

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter serves as the basis for the entire study. It begins with background, which explains the background of the problem and the reasons why it is important to conduct this study. Next, it presents the research question as a formulation of the question that is the main focus of the study. This chapter also contains the aims of study, describing the objectives to be achieved, as well as the significance of study, which emphasises the theoretical and practical contributions of the research. In addition, implications and applications are included, which explain the possible application of the research results in a broader context. Thus, chapter 1 provides a foundation for understanding the direction of this research.

1.1 Background

Language plays an important role in constructing meaning and creating stylistic effects in texts. In stylistic studies, language is not merely regarded as a medium of communication but also as a resource for expressing attitudes, emotions, relationships, and artistic effects (Leech, 2009). Among various linguistic features, lexical choice is considered one of the most significant elements because the selection of words contributes to how meanings are conveyed and how readers respond to a text. According to Halliday and Hasan (1976), lexical choices also contribute to textual cohesion through semantic relationships such as repetition, synonymy, and other lexical connections. Therefore, lexical choice functions not only to communicate information but also to shape the overall stylistic effect of a text.

One stylistic effect that can be constructed through language is dramatic style. Dramatic style refers to the presentation of conflict, tension, emotional intensity, and character interaction in a way that engages readers and emphasizes significant events within a narrative. Abrams (2018) explains that dramatic effects are often achieved through dialogue, actions, and interactions among characters, while Stanton and Abi (2007) emphasizes that stylistic effects are influenced by an author's linguistic choices, including word selection and expressive language.

In this regard, lexical choices play an important role in creating emotional intensity, expressing authority, and highlighting conflict within a narrative.

The Gospel of Matthew provides a rich context for examining the relationship between lexical choice and dramatic style. As a narrative text, the Gospel presents various episodes involving dialogue, confrontation, teaching, command, and interaction among characters. Powell (2009) argues that the Gospels contain narrative elements such as characters, plot, and conflict that contribute to the communication of religious messages. Consequently, the Gospel of Matthew may be examined not only as a religious text but also as a literary text that employs linguistic and stylistic resources to shape readers' understanding of events and characters.

The literary quality of the Gospel of Matthew has been recognized by several scholars. Hietanen (2011) argues that Matthew employs language strategically to support its persuasive purpose and to shape readers' perceptions of Jesus and other characters within the narrative. Similarly, France (2007) notes that Jesus is frequently portrayed as a figure of authority whose teachings, commands, and confrontations are expressed through direct and powerful language. These linguistic features contribute to the dramatic quality of the narrative and make the Gospel of Matthew a relevant text for stylistic investigation.

This study focuses on the New English Translation version of the Gospel of Matthew. The NET Bible is widely known for its transparency in translation decisions and for providing extensive translator notes that explain lexical and interpretative choices (Wallace, 2019). Because of its detailed documentation of translation decisions, the NET Bible offers valuable material for examining how lexical choices contribute to the stylistic presentation of biblical narratives.

Stylistics provides an appropriate framework for investigating the relationship between language and literary effect. According to Leech and Short (2007), stylistics applies linguistic analysis to literary texts in order to explain how language contributes to meaning and artistic expression. Through a stylistic approach, it is possible to examine how specific lexical choices function as linguistic resources that shape readers' responses and contribute to particular narrative effects.

Previous studies have examined lexical choice, lexical cohesion, and translation stylistics from semantic, discourse, and translational perspectives. However, limited attention has been given to the role of lexical choices as stylistic resources for constructing dramatic style in biblical narratives. In particular, research investigating how lexical choices contribute to emotional intensity, authority, and conflict in the New English Translation version of the Gospel of Matthew remains limited.

Based on this research gap, the present study investigates lexical choices in the New English Translation of the Gospel of Matthew and examines how these lexical choices contribute to the construction of dramatic style. Specifically, the study focuses on lexical choices associated with emotional intensity, authority, and conflict as major dimensions of dramatic style. It was expected that this research would contribute to stylistic studies, biblical narrative analysis, and the understanding of how lexical choices functioned in shaping dramatic style within religious texts.

Among the four Gospels, the Gospel of Matthew was deliberately selected because it presents a particularly rich combination of dialogue, confrontation, teaching, miracles, and interpersonal interactions that contribute to dramatic narration. Many episodes portray intense encounters between Jesus, His disciples, religious leaders, and the crowds, where emotions, authority, and conflict are expressed through carefully chosen language. These characteristics make Matthew especially suitable for examining how lexical choices construct dramatic style. In addition to these academic considerations, the researcher's personal interest in reading the Bible, particularly the Gospel of Matthew, inspired the selection of this text. Compared with the other canonical Gospels, Matthew contains a greater concentration of extended discourses, confrontational dialogues, and dramatic narrative episodes, making it a valuable source for investigating the relationship between lexical choices and dramatic style from a stylistic perspective.

1.2 Research question

This study was guided by one research question: How do lexical choices in the New English Translation of the Gospel of Matthew contribute to its dramatic style?

1.3 Aim of Study

The aim of this study is to identify and to explain how lexical choices in the New English Translation of the Gospel of Matthew contribute to the dramatic style of the Gospel of Matthew. This study analysed how lexical choices influenced the style of language in the Gospel of Matthew and how dramatic style emerged through the language used in the text. Using a stylistic approach, this study sought to provide a deeper understanding of how lexical choices shape the dramatic style in the Gospel of Matthew.

1.4 Significance of Study

This research is expected to serve as additional reading or reference for other researchers who wish to study lexical choices and dramatic style, especially in religious texts such as the Gospel of Matthew. This means that the results of this study are not only useful for current researchers, but can also be used by future researchers as comparative material or references, for example, to study other versions of Bible translations, compare the Gospel of Matthew with other Gospels, or examine dramatic style in other literary or religious texts.

1.4.1 Implication

The findings of this study have important implications for stylistics, particularly for the stylistic framework proposed by Leech and Short (2007). Their theory argues that stylistic effects are created through linguistic choices, especially lexical selection, which shapes tone, evaluation, characterization, and readers' responses. The present study supports this theoretical perspective by demonstrating that lexical choices in the New English Translation (NET) of the Gospel of Matthew function as significant stylistic resources for constructing dramatic style. The identified dimensions of emotional intensity, authority, and conflict illustrate how lexical choices contribute not only to meaning but also to narrative tension, interpersonal relationships, and emotional engagement.

Furthermore, this study extends the practical application of Leech and Short's stylistic theory by showing that their analytical framework can be effectively applied to religious narrative texts, particularly biblical discourse. While stylistic studies frequently focus on novels, poetry, or drama, this research

demonstrates that the same theoretical principles can also explain how dramatic effects are linguistically constructed in biblical narratives. Consequently, the study broadens the scope of stylistic analysis and reinforces the relevance of Leech and Short's framework in examining literary qualities within religious texts.

In addition, the findings contribute to biblical discourse analysis by providing a systematic analytical framework for identifying how lexical choices function to create emotional intensity, authority, and conflict. This framework may serve as a reference for future researchers who wish to investigate stylistic features in other biblical books, translations, or narrative genres.

1.4.2 Application

The findings of this study can be applied in several practical contexts beyond linguistic research. In education, particularly in English language teaching, the study may be used as supporting material for teaching stylistics, narrative texts, and discourse analysis. By examining how lexical choices contribute to emotional intensity, authority, and conflict, teachers can help students understand how language functions not only to convey information but also to create dramatic effects and shape meaning.

In literary and biblical studies, the analytical framework employed in this research may be applied to examine other narrative texts or translations. Researchers and readers can use the framework to compare how different lexical choices influence characterization, narrative tension, and dramatic style across texts.

Furthermore, this study provides a practical reference for future researchers who intend to investigate lexical choices, stylistic features, or dramatic language in different genres, translations, or discourse contexts. The coding framework and analytical dimensions developed in this research may be adapted or expanded to support similar qualitative investigations.