

The Lack of Communication in Grace Paley's "Mother": A Stylistic Analysis

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Abstract

Öz

Stylistics is a study on what effect is created on the hearer or on the reader via a specific use of language; therefore, a stylistic analysis of an everyday conversation or a literary work, such as a poem, a play, a short story and/or a novel aims at delineating the message conveyed or themes intimated. In this sense, stylistic analysis of a text illustrates what is meant by means of that specific use of language, and it makes a literary work more understandable for the reader as it discloses its implicit themes that are not stated directly in a poet's or writer's expressions and her/his use of language. Stream-of-consciousness technique, used mostly in 20th century works, is used in Grace Paley's short story entitled "Mother". The story is about the narrator's recollections of her mother and her family conveyed through the stream-of-consciousness technique. Through a stylistic analysis, which involves an analysis of discourse situation, point of view, average sentence length, lexis, grammar, figures of speech, and speech presentation, this study aims to unveil the implications of the feelings of the mother as well as the daughter and familial distance, all of which contribute to the major theme of lack of communication in the family as represented in the story.

Keywords: Stylistics, Prose, Short Story, Paley: "Mother".

Grace Paley'nin "Mother" Başlıklı Öyküsünde İletişimsizlik: Biçembilimsel İnceleme

Dilin nasıl kullanıldığını, bu yolla dinleyicide ya da okurda nasıl bir etki yaratılıp kendisine hangi anlamın verilmeye çalışıldığını inceleyen bilim dalı olan biçembilim, günlük yaşamda ya da şiir, düzyazı, oyun gibi edebi türlerde geçen temaları ya da aktarılan mesajı bu metinlerde kullanılan belli dil yapılarıyla gözler önüne sermeyi amaçlar. Biçembilim, edebi eser incelemelerinde, metni daha anlaşılır kılar ve şair ya da yazarın seçtiği ifadelerle ve dili kullanım şekliyle metinde alenen verilmesi de varlığını yazarın üslubuyla hissettiren temayı ortaya koyar. 20. yüzyıl edebi eserlerinde sıklıkla kullanılan bilinç akışı tekniği, Grace Paley'nin "Mother" başlıklı öyküsünde de görülmektedir. Öykü, anlatıcının, annesi ve ailesine dair anılarını bilinç akışı tekniği yardımıyla aktarmasını ele alır. Bu çalışma, metindeki karşılıklı konuşma durumlarının, anlatıcının bakış açısının, metindeki cümle sayısının, metnin kelime ve dilbilgisel özelliklerinin, söz sanatlarının ve metinde kullanılan hareket ve söz bildiren cümlelerin biçembilimsel analiziyle, öyküde anlatıcının üstü kapalı vermeye çalıştığı ailede iletişimsizlik temasını ve bu temanın anlaşılmasını sağlayan anne ve çocuğun karşılıklı duygularını ve aile fertlerindeki uzaklığı ortaya koymayı amaçlamaktadır.

Anahtar kelimeler: Biçembilim, Düz Yazı, Öykü, Paley: "Mother".

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Introduction

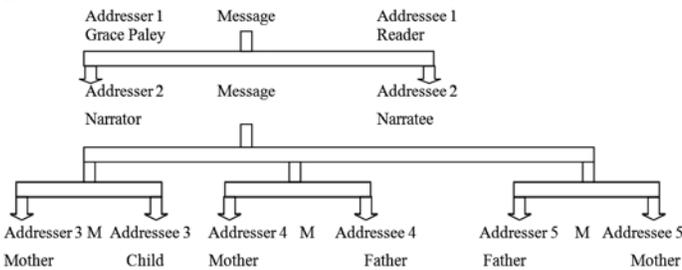
The modern American author Grace Paley’s short story entitled “Mother” deals with a child who remembers her dead mother via a song she hears on the radio. The story is narrated by the grown up daughter. She wants her mother to see, years after her death, that she can take care of herself, and that her mother’s doubts about her child’s future have not come true. The story is divided into two parts: in the first part “Then she died” (Paley, 2006, 104), the child talks about how much she longs to see her mother at different places of the house, in many different doorways, and in many other rooms. In the second part, she recognizes that the requests of her mother are not fulfilled both by herself and by her father. With this recognition, the story ends with the repetition of the phrase “Then she died” (104). Drawing upon the lexical, grammatical, and figurative effects in the story, the aim of this paper is to depict, through the analysis of discourse situation, point of view, average sentence length, lexis, grammar, figures of speech, and speech presentation, how the specific use of language unravels the mother’s worries about her child, distance in the family, sense of missing the mother, all of which contribute to the theme of lack of communication among family members.

1. Worries of the Mother

As stated above, the story is divided into two parts: the first part reveals the worries of the mother about her daughter’s future and political interest. So as to understand the implicit theme of lack of communication in the family, these worries will be stylistically analysed. One way to examine these worries is to look at the discourse situation between the mother and the child.

For Mick Short, a discourse situation is a situation mirroring “a conversation between two people” (Short, 1996, 39). It includes an addresser, a message, and an addressee (39). That is, in a discourse situation analysis, a conversation between two people is taken into consideration: these two people include the one who sends a message and the one who receives it. The discourse situation of the story is as in figure 1.

Figure 1: Discourse Situation of the Story



As shown in Figure 1, the story includes different discourse situations transmitting messages not only from the writer to the reader and from the narrator to the narratee, but also from one character to the other. These messages are sometimes stated clearly by the characters, and they are sometimes implied. In other words, the utterances of the characters become the explicit articulations of implicit meanings in the story. For this reason, the discourse situation of the story should be analysed for the apprehension of the implicit messages and meaning given in the story.

The discourse situation between the mother and her daughter, the third discourse situation, manifests mother's anxieties about her daughter. An example of the mother and child discourse situation illustrating these anxieties is as follows:

She said sadly, If you come home at 4 a.m. when you're seventeen, what time will you come home when you're twenty? (Paley, 2006, 104)

The extract exemplifies the message transmitted from the narrator, the grownup child, to the narratee, and it is understood from the statement "She said sadly" (104). In this speech, the aim of the mother is to voice her concerns about her child's future. The daughter comes home late, and the mother is worried about her and thinks that she will come much later than she does in her seventeen. That is, the discourse situation between the mother and the child centres on the mother's worries about her daughter. As an addresser, the mother sends the addressee the message that she is anxious of her daughter's future; the addressee is the daughter in this discourse situation. In this sense, the discourse situation between the mother and the child becomes a medium of lack of communication as the child pays little attention to what her mother tells.

To understand the worries of the mother about her daughter, the story can also be stylistically analysed in the light of different ideological viewpoints depicted in the story. The mother's disapproval of her daughter's ideological views reveals itself in her words: "Go to sleep for godsakes, you damn fool, you and your Communist ideas. We saw them already, Papa and me, in 1905. We guessed it all." (104) The mother and the father have already experienced the harsh consequences of the 1905 Russian Revolution; therefore, the mother does not approve of her daughter's declaration of a "political manifesto attacking the family's position on the Soviet Union" (104). Thus, this extract revealing different ideological viewpoints between the mother and her daughter unravels the mother's worries about her daughter. She is concerned about her daughter, who, just like the people attacking the tsarist system, may suffer from the harsh consequences of her political acts.

Another way to detect how much the mother is worried about her daughter is to analyse the text lexically and grammatically; that is, the use of abstract nouns and declarative,

interrogative, and complex sentences as well as the places of the phrases in a sentence and tense shifts in the story elucidate the sense of uneasiness felt by the mother. Lexically, the abstract nouns, such as “humor” and “meanness” (104), are used to indicate the inner thoughts of the narrator. She thinks her mother is really concerned about her, so to indicate the worries of the mother, the narrator makes use of such abstract nouns. Grammatically, the sentence type that is mostly used in the story is declarative as the narrator tells the readers the worries of her mother. An example of a declarative sentence delineating the worries of the mother is as follows: “She would not be present, she thought, when I was twenty.” (104) There are also interrogative sentences like “What will become of you,” (104) to reflect the worries of the mother about her daughter. The existence of the complex sentences, such as “She said sadly, If you come home at 4 a.m. when you’re seventeen, what time will you come home when you’re twenty,” (104), also expounds the worries of the mother as well as the conflicts in the family. The embedded subordinate clauses such as “If you come home at 4 a.m. when you’re seventeen” also reflect the worries of the mother. As the mother speaks while thinking, the sentence that she makes becomes complex: while speaking, she reveals her worries which are not trivial for her. She thinks about many issues at the same time, so her speech reflects these different issues with various grammatical structures that make her sentences complex. She knows that she will not be alive when her daughter is twenty, and as she thinks of her death and her daughter’s future concurrently, her sentences become complex reflecting these worries. Similarly, to reflect the mother’s worries more emphatically, Paley deviates the grammatical sentence order in the sentence “She would not be present, she thought, when I was twenty” to foreground the mother’s worries about her child. That is, the expression “she thought” does not reflect her worries as much as “She would not be present”. Therefore, “She would not be present” becomes the first expression stated in the daughter’s narration. Additionally, some of the sentences deviate from the common tense use in the narration: the story is narrated through the use of past tenses. The sentences that are not stated in the past belongs, in fact, to the third discourse level, and they are the inner thoughts of the characters. They are stated in a new sentence although they are dependent on the reporting verb of the preceding sentences as in the examples: “By God! I said, I understand that song” or “At the door of the kitchen she said, You never finish your lunch. You run around senselessly. What will become of you?” (104) That is, the sentences that are stated either in present simple or in future are dependent on the verbs “said”, which come before the expressions stated in the present or future tenses. By means of this deviation, the narrator reflects the mother’s viewpoint immediately without hesitation as the mother does not have much time to live, so this deviation functions as a way of depicting the worries of the mother for her daughter.

2. Familial Distance in the Light of Spatial, Temporal, and Social Distance

Point of view of a text demonstrates “from what perspective [a text] is described” (256). A text may have different viewpoints such as spatial, temporal, social, ideological, and conceptual. (263-268) Besides depicting the ideological viewpoints of the mother and the daughter, Paley’s story depicts the spatial and temporal viewpoints unravelling the distance among the family members. As the implicit theme of lack of communication is adumbrated by the familial distance in the story, these viewpoints will be elaborated too.

The spatial point of view depicts a spatial distance between characters and/or objects through the pointing demonstrative expressions, such as “this”, “that”, “these”, and “those”, deictic adverbs, such as “here” and “there”, and deictic verbs, such as “come” and “go”. (270) That is, “[d]eictic information [...] give[s] the reader a very rich mental representation of the setting of a novel or a story” (Verdonkand Weber, 2002, 185). In a similar fashion, the setting in Paley’s story is recognized through the spatial point of view of the story: the story is set in the 20th century and in a family house. It is told by the viewpoint of the narrator who sits in different rooms and who sees her mother in different doorways. An example of a spatial viewpoint demonstrating the distance among the family members is as follows: “As a matter of fact, she did stand frequently in various doorways looking at me. She stood one day, just so, at the front door, the darkness of the hallway behind her.” (Paley, 2006, 104) The mother who stands at the front door with “the darkness of the hallway behind her” is not close to the narrator or is not in the same room with her (104). She stands in the hallway that is illuminated by the light of the narrator’s room. Spatial distance is also perceived when the mother is seen standing at the door of the kitchen that is far from where the narrator is situated. Its example is as follows: “At the door of the kitchen she said, “You never finish your lunch. You run around senselessly. What will become of you?” (104) Still other times, the mother is seen

in a great number of places – in the dining room with [the narrator’s aunts], at the window looking up and down the block, in the country garden among zinnias and marigolds, in the living room with [her] father. (104)

Strictly speaking, the mother is, almost all the time, seen far from the narrator to foreground that she is dead and remembered after her death. In this sense, the spatial distance between the mother and the daughter foregrounds that they are not so close to one another as the daughter hears what the mother as a message-sender says, but she does not fulfil her requests. That is, there is not much understanding between them. The daughter understands only after her mother’s death that she expects her requests to be fulfilled.

Another viewpoint limning the familial distance observed in the story is the temporal one. The temporal viewpoint can be observed through the shifts of grammatical tenses and

different tense markers such as “in the past”, “today”, “now”, “soon”, and the like. (Short, 1996, 270) Paley’s story is written in the past tenses as the daughter, who is also the narrator who narrates when she is more grown up, narrates her past memories of her mother, who is dead. She begins narrating by using the past continuous tense and then goes on with the simple past tense. When she articulates how much she yearns for her mother, she uses the present perfect tense because she still misses her:

One day I was listening to the AM radio. I heard a song: “Oh, I Long to See My Mother in the Doorway.” By God! I said, I understand that song. I have often longed to see my mother in the doorway. As a matter of fact, she did stand frequently in various doorways looking at me. (Paley, 2006, 104)

Different uses of the past tenses extend the temporal deictic distance between the reader and the actions taking place in the story. As the mother is dead, actions are stated by means of the past tenses. The use of past tenses also manifests the lack of interaction among the family members: the mother’s message that she is worried about her daughter is underestimated by her daughter; when the mother is alive, the child does not understand the worries of her mother as much as she does when the mother is dead.

3. Symbols of Distance and Death

The story mostly includes the doorway image to symbolize the mother’s death. As can be seen in the above quotation, she is at “the front door” (104), another time she stands “in the doorway of [the narrator’s] room.” (104), and she is also seen “[a]t the door of a kitchen” (104). What is significant here is that she is not in the same room with the narrator, and she is not much closer to her spatially. That is why, the reader may get the sense that the mother will not live much longer; instead, she will die soon as she is outside the room where the narrator is. She is not close to the narrator; she is always represented in a doorway which signifies her death. The doorways become a transition from this world to the other: as the child will not die and it is the mother who will die, the mother is not in the same room with the child. In this sense, the rooms the child is in represent this world, while the doorways can be interpreted as passages that will separate the mother from her daughter and her family. Therefore, the doorways in the story are the metaphors of the mother’s death as well as the distance between the mother and her daughter. In other words, physical distance depicted through the doorway symbol unravels the lack of understanding, interaction, and communication among family members.

There is also irony that is used in the story to depict the distance between the mother and the father, and this distance indicates the theme of lack of communication:

The basis of irony as applied to language is the human disposition to adopt a pose, or to put on a mask. The notion of a disguise is particularly pertinent, as it brings out [a] the element of concealment in irony, and [b] the fact that what is concealed is meant to be found out. (Leech, 1969, 171)

The most specific example of irony in the story is perceived in the father-mother discourse situation: When the mother wants to talk with the father, he replies her as follows:

I'm tired [and] Can't you see? I saw maybe thirty people today. All sick, all talk talk talk talk. Listen to the music [...]. I believe you once had perfect pitch. I'm tired [...]
(Paley, 2006, 104)

What he does is just replying the mother by repeating the word “talk” rather than confabulating and communicating with her. Although he talks to her and utters the word “talk” four times successively, he does not offer a solution to the problem of lack of communication in the family. That is, the father-mother discourse situation, his words in his reply, is the mask and disguise of lack of communication in the mother-father relationship. There seems to be a conversation, yet it does not convey a solution to the problem of lack of communication.

4. Missing the Mother

The first part of the story which underscores how much the daughter misses her dead mother should be taken into consideration to delineate the implicit meaning of the story, which is lack of communication in the family. As discussed below, the stream-of-consciousness technique, the psychological sequencing of some elements in the story, and the lexical and grammatical analysis of the story unravel this feeling of longing for the mother.

As the story pertains to the modern age, the narrator depicts the recollections of the past with the stream-of-consciousness technique; therefore, the events in the story are given in a “psychological sequenc[e]”, in which the narrator does not firstly utter what she refers to; instead, she defers the articulation of the object she refers to (Short, 1996, 275). To illustrate, at the very beginning of the story, expressions such as “I heard a song: “Oh, I Long to See My Mother in the Doorway.” By God! I said, I understand that song. I have often longed to see my mother in the doorway” (Paley, 2006, 104) are seen. As shown in the example, the narrator firstly uses the word “song”, and then she tells that this song is ““Oh, I Long to See My Mother in the Doorway.” ” That is, she tells what this song is

after mentioning the action of hearing a song. The speech unravels how much the daughter misses her mother, who stands in different doorways. In this sense, the use of psychological sequencing is to highlight the narrator's longing for her mother. Another example of psychological sequencing is the mother's saying "We saw them already, Papa and me, in 1905." (104) With the articulation of the expression "we" before "Papa and me", the mother draws attention to who these people are, so she emphasizes and highlights herself and the husband to make the narrator bear in mind that they have already seen people suffering from the consequences of 1905 Russian Revolution. Thus, before perceiving that "Papa and me" are meant by the mother, the narrator has to understand who these "we" are; instead of telling "Papa and I saw them already" and using chronological order in this sentence, the mother uses a psychological order. It can be stated that Paley's choice of this order is to make the narration correspond to the perceptions of the child who remembers the past memories through stream-of-consciousness technique. As the child recognizes the existing problems in the family intermittently throughout her narration, Paley uses psychological sequence, rather than a steady and chronological one, to make the child perceive the ideological conflict in the family. Therefore, with this psychological sequencing, Paley makes the narration "deviate" from the chronological order at times and highlight the expressions uttered in the second place (Short, 1996, 11). That is, she makes some changes in the sequence of the sentences to emphasize the daughter's longing for the mother and the breakdown in the mother-daughter relationship in the sense that the mother's wish from her daughter to keep herself away from politics is not fulfilled by the daughter.

In addition to the stream-of-consciousness technique and the use of psychological sequencing, the sense of missing the mother can also be recognized through lexical and grammatical analysis of the story. To start with the lexical analysis, one can recognize that the nouns used in the story are commonly the concrete ones, such as "radio", "doorway", "living room", "kitchen", "chair", "record player" (Paley, 2006, 104), and the like. They are commonly the words referring to different places and objects in these places. These concrete nouns depict not only the distance among the family members but also the longing for the mother as well as the lack of communication in the family because they pertain to the actions rather than speech: the mother stands in many doorways and in many rooms; she listens to music while she is sitting on a chair.

Another way to perceive the idea of the longing for the mother is to compare the percentages of the word forms in each paragraph of the story to the ones in Ellegård norm; the percentages of different word forms are given in the figure below (Short, 1996, 337):

Figure 2: Percentages of Word Forms

	Average Sentence Length	Nouns	Verbs	Adjectives	Adverbs
Ellegård Norm	17.8	27.2%	12.1%	7.4%	5.3%
Whole Text	9.6	19.2%	15.6%	5.7%	6.4%
Paragraph 1	10.8	22.3%	16.1%	6.9%	3.8%
Paragraph 2	10.6	24.5%	13.2%	7.5%	7.5%
Paragraph 3	7.3	13.6%	18.1%	0%	9.1%
Paragraph 4	3	0%	33.3%	0%	33.3%
Paragraph 5	53	30.1%	3.7%	1.8%	1.8%
Paragraph 6	9.8	17.3%	14.4%	5.7%	8.6%
Paragraph 7	14	14.2%	14.2%	7.1%	0%
Paragraph 8	6.1	8.1%	10.8%	2.7%	16.2%
Paragraph 9	5.2	8.1%	37.8%	10.8%	5.4%
Paragraph 10	3	0%	33.3%	0%	33.3%

As shown in figure 2, the average sentence length in the whole story is below the norm. However, looking at the paragraphs individually, many variations can be seen. For example, when the averages of the first two paragraphs and the sixth paragraph are close to the average sentence length of the whole text, especially the fourth, the tenth, and the fifth paragraphs deviate much from the norm. The reason for these variations is that this is a story of past remembrances and that the narrator remembers different moments each time. She remembers seeing her mother in the kitchen one day and her sitting with the daughter's father on another day. She recognizes her mother is worried about her future, and she remembers her death.

The first paragraph, as an exposition of the story, describes the characters, the conflict between the mother and child, and how much the daughter misses her mother. The inciting action of the story is the daughter's hearing the song called "Oh, I Long to See My Mother in the Doorway." That is to say, even at the very beginning of the story, the sense of missing the mother is conveyed. As the first paragraph is the longest one revealing the conflict in the story, the characters and their feelings, the worries of the mother, and missing the dead mother, the average sentence length in this paragraph corresponds much to the average sentence length of the whole text.

Due to its being a modernist text revealing the mind of the narrator via the recollections of the past, the variations in the sentence lengths are put forward especially in the fourth, the tenth, and the fifth paragraphs. The fourth and the tenth paragraphs include only three

words: “Then she died” (104). “Then she died” is chosen as the last sentence and the paragraph of the story to point out that the narrator cannot be with her mother anymore because she is dead, so the death of her mother signifies the ending of the chance of seeing and being with her mother. Another deviant paragraph depicting how much the daughter misses her mother is the fifth one. It has the highest average sentence length as there is just one sentence with fifty-three words. The paragraph is as follows:

Naturally for the rest of my life I longed to see her, not only in doorways, in a great number of places—in the dining room with my aunts, at the window looking up and down the block, in the country garden among zinnias and marigolds, in the living room with my father. (104)

As the narrator misses her mother and longs to see her in different places, she ranks these places in only one sentence so as to foreground that the place is not that much important, but it is the mother that she wants to see. The narrator’s wish for seeing the mother is expressed without any interruption, without the use of period that will disturb the sense that the places are in fact alike in the absence of the mother. That is to say, there is no need to distinguish one place from the other: she misses her mother who stands in different places when she is alive. In this sense, the narrator’s longing for the mother is revealed by this longest sentence.

Paragraph seven, on the other hand, is the one that much corresponds to Ellegård norm with the sentence length of thirteen words: “I wish I could see her in the doorway of the living room.”(104) As this paragraph reflects the narrator’s wish to see her mother again, it has only one sentence that is enough to convey this wish.

Besides the lexical analysis of the story, its grammatical analysis unravels how much the daughter misses her mother. In the story, there are some grammatical deviations, depicting the sense of missing the mother besides the aforementioned worries of the mother about her child. Deviation, which is evocative of the notable changes in the order or form of a word or a sentence, is elucidated as in the following explanation by Mick Short:

Deviation, which is a *linguistic*¹ phenomenon, has an important *psychological* effect on readers (and hearers). If a part of a poem is deviant, it becomes especially noticeable, or perceptually prominent. We call this psychological effect **foregrounding**. (1996, 11)

Although Short defines deviation in poetry, one can encounter deviations in drama and prose, and a deviation in this prose is seen in its sentence structure: some sentences do not begin with the standard sentence structure that is a subject followed by a verb that might

1 The words “linguistic,” “psychological,” and “foregrounding” in this extract are Mick Short’s own emphasis.

be followed by an object. For instance, the sentence “By God! I said, I understand that song,” (Paley, 2006, 104) is grammatically deviant because it does not start with a subject that is followed by a verb. In the correct sentence order, the subject “I” should be stated first, and then the verb “said” should follow the subject. However, to make the narration more emotive, Paley deviates from the norm, so, through this grammatical deviant, she foregrounds the narrator’s recognition of how much she wishes to see her mother again.

5. Lack of Communication

As aforementioned, the worries of the mother and the daughter’s missing the mother underscore the story’s implicit meaning, which is lack of communication. Especially in the second part of the story, the daughter recognizes and reveals the lack of interaction and communication in the family. The discourse situation and the deliberate use of proper nouns, transitive and non-factive verbs, adverbs, simple sentence structure, and the use of action and speech verbs unravel the lack of communication in the family.

To understand the lack of communication in the family, it is necessary to look at the discourse situation. It is the daughter that narrates the story with the use of I-Narration, so the narration is highly subjective and “limited” in the sense that the story is told through the lens of the child without the perceptions of other characters (Short, 1996, 257). What other characters think is given just through the perception of the child.

As shown in figure 1 above, one can see the discourse situation between Grace Paley and the reader at the top of the discourse situations in the story. The discourse situation between Grace Paley and the reader unravels lack of communication in the family. As the writer of the story, Paley becomes the addresser telling the reader, the addressee, her text as the message, which is lack of communication, understanding, and interaction in the family. She becomes the first addresser while the reader becomes the first addressee receiving the message of the story.

The main message of the story, which is lack of communication, is basically perceived through the discourse situations between addressers and addressees 4 and 5, that is between the mother and the father, and the father and the mother, respectively. The mother in the story expresses her need to talk to her husband since they do not talk much anymore. (104) Therefore, the mother becomes the person who sends a message to the father, so she becomes the addresser while he becomes the addressee. On the contrary, the father says,

I’m tired [and] Can’t you see? I saw maybe thirty people today. All sick, all talk talk talk. Listen to the music [...]. I believe you once had perfect pitch. I’m tired [.]
(Paley, 2006, 104)

In this discourse situation, he becomes the sender of a message; hence, he becomes the addresser this time, and the mother becomes the addressee. In no other place in the story do the mother and the father talk to one another again. Therefore, through this discourse situation between the mother and father, the reader deduces that there is a lack of communication between them. While the mother wants to talk to the father, he rejects her by telling he is tired.

Besides the discourse situation, the use of different parts of speech reveals the idea of lack of communication highlighted in the story. Firstly, the story includes proper nouns like “Mozart” and “Bach” (104), depicting the marital problems: the couple listens to Mozart and Bach, but they do not talk right at that moment. When they listen to Bach, the mother asks the father to talk a bit, but he refuses. Therefore, these proper nouns symbolize the lack of communication between the mother and the father. Like the nouns, the verbs in the story carry different meanings, and transitive and intransitive verbs reveal the lack of communication in the family. The actions and events in the story are mostly stated with the use of transitive verbs whereas the inner relations within the family and the mother’s passive stance are given with intransitive verbs. The story begins with the action of the daughter’s listening to music, hearing a song, understanding it, for instance. Therefore, these actions are stated with transitive verbs. The verb “talk” is also another transitive one that is repeated many times by the father (104). As Verdonk states in his article “Words, words, words: A pragmatic and socio-cognitive view of lexical repetition”, “lexical repetition [...] may intensify the overall thematic or symbolic structure of [a] work.” (Verdonk and Weber, 2002, 9) The overall theme in this story is the lack of communication among the family members: the lack of communication between the daughter’s mother and her father also signifies the lack of communication between herself and the other family members: just like the mother’s request to talk, her messages to her daughter are declined. In this sense, lack of communication is given to the reader with the transitive word “talk”. The father’s indifference to the mother’s wish to talk is revealed in his use of the non-factive verb “believe” in the statement “I believe you once had perfect pitch” (104). That is, this non-factive verb, like the transitive verb “talk”, reveals the distance between the wife and the husband and the lack of communication between them. As the story is a modernist one reflecting the inner mind of the narrator, there are not many adjectives describing physical nouns; therefore, the percentage of the adjectives used in the story is less than the one in Ellegård norm. Instead, the reader recognizes that the percentage of adverbs is more than the one in Ellegård norm because the adverbs used in the story reflect both different places where the narrator’s mother stands and the lack of communication. That is to say, a great number of adverbs used in the story unravel the daughter’s longing for her mother and the nature of the relationship between the mother and the father. The most deviant paragraph with its much use of adverb is the eighth one. The paragraph is as follows:

She stood there a minute. Then she sat beside him. They owned an expensive record player. They were listening to Bach. She said to him, Talk to me a little. We don't talk so much anymore. (104)

As seen in the paragraph given above, there are different types of adverbs employed in it: adverb of place, "there", adverbs of time, "a minute", "then", and "anymore", adverbs of degree, "a little" and "so much". With the use of these adverbs, the paragraph reveals that the family does not talk as much as before and that there is lack of communication.

As stated before, declarative and complex sentences reveal the worries of the mother about her daughter. However, the story also includes simple sentences that are mostly used to describe the actions in the story. Besides depicting the actions, these simple sentences unravel the implicit meaning of the text, which is lack of communication. An example of the use of simple sentences is as follows: "She stood there a minute. Then she sat beside him. They owned an expensive record player. They were listening to Bach. She said to him, Talk to me a little. We don't talk so much anymore." (104). In these simple sentences, the author prefers using mainly action verbs, such as "stand", "sit", "listen to", and "talk". The reason for her using simple sentences is to depict that there are mostly actions in the family rather than a real communication. The mother attempts to communicate with the father, but her wish to talk is not fulfilled by the father, and it is expressed in a simple sentence "We don't talk so much anymore." (104) In this sense, action verbs, such as "stand", "sit", "listen to", and "talk", underscores the lack of communication in the family: the mother and the father sit and listen to Bach without a real communication.

For further analysis, one can say that the story consists mainly of action verbs rather than speech verbs; the number of action verbs far exceeding the speech verbs indicates the author's theme of lack of communication in the family. They do not talk much, so the verbs of speech presentation are not as much as the verbs of action. At the very beginning of the story, the reader sees that the action is foregrounded when the narrator tells "One day I was listening to the AM radio." (Paley, 2006, 104) There is not any speech reference like "I said", "I told", or "I uttered" in this simple sentence, so the action, "listen to", comes to the fore because all the narration begins with her listening to that radio. Therefore, it can be said that the sentence is presented through Narrator's Representation of Action (NRA), where there should not be any references to any speech, but the action itself. (Short, 1996, 296) Just like the first sentence, the second sentence is presented through NRA when the daughter says "I heard a song: "Oh, I Long to See My Mother in the Doorway."" (Paley, 2006, 104) Her hearing a song called ""Oh, I Long to See My Mother in the Doorway"" is presented without any speech reference. To be more precise, NRA presentation is the most common one in the story as the mother is remembered in different actions. Because of the lack of real

communication in the family, the mother is remembered with her actions, such as staying in different places and listening to music; therefore, these examples of NRA unravel the implicit meaning of lack of communication. As stated before, even at the very beginning of the story the main message of lack of communication is foreshadowed.

To elaborate on the lack of communication in the family, one should also not underestimate the analysis of speech presentation in the story. As discussed, the story consists mainly of action verbs to describe the actions and events. Moreover, there are the verbs of speech presentation through which “authors [...] represent character speech” (Short, 1996, 288), and through which the lack of communication in the family is depicted. The verbs that are used in the story to indicate speech are “said” and “asked”.

The third sentence, “By God! I said, I understand that song,” is distinguished from the first two sentences as it presents a speech through Free Direct Speech (FDS), which is a way of presentation of speech either without “quotation marks” or without “the introductory reporting clause” like “She said”, or even without both the quotation marks and the introductory reporting clause (Leech and Short, 1981, 322). That is, in FDS, “characters apparently speak to [the readers] more immediately without the narrator as an intermediary” (322). That is, in the third sentence, there is the use of FDS with the reporting clause “I said”, but the quotation marks are not used. This points out the idea that the reader can see what the daughter as the character feels with almost no intermediary. Then the aim of FDS in this sentence is to highlight the daughter’s sense of missing her mother. When she hears the song, she realizes she misses her mother, and this realization engenders the realization of lack of communication in the family. In this sense, the daughter’s hearing the song, as the inciting action, brings about the realization of lack of communication in the family. The use of FDS in this sentence, then, becomes a medium of the revelation of lack of communication. Just like the third sentence, the eighth one is also presented in FDS to give the direct speech of the mother: “She said sadly, If you come home at 4 a.m. when you’re seventeen, what time will you come home when you’re twenty?” (Paley, 2006, 104) Here, again, there is the use of FDS without the quotation marks, but with the reporting clause “She said sadly”. The use of FDS in this sentence underscores the worries of the mother. That is, the sentence reflects what the mother thinks without much intervention of the narrator. The narrator wants the reader to see her as a character who is still unaware of the communication breakdown between her mother and herself: the mother is worried about her daughter, and she verbalizes her worries, yet her message is not received by her daughter. In this sense, FDS in this sentence foreshadows the realization of communication breakdown as seen in the example as follows: “She said, Go to sleep for godsakes, you damn fool, you and your Communist ideas. We saw them already, Papa and me, in 1905. We guessed it all.” (104) The reporting clause “She said” comes not only before “Go to sleep

for godsakes, you damn fool, you and your Communist ideas” but also before the rest, so it presents the rest as well. Besides the communication breakdown between the mother and the daughter, the communication breakdown between the mother and the father is given through the use of FDS. The father’s speech given in FDS clearly depicts that the mother’s request to talk is turned down: “I’m tired, he said. Can’t you see? I saw maybe thirty people today. All sick, all talk talk talk talk. Listen to the music, he said. I believe you once had perfect pitch. I’m tired, he said.”(104) In this sense, the use of FDS through the expression “he said” points out the lack of communication between the mother and the father because the mother’s request to talk is not fulfilled. Moreover, she is silenced by the husband when the husband asks her to listen to the music or sing a song. That is to say, he does not want to talk with the mother right at that moment. In this sense, the mother’s voice in the family is not heard, except that she gives advice to her daughter to state her concerns and says that she wants to talk with the husband. To put it plainly, Paley uses FDS with a reporting clause, but without quotation marks even for different characters in the story. That is, the characters may change, but her writing style is same; she uses FDS to reflect the worries of the mother as well as the lack of communication.

Conclusion

In this study, Grace Paley’s short story “Mother” is analysed stylistically. Through the analysis of discourse situations, viewpoints, lexis and grammar, figures of speech, the sequence of some elements in a sentence, and speech presentation, the study depicts the worries of the mother, the familial distance, the sense of longing for the mother, and the lack of communication. That is to say, the stylistic analysis of the story unravels the implicit themes in the story. It also helps the reader recognize that language is a conscious articulation of meaning: meaning is unravelled through a deliberate use of language. The narrator in this story makes a meaning of events and utterances by using language. For her, the process of thinking is also meaning-making; therefore, the stream-of-consciousness technique Paley employs in her story serves the meaning-making process of the narrator. Through the stream-of-consciousness technique, the narrator recognizes the lack of communication between herself and her mother, and between her mother and her father. The lack of communication in the family centres around the mother. While the father and the daughter have a chance to talk outside home, the mother’s voice is heard only inside, at home. However, this does not mean that she is satisfied as a message sender since her requests both from her daughter and from her husband are not fulfilled. The narrator’s remembering the conversation between her mother and her father also underscores she is silenced by her husband. In this sense, the stream-of-consciousness technique employed in the story foregrounds a silenced mother who needs to be a part of a real conversation in

which she is listened to, yet whose wish is not fulfilled. For this reason, stylistics becomes the *signification*² and indication of language which carries meaning and which is the medium of the articulation of inherent meanings in a text. Then this study shows that a stylistic analysis of Paley's story, an analysis of the conscious and deliberate use of language, unravels the family's inherent problems. Furthermore, the stylistic analysis of this story underscores a still more significant issue: the story sets an example for the themes Paley, as a feminist writer³, generally deals with: "attachment between mother and child" (Deck, 2009, 862), and "[t]he themes of listening, voice" (863).

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2 My own emphasis.

3 Peck, D. (ed) (2009). *American Ethnic Writers*. California: Salem Press, pp. 862-866.

