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Unraveling the Language of Trauma: A Critical Examination of Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West*

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Abstract

In the present study, Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West* has been explored as a trauma narrative in order to analyze the lexical depiction of trauma. The study aims to explore how the author has dealt with the traumatic conditions of the characters' lives and how such context have affected the linguistic patterns of the characters. The researcher has employed Cathy Crauth's *Unclaimed Experience* and Michael Hoey's *Lexical Priming* as the theoretical framework for this study. Unspeakability, speakability, latency, repetition and testimony are the tropes of Crauthian theory and Lexical Priming refers to study the role of individual lexis in fictional and creative contexts. The purpose of this research is to explore how Mohsin Hamid uses lexical items to depict the trauma and how does he construct the meaning of trauma in *Exit West*. The study has followed a qualitative approach while the frequency of the sample of trauma lexis used in the novel has been checked through MS Word. The results attest that *Exit West* is a trauma narrative of Crauthian strain and the author has used lexical markers for trauma tropes. Trauma has been observed through the negation of non-trauma situation and trauma exemplification. The narration of the novel is about

trauma and the study of disturbed meanings and grammars of lexical items has revealed that the narration is also traumatized.

Keywords: Lexical Marker, Lexical Priming, Unclaimed Experience, Unspeakability, Trauma Narrative

Introduction

Trauma is a serious psychological issue across the globe while forced migration is the issue that brings forth unaccountable challenges and problems, and each of them causes severe trauma to refugees. American Psychiatry Association (2005) defines “trauma as experience of an event that involves actual or threatened death or serious injury; threat to one's physical integrity, witnessing an event that involves the above experience, learning about unexpected or violent death, serious harm, or threat of death, or injury experienced by a family member or close associate” (p. 463). In forced displacement, torture, sexual and physical violence, escape from crisis areas, persecution and loss of family members cause trauma (Schouler-Ocak, 2015, p. 3). The statistics and the study show the alarming situation of forced migrants and displaced persons who are traumatized and psychologically victimized. The literary authors try to sketch these scenarios through fiction. Mohsin Hamid is committed to highlight the psychological issues of the refugees through *Exit West* (2017). *Exit West* is a refugee narrative but Isaksen and Vejling (2018) tried to explore it as a trauma narrative (p. 54). They attempted to study Hamid's language as trauma language but through the lens of *The Trope of Unspeakable* in order to argue the unspeakability for the sake of the lack of description in the novel (p. 54-56). This study argues that Hamid has used enough vocabulary items to depict trauma and his language can be studied as trauma language through Michael Hoey's *Lexical Priming: A New Theory of Words and Language* (2004) and Cathy Caruth's *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (1996).

Hoey's *Lexical Priming* offers to study the ability of lexical items to construct the meaning in a sentence according to context. This theory is the contribution to psycholinguistics which permits to study of language from a psychological perspective. Hoey suggests every word and every group of words stimulate another word or another group of words for semantic associations (Hoey, 2004, p. 13). Pace-Sigge and Patterson (2017) has explained this suggestion through an example that one

can expect the word ‘caring’, ‘hospital’, ‘doctor’ after listening to the word ‘nurse’ while it may be misheard if s/he hears ‘editor’ after it (p. xiii). This sense can be interpreted as the words that prepare the mind of the reader or listener for the relevant words according to the context. In this study, it can be described as the theory of Lexical Priming which has the ability to select lexical items in the context of trauma highlighted by trauma theory.

In *Unclaimed Experience*, Caruth attempts to read trauma and traumatic experience in literary pieces to seek ‘a different story’ through the ‘recurring words or figures’ as ‘awakening’, ‘burning’, ‘falling’, or ‘departure’ (p. 5). In this way, Crauth has initiated the steps to identify lexical items that shape trauma in the narratives. In this study, Caruth’s theory is adopted because of its focus on literary facets of trauma. To explain the Crauth’s arguments, Michelle Balaev (2008) defines ‘trauma novel’ as a piece of fiction that “conveys profound loss and a sense of extreme fear” (p. 150). The sense of loss and fear prevails throughout *Exit West*.

Saeed and Nadia, the protagonists, in *Exit West* are the victims of war, persecution, and barbarism in the city of their birth, loss of home and country because of forced displacement caused by peace crisis and face the situation of statelessness almost more than a half-century by the dint of racism. This overview shows that a sense of fear and loss is prevalent throughout *Exit West*. There are enough lexical items employed in the novel to shape trauma narrative and gives a sense of fear and loss. ‘Dead’, ‘war’, ‘bomb’, ‘violence’, ‘unrecognizable’ and ‘scream’ can be taken as a token.

1.1 Aims and Objectives

1.1.1 To explore how Mohsin Hamid uses lexical items to depict the trauma narrative and construct the meaning of trauma in *Exit West*.

1.2 Research Question

1.2.1 How are lexical items used to depict the trauma narrative and construct the meaning of trauma in Mohsin Hamid’s *Exit West*?

1.3 Limitations and Delimitations

The followings are the limitations and delimitations:

1. The analysis of the research has been limited to only those parts of the novel which are related to the trauma.
2. The language of trauma focuses on numerous things but in this study the researcher will be delimited to lexical items only.

Literature Review

In this chapter, the researcher describes the background of this research, previous researches relevant to this thesis. It has three parts: trauma studies, lexical studies, and Hamid's fiction. In the part of trauma studies, the researcher focuses on the development of trauma theory and highlights the contributions to the language of trauma. In the second part, the studies are described in which the theory of lexical priming has been explored. In the third part, the significant interpretations of Hamid's fiction are described in order to locate the place and value of the lexical depiction of trauma. This chapter aims to highlight the directions which have been explored in the previous studies linking trauma, lexical studies and modern fiction.

Sigmund Freud (1989) highlighted the basic elements of trauma. Anna Whitehead (2004), Ruth Leys (2000) and Roger Luckhurst (2008) tried to explain the trauma process with its historical development. Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub (1992) explored the relationship between Holocaust literature and trauma as Crauth did. Richard MacNally (2003) focused on the therapy of trauma. Michelle Balaev (2008) endeavors to evaluate trauma novels. The phrase 'the language of trauma' has been used and explored by the scholars of psychology, literature and linguistics. It is significant to understand the theory of trauma before having reviews of the language of trauma.

The landmark contribution to the contemporary notion of trauma is by the works of Freud. For the understanding of the modern theory of trauma, Freud's works are unavoidable. Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1989) is considered for the development of the concept of trauma and cited by scholars. He described it as the "compulsion to repeat" and a switching process between unconscious and conscious (p. 20). Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1971) is another work that gives a basic understanding of the development of the human mind and its process. This understanding is taken as a key unveiling traumatic reminiscences and other suppressed thoughts. In this book, Freud explored the concept of interpretation that dreams have two parts: latent content and manifest content, two layers of meaning. Dream thoughts (latent

content) are used to explore the meaning of a dream while manifest content has nothing to do with it (Freud, 1971, p. 277). Unconscious thoughts have their relation with latent content which uncover the content of trauma in a mind. Freud's work is relevant to our work because Crauth established her theory of trauma through Freudian vocabulary and concepts.

MacNally (2003) as a clinician and therapy expert challenged the views about trauma which were widely accepted by the trauma scholars like Freud, Crauth, Felman and Laub. He argued for the ability of recalling the trauma causing events and the instances of negative connotations. He concluded that the trauma model which was accepted historically established on weak assumptions and the treatment method was old fashioned. MacNally (2003) claimed that Freud's method was freewheeling, unconstrained interpretive (p. 111). He acknowledged that the ability to recall and remember may be affected by trauma but this point was extremely exaggerated by the other scholars like Crauth. In this regard, he raised a significant aspect that the incompetent ability of thinking about any trauma causing event did not necessitate an inability to recall it (p. 2). He explored that it may be referred to that the victim might not want to talk about trauma, as evident in the cases of intrafamilial abuses, instead of facing the inability to talk. So, MacNally's research suggested that there can be a possibility of ignoring to talk or think about trauma causing event and it is not integral that the memory and recalling ability must be affected. MacNally's approach is directed towards the treatment of trauma patients. Although he criticized Crauth's approach but she is oriented to read trauma instead of treatment. In this research, Crauth's approach is preferred because of its ability to have a detail insight in the literary aspects of trauma.

Balaev (2008) outlined some significant concepts and terms about trauma and defined, on the base of Crauthian concepts, trauma novel as "a literary work that conveys a sense of intense fear or profound loss" (p. 150). One can assume that how content and form of a novel can convey loss and fear by using formal features while there is a little account about how this effect can be attained. The disruption between the others and self by a traumatic event and such disruption mediated by identity and culture can be taken as the identities of a trauma novel.

Academia focused on the language of trauma in the disciplines of psychology, literature, and linguistics. María Pilar Cáceres Casillas (2010) and Jamie D. Barker (2012) tried to show the relationship between language and trauma in the literary domains. Natasha Noel Liebig (2016),

Anna Douglass (2016) and Mariana Chaves Petersen (2017) employed the phrase ‘the language of trauma’ and focused on it. Saiba Verma (2018) used the phrase and tried to explore it in the domain of psychology. A small number of researches contributes to the language of trauma with the support of linguistics studies. Casillas (2010) studied trauma, language and memory in the poetry of Félix Grande composed during 1952-1984 (p. 8). Grande’s poetry featured with themes of derangement, poverty and war pointing towards tragic historical events (p. 10). Barker (2012) analyzed the traumatic figurative language through the poetry of June Jordan, Lucille Clifton, and Amiri Baraka in order to motivate the listening of trauma. He focused on multicultural American poetry to gather the common elements across cultures centered in America. He gave the in-depth study of trauma inscribed in the poetry through the other elements of trauma like unhomeliness, abjection and isolation. It was an attempt of reevaluation of literary trauma theory (p. 1) through collecting together the theories of Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart, Dominick LaCapra and Homi K Bhabha (p. 9).

Liebig (2016) is a significant contribution in the language of trauma. Liebig focused on “trauma writing” and explored it through the language of trauma and the knowledge of trauma. Trauma has been defined as “so destructive, so horrifying, that any knowledge is unbearable” (Liebig, 2016, P. 3). Douglass’ (2016) thesis is in close proximity to my work. She endeavored to read trauma through the language deployed in Samuel Beckett’s *The Unnamable* (p. 1). The language of trauma was supported through the theoretical framework built by key texts of trauma theory (p. 4). She identified ‘repetition’ and ‘self’ as the tools of trauma (p. 44) and observed impact on grammar, punctuation, syntax and spatialization in the novel (p. 65). This project justifies taking a step forward towards the lexical depiction of trauma because signs of trauma have been investigated in the grammar and language of a piece of fiction. Petersen (2017) attempted to establish a link between feminism and trauma, gave a little attention to language and focused on Silvia Plath’s stories: “Tongues of Stone” and “Mothers” (p. 10). She used Crauth’s arguments of trauma also to draw the theoretical framework for her study and used the phrase “the language of trauma” (p. 39) by the virtue of Crauth’s special focus to language (p. 9).

Verma (2018) observed trauma in Kashmir and also mentions its impact on their language. She noticed that national and local politics caused the shift of language, from the language of terror to

the language of trauma (p.130). She composed about the psychological state of the people of Kashmir after listening to numerous narrations about violence and its result on their families, lives and communities. She claimed that she has not witnessed any patient who declares him/herself traumatized but they were diagnosis through the idioms of native language, translated as ‘weakness’ and ‘restlessness’ (p. 131-132). Both terms create a precedent for my study. Verma’s study is based on her personal observations through her clinical experience and suggested the language of trauma as a rhetorical device to deal with victims of violence (p. 135).

Research Method; The present study explores the impacts of trauma on human language and its depiction in the selected novel “Exit West” by Hamid Mohsin. The study is delimited only towards the impacts of trauma on the lexis as used by the selected novelist. The subsequent portion of this chapter provides a comprehensive detail of the theoretical framework, tools used for selection of textual data and techniques employed to evaluate the effects of trauma on the language.

In this research thesis the researcher has employed following two theoretical frameworks to address the impacts of trauma with reference to human language as produced in literature. This chapter has been divided into three parts. In the first part, Caruth’s trauma theory is described. The second part deals with Hoey’s theory of Lexical Priming. In the final part, the framework for the analysis is established which provides the lens to study the lexical features of trauma in the novel.

3.1. Caruth’s Trauma Theory

Caruth, as a literary scholar, explores trauma on literary bases. She describes trauma in *Unclaimed Experience* as “an overwhelming experience of sudden or catastrophic event in which the response to the event occurs in the often delayed, the uncontrolled repetitive appearance of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena” (1996, p. 11) and “as the response to an unexpected or overwhelming violent event or events that are not fully grasped as they occur, but return later in repeated flashbacks, nightmares, and other repetitive phenomena” (1996, p. 91).

One of the central discussions in Caruth’s theory is about latency. “The historical power of the trauma is not just that the experience is repeated after its forgetting, but that it is only in and through its inherent forgetting that it is first experienced at all” (Caruth, 1996, p. 17). Caruth explores, in *Unclaimed Experience*, the ways by which trauma is spoken through a profound story. For this

purpose, she deals with the texts of a particular period as the texts of literary theory, literature and psychoanalysis. She prefers to explore these complicated ways which are jumbled in the language of trauma and the parables which are attached and linked with trauma instead of straightforwardly and directly discussing and interpreting the cases of trauma victims and their injured psychiatry. Her concern is with the central problem of representing, knowing and listening caused by the experiences of trauma. She does so through discussing the trauma theory as Freud does for dealing with collective history or individual level and Duras and Resnais do by sharing the narrative about two people indulged in catastrophic experiences.

3.2. Lexical Priming

Lexical Priming is the theory of not only word(s) but language as well. This theory argues, “lexis is completely and systematically structured and the grammar is the outcome of this lexical structure” (Hoey, 2005, p. 1). The theory has been developed beyond the general concepts and philosophies of both the word and the language. The Lexical Priming is not novel but James Neely presented this concept in late 1970 while the concept of priming was presented by Ross M. Quillian in the 1960s (Pace-Sigge, 2013). Hoey’s contributions are significant to expand the concept to the range of an applicable theory on the theoretical basis of psycholinguistics and have experimented on corpus linguistics for the sake of naturalness of the study (Pace-Sigge & Patterson, 2017, p. xii).

Lexical Priming has been described as a neo-Firthian theory (Pace-Sigge & Patterson, 2017, p. xiii). It extends to the approaches of the production, understanding and acquisition of language in both domains listening and writing through the stance of lexis driven instead of grammar driven. This theory is based on this principle, ‘a word or a group of words stimulates another word or a group of the word’. This principle results as when a listener hears the word ‘teacher’ then he/she expects another word which can be a ‘student’, ‘school’, ‘study’, or ‘classroom’. It can be taken as a misheard if the listener listens ‘patient’ or ‘nurse’ after the ‘teacher’ or ‘classroom’.

Every word is primed for use in discourse as a result of the cumulative effects of an individual’s encounters with the word. If one of the effects of the initial priming is that regular word sequences are constructed, these are also in turn primed. More specifically:

1. Every word is primed to occur with particular other words; these are its collocates.

2. Every word is primed to occur with particular semantic sets; these are its semantic associations.
3. Every word is primed to occur in association with particular pragmatic functions; these are its pragmatic associations.
4. Every word is primed to occur in (or avoid) certain grammatical positions, and to occur in (or avoid) certain grammatical functions; these are its colligations.
5. Co-hyponyms and synonyms differ concerning their collocations, semantic associations, and colligations.
6. When a word is polysemous, the collocations, semantic associations and colligations of one sense of the word differ from those of its other senses.
7. Every word is primed for use in one or more grammatical roles; these are its grammatical categories.
8. Every word is primed to participate in, or avoid, particular types of cohesive relation in a discourse; these are its textual collocations.
9. Every word is primed to occur in particular semantic relations in the discourse; these are its textual semantic associations.
10. Every word is primed to occur in, or avoid, certain positions within the discourse; these are its textual colligations.

Very importantly, all these claims are in the first place constrained by domain and/or genre. They are claims about the way language is acquired and used in specific situations. This is because we prime words or word sequences, as already remarked, in a range of social contexts and the priming, I argue, takes account of who is speaking or writing, what is spoken or written about and what genre is being participated in, though the last of these constraints is probably later in developing than the other two (Hoey, 2015, p.13).

The first is collocation, according to Hoey, which has been taken as a property of the language to show the naturalness. Under this term or concept, the frequent occurrence of two or more words in each other's company is being studied. Sinclair (1991) and Stubbs (1996) claimed that it is highly possible that collocation is the characteristic of all the lexical items. Hoey defines collocation as "a psychological association between words up to four words apart and is evidenced by their occurrence in corpora" (2005, p. 5). Fundamentally, collocation has psychological roots

as a concept. A research reader can assume the collocation, ‘recent + research’, while a newspaper reader may prefer the word ‘recent’ with ‘incident’ as compare to ‘research’. So, the psycholinguistics leads to the discussion about the relation between ‘prime’ and ‘target’. Priming is considered as a feature of the word in which it sheds light on the primed item (target).

Discussion and Analysis

In this chapter, this researcher has analyzed the lexical depiction of trauma in Hamid’s *Exit West*. This chapter is divided into two sections: *Exit West* as a Trauma Narrative, and Lexical Depiction of Trauma. It seems significant to have a brief study of the novel as a trauma narrative to develop a base for the lexical analysis of trauma in the novel. The purpose of this chapter is to explore the new dimensions for the study of trauma fiction through lexis.

4.1. *Exit West* as a Trauma Narrative

How far *Exit West* is a trauma narrative, in this section, it is analyzed through a thematic analysis. This section studies the novel as trauma novel, trauma fiction, traumatization in the novel, and traumatized characters. The researcher argues for the sake of speakability of trauma that Hamid’s language has enough power to describe the trauma which is not only limited to ‘unspeakability’ and endeavors to trace the concepts of ‘latency’ and ‘repetition’ prevailed in the novel. ‘Trauma Fiction’ as a term produces a sense of paradox or complexity that hinders the reader’s understanding. The situation of trauma brings forth restrictions on the spoken ability of the victim which may not let him allow to narrate the trauma causing event. This situation has been also addressed in *Trauma Fiction* (2004) by Whitehead. But, Caruth (1996) has solved this paradoxical sense before Whitehead’s contribution.

The Lexical Depiction of Trauma

The researcher aims, in this section, at the exploration of the lexis which has been employed to create a trauma narrative. In other words, this section addresses how lexis has been used to depict the trauma in Hamid’s *Exit West*. The researcher looks at the trauma lexis used in the novel and then analyzes how they create the meaning of trauma. This section has three parts. The first describes the trauma lexis used in the novel and the lexical markers for the Caruthian tropes of

trauma. In the second, the researcher explores the lexical dimensions by which trauma has been described in the novel. The last part deals with the effect of trauma on the narrator’s language.

According to Hoey’s theory of Lexical Priming, a word is considered a basic unit of the language which makes its relations with other words according to different situations. Similarly, the language of trauma has the lexis of trauma which primes on another lexis to convey the sense of trauma. For the speakability, the primary requirement is the trauma lexis as it has the agreement with Caruth’s notion of the representation of trauma through the “recurring words or figures’ as ‘awakening’, ‘burning’, ‘falling’, or ‘departure’ (p. 5).

In table No. 1, a sample of the trauma words, used in the novel, has been shown and selected randomly through the reading of the novel. In this research, the extraction of a sample of trauma lexis seems significant because of the nature of the study as ‘the lexical depiction of trauma’. The trauma words used in the novel have been presented in the table concerning their base words through which they adopt other forms according to the meaning and grammatical position. This display seems necessary because it affects the state of cause and effect; e.g. the word “frightened” as an adjective is the effect of trauma on someone whereas the word “fright” as a verb can be used to depict the cause of trauma. The frequency (freq.) of these words in the novel can help to estimate the power of contribution in the language of trauma. The frequency has been checked through MS Word. This table is limited to the above discussion.

Table No. 1 *Trauma Lexis Used in Exit West.*

No.	Base Word	Used Forms	Freq.	Cause/ Effect
1	War (n)	War (n)	7	C
2	Violence (n)	Violence (n), Nonviolence (n), Violent (adj)	2, 2, 3	C
3	Injury (n)(v)	Injuries (n)	1	C&E
4	Frighten (v)	Frightened (adj) (v)	7	E

5	Wound (n)(v)	Wounded (v), Wound (n)(v)	2, 2	E
6	Fury (n)	Fury (n), Furiously (adv), Furious (adj)	2, 2, 2	E
7	Harm (n)(v)	Harm (n)(v), Unharmed (adj)	2, 1	E
8	Hurt (n)(v)	Hurt (v), Hurtle (v)	2	C&E
9	Cut (n)(v)	Cut (n)(v)	9	C&E
10	Bruise (n)(v)	Bruised (v)	3	E
11	Damage (n)(v)	Damaged (v)	1	E
12	Scratch (n)(v)	Scratched (v)	1	E
13	Tear (n)(v)	Tears (n)	5	E
14	Gash (n)(v)	Gash (n)	3	E
15	Scrape (n)(v)	Scraped (v), Scraper (n)	1, 1	E
16	Incident (n)	Incident (n), Incidents (n)	2, 3	C
17	Disable (n)(v)	Disabled (adj)	1	E
18	Break (n)(v)	Break (n)(v), Breaking (v), Broken	4, 2, 5	C&E
19	behead (v)	Beheaded (v)	1	C
20	Shake (n)(v)	Shaken (v), Shake (v)	1, 1	C&E
21	Refugee (n)	Refugees (n), Refugee Camp (n)	1, 1	E
22	Migrate (v)	Emigrated (v), Migrate (v), Migration(n)	2, 4, 2	C&E
23	Rot (n)(v)	Rotted (adj)	1	C

24	Grave (n)(adj)	Grave (n)(adj), Graveyard (n)	3, 4	C
25	Danger (n)	Danger(n), Dangers(n), Dangerous (adj)	1, 2, 5	C
26	Bomb (n)(v)	Bomb(n), Bombed (v), Bombing (v), Bombers(n)	4, 1, 1, 1	C
27	Fight (n)(v)	Fighting (v), Fighters (n), Fights (n), Fight (n)	15, 2, 2, 3	C
28	Strike(n)(v)	Strikes (n), Striking (adj), Strikingly (adv)	3,1,1	C
29	Explode (v)	Exploded (v), Explosive (n)	2, 2	C
30	Militant(n)(adj)	Militants (n), Militant (n)	30, 3,	C
31	Death (n)	Death (n)	19	C
32	Diminish (v)	Diminished (v)	4	E
33	Fear (n)(v)	Fear (n), Fear (v), Feared (v)	13, 1, 3	C & E
34	Tension (n)	Tension (n)	4	E
35	Horror (n)	Horror (n), Horrors (n)	2, 1	C & E
36	Fatal			
37	Hell (n)	Hell (n)	2	C
38	Depress (n)(v)	Depressed (v), Depression (n)	1	E
39	Demolish (v)	Demolition (n)	1	C
40	Worry (n)(v)	Worried (v), Worry (n)(v), Worryingly (adv), Worries (n)	9, 2, 1, 2	E

41	Absurd (n)	Absurd (n)	2	C & E
42	Murder (n)(v)	Murder (v), Murders (n), Murderous (adj)	1, 1, 1	C & E
43	Terror (n)	Terror (n), Antiterrorism	5, 1	C
44	Tremble (v)	Trembling (v), (adj)	5	E
45	Blood (n)	Blood (n), Bloodshed (n), Bloodbath (n), Bloody (n)	2, 1,1,1	C & E
46	Fire (n)(v)	Fired (v), Gunfire (n), Crossfire (n), Firefighters (n), Fire (n)	2, 1, 1, 1, 5	C
47	Tremble (v)	Trembling (v)	5	E
48	Trauma (n)	matized (v)	1	E
49	Nostalgia (n)	Nostalgia (n), Nostalgias (n)	1, 1	E
50	Bury (v)	Bury (v), Burial (n), Buried (n)	2, 2, 2	C & E

It can be analyzed that there is the approximately equal frequency of cause and effect lexis which indicates the narrator's equal focus on the causes and effects of trauma. The multiple forms of the words according to their grammar shows the narrator's ability to manage the vocabulary during narrating trauma. This table may not be called trauma lexicology but as a preliminary step, it may proceed to the lexicographers to its development.

4.2.1.2. Lexical Marker for Unspeakability;In unspeakability, the victim is unable to narrate because of the lack of vocabulary or the incomplete realization of the event or incident about the trauma causing event. This situation can be realized through certain lexical markers as some of them have been tried to explore.

Table No. 2 *Lexical Markers for Unspeakability Used in Exit West*

No. Lexical Marker *Exit West* and Discussion

1 Unimaginable “..... the future because when he looked around him now at the almost unimaginable scale ... “(p. 177).

This is a situation in which Saeed is unable to realize the future and cannot say anything about it because of his past experiences.

“..... desirable futures began to emerge, unimaginable previously, but not unimaginable now” (p. 216).

This instance highlights that now can consciously plan for their future and able to speak and describe.

2 Confused “... so confused as to be incapable of gauging his own sincerity” (p. 212).

Incapable Saeed is not getting his own psychological position that feeling duplicity as an actor.

3 Unable “... she would have liked to say was unable to find a way through to her tongue and her lips” (p. 180)

Saeed and Nadia both want to say something to each other but they could not say because of their trauma. The context explains the impact of psychological disturbance on physical ability.

4 Unspeakable “... and unspeakable violence had occurred in relation to it....” (p. 197).

This is the subject of unspeakability in trauma that the victim faces such extreme violence for which they have no words to speak. For this

purpose, Caruth has enhanced the significance of the language that is somehow literary to explore trauma. As it can be compared with: “He summoned the nerve to speak to her” (p. 10). As it occurs in the non-trauma situation but the trauma context of the novel also gives such taste to it. In this situation, Saeed tries to speak something but facing difficulty.

- 5 Inexplicable “... it was inexplicable that she continued to wear her black robes...” (p. 187).

The black robe is a symbol of trauma. Even at the end of the novel, it seems inexplicable to describe its exact sense.

4.2.1.3. **Lexical Marker for Latency**

The situation of unspeakability occurs in the phase of latency which is identified at its end when the victim becomes able to comprehend the situation. A sample of these lexical markers indicates the end of latency phase.

Table No. 3 *Lexical Markers for Latency used in Exit West.*

No.	Lexical Marker	<i>Exit West</i> and Discussion
1	Realize	“... then he realized that they were not young boys ...” (p. 82). ‘Realized’ indicates Saeed’s father’s inability and ignorance about the men which he knows later and becomes aware. “... they realized that their street was under attack by a nativist mob ...” (p. 131). Again, as a strong marker, it highlights the situation for Saeed and Nadia that they know about an already done thing.

- 2 Notice “... besides she might have noticed the subterfuge” (p. 179).
- ‘Noticed’ marks almost the same situation. Nadia becomes aware subterfuge about which she was unaware.
- “... Nadia too noticed friction between them” (p. 130).
- ‘Noticed’ points out that they come to know about the problems among their relation about they do know but that exists.
- 3 Recognize “... the possibility struck Nadia with a shock of recognition ...” (p. 215)
- The semantic contribution of ‘recognition’ as lexis explores the end of the latency phase in the process of her trauma.
- 4 Understand “... was indeed a beautiful place, and they could understand why people might come here” (p. 108).
- “... tightly with people who spoke in tongues he did not understand” (p. 130).
- “... unpredictability of her words, words that he often could not understand” (p. 146).
- 5 Find “... the migrant ghetto in which Saeed and Nadia found themselves began badly....” (p. 160)
- The word ‘found’ explores the situation that Saeed and Nadia realize the trauma causing location.

4.2.1.4. Lexical Marker for Repetition

The repetition plays a central role to make the victim aware of the cause of his trauma. The given sample of the lexical markers indicates the repetition of the incident as used in the novel.

Table No. 4 *Lexical Markers for Repetition used in Exit West*

No.	Lexical Marker	<i>Exit West</i> and Discussion
1	Time to time	<p>“.... this unkindness that was now creeping into their words from time to time...” (p. 130).</p> <p>This is the repetition of Saeed and Nadia’s traumatic behaviour which makes them about their different natures.</p>
2	Next time	<p>“.... if each makes the threshold for irritation next time a bit lower, as is the case with certain allergies”</p> <p>‘Next time’ indicates that something has occurred already. The mentioned quotation describes the repetition of Saeed and Nadia’s critical behaviour to each other.</p>
3	Over time	<p>“..... but over time she understood more and more...” (p. 141).</p> <p>‘Over time’ points out the repetition which makes Nadia aware to come over the trauma of language which she faces while talking with Nigerians.</p>
4	Each time	<p>“.... she worried for Saeed each time he drove over to see her and back again.” (p. 72).</p> <p>‘Each time’ shows the repetition of Saeed and Nadia’s passion of love for each other.</p>
5	Again	<p>“When she visited again it was gone, unrecognizable, the building crushed by the force of a bomb....” (p. 66).</p> <p>‘Again’ as a lexical marker is also giving the sense of repetition that Nadia has visited that place more than one time.</p>

In the last part, the previous sketch of the first three parts prepares the mind of the reader to think about the psychological disturbance of the boy which keeps him mute; as “not speak to her” indicates the unspeakability. In this part, there is not trauma lexis but trauma theory provides a lens to observe trauma. So, the sense of trauma is maintained through the non-trauma lexis.

‘Pain’, ‘homelessness’ ‘fear’, ‘violence’ ‘psychological disturbance’, and ‘unspeakability’ are the subjects of trauma and belongs to the same semantic class. After reading the novel, it seems as a one-sentence summary. The researcher argues that there are four possible ways in the novel through which words contribute to depict the trauma: by trauma lexis, by non-trauma lexis, by negating normal situation, and by trauma exaggeration. These ways have been tried to explore through a few more instances from the text of the novel.

The first issue can be related to grammar and topic deviation. On behalf of grammatical issues, the irregular punctuation marks can be studied and it is also visible that the narrator moves from one topic to the other. The reader interacts with the second issue of the disturbing meaning while reading the situation about war and peace the first sentence; while, during reading the novel, the meaning of ‘swollen’ and ‘refugees’ also can be felt dynamic. In this part of the analysis, these issues of the narration are tried to explore to study the features of a traumatized text.

Conclusion

In this thesis, the lexical analysis of trauma is done through Mohsin Hamid’s *Exit West* (2017). The novel has been studied as a migration and diaspora fiction by several scholars but it has gained a limited focus through trauma perspective. The researcher focused on *Exit West* as a trauma narrative to explore the lexical features of trauma. For this purpose, two theories have been used: Crauth’s *Unclaimed Experience* and Hoey’s *Lexical Priming*. Both theories provide a base to develop a theoretical framework to study the lexical characteristics of trauma.

The main objective of the study is to explore how does Mohsin Hamid use lexical items in trauma narrative and constructs the meaning of trauma in *Exit West*. The research question of the study is as how are lexical items used to depict the trauma narrative and construct the meaning of trauma

in Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West*? It is a qualitative study while the frequency of trauma lexis has been tested through MS Word.

Crauth's theory of trauma is a literary approach to study trauma in literature which claims that trauma of victim cannot be accessed directly but it is possible only through a somehow literary language. In this way, the literary language plays a central role in the testimony of a victim. It includes reoccurring figures which depict the horrible and trauma causing events. According to Crauth, a victim cannot comprehend his trauma abruptly after the violent event but it takes time and face it again and again which makes him aware of the actual situation. It indicates the process of trauma which has gradual steps of unspeakably, latency, repetition and testimony.

In the first section of the analysis, it has been analyzed that *Exit West* is a trauma narration of Crauthian strain. It has been studied as a trauma fiction through comparative analysis with the themes of other trauma fiction analyzed by Whitehead and discussed that *Exit West* represents trauma of forced migration fiction. According to Balaev's perspective and concept, *Exit West* is also a trauma novel because of its themes of extreme fear and profound loss. The characters of the novel have been traumatized because of civil war and migration. Saeed, Nadia and Saeed's father face trauma caused by violent events and repetition of the incidents, they come out of the latency period. The narrator seems also traumatized because of contagion like nature of trauma and its effects are observable through the narration. It becomes also clear that trauma in the novel is not only limited to the trope of unspeakability but it deals with other tropes of trauma as well as latency, repetition and testimony.

In the second section of the analysis, the lexical depiction of trauma has been studied in two parts. The first part has analyzed and elaborated the trauma words used in the novel and presents a sample of trauma lexis which shows their frequency, cause and effect relationship, grammatical variations and gives the insight to analyze the ability of the narrator. Further, the lexical markers of the Crauthian tropes of trauma (repetition, latency and unspeakability) are discussed as represented in the novel. It is analyzed that trauma is represented in four styles by using lexis. It has not only been described through trauma lexis but the non-trauma lexis also gives a sense of trauma because of its trauma context. Trauma has been described by the negation of non-trauma situations and by trauma exemplification. The four styles can be developed to estimate the intensity of the trauma.

As mentioned earlier, the second part of the analysis explores the lexical features of traumatized narration. Often words have been found as disturbed and complex meanings that indicate the trauma situation of the narrator. It has been also found that a traumatized narration does not entertain lexis with proper grammatical arrangements. It is observed that the author changes the meaning of the same lexis as refugees. Trauma paradox, symbol, and metaphor are also part of traumatized narration which are indicated in *Exit West*. *Exit West* is a trauma narrative of the Crauthian strain, the lexical items contribute in developing the meaning of trauma in narration and it also represents a traumatized narration.

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