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## The Thing around Your Neck by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie: A Stylistic Perspective

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**Abstract:** *The study and analysis of texts from a linguistic and literary viewpoint is known as stylistics. This research looked at the fundamental language devices Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie employed in The Thing around Your Neck to communicate with her audience and the larger society. A functional approach was used, in which special attention was paid to the stylistic function, impact, and thematic importance of language elements in literary texts. Morphology, graphology, phonology, syntax, lexico-semantics, and point of view were the stylistic devices used. After using these techniques on the novel, it became clear that language is an essential component of all works of art and that a work's success depends on the writer's skill in manipulating language. Through her systematic use of language, Adichie has made adjustments that have improved understanding of her work.*

**Keywords:** *Stylistics, the Thing around Your Neck, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Language, Linguistics.*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

From a literary and linguistic standpoint, stylistics is the study and analysis of writing. It connects linguistics with literary criticism as a discipline. A stylistic analysis comprises examining in depth the elements of spoken or written texts and identifying the roles they play in the texts' overall structure. Three approaches—identification, description, and purpose—are used to address the features selected from any text. In the analytical process, pure science is used.

According to Carter (1989, p. 162), stylistic use can occur wherever a text's language and its literary components converge. Recognizing how a text functions as a whole is the main goal of stylistic analysis. It seeks to create guiding principles that can account for the specific decisions made by social groupings on the use of language and the creation or interpretation of meaning. To comprehend the potential meanings of a text, stylistics is practised. Most individuals also believe that analysing a piece of writing will reveal its strengths.



The study of stylistics focuses on the effects that writers and speakers want to make on readers and listeners via both literary and non-literary materials. The primary topics it addresses are the concept of style, literary text analysis, and the application of linguistics to both literary and non-literary texts. Each writer has their own distinct style of writing and thinking; therefore, each writer uses language in a distinctive way. Understanding how the language and writing style of the author influence how the work is interpreted is essential to understanding and appreciating a literary work. Stylistics places a strong emphasis on texts and pays close attention to devices and style. As a result, it investigates theoretical topics in conjunction with any applicable practical analyses.

Style analysis not only gives you a clear basis for choosing between different interpretations, but it also helps you become more aware of the techniques used to understand the text you've read.

## **2. METHODOLOGY**

This study will take a functional approach, which means that the way language is used, how it affects the text, and how important it is to the overall theme will be given special attention.

The people and circumstances in the text will be used in the essay to analyse the writer's imagined society. Your neck device will be the main source of information. Additionally, there will be a dependence on secondary resources, including textbooks, a stylistics dictionary, and online sources.

## **3. RESULTS AND FINDINGS**

### **Morphology**

In the text, some morphological formations were used to create certain effects.

### **Abbreviation**

Crystal (2008, p.1) says “As part of the study of word creation, the meaning of abbreviation has been clarified, highlighting the various ways that it might be condensed.”

**Initialism or Alphabetism:** It shows separation and how the first letters of each word are pronounced. Examples are:

- TV - Television (p.1)
- BBC - British Broadcasting Corporation (p. 72)
- CNN - Cable News Network (p.72)
- NTA - Nigerian Television Authority (p. 72)
- NGO - Non-governmental organization (p. 157)
- FM - Frequency Modulation (p. 157)
- DVD - Digital vital Disc (p. 81)
- MBA - Master of Business Administrative (p. 146)

Initialism is used to derive the short forms of words using initials.

**Acronyms** It is the process by which words are made from the first letters of phrases that are pronounced as single words..

- AIDS - Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (p. 119)



NITEL- Nigerian Telecommunication Limited (p. 70)

JAMB - Joint Admission Matriculation Board (p. 170)

SAT - Scholastic Aptitude Test (p. 150)

Acronyms were used for shorter forms of words for brevity.

### **Compounding**

Compounding, according to Adedimeji and Alabi (2003, p. 40), is the blending of two or more words. The combined forms may or may not contain a hyphen. Examples taken from the text include:

Sucked-until-limp (p.22). It means to swallow so much that the mouth feels like an orange.

Mouth-all-open (p. 47). It means laughing with a wide-open mouth.

Trigger-happy-policemen (p. 18). It's like how some police officers are always willing to pull the trigger (shoot).

Detergent – wet floor (p. 16). a floor that has been soap-soaked

Pimple-like (P11). Everything that looks like a zit

Half-smiled (p. 143). To smile half-way.

Yellow-orange-rice (p. 16). It means a type of orange-colored cooked rice.

Half-burned cars (p. 15). Cars that were burned halfway through,

There are also more examples in the text.

Vark - skinned (p. 143), Half - caste (p. 32), Self - contained (p. 32), Tummy - tuck (p. 145),

Matter - of - fact (p. 143), Spear - welding (p. 143)

Compounding entails joining two dependent words together to make a new meaning.

### **Graphology**

Adichie follows the rules of graphology, but sometimes some of these rules are more important than others.

### **Dashes**

The writer applied several dashes in the novel for example.

“I sat before my limp cakes – they were so much thinner than the chewy slabs I made at home – and bland tea that I feared would not get past my throat” (p. 171).

In the sentence above, dashes show that the writer is not happy..

“She dated married men before Obiora – what single ladies in Lagos hadn’t.... She would have considered being his fourth wife – he was a Muslim and couldn’t have proposed – so that he would help her” (p. 31).

In the above, dashes were used to show what was left out.

“Her face has always made people talk – how perfectly oval it is, how the flawless dark skin – but Obiora’s calling her eyes mermaid eyes used to make her feet beautiful” (p. 28).

“And when Obierika died – a man who had been hearty and laughing and drinking palm wine moments before he slumped- she knew that they had killed him with medicine” (p. 202).

In the above sentences, dashes were used to show that sentences were not finished..

“Dozie’s word – hate – floats around in your head now.

In the above example dash was used to show total dislike.

“And when he did offer her the job-after school until six thirty, twelve dollars an hour paid on cash-she still said nothing.” (p.77)



Dashes were used to link the words together. Dashes were used in the texts to show things like omissions, dissatisfaction, and sentences that were left unfinished.

### **Italics**

Italics are used in the text for several reasons;

To separate foreign words;

“Chi M egbuo m” – My God has killed me “(p. 2)

“ekwuzikwana” – Don’t say that” (p.9)

“Kwalikwata – An insect that bites viciously” (p. 12)

“Koboko – A kind of cane made from animal skin” (p.17)

“Eechieteka – A snake called Tomorrow is too far “ (p.188)

“Ada – The first female daughter” (p. 31)

“Ndo – sorry” (p. 2)

For clarity and emphasis

“She cries quietly, her shoulders heaving up and down, not the kind of loud sobbing that the women Chika knows do, the kind that scream Hold me and comfort me because I cannot deal with this alone” (p. 51).

“Nkem Shrugs, smiles in the way that says pay attention to the children first. (p. 39).

The first thing she noticed was that a complete guide to juicing vegetables was no longer on the counter” (p. 75).

“No Kamara felt awkward. Why haven’t you come up since Monday of last week? Why have you eyes not lit up at seeing me?” (p.91)

“In his precociously well formed hand were the words Kamara, I’m glad we are family. Shabbat shalom.” (p. 90).

Italics in the text are used to demarcate foreign words, for clarity and emphasis.

### **Capitalization**

Alabi (2007, p.174) says capitalization of initial letter or whole lexical items is for emphasis.

Examples of capitalization in the text.

“It was the time when signboards all over the university read, in bold letter, SAY NO TO CULTS” (p.7)

“Dusty, damaged cars were piled by the gate, near the sign that said OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER OF POLICE” (p.10)

All the while smoothing the silver sticker on the phone that said NO TO GUNS. (p. 77)

She touched the PROTECT OUR ANGELS sticker that Neil has recently placed on the cradle (p. 82)

“The Kenyan asked and Ujunwa answered with an emphatic NO.” (p. 103)

In this case, capitalization is used to emphasise and separate important words to draw the reader's attention.

### **Ellipses Periods**

There are a lot of ellipses in the text, and they are used for more than one reason. “Have you ever been an artist’s model? Tracy asked “NO...NO”( p. 87).

In this case, the ellipses show that the speaker was surprised by the question. Also in the conversation between Maren and Tracy;

“Oh. Thank you! Maren giggled nervously.



They really are violet.  
Oh... yes, I think so  
Have you ever been an artist model?  
Oh... no... more giggle  
You should think about it, Tracy”( p. 94)

Ellipses here were used to show the state of mind of Maren that she was absent minded.

“We can spend holidays here, together, she says. She stresses the “we”

What..? Why? Obiora asks “ (p. 41)

### **Phonology**

Adichie has used some phonological devices in the data to make the words flow in a rhythmic way.

### **Alliteration**

Obafemi et al. (2002, p.14) define alliteration as the repetition of the initial consonant sound in a sentence. Examples in the data include the following;

“I placed his French fries and fried chicken before him and said “I thought I would have my work permit by now.” (p.182)

“I take walks across the tackled faded field of freedom square with its border of mango trees “(p.70)

“So that he was left in the awkward position of explaining to his family and friends how he suddenly brought a Honda” (p. 160).

“The Kenyan said he would use that for his story-fish in the fancy resort fountain-since he really had no idea what he was going to write” (p.102)

In these four examples the consonant /f/ is repeated.

“She pride herself free and got up from the sofa and the man in the hooded Shirt still seated slapped her behind.” (p. 132).

“You said I will grow a beer belly, abi? “(p. 161)

The consonant /s/ and /b/ were alliterated.

Alliteration repeats initial consonant sound for memorability.

### **Assonance**

Obafemi et al. (2002, p.14) say assonance refers to the similarity of vowel sounds in a line as seen in;

“Abidemi gave him his ard and aid curtly” (p. 160).

“Many years after her husband died, Nwamgba still closed her eye” (p.198)

“When she would walk to the stream humming a song, thinking of the smoky scent of him” (p. 198).

### **Consonance**

Consonance is a half rhyme in which final consonants are repeated but with different proceeding vowel as seen on:

“ He was a crude and rude person from the bush.” (p.162) /Kru:d/ /ru:d/

“ She tickles my testicles.” (p.72) /Tikl /testikil/

“That is double trouble yes “.(p.133) /dbl//trbl/



Alabi (2007:170) says repetition provides musical tone and it aids memorability.

### **Syntax**

In order to emphasise information, the author utilised parenthesis, asyndeton, polysyndeton, and epizeuxis, as we'll see below.

### **Parenthesis**

According to Alabi (2007, p. 163), parenthesis involves inserting some verbal units (more information, an afterthought, or a comment) at a place that disrupts the natural syntactical flow of the phrase.

“And Nkem, although she disliked the woman’s severely shaved eyebrows, had understood” (p. 29).

Here, parenthesis was used to show Nkem’s feelings for the woman.

“The Thing that wrapped itself around your Neck, That nearly choked you before you feel asleep, started to loosen to let go” (p. 125).

Parenthesis here was inserted to tell us how the speaker felt before the problem was solved.

If a fortune teller had told her that she, in the space of a few days, would no longer recognize her life, she would have laughed (p. 131).

Parenthesis here was inserted to show the time frame of the event that was going to occur.

Tell them all about Ugonna, What he was like but don’t overdo it, because everyday people lie to them to get asylum visas (p. 134).

“He sounded like the voices that had been around her, people who had helped her husband’s escape and with Ugonna’s funeral, who had brought her to the embassy” (p. 134)

Parenthesis in this text is used for additional information.

### **Asyndeton**

Asyndeton is defined as "the purposeful absence of conjunction between a succession of linked sentences" by Alabi (2007:164):

“I had thanked them both for everything-finding me a husband, taking me into their home, buying me a new pair of shoes every year” (p. 170).

“He fights repression with the pen, he gives a voice to the voiceless, he makes the world know” (p. 137).

Asyndeton provides a hurried rhythm in the sentence.(Corbett, cited in Alabi 2007, p. 470)

### **Polysyndeton**

According to Alabi (2003, p. 235), polysyndeton is the purposeful employment of several conjunctions, particularly the same one and particularly for coordination. “Everything happened so fast and everybody ran and I was suddenly alone and I didn’t know what I was doing” (p.44).

“I used to look across the hedge and see him and close my eyes and imagine that he was walking toward me, coming to claim me as his” (p.6).

She was walking towards the car and I ran after her, and when I got outside I was not sure what to do, so I picked up a stone near the .... Bush and hurled it at the wind shield of the Volvo. I heard the brittle sound and saw the tiny lines spreading like rays on the glass before I turned and dashed upstairs and locked my self in my room to protect myself from my mother’s fury (p.14).



Polysyndeton in the text was used for foregrounding and co-ordination

### **Anaphora**

Alabi (2003, p.218) defines anaphora as “the repetition of the same word or phrase at the beginnings of successive stages of the chosen pattern” as in:

“He didn’t understand, how lucky he was that the policemen allowed him to come out our food how stupid he’d been to stay out during that night, how uncertain his chances were of being released” (p.13).

“How he had no money and could not buy bathing water how the other men made fun of him or accused him of hiding his son, how the chief ignored him, how he looked frightened and so terribly small” (p.15)

“How’ was foregrounded here to explain the extent of his suffering

Men who praised her baby skin, men who gave her fleeting handouts, men who never proposed because she had gone to secretariat school, not a university “(p.31).

“The streets where she ran blindly, not sure in which direction Nnedi had run, not sure if the man running beside her was a friend or an enemy, not sure, if she should stop and pick up one of the be wildered looking children separated from their mothers in the rush. “(p. 45).

Riots like this were what She read about in newspaper

Riot like this were what happened to other people (p.47)

Anaphora here was used to tell the extent of the riot.

It was easy enough for him to say that, as though she knew how to go about keeping her mind blank, as though it was in her power, as though she invited those images of her son Ugonna’s small, plump body.

“Staid and yet she had been arranging her life around his for three years. Staid, and yet, she had began to bother her uncle, a senator about finding her a job in Abuja after she graduated...staid, and yet she cooked his stews with hot peppers now, the way he liked. Staid, and yet they had spoken often about the children they would have” (p.148)

“staid and yet’ was used by Ukamaka to show her anger, and disappointment when her fiancé said he was no longer interested in the relationship.

Anaphora in the text, was used to show the extent of what the characters were going through and to produce a strong emotional effect.

### **Epizeuxsis**

Alabi (2007, p.165) says that epizeuxsis repeats a word or phrase without any break at all as shown in the following;

“Causing much blowing of horns sorry sir, sorry sir he chanted” (p. 122)

“When he drove you to the airport, you hugged him tight for a long, long moment and then you let go” (p. 127)

“Who probably did not cook with palm oil or know that palm oil when fresh was a bright, bright red and when not fresh, congealed to a lumpy orange”  
(p. 141)

“Edward had just told the Senegalese but he had dreamed of her naked navel, naked navel.”  
(p.111)

“Nobody has fresh ideas. It is university politics, politics, politics, while students buy grades with money and their bodies” (p. 68)

“Dozie’s word – ‘hate’ – floats around in your head now. Hate. Hate. Hate” (p. 197)



Epizeuxsis is employed for direct repetition to lay emphasis.

### **Polyptoton**

Alabi (2007, p.165) says polyptoton repeats words derived from the same root as in the following;

“He gives a voice to the voiceless” (p. 137)

“His sadness saddened her” (p. 211)

Repeated words from the same root gives variety.

### **Lexico – Semantics**

Under lexico semantics, choice of words are obtained through devices such as the use of hypernyms, figures of speech and proverbs, collocates and exact repetitions.

### **Hypernyms**

Hypernyms entails the relation which holds between specific (subordinate or hyponymic) items and a more general lexeme as in:

HYPERNYM - News papers

CO-HYPONYMS - The guardian, The news, The vanguards, The New Nigeria and Evening News. (pp. 128-137)

HYPERNYM - African Citizens

CO-HYPONYMS - The Zimbabwean, Tanzanian, white South African, Senegalese and Nigerian.(p.97)

HYPERNYM - Cultists

CO-HYPONYMS - The Black Axe, The Buccaneers and The pirates (p.7)

Hypernymy/Hyponymy is common where a passage of text is being developed by means of elaboration.

### **Figures of Speech**

#### **Simile**

A simile is a comparison of two unrelated things that is often made using the terms "as" or "like," according to Obafemi et al. (2002, p. 13). Here are a few quotes from the text:

“We said nothing about the windshield, although the cracks had spread out like ripples on a frozen stream” (p. 14)

This passage compares the windshield crack to the waves on a frozen brook.

“The house Obiora rented, and would later buy, smelled fresh like green tea and the short drive way was thick with gravel” (p. 24).

“Here, the house was likened to green tea.

She will imagine the burning cars dotting the city like picnic bonfires” (p. 46)

“Here, The flame of the burning car was likened to that of picnic bonfires.

My nipple is burning like peppers” (p. 49)

Here, the woman’s nipple was burning as hot as pepper.

“Mouth that told story of sleep, that felt clammy like, the old chewing gum, that smelled like the rubbish dumps at Ogbete market” (p. 169)





Here, Agatha was showing her dislike for Ofodile, her husband and compares the odour of his mouth to a rubbish dump.

In the text, simile was used for comparison and it give liveliness to words.

### **Personification**

Obafemi et al. (2002, p.13) define personification as a figure of speech in which human qualities are attributed to inanimate objects. There are two examples in the text. These are:

The streets are silent. The sun is falling (p. 53)

A human attribute has been giving to the sun in the text.

A breathing sidewalk (p. 130)

A sidewalk has been giving a human attribute of breathing.

Personification in the examples stirs the emotion.

### **Hyperbole**

According to Alabi (2007, p.168), hyperbole is the use of exaggerated language like this:

You must be bored to death in that apartment (p. 180)

It is an exaggeration to say one is bored to death.

My father driving inordinately fast, as my heart was beating (p. 19)

This statement is an exaggeration because a car cannot be driven as fast as a heartbeat.

Hyperbole in this text is used for exaggeration.

### **Onomatopoeia**

According to Obafemi et al. (2002, p. 14), onomatopoeia is a word whose sound communicates its meaning.

“ And the brr-brr-brr vibration of swishing blood going the wrong way” (p. 49)

“I have been talking to you and you just look at me like a moo-moo and now ignored her” (p. 129)

“It made you think of her laugh, a ho-ho-ho laugh that started deep inside her belly “(p. 190)

“And she continued to do so flick – flick – flick while Anikwena talked about winning souls” (p. 211)

Onomatopoeia gives sense to the reader through the sounds.

### **Collocates**

Collocates are associations between items or terms and they have the tendency to co-occur. Examples in the text are:

My mother eyed me up and down and headed for the door (p. 14)

Yet the door downstairs was opening and closing(p.67)

To know that America was give and take. (p.116)

His Igbo was even-tone, his voice was rising and falling . (p. 15)

The underlined collocates are means of achieving cohesion in the text.

### **Exact Repetitions**

Some words in the text were repeated exactly as exemplified next.

It was only Chinwe she felt she could really talk to. Chinwe was the friend who had never told her she was foolish to wait for Tobechei, and if she told Chinwe how she did not like her



bed but did not want to get up from it in the morning Chinwe would understand her bewilderment.”

“She called Chinwe and Chinwe began to cry after the first hello and Kedu.”(p.86)

“Chinwe” was repeated six times to show how important Chinwe was to her.

“You” was used two hundred and fifty times in chapter seven of ‘The Thing Around Your Neck’. It was also used one hundred and fifty times in chapter 11 of Tomorrow is too far”.

The writer foregrounded “You” in these chapters because she could have used “I” but “you” was used to retain the reader’s attention and make the reader feel as if he/she is part of the story.

“It was grace” was also repeated 11 times between pages 216-218 for emphasis and to show how important Grace was to Nwamgba her grandmother.

Repetitions generally are used for foregrounding and in those cases for emphasis.

### **3.7 Proverbs**

In this text, we have occurrences of proverbs which help in decoding meaning although the writer used proverbs thrice, as follows;

A famous animal does not always full the hunter’s basket (p.61)

Does one throw away a guinea fowl’s egg? (p. 184)

It was a piece of advice for another character not to miss the great opportunity before her.

“She could not complain about not having shoes when the person she was talking to had no legs” (p. 86)

Here it means that she was being appreciative of her condition despite the fact that it was an unpleasant one.

Proverbs are generally used to give advice and consolations to people and say things that are generally true.

### **Point of View**

The work, which is divided into twelve brilliant episodes, offers a complex point of view. The author used the first person point of view in chapters 1 "Cell One," 4 "Ghost," and 10 "The Arrangers of Marriage," in which one of the text's participating characters is also the narrator, informing the reader what the other characters are thinking. The author used the Limited omniscient point of view in chapters 7 "The Thing Around Your Neck" and II "Tomorrow is Too Far," where one of the characters in the novel explains the events. The character she used then became the third person, but in these chapters "you" was used instead of "I," and Adichie did it on purpose to keep the reader's interest by making the reader feel as if she/he is a part of the tale. The author used the Omniscient point of view in chapters 2 "Imitation", 3 "A Private Experience", 5 "on Monday of Last Week", 6 "Jumping Monkey Hill", 8 "The American Embassy", 9 "The Shivering" and II "The Head Strong Historian" where the author goes into the character's activities to say everything, she has a total grasp of the characters activities. Because of her distinct narrating style, the narrative becomes more difficult and engaging. The author used the multiple point of view storytelling style, in which the story was told from the perspectives of several individuals, so that the reader was not confined by the attitude of one narrator.

### **Findings:**



After applying the theory and its fundamental elements to the data analysis, it was discovered that Adichie deliberately manipulated language to create stylistic effects that contributed to the text's meaning.

Through the use of abbreviation, which is used to derive short forms of words, and compounding, which is used to join two or more independent words, words are structured in a meaningful way to attract the reader's attention. This structure also helps us understand how words are organised in the word formation process.

The stylistic effects of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's use of language are also demonstrated graphologically through the use of italics to denote foreign words, for clarity and emphasis, and ellipsis periods to depict the characters' emotions and emotional disorder. In the text, dashes were also used to connect words and indicate incomplete sentences, while capitalization was used to emphasise certain phrases.

Other interesting facts about Adichie's use of phonology are that she uses alliteration, assonance, and consonance to create tone and make words easy to remember. During the course of our analysis, we also discovered that Adichie utilised the syntactic elements of repetition, parentheses, and word omission. Asyndeton does not use conjunctions, whereas polysyndeton does. The lexical effects of anaphora, epizeuxis, and polysyndeton are powerful.

During the course of this analysis, it was discovered that several stylistic effects are produced through the manipulation of language under lexico-semantics. A lexico-semantic analysis of this work examined the use of hypernymy to elaborate and expound, collocates for completeness, similes for direct comparison, personification to evoke emotion, hyperbole for exaggeration, and onomatopoeia to convey meaning through sounds to the reader. It was determined that Adichie used more similes than any other figure of speech in the text. To make the reader feel like he or she is a part of the story, the word "you" was repeated 250 times in chapter seven and 150 times in chapter eleven. In the final chapter of the text, between pages 216-218, the phrase "it was grace" is repeated eleven times to demonstrate Grace's significance to Nwamagba (her grandmother) and to emphasise the transformation she brought about.

One hundred ninety dashes were used in the text to separate words and indicate unfinished sentences. Multiple point of view was the narrative technique used by Adichie because the story was told from the perspectives of different characters, making this work of art creative and original because the reader is not limited to the perspective of one narrator.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

The stylistic elements included in *The Thing Around Your Neck* have been highlighted using passage samples. According to this study, Adichie has been successful in changing language in a way that produces aesthetic consequences. Because it is so new, *The Thing Around Your Neck* has not received much attention. Therefore, we advise forthcoming academics to focus on other areas of the text that have not been studied, such as "a feminist analysis of the novel," which would be a good place to start, and "oral aesthetics in the novel," which may make for interesting research.

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