



## ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

### Stylistic Analysis of the Famous Persian Fable the Scorpion and the Tortoise

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The term "stylistic analysis," which describes the procedure of discovering usage patterns in speech and writing, is used by linguists to assess the value and significance of texts in literary studies. Analysing a document's style is crucial to understanding the text, content and the function of language within it. This paper aims to provide a stylistic analysis of the well-known Persian fable The Scorpion and the Tortoise by dissecting its various literary and rhetorical elements. Any given stylistic study aims to either break down a language into its component elements or obtain an understanding of its meaning. Many literary and linguistic devices are used in this story to show irrationality, obsession, tension, and other themes that keep coming up. So, using the method of stylistic analysis, I will look into how the writer's choices contribute to creating particular meanings.

**Keywords:** Stylistics, Style, Literary Devices, Rhetorical Devices, Irrationality, Obsession.

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## Introduction

### Stylistics

Stylistics is a discipline of applied linguistics focused on the study of style in writing, particularly, but not solely, in literary works. In 1860, stylistics was modelled after the German terms 'stilistisch' and 'stilistik'. However, the term 'stylistics' was first recorded in English in 1882 (Adepoju 2016, 64).

Stylistics, often known as literary linguistics, studies the figures, tropes, and other rhetorical devices employed to bring diversity and originality to a work. According to Encyclopedia Britannica, style does not "exist on paper at all; it is the way the mind of an author expresses in words." Geoffrey N. Leech, in *A Linguistic Guide to English Poetry*, defines stylistics as "simply the study of literary style, or to make matters even more explicit, the study of the use of language in literature. When discussing style, we often consider the language of a particular writer, a particular period, a particular genre, even a particular poem" (Leech 1969, 1). In his book *A Linguistic Guide to the Study of Poetry*, Leech provided a detailed analysis of the components and characteristics of style. With stylistic analysis, we can get beneath the surface of a text and discover meanings that aren't immediately apparent. The patterns, forms, and levels that make up language's structure give it such high value. Linguistic features are meaningless apart from their context, so interpreting text depends on its functional significance. The primary goal is to provide meaning to texts.

### Language and Stylistics

Widdowson (1996, 15) says that language is unique because it is closely connected to the human mind and society. So, it has to do with both understanding and talking. Using language is all about communicating, and communicating is all about making sense. As inferred from the preceding, a language style is a manner of speaking and or a type of utterance created via the deliberate selection, systematic patterning, and application of linguistic and extra-linguistic means concerning the issue. Language is selected to fit the speaker, subject, and situation (Missikova 2003, 17).

### The Concept of Style

The term 'style' originated from the 14<sup>th</sup>-century French word 'stile', which emerged from Latin 'stilus' referring to a pointed instrument for writing. All schools of thought agree that the concept of style should be essential to the linguistic analysis of literature. *Essays on Style and Language* is a British collection published in 1966 that discusses the connection between linguistics and literature and in which Halliday draws an equivalence between stylistics and the linguistic study of literature (Ellis 1970, 65). David Crystal defined style as "a selection of language habits, the occasional linguistic idiosyncrasies which characterise an individual's uniqueness" (Crystal & Derek 1969, 9). Eckert thinks style integrates all linguistic levels, including aesthetic, semantic, and defining functions (Eckert & Rickford 2001, 22). As it is applied to several human endeavours, the concept of style has broad currency. Traditional literary criticism views "style" as the author's "intuitive perception of aesthetics," making it highly subjective and devoid of scientific rigour. (Crystal 1972, 104). Thus, a writer's style is how he expresses himself and conveys

his ideas to the reader. It involves a wide range of decisions along paradigmatic and syntagmatic axes, including word selection, deploying tropes and figurative language, designing grammatical phrases and paragraphs, and so on. These choices distinguish the writer as an individual, just as the frequency and quality of his voice, behavioural quirks, and walking and laughing styles do. He expresses the entirety of man, his entire self, through his style (Murtaza & Qasmi 2013, 6).

### **Style in Literature**

The study of style can be traced back to the literary scholarships of the Greeks and Romans in the fifth century BC when rhetoric was the dominant art form. This discipline was a collection of norms and tactics that enabled rhetors and orators 'to speak well'; in other words, to employ language that was ornamented entirely with all the figures and tropes to effect changes in the sentiments and opinions of the audience (Manqoush & Al-Wadhaf 2021, 20). This linguistic action has developed a rhetorical connotation and, without a doubt, is regarded as rhetorical stylistics. The search for effect on the hearers may be recognised as the practical function of language, or what Jakobson (1960) subsequently referred to as the 'conative function,' as the emphasis was to provoke specific attitudes and sentiments in the audience.

Stylistics could be used to decode the meaning of a text by determining the significance of the interaction between foregrounded elements and the norm. The norm in literature is the use of expected language within which specific ideas are intentionally foregrounded through language that deviates from the standard. For example, the use of phrases like "farmyards away" or "a grief ago" in the poems "Fern Hill" and "A Grief Ago" by Dylan Thomas adds a new layer of introspective expression to the poet's oeuvre beyond simply expressing distance or time in different ways. Similarly, the quality of the five years that separated Wordsworth's two excursions to the Wye Valley is conveyed through his description of "five long summers and five long winters" (Bharadwaj 2017, 183).

### **Stylistic Analysis**

Stylistic analysis examines various linguistic idioms to ascertain the meaning or message a text is trying to convey by using the discussion above. The stylistic analysis delves into the different linguistic styles employed to discern specific texts' intended meaning or underlying themes. It entails recognising the many ways poets or authors of literary works deliver their message, such as through a subtle and oblique pattern (Baroudi 2021, 2). It necessitates a rigorous examination of texts to identify the distinct styles employed.

### **Steps of Stylistic Analysis**

The short story "The Scorpion and the Tortoise" is subjected to a thorough stylistic analysis. The study's primary objective is to highlight the most frequent deviations from standard English in the narrative. It is possible to conduct research at various linguistic levels, including phonological, syntactic, semantic, and graphological. Additionally, figures of speech or metaphorical speech such as personification, simile, and hyperbole can be analysed from a stylistic standpoint. The figurative speech that distinguishes the short story "The Scorpion and the Tortoise" will be examined in this essay.

### **Figures of speech**

A word or phrase that purposefully deviates from the regular use of language to achieve

a rhetorical effect is known as a figure of speech or a rhetorical figure. Figurative language purposely highlights secondary or extended meanings while deviating from their literal meaning (Del Pilar et al. 2020, 2106).

### **Research Questions**

1. How do narrative strategies such as using animal characters and employing diverse literary and rhetorical strategies, contribute to the effectiveness of fables in conveying moral lessons and engaging readers?

2. What persistent themes and insights about human behaviour can be recognised in fables like

"The Scorpion and the Tortoise," and how do these themes resonate with readers across different time periods and cultural contexts?

### **Introducing the text**

A famous Persian short story, *The Scorpion and the Tortoise*, has been selected to analyse stylistically in this paper. It is one of the 30 stories of the Anwar E Sohayli.

### **The Author**

Husayn Kashifi, also known as Kamal Al Din Husayn ibn Ali Kashifi, was a prominent Persian prose stylist, poet, Quran exegete, Sufi philosopher, and astronomer of the Timurid era. His pen name was Kashifi, and his surname, al-Wai (the preacher), indicated his professional occupation. Kashifi is credited with writing thirty volumes in prose, poetry, tafsir, astronomy, and Islamic sciences. Among them, 'Anwar E Sohayli' (or Anwar i Suhaili), meaning the 'Light of Canopus' is a famous collection of interrelated fables, mostly about animals set within a framework (Natif 2008, 332).

### **Anwar E Sohayli**

It is the most critical Persian adaptation of the Indian-Middle Eastern cycle of mirror-for-princes stories, also known as the Pacatantra, Kalla wa Demna, and the stories of Bidpay (Pilpay), written in the 15th century. The work consists of fourteen chapters. Approximately one hundred important stories are dispersed unevenly throughout the chapters, fluctuating slightly between versions. Anwar E Sohayli has been translated into several Asian and European tongues. It served as a reference text for students of the Persian language for many years.

### **The Plot Summary**

The Scorpion and the Tortoise is one of the thirty stories included in Anwar E Sohayli. It describes an incident between two old friends, a tortoise and a poisonous scorpion.

A scorpion and a tortoise became such fast friends that they vowed to remain together forever. So, when one of them was forced to leave his home country, the other promised to accompany him. They had only travelled a short distance when they met a large river. The scorpion was now in great distress. "Unhappily," he remarked, "you, my friend, can swim easily, but how can a poor scorpion like me

cross this stream?" "Never fear," the tortoise said. "Just position yourself properly on my broad back, and I'll carry you securely across."

The tortoise crawled into the water and began swimming as soon as the scorpion was placed on its broad back. Halfway across, a weird tapping on the tortoise's back shocked the tortoise, prompting him to ask the scorpion what the scorpion was doing. The scorpion replied, "I am testing my sting to see if I can pierce your hard shell."

The scorpion's testing of its sting on the tortoise's back left the tortoise feeling shocked and hurt. The tortoise confronted the scorpion, asking why it would betray their friendship in such a way. The scorpion expressed its nature as a poisonous creature, stating that it couldn't resist the urge to check its sting, even at the cost of their friendship.

Realising that the scorpion's nature was ingrained and unchangeable, the tortoise made a decision. With a heavy heart, the tortoise said, "Ungrateful friend, it is well within my power to save myself and punish you as you deserve." The tortoise then submerged its back in the water, shaking off the scorpion into the river.

The scorpion, unable to swim, struggled in the water and eventually drowned. The tortoise continued its journey across the river alone, saddened by the loss of its friend but relieved to have escaped the scorpion's betrayal. It learned that sometimes, despite the bond of friendship, certain innate traits or characteristics can outweigh loyalty, leading to unexpected consequences.

As the tortoise reached the other side of the river, it reflected on the lessons learned from this incident. It vowed to be more cautious in trusting others unquestioningly and aware of their true nature, even in friendships.

### **Analysing the Story**

In the well-known Persian fable *The Scorpion and the Tortoise*, a scorpion begs a tortoise to carry him across a river. The scorpion reassures the tortoise that he won't sting him despite the tortoise's initial hesitation and fear that they will perish if he does. The scorpion stings the tortoise halfway across the river, and as they both sink, the tortoise asks the scorpion why he would do such a thing. The scorpion responds, "It is in my nature."

Fables frequently involve animal characters, and in this narrative, the scorpion represents irrationality and obsession, whereas the tortoise represents caution and rationality. Using animal characters also lends a layer of abstraction to the story, allowing it to be taken as a moral lesson for humans. The novel gets its point across by using a variety of stylistic and literary approaches. In the following segments, the potential rhetorical and literary methods applied in this story will be presented:

#### ***Style***

**Opening:** The story briefly introduces the two central characters, who are friends: the scorpion and the tortoise. The language employed is straightforward, laying the groundwork for unfolding the story.

**Conflict:** When one of the friends, the scorpion, cannot cross a river due to its incapacity to swim, the dispute erupts. This disagreement adds drama to the plot and sets the stage for the fundamental problem.

**Dialogue:** The tortoise and scorpion's conversation illustrates the characters' characteristics and motivations. The tortoise's reaction reveals its sense of betrayal and hurt. In contrast, the scorpion's justification for wanting to test its sting despite the dangers reveals its innate nature as a vicious animal.

**Emotions:** The tortoise deals with the scorpion's betrayal and the end of their friendship. The story elicits emotions like astonishment, hurt, and despair. These feelings give the character dimension and foster an emotional bond with the reader.

**Morality and Life Lessons:** A short story's morals and life lessons are the morals, values, and lessons that can be drawn from the story. Short stories frequently offer deeper insights into society and human nature. They might delve into love, friendship, family, justice, and personal development. While the overriding themes or insights for readers are the life lessons, morality is reflected in the characters' actions and outcomes. Depending on the narrative and the reader's perspective, these lessons advise overcoming obstacles and making moral choices.

The story's moral signifies the perils of relying solely on others and the importance of recognising one's inherent strengths. This moral lesson is underscored by the tortoise's decision to prioritise its safety over its friendship with the scorpion.

**Imagery:** Any writing style that employs imagery includes literal or metaphorical language to enhance meaning and assist the reader in visualising the work's setting. In other words, it uses the reader's senses to help them grasp what is happening and how to respond.

The story's environment is vividly described through images, especially the river that challenges the scorpion and the tortoise. Words like "large river," "swimming across," and "submerging its back into the water" evoke a mental picture in the reader's imagination, adding to the sensory appeal of the story.

**Tone:** The tone of a short story influences readers' emotions, perception of the plot, characters, atmosphere, and the author's style and voice, among other things. It establishes the emotional tone, provides character insights, generates mood and atmosphere, and adds to the overall meaning and effect of the story.

The tone of this story is subdued as it deals with the loss of a friendship and the consequences of betrayal. The language conveys a sense of gravity and reflection, stressing the moral lesson and the impact of the events on the characters.

**Resolution:** The tortoise ends the story by reflecting on the lessons learnt and promising to be more cautious. The perseverance brings the narrative to a close and highlights the story's moral message.

Stylistic analysis entails studying how the author employs literary techniques, language choices, and other stylistic factors to convey meaning, create a specific tone or atmosphere, and engage the reader. It looks into the text's aesthetic features, highlighting how the story is produced and presented to elicit a specific effect on the reader. The story synopsis for "The Scorpion and the Tortoise" features simple language, dialogue to express character motivations, vivid emotions, moral lessons, imagery, tone, and a resolution that brings closure. These stylistic decisions combine to create an engaging narrative that fascinates the reader and conveys a relevant message.

**Literary and rhetorical devices**

The story employs various literary and rhetorical devices to convey its themes and messages. The following are some of the most prominent ones:

**Anthropomorphism:** The attribution of human characteristics such as emotions and speech to nonhuman beings such as gods, animals, plants, sounds, and weather events is known as anthropomorphism. Anthropomorphism, which derives from the Greek words *anthropos* (meaning "human") and *morphe* (meaning "shape" or "form"), implies more than just imbuing nonliving things with life (Kollias 2015, 99).

The tortoise and the scorpion are anthropomorphised in this fable, with human-like characteristics such as speech, intentionality, and moral reasoning. The scorpion is portrayed as crafty and devious, convincing the tortoise that, despite its inherent deadly nature, it will not sting. The tortoise is shown as cautious and trusting but eventually succumbs to the scorpion's true nature. It also underscores the concept of inherent nature and how it can affect individuals' conduct, even when they go against their better judgments or earlier pledges. The story uses anthropomorphism to help readers find similarities between the characters' actions and human experiences, making the story more approachable and realistic.

**Irony:** A situation in which there is a disagreement between anticipation and reality is an example of irony as a literary device (Danner 1977, 564). In this fable, the irony lies in the scorpion's actions and behaviours, which go against its inherent nature, resulting in unexpected consequences. The irony is highlighted here in various ways:

- a) The Scorpion's Promise: The scorpion in the fable requests the tortoise transport it across a river, vowing not to harm the tortoise despite its deadly nature. The scorpion, famed for its lethal sting, commits not to activate its natural defence mechanism, which goes against its nature. This generates a sense of dramatic irony because the reader or listener understands that the scorpion will most certainly betray its promise owing to its intrinsic character, but the tortoise is clueless.
- b) The Scorpion's Betrayal: According to the story, halfway across the river, the scorpion strikes the tortoise, causing them to suffer. This development is ironic because the scorpion's betrayal goes against its earlier pledge. Despite the scorpion's assurances and the tortoise's faith in them, the scorpion eventually follows its natural impulses, which is ironic because it contradicts its earlier vow.
- c) The Tortoise's Nature: The tortoise is another example of irony. Tortoises are frequently depicted as sluggish and cautious creatures in many fables and stories, which is also mirrored in this fable. The tortoise accepts to carry the scorpion despite knowing the risks, which is odd because trusting a dangerous scorpion goes against its cautious nature. The tortoise's decision to confide in the scorpion had tragic repercussions, contrasting the conventional image of tortoises as intelligent and careful creatures.

Overall, the fable of "The Tortoise and the Scorpion" contains various ironic elements that add depth and complexity to the story and highlight the unexpected



consequences that can arise when characters go against their inherent nature or break their promises.

**Repetition:** Repetition is a literary method that uses repeated words, phrases, or ideas to highlight or establish a pattern. The fable's recurrence is primarily intended to stress the scorpion's promise and later deceit. The repeated promise points out and draws attention to the scorpion's statements. It underlines the scorpion's endeavour to acquire the tortoise's trust and provides a sense of expectation that, despite its intrinsic character, the scorpion will honour its promise. However, the scorpion's subsequent breaking of the pledge by stinging the tortoise provides a dramatic contrast and acts as a terrible irony. The repeated promise in the tale brings out the scorpion's deception and contributes to the overall impact of the story's outcome.

**Symbolism:** The story has several allegorical interpretations. The tortoise and the scorpion characters can signify trust and betrayal, signifying the risks of mistaken confidence and the dishonest nature of some people. They can also reflect human nature, with the scorpion representing darker aspects of human action and the tortoise reflecting naive trust. The tale can also be interpreted as a metaphor for innate features and fate, demonstrating how one's nature or destiny can lead to unexpected events. Furthermore, the story might represent moral quandaries and ethical choices, accentuating the consequences of unethical conduct and the hazards of rejecting moral values.

**Paradox:** A paradox is a statement that, at first glance, appears to contradict itself yet, upon deeper investigation, is supported by logic. This literary device is frequently used to spark a reader's curiosity in uncovering the underlying sense of a statement or phrase that seems to contradict itself. Paradoxes in the fable "The Tortoise and the Scorpion" make the plot more intricate. These paradoxes include the scorpion's vow to protect the tortoise even though it stings naturally and the tortoise's choice to believe the scorpion despite being aware of its lethal characteristics. These discrepancies add to the tale's overarching thematic elements of irony, betrayal, and human nature by generating tension and pressing the reader to analyse the ambiguities and complexities of the characters and their actions.

**Metaphor:** A metaphor is a figure of speech contrasting two unrelated ideas by implying that one is like the other without using "like" or "as." Several metaphors can be recognised in the fable; here are a few of them:

- a) The scorpion's sting: The poisonous sting of a scorpion can be seen as a symbol of betrayal or

Dishonesty. In contrast to how someone could betray or deceive another person, harming them despite their guarantees or promises, it portrays the detrimental action the scorpion conducts despite its commitment.

- b) The tortoise's shell can be used to describe defence or protection. It can be compared to how

Someone exposes themselves to potential injury, lets down their protective shell or guard, and becomes open to betrayal or deceit by trusting the scorpion despite its intrinsic nature.

- c) The river's current": The journey or difficulties in life might be compared to the river's current,



which the tortoise and the scorpion must traverse together. It depicts the challenges and ambiguities the characters must face and how they manage them, portraying the overall human experience.

These metaphors give the fable breadth and diversity, allowing readers to view it literally and metaphorically and enhancing the narrative's interest and ability to stir up thought.

**Personification:** A figure of speech known as personification gives inanimate objects or animals human attributes. There isn't much personification in the fable "The Scorpion and the Tortoise," as the tortoise and the scorpion are already anthropomorphic (human-like) animals. For instance, the scorpion is said to "reason" with the tortoise, while the river is "calling out" to it. These personifications give the narrative a sense of life and vividness and help readers connect with the characters and their actions more personally.

In general, the literary and rhetorical device analysis in "The Scorpion and the Tortoise" demonstrates how these strategies are employed to express the story's ideas and messages, allowing readers to engage with the narrative on a deeper level. Readers can better appreciate the story and its impact by understanding how these tactics are used.

These tactics include anthropomorphism, irony, foreshadowing, repetition, symbolism, contradiction, metaphor, and personification. The story offers a commentary on the complexities of human nature and the destructive power of negative impulses and actions by attributing human characteristics to animals, using irony to highlight the certainty of the scorpion's activities, and employing symbols such as the river and the scorpion's sting. The story also reinforces the significance of making moral decisions and understanding the implications of one's actions. Overall, *The Scorpion and the Tortoise* is a fascinating and thought-provoking fable that has captivated readers for generations.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, "The Scorpion and the Tortoise" is a timeless and brilliantly produced fable that employs a wide range of stylistic and literary approaches to effectively deliver its moral message while enthralling its readers. The novel helps us to perceive mirrors of our own human features and experiences in the behaviours of animal characters by anthropomorphizing them. Irony enhances the story by highlighting the consequences of going against one's natural instincts or breaking arrangements.

Repetition is essential in emphasising the scorpion's deception and the tortoise's confidence, as well as in generating anticipation and underlining dramatic contrasts. Symbolism allows for a variety of allegorical readings, giving light on potential hazards of misplaced reliability, the darker sides of human behaviour, and the role of intrinsic nature in influencing our judgments. Readers are challenged by paradoxes. Paradoxes encourage readers to think about the multifaceted nature of the characters and their decisions, when metaphors give diversity and variety to the story, both literally and metaphorically. Personification, when use cautiously, brings the characters and environment to life, making them more approachable and interesting for readers. These literary and rhetorical strategies work in harmony to portray the

fable's fundamental themes of deceit, human nature, ethical issues, and the great importance of knowing the consequences of our choices.

In essence, "The Scorpion and the Tortoise" is a fascinating and thought-provoking story that offers profound insights about the intricacies of human behaviour, the effects of trust and betrayal, and the value of making moral decisions. This fable continues to engage with readers through its wide range of literary and rhetorical tactics, inspiring introspection as well as important dialogues and ensuring its place as a valued and eternal piece of storytelling.

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## تحلیل سبک‌شناختی افسانه مشهور فارسی عقرب و لاک‌پشت

جنیفر جهان<sup>۱</sup>

دانشیار گروه زبان‌شناسی، دانشگاه داکا،  
داکا، بنگلادش.

(تاریخ دریافت: ۱۳ اردیبهشت ۱۴۰۲؛ تاریخ پذیرش: ۱۴ شهریور ۱۴۰۲؛ تاریخ انتشار: ۹ آذر ۱۴۰۲)  
اصطلاح «تحلیل سبک‌شناختی» که فرآیند کشف الگوهای کاربردی در گفتار و نوشتار را توصیف می‌کند، توسط زبان‌شناسان برای ارزیابی ارزش و اهمیت متون در مطالعات ادبی به کار می‌رود. تحلیل سبک یک سند برای درک متن، محتوا و کارکرد زبان در آن امری حیاتی است. هدف این مقاله، ارائه تحلیل سبک‌شناختی افسانه مشهور فارسی «عقرب و لاک‌پشت» از طریق تشریح عناصر ادبی و بلاغی گوناگون آن است. هر مطالعه سبک‌شناختی به دنبال یا شکستن زبان به اجزای تشکیل‌دهنده آن است یا کسب درکی از معنای آن. در این داستان از بسیاری شگردهای ادبی و زبان‌شناختی برای نمایش عقل‌ستیزی، وسواس، تنش و سایر درون‌مایه‌های تکرارشونده استفاده شده است. بنابراین، با به‌کارگیری روش تحلیل سبک‌شناختی، این مقاله به بررسی چگونگی نقش‌آفرینی انتخاب‌های نویسنده در خلق معانی خاص خواهد پرداخت.

**واژه‌های کلیدی:** سبک‌شناسی، سبک، شگردهای ادبی، شگردهای بلاغی، عقل‌ستیزی، وسواس فکری.

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