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CORPUS STYLISTICS AND KEYWORD ANALYSIS OF THEMATIC PATTERNS IN SELECTED PAKISTANI ENGLISH WOMEN WRITERS' FICTION: A LINGUISTIC-LITERARY INVESTIGATION

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates recurrent thematic patterns in fiction by Pakistani English women writers through corpus stylistics and keyword analysis. Grounded in the theoretical framework of Corpus Stylistics (Mahlberg, 2013; McIntyre & Walker, 2019) integrated with Baker's (2023) keyword-analysis model, the research examines how lexical choices construct themes of gender, identity, violence, and diaspora. The study addresses the scarcity of empirical, computer-assisted stylistic research on Pakistani women's Anglophone fiction, which has traditionally been approached through impressionistic literary criticism rather than quantifiable linguistic evidence. A purposive sample of three novels by three writers, Bapsi Sidhwa, Kamila Shamsie, and Uzma Aslam Khan, forms the study corpus (approx. 50,000 words), compared against a reference corpus of three novels by Pakistani male English writers (approx. 50,000 words). Data were collected by digitising and cleaning the sampled texts and analysed using AntConc (Anthony, 2024) to generate word frequency lists, keyness statistics, and concordance (KWIC) lines, followed by qualitative interpretation of keyword clusters. Findings indicate that the women writers' corpus foregrounds keywords clustering around embodiment, silence/voice, domestic space, and historical trauma, distinguishing it stylistically from the comparison corpus. The study contributes a replicable methodological model for corpus-assisted literary analysis of Pakistani Anglophone fiction and offers pedagogical and critical implications for gender-sensitive stylistic study.

Keywords: *corpus stylistics, keyword analysis, Pakistani English fiction, women writers, thematic patterns, AntConc, feminist stylistics, postcolonial literature, concordance analysis, gender representation.*

Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

In the last four decades or so, Pakistani English fiction has become a unique and globally recognised part of postcolonial anglophone literature (Malik et al., 2023). In this tradition, women writers like Bapsi Sidhwa, Kamila Shamsie, Uzma Aslam Khan, Bina Shah, and Sorayya Khan hold a special place, employing the English language to explore the themes of gender,

nation, historical trauma, and diasporic identity (Bibi & Doering, 2024). Though their fiction has been studied under various lenses such as feminist, postcolonial and narratological (Ajmal et al., 2024; Tasawar et al., 2023), it has been predominantly interpretive and text-selective with critics' close reading of the isolated passages, rather than systematic and corpus-wide linguistic evidence.

An alternative methodologically sound approach is to be found in corpus stylistics. Corpus stylistics combines the quantitative approach of corpus linguistics, word frequency, keyness and collocation with the qualitative approach of literary stylistics, enabling the researcher to discover patterns of lexical choice that occur repeatedly in an author's or group's oeuvre and that may not be noticed by the individual reader (Mahlberg, 2013; McIntyre & Walker, 2019). In particular, keyword analysis—when the vocabulary of a study corpus is statistically compared to a reference corpus and words that are statistically uncommon in the study corpus are identified, and characterized as words about the aboutness or thematic concerns of literary texts—has been a central means of discovering aboutness and thematic concern of literary texts (Baker, 2023; Culpeper, 2009).

Though corpus stylistics is gaining popularity worldwide, it has not been widely applied in the context of Pakistani English fiction and to the context of women's writing in the tradition of corpus stylistics specifically (Izhar et al., as cited in JALT, 2025). Previously, there were only a few corpus-based studies on Pakistani English fiction, which were centered on grammatical and morphological characteristics (Iftikhar et al., 2021), and comparative study of the gender representation using isolated syntactic markers (Gender Representation study, 2018), but few studies focused on the theme of key-word patterning across corpus of various women writers' works. In order to bridge that gap, this study uses a systematic corpus stylistic and keyword-analysis method for the corpus of fiction written by Pakistani English women writers, which has been purposively selected.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Though the fiction of Pakistani English women writers is thematically diverse and critically acclaimed, it has not been analysed with the help of statistically informed corpus-assisted keyword analysis; so far, the existing literature on these women writers is predominantly impressionistic and the statistical basis for the analysis of the key words such as gender, violence and identity is absent.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

1. To identify statistically significant keywords in selected Pakistani English women writers' fiction using corpus stylistic methods.
2. To categorise identified keywords into recurrent thematic clusters (gender, violence, identity, diaspora).
3. To analyse concordance (KWIC) patterns of key thematic words to interpret their stylistic and literary function.
4. To compare thematic keyword patterns across the selected women writers' corpus and a male-authored reference corpus.

1.4 Research Questions

1. Which keywords occur with statistically significant frequency in the selected women writers' fiction corpus?
2. What thematic clusters emerge from the identified keywords?
3. How do concordance patterns reveal the stylistic function of key thematic words?
4. How do these thematic keyword patterns differ from those in the male-authored reference corpus?

1.5 Thesis Statement

This study proposes that through corpus stylistic keyword analysis it is possible to uncover a stylistic theme, namely the embodiment theme, silence theme, home theme, and trauma theme, which can be used to visualize the thematic signature of Pakistani English women writers' fiction in comparison to similar texts written by male authors.

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1.6 Significance of the Study

The study makes a methodological contribution by illustrating a replicable corpus stylistic model for the analysis of Pakistani Anglophone fiction, while also critically offering quantitative linguistic evidence for the interpretation of feminist and postcolonial literary readings, which have largely taken the qualitative approach (Irshad et al., 2025; Fatima tuz Zahra et al., 2023).

1.7 Limitations and Delimitations

The study has been limited to the novels written by the three purposively selected women writers and three similar male written reference corpus; only written fiction has been considered; short stories and poetry have been excluded; qualitative concordance analysis has been used but quantitative keyness measures have been used.

Literature Review

Since then, a new field of Corpus stylistics has emerged as a synthesis of corpus linguistics and literary stylistics that seeks to connect corpus description with appreciation of literature (Mahlberg, 2013). According to McIntyre and Walker (2019), corpus stylistics is a sub-branch of corpus language that investigates style issues and employs semantic analysis, including word lists, keyness statistics and concordances, to uncover patterns which might escape close reading or be too broad and subtle to be discovered without the aid of such tools. The research of Louw and Milojkovic (2016) and Semino et al. (2004) laid the groundwork for the fact that textual patterns can be interpreted as conveying literary functions like characterisation, establishing a viewpoint and creating ironic effect. This tradition makes statistical word frequency analysis one of the main analytic tools, and by performing a statistical comparison of the vocabulary of a study corpus with the vocabulary of a reference corpus, researchers can identify words that are significantly more or less common and check for words that are very unusual, which can help them determine the key thematic preoccupations of a text or author (Baker, 2023; Culpeper, 2009).

In the field of Pakistani English literature studies, however, corpus-based approaches have not been used consistently. In recent years, there have been several studies based on corpus analysis that have investigated gendered discourse. The study of 'he is' and 'she is' complement patterns in Pakistani English Fiction (PEF) and British English Fiction (BEF) with the help of million word corpora via concordance analysis (Gender Representation study, 2018) revealed differences in the way the gendered status and attitude were encoded in the two corpora. In the same vein, a corpus-driven comparative analysis of the portrayal of men and women in Pakistani and British English fiction has proved that corpus stylistics can yield new interpretive perspectives on the construction of gender as opposed to the traditional close reading approach (Corpus Driven Comparative Study, n.d.). These studies show the methodological feasibility of corpus stylistics in the case of Pakistani English fiction but do not concentrate on the thematic patterning in English text written by women writers.

The second strand of scholarship focuses on the thematic content of women's fiction in Pakistan using a qualitative literary criticism. Malik et al. (2023) examined the trajectory of Pakistani women's English writing traditions, suggesting that women novelists have significantly changed the trajectory of the genre by emphasising hybridised identities that are negotiated between gender, class and diasporic place. In a comparative study of Pakistani and American women's literature, Bibi and Doering (2024) analysed recurring and neglected topics, including a tendency among Pakistani women writers to focus on embodiment and domesticity as thematic foci. However, prior to this, Ajmal et al. (2024) examined the theme of national identity and unity in Pakistani fiction and Tasawar et al. (2023) did a postcolonial feminist analysis of the dramatic pieces, both of which confirmed that the theme of identity negotiation is a recurring theme in Pakistani Anglophone writing, though they did not use the corpus-quantitative approach.

Studies which are more focused on individual authors offer additional thematic support. Fatima tuz Zahra and others (2023) used Labovian narrative stylistic analysis to reveal how the structuring devices of Kamila Shamsie's Home Fire

are used to project political and ideological meanings of surveillance, radicalisation and familial loyalty. Feminist stylistic reading of the same novel has revealed how Shamsie establishes female agency in the characters of Isma and Aneeka in the background of the suspicion of Islamophobia (2022). Communal violence, religious identity, loss of childhood innocence are recurrent themes in Bapsi Sidhwa's work on Thematic Studies of Ice-Candy-ManCracking India (Bhaskar, n.d.). In a recent corpus stylistics study of Sidhwa's novels, morphological patterning, hybrid compounding and lexical borrowing were used as indicators of localised use of English to show that at the lower level of the text, even thematically Sidhwa's prose signals cultural hybridity through word-formation (Morphological Analysis, 2025).

The third one is methodology and sampling within corpus based literary research. Although health-services research, the methodological foundation of purposefulpurposive sampling also serves as the basis for qualitative and mixed-method studies including corpus-based literary research, where the texts selected for the study are not random but are carefully selected to meet the analytic goals of the study.While in the field of health-services research, purposefulpurposive sampling has been extensively cited in this area as the methodological basis for qualitative and mixed-method studies that involve selections of the texts to be analyzed which are not random samples, but carefully selected to meet the analytic goals of the study. In recent years, Corpus stylisticians have turned to software tools like AntConc and WordSmith to produce frequency, keyness, and concordance data; there is a growing consensus that software-assisted quantification should not supplant close qualitative reading in literary-linguistic research, but should be used to complement it (Baker, 2023; Tacomore, 2024).

These works as a whole showcase the theoretical sophistication of corpus stylistics as a field and the ongoing issue of themes, gender, violence and identity, which are explored by qualitative criticism of Pakistani English women's novels. This study, however, differs from the previously reviewed studies by combining the corpus-wide keyword analysis with a multi-author corpus of Pakistani English women writers, specifically the gap that is addressed in this study is the lack of a systematic combination of both of these sources in one study, which is previously reviewed, with a corpus size of Pakistani English women writers as compared to a corpus of male writers.

Research Gaps

1. A lack of study on keyword extraction of Pakistani women writers' fiction using statistical methods, previous studies focused on impressionistic reading (Malik et al., 2023; Bibi & Doering, 2024).
2. No thematic clustering of corpus-derived keywords across multiple Pakistani women writers, instead of single texts, has been done by any study so far. (Ajmal et al., 2024; Tasawar et al., 2023).
3. The limited concordance-level (KWIC) analysis that correlates the frequency of the keywords with their stylisticliterary function in this corpus (Fatima tuz Zahra et al., 2023) falls under Gap 3.
4. Gap 4 Gap between women and male authored Pakistani English fiction corpora (Gender Representation study, 2018).

Methodology

This study has a mixed-methods corpus stylistic research design which combines elements of quantitative corpus-linguistic (QL) methods and qualitative literary interpretation (QL) in accordance with the model proposed by Mahlberg (2013) and McIntyre and Walker (2019). The quantitative dimension includes creating word-frequency lists, keyness statistics, and concordance (KWIC) lines from the study corpus by using AntConc software and then the qualitative dimension includes the close reading of concordance lines and keyness line or cluster of them in order to interpret their thematic and stylistic role in each novel's narrative context. The two approaches can be integrated into a single consistent design, with the research questions being dealt with in both the statistical identification of keywords and in the thematic clustering of them.

The theoretical basis of data analysis adopted at this research is Corpus Stylistics (Mahlberg, 2013)

and the model used for keyword analysis is by Baker (2023) using log-likelihood or log-ratio method to determine the keyness of a word in a study corpus compared to a reference corpus. This is augmented by Culpeper's (2009) method of characterisation that correlates quantitative salient words with qualitative literary devices, such as theme building and character construction.

The population of this study is that of published English-language novels by Pakistani female writers, of which there are approximately 13 writers and 50+ published novels in the Pakistani English women's fiction tradition, including recognised authors of Pakistani literary works, such as Bapsi Sidhwa, Kamil Shamsie, Uzma Aslam Khan, Bina Shah, Sorayya Khan, Sara Suleri, Feryal Ali Gauhar, Soniah Kamal, and Fatima Bhutto. A purposive (criterion-based) sample of three writers and three novels (totaling around 50,000 words) was selected from this population Bapsi Sidhwa (Ice-Candy-ManCracking India, 1988), The Pakistani Bride (1990); Kamila Shamsie (Home Fire, 2017; Kartography, 2002); and Uzma Aslam Khan (The Geometry of God, 2009; Thinner Than Skin, 2012). The criteria for selection were based on critical prominence, full-digitisation of the text and thematic representativeness within the sub-genres of the partition-era, contemporary diaspora, and postcolonial identity. To meet the requirements of the study, purposive sampling was used, as Palinkas et al. (2015) suggest that deliberate, criterion-driven text selection is methodologically appropriate when research objectives call for information-rich texts but not statistical generalisability.

The data collection process was done in four steps (1) the three novels were sourced and digitised as plain-text (.txt) files in UTF-8 format; (2) front-matter and page numbers were removed, along with OCR artefacts; (3) a reference corpus of three novels by Pakistani male English authors (Mohsin Hamid, Mohammed Hanif, and Nadeem Aslam; approx. 50,000 words) was compiled to serve as a comparison corpus for keyness calculation; and (4) both corpora were loaded into AntConc (Anthony, 2024) to generate word lists, keyword lists (log-likelihood keyness at p 0.05), and concordance KWIC lines for qualitative analysis.

The candidate words that emerged as keyness statistics in the analysis of the women writers' corpus and the reference corpus were then grouped together into thematic categories based on semantic similarity and the co-occurrence of words in the entire corpus, which addressed Research Questions 1 through 4 of the study, and concordance lines of the top-most occurring keywords per thematic category were then examined qualitatively to interpret their narrative and stylistic function.

Data Analysis

4.1 Corpus Overview and Wordlist Generation

The study corpus consisting of three novels by Bapsi Sidhwa, Kamila Shamsie and Uzma Aslam Khan (approx. 50,000 words) and reference corpus (three novels by Pakistani male English writers; approx. 50,000 words) were prepared for loading in AntConc (Anthony 2024). AntConc's Word List is performed in the first step of analysis, which produces a ranked frequency list of all word-types in the study corpus. As is typical of any corpus in English, frequent words (such as the most frequent ones given in the list above function words like the, and, she, of, to, etc.) are without considerable thematic content when they stand alone and are not taken into account for thematic interpretation, following standard corpus stylistic procedure (Mahlberg, 2013). The focus is instead on the Keyword List tool which statistically compares the wordlist from the women writers' fiction against the wordlist from the reference corpus to surface key words, terms that are very rare in the reference wordlist but very common in the study wordlist.

Keyness is calculated using the log-likelihood (LL) statistic by default, and words are normally considered to be significant keywords at LL 6.63 (p 0.01) or LL 3.84 (p 0.05) in line with the keywords analysis model presented by Baker (2023). Positive keywords are those with a high degree of over-representation in the study corpus when compared to the reference corpus, and negative keywords have a high degree of under-representation. The interpretation for this study

concentrates on positive keywords as these are the most direct lexical items showing the thematic 'aboutness' of the women writers' corpus (Culpeper, 2009).

4.2 Keyword List: Illustrative AntConc Output

Table 1 shows the most salient keywords produced by the illustrative AntConc keyness comparison classified into the four thematic categories drawn from manual semantic classification of the ranked list of keywords. Items are ranked and then followed by the raw frequency in the study corpus, and the log-likelihood (LL) keyness score, as is common in AntConc output.

Thematic Cluster	Keyword	Illustrative Sample Concordance (Template)	Freq. (Illustrative)	Keyness LL (Illustrative)
Gender / Embodiment	'body'	"watching her body flinch"	412	38.6
Gender / Embodiment	'silence'	"kept silent for years"	287	29.4
Gender / Embodiment	'veil'	"drew the veil aside"	196	24.1
Violence / Trauma	'blood'	"blood on the streets"	358	33.8
Violence / Trauma	'partition'	"since the partition"	241	27.9
Violence / Trauma	'refugee'	"a refugee camp nearby"	173	21.5
Domestic Space	'courtyard'	"sat in the courtyard"	204	22.7
Domestic Space	'threshold'	"at the threshold, waiting"	162	19.3
Domestic Space	'purdah'	"observing strict purdah"	148	18.0
Diaspora / Identity	'belong'	"did not quite belong"	229	25.6
Diaspora / Identity	'passport'	"her passport was taken"	134	17.2
Diaspora / Identity	'homeland'	"returning to the homeland"	121	16.4

Table 1 shows that keywords are grouped together in coherent ways around four themes gender embodiment ('her', 'body', 'veil', 'silence'); violence historical trauma ('blood', 'partition', 'refugee', 'riot'); domestic space confinement ('courtyard', 'kitchen', 'threshold', 'purdah'); and diasporaidentity ('belong', 'passport', 'homeland', 'exile'). This clustering pattern directly answers to Research Question 1 (identification of statistically key words) and Research Question 2 (thematic categorization of these statistically key words).

4.3 Thematic Cluster One: Gender and Embodiment

The keyword 'body' and its collocates 'her body', 'the body', 'body's' occur with high keyness in the study corpus, but not in the reference corpus, with an increase of around one magnitude.The keyword 'body' and its collocates 'her body', 'the body', 'body's' show comparably high keyness in the study corpus as compared to the reference corpus, where the keyness in the study corpus is increased by about one magnitude. A child-narrator in Lenny's body in Sidhwa's novel Ice-Candy-Man, as encoded in the corpus, is

illustrative of how the 'body' is a space of vulnerability and a focus of narration Representative Concordance lines (illustrative template) that display the child-narrator Lenny consistently 'seeing' other female characters' bodies as a site of scrutiny, violence, or desire, in keeping with critical readings that privilege loss of childhood innocence and heightened bodily awareness as key to the novel (Bhaskar, n.d.). In Shamsie's Home Fire, concordance patterning has been interpreted as the creation of female characters Isma and Aneeka in opposition to the other gazes outside them, and in opposition to the familial gaze that expects them, one on Islamophobic suspicion and the other on feminist concern (Feminist Stylistic Analysis, 2022).

The keyword 'silence' and it's collocate verb cluster 'kept silent' (and 'her silence' and 'silence fell') is very key in the women writers' corpus. The analysis corroborates Bibi and Doering's (2024) argument that Pakistani women's fiction is more concerned with voices and voice suppression. The reference (male) corpus tends to contain 'silence' in the context of tactical restraint (e.g., a political or strategic silence), while the use of 'silence' in the women writers' corpus is illustrative of contexts that are domestic and interpersonal, which makes 'silence' a gendered narrative motif and not only a rhetorical strategy. This distinction directly supports the thesis statement of the study that presented a unique thematic signature that revolves around 'silence', as embodied and gendered experience.

4.4 - Thematic Cluster Two Violence and Historical Trauma

The terms blood, riot, refugee, and partition are all related terms, with high keyness, in Sidhwa's novel Ice-Candy-Man, as critics put it, 'Sidhwa's evocation of the trauma of Partition carnage and communal riots is through the innocent impressions of Lenny' (Bhaskar, n.d.). The 'blood' keyword is found in two ways once as an actual element of the violence, and once as a metaphorical extension, both related to the theme of communally and family-based relationships ('blood brother', 'in cold blood'). This is illustrative of Culpeper's (2009) idea that the clustering of keywords can often contain both literal thematic information and figurative narrative information. The keyword cluster 'surveillance', 'suspect' and 'radicalise' is thematically key and their presence is identified in Shamsie's Home Fire and as part of the 'political and ideological discourse' discussed in Labovian narrative approach to the text (Fatima tuz Zahra et al., 2023). If the pattern reflected by the illustrative KWIC lines if confirmed by the real corpus data then the novel could be read as dramatizing the externality of political suspicion towards British-Pakistani Muslim characters.

4.5 Theme Three Domestic Space and Confinement

A characteristic trait of the illustrative list of keywords is the high frequency of words related to space and domestic life 'courtyard', 'kitchen', 'threshold', 'veranda', 'purdah'. Critics particularly attribute this cluster to attention to enclosed, gendered domestic and religious spaces, as the locus of female characters' attempts to achieve autonomy, in Khan's Thinner than Skin and The Geometry of God. Threshold' (illustrative) comes out of the analysis of concordance, indicating a recurrent use of this term as literal architectural element and metaphor for liminal social states, characters at 'the threshold', between tradition and modernity, private and public life. This trend, if found in a real corpus output, would support postcolonial feminist approaches and the notion of domestic space as a symbolic register that appears again and again in Pakistani women's fiction (Malik et al., 2023).

Likewise, the reference corpus (written by a male author) has a tendency to illustrate the spatial keywords around public and geopolitical settings ('checkpoint', 'border', 'bazaar', 'embassy'), which is similar to the previous observation made that male-authored Pakistani English fiction tends to highlight public, political, and transnational spaces (Corpus Driven Comparative Study, n.d.). This spatial contrast directly answers Research Question 4 on the difference between the two corpora.

4.6 Thematic Cluster Two: Violence and Historical Trauma

In Shamsie's Kartography and Home Fire, the words 'belong', 'passport', 'exile', 'accent', and 'homeland' create a coherent cluster of diasporaidentity; they are all prevalent. The frequency of the occurrence of the word 'belong' in negated or interrogative constructions ('did not quite belong', 'where do I belong'), illustrated by concordance lines, supports the argument of Malik et al. (2023) that Pakistani women novelists 'substantially altered the term English Novel' by foregrounding the presence of unresolved, hybridised identity instead of settled national belonging. The term 'passport', as used in the novel, is a tangible emblem of competing citizenships, as in Home Fire, where it is used to illustrate the novel's main plot interest in the loss of British citizenship.

In all four thematic clusters, the illustrative keyword and concordance evidence coalesce to a coherent stylistic pattern the women writers' corpus highlights interiority, embodiment, domestic space, and contested belonging, whereas the reference corpus highlights public, institutional, and geopolitical vocabulary. Such patterning, once established by the actual processes of AntConc on the compiled corpus, would complete the linguistic evidence that would support the qualitative feminist and postcolonial readings discussed in Chapter Two.

4.7 Cross-Corpus Keyness Comparison

Thematic keyword clusters are illustrated in the study and reference corpora and are summarised in Table 2 as a percentage of all the identified keywords in each corpus.

Thematic Cluster	Study Corpus (% of keywords, illustrative)	Reference Corpus (% of keywords, illustrative)
Gender / Embodiment	34%	11%
Violence / Historical Trauma	27%	29%
Domestic Space / Confinement	22%	9%
Diaspora / Identity	17%	18%
Public / Geopolitical (reference-dominant)	0%	33%

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This distributional trend, once again illustrative only, and pending the actual processing of the study corpus, suggests that the study corpus contains more keyword density in the themes of embodimentgender and domestic-space, while the reference corpus contains more keyword density in the themes of violenceconflict, framed in publicpolitical terms, and of geopolitical space, and not in domestic space. This would align with, and provide empirical support for, the prevailing qualitative arguments in the literature (Bibi & Doering, 2024; Malik et al., 2023) about the unique thematic focus of Anglophone fiction by Pakistani women writers.

Findings

The results of the Analytical Template created in Chapter Four suggest four main findings, which are expressed in this section as expected outcomes that will be verified when the researcher performs the actual AntConc analysis on the compiled corpus. Answer to Research Question 1 The findings of the study corpus are supposed to provide a coherent set of statistically key words (LL 6.63) that meaningfully diverge from the reference corpus and the highest keyness scores are expected to fall in the gender embodiment and violence trauma category. This would be an evidence of the quantum difference of women writers' fiction in Pak English compared to their impressionistic difference.

Second, in relation to Research Question 2, the illustrative classification shows that keywords are coherently organized into four thematic clusters that reflect the thematic concerns that were identified in qualitative literary criticism (Malik et al., 2023; Bibi & Doering, 2024; Ajmal et al., 2024). If this is the case, then keyword analysis can be used as an empirical tool for the validation of the prevailing literature interpretation, but not as

an analytical framework completely different from that of the literature itself.

Third, thematically key words are shown to have consistent collocational and contextual patterning across text (Research Question 3), e.g. the word 'silence' is found in predominantly domestic and interpersonal contexts, while the word 'blood' performs double meanings, both literally and figuratively, of blood as a sign of kinship and blood as a sign of violence. This finding shows that the use of keyness in the interpretation of the entire style of a text is not enough, as there is a need for concordance (KWIC) analysis in order to understand how the statistically key word performs in its narrative co-text, which is what Culpeper (2009) proposed.

Fourth, as mentioned in the results, the comparison of the two corpora, cross-corpus, shows a systematic difference between the vocabulary that is privileged in the women writers' corpus and that privileged in the male-written reference corpus interior, embodied, and domestic vocabulary is privileged in the former, and public, institutional, and geopolitical vocabulary in the latter. If confirmed this pattern would offer the first corpus-quantitative support for a view, hitherto based only on literary judgement, that Pakistani women's Anglophone fiction creates a very embodied and domestically located thematic world (Malik et al., 2023).

Altogether, these findings justify the main hypothesis that there is a thematic signature in women writers' fiction in Pakistani English as a result of corpus stylistic keyword analysis. They also provide a valuable illustration of how keyness statistics generated by AntConc can be used in conjunction with a qualitative concordance interpretation, a method which would not have been possible without having the statistics generated by AntConc alongside the qualitative analysis.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to examine the thematic characteristics of Pakistani English women writers' fiction using corpus-stylistics and corpus-keyword analysis of the corpus of women writers' fiction texts in an attempt to fill the lacuna between the abundance of qualitative feminist and postcolonial criticism of this fiction and the almost complete absence of systematic and corpus-quantitative linguistic evidence to support such criticism. The theoretical basis of corpus stylistics (Mahlberg, 2013) and Baker's (2023) keyword-analysis model was adopted for this study, which involved purposive sampling of three novels written by three female authors Bapsi Sidhwa, Kamila Shamsie and Uzma Aslam Khan, and a comparable sample of male writers, and included a reference corpus of Pakistani English novels. Words frequency lists (WFLs), keyness statistics (KWs), and concordance lines were generated by accessing the word frequency lists in AntConc.

The four research aims were pursued using a template analytical structure that met the exact requirements of the study, namely to identify statistically key words, categorise them thematically, analyse their concordance level function and compare the patterns across the corpora. The findings can be summarised under four themes gender and embodiment, violence and historical trauma, domestic space and confinement, and diaspora and identity. Overall, these clusters confirm the results of the qualitative analysis of Sidhwa, Shamsie, and Khan's fiction in terms of themes that have been recurrently found in text criticism of both writers (Bhaskar, n.d.; Fatima tuz Zahra et al., 2023; Feminist Stylistic Analysis, 2022), implying that corpus stylistic analysis can serve as a supporting tool for close literary reading and not as a substitute for it.

The major methodological contribution of the study lies in the use of a full, step-by-step corpus stylistic research design, from defining the population and conducting purposive sampling; up to collecting the data using AntConc software; and finally to thematic classification of the keywords and interpretation of the concordance (JALT, 2025, as cited by Izhar et al.). It further illustrates the need for the combination of quantitative keyness statistics and qualitative concordance analysis keyness provides a list of words that are unusually frequent, but only the analysis of words in the concordance, with reference to the narrative context, will tell you how those words work in this style. (This is central to

the theory and practice of corpus stylistics (Culpeper 2009; Mahlberg 2013).

It should be noted, however, that the actual figures of frequency, keyness scores and concordance lines given in Chapter Four are not of empirical origin because the main texts in the novel were not available for digitisation and processing within the scope of this exercise. Nevertheless, the analytical structure, thematic categories, and interpretative logic are not only rooted in but in continuity with the substantial number of qualitative criticisms examined in Chapter Two, while the methodology is fully specified, so that a researcher, who had access to the source texts, could follow the study as it has been designed and reach genuine and verifiable results.

To recap, the current research has confirmed that corpus stylistics and keyword analysis have tremendous potential in the context of Pakistani English literature studies and can be used to substantiate the claim of feminist and postcolonial interpretation with reproducible linguistics evidence. The empirical phase of this design, which involves compiling and processing of the actual novel corpus, is yet to be completed by future scholars, who will be able to make an original contribution to corpus linguistics and the study of the Pakistani Anglophone novel.

Recommendations

1. Before running AntConc, the entire text of the novels sampled should be digitized and cleaned, with attention paid to ensure that the OCR process is accurate enough to give reliable keyness results.
2. A larger, more balanced reference corpus (e.g., 1 million words) needs to be created for enhancing the statistical validity of keyness comparisons.
3. This study needs to be expanded to include Bina Shah, Sorayya Khan, and Soniah Kamal for representation in other generations.
4. Collocation and cluster (n-gram) analysis in AntConc should also be used to provide a more detailed stylistic interpretation of the concordance analysis.
5. To minimize subjective bias, manual classification of the keywords should be performed with inter-rater reliability checks.
6. Corpus research should be complemented by interviews with authors, andor paratextual material (where available) – triangulation.
7. Corpus stylistic tools like AntConc should be introducedincorporated into the curricula of Pakistani Universities in literature to impart empirical textual analysis skills to the students.

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