

## AN ANALYSIS OF THE PERSONS OF DISCOURSE, THIRD PERSON, AND PRETERITE IN THE *OLD MAN AND THE SEA*

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### ABSTRACT

This study is an analysis of the persons of discourse, third persons and preterite in *The old Man and the Sea*. Grammatically speaking, both the oral and written expressions of speakers of English as a second language are characterized by inappropriate use of the persons of discourse hence the need for this study. It is significant because it establishes the worth of persons in every discourse situation. Besides, it stresses the need for turn-taking to achieve coherence in a text. The persons of discourse are two people in a dialogue that interchange personal pronouns 'I' and 'you' between them and use neuter 'it' to make reference to the things that constitute part of the dialogue in a novel. Third person is the thing that the persons of discourse talk about while preterite means simple past tense. The study is limited by dearth of materials as the topic, to the best of the researchers' knowledge, has not been explored by scholars. Qualitative and discursive approach was adopted as method of investigation. The result of the analysis shows that the personal pronouns 'I', 'you', 'he' and preterite are often used in the novel. The old man and Manolin often interchange 'I' and 'you' between them. 'He' is employed by the old man to refer to the hooked fish; it is also used by the narrator to make reference to the old man. Preterite is used repeatedly to report the past events in the novel. The study impacts positively on readers generally as it enables them to have better understanding, of any literary piece or the writer's point of view.

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**KEYWORDS:** Person, Pronouns, Preterite, Discourse, And Dialogue

### INTRODUCTION

The expression "the Persons of Discourse" denotes two people in a dialogue that exchange 'I' and 'you' between them and make use of 'it' to refer to the entity which constitutes part of the dialogue. They are prevalent in any standard novel; it is through them that dialogues are realized in the novel. Without them, dialogue would not have been possible there in the novel. Third person is the centre of the conversation. The old man uses the third person singular pronoun 'he' to make reference to the great fish. 'He' is also used by the raconteur to refer to the old man. Preterite is the simple past tense. Mathew (2007) asserts that preterite is 'used to distinguish the simple past in modern European languages.' Akwanya (2002) opines that preterite should be employed to narrate the past. No wonder Hemingway uses it to narrate what happens to the old Cuban fisherman in *The Old Man and the Sea*.

### Objective of the Study

The study aims to analyse the Persons of Discourse, Third person and Preterite in *The Old man and the Sea*. The study strives to achieve the following objectives:

- To identify and examine the persons of discourse, and third person in the novel.

- To identify the statements framed in preterite and examine them.

**Method of investigation:** Qualitative and discursive approach was adopted as method of investigation. The approach is deemed appropriate because it allows explanation of the use of certain linguistic features in a given context.

### Conceptual Clarification

In this section, essential concepts are clarified to give orientation to the reader for better comprehension. The concepts include:

- **The persons of discourse:** In a dialogue there are two people who interchange 'I' and 'you' between them and make use of 'it' to refer to the things that constitute part of the dialogue.

Akwanya (2002) explains the persons of discourse as follows: "In spoken discourse there are two participants who exchange the personal pronouns 'I' and 'you' between them and employ the neuter 'it' in reference to the things that form part of the speech situation".

Unless one is involved in intrapersonal discourse (any instances of soliloquy and whenever one talks to

oneself), human communication is in most cases interpersonal (interactive and involves at least two persons). There is the encoder (speaker/writer) and the decoder (listener/reader). Grammatically speaking, those involved in communication are referred to as persons, but in the context of this paper they are described as discourse persons. The feature of person is one of the features that serve to classify personal pronouns. Others are number and gender (Akmajian, Demers, Farmer and Harnish, 2001; Fakuade, 2009).

Finegan (2004) holds that person refers to the aspect of pronoun that shows the different parties involved in a social interaction like conversation. They include, the speaker or speakers (first person), the addressee or addressees (second person) and the person (-s) or thing (-s) spoken about. Persons would be singular/plural, and either in nominative case (as subject in a sentence) or accusative case (as object in a sentence) (Pryse, 1984). Examples include:- I, me, we, mine, ours, us (1<sup>st</sup> person), you, yours (2<sup>nd</sup> person) and he, she, him, her, them, they, their, it, its, theirs, hers, his (3<sup>rd</sup> person).

We observe that persons are pronouns. However, nouns can at times appear as 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> persons respectively. But they must be preceded by personal pronoun as in:

- I, Yusuf, wants you to call John.
- She said you, John, must do it.
- **Third person** is the entity that the participant(s) in spoken discourse talk about. In this novel, the old man uses “he” to make reference the great fish. “He” is also used by the narrator to refer to the old man.
- **Preterite** is the simple past tense. Crystal (385) states that: “Preterite is a form of the verb expressing past time without any ASPECTUAL consideration; also called a simple PAST TENSE.”

### Theme

The central theme in *The Old man and the Sea* is the theme of “struggle.” The old man fishes for eighty-seven days without taking a fish. In spite of this misfortune, he strives to earn his livelihood by fishing. Finally, he hooks a great fish which is eaten up by the sharks on the high sea.

### Analysis

The text was read and subjected to analysis in order to uncover the Persons of Discourse, Third Person and Preterite in it. The identified Persons of Discourse, Third person and Preterit were discussed or explained with excerpts or quotations from the text to support claims.

### The Person of Discourse

‘I remember’, the old man said.

One often remembers serious things that happen to one. The old man remembers the misfortune which befalls him. He fishes for eighty-seven days without taking fish.

“It was papa made me leave. I am a boy and I must obey.”

Parents often order their children to do what they (parents) want them to do, and the children do obey. Manolin’s father orders him to leave the old man’s boat and join another fisherman’s boat and the boy obeys.

“I would like to go. If I cannot fish with you, I would like to serve in some way.”

Some people wish to go for work with those whom they love. If they cannot be allowed to do a particular piece of work, they may wish to do others. Manolin wishes to go fishing with the old man. If he cannot be allowed to fish with him, he may wish to help in another way.

‘You bought me a beer’, ... ‘You are already a man.’

A boy can do something that will make other people regard him as a mature man. Manolin buys a bottle of beer for the old man; the man regards him as a mature man.

‘..... you did not leave me because you doubted.’

Some people leave others not because they doubted their ability to do certain job well, they do so because it is mandatory for them. Manolin does not leave the old man because he doubts his ability to catch fish he does so because his father asks him to.

‘I remember everything from when we first went together.’

Certain people do remember everything that happens in their presence easily. Manolin remembers everything that happens the first day he goes fishing with the old man.

‘.... I know where I can get four baits too.’ There are people that can use all the means at their disposal to get what they wish to offer to others. Manolin wishes to get some baits to offer to the old man.

‘I have mine left from today....’

People who are in possession of certain things often reject gifts of such things. The old man does not want to accept the baits Manolin wishes to offer him because he has his own.

‘But I bought these.’

Some people own things by purchasing them. Manolin purchases the sardines which he owns.

‘I am a strange old man.’

Certain men are unique. The old man has immune system which many people do not have. After many years of mosquitoes bite on the coast, the old man does not go blind.

‘I’ ll be back when I have the sardines..’

One has to return to one’s residence after buying what one goes to market to buy. Manolin will return to his residence after purchasing the sardines he goes to the market to purchase.

'.... I can always borrow two dollars and a half.'  
Some people are in the habits of borrowing money from others. Manolin often borrows two and a half dollars from other people.

'I think perhaps I can too. But I try not to borrow. ...' certain people have the opportunities to borrow money from others, but make no attempt to do so. The old man has opportunity to borrow money from others, but decides not to do so.

'I must thank him.'

Some people are of the view that it is mandatory for them to express their gratitude to people who have done something appreciative for them. The old man is of the view that it is a must for him to express his gratitude to Martin for offering him and Manolin food.

'I'll give him the belly meat of a big fish...'

Certain people think it is mandatory for them to offer gifts to those who present them with gifts. The old man promises to present Martin with belly meat of a big fish for offering him and the boy Manolin food.

'I like the beer in can best.'

Certain men prefer drinks in certain container than others. The old man prefers beer in cans than the ones in bottles.

'I believe it', the boy said.

Certain people do believe what they perceive to be true. Having noticed how long the skeleton of the great fish is, Manolin believes the fact that the length of the skeleton of the great fish is eighteen feet, from the nose to the tail.

'You keep it if you want it.'

Some people wish others who want their possessions to have it. The old man wishes Manolin to take his spear if he wants it.

'I will get another knife...'

One has to buy another knife if the one he has before is broken. The old man wishes to purchase another knife because the one he has before is broken.

'I know how to care for them...'

Some people know how to take care of their parts of bodies which are injured. The old man knows how to care for his injured hands.

'You must get well fast...'

Certain people do wish their dear ones quick recovery whenever they are in ill health. Manolin wishes the old man whom he loves so much to get well rapidly.

'... you can teach me everything. ...'

Reasonable people wish to acquire knowledge from experienced men. Manolin wishes to be taught by the old man who has wealth of experience in fishing.

'I missed you.'

People miss their dear ones when they are not with them to help do one thing or the other. The old man misses Manolin because the boy is not with him on the high sea to help him fish or do other things.

'Thank you. You make me happy. ...'

Men do express their gratitude to those who make them happy. The old man expresses his gratitude to Manolin for being the source of his happiness.

'... , You're with a lucky boat. Stay with them.'

Some people do not want the misfortune which has befallen them to befall others. The old man advises Manolin to stay with a lucky boat because he does not want the misfortune which has befallen him to befall the boy.

'... . You'll not fish without eating while I'm alive.'

Certain men wish to feed those who for one reason or the other work without feeding well. Manolin wishes to feed the old man often because he fishes without eating frequently.

'I'll bring the food and the papers'

Certain people wish to supply their dear ones with what they desire. Manolin promises to bring food and papers which the old man so much likes to him.

'... I am not lucky anymore.'

People whom misfortune befalls often think that they have finally run out of luck. The old man fishes for eighty-seven days without taking a fish, and asserts that he is not lucky any longer.

'... I will bring the luck with me.'

Certain people believe that they move along with luck whenever they go. Manolin believes that whenever he resumes fishing with the old man, they will have luck to take fishes often.

'I feel confident today.'

There are days that people have confidence in what they do. The old man feels confident he will take fish when he rows out of the harbour in the dark to fish on the high sea.

Scrutiny of the person of discourse indicates that "I" and "you" are regularly used in the novel.

The old man and the boy manolin often exchange "I" and "you" between them in a conversation.

### Third Person

'He'll make a beautiful bait.'

There are fishes that make pretty baits.

Albacore is one of the fishes that makes a pretty bait.

'... he must be huge in this month...'

There is the month that fishes do grow big. The old man hooks the great fish in the month that fishes do grow big.

'He took the bait like a male and he pulls like a male ...'

An experienced fisherman can describe how a male fish takes bait and how it pulls. The fish which the old man hooks is a male because it takes bait and pulls like a male fish.

'He had stayed so close that the old man was afraid he would cut the line with his tail...'

A hooked fish which is close to a fisherman can break the line with its tail. The great fish is close to the old man and so he is afraid that it will cut the line with its tail.

'... he is travelling and not going down.'

Some hooked fishes swim straight without going down the sea. The great fish swims straight away without going downward.

'He's coming up.'

Hooked fishes often come on top of water with the intention to relieve the pain in their bodies. The great fish struggles to come up on top of water with the intention to relieve the pain in its body.

'He comes out unending...'

Some fishes are so long that if one is in a skiff, one will not be able to see their ends. The great fish is so long that the old man does not see its end when it comes up.

'He is a great fish...'

Some fishes are great. The fish which the old man hooks is great. He has hooked other fishes that are big but not as great as this one.

'He jumped almost as though to show me how big he was.'

Hooked fishes do jump high as if to show fishermen how big they are. The great fish jumps high as if to show the old man how big it is.

'he may be half asleep himself...'

Certain people assume that hooked fishes do not sleep soundly. The old man assumes that the great fish is half asleep, not sound asleep.

'He must pull until he dies.'

Hooked fishes often pull until they die. The old man hopes the great fish will pull until it dies.

'He can't be that big.'

If something is bigger than what one imagines before one sees it, one will be surprised when one sees it. The great fish is so big that when the old man sees it, he becomes amazed.

'He had come up so fast and absolutely without caution ...'

A hooked fish do come on top of water very fast without caution because it is in pain. The great fish comes up on top of water very fast without caution.

'He was a very big Mako shark built to swim as fast as the fastest fish in the sea ...'

Some fishes can grow big and swim as fast as possible. Mako shark can grow big and swim as fast as the fastest fish you can think of in the sea.

'He was built as swordfish except for his huge jaws... were tight shut...'

Certain fishes resemble others. Mako shark looks like a sword fish, what differentiates it from swordfish is that its jaw is tight shut while that of swordfish is not so.

'He lives on live fish...'

There are fishes which feed on others. Dentuso is one of the fishes that feeds on other fishes.

'He is beautiful ... and knows no fear of anything.'

Some fishes are good looking and brave. Dentuso is elegant and brave.

'He is two feet longer than the skiff ...'

A hooked fish could be longer than the boat a fisherman uses for fishing .The great fish is two feet longer than the boat the old man uses for fishing.

'He is making a turn...'

Some fishes turn round hooks many times before taking them. The great fish turns round the hook several times before taking it.

The personal pronoun "he" is repeatedly used by the old man to make reference to great fish;

"he" is also employed by the relator elsewhere in the novel to refer to the old man.

### **Preterite**

'... he dreamed of Africa ...'

One who dreams of something thinks of it often. The old man dreams of Africa because he thinks of it frequently.

'The old man went out of the door and the boy came after him.'

One who cares for an old man often follow him to any place he goes so as to render help to him where necessary. Manolin does follow the old man wherever he goes so as to render him help where necessary.

'How old was I when you first took me in a boat?'

Boys often inquire about what they do not know. Manolin asks the old man to tell him how old he was when he was taken in boat.

'The old man looked at him with his sunburned confident loving eyes.'

A look of confidence can easily be noticed on someone's face. The old man looks at Manolin with his confident eyes.

'The blood ran down his cheek...'

Blood do run down the cheek of an injured person. Blood run down the old man's cheek because he is being injured by the great fish.

'He ... carefully worked the line so that it came across a new part of his shoulders...'

One can change the position on which a line of a hooked fish rests on one's shoulders cautiously so as to avoid injury. The old man shifts the line of the fish he hooks to different part of his shoulders carefully so that it should not hurt him.

'Then he rested against the bow.'

One who is tired needs rest. The old man rests against the bow because he is tired.

'He opened it and drank a little.'

A thirsty man needs drink.

The old man is thirsty, so he opens his water bottle and drinks little water from it.

'Then he looked behind him and saw that no land was visible'

One who is on the high sea cannot see land. The old man rows to the high sea where land cannot be seen.

'He picked up a piece and put it in his mouth and chewed it slowly. ...'

To strengthen one's hand, one needs to chew Benito. The old man chews Benito so as to strengthen his hands.

'He rubbed the cramped hand against his trousers and tried to gentle the fingers. But it would not open.'

If you rub a severely cramped hand on something, it will not open. The old man rubs his severely cramped hand on his trousers and strives to keep it straight, but it does not open.

'He saw it first when it jumped in the air...'

A fisherman can see the fish he has hooked clearly when it jumps in the air. The old man sees the great fish for the first time when it jumps in the air.

'He washed his left hand and wiped it on his trousers.'

One washes one's hand and wipes it on something when it is dirty. The old man washes his left hand and wipes it on his trousers after rebaiting his line with a sardine.

'He took hold of the line carefully so that it did not fit into any of the fresh line cuts...'

One is often careful not to allow the line of a hooked fish fit into a fresh line cut because it is painful. The old man holds the line carefully so that it does not fit into fresh line cut in his hands.

'Then he jumped again and again ...'

A hooked fish jumps frequently so as to break the line and escape. The great fish jumps repeatedly in order to break the line and escape.

'The old man ... lifted the harpoon as high as he could and drove it down with all his strength...'

One can drive a sharp object into the flesh of any fish by lifting it as high as possible before driving it. The old man lifts the harpoon as high as he can and drives it into the body of the great fish.

'He ... tied the fish's lower jaw against his bill so that his mouth would not open and they would sail as clearly as possible.'

If a hooked fish's jaw is tied against its bill, its mouth will not open and the boat will sail easily. The old man ties the lower jaw of the great fish against its bill and the boat sails easily.

'He took my harpoon too and all the rope.'

A fish can escape with weapons in its body. The fish that the old man drives his harpoon into its body escapes with the harpoon and the rope.

'He did not like to look at the fish any more ...'

One will not like to look at one's damaged possession because whenever one looks at it, one will become sad. The old man does not like to stare at the mutilated fish any longer because whenever he stares at it, he becomes sad.

'He watched only the forward part of the fish and some of his hope returned.'

One may look at part of one's possession which is not damaged and some of one's hope will return. The old man stares at the front part of the fish which is not mutilated and his hope returns.

'He chewed it and noticed its quality ...'

To notice the quality of a fish, one has to chew it. The old man chews the flesh of the great fish and notices its quality.

'When he saw the shark, he leaned over the side and punched at him.'

One has to fight an enemy that comes to destroy one's possession. The old man fights the shark that comes to mutilate the great.

'... he knew the fight was useless...'

One can be conscious of fighting a futile battle. The old man is aware of fighting an unprofitable battle.

'He noticed how lightly and how well the skiff sailed now there was no great weight beside her.'

One can easily notice how light and how well a boat sails if there is no heavy object tied to it. The old man is conscious of how light and how well the boat sails now that there is no heavy thing tied to it.

'He saw the white naked line of his backbone and the dark mass of the head with the projecting bill and all nakedness between.'

One can see clearly in the reflection from light. The old man sees in the reflection from the street light the skeleton of the great fish.

'He pulled the blanket over his shoulders and then covered his back and legs...'

To cover oneself with blanket very well, one has to pull it over one's shoulders and cover his back and legs. To cover himself with the blanket very well, the old man pulls it over his shoulders and covers his back and legs.

'The boy carried the hot can of coffee up to the old man's shack and sat by him until he woke.'

To help someone who suffers from cold to warm his body, one needs to give him hot coffee to drink. Manolin carries a can of hot coffee to the old man to drink so that his body will be warm.

Preterite is commonly used to recount the past actions in the novel. The raconteur uses it to tell us what happened in the novel.

### **The Place of Persons of Discourse in Literary Texts/Communication**

The beauty of any literary text depends to a large extent on the exchange of ideas between and among characters mentioned in the text. Effective exchange of ideas sustains communication and enables readers to understand the source of the message and receiver of the message (encoder – message – decoder). It also shows when the speakers are taking turn in a conversation (when two or more participants in a discourse freely alternate in speaking).

In fact, persons of discourse bring about grammatical cohesion in texts; enable the writer to maintain grammatical reference and avoid repetition.

### **CONCLUSION**

Persons of discourse as revealed by the analysis of the novel are devices. The study has revealed novel. The old man and Manolin exchanged 'I' and 'you' between them. 'He' is repeatedly used by the old man to make reference to the great fish. The narrator also uses 'he' to refer to the old man. Preterite is often that the use of pronouns 'I', 'you', 'he', and preterite are prevalent in the used to narrate the events w that enable characters to make reference to

or retrieve the identity of a participant in a spoken discourse; third person is the entity that the interlocutors make reference to in a spoken discourse while Preterit refers to the application of simple past tense as a narrative technique. This is a technique used in the novel to relate all the events.

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