

## THE SIGNIFICANCE OF DIALOGUES IN HEMINGWAY’S: “A CANARY FOR ONE” AND “HILLS LIKE WHITE ELEPHANTS”

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### ABSTRACT

*This study deals with the significance of dialogue in short stories. It aims to examine the functionality of dialogue in two short stories by Ernest Hemingway. These are: "A Canary for One" and "Hills like White Elephants". To achieve this objective, the study draws upon the formalistic approach, which deals the dialogues, images and symbols deployed in Hemingway's mentioned stories without any external consideration to the context. After an in-depth analysis of "Hills like White Elephants" and "A Canary for One", it can be noted that Hemingway deploys the dialogue along with symbols and images to shed light on variable themes and to reveal the personality of the characters by means of analyzing their language. One of the functions of the dialogue is to help the readers expect the event series of the story. In addition, the dialogue in the two short fictions helps a great deal in analyzing the characters' actions as well as their minds and in understanding their attitudes and thoughts. In "A Canary for One", the writer portrays the uncertainty of marital life. The story presents the consequences of a doomed relationship. In "Hills like White Elephants", the author deploys dialogue to achieve a rather different objective. Through this story, Hemingway tries to stress the importance of dealing with relationships seriously and to urge for facing responsibilities unselfishly and courageously.*

**Keywords:** Hemingway, Dialogue, Functions, Short story, Formalistic approach

### INTRODUCTION

Dialogues play an essential role in structuring short stories as they help the readers to easily comprehend characters, besides revealing actions and emotions of the characters. Dialogues are generally used for making an effective communication with the readers regarding some important issues related to characters' speech which is used in their stories. Dialogues also help the reader to understand various personality attributes of the characters mentioned in the stories. They provide an original voice to the stories to make them sound more realistic. It is important for all of the authors to do a proper planning of the framework for short stories they are writing so that the thought process and the feelings of the characters can be understood by the readers in a proper way. For the readers, the narrator is highly significant as it exposes the hidden feelings and thoughts of the characters to the reader which ultimately helps the reader to develop a better understanding of characters and the story as a whole. This is clear in Hemingway's two short stories mentioned here, "Canary for One", and "Hills like White Elephants". A profound discussion and a detailed analysis based on a critical close reading of Hemingway's short stories will be provided in this study.

The current study aims to discuss the functionality of dialogues in two short stories of Hemingway. The short story collection named "Men without Women" includes some renowned stories among which are "A Canary for One" and "Hills like White Elephants".

## **A Brief Summary of Hemingway's Life, and Some of his Works**

Ernest Miller Hemingway is considered one of the most important American Novelists, short stories writers, journalist, and sports man at the period of (1899-1961). His literary works were produced between the mid of 1920s into the mid of 1950s, and he won a noble prize in 1954. He published six short stories collections, two non-fiction, and seven novels.

Hemingway was born on July/21/1899 in Oka Park. He was raised at well-educated family. His mother was a musician and his father was a doctor and a hunter. His father bought for him a gun and it was the means for committing suicide. Hemingway witnessed World War I, and he was injured seriously. Due to that accident, Hemingway stayed in hospital for a long time. During his stay he fell in love with a nurse who was looking after him. He planned with her to get married, but she left him and went to another man. That sad memory played main role in affecting his novels and short stories.

After World War I, Hemingway spent some time in Toronto and Chicago, where he met his first wife Haldey. He left her for Paris and worked there as a correspondent. During the 1920s, Hemingway was often traveling to Pamplona. He would go there with Hadley and a few others, including his mistress, Pauline.

In Spain he became fascinated with bullfighting, seeing it to be literally a game of life and death. Then he returned to the United States with his second wife Pauline whom he divorced after returning from the Spanish Civil War, where he worked as a journalist there. After that he spent some time in Cuba with his third wife Martha, and she left him also. During World War II, he met Marry Welsh who was his fourth wife, during the period between World War I and World War II, he published *The Sun also Rises*, *The Torrents of Spring*, *A Farewell to Arms*, *Well to Arm*, *To Have and Have not* and *A Cross the River and Into the Trees*.

Hemingway used a specific style of writing; he represented some events of his life at his short stories. Hemingway proposed his famous theory that is "iceberg theory". During his work as a journalist, he had focused on the direct events with a title explanation. Then, he followed this stereotype in writing the short stories by mentioning minimalist number of events without discussing the deep events in direct ways. He believed that the deeper meaning of the story should be ambiguous, and the reader should get it implicitly. Some critic like Jackson Benson (1990) claimed that the "iceberg theory" led Hemingway to ignore the characters of the stories and focus on the core of the theme.

### **Statement of the Problem:**

Not all Hemingway's short stories have received adequate critical attention. More academic examination of the functionality of dialogue is needed in this regard. Thus, this study is concerned with analyzing the functionality of dialogue in the short stories of Hemmingway, particularly in two well-known stories, namely "A Canary for One" and "Hills like White Elephants".

### **Objective and Question of the Study**

The study aims to describe the significance of the dialogue in "A Canary for One" and "Hills Like White Elephants". The study raises the following question:

What is the significance of the dialogues in Hemingway's "A Canary for One" and in "Hills Like White Elephants"?

### **Significance of the Study**

Academic studies conducted about Earnest Hemingway's short stories by Arab researchers and particularly Jordanians are scarce. Thereby, the present study contributes towards

enriching existing research on Hemingway's literary value. Moreover, although the short stories intended for discussion have received previous critical attention, they are still in need for further scholarly examination.

The present study discusses magnificent literary works written by the renowned American writer; Ernest Hemingway. It focuses on how Hemingway employs the functionality of dialogue in a selection of his short stories with particular reference to those from his early coactions "The First Forty-Nine Stories".

### **Limits and Limitations of the Study:**

This study was conducted in Amman, Jordan during the first semester of the academic year; 2019/2020. The outcomes of this study are restricted to the above-mentioned stories by Hemingway and do not include other works by the author or any other authors. It is namely limited to "A Canary for One" and "Hills like White Elephants".

### **Definition of Terms**

**Dialogue:** is a literary technique in which authors employ the characters to be interacted in conversation with one another. In literature it is a conversational passage either written or spoken. The main aim of dialogue is to exchange information or conversation among characters.

**Narrative style:** is a literary style used by the authors referring to the protagonists as (third person narrative) such as: he, she, it, they, and them. The narrator presents the thoughts and feelings of characters in a broad view displayed through different perspectives. An omniscient narrator will display the point of views of author through various perspectives. This style is a common style in Hemingway's' story which provides a broad view of the events in the story by the dialogue.

## **THEORETICAL LITERATURE RELATED TO THE SIGNIFICANCE OF DIALOGUE IN HEMINGWAY'S SHORT STORIES**

The dialogue in the short story helps the reader to understand the irony and the emergence of the climax of the events. The catastrophic change within the incidents can also be understood with the help of dialogues. Schumacher (2017) believes that "the deployment of the dialogue in the short story allows the reader to better understand funny situations and with the help of funny dialogues, a reader can get the raptures of delight", (P.18).

Thomaskutty (2015), states that "the usage of dialogue helps the story to move forward and a reader to easily understand the narrative. A proper conversation helps to realize the themes and symbolism of a particular story. The efficient usage of dialogue contributes towards realizing the change of vocal tone of a particular character and makes the reader ponder over the character's main intention", (p.12)

The use of dialogue determines the dynamics of a story by showing the setting of the story, time and place. The setting is considered a key role in controlling the dialogue of the characters. The reader can cherish realism of a short story because the dialogues in the short story helps the character to become more lively and as a result, the reader can easily get involved with the incidents of the particular short story (McConn, 2016). Therefore, "it is discerned that the use of dialogue in a short story is considered as an indispensable aspect for bringing life into the incidents as well as the characters of the short story" (p .51).

Based on the theoretical study, the researcher investigates that Hemingway has adopted the narrative style in his stories. American literature of the twentieth century flourished with the writings of Hemingway. Mohammed (2017, p. 5) mentions that "Hemingway has opted for

simple and lucid narrative style and has used direct and unvarnished dialogue in his short stories that can be easily perceived by the general reader. Hemingway has been recognized as a master of using skillful dialogues that make his short stories lively.'

Hemingway has kept the reader under confusion by not revealing the actual motion of the short story initially. At a certain point, the reader is unable to discern the fact or the purpose of the incident but the efficiency of his narrative technique gradually spreads the curtain by revealing the precise purpose of the incident.

Hemingway often does not give proper description of the characters but the readers of his short stories get glimpses of the characters by reading the story very carefully. For example, in the "Hills like White Elephants", the reader is unable to know the name of the protagonists but after some time, the reader comes to know about their purpose of meeting at the station. Schumacher (2017, p. 18) states that "the skillful dialogue is able to deliver important factors about the protagonists."

The spontaneous narrative style of Hemingway grips the reader and attracts him to his short stories. McConn (2016) contends that "the efficiently honed and cultured narrating style makes the writing of Hemingway livelier and he has not opted for providing superfluous matters while writing a short story. He often uses genuine ideas and omitted extraneous activities in his narrative style and these techniques make his writings more interesting" (p. 51). According to Valeri (2018) says that "Hemingway has particles of minimalism while writing a short story and he tends to give extra preference to the surface elements by avoiding the explicit discussion on the unnecessary themes" (p. 3). According to Benson (1990, p. 512), "Hemingway has followed the methods of omission and by following this theory he has extinguished the usage of unnecessary things in his writings and thus he is able to deliver more clarity through his writing skills. Hemingway's mastery in the art of narrative style has made him popular to his readers and the clarity in his writing has become understandable to all readers".

According to Ruthrof (2016) the theoretical study often gives answers to the question of 'why' and the possible authentic answer helps in identifying the purpose of the functionality of the dialogue used in the short stories. The usage of vivid dialogues by Hemingway has made him popular to his readers because he has followed the methods of omission. Following this method, he has been able to put away the superfluous matters of the incidents mentioned in the short story. The theme of possession is mentioned in his short story "A Canary for One" where we get it through the style of dialogue. The clarity of the dialogue helps the reader realize how the American lady controls the life of her daughter by restricting her from marrying a foreigner. The clarity of the dialogue shows her preference of an American husband. The skillful dialogue leaves the readers uncertain as they are not quite aware of the conclusion of the story. Hussein (2016, p.12) states that "the theme of individuality has been explored by the dialogues used in the short story and at the end of the story, the reader comes to know that the narrator is going to separate from his wife. Therefore, it is the skillful delivery of the dialogue that keeps the reader wondering about the upcoming events of the short story.

According to some critics, tendencies towards misogyny are clear in "Men without Women". However, in this story collection, there is no preference to masculinity; rather the story focuses on the bitter realism of a patriarchal world. The tone used in the dialogues of this short story collection seems to have manifest meaning regarding the social issues faced by the general people. According to Hays (2018), "the dialogue used in the "Indian Camp" seems to be terse and this is the main key of the dialogue functionality of the short story. In the short story, most of the dialogues are centered on the doctor who gives explanation to the son how

a new life is born to the world. The kind of dialogue mainly focuses on the cycle of life and death but the doctor seems to be indifferent to the screams of labor pain. This dialogue focuses on the impassivity of the doctor regarding the labor pain the woman is going through" (pp 1-5).

In "Hills like White Elephants", Hemingway shows his mastery in the usage of dialogues. Rizkiyani & Lutfiyana (2017) mention that the couple is introduced as contradictory characters and the clarity in the dialogue helps the reader to understand the shallowness of American society as the couple is discussing to abort their child in order to enjoy their lives. Hemingway has been able to give a vivid explanation of the anxiety of the couple by inflicting proper emotion into the dialogues of the characters. Hemingway has carefully honed the functionality of the dialogue and the precise usage of the dialogues has made the reader attracted to his writings.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study adopts the descriptive and analytical methodologies to find out the dimensions of employing the functionality of dialogue. The researcher relies on elaborating and analyzing two of Hemingway's short stories which are "A Canary for One" and "Hills like White Elephants". The analysis is done by focusing on the dialogue in the above-mentioned stories.

This study analyzes the dialogue in two short stories by Hemingway and evaluates the function of some images and symbols drawing heavily on the formalistic approach. In other word, the formalistic approach deals with the dialogue as a whole unit and analyzes it without any external consideration for or referring to the context in which the literary work was produced. Thus, the researcher gives great attention to the elements of the short story such as, characters, theme, plot, narrative technique, in addition to the dialogue. Settem (2015) defines the formalistic approach as "a literature approach that examines the original text by its setting, theme, scene, narrative, image, and symbol" (p.240). Some scientists referred to it as a scientific approach to literature because it supports the systematic and methodical reading of a text.

The researcher tries to use the analytical style in dealing with the stories. This includes the various dialogue linguistic attributes. This ultimately aims to reveal the personality of the characters by means of analyzing their language. In this regard, the sociolinguist Holmes (2008) argues that "language determines where its users come from, who they are, their level of education, their social class, etc". Accordingly, one can argue that analyzing the language of the characters in a certain literary work plays a crucial role in comprehending the characters as well as their actions.

Therefore, the study explores the devices which Hemingway utilized to create an atmosphere of realism in his short stories. Realism, in literature is the attempt to show the element and subject matters truthfully, without artificiality and avoiding artistic norms, exotic, and supernatural categories..

## **ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Analysis of "A Canary for One"**

A detailed analysis of "A Canary for One" reflects the consequences of dominance based on the dialogues of the characters of this short story. The elaborate analysis also shows the discontent of the characters and helps in analyzing the historical ambience that affects the lives of countrymen. At the beginning of the story, the narrator makes it clear that he and his wife are returning to their home. The verbal communication of the female characters in the



deck of the train shows the dominating mentality of the middle-aged lady. She shows a domination and power over the male character who reflects huge weakness in his personality. The reader assumes the miserable plight of the daughter of that lady because the daughter has been forced not to marry the man according to her choice. Rizkiyani (2017) analyzes the ways a misconception can affect the personal life of an individual. It is their mother's prejudice that puts a negative impact on the mental health of the girl. According to the critics, the daughter could have been happy with her beloved man but only based on the misconception of her mother; she has to sacrifice her love.

Sheeran (2017) argues that no one could assume the wrong side of the couple as it seems that they are enjoying the bliss of marital life. The critic argues that the middle-aged lady thinks Americans are the best husbands ever, but she is unaware of the fact that the other female in the train deck is going to separate from her American husband. Therefore, according to the critics, it is impossible to tell who is happily married and who is not.

Martín (2017) mentions that the narrator keeps silent throughout out the story but only one time, readers see him speaking. This lack of eloquence shows the discontent in his mind. At the end of the story, it is revealed that the couple are going to separate, which denotes how the historical disaster has devastated their personal life. Overall, a detailed analysis shows that there lies an ambiguity in the conjugal life that affects individual's happiness. The story also portrays the dominating influence upon the subordinates, which has continued over the years.

### ***Dialogues in "A Canary for One"***

The dialogues in "A Canary for One" show the complexity of the human nature which reflects all aspects of human relationship. The dialogue in this short story emphasizes the multiple sheds of human life. "I'm so glad you're Americans. American men make the best husbands", said the middle-aged lady as she only gives preference to American husbands over other men. Though the middle-aged lady has been successful in confining her daughter, the miserable plight of her daughter tends to haunt her. In order to dissuade her daughter, she has to buy a canary as a gift for her. Therefore, the critic stated that there lies a discontent, even in the winning process. There is no physical appearance of the daughter in this short story but with the help of dialogue, the afflicted condition of that girl is made clear. According to the critic, the miserable plight of the daughter has been permeated through the dialogues of her mother. The characters of this story are obsessed with need for one another. Life for them can be true only when they are together.

Rainey (2017) argues that the mother takes the right decision about the marriage of her daughter because only a mother could seek the best option for her offspring. Though the canary in the story seems to be happy in the cage, at the end of the day it also wants to be free. Similarly, the daughter could have been able to forget her unhappiness but at the end of the day, she has to accede her allegiance under her mother's dominance. The functionality of dialogue has been arrayed in the short story in such a way that the reader could not be able to suspect that the couple mentioned in the story is going to separate. Ruthrof (2016) mentions that the couple does not want to expose their personal issues in public. Following this mentality, they tend to behave like a happy couple in front of the middle-aged lady. After listening to the middle-aged lady's prejudice, the female character does not make any objection. Matos & Oliveira (2017) argue that the female character has not objected to the backdated mentality of the middle-aged woman as to some extent she thinks that the lady has taken the right decision for her daughter. According to the critic, the female character thinks that, if the daughter could have been married against the choice of the mother, the daughter could probably end with a separation.

### **Analysis of “Hills like White Elephants”**

“Hills like White Elephants” (1927) is considered one of the most famous short stories of Ernest Hemingway that points toward the miserable condition of couples. In this story, it has been clear that the man mentioned in the story is reluctant to bring a baby into the world. According to Hussein (2016), the dialogue exerted the motif of uprooting a new life, which denotes the selfish trait of the protagonist. The critic believes that the story revolves around pregnancy and the decision of abortion, which acts as a heinous incident as it deliberately mitigates a new life. With the help of dialogues, Hemingway has been able to penetrate the mentality of the couple.

Avitzour (2018) argues that at the beginning of the story, the man orders an alcoholic beverage for him as well as for his partner and this incident denotes the carelessness of the man. Though the man knows that the woman is pregnant, he seems not to be perturbed. The requirements of the man have been emphasized in this short story and based on his requirements; he continuously convinces the lady of abortion. The study focuses on the functionality of dialogues in “Hills like White Elephants”, which helps the reader to discern the insensitivity of the couple about their future child. In this story, it has been noted that the couple wants to reach a conclusion and the usage of precise dialogues shows the indifferent attitude of the couple, which strangles the outcome of new life into the world.

One of the functions of the dialogue is that it helps the researchers to expect the event series of the story, as well as, it is capable of making the reader realize the way that the character thinks. In other words, readers can imagine the mentality of the couples who are mentioned in the stories to understand the ways they are making their decision toward their relationships. Bausch’s study (2015) confirmed that every couple poses a right over their own lives or deals with their relations as the circumstances surrounding them.

A detailed analysis of the story helps explore how life can be perceived. At the beginning of the story, it has been clear that the couple is alternating over a topic. The precise dialogue in the story uses symbols of deserted land, which stands for the miserable condition of life perhaps the deserted land is symbolic of barren woman. Simultaneously, there is a connotation of a white colored elephant that stands for the fertility of life. According to Muposhi (2017), the lady is dominated by the male protagonist as she does not convey her opinion about the abortion of the child. It seems that the lady has been confined under the dominance of the male protagonist. Moreover, the couple seems to be unhappy. This fact has been evident when at the last part of the story; the lady looks at the deserted land, which stands for the miseries of life. On the contrary, Hays (2018) argues that every couple should focus on their desire. The couple mentioned in the story eagerly wants to enjoy their former lifestyle and they think that the outcome of new life can act as an obstacle in their personal life. The critic maintains that the man wants to convince the woman of abortion in order to consolidate their own future. The critic thinks that the man believes, if the new life comes into the world, they will be distracted from achieving their personal goals. Thus, the couple gives first preference to their own choices in order to deal with the future in a better way.

A detailed analysis of the story helps denote the careless mentality of the female protagonist as she does not seem to care about the health of her child. It shows her indifferent attitude when she does not object to the man's inhuman decision. Hays (2018) mentions that the lady’s stand denotes her acceptance of the man's decision. Therefore, it can be argued that the lady adopts a selfish character; there has been no intention of keeping the child in the womb of the lady as she also wants to enjoy her former lifestyle with her beloved.

### ***Dialogues in “Hills like White Elephants”***

The functionality of the dialogue shows different aspects of the protagonists' mentality. The incisive delivery of dialogue showed multiple layers of the human mind. In "Hills like White Elephants", the couple is arguing over a topic and the topic revolves around whether to keep their child or abort it. The uncertainty of the relationship has been emphasized with the help of dialogue. At the beginning of the story, the man orders a drink in a bar and this incident denotes the indifference of the man towards their child. The dialogue of "Hills like White Elephants" "exerted the motif of uprooting a new life that indicates the egoistical trait of the protagonist when he says "We'll be fine afterward..... were before".

The dialogue shows that the male protagonist only wants to enjoy his life. Having a child seems to him as a source of obstruction. Through the dialogue, it is clear that the man is annoyed with the lady as he has to convince her of abortion. Sometimes the man seems to be helpless when he thinks that he will not be able to convince the girl. This state of helplessness is portrayed through dialogue. The functionality of dialogue helps the reader to discern the insensitivity and careless trait of the couple about their future child.

### **SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

This study has examined the functionality of dialogue in Ernest Hemingway in "A Canary for One", "Hills like White Elephants". After a close reading of these short stories, it can be concluded that the deployment of dialogue in short fictions can be of great significance as with the help of dialogue, the reader can provide a better perception and a rather profound understanding of the writer's thoughts. In addition, the dialogue in short fictions helps a great deal in analyzing the characters' actions as well as minds. Furthermore, with the help of the dialogue, a reader is able to figure out the meaning of the symbols, the images and the motifs incurred in the story. "A Canary for One" presents the negative impact of the World War I on the marital life and depicts the theme of control upon the subordinates. In this short story, the canary that is imprisoned in the cage stands for the life of the lady whose life is controlled by her mother; the mother profoundly believes that only an American man can make a perfect match for her daughter and can guarantee a successful relationship. However, it is only through dialogue the reader is able to draw similarities between the lady and the canary and to come to the conclusion that the lady is dominated by her mother. Thus, the dialogue in Hemingway's short fiction plays a crucial role in helping the reader interpret the text and understand the attitudes and thoughts of the characters. Ultimately, this helps the reader perceive the author's standpoint of major issues in life namely marriage and dominance in this regard. It is noted that the assumption the mother has towards marriage proves to be inadequate, which reflects that author's outlook on his society's norms and tradition regarding marriage.

In "Hills like White Elephants", it can be concluded that the couple mentioned in the story is unable to make a decision regarding the woman's pregnancy. In this story, it is concluded that the couple is pondering to uproot a new life in order to cherish their former lifestyle. With the help of dialogue, the reader is able to analyze the mentality of the couple when they face the sudden fate. While the two partners indulge in a conversation, the lady seems not to have mixed feelings towards pregnancy. When she looks over the window, she sees the hills. The hills in this regard signify the lady's desire for pregnancy. However, when she compares the hills to an elephant, the reader realizes that the woman shares her partner's selfish attitude; she, just like her partner, wants to enjoy her previous lifestyle which seems to be carefree. Ultimately, the final intense decision of abortion denotes the selfish attitude of the couple. The reader is able to reach this conclusion only with the help of dialogue.



After an in-depth analysis of “Hills like White Elephants” and “A Canary for One”, it can be noted that Hemingway deploys dialogue along with symbol and images to shed light on variable themes. In "A Canary for One", the writer portrays the uncertainty of marital life. The story presents the consequences of a doomed relationship. In the story, the daughter of a middle-aged woman is forbidden from marrying a man as her mother does not want a foreign man to be her son-in-law. Based on a racist perspective, the mother dominates her daughter. As a result, the daughter is leading unpleasant life-style. In "Hills like White Elephants", the author deploys dialogue to achieve a rather different objective. Through this story, Hemingway tries to stress the importance of dealing with relationships seriously and to urge for facing responsibilities unselfishly and courageously. As we see in the story, the couple is unhappy to receive news about the woman’s pregnancy as the expected child will hamper them from enjoying their carefree life.

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