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**A Narrative Discourse Analysis of Manto's Short Story "Toba Tek Singh"**

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**Abstract**

*This paper employs narrative discourse analysis to analyze Manto's short story "Toba Tek Singh" by using two narrative analysis frameworks that focus on the macrostructure (Stein, 1982) and microstructure (Halliday & Hasan, 1976) aspects of the story. The analysis covers the story's purpose, generic structure, and lexico-grammatical cohesion. Findings show that Manto follows a series of structural moves and uses a variety of narrative strategies (e.g. high level of involvement and a wide range of lexical and grammatical cohesive ties) which contribute to the creation of a well-formed text that has effectively achieved its purpose and made its intended effect. This paper argues that there are many ways in which this macro- and microstructure analysis of the story may be exploited in the language classroom.*

**Keywords:** Discourse Analysis, Genre, Lexico-grammatical cohesion, Narrative, Language Teaching

**Introduction**

"Toba Tek Singh", a tale of horror, is one of *Sadat Hasan Manto's* famous short stories that has been long admired as an excellent example of how a short story can produce an effect on the reader. *Manto* was a prolific Urdu writer. He published considerable number of short stories. He is considered among the famous writers of psychological fiction genres. This paper attempts to analyze the narrative aspects of this story. However, it should be noted that the paper can by no means fully address all aspects of narrative analysis. In particular, it aims to examine how different parts of this story become so united and meaningfully connected so as to keep the reader in suspense. The paper argues that there are many ways in which the macro- and microstructure analysis of the story may be exploited in the language classroom. Thus, the aim of this paper is twofold:

- 1) It attempts to analyze the macro- and microstructure aspects of *Manto's* short story: "Toba Tek Singh."
- 2) It discusses the many ways in which this analysis of the story may be able to unravel the mystery of narrative structure.
- 3) This is a critique on partition, explaining how people could associate birth of a new nation only with the violence unleashed and could not

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perceive Pakistan as an independent entity. The confusion highlights the insanity of creating artificial countries overnight.

The paper comprises three main sections: macrostructure analysis of the story (genre and schematic structure), microstructure analysis of the story (lexico-grammatical cohesion), and implications of the analysis for language classroom

## **1. Macrostructural Analysis: Genre Schemata**

Literature provides meaningful and memorable contexts for processing and interpreting new language. Researchers have discussed several benefits of using literary texts in the language classroom in terms of enhancing students' language skills and vocabulary and grammatical knowledge. Collie and Slater (1991), for example, pointed out that using literature in the language classroom provides a variety of benefits, including valuable authentic material, cultural enrichment, language enhancement and personal involvement. Likewise, Erkaya (2005) discussed the effectiveness of using short stories and pinpointed a number of linguistic, motivational, literary, cultural and higher-order thinking benefits.

Researchers in the field of discourse analysis (e.g., Bhatia, 1993; Celce-Murcia & Olshtain, 2000; Paltridge, 1996; Kay & Dudley-Evans, 1998) highlighted the usefulness of the notion of genre and text type and their implications in the language learning classroom. According to Swales (1990, p. 58),

A genre comprises a class of communicative events, the members of which share some set of communicative purposes. These purposes are recognized by the expert member of the parent discourse community, and thereby constitute the rationale for the genre. This rationale shapes the schematic structure of the discourse and influences and constrains choice of content and style.

According to Georgakopoulou and Goutsos (1997), genre represents "a classificatory concept, referring to a class of communicative events, the participants in which share a certain set of conventions defined in term of formal, functional and contextual properties" (p. 33). These definitions imply that a genre is a discourse type which is determined not only by its form and content, but also by its social context. Paltridge (2000) summarizes the typical patterns and structures of genres (text-types). These genres include recount, instruction, argument, discussion, narrative, anecdote, report, explanation and discussion. However, it should be noted that the schematic structures for these genres are neither clear-cut criteria, nor static patterns. Therefore, they should be viewed as continuum of "dynamic compilations of textual and contextual divisions" (Georgakopoulou & Goutsos, 1997, p. 34). In literary studies the term 'genre' has been used to differentiate between various types of literary texts, i.e. to indicate whether a particular text is a novel, a short story or a play (Johnstone, 2002). The following section focuses on the narrative genre: its purpose and schematic structure.

### **The Narrative Mode**

A narrative can be defined as "a perceived sequence of non-randomly connected events, typically involving, as the experiencing agonist, humans ..., from whose experience we human can learn" (Toolan, 1988, p. 8). According to Ochs (1997), narratives represent "cultural tools *par excellence* for understanding unusual and unexpected conduct" (p. 193).

### **Purpose**

The general purpose of the narrative genre is to tell a story (Paltridge, 2000). However, each narrative type has its own purpose which differs from another type. For example, the purpose of a comic story might be to tell a story in order to amuse the addressee while the purpose of a horror narrative might be to tell a story in order to shock and create horror. Likewise, other story genres such as action, romance, thriller, adventure, ... etc, have different purposes. The typical structural features of narratives are discussed in the next section.

### **Schematic Structure (Plot)**

Why do readers conceive a particular text as being a narrative? How are stories different from other discourse types? To answer such questions, it is essential to examine how smaller parts of a story are arranged and developed to form the bigger text 'the whole story'. Discourse analysts and literary critics have tried to analyze the common elements that comprise narratives. For example, Labov (1972), Stein (1982) and Paltridge (2000) have proposed three influential schematic models of the prototypical structure of a story. These three schemes include quite similar constituents (moves) (see Table 1). As can be seen from the table, different terms are sometimes employed to describe the same move.

**Table 1. Three models of narrative schematic structure**

Labov (1972)	Stein's (1982)	Paltridge's (2000)
Abstract	Setting	orientation
orientation	initiating event	complication
complicating	response/reaction	resolution
action evaluation	attempt	comment
resolution	consequences	coda
coda	reaction	

### **Purpose**

This story, like many of *Manto's* tales, is a sensational story of partition. It is addressed to all those interested in reading literary texts in general, and particularly to those readers who enjoy reading stories of partition. Two main purposes can be identified for "*Toba Tek Singh*":

- 1) to tell a story of partition
- 2) to create a language of madness

To achieve these purposes, the writer employs another type of genre, namely argument. In a schematic analysis, the paper will concentrate only on the

narrative genre in order to allow for more space for an in-depth analysis of the grammatical and lexical cohesion.

### **Macro-structural Description**

To begin with, it should be acknowledged that it is quite difficult to describe this story as a series of moves because of the nature of its purpose. However, based on the above discussion of narrative schematic structure, the paper shall attempt to assign the certain moves used by the writer.

#### **Setting (Paragraph 1)**

*Two or three years after the Partition, it occurred to the governments of India and Pakistan that along with the transfer of the civilian prisoners, a transfer of the inmates of the lunatic asylums should also be made. In other words, Muslim lunatics from Indian institutions should be sent over to Pakistan, and Hindu and Sikh lunatics from Pakistani asylums should be allowed to go to India. It is debatable whether this was a judicious step. Nonetheless, several high-level conferences took place, and the day of the transfer was fixed. Following a great deal of initial investigation, those inmates who had relatives in India were retained there, while the rest were transported to the border. Since there were no Hindus or Sikhs in Pakistan, the question of retaining anyone there did not arise.*

Paragraph 1 represents the first move made by the writer. It should be noted that our understanding of the concept of setting should not be limited to the issue of time and place but also to include other important dimensions such as the physical, social and temporal physiological approaches of the characters (Ochs, 1997). The unnamed first-person narrator who also plays the role of the protagonist in the story is introduced. The first sentence "Two or three years after the Partition," is a temporal deixis which provides clues about time frame of the story. In the word "partition", as in many other words throughout the story, "emphatic device" is used outside of the normal convention (Lakoff, 1982). *Sadat Hasan Manto* creates suspense by starting the tale with such an extraordinary opening, by choosing an unreliable first-person narrator who is struggling to prove his sanity, and by promising to tell "the whole story." Now, we are quite prepared for the upcoming, unexpected events in terms of the protagonist's actions and feelings.

#### **Initiating event**

- *All the Hindus and Sikhs in the asylums were taken to the border in the custody of the police. What happened in India is not known. But here, in the Lahore asylum, the news of the transfer resulted in interesting speculation among the inmates. One man, who had been reading Zamindar regularly for nearly twelve years, was approached by a friend. "What is Pakistan?" "A place in India where they manufacture razors," he answered after much deliberation. His friend appeared to be satisfied by the answer. A Sikh lunatic asked another Sikh, "Sardarji, why are we being sent to Hindustan? We can't even speak their language." "But I know the language of the Hindustanis," the first one interjected with a smile, adding, "Hindustanis*

*are devilish, they strut about haughtily...*" During the course of a bath one morning, an inmate shouted, "Pakistan Zindabad!" so loudly that he slipped on the floor and fainted.

When a Sikh madman asks another, "*sardar ji hamen Hindustan bheja ja raha hai hamen to wahan ki boli bhi nahin ati*" shows how linguistic identity was being uprooted, to thrust upon the new political identity. One particular inmate shouts "*Pakistan Zindabad*" with such a passion that he loses his balance and faints" is again a critique of the absurdity and harmful repercussions of hollow sectarian patriotism involving mindless passion and zeal, which unfortunately is still doing its rounds in the discourse these days

- *For one lunatic, the entire issue of Hindustan-Pakistan and Pakistan Hindustan resulted in further disorientation. One day, while he was sweeping the floor, he suddenly suspended his task and climbed onto a tree, where he remained for nearly two hours. During that time, he lectured extensively and nonstop on the matter of Pakistan versus Hindustan. When ordered by the guards to come down, he climbed higher still; when threatened with force, he said, "I want to live neither in Pakistan nor in Hindustan—I will live on this tree." He descended from the tree when his fever cooled somewhat, and embracing his Hindu and Sikh friends, he cried bitterly. He was saddened by the thought of their impending departure to India.*

*A Sikh who had been in the asylum for fifteen years used to mutter constantly to himself. "Oper di gur gur di annexe di bay dhania di mung di daal di of laltain," he kept saying, over and over again. He slept neither at night nor during the day. According to the guards, he had not slept at all in fifteen years. He did not lie down either. Sometimes he leaned against a wall.*

But what capture the mind of the readers is the main character Bishen Singh and his apparent gibberish which in a real world is a symbol for his insanity and carries no meaning or can be perceived as meaningless. It actually carries a huge weight of meaning in it. In literary terms it becomes a symbol of the nonsense of partition, the collapse of human communication in the midst of sheer madness and the failure of language to have any meaning in such times of turmoil. In his demented chants lies encoded the entire range of fictional reasons used to incite people to entertain fantasies of offended pride, retaliatory violence and religious communities.

After introducing the protagonist who has promised to tell "the whole story", the reader's attention is immediately turned to the role of motive even before introducing the antagonist.

*(a) Object. (b) Passion. (c) For.*

These are three instances of left-dislocation head structure. By using such a structure, protagonist achieves two goals. First, he creates suspense. Second,

he admits a lack of normal motivation. The second major character (the antagonist) is introduced at this point of the story.

- *the entire issue of Hindustan-Pakistan and Pakistan Hindustan resulted in further disorientation*
- *"I want to live neither in Pakistan nor in Hindustan—I will live on this tree."*

So, what might be the cause? What initiated the event We are eager to know. Here comes the answer after some deliberate delay:

- *His name was Bishan Singh, but people now called him Toba Tek Singh. Though it was apparent that he was impervious to the passage of time, he waited for the visits from his relatives and was ready for them when they came.*

This point takes us to the next move, i.e. the protagonist's response to what he describes as the

- *"Oper di gur gur di annexe di bay dhanian di mung daal di of laltain."*

### **The protagonist's response or reaction to the event**

Having introduced the two major characters ('I' the narrator/protagonist and 'he' Bishan Singh/antagonist), and the initiating event or the motive for the upcoming incident, the writer then goes on to introduce the protagonist's reaction.

- *In the lunatic asylum there was a man who believed that he was God. Bishan Singh asked him about Toba Tek Singh. The man laughed raucously. "It is neither in Pakistan nor in Hindustan," he said, "because I haven't given any orders yet."*

The decision is strikingly announced. The protagonist decides "to take the life of the old man." This move is very essential because it introduces the shocking plot of the protagonist and at the same time creates suspense. Furthermore, it gives rise to the next dramatic move.

**Attempt:** a set of overt actions in the service of the protagonist's goal initiated by events or motivating states. .

This move's opening is as follows:

- *A few days prior to the transfer, Bishan Singh was visited by an old Muslim friend. Seeing him, Bishan Singh turned to leave. The guard restrained him. "He's come to see you," the guard said. "This is your friend, Fazal Din." Bishan Singh glanced at his friend briefly, then began muttering his customary nonsense. Fazal Din came forward and placed a hand on his shoulder. "I wanted to come and see you earlier. I've just been so busy. Your family has left for Hindustan, and everyone is fine...I helped them in whatever way I could. Your daughter Roop Kaur?..." He paused in mid-*

sentence. "Roop Kaur?" Bishan Singh looked thoughtful. "Yes...she...she's fine too," Fazal Din said haltingly. "She also left with the others."

Readers are kept in suspense. They are also strongly involved by the narrator through repeated uses of first- and second- person pronouns to intensify readers' involvement and thus to maximize the scary effect of the tale.

In fact, two narrative relations can be identified at this point of the story: the temporal and casual relations. Attempts are temporally related in the sense that each attempt is followed by another one. In addition, each attempt gives rise 'motivates' the next one.

The climax of the story occurs when the protagonist starts his account of the.

- *On an extremely cold day, lorries filled with Hindu and Sikh lunatics left the asylum in Lahore, accompanied by the police and some higher officials. At Wagah, the superintendents from both sides met, and after the initial formalities were out of the way, the actual transfer began, continuing all night. Getting the lunatics out of the lorries and handing them over to the Indian officials proved to be an arduous task. Many of them refused to leave the lorries, and those who did ran about wildly, making it difficult for the guards and other officials to keep them under control; those who were naked tore off any clothing that was forced on them, many swore and cursed, one or two sang, some fought with each other, and others cried or wailed. Confusion was rampant. The women were also a problem, and the cold weather made everyone's teeth chatter*

Sentences cited above are all devoted to this aim. The protagonist provides thorough description of planning. *Manto* is very famous for his use of dashes. Indeed, dashes add to the mysterious atmosphere already established. It might also reflect the mental state of the "nervous" narrator.

### **Consequence(s) of the attempt**

Two main consequences can be identified. First, the protagonist achieves his goal by highlighting uprootedness. Second, highlighting the pointless effort to divide a nation into two.

- *Most of the lunatics were not in favour of the transfer because they could not comprehend the reasons for being uprooted from one place and thrown into another.*
- *When Bishan Singh's turn came to cross the border, he asked the official who was entering his name in a register, "Where is Toba Tek Singh? In Pakistan or in India?"*

This move represents the beginning of the stage of falling actions. So, what is the protagonist's reaction to the query of Bishan Singh? The answer to this important question is given at the end of the story. This takes us to the last move in the story.

### **The protagonist's reaction to the consequences**

The protagonist calmly answers the query.

- *The official laughed and said, "In Pakistan." On hearing this, Bishan Singh leaped back and ran towards the remaining group of men who awaited their turn. The Pakistani soldiers caught him and tried to force him back to the checkpoint. He resisted vigorously. "Toba Tek Singh is here!" he yelled. "Oper di gur gur di annexe di bay dhanian di mung daal di of Toba Tek Singh and Pakistan!" The authorities attempted to reason with him. "Look, Toba Tek Singh is in Hindustan now—and if he's not there yet, we'll send him there immediately."*

To sum up, these constituents appear as a sequence of events which as a whole represent one big event developed coherently throughout the story. Indeed, the story has achieved its purpose because *Manto* employs a variety of narrative strategies, as discussed above, to create surprise, suspense and horror throughout his tale. Up to this point, the structural constituents of the story that successfully contribute to its effect have been identified and discussed. The following section examines the microstructural aspects of the story.

### **Microstructural Analysis: Lexico-grammatical Cohesion**

Halliday and Hasan (1976) state that "cohesion occurs where the INTERPRETATION of some element in the discourse is dependent on that of another" (p.4). According to Paltridge (2000, p. 131), cohesion refers to "the grammatical and/or lexical relationships among different elements of a text." Thus, cohesive ties can be classified into two main categories: grammatical cohesion and lexical cohesion. Grammatical cohesion includes four main types: reference, substitution, ellipsis and conjunction. On the other hand, lexical cohesion can be classified into two main categories: reiteration (repetition, synonymy, hyponymy, meronymy, antonymy) and collocation.

### **Grammatical Cohesion**

As stated above, grammatical cohesion is realized through reference, conjunction, ellipsis and substitution.

The paper shall analyze the text (the first three paragraphs of the story) by identifying the cohesive devices that contribute to its cohesion. My analysis will cover two main types of grammatical cohesion: (1) referential cohesion and (2) conjunctive cohesion.

### **References**

To begin with, there are three main kinds of reference: endophora, exophora and homophora (see Figure 1). Endophora reference includes two categories: anaphora (backward) reference and cataphora (forward) reference. Exophoric (outward) reference refers outside the text. Homophoric reference (cross-textual) is retrieved by reference to our general cultural knowledge. These cohesive devices are grammatically realized by personal pronouns, demonstratives and



comparatives (Halliday & Hasan, 1976).

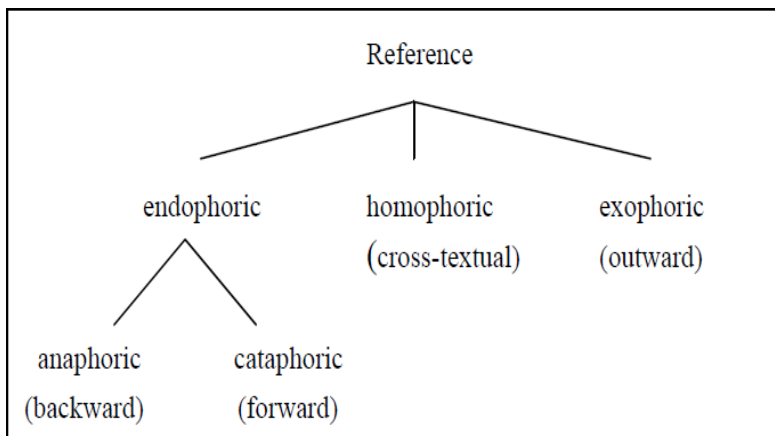


Figure 1. Types of referential devices (Halliday & Hassan, 1976)

### **Endophoric Anaphora**

Anaphoric reference refers backward. Let us now identify instances of anaphoric reference, and the word(s) they refer back to in order to show how such cohesive ties contribute to the overall cohesion of the text. It should be noted that all these instances occur across sentence boundaries.

The following anaphoric references are identified in the text all of which refer back to *I* (the narrator) in sentence (1):

*“What is Pakistan?” “A place in India where they manufacture razors,” he answered after much deliberation. His friend appeared to be satisfied by the answer. A Sikh lunatic asked another Sikh, “Sardarji, why are we being sent to Hindustan? We can’t even speak their language.” “But I know the language of the Hindustanis,” the first one interjected with a smile, adding, “Hindustanis are devilish, they strut about haughtily...” During the course of a bath one morning, an inmate shouted, “Pakistan Zindabad!” so loudly that he slipped on the floor and fainted*

- *he* answered after much deliberation
- *His* friend appeared to be satisfied by the answer
- why are *we* being sent to Hindustan?
- *We* can’t even speak their language
- But *I* know the language of the Hindustanis
- *he* slipped on the floor and fainted

It should be noted that all the above mentioned reference items function for the inter-sentence cohesion of the text because they occur across sentence boundaries and therefore, they play a crucial role in creating cohesion by connecting the different parts of the text.

### **Endophoric cataphora**

The second type of endophoric reference 'cataphora' is generally less common than anaphoric reference. It refers forward. Few cases of cataphoric reference have been identified in the text including:

- "Yes...she...*she*'s fine too," *Fazal Din* said haltingly.
- "*She* also left with the others."

### **Exophora**

Exophoric reference points to something outside the text.

- For example, *The official* laughed and said, "*In Pakistan*."

"*In Pakistan*" can only be exophoric, referring to the place where *Toba Tek Singh* is situated. Indeed, the whole story is based on these three exophoric references *Hindustan*, *Pakistan* and *Toba Tek Singh*. This clearly shows that referential cohesion helps tying different sentences of the text together meaningfully.

### **Homophora**

The last type of referential cohesion is homophoric reference which refers to "items the identity of which can be retrieved by reference to cultural, social, and political knowledge in general" (Paltridge, 2000, p.133). The homophoric ties have been identified in the text:

- *Two or three years after the Partition, it occurred to the governments of India and Pakistan that along with the transfer of the civilian prisoners, a transfer of the inmates of the lunatic asylums should also be made.*

Here, it is assumed that the identity of transfers of inmates of the lunatic asylums represents part of readers shared cultural and political knowledge. To sum up, the writer uses different devices of referential cohesion (anaphora, cataphora, exophora and homophora) to connect different parts of the text so that it appears as a well-connected, meaningful unit capable of achieving its purpose.

### **Conjunction**

The word conjunction is used to "describe the cohesive tie between clauses or sections of text in such a way as to demonstrate a meaningful relationship between them" (Bloor & Bloor, 1995, p. 98). Conjunctive devices differ from other cohesive devices in the sense that they "explicitly draw attention to the type of relationship between one sentence or clause and another" (Cook, 1989, p. 21). Four types of conjunctions have been identified by Halliday and Hasan (1976): additive (e.g., and, in addition), adversative (e.g., but, whereas), casual (e.g., because, so that), and temporal (e.g., before, finally). Martin (1992) categorizes conjunctions as additive, comparative, temporal, consequential, internal, external, paratactic, and hypotactic. Let us now attempt to identify and

analyze the conjunctive devices that contribute to the cohesion of the text. It is Martin's classifications that will be used in the present analysis because they are more frequently used in current work on cohesion analysis (Paltridge, 2000).

*and* :

*then*:

*but* :

*whenever*:

*now* :

*when*:

*so*:

Most of the conjunctive ties listed above are inter-sentential in the sense that they connect different sentences together and help in creating meaningful chain of related sentences. This, in turn, leads to the creation of a coherent text. Clearly, the use of such connectives contributes to the creation of suspense which in turns leads to reader's high involvement. For example, repeated use of 'and' and 'but' creates a conversational tone which helps to unfold the events one by one and get the reader involved in witnessing the whole event.

### **Lexical Cohesion**

Lexical cohesion "is the cohesive effect achieved by the selection of vocabulary" (Halliday & Hasan, 1976, p. 274). This kind of cohesion is captured at the lexical level (Cha, 1985). Its two main components are reiteration and collocation. As a cohesive component, lexical cohesion plays an important role through the many connections it makes in the text. Indeed, different types of lexical relationship help generating chains of connected lexical items in the text. The main types of lexical cohesion are repetition, synonymy, antonymy, hyponymy, meronymy, and collocation.

In short, the text contains a wide range of cohesive devices that occur across sentence boundaries and thus contribute to the grammatical and lexical cohesion of the text.

### **Conclusion and Implications**

This paper provided a narrative discourse analysis of *Manto's* short story "*Toba Tek Singh*" at both the macro and micro level. From the above analysis it can be seen that the writer follows a number of moves and uses a wide range grammatical and lexical ties which contribute to the creation of a coherent text; a text that can effectively achieve its purpose and make its intended effect on the reader.

*Bishen Singh's* death in the end of the story in no-man's land is *Manto's* ultimate rejection and critique of the partition of India. *Toba Tek Singh's* death is an act of defiance, a symbol of protest and rebellion, a challenge to history and a refusal to accept the political identity thrust on him by arbitrary decisions of policy-makers. It is his ultimate attempt for liberation from the clutches of fascist politics and communalism. His death marks the culmination of his search for his land in no man's land, an alternate space, an escape from the dislocation imposed. It is a deliberate and forceful repudiation of imposed externals.

These strategies have led to the creation of "*Toba Tek Singh*"; a tale of horror

that has been long admired as an excellent example of how short stories can produce an effect on the reader.

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