

# The contextualization of the parables english language essay

[Linguistics](#), [English](#)



### Chapter 3

This research is a qualitative research. The researcher will carry out library research and internet research. It largely depends on the interpretation of data, the interpretation can be quite subjective, and it may therefore vary from person to person. Interpretation cannot be entirely avoided in linguistic analysis. The reason why quantitative analysis is not being used here is because it relies on counting the collected data, and numerical figures, usually collated by using a statistical approach. However, not all data which involves language or texts can be appropriately analyzed by counting e. g. a single occurrence of a linguistic feature may be more significant than numerous occurrences of another feature. As mentioned in earlier chapters the parables chosen for stylistic analysis and contextualization are those that are common to the three Synoptic Gospels. The researcher has divided the study of the parables into two parts. In the first part of the study the parables that are common in the three synoptic gospels will be stylistically analyzed, this will help us to see how each account of the parable is linguistically similar or different from each other, as well as determining the perspective of each account. The second part of the study will deal with the contextualization of the parables. Each parable will be contextualized in the current Pakistani context. The purpose of this endeavor is to see how the Parables of Christ are applicable to the Pakistani setting and context. It should be kept in mind that the aim of the researcher is not to question if the parables of Christ are applicable to the Pakistani Context and situation but to see how these parables can be contextualized according to the Pakistani context, especially in the context of the Pakistani Christians. For the first part

of the study the researcher will follow the outline of stylistic analysis provided in the Article on English Language Stylistic Analysis. Furthermore the next part of the thesis which deals with the contextualization of the chosen parables will put the parable in the light of the current Pakistani situation—the message of the parable and how it applies to the Pakistani context.

### **3. 2 Operational Framework**

The researcher has selected principles adapted by Sheila E. McGinn from Jeffrey S. Shiker's Guidelines for Synoptic Analysis for her preliminary approaches. Some of these (such as No 1, " Read through the passage one Gospel at a time", or No 2, " Read across the passage one verse at a time...") seemed rather obvious, so she has not included all of the guidelines here. In the final analysis, all attempts at reading the parables have the same purpose of understanding them, whether the approach is stylistic or otherwise. These guidelines are for the totality of texts (which, of course, cannot be avoided if the matter is to be contextualized), but the researcher's first concern is for the parables. She has therefore selected and adapted what she found useful for her purpose: Compare and contrast the exact wording of the parallel passages you are examining . The use of colored pencils makes it easier to highlight similarities and differences between the various Gospels...the following are suggested: a. red: material in common across Matthew, Mark & Luke (triple tradition)b. blue: material common only between Matthew and Luke (' Q' material)c. green: material common only between Matthew and Markd. orange: material common only between Luke

and Marke. brown: material common between the Synoptic Gospels and Johnf. unbroken line for exact agreement in order and wordingg. use a broken line for agreements that aren't quite exact(Important Note: It will be seen that the researcher has presented her material much in accordance with these recommendations, but without the colour-coding suggested by this author)It will be noted what the most significant differences between the various Gospels are in how they relate the parallel passage. Part of the process entails deciding what counts as a major difference and what is a minor difference such as, What is the larger literary context in which the passage occurs in each Gospel? Sometimes the context will be very similar in each Gospel, sometimes very different...to check this it will be seen what comes before and after the parable. Is it closely connected to what comes before and after? Does it continue a discussion or argument? Does it move on to another topic? Does it begin a new section, or cap off a section? In general, how does this passage fit into each Gospel as a whole? It will also be noted what is the literary structure of the parable in each Gospel. Where and how do thoughts begin and end? What are the major and minor divisions within the parable? Where does the emphasis fall? What is the content of the parable? What is being said? Who are the main characters? What is the implied moral or lesson if any?(Important Note: the researcher has avoided this writer's recommendation [in No 10] that a redactive criticism be made to determine if differences introduced by the writers of the Gospels indicate their own agendas or theologies. Such an activity would be speculative and controversial). The above mentioned points of analysis are discussed below:

### **3. 2. 1 What it is**

This part of the analysis will point out what kind of text has been taken up for analysis. A text can be of different kinds such as: Newspaper, article, diary, advertisement, political manifesto, sermon, a literary text such as short story, fable, parable, play, novel, poem, religious texts. Under this heading it will be seen if the text can be termed as a 'genre' and whether there are any recognizable genre conventions, or does the writer break away from conventions?

### **3. 2. 2 Content**

Under this heading the researcher will discuss 'What is it (the parable) about? Here it will be analyzed what the text deals with, what it contains.

### **3. 2. 3 Intention/Purpose**

One of the most important questions about any text is the reason or the purpose behind it. Why was a certain text written? What is its purpose or the intentions behind it? There can be any number of purposes of a text such as to entertain, or to persuade, to instruct, or to advise, or inform. Why some text can affect the language. For example, if the purpose of the text is to persuade then the text may use emotive, connotative language, and make value judgments. But on the other hand if the text is informative, then concrete nouns and factual adjectives might be used in greater number in the text. If its function is to be instructive, then there would be the use of imperative verbs. A story may have intensifiers (i. e. a word, esp. an adjective or adverb, that has little semantic content of its own but that serves to intensify the meaning of the word or phrase that it

modifies: awfully and up are intensifiers in the phrases awfully sorry and cluttered up { <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/intensifier> }), and the nouns may be heavily modified. There maybe excessive use of verbs where there is action to be shown; an argumentative text may have tentative modals. It is to be remembered that a text may have more than one intention. The parables of Christ too have different intentions and purposes for which different techniques have been employed. Some are descriptive; others are imperative; then there are those that are narrative in nature and so on. These will be analyzed in the upcoming chapter.

### **3. 2. 4 Audience/Readers**

The next important aspect to analyze a text is to see who it has been written for i. e. the audience or the readers. The things which are to be taken under consideration for analysis under this heading are: Age, sex, and level of education of the audience; whether the text is for a specialist market? How does the intended audience affect the language? How much knowledge is assumed? What other values/attitudes of the reader are assumed? The register? Once the target group is identified then the purpose of using a particular type of language variety can also be determined. Since the parables of Christ belong to a religious text therefore what kind of language is to be expected from it? The other interesting factor is finding who were the original audience of the parables and who are the present audience.

### **3. 2. 5 Structure & Form**

The points that will be analyzed under the heading of structure will be: How the content has been organized; or whether it is set chronologically; whether

it has flashbacks; or is there a logical development of argument (if, so, therefore, thus, because)? Is there a juxtaposition of ideas? In what manner is the text introduced and how is it concluded. Furthermore, under this heading the parables texts would be analyzed for its surface and Internal or deep structure, textual cohesion, reiteration (recurrence), ellipsis (short forms), substitution, collocation or deviant collocation.

### **3. 2. 6 Voice of the Author**

During the analysis of any text the presence of the author or how he has conveyed the message is very important. While studying each parable one interesting factor will be the study of the authorial voice. The researcher will look at how conscious is the reader of the author? What perspective does the writer take - first, second or third person? Is the tone conversational or confessional etc.? Does the writer create a persona? Is s/he subjective or objective? Does the author use foregrounding? And so on. Some parables are aphoristic in nature, some are narrative, in some parables the presence of the gospel writer is strong and in others the direct speech by Jesus has been emphasized. So analyzing the authorial voice of each parable will make an interesting study.

### **3. 2. 7 Style**

While analyzing a text for style the following things are taken into consideration: Whether the style is formal or informal; what characterizes the lexis (Latinized, verbose, taciturn, field specific, laconic); the syntax, are the sentences simple or complex, or is there an unusual word order; whether the text is a dialogue or monologue; whether it is direct or reported speech;

if the nouns pre modified or post modified. It will also include the tone of the text—ironic, humorous, sad angry, or patronizing; and whether the tone remains consistent or does it shift; does the text make use of shocking, taboo language; and what kind of rhetorical devices and literary techniques if any have been used; is the voice active or passive; etc.

### **3. 2. 8 Literary terms and figurative language**

Under this heading the researcher will identify any literary devices or figurative language that have been used such as the use of imagery, metaphor or simile, parallelism, personification, puns, euphemisms, archaic language, affixation, use of quotations, ambiguity, idiom, clichés, stream of consciousness, phonological features, foreign words, nonsense words, rhythm, meter, anecdotes, didactic, satire, hyperbole, vernacular, coherence, sarcasm, disclaimers, etc. etc.

### **3. 2. 9 Argument**

What kind of argument does each parable give? Is it persuasive, or political, is it part of a sermon, or an advertisement. Can any evidence of a bias be traced, or does the writer make concessions to the other side of the argument? Does the writer anticipate the other side of the argument? Is there a plea to or sense of camaraderie with the audience/readers? Is the lexis sophisticated?

### **3. 2. 10 Social Issues**

This part of the analysis is very important, because it deals with the circumstances under which the parables were told and who they were told to



and who they were meant for. This section deals with questions such as: Which strata of society does the text address? What kind of social issues does it portray or question? Is it for a specific class, gender, race, or age? Since these parables come from a religious text therefore their intention is reformative, informative and instructive in nature. And thus they address various social issues that may lead to belief or faith, and are religious or moral in nature.

### **3. 3 Outline for the Contextualization of the Parables**

After discussing the frame work for the stylistic analysis of the parables the framework for the Contextualization of the parables will be discuss in detail. There has always been a need for any religious text to be explained in easier words to the common man. For this purpose many a scholars and religious elders have poured into each and every detail of the ways in which to make the text understandable and acceptable to the masses. If there had not been those who toiled hard to correlate the religious teachings with the language and culture of the crowd and congregation to which it was to be taught then it could be speculated that most probably more than half the religions that still exist today would have disappeared. In this regard there have been numerous scholars who have tried to interpret and contextualize the contents of a religious text. This is a great service they have rendered to their community. Mainly for the purpose of this study the text of the parables is treated as literary text. The term ' literature' is itself difficult to define, as much of what we see in literary writings can also be seen in everyday speech. The differences if any lie more in non-representative features of

language and also in selection, organization and presentation than in subject or content. The sonority and musicality of some passages in the text confirm their literary quality, especially when we see how much of the bible has been taken into everyday speech in English. I have treated the parables as 'text' in English to be analyzed as far as possible with insights derived from the field of linguistics. These aspects will be dealt with in the previous section. However, for the purpose of the Contextualization of the parables I hope to be able to go beyond counting parts of speech to a level of sensitive qualitative interpretation, and as far as possible to relate what I see to this country, in which Christians form a minority. Some of the recommendations of Critical Discourse Analysis (Blommaert, J., Discourse, 24, 25) have also been adopted, namely, that social factors be taken into account, and that the interpreter can (and should) take sides: "...but apart from (passive) subversion, CDA also advocates (active) intervention in the social conventions it critically investigates...{it} opts for a prescriptive stance: CDA should make proposals for change and suggest corrections to particular discourses..." For obvious reasons, corrections or changes cannot be made in biblical discourse. However, suggestions based on interpretations of the parables can be made for some of the social and public discourses to which Christians living today in a minority situation are exposed, and this I have tried to do. This second activity is based on my own subjective estimation of things. I have no text for the delineation or definition of such discourses, but I do have my own daily experience, and that of my fellow Christians, to draw upon. In general, the environment minority Christians living in their own country find today leaves much to be desired. I have not tried to answer

certain primary questions which are often asked. For example, why did the early compilers of the Bible include four accounts? And why only these four accounts when other accounts were said to exist? Would one not have been enough? If the similarities are very strong, what need was there to repeat the story four times? If there are differences, why should there be any differences when the source action was the same? Probably no one is competent to answer such questions. For what they did, the early compilers no doubt had defensible yardsticks, good enough for generation after generation of followers to accept without demur. Second guessing the motives or actions of people who lived two millenia ago is a pointless and highly speculative exercise. It does not have a place in this study because it falls outside the parameters of my research. Having established the framework for the Stylistic Analysis and the Contextualization of the Parables I will now move on to discuss an important issue in Chapter 4 regarding the synoptic gospels, because it closely relates to the parables selected for this study. Since the parables chosen for this study are synoptic parables those that are common to all synoptic Gospels thus it becomes necessary to give a little background to this phenomenon known as the Synoptic Problem.