Chapter-V
CONCLUSION

1

The present study is a modest attempt to explore the style of Virginia Woolf’s novels. The linguistic-critical study makes use of a relatively vast set of linguistic tools, techniques and categories derived from a number of linguistic theories—descriptive, functional, contextualist and cognitive—in order to study the characteristic linguistic choices Woolf makes to express her individualistic vision of life in the novels. The study focuses on both the macro and the micro levels of the organization of fictional and linguistic material with a view to providing a comprehensive critique on her novels from the point of view of the relatively objective linguistic science—stylistics. The five novels selected for the study are: *The Voyage Out* (1915), *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925), *To the Lighthouse* (1927), *The Waves* (1931) and *Between the Acts* (1941). These are analyzed with reference to the following levels:

1. Structure and Technique

2. Linguistic Style: lexical, syntactic, phonological, semantic levels and cohesion

3. Literary Style: imagery, conceptual metaphor, symbolism, poetic style, mind style and Feminist Stylistic aspect—the female sentence

The levels approach is placed within the broader contextual and functional approaches outlined by Halliday (1981)—the ideational, the interpersonal and the textual—and Fowler’s (1981, 1986) ‘transactions within the society’, ‘as the representations of the dominant or the problematic beliefs current within a historically specific society’ (1986:78). However, the pragmatic/discoursal aspects are not attended to due to considerations of the detailed and independent approach required for it.

The present thesis contains five chapters. Chapter I deals with the theoretical issues and concepts related to stylistics. It also contains the Research Design followed in this study (1.2). Chapter II contains a brief survey of Woolf’s life, vision and art in the first
part, and in the second part, the detailed stylistic analysis of the first novel is presented. Chapters III and IV present the detailed stylistic analyses of the remaining four novels.

2

Since Woolf’s novels have received critical attention from academicians and critics alike, her style also has received some attention (1.2.5). Critics have characterized her style as— ‘cultivated and intellectual’; possessing ‘subtle observation and symphonic style’; ‘delight in verbal mastery’; ‘writing a poet’s prose from a poet’s angle’; ‘this plastic effortless prose with its supple rhythms and easy flow’; ‘the dialogue between these two languages, the ventriloquist and the soliloquist as much part of the ‘action’ in a novel’; ‘feminine style’, etc. However, these comments are critical opinions based on general impressions and not supported by rigorous stylistic study of her novels. A sustained and meticulous investigation of Woolf’s style was felt necessary to reveal her concerns as a novelist, her art and the uniqueness of her style. Hence this style study.

3

The study offers the following insights into the style of Woolf’s novels based on the description and the interpretation of textual data, with focus on specific levels of language use.

3.1

The linguistic analysis of the narrative structures of the novels reveals Woolf’s successful attempts at dismantling the conventional linear narrative model with rupture (VO), disjointed double narrative clauses (MD), single narrative clause (TL), decentred, ‘absent’ structure (Ws) and fractured narrative clauses (BA). Conceptual coherence rather than structural coherence appears to be the deliberate narrative strategy employed by Woolf to counter the architectural, rigid structures of the past. Moreover, all the novels analyzed in the study are open-ended and inconclusive and they appear to be a reaction against the romantic or the tragic closure of the conventional plot. Thus, the tension between the form and the formlessness underlies Woolf’s novelistic structures.

The study proves the efficacy of stylistics in the study of prose fiction where the formal aspects are believed to lie ‘beyond’ the linguistic texture of the novel. And also, it proves the efficacy of Labovian model in the analysis of narrative structures.
Woolf’s use of the spatio-temporal framework also reveals extreme contraction and/or expansion of time and space in the novels; in *VO*, it is a period only of a few months on the voyage from London to South American island; in *MD*, the actual action takes place in London and in one day whereas, through flashback, it covers thirty-three years in the lives of the characters, thus exhibiting double spatio-temporal scheme. In *TL*, the real action takes place on an island and the time is confined to half-a-day in Part I, half-a-day in Part III, mediated by ten years’ gap in Part II; in *Ws*, the double time scheme of a single day and the human life from childhood to old age is used and London remains the chief locale; and, *BA* makes use of the juxtaposition of double time-frame of a single day for real action against the background of the entire history of mankind. The action takes place in a village at a manor house. London appears to be the favoured place, which Woolf uses as the microcosm of human civilization against which she launches her ideological attack.

In matters of the narrative technique, Woolf progressively abdicates narrative authority and delegates narrative space from omniscience to characters. In *BA*, the identification of the omniscient narrator with the characters dissolves the boundary between narrator and character/s. The dismantling of the Victorian authorial omniscience is achieved in favour of a relativistic and multi-angled approach to life. The Stream of Consciousness technique is used as an expressive mechanism to give narrative voice to the characters who feel oppressed and silenced in the modern materialistic world.

The fragmented paragraphs in the texts reveal Woolf’s disdain, similar to her dislike for the narrative structures, for the imposing authoritarian paragraph structures with their logic, coherence and linear organization. Woolf deliberately makes use of circularity and incoherence, resulting in fractured thought or idea embodied in the paragraph.

3.2

Woolf’s texts reveal a great deal of lexical patterning as they form strong lexical sets. These create meaning patterns and evoke thematic framework underlying the novels. They create a rich complex of tones, moods and, by generating the broader socio-cultural milieu, point at the physical world which exists outside the novels. For instance, the ‘urban set’, in most of the novels, refers to the decay and disintegration of modern culture reflected in the microcosm of urban civilization, London.
Woolf had an aesthetic of the word—the ‘split-husk’ theory (MD), by which she meant if the outer ‘husks’ are removed, the words would yield their ‘riches’. This she exploits to the utmost by placing common, everyday words in multiple contexts and setting them ablaze with new and unpredictable meanings. For instance, in VO (2.2.3.1.2), the word light undergoes double contextualization—one as the emblem of modern materialistic civilization, ‘the glittering lights of London’, and the other as the eternally burning light of the Hell, thus, establishing unequivocal link between the mythical hell and the modern ‘hell’–London city, echoing Conrad’s image of the same in Heart of Darkness.

Her use of Latinate polysyllabic words alongside monosyllabic words reflects Woolf’s felicity with the lexical resources of English language, and also, they are made to blend naturally into the intellectual atmosphere and sophistication of the characters in her texts. These elevate the discourse of the novels from the mundane and commonplace level to the intellectual level.

Woolf’s dissatisfaction with the conventional words is expressed in her lexical experimentation with the material form of the words by odd compounding, conversion and odd formations, etc., as in ‘thunder-claps’, ‘stonily’ and ‘meaningly’.

The use of the verbs of perception and cognition, rather than of action, is suitable for the portrayal of psychic lives of the characters in the novels. Her characteristic preference for the ‘verb of estrangement’, seemed, indicates her non-committal and non-dogmatic attitude towards the world portrayed in her novels.

Her individualistic vision of language is visible in dismantling the conventional rigid lexical hierarchy between the open-class words and the closed-system items, the former enjoying the privileged status by virtue of the semantic value they carry. Woolf asserts the democratic principle in making capital investment of meaning in the so-called grammar-words, such as the indefinite pronouns one and thing/something, the reflexives and time-place adverbial complex, here and now. These words function as style markers and carry thematic motifs in the texts.

3.3

Woolf discovered the impediment of the conventional linear syntax, which she characterized as ‘the formal railway line of sentence’ with its discursive features of systems of order and coherence in the portrayal of ‘the luminous halo’, i.e. the fluid states
of mind. Her preference for paratactical superordinate clause, in which multiple paratactic
and hypotactic clauses are embedded, achieves the twin purpose of infinite extendibility of
the sentence and of depth and complexity simultaneously in the very structure of the
syntax. The structural freedom and flexibility afforded by the linguistic mechanism of
coordination is suited for recording the flow of impressions and that of subordination for
revealing the complex states of the minds of the characters. Moreover, the use of
coordinate clauses with the mere connectivity of ‘and’ makes for relative laxity or break or
incoherence in rendering the stream of consciousness, since parataxis is known to merely
join and not cause ‘fusion’ as the hypotaxis appears to do. Woolf also makes use of
polysyndetic sentences for rhetorical purposes, for instance, for recreating the monotony
and boredom of the characters by the repetitive use of and in close vicinity.

The density of one type of hypotaxis, which gives a distinctive flavor to her texts, is
the non-finite present participle clause. Though these clauses cannot be said to have any
inherent meaning, as for instance, the passive constructions, in the contexts of their use, in
the texts of Woolf, they appear to be a proper medium in the portrayal of fluid states of
mind, as they provide gliding effect to the narration when the present participles pop out
one after another suggesting spontaneity, simultaneity and continuity of impressions. They
add dynamism and vivacity to the otherwise lifeless syntax of the past.

The total absence of causative conjunctions, such as because, due to and therefore
and the preponderance of for speaks volumes for the world-view projected in the novels– a
world, which is inexplicable and beyond the control of human agency or interference.

The defining syntactic structures, however, in the texts of Woolf, are the repetitive
and parallelistic structures at all levels of syntactic organization– morphological level,
group level and clausal level. In addition, parallelistic synonymous expressions and noun
tags also contribute to the circularity or repetitiveness of the utterances in the texts. These
structures espouse the character perspective or the narrator perspective, as the case may be,
in their contexts of use, in addition to providing iconic and emphatic effects to the
utterances. They are also used as part of the rhetoric of irony also.

The elliptical structures, in addition to being cohesive functionally with anaphoric
reference, add to the brevity and succinctness of the utterances. They create rhetorical
effect by omitting repetitive elements and focusing on important information in the
sentences. They also contribute to the rhythmic nature of the syntax.
Even graphological features, like punctuation marks, are used as rhetorical devices to achieve multiple purposes. Woolf’s tendency is to use long graphic units with heavy punctuation, particularly the semi-colon, which becomes a marker for *and*, and hence, has an important stylistic role. They create a sense of fluidity by facilitating ellipsis. And also, in many passages, the punctuation marks are invested with semantic values as in ‘And the marriage had been, Sally supposed, a success?’ (*MD*:208).

Similarly, the parenthetical structures are used for multiple purposes such as suggesting break in the thought process, superimposition of a new thought or idea, or to present double layers of thoughts, or for brevity, etc.

Manipulation of the normative syntax of English language for the purposes of thematic focus and emphasis is used in the texts. The use of the end-focused syntax and the thematic fronting are the common modes of focusing the intended information or creating rhetorical effect in the sentences. The end-focused sentences are moulded in a deviant way by building up lexico-semantic patterns, through winding ways, to the climax of the thought– in a clause or phrase.

Modality rather than the flat narrative past tense is the preferred mode in the texts. The progressives, perfectives, passives and modals, by and large, espouse and modulate the responses of the characters towards their experiences of the world. These involve appraisal of the truth value of the utterances and their relation to the objects or ideas. This also contributes to the unsettling fluidity of the narratives.

In short, the syntactic structures in Woolf’s texts are, by and large, deviant, yet methodical, in their usage and impact.

3.4

Woolf’s texts echo the sense of the texts in the literal sense. The deliberate creation of symphony between sound and sense is indicative of her integrated approach to language. The sound patterns, of both free repetition and patterned repetition (alliteration) orchestrate her texts for the purposes as various as emphasis, espousal of character perspective, irony, presentation of a particular sensibility of a character, and most importantly, not only to convey the conceptual sense but also the perceptual experience of the situation or object.
The use of onomatopoeia and sound symbolism or phonaesthesia, mimic the external as well as the inward reality of the characters. These, in most of the novels, directly convey the thematic motifs of the texts. In VO, Ws and BA, the silence of the central characters is punctuated by the senseless sounds, created from different sources. In BA, the *chuff, chuff* sound, emanating from the gramophone, functions as phonological metaphor for the entire novel.

Among the suprasegmental features, both rhythm and intonation contribute to the meaning/s and aesthetic appeal of the texts. Rhythm, however, emerges as the fundamental principle of aesthetic organization of the novelistic material in her novels. Rhythm is organic in her novels, since she conceives life, reality, nature, time, consciousness and language as essentially rhythmic in quality. Her rhythmic structure is invested with ideological significance to counter the linear narrative and sentence structure.

Rhythm gives rise to music in her texts, particularly in MD, TL and Ws. In Ws, life is conceived as musical flow, the music of life achieved in the rhythmic ordering of the language of the text-- the similar syntactic structures and lexical patterns evoke musicality, with point and counterpoint, balancing each other as in a Waltz. The music in her texts is yet another achievement in transcending the barrier of flat rendering of real life as in the traditional novels.

Woolf’s texts reveal the falling intonation patterns as the norm. They lend a quiet assertive tone to the texts and when they occur in close vicinity, they provide cascading effect with a sense of finality and purposiveness.

3.5

Woolf’s creativity is evident also in her unusual violation of the selection restriction rules at the phrasal and clausal levels. Her attempt to ‘split’ the ‘husk’, true to her aesthetic of the *word*– ‘the split husk theory’, appears to be aimed at disrupting the logical or cognitive meaning traditionally associated with them. This is achieved through unusual colligation of disparate lexical items belonging to different experiential fields, through semantically deviant sentences, and through lexical deautomization of human nature. These aptly capture the ‘vision’ of the human world, and particularly of human nature, as something perverse and dehumanized in the modern materialistic world. Woolf consistently evokes this vision in the five novels culminating in BA, where animals behave like humans and vice versa. The unusual semantic transfer in the above mentioned
linguistic constructions proves the thesis that words do not possess intrinsic meanings, but acquire them by virtue of their use in particular contexts.

Intertextuality or multidimensionality of reference in all the five novels forms an important contextual dimension in which the texts are embedded. The texts generate their meanings in relation to cultural systems and literary allusions, which exist outside the texts. Numerous quotations from literary texts from across the ages—from the ancient Greece to the modern times—establish direct semantic relationship with her texts, drawing parallels and contrasts between them, and thus, provide depth of interpretation to the texts. For instance, the recurrent quote from Tennyson’s poem, ‘Stormed at with shot and shell’ (TL:21) characterizes Mr. Ramsay as a man who perceives life as a battlefield and himself as a soldier on a doomed expedition, which reveals his pessimism, loneliness and sense of failure. Thus, the intertextual features are properly integrated into the semantic texture of the novels.

3.6

All the five novels analyzed here reveal the quality of textuality both at the macro level and the micro level of linguistic organization. At the micro level, the five processes of cohesion—reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction and cohesion—are used, which bind the text at the intrasentence level. The absence of causative conjunctions, such as because and due to, are remarkable, but their absence does not affect the cohesion of the texts, since the cohesive relations are achieved by the above mentioned cohesive processes. At the macro level, recurrent lexical items and certain expressions at remote places and, sometimes, in close proximity not only integrate the different parts of the texts and provide semantic cohesion by making them function as one semantic unit, but also make for structural integration, as the recurrent expressions provide significant thematic motifs in terms of which the narrative progression takes place. For instance, in Ws, the recurrent expression ‘I see women carrying red pitchers’ (7, 48, etc.) binds the text tightly at the conceptual level. And again, the repetitive/parallelistic syntax, which is the common feature of all the novels, also functions as a cohesive device.

However, deliberate incoherence is cultivated in the very fabric of the texts (for instance, (4.1.3.5)), which makes the cohesive relations tenuous.
Another distinctive feature of the linguistic and narrative organization of Woolf’s texts is the weaving of the narrative texture with imagery. This is deliberate, with a view to creating works of literature and not mere transcripts of life. The imagery used in the texts is evocative, graphic and concrete and the interlocking of images in the texts contributes to narrative progression. For instance, ‘James, as he stood between her knees, felt her rise in a rosy-coloured fruit tree laid with leaves and dancing boughs into which the beak of brass, the arid scimitar of his father, the egotistical man, plunged and smote, demanding sympathy’ (TL:39). Here, the six year old James’ feelings towards his mother and father are presented mainly through imagery. His oedipal love for the former and dislike for the latter are not described in a conventional way, but rendered vividly through concrete, visual imagery. Hence, the imagery in Woolf’s texts is not just a rhetorical device but an integral part of the narrative art achieved by incorporating the substance of inner thought into concrete imagery. Thus, imagery, in Woolf’s texts, is another form of circumventing traditional representationalism in the novels.

‘Modern’ images, in the sense of incongruent and illogical conjunctions of lexical items involving objects of modern scientific and technological advancement, which reveal Woolf’s disdain for them as props of modern civilization, are common in her texts. For instance, ‘It was as if she had antennae trembling out from her, which, intercepting certain sentences, forced them upon her attention’ (TL:91).

Similarly, extended metaphors and similes scattered throughout the texts help conceptualize a scene or a situation, particularly in the Stream of Consciousness novels. They vividly present the complex psychic processes with an undercurrent of conscious and unconscious motives, which otherwise would have gone unnoticed in the flux of experience.

Woolf’s texts project a broader conceptual framework underlying the narratives in the form of conceptual metaphors, a popular concept in Cognitive Stylistics. For instance, in Ws, the related conceptual metaphors are:

Life is a battle.
Chaos and death are the enemies of mankind.
Fighting the enemy, despite failure, is all that matters.
In the passages quoted from the text, the conceptual metaphors present the mortal man in search of immortality on the spiritual level and man’s recognition of his limitations to do so. It is Bernard, who remembering Percival, asserts his sense of self and prepares to meet death heroically. *The Waves*, thus, is the tragedy of the individual wave breaking on the collective shore.

Her association with the Bloomsbury Group and the Post-Impressionist artists provided Woolf with yet another idea of challenging the stiff and lifeless language of the past and the ways to infuse life into it through the synthesis of colour, sound, shape and movement– a synaesthesia of experience, which sets the language on fire, makes the imagery graphic and visual and the style expressionist. Woolf’s consistent use of the Post-Impressionistic imagery in the texts is, along with other aspects, a kind of new language for the portrayal of subjective experiences and rhythms of inner life. For instance, ‘… but with a roughness in her voice like a grasshopper’s, which rasped his spine deliciously and sent running up into his brain waves of sound, which concussing, broke (*MD*:25) (tactile + kinetic + auditory + visual imagery).

Symbols in Woolf’s novels do not merely stand for a cluster of ideas or feelings. They are an integral part of the narrative design and of the central vision, in terms of which the narrative progression takes place. The symbols of ‘voyage’ in *VO*, the ‘sea and waves’ in *MD*, ‘the Lighthouse’ in *TL*, ‘the waves’ in *Ws* and ‘Pointz Hall and the Pageant’ in *BA* are part of the narrative structure. In addition, the symbols are open-ended and are never stable. They embody different meanings and significance in different contexts. For instance, the symbol of the ‘sea/waves’ in *TL*, simultaneously stands for the wholeness of being, for the deeper self of human mind, for a destructive force engulfing the world, and also for creativity. As Woolf herself characterizes them as ‘vague, generalized’, they involve imaginative participation of the readers and defy definitive interpretative framework.

3.8

The study proves the critics’ (Ralph Freedman (1963), etc.) observations and Woolf’s own assertions about the poeticity in her novels. As she was wary of the term ‘novel’ for her novels, she preferred designating them as ‘elegy’ (*TL*), ‘the play-poem idea’ (*Ws*), and, ‘the Pageant-the Play’ (*BA*). Woolf’s texts reveal poetic qualities in her foregrounding of deviation and parallelism, her emphasis more on the ‘the axis of
selection’ than on ‘the axis of combination’ (Jakobson, 1960). Her use of syntactic
dislocation, heavy reliance on metaphoric processes, verbal echoes through patterned use
of sounds, and above all, rhythmic structures ‘defamiliarize’ or ‘estrange’ (Russian
Formalists) the texts of Woolf. In fact, Ws emerges as a pure poetic novel where poeticity
rather than meaning is emphasized.

3.9

The study also reveals the mind styles or the world view of the novelist as
embodied in the texts of the novels. These represent the ideational choices or refer to the
world outside the texts whose meaning in the texts resides in the way experience is
represented or the world is conceptualized. All the texts exhibit the marked mind styles,
thereby indicating Woolf’s strong affiliation towards her ideological convictions. These
directly touch the core or the nerve-fibre of the crisis-ridden modern civilization in
pointing out the essentialist unity and the existentialist disunity in its core– between man
and man, man and nature and more importantly, between man and his self. The suitable
metaphor for this lethal disjoint, which would take the world to its doom (World War II), is
poignantly expressed as the fragment. Woolf conceives the world, unlike in the bygone
days, as the fragmented, splintered world where unity of vision is impossible. This kind of
fragmentation of experience she presents in fragmented syntax in VO, in fragmented
human body-parts which acquire agency and animacy in MD, along with the fragmented
body-parts, the non-human objects which acquire agency and animacy in TL, the symbol of
unity– the rhythm as mind style in Ws in order to arrest the nihilistic tendencies of the
modern world and, the intensified foregrounding of the processes of fragmentation
presented in fragmented names and words and fragmented selves, etc. in BA.

The mind styles of the five novels, as mentioned above, represent Woolf’s
ideological challenge to the idea of the modern, progressive civilization, which fostered
unchecked materialism, social divisions with high and low culture– ‘the outer veils of
civilization’, whereas the inner core or human spirit starves and dies, ‘the dryness of the
soul’. In short, Woolf projects the possibility of the spectre of the death of the ‘human’ in
the human being and the human agency considerably diminished to the extent of the non-
human objects taking over the mantle of furthering ‘civilization’ (science and technology)
and the human-like creatures inhabiting the earth.
Since Woolf was a feminist and had strong objection to patriarchy in all its manifestations, her novels reveal these tendencies in all aspects—themes, characterization, point of view and, more pertinent to the present study, the style of her novels. Considering the scope of the study, the researcher has focused on one aspect—Woolf’s notion of the female sentence. For her, language is literally ‘man-made’: ‘The very form of the sentence does not fit her’. Thus, Woolf makes the sentence in particular, and language in general, a gendered one. She prefers Dorothy Richardson’s sentence for being ‘the psychological sentence of the feminine gender’—the free, amorphous, flexible and open-ended sentence structure, which constitutes her aesthetic of language in general and the sentence in particular. Woolf makes use of a plethora of sentence structures, which defy the conventional ‘code’ and the process of signification.

Some features of sentences, which purport to be the female sentences, are: evasion of order and coherence and accumulation of unconnected, diverse and fragmentary details; preference for paratactical clauses, which operate on the principle of equivalence unlike the hypotactic structures, which operate on the principle of subordination; the subjectless/verbless sentences; sentences with synonymous expressions; deferment of completion of sentence; incomplete sentences and abrupt endings; and interrupted sentences which indicate author-interference in the middle of the sentence suggestive of the style of Lawrence Sterne in Trishtram Shandy.

The study has been fruitful in both justification and refutation of some of the critical observations made by critics over the years. The study, thus, proves the efficacy of stylistics in literary studies, particularly of fiction. The following are a few such instances.

Critics like Clive Bell and Lytton Strachey criticize the structure of VO as ‘a remarkable failure, … some discrepancy between the comic and tragic parts’ (Clive Bell), and it ‘lacked the cohesion of a dominant idea— in the action’ (Lytton Strachey). The present analysis refutes these charges, by providing linguistic evidence that the conceptual coherence supersedes the structural incoherence and the narrative structure follows the iconic order of randomness of events in human life.
Critics like David Daiches (1942), R. L. Chambers (1947) and Hermione Lee (1977) criticize Woolf’s novels for rarified atmosphere, without any solid, concrete themes like social issues or tangible reality. The researcher feels obliged to dismiss their assumptions by pointing out the fundamental concern of Woolf— to liberate the novel form from its bondage to the portrayal of external reality like poverty and social injustice, and instead, to depict the core or the essence of reality/experience. From Woolf’s point of view, the real problems of life need to be addressed at the level of the idea— in the proper vision of the world, i.e. unity of mankind, and not by the mere depiction of ugliness and squalor, as is the wont of many novelists, which may serve the purpose only superficially. Moreover, the lexical sets, particularly the ‘Urban Set’, the ‘Domestic Set’ and the ‘Decay and Disintegration Set’ point at the physical world outside the minds of the characters and portray, in broad outlines, the deterioration of human values in the modern materialistic society. In short, the civilizational concerns are at the heart of her novels. The critics, or readers, trained on the conventional reading of the novels, are forced to shed their prejudices and are called upon to adopt an unconventional approach in the deconstruction and reconstruction of the meaning/s of Woolf’s texts.

David Daiches (1942) and David Lodge (1966) express serious reservations about her repetitive use of ‘one’ by labeling it as ‘compromise pronoun’, ‘transitional pronoun’, ‘minor device as a characteristic upper middle class speech habit’ and ‘slyly invoking authority from some undefined community’ (3.1.3.1.4). These comments appear to be off-the-cuff remarks and, therefore, they do not stand the test of linguistic scrutiny. The place of the indefinite pronoun one in the overall lexical patterning of the texts, particularly in the context of other pronouns such as he, she, we, you and I needs to be determined with reference to its functional value. Woolf uses it in its generic sense and extends it as an all-encompassing substitute for one and all, the collectivity of mankind and its essentialist unity. The density and its occurrence in thematically important positions in the texts reveal its significance to the world-view embodied in the novels— the human solidarity and integrity of life.

Daiches and Lodge are critical also of her use of the non-finite present participle clause in all her texts, finding it an important limitation of her art. However, the study proves these constructions, as adding freshness and dynamism to the otherwise plain and dull language of the past. And in their contexts of use, they perform specific functions such
as dramatizing the thoughts of characters and functioning as spatial deictics.

Moreover, Daiches and Lodge disapprove of Woolf’s recurrent use of ‘for’, as being ‘pseudo-logical’ or ‘half-logical’ (Daiches), revealing ‘a certain timidity in exploring the flow of consciousness’ (Lodge). However, in the texts of Woolf, the use of the causative ‘for’ has direct consequences for the particular vision of the world portrayed in the novels– a world where things happen without any apparent cause, the world which remains inexplicable and beyond the control of human agency.

Woolf’s contemporary, Arnold Bennett comments on her syntax (in TL): ‘The form of her sentences is tryingly monotonous, and the distance between her nominatives and her verbs is steadily increasing’ (qtd. in Majumdar and McLaurin, 1975:200-201). However, the analysis of clause structures of MD and TL (3.1.3.2.2 and 3.2.3.2.2, for instance) reveals careful manipulation, ordering and dramatization of thoughts through embedded clauses, which illustrate her aesthetic principle of the sentence structure to balance ‘naturalness’ with ‘art’, though the sentences happen to be long and unwieldy.

The study refutes also the observations made by Robert Humphrey (1954) and Fowler (1977) that Woolf’s use of punctuation and parentheses are mainly syntactic in orientation. This study proves that these features serve expressive purposes as well.

The study, however, justifies the observations made by certain critics like Ralph Freedman (1963) about the poeticity in her novels. Woolf, in order to alter the orthodox novel, deliberately incorporates the poet’s vision and language into her novels, thus blurring the generic distinctions between prose and poetry. Woolf (CE, II, 1966:224-25) asserts, ‘That cannibal, the novel, which has devoured so many forms of art will then have devoured even more … It will be written in prose, but in prose, which has many of the characteristics of poetry’.

One of the objectives of this study has been to trace the ‘development’– the word which was anathema to Woolf– of Woolf’s style, in accordance with which the five novels belonging to the three phases of her literary career have been selected. However, Woolf’s style does not reveal stages of ‘development’ in the conventional sense of progression on a scale, but as a complex process of change or transformation in an attempt to adjust and suit the style to the requirements of the artistic purposes at hand. Woolf herself (WD, 1969:30)
noted, ‘Suppose one of my myriad changes of style is antipathetic to the material? Or does my style remain fixed? To my mind, it changes always … The truth is that I have an internal automatic scale of values’ (italics supplied). Woolf seems justified in her assertion of the ‘internal automatic scale of values’ for each of the novels as may be seen below:

Broadly speaking, the researcher finds the following pattern of ‘development’ in her style:

1. The Phase of Initiation: The Voyage Out

2. The Phase of Complexity and Maturity: Mrs. Dalloway and To the Lighthouse

3. The Phase of Dissolution: The Waves and Between the Acts

The Levels-Approach adopted in this study enables the researcher to trace the changes or transformations level-wise of the stylistic aspects of the novels:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Aspects</th>
<th>VO</th>
<th>MD</th>
<th>TL</th>
<th>Ws</th>
<th>BA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Structure</td>
<td>Conventional narrative with a rupture</td>
<td>Two disjointed narrative clauses; unconventional structure</td>
<td>Single narrative clause; unconventional structure</td>
<td>Zero narrative clause; dissolution of narrative structure</td>
<td>Frustrated narrative clauses; dissolution of narrative structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Technique</td>
<td>Prominent omniscient narration; conventional point of view</td>
<td>Stream of Consciousness; multiple perspective</td>
<td>Stream of Consciousness; multiple perspective</td>
<td>Soliloquies; abdication of authorial narration; dissolution of narrative authority</td>
<td>Ambivalent narrative voice; omniscient narration merging with characters’ voices; dissolution of narrative authority</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Paragraph Structure</td>
<td>Fragmented paragraphs</td>
<td>Fragmented paragraphs</td>
<td>Fragmented paragraphs</td>
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<td>Fragmented paragraphs</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Lexical Level</td>
<td>Lexical patterning scattered, and hence, diffuse effect; formal vocabulary</td>
<td>Lexical patterning intense and intricate; formal vocabulary with purposive use</td>
<td>Lexical patterning natural, spontaneous flow of lexis; formal vocabulary with purposive use</td>
<td>Highly rigid and repetitive lexical patterning; formal vocabulary used but disbanded with a cry for ‘words of one syllable’</td>
<td>Near absence of patterned lexis; emphasis on words of one syllable; dissolution of lexical patterning</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sl. No.</td>
<td>Aspects</td>
<td>VO</td>
<td>MD</td>
<td>TL</td>
<td>Ws</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Syntactic Level</td>
<td>Conventional narrative; sentences with modulations, intermittently, by parallelism; thematic focus and modality</td>
<td>Highly complex, embedded syntax with heavy modality by parallelism; thematic focus, ellipsis, parentheticals, punctuations and verbal modality; highly wrought texture</td>
<td>Highly complex but artistically crafted syntax; moderate parallelism, thematic focus and modality, as compared to MD; controlled handling of syntax ensuring smooth flow</td>
<td>Rejection of narrative past tense; adoption of simple present tense with simple clause structures; defining parallelism; highly diffuse as well as tenuous syntax</td>
<td>Explosive syntax of various types; dissolution of conventional as well as her own preferred syntax</td>
</tr>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Phonological Level</td>
<td>Less conscious and less patterned phonological features; thematic use of onomatopoeia and sound symbolism; low key rhythmic structures; falling intonation</td>
<td>Highly conscious sound patterns; motivated alliteration; rhythmic structures and musicality; falling intonation</td>
<td>Controlled use of sound patterns; intense rhythmic patterns and musicality; falling intonation</td>
<td>Centrality of sound patterns with thematic echoes; motivated alliteration and onomatopoeia; austere and defining rhythmic structures; falling intonation</td>
<td>Loud, noisy use of phonological features with thematic echoes; artificial rhythmic structures; mock musicality; falling intonation</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Semantic Features</td>
<td>Early recognition of the value of unusual collocations and semantically deviant structures; low key usage; less integrated intertextuality</td>
<td>Purposive use of collocations, semantically deviant structures; integrated intertextuality</td>
<td>Foregrounding of semantically deviant structures; integrated intertextuality</td>
<td>Highly motivated, semantically deviant structures; nihilistic note; polyphony of several discourses</td>
<td>Strong affiliation towards the perverse, the chaotic and the deviant structures; pastiche work with heavy intertextuality</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Imagery</td>
<td>Controlled and moderate use of imagery</td>
<td>Integral and pervasive feature of the text</td>
<td>The text interwoven with a network of imagery as in Imagist poetry</td>
<td>Foregrounded imagery; the text consisting in recurrent imagery; part of textuality</td>
<td>Ambivalent use of imagery; indulgence in polyvalency and instability of meanings</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sl. No.</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Cohesion</td>
<td>Cohesive text</td>
<td>Cohesive text, but with cultivated incoherence due to the technique of narration</td>
<td>Cohesive text; natural flow of the text</td>
<td>Tenuous cohesion; problematizing the textuality of the text; virtual creation of chaos and disunity; semi-textuality</td>
<td>Cohesive, intelligible text; but ruptures within the passages causing visible fragmentation and chaos; semi-textuality</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 10     | Poetic Style | Semi-poeticity | Poetic novel | Poetic novel | Poetic novel | Mock-poetic novel |}

The table above provides ‘the rising and falling’ graph, to use her own image for the rhythmic movement, of the development of Woolf’s style. The initial phase, i.e. VO, exhibits, though tentative in orientation, Woolf’s characteristic choices of linguistic features at all levels of textual organization. Her formalist inclinations of achieving balance between form and content are manifest in structure, point of view and style. However, in the novel, her narrative art is subordinated to conventional patterning. And also, the lexical, syntactic, phonological and semantic patterning of the text does not appear to be as complex, varied and evocative as in the later novels.

The second phase of complexity and maturity as in MD and TL, marks a distinct advance over the initial phase in matters of all layers of style. The stylistic choices which appear tentative and of uncertain effect become definitive and purposive in import: in the meticulous patterning of lexis, syntax, phonological features, semantic deviations, intertextuality, the variety and complexity of imagery, all evoking patterns of similarity and/or contrasts; and the proper integration of various levels of linguistic organization into a whole, which create unity of impression. This phase represents Woolf’s radical break with the conventional novel, as she succeeds in supplanting the linear phenomena or architectural features by the complex interrelationship between levels of linguistic and fictional organization. Quantitatively and qualitatively, MD and TL appear to have achieved balance between art and naturalness. Therefore, critics have adjudged these novels as modernist classics.

The phase of dissolution begins at the artistic and imaginative level with Ws and realistically in BA. The rigid patterning of the text of Ws at all levels reaches its climax and...
remains unparalleled and records Woolf’s total break with the past as well as with her own earlier fiction. In Ws, she succeeds in fulfilling her dream of writing pure ‘literature’, her aesthetic impulse towards unity in the form of waves of experience, in which she creates a new language for fiction. Thus, she extends the scope of the novel form. Robert Herrick (qtd. in Muzumdar and McLaurin, 1975:278) argues that ‘There was development in her work from the particular to the general, culminating in Ws, in which style is emphasized at the expense of content’.

In BA, as Prospero in Shakespeare’s The Tempest buries the magic wand after its utility is over, Woolf dissolves the narrative art not only of the past but her own novelistic art through pastiche, desultory techniques and grotesque style. The dissolution of the narrative structure, of the structure of the word, of the sentence, of point of view and ruptures within consciousness, human selves and the Pageant, etc. are suggestive of the reign of chaos in the world stripped of all idealism and value. In a tone strongly indicative of her belief in the extinction of human civilization under the threat of World War II and her craving for instantaneous creative renewal, her metaphorical cry for ‘words of one syllable’ evokes the dead end of her illusion, vision and hope.

The uniqueness of Woolf’s style could be established with reference to contemporary modernist writers, in this case, James Joyce’s style as in Ulysses. Both Woolf and Joyce are formidable experimentalists in their own varied ways. The researcher bases the comparison between the two on linguistic features. Since the artistic purposes of both the writers appear to be at extreme poles, i.e. Woolf’s philosophical vision and Joyce’s comic-satirical vision, these govern differently their linguistic choices and their stylistic motivations. However, in broad outline, the following few observations appear relevant in the context of the study:

1) In the narrative structure, Woolf maintains multiple layers of temporal framework—the surface layer confining to a single day in majority of the novels and the deeper layer stretching through years up to the primitive times as in BA. Joyce also confines the actions of the characters to a single day, but scales vast stretches of time reaching to the mythical times. Unlike Woolf, Joyce adheres to the chronological sequence of events in Ulysses from morning till midnight. Whereas
Woolf adheres to the traditional unities of the novel, Joyce sacrifices many of these in the interest of the vast canvas of the narrative.

ii) Woolf makes use of Indirect Interior Monologue in her novels, whereas Joyce makes use of Direct Interior Monologue in *Ulysses*. Whereas Woolf makes use of FIT (Free Indirect Thought) prominently with the admixture of other forms of thought presentation, Joyce makes use of FDT (Free Direct Thought) and DT (Direct Thought) in the novel, with the admixture of other forms of thought presentation. Both Woolf and Joyce delegate narrative space to the characters. However, Joyce withdraws himself from the text; but Woolf controls the narrative flow by the omniscient narrator’s iterative ‘he said’ and ‘she said’, signalling the authorial presence.

iii) The lexis of Woolf in her texts—both commonplace and formal/polysyllabic words—appears sophisticated and intellectual which suit the upper middle class characters. Joyce, on the contrary, amalgamates words from child’s babel to the most sophisticated ones—both monosyllabic and polysyllabic. His range of vocabulary traverses the realms of both the profane and the sublime, the mundane and the scientific, the ordinary to the philosophical—indicative of the vast range of emotions and feelings from indignation and satire to wit, humour, sheer joy and irreverence—suitable for his artistic purposes. Woolf’s lexical experimentation is moderate and sensible in comparison with Joyce’s intense and non-sensical experimentation throwing all norms to the winds.

iv) Both Woolf and Joyce revolted against conventional sequential syntax and both discard it in favour of deviant syntax. Whereas Woolf confines herself to well-thought-out and well-defined syntactic choices, Joyce’s syntax rejects all norms of the conventional syntax including the punctuation. It may be said that Woolf’s language is the language of ‘silence’ where conscious mind can control the flow, whereas Joyce’s language is that of ‘sleep’ and therefore, tends more towards illogicality. Joyce’s language in the last pages of the novel, where Molly Bloom’s sub-conscious and unconscious contents are revealed, is irrational. In *Finnegan’s Wake* also, Joyce uses similar language for H. C. Earwicker’s dream reverie.
v) Woolf exploits phonological features for aesthetic as well as communicative effects and Joyce too does the same, but rather more blatantly, so that *Ulysses* reads throughout like a noisy book. Woolf constructs her narrative around rhythmic principles, whereas Joyce appears to make use of linear principle in narrative organization.

vi) Woolf reveals semantic deviations of various kinds. But Joyce indulges in extreme kinds of semantic oddities, beyond the realms of logic or sense. Both Woolf and Joyce turn to imagery and symbolism as vehicles for their ideas. Whereas Woolf’s texts are interwoven with interlocking systems of imagery such as trees, birds, and fire, Joyce’s range of imagery is huge, including tautology and pun. Both of them use imagery as a reaction to the traditional ways of representationalism.

vii) Woolf’s style, in comparison with Joyce’s, could be called Post-Impressionistic. Joyce’s synaesthetic rendering of experience is linear in orientation, whereas Woolf’s is circular, and therefore, gives the feel of the live wire set on fire. Woolf (*CE*, II, 1966:183) notes, ‘The art of writing, … every word in the language, of knowing their weights, colours, sounds, associations, … so that if you want to satisfy all those senses that rise in a swarm … the reason, the imagination, the eyes, the ears, the palms of the hands and the soles of the feet …’. Woolf’s style is never flat. It does not starve the visual, aural, tactile and kinetic senses. She considers language as a living organism.

viii) Woolf makes use of different styles in a single text as in *TL*, though moderately, and Joyce too brings in enormous amount of variety in the style of *Ulysses*—from journalistic, child’s babel to inflated rhetoric and dream reverie.

ix) Both scrupulously maintain artistic integrity in matters of style, though their purposes differ.

Woolf’s experimentation, as compared to Joyce’s, appears to be within the bounds of reason and intelligibility. Therefore, she is called ‘a radical conservative in practising her craft’ (Majumdar and McLaurin, 1975:36).

As part of summing up, a few general observations on Woolf’s novels from the point of view of style may be made:
i) Woolf, in the age when the old systems and convictions were crumbling, fashioned her novelistic style in response to the ‘modern’ experiences, which she herself characterized as ‘fragmentary’, full of strife and divisions. Her language and style reveal the inner contradictions and incoherences, as may be evidenced in the conjunction of parallelistic and elliptical structures, nominalization and expansion, formal and colloquial vocabulary, etc.

ii) Woolf developed her own individualistic aesthetic of language– the word, the sentence, the paragraph, imagery and of the novelistic art as a whole in accordance with which she developed her novelistic style which remains distinctive and inimitable till date.

iii) The density of the style markers in her texts and the intricacies and complexities in the interrelations among these at various levels create their own internal dynamics– ‘internal automatic scale of values’– which requires a complex interpretative framework. Her novels require deep involvement of the readers to make sense of the texts.

iv) Considering the vast linguistic repertoire available to Woolf and her own felicity with the language, her choice of limited number of linguistic features, such as highly patterned structures, at all levels, which she consistently uses from the first novel to the last one, though with slight functional variations, highlights her self-conscious and intense focus and enormous control and tenacity over the medium with the help of which she depicts complex mental states of the characters.

v) The duality or self-contradictions deliberately incorporated into the linguistic organization of the text such as colloquial and formal vocabulary, nominalization, ellipsis and parallelism, semantic overlapping in synonymous expressions and noun tags and ellipsis, which indicate the use of the principle of condensation and expansion used in the texts, metaphorically evokes the duality within the thematic structures in the texts such as order and chaos, flux and fixity, and life and death. These generate and foreground the interactive tension, the tenuous relationship between the subject matter and the form of expression. Thus, Woolf’s style problematizes the relationship between reality and language, content and form.
vi) Similar tension of form and substance underlies Woolf’s mixing of generic features of the narrative, the poetic and the dramatic art. In Woolf’s scale of values, literature is an open set, capable of great diversity and values which are neither universal nor stable, but dynamic and ever changing.

vii) Another important feature that this study reveals is conversion of conventional rhetorical devices such as schemes and tropes into discourse features, as for instance, the rhythmic ordering of the novelistic and linguistic material in her texts with a view to subverting the ‘rigid, authoritarian structures of novel form’.

viii) The vision of the world that emerges out of the recurrent use of certain linguistic features is one of stasis– compounds with half- as first particle, verbs of perception and cognition, the quasi-modal seemed, the generic one and thing, nominalization, passive constructions, the repetitive/parALLEListic structures, overuse of and and total absence of causatives and use of for as causative link, etc. are suggestive of this. The stasis condition of the human world is meant for critical observation and contemplation. All the novels analyzed in the thesis, point at the lack of ‘action’ or if at all any, feeble ‘actions’ by the protagonists to effect ‘change’ in the universe, which ultimately fail. The non-progressive world is characterized by the persistent use of ‘Decay and Disintegration’ lexical set, which indicates the tragic collapse of all meaning and value in all the spheres of life– both private/domestic and public. It is just the mechanical flux of Time and life which is the movement or ‘action’ in her novels. Moreover, the point of stasis is the point of dissolution. And hence, in BA, Woolf presents the apocalyptic view of the total failure and extinction of mankind and civilization by the War.

ix) In addition, the non-human attributes of the human characters and the lexical deautomization of human nature and the mind styles point towards the dehumanized, denaturalized human selves, who lack the will and agency to effect change and transform the world– for a better future. The flickering hope suggested at the end of the novels is too insufficient to be taken into account.

According to Fowler (1977, 1981, 1986), linguistic structures are not just devices for formalistic analysis to draw out the textures and contours of a literary text, but are the basis for interpretations in relation to the values and preoccupations of the society. The present stylistic analysis does just this.
The study confirms the hypothetical observations made at the beginning: (1) The linguistic and novelistic organization of Woolf’s novels is intricate and complex. (2) Since she deals mostly in deviation and parallelism at all levels, Woolf’s language could be said to perform poetic function rather than the referential function as the conventional novels do. (3) The linguistic texture is full of complexity due to deviant syntax and polyvalent imagery and symbolism. (4) The unabashed mixing of genres—poetry, drama, music and painting is revealed in various linguistic aspects. (5) Woolf developed distinctive style of her own as compared to Joyce.

The conventional discussion of plot-structure, characterization, setting and themes does not help the Indian students to understand the quintessential experimentalist, Virginia Woolf. The pedagogical implication of the study is that the stylistic approach to Woolf’s novels is best suited to understand her novels in view of her unorthodox approach to the novelistic art.

The scope for further study of Woolf’s novels relates to—

1. Eco-critical approach, which would reveal Woolf’s concern for Nature and Mother Earth;
2. Intertextuality of Woolf’s novels
3. Psychoanalytical analysis of imagery in terms of Freudian Regression and Wish-Fulfillment; and
4. Pragmatic analysis of Woolf’s texts.

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