

Exploring Character Communication Through the Lens of Jakobson's Language Functions in the Novel "Where the Crawdads Sing"

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Abstract

This study examines the language functions utilized in Delia Owens' novel "Where the Crawdads Sing," employing Roman Jakobson's theoretical framework to identify and analyze key linguistic functions within the text. The research also explores the contextual subtleties surrounding these language functions, providing insights into their significance in character development and thematic expression. The study employs a descriptive qualitative research methodology, focusing on the characters' dialogue throughout the novel. Data were systematically collected from these utterances, enabling a comprehensive examination of the language functions present. The findings reveal six distinct language functions: expressive, conative, referential, metalinguistic, phatic, and poetic. In contrast, the metalinguistic and poetic functions are identified as the least prevalent, suggesting a reduced emphasis on code analysis and creative expression within the dialogues. This pattern indicates that the character's communication primarily emphasizes clarity and the exchange of information rather than emotional depth or artistic expression. The findings highlight the crucial role of language in conveying the complex themes of isolation, resilience, and identity in the narrative. By applying linguistic theories to the analysis of dialogue, this study enhances our understanding of the text while shedding light on the broader significance of language use in literature. It illustrates how specific linguistic choices affect reader interpretation and contribute to the overall impact of the narrative in "Where the Crawdads Sing." This approach encourages further exploration of the intricate connections between language and meaning in literary works.

Keywords: Language Functions, Context, Novel, Character Development.

Introduction

In everyday interactions, humans rely heavily on language to communicate. Language is a purely human trait that distinguishes human beings from other creatures. Language is the vehicle of cultural transmission, a tool for communication, and a symbol of self-identity and self-expression (Younus et al., 2023; Maitlo et al., 2024). According to Roman Jakobson (Chandler, 2007, p.5), verbal communication is the most important and significant of all semiotic systems. Human

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communication serves various purposes on a social and personal level (Murcia, 2000; Jalbani et al., 2023). It is impossible to overstate the profound significance of language in human existence. While individuals often overlook the complexity of spoken or written sentences, each utterance serves a distinct purpose in communication (Rasheed et al., 2023). Without a clear intent, communication risks becoming misinterpreted or disordered, as the listener's comprehension may be hindered. This highlights the importance of linguistic choices in accurately conveying the speaker's intended message. On a societal level, language serves multiple functions, ranging from transmitting information to expressing emotions and social bonds (Hafiza et al., 2024). Language is both a tool for conveying ideas and a means of social and emotional expression (Iqbal et al., 2023; Abbas et al., 2024). In this regard, communication extends beyond simply exchanging facts; it also encompasses sharing feelings, desires, and experiences. For example, the dialogue between characters in literature often unveils these emotional and social dimensions of language, revealing the intricacies of human interaction and providing insights into individual psychology (Yousaf et al., 2021; Maitlo et al., 2023). Language, therefore, functions as both a medium for intellectual exchange and a vehicle for emotional resonance, reflecting the multifaceted nature of human communication (Rao et al., 2023).

Statement of the Problem

"The problem statement is a clear and concise summary of the research problem, typically contained within one paragraph; its function is to identify the concerned issue" (Ahmad et al., 2024, p.300). Effective communication is essential for meaningful interpersonal relationships; many individuals fail to recognize language's functions. This lack of awareness can lead to misunderstandings and emotional disconnection in personal and social interactions (Zafar & Ullah, 2020; Rasheed et al., 2024). The core issue is understanding how language functions, conveys information, expresses emotions, and reflects contextual nuances. This study addresses this problem by analyzing the language functions in Delia Owens' novel "Where the Crawdads Sing." By thoroughly examining character dialogues, the research aims to identify the specific language functions utilized and how contextual factors shape these functions.

This research enhances our understanding of the intricate dynamics of communication within the narrative, offering valuable insights that can be applied to real-world interactions.

Research Objectives

- To identify the types of language functions used by the characters in the novel "Where the Crawdads Sing" by Delia Owens.
- To find out the prominent language functions used by the characters in the novel "Where the Crawdads Sing" by Delia Owens?
- To analyze the contexts of language functions used by the characters in the novel "Where the Crawdads Sing" by Delia Owens?

Research Questions

1. What are the types of language functions used by the characters in the novel "Where the Crawdads Sing" by Delia Owens?
2. What are the most used language functions used by the characters in the novel "Where the Crawdads Sing" by Delia Owens?
3. What are the contexts of language functions are used in the novel "Where the Crawdads Sing" by Delia Owens?

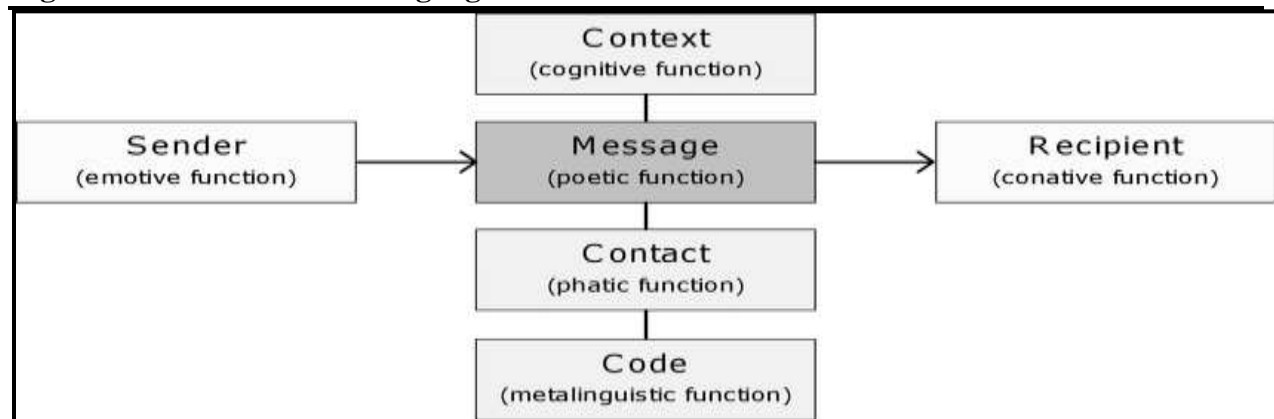
Significance of the Study

This study sheds light on the language functions utilized by characters in *Where the Crawdads Sing* by Delia Owens, offering valuable insights into the complex use of language. Jakobson's theory of language functions, including emotive, referential, phatic, metalinguistic, conative, and poetic functions, provides a robust framework for understanding how language shapes communication and interacts with society. The research significantly enriches literary analysis by revealing hidden meanings in the novel through a structured examination of language, improving literary criticism. Additionally, it has practical implications in enhancing communication skills, cultural insights, and pedagogical approaches, particularly in fields like literature, linguistics, and education. By applying Jakobson's theory, this research helps us understand how language reflects societal norms and identity formation, benefiting scholars, educators, and policymakers alike. This research informs literary criticism and offers valuable tools for educators, linguists, and scholars.

Theoretical Framework

A theoretical framework is an arrangement that sustains and provides an account of a theory and how the researchers use the theory and its underlying assumptions to investigate the research problem (Shakir et al., 2011; Arshad et al., 2024). This study focuses on Roman Jakobson's (1960) classification of language functions theory, which includes expressive, conative, multilingual, phatic, referential, and poetic functions.

Figure 1: Classification of language functions



Phatic Function

The phatic function is concerned with the interconnection of speakers.

Poetic Function

Jakobson defines the poetic function as "the behavior toward the message itself, focused on the message itself."

Metalingual Function

Metalingual work is used when the sender and the receiver need to discover whether they share the similar code or when the words are used to argue language.

Emotive Function

This work comes out when we need to express our feelings in spite of the fact that one doesn't talk to provide a data.

Conative Function

Introduction to the "addressee" is the conative function. Vocative and basic sentences are where this function manifests itself in its most pure syntactic form. This function aids in the creation of actions and incorporates orders.

Referential Function

The referential function: compares to the reason of Setting and depicts a situation, protest or psychological state.

Literature Review

Literature review is a written overview of major writings and other sources on a selected topic. Sources covered in the review may include scholarly journal articles, books, and websites. Its aim is to increase understanding of the current research to a certain theme and provide framework to contemplate about the possible result of new study (Naz et al., 2023; Kosar et al., 2024; Saleem et al., 2024). Following is the literature review of present study.

Language functions, as theorized by Roman Jakobson (1960), provide a foundational framework for analyzing communication within literature. Jakobson's six functions referential, emotive, conative, phatic, metalingual, and poetic—are essential in understanding how characters in *Where the Crawdads Sing* (Owens, 2018) use language to convey emotion, establish relationships, and structure the narrative. The poetic function, for example, is evident in Owens' descriptive and lyrical language, while the referential function is central to the unfolding mystery in the novel. Bühler's (1965) model complements Jakobson's work by categorizing language into expressive, conative, and graphic functions, highlighting how Kya's isolated dialogue reflects her emotional and psychological state. Leech (1983) extends this understanding by examining illocutionary acts, showing how language performs not just a representational role but also shapes social interactions and actions. Searle's (1969) theory of speech acts further enhances this analysis by focusing on how language is used to perform actions, such as making requests or asserting control, which is evident in Kya's interactions with other characters. The transactional and interactional functions, as discussed by Yule (2022), are particularly relevant for exploring the informative and relational aspects of language in the novel. Halliday's (1985) systemic functional linguistics also contributes by emphasizing how language represents reality through the ideational function, which is crucial in understanding how Kya's relationship with the natural world is constructed through language. Additionally, Vygotsky's (1986) socio-cultural theory highlights the role of social interaction in shaping language, particularly in Kya's development, given her isolation.

The researcher also reviewed several previous studies that employed Roman Jakobson's theory of language functions. Sanastia (2022) examined the language functions used by the main characters in the movie *Marriage Story*, finding that all six language functions appeared in the characters' utterances, with the emotive function being the most prevalent. Ria Karmila (2019) analyzed the language functions in *White House Down*, identifying five functions used by the characters, including phatic, referential, expressive, mandate, and metalinguistic functions, with asking for and giving information being most frequent. Fatehah Darama (2019) applied Jakobson's theory to the analysis of Maher Zain's songs, revealing that the metalingual and referential functions were

most commonly used. Olya Octa Devia Putri (2018) focused on the film *Now You See Me 2*, concluding that five of the six language functions were present, with the referential function and poetic function being most frequent. These studies support the applicability of Jakobson's theory in diverse contexts, reinforcing the current research on language functions in *Where the Crawdads Sing*.

Methodology and Design

The research methodology is the procedure which is used by the researchers to gather data for resolving problems of investigation (Ahmad et al., 2021; Ahmad et al., 2023). "Design of the research comprises of the whole procedure which is conducted research" (Ahmad et al., 2022, p.524). The researcher employed a qualitative descriptive design. The data analysis is presented descriptively, so the descriptive approach is used. The information was gathered by locating the utterances that contained the Jakobson-mentioned language function types, classifying the function types, context of the language functions and clocking up the dominant types to show which language function was used the most in the novel "Where the Crawdads Sing" by Delia Owens.

Data Set

The data set for this research was selected through purposive sampling, a method that allows for the intentional selection of specific cases that are most relevant to the research questions and objectives (Rao et al., 2023; Sadaf et al., 2024). This approach ensures that the sample accurately represents the key elements necessary for the analysis of language functions within the context of Delia Owens' *Where the Crawdads Sing*. By focusing on character dialogues and interactions, purposive sampling enables a detailed examination of the language functions employed throughout the novel, ensuring that only the most pertinent instances are analyzed. This method is particularly suited for this study, as it targets the critical moments of communication that contribute to the narrative's exploration of emotional and social dynamics, thus offering a focused and purposeful exploration of the data.

Research Instruments

Instruments perform significant part and help to collect accurate data (Ramzan et al., 2023; Mumtaz et al., 2024). The researcher engaged in close reading of the novel, meticulously examining character dialogues and interactions to identify the various language functions employed throughout the narrative. In addition to the text itself, several secondary resources were utilized to support the research. These included academic journals, scholarly articles, and relevant books, which provided both theoretical frameworks and previous studies on language functions, particularly those related to Roman Jakobson's theory. The research instrument for this study was a thorough analysis of the original text of Delia Owens' *Where the Crawdads Sing*. Furthermore, online databases and credible internet resources were consulted to access up-to-date research and theoretical perspectives, enhancing the depth and breadth of the analysis. The integration of these multiple resources allowed for a comprehensive and informed approach to the study, ensuring that the analysis was both rigorous and well-grounded in the existing literature on linguistic theory and literary analysis.

Procedure of Data Analysis

To begin the researcher read the novel while reading the novel to guarantee its reliability and authenticity. After collecting the data, the researcher grouped it into six categories based on Jakobson's language function theory: expressive, conative, referential, metalingual, phatic, and poetic functions. Conclusion was the final phase in the data analysis process. The study's findings were summarized by the researcher in this section.

Findings

The researcher presents the study findings along with two discussion points: the findings and the discussion. This section offers a more thorough explanation that includes every outcome of the data analysis and addresses the research questions.

The Roman Jakobson theory was used to identify and categorize the various language functions in the novel *Where the Crawdads Sing*. Additionally, the context of the language functions used in the novel was examined. After analyzing the data, the researcher identified all six categories of language functions in the utterances of the characters, as indicated in the table below:

Table 1: Language Functions found in the data

No	Type of Language Functions	Frequency
1	Referential Function	95
2	Conative Function	65
3	Emotive Function	51
4	Phatic Function	40
5	Poetic Function	14
6	Metalingual Function	12
	Total	277

It is evident from the table above that 277 data about linguistic functions utilised by every character have been gathered by the researcher. The functions that are present in language include referential, phatic, emotional, poetic, conative, and metalingual. There is a referential function in the first rank. With 95 data, it is the most often used language function. Next, with 65 data, the conative function is in the second rank. The Emotive function, with 51 data, is ranked third. Additionally, the Phatic function with 40 data is in the fourth rank. The Poetic function, which has 14 data, is ranked sixth. The Metalingual function is the sixth. There are 12 data for the little utilised language function. Thus, it can be said that the metalingual function is the least common form of language function while the referential function is the most often employed type.

Discussion

The discussion revolves around the research issues. This study focuses on the types of language functions identified in the novel. The usage of language functions is influenced by context as it reflects how characters perceive their interactions based on whom they are conversing with and where these conversations take place as their intentions behind their statements. Furthermore understanding the role of language in communication is crucial, for interpreting the nuances within utterances made by characters. In Delia Owens' novel "Where the Crawdads Sing," the characters and narrative are richly imbued with Roman Jakobson's six functions of language, offering insights

into how language functions both within the story and as a tool for literary analysis. This discussion explores these functions through specific contexts from the novel, highlighting their roles in character development, narrative structure, and thematic exploration.

Referential Function: In Delia Owens' *Where the Crawdads Sing*, the referential function of language is dominant and foundational and shapes the narrative and character development. The referential function of language, which is concerned with conveying factual information, is shown in Kya's character development. Kya is initially an abandoned child living in the marshes of North Carolina and becomes a knowledgeable and strong woman as she acquires scientific knowledge of the natural world around her. When Kya describes the behavior of marsh creatures or identifies plant species like "the firefly orchid blooming in the swamp" (Owens, 87) she shows she knows the world. This function grounds the narrative in a specific place and environment and Kya to her surroundings.

Phatic Function: The phatic function of language which is concerned with establishing and maintaining social relationships is shown in Kya's interactions with other characters. An example is when Tate, Kya's childhood friend and love interest, uses language that is focused on maintaining emotional connection rather than conveying new information. When Tate tells Kya "You know I'll always be here for you" (Owens, 210) in a moment of emotional vulnerability he is reassuring her of his friendship and support. This function develops the interpersonal dynamics that are crucial to the plot of the novel and highlights the importance of human connection in Kya's isolated life.

Emotive Function: Emotive language is key to getting emotions and feelings out of the characters and the reader throughout the novel. Owens uses emotive language to paint Kya's inner struggles with loneliness and abandonment and her deep connection to the natural world. When Kya thinks about being alone, she calls the marsh her "best friend" (Owens p.33) and finds comfort in its rhythms and creatures, the emotive language makes her more resilient and the reader more sympathetic to her situation. This is key to the theme of human resilience and the healing power of nature.

Poetic Function: The poetic function is on full display in Owens' beautiful descriptions of the marsh and its creatures. Through metaphor and sensory language she turns the setting into a poetic landscape that mirrors Kya's journey. Phrases like "the marsh's moods" (Owens p.76) and "the sky changed colours like a chameleon" (Owens p.124) not only describe the beauty and fragility of the natural world but also the isolation and survival. This function makes the prose more beautiful and the reader more immersed in Kya's world and the themes of resilience and adaptation.

Conative Function: In "Where the Crawdads Sing," characters often use language to try and influence each other's behavior. This can be seen in moments like Kya's trial, where her defense attorney uses persuasive language to try and sway the jury's opinions and affect the outcome of the legal proceedings. This conative function highlights the power dynamics at play in the courtroom and shows how language can shape decisions and perceptions in the novel.

Metalingual Function: While not as obvious, the characters in "Where the Crawdads Sing" also engage in discussions about language itself. This metalingual function can be seen when Kya reads scientific texts or poetic verses left by Tate. These moments deepen her understanding of language as both a tool for scientific inquiry and artistic expression. Even though it's not talked about as much as other functions, these instances highlight the novel's exploration of communication and interpretation.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Delia Owens' *Where the Crawdads Sing* masterfully integrates Roman Jakobson's six language functions, offering a nuanced portrayal of communication that enriches both character development and thematic exploration. Through the referential function, Owens grounds the narrative in the natural world, using Kya's deep connection to the environment to shape her growth. The phatic function underscores the emotional bonds between characters, emphasizing the need for human connection amidst isolation. Emotive language paints Kya's inner turmoil and resilience, while the poetic function elevates the narrative's beauty, reflecting both Kya's personal journey and the fragile ecosystem she inhabits. The conative function demonstrates the power of language to influence others, especially in the courtroom, while the metalingual function subtly encourages reflection on the nature of language itself. Together, these functions not only deepen the reader's engagement with the novel but also highlight the complex role of language in shaping identity, relationships, and survival. This study reveals how Jakobson's theory provides a rich framework for analyzing the intricate ways in which language operates within literature, particularly in *Where the Crawdads Sing*, where every utterance carries layers of meaning that drive the characters and plot forward.

Recommendations

- The researcher suggests that readers should enhance their understanding of language function and how it applies in our daily lives. This will give you a deeper knowledge and insight into effective communication. Language function isn't limited to just plays; it can be found in various forms of literature like novels, poetry, short stories, and even picture books for children. Let's hope that research on this topic keeps advancing.
- To understand the meaning behind sentences or utterances in a novel, it's important to work on improving your comprehension. By doing so, you'll be able to analyze the utterances in the novel more easily.
- For future researchers interested in the same study, this research can be a valuable comparison, direction, or additional reference for their own work.
- Teachers and educators, pay close attention to your students' English learning process, especially when it comes to language function. Language serves more than just communication purposes; it has a wider scope. The researcher recommends that other researchers continue to explore language function in greater depth.

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