



The linguistic style of Mohammad Kazem Kazemi's poetry through the perspective of layered stylistics emphasizing the ideological layer

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Abstract: Layered stylistics is a contextual approach that analyzes the linguistic layers of a text within a coherent and systematic network. The main aim of this study is to identify Kazemi's linguistic style that expresses the ideological layer. This research uses a descriptive-analytical method based on library studies. By examining the linguistic layers of Kazemi's poems within a networked system, one can depict the development of his individual linguistic style. The analysis of Kazemi's poems on three linguistic levels the lexical, the rhetorical and the ideological shows that he tends towards objectivity in the lexical level, where sensual vocabulary occurs more frequently than abstract concepts. Specific vocabulary is more common than general terms, and the dominant code in the text is religious. At the rhetorical layer, personification (a form of metaphor) and allusion are more common and serve as key elements of meaning production and style formation. Through these means, the poet creates a vivid and stimulating imagery. On the ideological layer, Kazemi presents ideology through implicit

meaning by harmonizing linguistic structures with his worldview. The shifting of language systems around ideological components ultimately characterizes his linguistic style.

Keywords: *Layered Stylistics, Lexical Layer, Rhetorical Layer, Ideological Layer, Mohammad Kazem Kazemi*

Introduction

Style is a method of language use employed by a particular person in a particular context and for a particular purpose. Stylistic approaches are broadly divided into text-based and context-based categories. Text-based stylistics focuses on analyzing text structures — such as phonological, lexical, syntactic, rhetorical forms and ideology — without linking them directly to context or content. In contrast, contextual stylistics examines the broader social and linguistic contexts in which texts are produced, including linguistic structures (text) and non-linguistic structures (social institutions). Layered stylistics is a modern approach to literary style analysis in which a text is examined on five layers: phonological, lexical, syntactic, rhetorical and ideological. This approach enables a precise and novel reading of poetic texts by revealing hidden and deeper layers that reflect unique linguistic and ideological features.

The main aim of this study is to explore Kazemi's linguistic style in expressing ideological content with the help of layered stylistics. Accordingly, the central research question is: How are the linguistic layers in Kazemi's poems reflected through the approach of layered stylistics? The unit of analysis in this study is the stanza. Each stanza is examined on three levels: Description, linguistic context and non-linguistic context. The descriptive level provides an overview of the poem to help the reader visualize the atmosphere and prepare for a deeper analysis. The linguistic context analysis examines the relationships between the linguistic forms, including verbs, adverbs and other structures within the syntagmatic axis. Non-linguistic context is concerned with the referents of time, place and person and highlights the dependence of the verse on its situational background. The decision to analyze verse on these three levels is based on two reasons:

1. The novelty of the analytical model in layered stylistic research on poetry.
2. The meaningful and intricate relationship between the linguistic forms on these levels allows for a precise and nuanced analysis of verse.

Research background

This section provides a brief overview of studies that have been conducted using the layered stylistic approach:

1. **“Layered Stylistic Analysis of Mehdi Akhavan Sales’ Poetry”** (Ali, Qudsiyeh, 2018). This work examines four layers —the phonological, the lexical, the syntactic and the rhetorical — using a structuralist (text-based) approach rather than a context-based one. It identifies stylistic components, but does not examine their meaningful connections to the content.
2. **“Layered Stylistics in Khalilullah Khalili’s ghazals”** (Ahmadi, Nasima, 2017). This study analyzes five layers and concludes that Khalili’s ghazals strike a balance between form and meaning and integrate the five layers (phonological, lexical, rhetorical, syntactic and semantic) to convey conceptual frameworks.
3. **“Analysis of the poetic life of Qeisar Aminpour”** (Fotouhi, Mahmoud, 2008). This study divides Aminpour’s poetic career into three periods — active, passive and reflective — based on linguistic (lexical and syntactic), rhetorical (imagery and literary devices) and ideological distinctions. These periods are described as epic (active), melancholic-romantic (passive) and fatalistic (reflective).
4. **“Comparative study of Azerbaijani style in Khaqani’s Qasidas and Nizami’s Makhzan al-Asrar using layered stylistics”** (Sajedi, Zahra, 2018). This study examines five layers and finds that phonological patterns favor verbal rhymes, lexical layers emphasize marked and abstract vocabulary, syntactic layers favor declarative and active verbs, rhetorical layers emphasize metaphors and similes, and ideological layers address themes such as patience, trust in God, and asceticism.
5. **“Layered Stylistic Analysis of Salman Savaji’s ghazals”** (Ahmadi, Hadith, 2017). In this study, five layers are analyzed, noting the prevalence of certain metrical patterns in the phonological layer, active syntactic structures, similes in the rhetorical layer, and romantic and mystical themes in the ideological layer.
6. **“Stylistic analysis of the lexical layer in Attar’s Mantiq al-Tayr”** (Salahi, Sohaila, 2017). This study focuses exclusively on the lexical layer and emphasizes the abstract, universal and absolute nature of Attar’s personal style.

Theoretical foundations

Stylistics

Modern stylistics is considered a branch of linguistics. Following Ferdinand de Saussure, Charles Bally sought to establish stylistics as a scientific discipline within linguistics. His successors, such as Cressot, continued this trajectory, moving stylistics away from traditional literary criticism toward linguistic analysis. Today, stylistics is viewed as a discipline bridging linguistics and modern literary criticism, combining aesthetic evaluation with linguistic insights. Linguists aim to make literature a scientific field by establishing objective criteria, unlike traditional literary scholars who have been less concerned with such rigor. For instance, Richards argued against the need to define literature, while Algirdas Julien Greimas described stylistics as the application of linguistic principles to literary language. Shamis (1995) notes that linguists studying literary language label their work as stylistics.

Style is a distinctive set of linguistic forms that reflect to the reader the intellectual path of the speaker. It distinguishes one speaker from another within a language. Stylistics, then, is the systematic study of a speaker's methods of expression and the way they are characterized by different linguistic forms. According to Jamkarani and Farhmandfar (2018), stylistics examines how meaning is created through language in literature and other texts, and uses linguistic theories and frameworks to explain the functionality of texts. A writer's linguistic style results from selective choices within the closed grammatical system of a language, determined by artistic taste and prior linguistic knowledge, leading to a distinctive style. Fotouhi (2012, cited in Hemmati, 2015) argues that an individual's style emerges from their choice of linguistic structures, which is influenced by their worldview, beliefs, environment, social class, education and interests. Qasemi (2018) states that language is not uniform, but varies across historical, individual, social and geographical dimensions, with individuals adopting a particular language style depending on their social context and relationships.

Layered Stylistics

Layered stylistics, a new approach, analyzes texts on five layers: phonological, lexical, syntactic, rhetorical and ideological (Fotouhi, 2016). Linguistics plays a crucial role in this analysis. Although all five layers are usually considered, this study focuses on three —the lexical, rhetorical and ideological layers — to examine Kazemi's linguistic style in expressing the ideological layer.

Lexical Layer

In the lexical layer, words serve as primary linguistic markers for the speaker's thoughts and reveal the reasons for their selection. Beyond their semantic and grammatical role, words can express the poet's ideology about the world. Fotouhi (2016) claims that words carry ideological markers and that their neutrality or markedness significantly determines the ideological content of a text. Words also convey different semantic roles, as style results from the choice of certain words, expressions and phrases.

Sensory vs. abstract vocabulary

Fotouhi (2016) distinguishes between abstract words (which denote beliefs, qualities or mental concepts) and sensory words (which denote tangible, concrete objects).

Specific vs. general vocabulary

General words refer to a group or genus, while specific words refer to a particular member (e.g. “tree” [general], “pine” [species], “black pine” [specific]).

Markedness of vocabulary

Markedness is a stylistic feature in which words have an ideological meaning beyond their grammatical meaning. Poets choose words to reflect their worldview because literary texts are inherently personal and value-laden (Yar Mohammadi, 2004, cited in Amiri, 2019).

Social markers

Social markers in a text indicate ideological meanings. Words with certain markers reflect the poet’s ideology and refer to situational contexts such as place, time or person (Safawi, 2004, cited in Fotouhi, 2011).

Textual codes and ideological references

A text consists of various linguistic codes, with the dominant codes shaping the ideological tone of the text. Sojudi (2008) defines codes as knowledge systems that enable the production and interpretation of texts and are primarily context- and culture-based. Language is the most complex code, which also includes other codes such as customs, dress and behavior. Codes are categorized into verbal, physical, commodity, structural and procedural types, with structural codes linking elements to specific social or cultural systems (e.g., mysticism, asceticism).

Mythical vocabulary

Mythic themes have long been interwoven with human consciousness and symbolize idealized worlds, especially in poetry, where symbolic language borrows from mythic narratives. Contemporary poets often draw on myths to enrich their works, influenced by their familiarity with global poetry and myths as well as the social and political functions of poetry (Mirali and Kalbadi, 2012). Myths provide an ethical and religious framework by expressing human beliefs and resistance to existential realities (Henliz, 2000; Rashidian, 1991, cited in Mirali and Kalbadi, 2012).

Rhetorical layer

Personification

Personification, a form of implicit metaphor, breathes life into poetry by ascribing human characteristics to non-human beings. This device creates dynamism and liveliness and reflects the poet’s perspective and feelings (Fotouhi, 2016).

Allusion

The allusion, a prominent stylistic feature in Kazemi’s poetry, enriches the meaning by referring to familiar cultural or religious elements. It enhances the esthetic and semantic depth, tailored to the audience’s knowledge (Mohammadi, 1995, cited in Zolqadr, 2018).

Ideological layer

Ideology in the text

Ideology is inherent in all literary texts. Roland Barthes considers ideology as a secondary system of meaning that adds implicit connotations to explicit meanings (Sojudi, 2008, cited in Fotouhi, 2011). The meaning of a text is derived from the situational context and social dynamics and enables an ideological interpretation of non-ideological texts (Fotouhi, 2016). Ideologies manifest themselves explicitly or implicitly, with explicit ideologies appearing in

discursive texts that are tied to specific interpretive communities and reflect group beliefs within defined linguistic and semiotic systems.

Ideology and personal style

Literary works, especially poems, are products of the poet's artistic imagination. Personal style is more evident in art because of its individualistic nature, whereas ideology is more oriented towards social expression. Personal style reflects individual memory, while ideological style reflects collective memory (Fotouhi, 2016). The personal style reduces the ideological influence and emphasizes the personal codes, while the ideological style aligns with social codes prevalent in interpretive communities.

Analysis of the data

Analysis of the lexical level

At this layer, sensory words (e.g., tree, night, wound, sun, earth, sky, apple) dominate Kazemi's poems. The frequency of sensory and abstract vocabulary is shown in Table 1-1.

Table 1-1: Sensory, abstract, general and specific vocabulary

Sensory / Abstract Vocabulary	Specific/General Vocabulary
Tree / Sensory	Stormy Night/Specific
Night / Sensory	Lion of the Plains / Specific
Wound / Sensory	Battle of Dushin / Specific
Sky / Sensory	Lamp of Miracle / Specific
Soil / Sensory	Fire / General
Sun / Sensory	Sunlight / General
Death / Abstract	Wind / General
Sigh / Abstract	War / General
Pain / Abstract	Apple / General

Sensual word: night

Line:

Alas, this night, the night of rebellion, in this narrow land

No sound but the night watchman's knotted cry (The Tale of Stone and Brick, 31)

Descriptive analysis

'night' symbolizes darkness, grief and turmoil and represents the chaotic state of Afghanistan. The poet evokes a night of rebellion caused by countrymen seeking wealth instead of defending their land and people.

Analysis of the linguistic context

The poet skillfully arranges the words in a syntagmatic chain, creating a coherent and meaningful structure. Words such as "alas," "night," "narrow land," "knotted" and "night watchman" reinforce each other and create a poignant atmosphere. The choice of words with long vowels (e.g., "ā") reflects the poet's grief and creates a meaningful connection between form and content.

Analysis of the non-linguistic context

"Narrow land" refers to Afghanistan, while "night of rebellion" denotes the oppressive atmosphere after the 1960s. the "night watchman" symbolizes a watchman and reinforces the symbolism of a troubled time.

Abstract word: Death

Line:

*One sacrifices for the king, the other for the tower**How quickly death and destruction befall the peasants (Sword and Geography, 125)***Descriptive analysis**

This line criticizes class distinctions and depicts how the rulers exploit the lower classes to achieve their goals.

Analysis of the linguistic context

By using chess pieces in a syntagmatic structure, the poet reflects the ideological and social turmoil in 1960s Afghanistan where war led to destruction.

Analysis of the non-linguistic context

“King” refers to the government officials, “tower” to the opposing factions and “peasants” to the exploited lower classes. The poet criticizes the manipulation of the masses by the elite and points to the ongoing socio-political exploitation.

Marked vocabulary and dominant codes

The marked vocabulary in Kazemi’s poems often draws on religious figures and themes to reflect the socio-political conditions. Table 1-2 lists marked vocabulary, markers and dominant codes.

Table 1-2: Structural codes

Word	Markedness	Markers	Dominant Codes
Pharaoh	Reference to the king of Egypt	Personal	Religion
Cain	Reference to the sons of Adam	Personal	Religion
Uhud	Reference to the battle of Uhud	Spatial	Religion
Army of the Elephant	Reference to Abraha’s war	Temporal	Religion
Kaaba	Reference to the house of Kaba	Spatial	Religion
Companions of Sleep	Reference to the companions of the Cave	Personal	Religion
Three hundred and thirteen	Reference to the companions of the Mahdi	Personal	Religion - Sect

Line:

Are you the legion of Pharaoh or the caravan of Cain?

Pure shame, I don't know what tribe you're from (The Tale of Stone and Brick, 20)

Descriptive analysis

The poet uses “Pharaoh” and “Cain” to criticize the socio-political chaos in 1960s Afghanistan, using prominent religious figures to convey implicit meanings.

Analysis of the linguistic context

Words such as “legion” (with “pharaoh”) and “caravan” (with “Cain”) establish meaningful syntagmatic relationships and evoke urgency or calculated movement. The abbreviated verb form “hail” reinforces the stylistic effect.

Analysis of the non-linguistic context

“Legion of Pharaoh” refers to mujahideen who exploit religion for personal gain, while “Caravan of Cain” refers to officials who commit fratricide for power. The questioning tone emphasises the moral depravity of these groups.

Mythical vocabulary

The mythical vocabulary prevalent in Kazemi's work reflects the turbulent times in which the poet sought refuge in idealized mythical imagery. Table 1-3 shows the mythical vocabulary and references to Shahnameh stories.

Table 1-3: Mythical vocabularys

Word	Myth/Shahnameh Stories
Simurgh	Reference to the tale of Simurgh
Shaghad	Reference to Rustam's half-brother
Esfandiyar / Rustam	Reference to the battle between Rustam and Esfandiyar
White Demon	Reference to Rustam's battle with the white demon / seventh labor
Dragons	Reference to Rustam's battle with the dragon / third labor
Zal	Reference to Rustam's father
Siawash / Kawusan	Reference to the tale of Siawash's death
Unfortunate moon of Samangan	Reference to the acquaintance of Rostam and Tahmina

Line:

Seven rivers from the mountain's side, bearing blood

A seven-headed dragon has reappeared (The Tale of Stone and Brick, 67)

Descriptive analysis

In this line, the political alliances of Afghanistan are depicted as bloodthirsty dragons symbolizing the destructive political factions.

Analysis of the linguistic context

Words such as "river", "mountain", "blood" and "dragon" form a cohesive syntagmatic structure that evokes a vivid, harrowing image of violence.

Analysis of the non-linguistic context

The "dragon" symbolizes malevolent political leaders, while "seven" refers to both mythical sanctity and the seven political parties of the time. "The mountain" stands for Afghanistan and criticizes the destructive effects of these parties.

Analysis of the rhetorical layer

Personification and personal metaphor

Line:

O apple, characterized by the choice of guests

How they divide you, what they bring upon your soul (The Tale of Stone and Brick, 135)

Descriptive analysis

This line depicts the history of Afghanistan, which is characterized by the invasion and partition by the colonial powers.

Analysis of the linguistic context

Linguistic constructions ('apple', 'shape', 'choice', 'guests', 'divide', 'soul') create specific meanings in a syntagmatic chain, reflecting the poet's mental images.

Analysis of the non-linguistic context

"apple" symbolizes Afghanistan, and "guests" refers to the colonial powers. The personification of the apple as a non-human being addressed directly creates a unique metaphorical style.

Allusion

Allusions characterize Kazemi's imagery and draw on well-known religious references. Table 1-4 examines the religious allusions.

Table 1-4: Religious allusions

Poetic Lines	Religious Allusions
God did not alter the fate of a people	Allusion to Verse 11 of Surah Al-Ra'd
You are bitter prey, plunged into Hell	Allusion to Verses 62 and 65 of Surah Al-Saffat
Ahmad has come neither as a leopard nor a jackal	Allusion to Verse 7 of Surah Ibrahim
Even if a call to prayer rises from their throats	Allusion to Verse 19 of Surah Loqman
The nectar bloomed, and the testimony was forgotten	Allusion to Verse 5 of Surah Al-Fatiha
A blessing came and prepared for rebellion	Allusion to Verses 6 and 7 of Surah Al-Alaq

Line:

Even if a call to prayer sounds from their throats

Let it be the cawing of a crow, the braying of a donkey (The Tale of Stone and Brick, 108)

Descriptive analysis

The poet criticizes groups that use religion to oppress and portrays their actions as incompatible with Islamic values.

Analysis of the linguistic context

Words such as 'call to prayer', 'throat', 'croak', 'crow' and 'donkey' create a contrastive syntagmatic structure that highlights the hypocrisy of the oppressors.

Analysis of the non-linguistic context

This line alludes to Surah Luqman (19), in which the Taliban's calls to prayer are portrayed as morally reprehensible, using 'crow' and 'donkey' to evoke revulsion.

Analysis of the ideological layer

Ideology in text and personal style

Kazemi's ideology is implicitly expressed and rooted in metaphorical thinking along the paradigmatic axis. His linguistic forms shift from explicit to implicit meanings, allowing for interpretative depth. Implicit connotations characterize his personal ideological style, in contrast to explicit meanings, which lack distinctiveness. The ideological layer feeds on other linguistic levels, with the poet's covert thinking manifesting itself in lexical and rhetorical concealments. Table 1-5 examines explicit and implicit linguistic markers.

Table 1-5: Ideology in the text

Linguistic Marker	Explicit Connotation	Implicit Connotation
Free Bread	Bread obtained without effort	Political power and positions of parties
Document	Official papers of a contract or agreement	Coalition of the seven political parties
Hollow Nut	An almond without a kernel	A meager share in governmental power
Ghoul	A malevolent mythical creature	Taliban group
Jug	A vessel for fetching water	Mujahideen and Taliban groups
Apple	Fruit	The land of Afghanistan
Ajmal / Athak	Names of Afghan tribes	Ruling classes

Line:

Free bread is a disgrace to the mouth, O people!

The proof of this tale is my blood, O people! (The Tale of Stone and Brick, 68)

Descriptive analysis

This line addresses the unrest in Afghanistan, with the blood symbolizing the sacrifice of the innocent.

Analysis of the linguistic context

The vocative “O” emphasizes the poet’s intention to reveal the truth, with the repeated use emphasizing the urgency. Constructions such as “free bread”, “shame for the mouth” and “my blood” form a meaningful syntagmatic chain that evokes secondary meanings.

Analysis of the non-linguistic context

“Free bread” implicitly refers to unearned political power, “shame” criticizes its illegitimacy, and “proof” refers to the bloodshed caused by political alliances. The pronoun “my” stands for the collective struggle, not for the poet’s individual voice.

Themes

Kazemi’s poems frequently address the social unrest in Afghanistan, often through religious themes, especially the Ashura uprising, a key motif in the post-1960 discourse. His daughter’s play also reflects class differences. Table 1-6 lists the most important themes with sample lines.

Table 1-6: Themes in the poetry of Mohammad Kazem Kazemi

Themes	Poetic Lines
Social turmoil	A land of rainless clouds/ A land of stormless graves
Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan	Hala! Hala, where are you fleeing to? Return / Enter the arena, lest you be considered cowards!
Ashura uprising	O travelers to hell, the hour of repentance has come / Hide your heads, seventy-two blades have come.
Despair	No zeal for the journey remains, no chance for the return / I am utterly despairing, my breath is the last sigh
Genuine struggle	In short, not a single man was found in the entire caravan /

	Or if he was, he was not worthy of the challenge
Unity and solidarity	Call with me all slumbering companions / The only living sound that stirs is our voice
Indifference	No tears flow from my eyes, though my heart is heavy / The fault lies not with my poor eyes, but with wavering feelings
Martyr	And the fire has so consumed your wings and feathers / That we have not even seen your ashes
Nostalgia for homeland	How can I not return when my ditch is there? / How, alas, when my brother's grave is there
Immersion in luxury and decadence	O God! If the shackles of luxury / Had not bound the hands of our archer

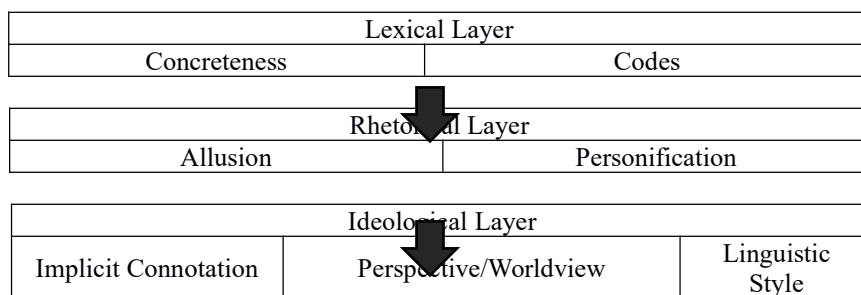
Conclusion

The layered stylistics integrates structuralist and functionalist perspectives and analyzes linguistic markers in their external (non-linguistic) context. The analysis of Kazemi's poems reveals a linguistic style in the lexical layer that favors the concrete, with sensory vocabulary dominating over abstract terms and shaping his style towards linguistic concreteness. This tendency strengthens the specific vocabulary and creates a lively visual language and artistic expression. The specific vocabulary prevails over general terms, as Kazemi uses sense-specific words to achieve a greater effect. These style-forming elements (sensual and specific vocabulary) result in distinct textual codes that are predominantly religious and reflect his worldview. The movement of Kazemi's style on different layers - from concreteness to rhetorical imagery - is his creative fingerprint. The mythical vocabulary gives him symbolic depth and is very common in his work.

On the rhetorical layer, Kazemi emphasizes metaphor and allusion, concealing concrete and marked meanings in metaphorical images, thus promoting paradigmatic thinking. Personification, a frequent device, facilitates the transmission of meanings and gives his style linguistic independence. These images and rhetorical devices form implicit connotations and a personal ideology at the ideological layer.

The analysis shows that concreteness, textual codes, a distinctive vocabulary and personalised imagery stem from Kazemi's worldview. His style is the result of a networked language system in which different levels interact to create meaning-generating and style-forming components. On the ideological layer, Kazemi's language serves his world view, with the networked movement of the linguistic layers shaping his individual style.

Diagram: The movement of linguistic layers in the poetry of Mohammad Kazem Kazemi



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