



**RESEARCH PAPER**

**Style, Ideology and Female Representation: An Ideo-Stylistic Analysis of Shakespeare's King Lear**

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**ABSTRACT**

Language use proclaims an individual's personality and socio-political scenario of a particular age. The present study critically analyses the language used by female characters in Shakespeare's *King Lear*. The data has been collected from the speeches of Goneril, Regan, and Cordelia from the mentioned play. The study employs an amended research model, which has been devised by drawing upon Fairclough (2012) and Mills (1995) to analyze the data Ideo-stylistically. The levels of analysis include the word, clause/sentence, and discourse. The analytical categories used in the study include representation, a normative and Marxist critique of language, comparative degree, rhetoric question, metaphor, simile, use of weak form, exclamation mark, contrasted pair, and parallelism. It finds that no use of language is ideology-free and linguistic conditions are highly ideological. Change in linguistic form changes the function of language. The language used by Goneril, Regan, and Cordelia mirrors their inward and social reality. The study in hand is a form of literary, linguistic research. Besides, it contends that an individual's linguistic habit proclaims their personality and reflects the prominent socio-political tendencies of a particular age.

**Keywords:** Critical Social Analysis, Feminist Linguistics, Ideology, Literary Text, Representation, Style

**Introduction**

The present research focuses on using stylistic devices to lay bare embedded ideologies regarding female representation in the Shakespearean play *King Lear*. This way, it attempts to mediate the link between using stylistic devices in female speeches/language and critical social analysis. The present study employs an integrated research approach to analyze female language use in the mentioned play Ideo-stylistically to lay bare underlying ideologies. The significant feature of the study is that it has analyzed stylistic devices qualitatively and quantitatively to support qualitative findings quantitatively and vice versa. The frequency of occurrence of various stylistic devices illustrates the dominant ideological themes embedded in the language used by female characters to represent themselves. The research model employed for the present research is an amended model which the researcher has devised after critically analyzing the existing model of Mills (1995), her level of analysis, and correlating it with the concept of critical social analysis propounded by Fairclough (2012). Moreover, the devised model explains how the use of stylistic devices, on the one hand, assigns an identity to the speakers to probe deep into their characters and, on the other, reflects the prevalent tendencies of that particular time.

Fairclough (2003) argues that language is a social semiotic and reflects a particular age's prevalent tendencies. Similarly, the language used by female characters in the selected play implies the changing tendencies and elements of women's empowerment during the Shakespearean age.

Machaba (2011) opines that females have always been the focus of various studies in different disciplines, such as gender studies, developmental studies, linguistics, literature etc. According to him, women are mainly represented as slack, dangerous, weak and dependent on men. In this regard, Leavy (2000) believes that the representation of women is primarily observed from social and economic factors, and less emphasis is put on the language itself. This study aims to analyze the representation of females by considering the language they use to represent themselves.

The present research is qualitative as it decodes linguistic/stylistic devices encoded by female characters in the mentioned text to lay bare embedded ideologies regarding female representation. It is qualitative as it deals with the ways of words, i.e. how linguistic spin assigns positive/negative identity to the users, in this case, female characters. It endeavours to explore how language is used to propagate desired ideology and how language serves as an identity marker to its users. It aims to ideo-stylistically analyze the speeches delivered by female characters at the level of word, sentence and discourse and to correlate it with critical social analysis.

### **Literature Review**

This section critically reviews the previously conducted research in the relevant domain to justify the gap for the present study. The critical review of some of the most relevant research has been discussed here.

Demmen's (2009) study focuses on stylistic devices used by men and women in Shakespeare's texts. It deals with the language used by the main characters from the plays *Macbeth* and *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. The frequency-based use of stylistic devices highlights the mindset of male and female characters. Moreover, it is based on the notion that style and ideology are interlinked. Change in style results in changing the function of language. It contends that using specific linguistic and stylistic devices assigns a particular identity to the users. The language used by male and female characters has been stylistically analyzed to lay bare underlying ideology.

Jane (1993) opines that the representation of female characters in plays of Shakespeare both endorses and challenges the construction and representation of gender stereotypes from different texts. He views gender as the sexed stereotyping of specific ways of speaking, behaving and thinking which are thought appropriate for the male or female sex. This creates a world of masculinity and femininity. He challenges these false concepts and argues that gender stereotypes are context-specific and subject to change.

Corbett (2009) holds that gender roles are often divided in/through language right from the beginning. Language is a divider of gendered roles, and its long-lasting effect shapes an individual's mind. Certain aspects of being male or female are made naturalized and common sense through language. Man Made Language often renders women invisible from the domain of power. He explores that Shakespeare's female characters are a mostly metaphorical representation of marginalized figures.

Rubio (1999), while commenting on the Shakespearean representation of female characters in his tragedies (especially in *King Lear*), asserted that one should notice that Cordelia's representation in the play *King Lear* carries several implications. She appears at the beginning and the end of the play. She is often absent from the scene, which might be taken as a clear example of a prototypical Shakespearean woman, silent, absent or dead. Moreover, she is characterized by her silent and obedient attitude. The way Goneril, Regan and Cordelia have been represented in the play, they metaphorically stand for prominent tendencies of that age, i.e., observance of gender stereotypes and compliance with gender stereotypes.

Busse (2002) researched the usage of pronouns in literary texts. The study reveals that the first-person pronoun 'I' stands for certainty, individuality and credit-taking through language. Similarly, the second-person pronoun 'you' implies the concept of inclusion and exclusion through discourses. Whereas, according to him, the third person pronoun 'they' connotes the idea of 'Them-ness'. The use of different stylistic devices is never neutral. Moreover, it illustrates that variation in the use of discursive moves causes a change in the ideological underpinnings of the target audience.

Froehlich (2012) opines that linguistic functions are associated with linguistic forms. Change in language form results in changing the function of language. He explores that using grammatical structures in language implies a degree of formality among the users. Shahid (2013) studied that females can uncover the more active and capable women who are rendered weak in the overpowering shadow of the patriarchy with the help of cross-dressing. She opines that female characters choose to cross-dress to hide their feminine identity because that feminine identity does not give them equal opportunity to prove their worth. Jajja's (2014) work "A Feminist Reading of Shakespearean Tragedies: Frailty, thy Name is Woman" highlights the representation of women as lesser and inferior to men. He opines that women in Shakespearean tragedies are portrayed as creatures of passion and irrationality. However, both Goneril and Regan in King Lear stand for revolt and the Machiavelli spirit prevailing during Renaissance Age. Similarly, the present study highlights how linguistic and stylistic devices assign different identities to the female characters in King Lear.

### **Stylistics**

It is a branch of linguistics investigating the entire system of expressive resources available in a particular language. Most often, language is defined as a scientific study of language. On the other hand, language is also defined as a social semiotic. No finality can be had even in hard sciences. So, in this way, the word 'science' means the art of evaluating style. It may be literary or non-literary. It can be viewed as the science of literary style, the study of stylistic features (OED, 1882). It can also be described as the analysis of distinctive expression in language and the description of its purpose and effect (Verdonk, 2003). Mistrik (1985) argues that stylistics can be regarded as the study of choices and the use of linguistic and extra-linguistic devices and particular communication techniques. It could also be defined as a branch of modern linguistics devoted to the detailed analysis of language style or the linguistic choices used by the speakers or writers in different contexts (Baldik, Oxford Concise Dictionary of Literary Terms 1996). According to Galperin (2004), stylistics deals with two independent tasks: it studies special media of language, which are called stylistic devices and expressive means. It is concerned with the possible significance of the linguistic features in the text and how they can be interpreted as representing an event or situation from a particular perspective and positioning. At the same time, Crystal (2003) defines it as a branch of linguistics which studies the features of distinctive situational uses of language and tries to establish principles capable of accounting for particular choices made by individual and social groups in their use of language. In the twentieth century, stylistics expanded its scope and replaced the earlier discipline named rhetoric. Stylistic analysis is viewed as one of the essential methods of textual interpretation in which primacy is assigned to language as language plays a significant role in interpretation because the various forms, patterns and levels that constitute linguistic structures are an essential index of the function of the text. The text's functional significance acts as a gateway to its interpretation. Moreover, stylistics is concerned more specifically with exploring creativity in language.

### **Ideology**

Ideology is a set of ideas, beliefs and aims that a person holds. It is a set of social, cultural and political beliefs and values that inform how we think things ought to be

(Verdonk, 2003). Fairclough (1992) holds ideologies as the construction of reality. He believes ideologies refer to the distortion of the relationship between ideas, matter and representation. Language is one of the mediums through which ideologies are constructed, maintained, propagated and challenged. Ideology constitutes various cultural and political systems and determines the outlook of different social classes. Marks (1818) opines that ideology determines the perspective and worldview of the people, their beliefs and the values of the dominant class. Dijk (1998) views it as the basis of the social representations shared by group members so that there is a mental framework of beliefs about society and the cognitive and social functions of such a framework for groups. Ideology as a system of beliefs can be expressed in symbols, rituals, discourse and other social and cultural practices (Dijk, 1998). Ideology can be viewed as a collection of conscious and unconscious ideas which make up one's beliefs, motivations and expectations. Gould (1964) states that ideology is a pattern of beliefs and concepts, both actual and normative, which support explaining social phenomena to simplify sociopolitical choices facing the individual and groups. Ideology and ideological discourses hold a significant position in political structure. Kress (1985) opines that ideologies find their most explicit articulation in language. Hence, ideology and language are both interrelated. Language is the reflection of society and ideologies; most of the time, it finds expression in or through language.

### **Style and ideology**

Style can be defined as the variant of language (or literary language). It varies differently in different situations. It can also be viewed as the linguistic habit of an individual. The main aim of stylistics is to explore creativity in language. Therefore, style is not a mere ornament. Instead, it conveys significant subtleties of meaning and evaluation, which define the writer's nature, presuppositions, political or moral stance and ideological underpinnings behind the use of particular linguistic codes because language varies from situation to situation and different linguistic items convey different meanings in different situations. The ideology surrounding a discourse mainly informs or dictates the writer's style choice. Volosinov (1973) and Halliday (1985) believe that style not only deals with particular linguistic decisions but has to do something with sociological factors that have gotten greater attention in more modern and recent literature. The role of sociopolitical setup is significant in stylistic discourses because different sociopolitical setups have different ideological dimensions. The production of a text as a social process plays an excellent role, for example. It helps to establish the interactive point between the reader and the writer. Social systems encapsulate ideologies, and the text demands to be comprehended within a specific ideological orientation (Hunston, 1993).

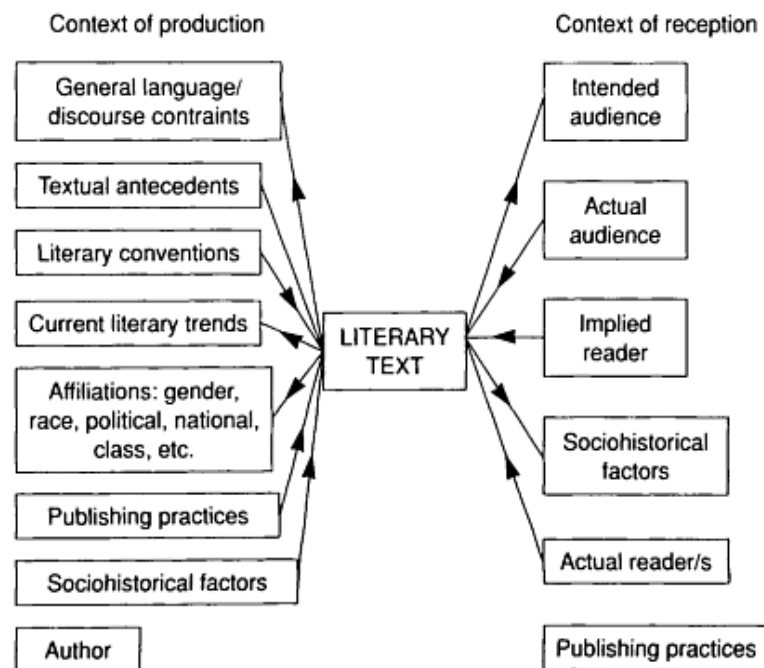
### **Stylistics and construction of identity**

Trudgill (1995) maintains that language choice and accent illustrate what we are and where we are from. Language is one of our identity markers. The present research analyzes the use of stylistic devices in the mentioned play of Shakespeare to know how language use is linked with the construction and representation of female identity. Additionally, it compares/contrasts stylistic devices in the speeches of female characters in *King Lear to lay bare underlying ideologies behind language use*. The research is significant as it locates how stylistic devices assign a particular type of identity to the users, i.e. female characters. Moreover, the study also attempts to correlate the language used by the female characters in the selected play with the dominant tendencies of the age.

### **Material and Methods**

The research intends to analyze the language used by female characters ideologically critically. For this purpose, an amended research model has been devised to analyze data by drawing upon Mills (1995) feminist stylistic analysis and Fairclough's (2012) model of critical social analysis (CSA). The rationale behind using an amended

research model is that some of the analytical categories present in Mills' model are missing but are present in the present data. It is because Fairclough's model has also been operationalized. The following diagram illustrates Mills' (1995) model having two critical domains, the, i.e. context of production and the context of reception.



It deals with analyzing a literary text at the word, clause/ sentence and discourse level. Some of the analytical categories missing in the model but are present in the existing data include alliteration, metaphor, simile, comma, metonymy, parallelism, weak form, irony and rhetorical question.

### Critical Social Analysis (CSA)

Besides operationalizing Mills' (1995) model and the above-mentioned stylistic devices, the researcher has also drawn upon Fairclough's (2012) model of critical social analysis. This model argues that language is a byproduct of the society it belongs to. It explicitly or implicitly embodies the prominent prevalent tendencies of the age. The main analytical categories of this model are normative and explanatory critique. Besides, this model argues that social reality is conceptually mediated, reflexive, ideological, and economy-dependent.

### Results and Discussion

#### Analysis of Goneril's Speeches

Rehman (2003) asserts that language is essential in constructing identities. On the one hand, it reveals the user's identity and, on the other, up to a great extent, highlights the salient features of the age it belongs to. Similarly, when King Lear asks Goneril to express her love for him, she starts telling her love for her father by saying;

*Sir...I love you .....more than words,,,,, can wield the matter: (Act1, Scene1, Line53)*

One of the essential stylistic devices used here is the adjective, *sir*. It is used for someone superior in rank to show respect or to seek a favor. By being a good judge of her father's nature, she tactfully uses this word instead of the word father. She behaves more like a courtier than a daughter. Ivanic (2001) maintains that using the first-person pronoun is highly ideological. It connotes a degree of certainty, authenticity and a gradual process of

proceeding from self to universal. She is certain she would persuade her father about her love for him. The expression 'can wield the matter' implies that her implied interests are otherwise than what she utters. Still another essential thing to note here is the use of the stylistic device in the form of comparative, which is as under;

*Safer than... trust... (Act1, Scene4, Line313)*

Renaissance is an age of rapid changes. This tendency is evident from Goneril's language use. She quickly perceives that King Lear is no more valuable to her than before dividing his kingdom. Her language use illustrates that same ideology. The use of comparative degree safer connotes that after going through the process of loss and gain from the king, she concludes that she should stay away from the king and his knights. The pragmatic approach, a significant feature of the renaissance age, is evident in her behavior. This is how language reflects human behavior and the age it belongs to. The philosophy of scepticism is clear from her words that one should be sceptical even about scepticism.

Gramsci (1980) is of the view that the ideology of the powerful is the powerful ideology. Throughout the play, Goneril sticks to her guns and continues behaving like a powerful lady. In her character portrayal, Shakespeare has presented her as a powerful lady capable of commanding her husband and army as well. At the same time, she is also representative of a significant feature of her age, humanism, a prevalent tendency during that age against theocentrism. She prefers self-interests to everything else.

The frequency of occurrence of different stylistic devices employed by Goneril has been reproduced in the form of a pie chart and graph, which are as under:

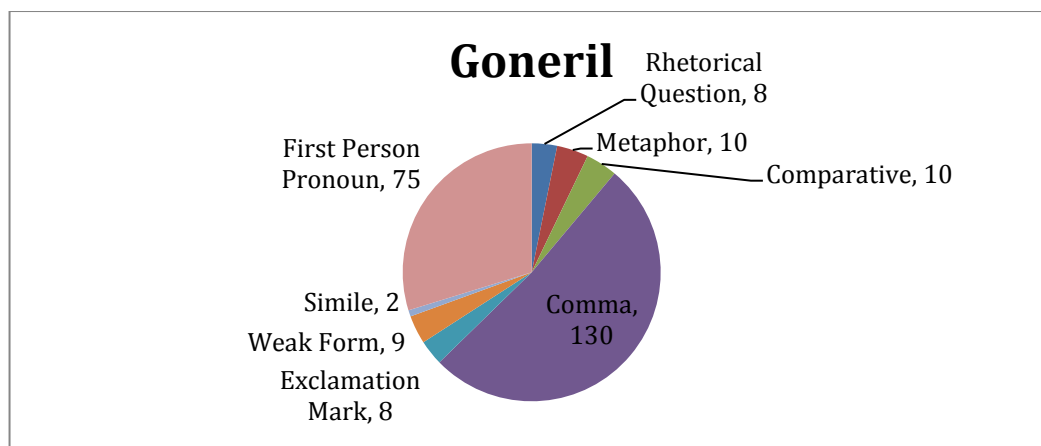


Figure 1: Graphical Representation of devices employed by Goneril

The frequency of occurrence of the stylistic devices shown in the pi-chart illustrates that Goneril is a self-assertive woman who believes in enjoying life to its fullest and openly lays stress on her ideological stance.

### Analysis of Speeches of Regan

Her sister Regan expresses her love for her father in superlative degrees but soon starts behaving like Goneril. The following lines represent the sudden and drastic change which occurred in her:

*I cannot ...think my... sister in... the least...*

*Would fail her... obligation... If, sir,...*

*She has... restrained the ...r..iots of your followers,*  
*'Tis on...such ground,... and to ...such wholesome end,*  
*As clears... her from... all blame. (Act2, Scene4, Line137-141)*

It is said that language is one of the strongest means of otherization. Similarly, while talking to King Lear, Regan argues that her sister is justified in her stance about her father's rude behavior. She is of the view that fault lies with King Lear.

Then she uses a conditional sentence in the form of *if sir* and the use of grammatical inversion because she uses the helping verb *have* with *her*. In a way, the pronoun she can be used in the plural sense. It represents singular, which means Goneril, but indirectly she is trying to represent herself as an ally with her sister as is obvious from the use of the helping verb *have* instead of *has*. Still, another stylistic device used by her is the use of the verb or adjective *restrained*. It implicitly represents King Lear and his knights' inhumanity and justifies her sister's treatment of the king and the others.

Use of the weak form is also there, i.e. *'Tis* This implies the hurried and worried state of mind of both the sisters about the wrongdoings of King Lear and his knights. In this regard, another example to (mis)represent King Lear is that *you should be ruled and led*. It implies that Lear is no more powerful, and instead of ruling the others, he should be led and ruled.

Moreover, she uses another stylistic device in the form of a sign of exclamation (!). It stands for her extreme happiness for being empowered on the one hand and worried on the other.

The frequency of occurrence of various stylistic devices employed by Regan has been reproduced in the form of the following pie chart:

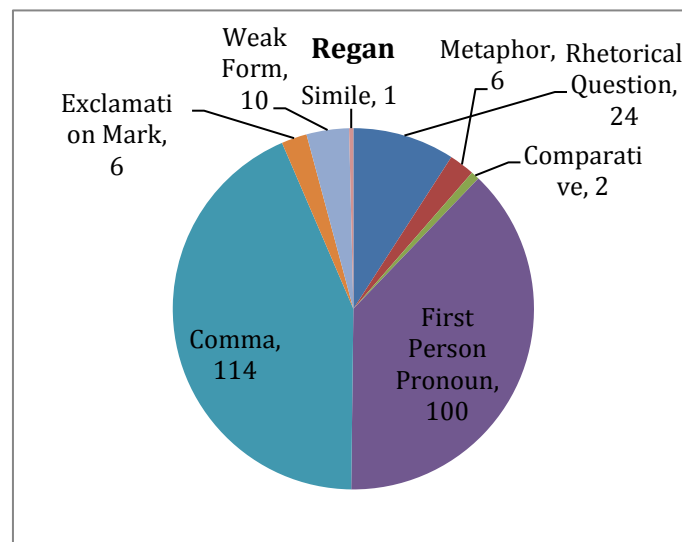


Figure 2: Graphical Representation of devices employed by Regan

The frequency of occurrence of the stylistic devices shown in the pi-chart illustrates that Goneril is a self-assertive lady who believes in enjoying life to its fullest and openly stresses her ideological stance.

### Analysis of Cordelia's speeches

Cordelia is one of the radical female characters of Shakespeare. She deconstructs the stereotypical norms. She has a realistic approach towards life and the people around her. She is forced to go through a love test. There are two types of love, as has been exhibited by Goneril, Regan and Cordelia. She is one of those who leave history unspoken. She believes that sometimes, silence proves more powerful than speech. When she is asked to express her love for her father, she starts by saying:

*What shall... Cordelia speak... Love, and be silent... (Act1, Scene1, Line 59)*

The very first line spoken by her carries a bundle of interpretations. It connotes that she has nothing to say compared with her two sisters' remarks. She thinks flattering is the standard in showing love for her father. She is poor. But, if love for her father on realistic grounds is valued, she considers herself richer than her sisters. The very construction of the sentence implies her somewhat confused state of mind. She is of the view that actions should speak louder than words.

The following lines illustrate her mindset clearly.

*And yet not so...nice I am sure my love's...*

*More ponderous...than my tongue... (Act1, Scene1, Line74-75)*

Fairclough (2012) argues that language denotes and connotes things simultaneously. Love is an abstract noun, and it is hard to measure it in terms of material amount. She maintains that her love is so huge in an amount that her tongue cannot express it. The comparative technique adopted by her is persuasive. When she is forced to express her love for her father, she says:

*"I love your majesty according to my bonds, No more, No less"*

It illustrates that she is among those who wish to balance different passions. The use of first-person pronoun connotes a degree of certainty on her part. Nature has set a balance among things, and it must not be violated. The use of the thesis (poor) vs anti thesis (rich) comparative technique is impressive and ideological.

*Unhappy that I am, I cannot heave*

*My heart into my mouth...I love you, majesty...*

*According to my bond...no more nor less... (Act1, Scene1, Line89-91)*

Still, in the following line uttered by Cordelia, the adjective *unhappy* needs critical decodation, like the concept of poor and nothing. The use of the adjective *unhappy* is full of meanings. In the other context, it is layered that unhappy for one may be happy. When she compares herself with her sisters in terms of speech, she finds herself poor and having nothing. Therefore, for the time being, she feels unhappy, and after analyzing what is happening inside herself, she comes up with an answer to give her father. She utters to her father that she finds herself unhappy. The metaphor 'my heart into my mouth' is appropriate. To measure love materialistically is as impossible as bringing a heart into one's mouth.

Cordelia, when she finds her father in a miserable condition after his having been suffering badly in the storm scene, expresses her deep love and care for her father, and she starts her speech by expressing strong desire;

*Had you not been their father, these white flakes (Act4, Scene7, Line31)*



The above line illustrates Cordelia's love for her father when she meets her father after the storm scene. At the same time, it highlights the concept of fatalism as well. The concept of powerful versus powerless has also been highlighted here through these lines uttered by Cordelia. Moreover, the use of the adjective white flakes is appropriate here and implies the thankless nature of her two sisters.

*Was this a face to be opposed against the warring winds? (Act4, Scene7, Line32)*

*To stand against the deep dread-bolted thunder?... (Act4, Scene7, Line33)*

When Cordelia sees her father in a miserable state, she bursts into emotions and expresses her feelings as a rhetorical question. The rhetorical question carries an answer, implying that the king must not have been treated rudely.

*Who with the best meaning...have incurred the worst...(Act5, Scene3, Line4)*

The use of best and worst contrasted pairs is an example of the use of binary opposition. It implies that Cordelia's intentions for her father and sisters have always been based on reality and goodwill. In contrast, she has always been treated wrongly by her sisters and initially by her father. Therefore, the use of binary opposition, on the one hand, implies the existing order in the universe, represents evil in glowing colors and the helplessness of human beings before the will of gods.

*Shall we not see these daughters and these sisters...? (Act5, Scene2, Line7)*

The use of interrogative form and the use of first-person pronouns are layered. It carries an answer that she and her father must not see Goneril and Regan again. Such evil and thankless creatures must not be met again. From the analysis of Cordelia's speeches, it is evident that her language use assigns her a particular identity. The use of various stylistic devices by Cordelia in King Lear conveys her feelings comprehensively.

The analysis of Cordelia's speeches reveals that she used different stylistic devices throughout the play *King Lear*. She uses rhetorical questions fourteen times, metaphors six times, first-person pronouns seventy times, and commas seventy-four times. The first person pronoun employed by Cordelia in her speeches implies that she has been too confident regarding whatever she is saying. She emerges as a revolutionary character who is too certain about her realistic stance. The use of the first person pronoun employed by Cordelia implies that she represents herself differently from her two sisters. Still, another stylistic device which finds expression in her speeches is punctuation marks in the form of a comma. She has used commas seventy-four times. One of the interpretations of the comma is that this stylistic device is used to stress something. It is the case with Cordelia. Here in Cordelia's case, the use of the comma as a stylistic device is that she wants to make her father realize by slowing down her speed of language delivery so that her father should ponder what she is saying. She likes that lest her father should not overhear and ignore the words she is uttering. However, King Lear realizes reality too late.

The frequency of occurrence of various stylistic devices employed by Cordelia has been reproduced in the form of the following pie chart and graph:

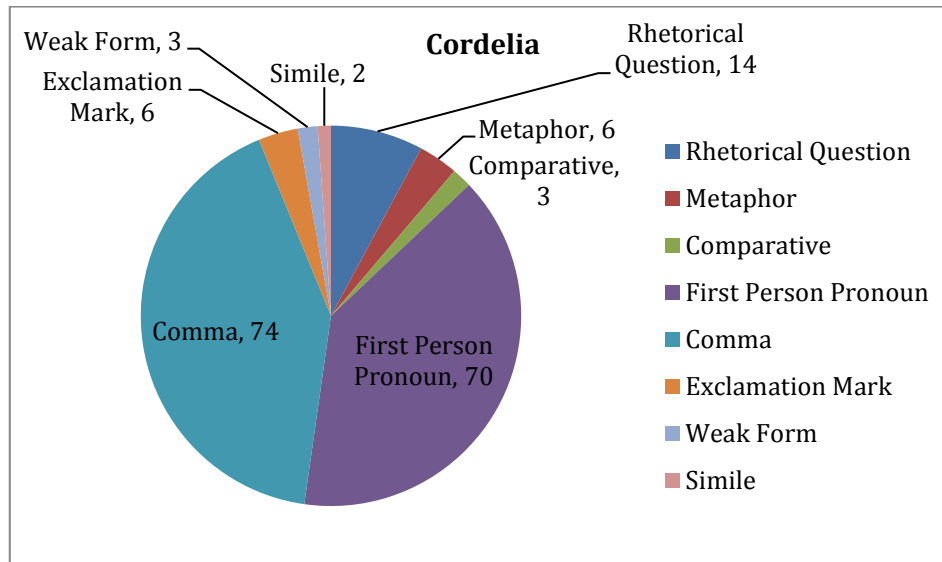


Figure 3: Graphical Representation of devices employed by Cordelia

The frequency of different stylistic devices illustrates her passionate and kind nature, the degree of certainty in her remarks, and her profound judgement of human nature. The rhetorical question technique implies that she is a good judge of human nature. She is an embodiment of a balanced personality. When she knows that the king has been badly treated by her sisters, she gets emotional, as is evident from the exclamation marks. The use of weak form implies her worried state of mind at the misbehavior of King Lear by her sisters.

### Conclusion

The research was undertaken to do an Ideo-stylistic analysis of female speeches in King Lear. For this purpose, an amended model has been devised and used to analyze the data. The data analysis reveals that Goneril, Regan and Cordelia have used various linguistic and stylistic devices, including weak form, simile, rhetoric question, metaphor, comparative degree, first-person pronoun, comma and sign of exclamation. The language used by female characters highlights the prominent tendencies of the age, such as humanism, the clash between good and evil, the discovery of self and pragmatism. Goneril and Regan stand for a pragmatic spirit. At the same time, Cordelia stands for a balanced approach towards life. She is an embodiment of passion and a realistic approach towards life. The study proves that no use of language is ideology-free, and an individual's linguistic habit illustrates their personality. All the female characters seem steadfast in their ideological stance.

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