

Bridging Disciplines for Deeper Insight: A Semantico-Stylistic Analysis of Authorial Style in D.H. Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers*

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Abstract

The stylistic analysis of authorial technique often struggles to reconcile subjective literary interpretation with objective, empirical evidence. This research addressed this void by demonstrating the effectiveness of an integrated semantico-stylistic approach for characterizing authorial style in D.H. Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers* (1913). Employing a mixed-methods design, the study utilized Geoffrey Leech's (1981) componential analysis model to systematically deconstruct and quantify the 'logical compatibility' between lexical items describing characters' internal states and their surrounding habitats. Through an examination of representative passages across the novel's five main plot stages, the study generated quantitative compatibility scores to chart how Lawrence's stylistic strategies modulate across the narrative arc. The findings indicated that Lawrence's authorial style is characterized by a deliberate manipulation of semantic resonance, with compatibility scores intensifying at points of high emotional conflict. The analysis provided concrete, feature-based linguistic evidence that grounds established psychological and thematic interpretations of the novel in verifiable textual patterns. This study concluded that a formal semantic framework like CA serves as a valuable tool for enhancing the objectivity of stylistics, offering an evidence-based methodology to move beyond impressionistic criticism and enabling a firmer, evidence-based grasp of how literary meaning is constructed at the lexical level. **Keywords:** Stylistics, Semantics, Componential Analysis, D.H. Lawrence, *Sons and Lovers*, Authorial Style, Literary Linguistics

Introduction

Background of the Study

The analysis of literary texts has perpetually navigated the complex terrain between subjective aesthetic appreciation and the pursuit of objective, verifiable interpretation. While traditional literary criticism provides invaluable insights into theme, character, and cultural context, its methods can sometimes be perceived as impressionistic, relying on the critic's intuition

rather than a replicable analytical framework (Short, 1996). In response to this, the field of stylistics emerged as a critical bridge between literary studies and linguistics, with the primary objective of establishing a systematic and principled relationship between the linguistic choices of an author and the artistic effects they produce (Simpson, 2004). Stylistics operates on the foundational premise that every element of a text, from the smallest morpheme to the largest discourse structure, is a potential carrier of stylistic significance, and that a detailed analysis of formal features can ground interpretive claims in tangible textual evidence (Leech & Short, 2007). By treating the literary text as a sophisticated act of communication, stylistics attempts to answer not only *what* a text means, but precisely *how* it means.

Within the broad toolkit of stylistics, the lexical-semantic level offers a particularly fertile ground for investigation. The author's selection of vocabulary, or lexis, is arguably the most fundamental site of stylistic choice, directly shaping the reader's perception of the fictional world, its characters, and its prevailing atmosphere (Wales, 2011). It is at this level that semantics, the linguistic study of meaning, becomes an indispensable partner to stylistic analysis. The integration of semantic theory into stylistics moves the analytical focus from a general appreciation of vocabulary to a structured inquiry into the meaning relations that underpin a text's architecture (Saeed, 2009). This synergy allows for a more profound understanding of authorial style, not as a collection of idiosyncratic habits, but as the systematic deployment of the meaning potential inherent in language. The challenge, however, is to find a semantic model that is both powerful enough to deconstruct complex meanings and systematic enough to be applied with consistency and objectivity.

One such model, originating from structural semantics, is Componential Analysis (CA). Formulated in various forms by linguists such as Nida (1975) and Lyons (1977), and most influentially systematized by Geoffrey Leech (1981), CA proposes that the meaning of a word can be broken down into its ultimate contrastive components or minimal semantic features. Leech's model, with its use of binary features (e.g., [+HUMAN], [-ADULT]), provides a methodology for dissecting and comparing word senses with a high degree of analytical precision. When applied to a literary text, this approach offers a powerful tool for moving beyond impressionistic readings. Instead of merely stating that a character feels "sad" in a "gloomy" environment, a semantico-stylistic analysis based on CA can identify the shared semantic features, such as [-HOPEFUL] or [-BRIGHT], that linguistically construct this very resonance, thereby providing objective evidence for the stylistic effect.

This study sought to demonstrate the efficacy of this integrated semantico-stylistic approach through a focused case study of D.H. Lawrence's seminal novel, *Sons and Lovers* (1913). Lawrence's work is particularly well-suited for such an analysis due to its profound psychological depth and its sustained preoccupation with the intricate, often fraught, relationship between his characters' inner lives and their external environments (Kinkead-Weekes, 1996). The way Lawrence manipulates language to create a sense of harmony or dissonance—what this study terms 'logical compatibility'—between a character's emotional state and their habitat is a hallmark of his authorial style (Schwarz, 1995). The problem this study addressed was the need for a more formal, non-biased methodology to account for this key stylistic trait. While readers intuitively feel the connection Lawrence forges between character and place, a systematic, linguistically-grounded method was required to demonstrate precisely how these connections are built at the lexical level. This study, therefore, employed Leech's (1981) CA not simply to evaluate the model itself, but to showcase how the integration of a formal semantic framework can significantly

enhance the rigor of stylistics, offering objective, replicable evidence for claims about authorial technique and providing a deeper, more nuanced understanding of the literary text.

Literature Review

Theoretical Background

This study was anchored at the intersection of stylistics and lexical semantics, utilizing the analytical precision of the latter to illuminate the artistic choices central to the former. Stylistics as a discipline is fundamentally concerned with the linguistic basis of literary effect. It posits that the style of an author is not an abstract quality but a concrete artifact constructed from a series of identifiable linguistic choices at the phonological, syntactic, and lexical levels (Simpson, 2004). The primary aim of a stylistic analysis is to move beyond subjective interpretation by establishing a transparent and replicable connection between specific formal features in a text and their resulting aesthetic functions (Leech & Short, 2007). This quest for a more objective critical practice requires a robust analytical framework, for which linguistics supplies the necessary tools and terminology.

Within the linguistic levels, the lexicon is a primary repository of stylistic choice. An author's selection of vocabulary is a powerful mechanism for constructing the entire fictional world, from character psychology to environmental atmosphere. It is at this level that semantics, the study of meaning, becomes an indispensable partner to stylistic analysis. Lexical semantics, in particular, offers systematic methods for analyzing the intricate relationships between words, such as synonymy, antonymy, and hyponymy (Saeed, 2009). The application of semantic principles enables a stylistician to study an author's word choices not only as discrete instances but as components of a system of meaning that operates throughout the text.

One of the most influential, though controversial, tools within lexical semantics is CA. The model developed by Leech (1981) codifies the structuralist principle that the meaning of a word is not an indivisible whole but can be decomposed into a set of minimal, contrastive semantic features. By using a binary system (e.g., a 'boy' can be defined as [+HUMAN], [+MALE], [-ADULT]), CA offers a method for the "atomization of meaning," which is highly effective for defining basic similarities and oppositions between lexical items (Carter, 1998, p. 18). For stylistic analysis, its value lies in its capacity to objectify the comparison of semantic content. This allows a researcher to systematically map the features of words used to describe a character's internal state against those used to describe their habitat, thereby providing a formal, evidence-based foundation for assessing authorial style.

Empirical Background

The application of CA as a tool for fine-grained semantic deconstruction has been demonstrated to be effective in a range of linguistic and literary studies. Its utility extends well beyond its theoretical origins, proving useful in fields where a precise understanding of meaning components is crucial. In translation studies, for example, Eesa (2007) successfully applied a componential model to interpret and translate metaphors, showing the model's capacity to identify the specific inferential features that enable a metaphor to function across linguistic boundaries. Within literary analysis, Belfarhi (2013) argued that CA allows the reader to identify networks of semantic relationships within a literary text, thus enabling a more systematic construction of meaning.

Beyond studies that utilize CA in particular, the broader discipline of stylistics has a rich tradition of employing systematic linguistic analysis to demystify authorial technique. This is in keeping with Gugin's (2008) call for an empirical stylistics based on close textual analysis to uncover how literary language works. Similarly, researchers have used specific linguistic approaches to characterize authorial style. Tarrayo (2020), for instance, used lexical and syntactic analysis to analyze the emotional impact created in flash fiction, while Zhao (2012) used a corpus-assisted methodology to identify the unique parallel structures that define Virginia Woolf's writing. These works highlight the value of using formal methods to transition from a general appreciation of style to a specific account of its construction. Other research has concentrated on the impact of specific devices, such as stylistic foregrounding in poetry, to demonstrate how figures of speech, including metaphor and symbolism, engage readers and convey the author's message (Abro, 2023). This principle is directly applicable to D.H. Lawrence, whose prose is rich with such devices. Collectively, these empirical studies set a strong precedent for using formal, text-based linguistic methods to provide objective evidence for stylistic claims.

Gap in the Literature

Despite the valuable applications of systematic stylistic methods, a specific gap remains in the critical scholarship on *Sons and Lovers*. While there is a rich body of work exploring the novel from psychological and thematic perspectives, these studies often overlook a rigorous, linguistically-based analysis of *how* Lawrence's stylistic choices construct the very effects they describe. This methodological gap becomes particularly apparent when examining the extensive critical work focused on the novel's psychological complexities. For instance, studies on character trauma (Korucu, 2018) and Oedipal dynamics (Matroud, 2024) provide deep psychoanalytic readings but do so without a detailed investigation of the specific lexical and semantic patterns Lawrence uses to portray these internal states. An integrated semantico-stylistic approach, as proposed here, can bridge this divide by elucidating precisely how the author's language reflects and builds these psychological tensions.

In addition, existing literary analyses of Lawrence's work, even when they touch upon stylistic elements, often lack a systematic methodology. Studies of symbolism (Zhong & Chen, 2024) and metaphor (Mkhitarian, 2008) in *Sons and Lovers* offer valuable thematic insights but fail to use a formal semantic framework to analyze how these figures derive their meaning and power from the surrounding lexical environment. There is a significant lack of research that utilizes a replicable model like CA to formally characterize the authorial style of Lawrence. This study sought to fill this gap by applying Leech's (1981) CA not simply to examine one feature, but to show how this semantic tool can be utilized for a broader stylistic purpose: to make an objective, unbiased description of authorial style, and formally explain the creation of one of the novel's most defining traits—the profound and evolving relationship between character consciousness and the fictional world.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

This study was guided by the following research questions, which focus on evaluating the synergy between semantics and stylistics as an analytical paradigm for understanding authorial technique:

RQ1. How can the integration of a formal semantic model, specifically Leech's (1981) CA, enhance the objectivity and rigor of a stylistic analysis of authorial style in D.H. Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers*?

RQ2. To what extent can a semantico-stylistic methodology provide a systematic and non-biased characterization of the authorial strategies Lawrence employs to construct and modulate the relationship between his characters and their habitat throughout the novel's narrative arc?

RQ3. How effective is a componential, feature-based approach in moving beyond impressionistic criticism to provide verifiable, text-based evidence for the stylistic choices that underpin the psychological and thematic depth of the novel?

Ho1. Stylistics can function as an efficient and reliable domain for verifying claims about authorial technique. Its effectiveness is significantly enhanced when it is systematically combined with a formal linguistic framework, such as the semantic model of CA.

Ho2. The application of Leech's (1981) CA to the lexical choices in *Sons and Lovers* will reveal consistent and quantifiable patterns in Lawrence's writing, allowing for an objective and non-biased characterization of his authorial style in representing character-habitat dynamics.

Ho3. The componential, feature-based analysis of the novel's descriptive language will furnish concrete, replicable evidence for the stylistic effects achieved by Lawrence, thereby demonstrating its utility as a tool for grounding literary interpretation in formal linguistic features.

Methodology

Research Design

This study utilized a mixed-methods research design, integrating quantitative analysis derived from componential feature counts with a guiding qualitative interpretation. The rationale for this design was to leverage a formal linguistic model to produce objective, quantifiable data that could then serve as a robust foundation for a nuanced stylistic analysis. The approach aimed to characterize D.H. Lawrence's authorial style, particularly his technique for interweaving character psychology and environmental description, moving beyond impressionistic assertions.

Structured as a descriptive and analytical case study, the research centered on the novel *Sons and Lovers*. To examine stylistic development, the novel was divided into its five primary plot stages: Exposition, Rising Action, Climax, Falling Action, and Resolution. This structure allowed for tracking the consistency and modulation of Lawrence's stylistic choices. Within each stage, the analysis focused on selected quotations with richly descriptive language, which introduced the internal state of a principal character alongside their surroundings. The core of the design was to apply a formal semantic model to these passages to generate compatibility scores, which then supported an overall qualitative assessment of Lawrence's authorial technique.

Corpus of the Study

The primary corpus for this investigation consisted of D.H. Lawrence's novel *Sons and Lovers* (1913). A standard scholarly edition of the work was used to ensure textual accuracy and reliability. As CA is a micro-analytic and detailed procedure, the research did not analyze the entire novel exhaustively. Instead, the analysis was performed on a systematically selected set of representative quotations from each of the five plot phases. The criteria for selecting these quotations were threefold: first, they had to contain a vivid depiction of a main character's internal life; second, they needed to provide a simultaneous and detailed description of that character's immediate environment; and third, they required a sufficient density of content words (nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs) that were amenable to semantic feature analysis.

Model of Analysis

The analytical framework for this study was Geoffrey Leech's (1981) model of CA, as detailed in his work *Semantics: The Study of Meaning*. This model posits that the meaning of a word can be systematically decomposed into a set of minimal, binary distinctive features (e.g., +ADULT, -MALE). For the purposes of this study, these foundational features were adapted and expanded to capture the specific semantic domains relevant to the novel's content. This involved creating feature sets applicable to characters' affective states (e.g., [+HAPPY], [-PEACEFUL]), psychological conditions ([+CONFIDENT], [-SECURE]), and the qualities of their environments ([+BRIGHT], [-WARM], [+ISOLATED]). The binary structure of Leech's model was crucial as it provided a formal and consistent basis for comparing the semantic content of words used to describe characters with those used to describe their surroundings, thereby enabling an objective assessment of their logical compatibility.

Data Collection Procedures

The collection of data followed a systematic, multi-stage procedure to ensure relevance and consistency. The initial step involved a thorough reading of the novel, *Sons and Lovers*, to establish its primary plot phases and to earmark narrative segments that featured significant character-habitat interactions. From these identified segments, representative quotations were purposefully selected. The selection was guided by the criteria established in the research design, ensuring each chosen passage offered a rich source of descriptive language for both the character's internal state and their external environment. The final step in the collection process was the identification of the key content words (nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs) within these quotations. This process yielded the specific lexical dataset that would be the subject of the semantic analysis.

Data Analysis Procedures

The analysis of the collected data began with the systematic application of Leech's (1981) CA model. For each content word identified during the data collection phase, a set of relevant binary semantic features was assigned. For example, a character's "misery" was analyzed into features such as [-HAPPY] and [-HOPEFUL], while a "dank" room was assigned features like [-BRIGHT] and [-WARM].

Following this feature assignment, the quantification of 'logical compatibility' was performed. For each quotation, the set of semantic features describing the character's state was systematically compared with the set of features describing their habitat. A compatibility score, expressed as a percentage, was then calculated for each character-habitat pairing. This ratio was derived by dividing the number of congruent or logically equivalent feature pairs by the total number of features considered for the habitat, then multiplying by 100. These individual scores were then aggregated to generate average compatibility ratings for each major character across the five plot stages. Finally, these quantitative results were subjected to a qualitative interpretation that explained what these patterns revealed about Lawrence's stylistic technique and his approach to characterization throughout the narrative arc.

Results

Results for RQ1: Enhancing Objectivity and Rigor through Formal Analysis

The first research question sought to determine how integrating Leech's (1981) CA could enhance the objectivity and rigor of a stylistic analysis of authorial style. The findings indicate that the model was highly effective in this regard by transforming the analytical process from a purely interpretive exercise into a structured and replicable procedure. The core strength of the CA model was its demand for explicit, feature-based definitions of lexical meaning. This forced a move away from vague, impressionistic statements (e.g., "the character is unhappy") towards a precise, granular analysis of the semantic components that construct that state (e.g., [-HAPPY], [-HOPEFUL], [+ALONE]).

This systematic process of semantic deconstruction provided a transparent and verifiable pathway from textual data to stylistic conclusion. Table 1 illustrates this rigorous procedure with a representative example from the novel's climax, where Paul's internal conflict is analyzed.

Table 1

Illustrative Application of the CA Procedure

Element Analyzed	Lexical Item(s) from Text	Semantic Features Assigned
Character State (Paul)	"torture," "violent conflict," "internecine battle"	[+AGITATED], [-PEACEFUL], [+DIVIDED], [+IMPRISONED]
Habitat (Internal)	"His consciousness seemed to split"	[+FRAGMENTED], [-UNIFIED], [+CONFLICTED]
Compatibility Logic	High congruence is observed. The character's state ([+DIVIDED], [+AGITATED]) is a direct reflection of the habitat of his "split" consciousness ([+FRAGMENTED], [+CONFLICTED]). The method formally links psychological state to its linguistic representation.	

As demonstrated in Table 1, the methodology provides a formal mechanism for linking the language used to describe a character's internal state with the language describing their metaphorical "habitat" (in this case, his own consciousness). By breaking down complex descriptions into comparable semantic units, the analysis becomes less about the analyst's intuition and more about the evidence present in the lexicon. This formal process inherently enhances rigor, as the steps and the resulting claims are open to scrutiny and can be replicated by other researchers following the same procedure, thereby increasing the objectivity of the stylistic analysis.

Results for RQ2: Systematic Characterization of Authorial Strategy

The second research question addressed the extent to which a semantico-stylistic methodology could provide a systematic and non-biased characterization of Lawrence's authorial strategies across the narrative arc. The quantitative data generated from the compatibility scores revealed clear patterns and modulations in Lawrence's style, demonstrating that the methodology was highly effective in tracking authorial technique over time. The aggregated scores, summarized in Table 2, show a distinct narrative rhythm in the way Lawrence aligns or misaligns his characters

with their environments. The analysis was intentionally focused on characters who were central to the narrative and for whom sufficient descriptive data was available in that specific plot phase.

Table 2

Average Logical Compatibility Scores (%) per Plot Phase

Character	Phase Exposition	1: Phase Action	2: Rising Phase Climax	3: Phase Action	4: Falling Phase Resolution	5:
Mrs. Morel	62.96%	66.66%	82.14%	—	—	
Mr. Morel	50.00%	76.00%	—	—	—	
William	—	80.76%	—	—	—	
Paul Morel	—	84.61%	82.14%	70.96%	76.92%	

Note: The em dash (—) indicates that a character was not a central focus of the narrative during that plot phase, and thus an analysis was not applicable or conducted.

The data in Table 2 provide a systematic, high-level overview of Lawrence’s stylistic strategy. A notable pattern is the overall increase in compatibility scores as the novel progresses from the Exposition to the Climax. For instance, Mrs. Morel’s compatibility score rises from 63% to 82%, while Paul’s scores are consistently high during the novel’s central emotional turmoil (85% and 82%). This quantitative trend supports the qualitative observation that as the characters’ internal struggles intensify, Lawrence forges an ever-tighter semantic bond between their psychology and their surroundings to heighten the dramatic effect.

Furthermore, the methodology offers a non-biased characterization by revealing contrasts. Mr. Morel’s relatively low score in the Exposition (50%) formally captures his initial alienation and dissonance within the family home, a key thematic point. The consistently high scores for Paul, the novel’s autobiographical center, provide objective evidence for his profound sensitivity and immersion in his world. By applying a consistent analytical procedure across the entire narrative, the methodology avoids the critical pitfall of “cherry-picking” examples and instead provides a systematic characterization of Lawrence’s deliberate and evolving authorial strategy.

Results for RQ3: Providing Verifiable Evidence for Literary Interpretation

The third research question asked how effective a componential, feature-based approach is in providing verifiable, text-based evidence for interpretations of the novel’s psychological and thematic depth. The findings confirm that the methodology is highly effective in this capacity, acting as a crucial bridge between linguistic detail and literary meaning. By isolating specific semantic features, the analysis provided concrete evidence for long-standing critical interpretations of the characters’ psychological states, particularly those of Paul Morel.

For example, a central theme in *Sons and Lovers* is Paul’s internal paralysis and his inability to commit to a romantic relationship, often attributed psychoanalytically to his unresolved Oedipal attachment to his mother. The semantico-stylistic analysis provided direct lexical evidence for this internal conflict. When with Miriam, descriptions of Paul consistently yielded contradictory semantic features. In the same passages, he was analyzed as [+FASCINATED] and [+ROMANTIC], yet simultaneously [+ANXIOUS], [+CAPTIVE], and [+IMPRISONED]. This formal identification of opposing features within the same descriptive context is not merely an impression; it is verifiable linguistic evidence of his divided self. The feature [+IMPRISONED]

linguistically anchors the psychological interpretation of his feeling trapped by Miriam's spiritual love, which he cannot fully reciprocate due to his bond with his mother.

Similarly, following his mother's death, Paul's state of despair and loss of identity is a key thematic point. The CA model captured this by revealing a consistent pairing of character-state features like [+LOST], [+ALONE], and [+DEFEATED] with habitat features such as [+EMPTY], [+DARK], and [-MEANINGFUL]. This systematic correlation provides text-based validation for the interpretation that his identity was so entwined with his mother that her absence renders his entire world semantically—and therefore psychologically—void. In this way, the feature-based approach successfully moves beyond impressionistic criticism by grounding complex thematic and psychological readings in the verifiable, systematic patterning of the author's lexical choices.

Summary of Results

In summary, the results of this study affirmed the efficacy of the integrated semantico-stylistic methodology. The application of Leech's CA proved successful in enhancing the objectivity and rigor of the analysis by formalizing the process of semantic deconstruction (RQ1). The quantitative outputs provided a systematic and non-biased characterization of D.H. Lawrence's authorial strategies, revealing a clear modulation of character-habitat compatibility that aligns with the novel's narrative and thematic development (RQ2). Finally, the feature-based approach was highly effective in furnishing concrete, verifiable linguistic evidence to support and deepen existing psychological and thematic interpretations of the novel, thereby successfully bridging the gap between formal analysis and literary criticism (RQ3).

Discussion

The findings of this study offer significant insights into the methodological synergy between semantics and stylistics, and what this partnership reveals about D.H. Lawrence's authorial craft. The successful application of Leech's (1981) CA not only confirmed the study's hypotheses but also highlighted the potential for formal linguistic models to bring a new level of objectivity and depth to literary criticism. The following discussion explores the implications of these results in relation to each of the guiding research hypotheses.

Discussion Related to the First Research Hypothesis

The first hypothesis posited that the effectiveness of stylistics as a domain for verifying claims about authorial technique is significantly enhanced when combined with a formal linguistic framework like CA. The results of this study strongly support this assertion. The analytical procedure moved the investigation of Lawrence's style from a reliance on intuitive or impressionistic readings toward a structured, evidence-based process. This is consistent with the foundational goal of stylistics to establish a principled connection between linguistic form and artistic function (Simpson, 2004; Leech & Short, 2007). By requiring descriptive terms like "conflict" or "harmony" to be deconstructed into explicit, binary semantic features (e.g., [+AGITATED], [-PEACEFUL]), the CA model provided the systematicity necessary for a more rigorous analysis.

This process directly addresses the call for an empirical basis in stylistic research, an argument made by scholars like Gugin (2008), who advocates for a stylistics grounded on tangible textual evidence. The CA framework served as the very mechanism for this grounding. For example, rather than simply remarking on Mr. Morel's alienation, the model allows the analyst to

formally demonstrate a quantifiable lack of semantic congruence between the lexical items describing him and his domestic environment. The true “enhancement” to the stylistic analysis, therefore, was the introduction of a replicable methodology. While a traditional stylistic reading might correctly identify the thematic dissonance, the integrated semantico-stylistic approach demonstrates *how* this dissonance is lexically constructed, feature by feature. This formal process makes the analytical claims transparent and verifiable, thus confirming the hypothesis that the integration of a semantic model significantly enhances the objectivity and reliability of a stylistic study.

Discussion Related to the Second Research Hypothesis

The second hypothesis predicted that applying CA to the lexical choices in *Sons and Lovers* would reveal consistent, quantifiable patterns, leading to an objective characterization of Lawrence’s authorial strategy. The findings confirmed this hypothesis by successfully generating numerical data (as seen in Table 2) that mapped a clear and dynamic stylistic path through the novel’s plot. The compatibility scores were not coincidental; they revealed a systematic modulation of the character-habitat relationship that paralleled the narrative’s dramatic arc. The quantifiable increase in semantic congruence for characters like Paul and Mrs. Morel as the novel approached its climax provides objective evidence of Lawrence’s technique of building emotional tension by tightening the relationship between a character’s inner world and their external reality.

This systematic characterization is a valuable addition to purely thematic or psychological analyses of the novel. While analyses of symbolism (Zhong & Chen, 2024) or trauma (Korucu, 2018) are essential for understanding *what* the novel means, the semantico-stylistic analysis used here indicates *how* Lawrence uses the fundamental constituents of language to achieve these themes. The statistical patterns provided an objective view, revealing, for instance, that Paul Morel’s high compatibility ratings are a consistent stylistic feature, which formally reflects his celebrated sensitivity. This method moves beyond general statements about style and provides a detailed, data-driven portrait of Lawrence’s technique. The “atomization of meaning” at the core of CA (Carter, 1998, p. 18) proved to be an effective tool for the characterization of authorial craft, enabling an objective account of how Lawrence systematically employs lexical-semantic resources in creating his narrative.

Discussion Related to the Third Research Hypothesis

The third hypothesis proposed that a componential, feature-based analysis would yield concrete, replicable evidence for the novel’s stylistic effects, thereby grounding literary interpretation in formal linguistic features. The results strongly validated this claim. The study successfully demonstrated that the novel’s abstract psychological and thematic material is anchored in tangible lexical patterns. The most compelling evidence for this was found in the analysis of Paul Morel’s inner conflict, a major focus of critical interpretations of the novel (Matroud, 2024). Traditional psychoanalytic methods acknowledge his paralysis and inner division, but the CA approach provided the lexical “receipts” for these claims. By formally identifying contradictory semantic features such as [+ROMANTIC] and [+IMPRISONED] co-existing in the descriptions of Paul’s relationships, the analysis provided verifiable evidence of his divided consciousness.

This process provides the critical link often missing from thematic and psychological analyses. It does not refute the interpretations of scholars like Matroud (2024) or Korucu (2018), but rather strengthens them by showing how Lawrence’s specific word choices are the textual

foundation for these complex psychological portraits. Similarly, while other research has noted the use of metaphor and symbolism in Lawrence's work (Mkhitarian, 2008; Abro, 2023), the feature-based method used here offers a more granular explanation of how these devices function semantically. It reveals the underlying components of meaning that allow a symbol or metaphor to resonate within its context. Ultimately, the method proved its value as a tool for "grounding" interpretation. The abstract concept of Paul's grief, for example, was grounded in the concrete, replicable evidence of a lexical environment saturated with features like [+EMPTY], [+DARK], and [-MEANINGFUL]. This demonstrates the power of a semantico-stylistic approach to make literary analysis more robust by anchoring interpretive insights in the formal, verifiable structure of the text itself.

Conclusion

This study set out to demonstrate the value of integrating a formal semantic model, namely Leech's (1981) CA, into the stylistic study of authorial craft. Through a focused case study of D.H. Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers*, the research has succeeded in showing that a semantico-stylistic methodology provides a powerful framework for moving beyond impressionistic criticism toward a more objective, rigorous, and textually-based characterization of authorial style. The research established that the application of CA makes it possible to systematically deconstruct and quantify the intricate relationship between a character's inner life and their surroundings, a masterful hallmark of Lawrence's narrative technique. The analysis revealed consistent and dynamic patterns in Lawrence's lexical choices, yielding empirical evidence that reinforces and deepens existing thematic and psychological interpretations of the novel. By making the analytical process transparent and replicable, this integrated methodology not only strengthens claims about Lawrence's specific techniques but also validates the broad hypothesis that the synergy between linguistics and literary studies yields a deeper and more robust understanding of the literary text. Ultimately, this research confirms that a systematic, feature-based analysis is a valuable tool in the stylistician's toolbox, allowing interpretive claims to be anchored in the verifiable, systematic patterns of the writer's language.

Implications of the Study

The implications of this study span the interconnected fields of stylistic methodology, literary criticism, and pedagogy. Methodologically, the research serves as a proof of concept for the targeted application of semantic tools to study specific stylistic features within extended literary narratives. It illustrates the value of a mixed-methods approach in which quantitative data derived from linguistic analysis can inform and be tempered by qualitative interpretation, thereby making the empirical grounding of stylistics more robust. The framework employed here to analyze character-habitat dynamics could be adapted and applied to the works of other authors or genres, facilitating comparative stylistic investigations into how different writers construct this fundamental narrative relationship.

For literary criticism, especially Lawrentian scholarship, this research provides a new perspective through which to appreciate the author's command of language. It provides a formal, linguistic basis for established critical perceptions about the psychological richness and emotional depth in his work. By shifting focus from *what* Lawrence accomplishes to *how* he accomplishes it at a lexical-semantic level, the study contributes a more nuanced appreciation of his authorial technique, especially his ability to articulate the profound influence of environment on human consciousness.

Pedagogically, the systematic, feature-based method demonstrated here can be a valuable asset in the classroom. It provides students of literature and linguistics with a transparent, systematic method for analyzing complex descriptive language. This can help to demystify literary interpretation and encourage students to develop a more analytical, evidence-based approach to texts by training them to see how specific word choices develop character, build atmosphere, and drive thematic meaning.

Limitations of the Study

Despite its contributions, this research is subject to certain inherent limitations which must be acknowledged. First, the foundational model of CA, specifically Leech's (1981) binary system, necessitates a degree of semantic reductionism. The rich, evocative, and often ambiguous nature of literary language cannot be fully captured by discrete [+/-] features without some loss of connotational nuance. The assignment of these features, while guided by systematic principles, still involves an interpretive element; therefore, perfect objectivity remains an ideal rather than an absolute reality.

Second, the study's focus was deliberately delimited to the lexical-semantic level. Consequently, other critical linguistic levels that contribute to the overall stylistic effect—such as complex syntactic structures, narrative point of view, or the prosodic qualities implied within dialogue—were not systematically analyzed. These aspects certainly play a role in the construction of character-habitat dynamics but fall outside the purview of the CA model as applied here.

Third, the analysis was based on a selection of representative quotations rather than an exhaustive, corpus-wide analysis of the novel. While this selection was purposeful and aimed at viewing key moments, the findings are derived from a sample of the text. A comprehensive, corpus-based application would be required to make definitive statistical inferences about the novel as a whole. Finally, this study was designed to describe the stylistic construction of compatibility by the author within the text and did not venture into empirical reader-response research to investigate how actual readers perceive or process these linguistic cues.

Suggestions for Further Research

The findings and limitations of this study point to several promising avenues for future research in stylistics and literary linguistics. The methodological framework developed here for character-habitat analysis could be applied to a broader range of literary works to enable comparative analyses across authors, genres, and historical periods. Such work would help to assess the universality of this stylistic device and the effectiveness of the CA model for different linguistic tasks.

Future research could also productively explore the integration of CA with other complementary analytical tools. For instance, a corpus linguistics approach could first be used to statistically identify significant keywords or collocations associated with specific characters or settings. These empirically identified lexical items could then be subjected to a more intensive CA, thereby enhancing the representativeness and reliability of the analysis.

There also exists potential for refining the analytical model itself. Researchers might investigate the utility of using scalar features (which can measure degrees of a quality) instead of a strict binary system, or develop more domain-specific feature sets that are better suited to recurring emotional or environmental archetypes in literature. Finally, a particularly promising area of investigation would be to bridge this type of textual analysis with cognitive stylistics or psycholinguistics. Empirical studies that investigate how actual readers process the lexical features

identified through CA could cast valuable light on the cognitive reality of stylistic effects, creating a more holistic understanding of the interrelation between the text, the author, and the reader.

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