

**DICTION AND SYNTAX IN RICK RIORDAN'S "THE SERPENT'S SHADOW"****Étapes de traitement de l'article****Date de soumission : 17 - 11 -2024****Date de retour d'instruction : 22 - 11 -2024****Date de publication : 12 - 12 - 2024****Moses ELIA KATABESHA**

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Abstract: This paper centers on diction and syntax in Rick Riordan's *The Serpent's Shadow*. The main target of this paper was to check whether or not readers' problems of grasping the meaning conveyed in TSS are due to the diction (choice of words) and syntax (arrangement of sentences) that Riordan used when writing this novel. Generally, the present study aims at helping readers to be aware of how Riordan uses his words, i.e. identifying some syntactic and linguistic realities related to diction and syntax to convey themes, tones and foreshadowing for a situation throughout the narrative under discussion. To carry out this study, skimming, systematic random sampling, close - reading, point - by - point and Internet were used as approaches for data collection. As for data analysis, textual, library, linguistic and stylistic methods were also used. Throughout the analysis, findings reveal that (1) many sentences used by Riordan are perfective and represent 92, 75% of the 138 sampled sentences; (2) most of characters use past sentences with the proportion of 67, 39% that is 98 sentences out 138. It is showed that only 28 sentences are expressed in the present tense (20, 29%). Sentences used throughout the novel express simple actions 0as far as types of sentences are concerned (43, 48%), i.e. 60 out of 138 selected sentences; (3) the indicative mood is the most predominant throughout the narrative, representing 95, 65% of the average; (4) the diction type mostly used is low and ranks 98, 28%; (5) sentences with denotative meanings are the most predominant with 98, 55% and (6) at 100%, the analyses prove that all the sentences used by Riordan in TSS bear different meanings.

Key words: connotation, denotation, diction, meaning, syntax.

DICTION ET SYNTAXE DANS « L'OMBRE DU SERPENT » DE RICK RIORDAN

Résumé : Le présent travail se focalise sur la diction et la syntaxe dans 'The Serpent's Shadow' traduit en français comme 'Ombre du Serpent.' La principale cible dans ce travail était de prouver si oui ou non les problèmes rencontrés par les lecteurs lors de

la lecture peuvent être dus à la diction (choix des mots) et syntaxe (arrangement des phrases) que Riordan a utilisé pour exprimer son message quand il écrivait ce roman. De manière générale, ce travail a pour objectif de démontrer aux lecteurs la façon dont Riordan a employé ses propres mots pour compiler ce roman en identifiant quelques réalités syntaxiques et linguistiques cadrant avec la diction et syntaxe afin de communiquer les thèmes, tons et indicateur préfigurant pour une situation donnée à travers le roman sous étude. Pour amener à bon port ce travail, nous avons utilisé la sélection systématique hasardeuse, lecture proche, point par point et l'internet comme approches pour la collecte des données. En ce qui concerne l'analyse des résultats, nous avons fait recours aux méthodes linguistiques, stylistiques, documentaires et textuelles. Après analyse et interprétation des données, les résultats prouvent que (1) beaucoup de phrases utilisées par Riordan sont perfectives et représentent 92, 75% sur les 138 phrases sélectionnées; (2) la majorité de personnages utilisent les phrases au temps passé à 67, 39%, les phrases employées au présent de l'indicatif s'élèvent à (20, 29%). Les phrases utilisées dans tout le roman expriment des actions simples selon les types de phrases (43, 48%), cela veut dire 60 sur les 138 phrases sélectionnées; (3) le mode indicatif est le plus dominant dans tout le roman représentant 95, 65% de suffrage; (4) le type de diction utilisé par l'auteur est plus faible (informel) à 98, 28%; et (6) à 100%, les analyses démontrent que toutes les phrases utilisées par Riordan dans TSS portent différents sens.

Mots clés : diction, syntaxe, dénotation, connotation, sens.

I. INTRODUCTION

Most of the time, in literary works, writers do not use language in the same way. These different ways of using language always vary from one writer to another. It is due to their choice of words and sentence arrangements that readers succeed and/or fail to grasp the meaning conveyed throughout their works. In this way, readers may be wishing to know why the writer selected this word in such a way and not the other. Something worth mentioning here is that, writers select and arrange sentences not for the sake of writing or choosing, but for a given purpose. It is in this perspective that the present paper focuses on diction and syntax so as to check whether readers' problems of grasping the meaning conveyed in Rick Riordan's *The Serpent's Shadow* (henceforth TSS) are due to the diction and syntax that he has used.

To start with, it is worth recalling that diction and syntax are two important aspects of style; both aspects play an integral part in the formation of sentences in a text. The **main difference** between diction and syntax is that **diction refers to the choice of words** while **syntax refers to the arrangement of words**. Therefore, they both play an equally important role in forming a sentence.

Diction refers to the specific choice of words by a speaker or a writer. It is the choice of words or an important aspect in deciding the quality of a text. When selecting



diction, a writer has to pay attention to factors like accuracy, clarity of a word as well as suitability to the context. An author can use different types and varieties of words in a text; he can use simple, common words or formal, unique words. Words can also be classified according to different registers. For example, the word “home” can be also used as “house”, “lodging”, “place of residence”, “adobe”, “domicile” (formal), “digs”, and “pad” (informal).

Diction should depend on the context. If one is writing an informal text, i.e., an essay, a letter to a friend, the word *home* is appropriate. But, s/he is likely to find the term *place of residence* in an official document.

Syntax is the arrangement of words in a language. It can be also described as the set of rules and principles that govern sentence structure in a language. Syntax is generally concerned with aspects like word order, subject-verb agreement, case, mood, etc. Every accurate and proper sentence or utterance can be taken as an example of syntax. However, syntax alone does not make a proper sentence.

In this way, Chomsky (1965) states that, as syntax implies the arrangement of words within sentences, then, it is;

- (1) *Word order*: most English sentences follow a subject-verb-object/complement pattern. Deviating from the expected word order can serve to startle the reader and draw attention to the sentence.
- (2) *Sentence length*: a short sentence following a much longer sentence shifts the reader’s attention, which emphasizes the meaning and the importance of the short sentence.
- (3) *Sentence focus*: deals with variation and emphasis within a sentence. It is generally achieved by syntactic tension and repetition (see periodic and loose sentences).
- (4) *Punctuation*: It is used to reinforce meaning, to construct effect and express the writer’s voice.

Denotation is the act of naming something with a word; the actual object or idea to which the word refers. Denotation expresses explicit meaning of words. These are primary meanings of words as they appear in a dictionary. Symbols take the first place in this area, but then they also lead to some kind of connotation.

Connotation on the other hand is an idea suggested by a word in addition to its main meaning. Readers may be capable to grasp the primary meaning of words according to dictionary utterances. It is due to this phenomenon that connotation implies the use of literary or figurative language.

In regard to what is mentioned above, Tembue (2018:78) states that *there is a distinction between the plain, standard, overt meaning (the denotation) and the associative meaning (the connotation). First meanings derive from dictionaries and bear the idea of denotation while connotation is filled of associative ideas. The distinction between both*

denotation and connotation is that it is the reader who actively makes them part of the meaning of the text. For example, "blood" is the red liquid that circulates in our veins and arteries (the denotative meaning) as well as the very stuff of life, an offering in sacrifice, the inheritance of our families, the passions that stir us and sign of villainy and guilt (some of the connotations). In so doing, learners of literature should necessarily pay attention to these concepts.

A point worth maintaining about denotation and connotation is that words' connotative meanings are always subjective, multiple and some other times arbitrary. For example, the word "flock" is used for 'animals' like 'sheep', 'birds', etc. to mean "fly". But a writer can use it in his literary work to give his message as if he were talking to 'animals'. When interpreting it in literature, it means something else and can have the denotation of "people". Let us consider the following sentence for example; "People are flocking to the exhibition."

The point here is not that *people are flying to the exhibition like birds or whatever*, but it is rather *people are going in a "crowd"* to watch the place where the exhibition will take place. So, "flock" is "fly" when talking about "animals" and some other times it means "crowd" when it refers to "people" as its denotative meaning.

The problem that has triggered the present study is that many readers of literary works always encounter problems of grasping the meaning conveyed by authors. One of the sources of such problems is word choice and sentence arrangement. While reading Riordan's TSS, one may come across linguistic realities related to diction and syntax that, if care is not put on them, the reader is likely to fail to come up with the understanding of the novel at hand. The problem under study here is to study whether or not diction and syntax influence a lot the understanding of TSS. In this perspective, a deep analysis of these aspects, i.e. word choice and sentence building is of a paramount importance. That is the reason why it was useful to survey the novel at hand with hope that anybody who might have got difficulty in understanding TSS may be able to get the meaning conveyed through this study.

Considering the research questions, the following were the questions that the present study intends to address: (1) to what extent does the choice of words affect the meaning conveyed in TSS? (2) which words are likely to hinder both meaning and understanding of TSS? (3) how does the study of syntax harm the understanding of TSS? (4) what are the different types of sentences which might be the source of such setbacks?

With regard to the above mentioned questions, it was hypothesized that: (1) it might be possible for word choice to affect the meaning being conveyed in TSS; (2)



connotative words might be the main cause leading to the misunderstanding of TSS; (3) the study of syntax might affect the comprehension of the narrative; and (4) complex and compound sentences along with interro-negative features are likely to harm the understanding of the narrative. There might be some figures of speech in TSS that can cause problems in the understanding of the message conveyed throughout the novel. So here, readers need to read, re-read and think more in a critical way about the narrative.

In case the latter is not analyzed in an appropriate manner, it can lead readers to misunderstand the novel.

Generally, this paper aims at helping readers be aware of how Riordan uses his words and the structure that he follows in respect of those word effects to convey the message in *The Serpent's Shadow*. This paper will help readers know how to acquire basic knowledge in linguistic realities that are found in the novel so that they can be able to grasp the meaning conveyed.

Specifically, it seeks to (a) show the different ways in which diction and syntax function in TSS; (b) identify some possible syntactic realities existing in TSS so as to help readers grasp the meaning conveyed when reading it; (c) identify the possible ways in which the understanding of the novel can be grasped from the analysis of diction and syntax, since main characters bear around 90% of the whole narrative as far as diction and syntax are concerned. In so doing, characters play the most important role in the narrative because they make possible the understanding of the novel through their different actions, interactions and reactions. In this particular context, main characters developed in TSS are the ones who start and end the narrative. That is why I said above that they bear around 90% of the whole narrative as far as the analysis of diction and syntax is concerned.

II. METHODOLOGY

This section gives out explanation of each method, approach and technique, ways in which they function, the different motives that pushed me to choose this method or technique and how appropriate they were during the collection and analysis of data. They were of a great importance for the achievements of the results that this paper aims at.

Close reading technique

For close - reading to be used, a look has to be put at steps among others, *comprehension, paraphrasing, situation, intention, development* and *logical structure* so as to be able to analyse a given literary work. Regarding this statement, close - reading

technique was very important in such a way that it helped me to concentrate more on the text; that is, TSS and to be closer to it until I came up with its reliable understanding. This enabled me to help my readers grasp the meaning being conveyed in TSS. Thanks to close-reading, I happened to read word after word, sentence after sentence, page after page and chapter after chapter given that there was necessity to decide which analysis of diction and syntax had to be done. That is why by the reading of the whole novel, I was able to collect main characters and the narrator's utterances including each first and last sentences per chapter whose diction and syntax are analysed. It is important to point out that close-reading helped me to collect reliable data whose results are presented in the section of data presentation and discussion.

Systematic random sampling

This technique was applied to the present study in the sense that it helped me to decide which sentences had to form the basis of the study given that it would not be possible to analyse all the characters and all the sentences of the novel being studied (TSS). That is the reason why I had to put forth a number of criteria that helped me in the collection and analysis of data. The selection of sentences to study was conducted on the basis of the following criteria:

First, I took each 1st and last sentence of each chapter of the novel. Given that TSS has 22 chapters, when applying this criterion, it led me to a random selection of 44 sentences. These sentences included both narrator and main characters' uttered sentences. The reason for me to proceed in this way was that readers can easily have the idea of what the novel chapters are about by looking at each chapter's 1st and last sentences.

Second, I took each 19th sentence on the 19th line of every even page after seven pages, i.e.; 1→7. In case the chapter's last sentence does not respond to the criterion of being on the 19th line, the sentence on the 7th line of the odd page was selected. Following this criterion, 50 sentences were selected. I decided to proceed in this way because not only the chapters' 1st and last sentences can give the idea of the whole chapter of a novel, but also a look at sentences uttered alongside the work can help readers grasp the meaning.

Third and last, each main character's 8th and 16th uttered sentence per chapter was selected. In TSS, main characters are Carter and Sadie. When reading the novel, I found that Sadie has much intervened with her utterances in 12 chapters while Carter intervened in 10. Thus, Sadie's uttered sentences are 24 and those of Carter are 20. Given that the whole narrative gathers 22 chapters, and taking this criterion into account, 2 sentences were selected per chapter. This implies that 2 sentences multiplied by 22 chapters that the novel has is equal to a number of 44 selected sentences. The total number of main characters' selected sentences is 44. The reason for me to choose



this criterion is to help my readers grasp the message conveyed in TSS through main characters' uttered sentences because the latter appear almost in the whole novel from the beginning up to the end. Their 8th and 16th sentences per chapter are enough for any reader to understand easily the meaning conveyed in the novel under study.

With regard to the above mentioned criteria and thanks to the systematic random sampling technique, I finally came up with 138 selected sentences. In this way, I found that they are enough to help me come up with a reliable assistance to the readers of TSS.

To analyze data, different main characters' pieces of dialogues were analyzed and were displayed first in bar charts that yield important information arranged in columns to explain the key aspects of the analysis.

Finally, percentages were computed thanks to the rule of "three simple". But as some sentences might have been found in the position that they have more features of number such as aspect, mood, tense than the number of sentences, their percentages were calculated in rapport with the so-features' total number than with the number of sentences. The rationale here was to help readers have a clear picture of what the analysis of diction and syntax in TSS is.

III. FINDINGS

a) 1st and last selected sentences per chapter

Table 1: Frequency of diction and syntax for each 1st and last selected sentences per chapter

Label	Total number of sentences	Features	Number	%
Aspect	44	<i>Perfective</i>	37	84, 10
		<i>Imperfective</i>	7	15, 90
Tense	44	<i>Past</i>	21	47, 70
		<i>Present</i>	15	34, 10
		<i>Present and Past</i>	5	11, 40
		<i>Future time</i>	2	4, 50
		<i>Future and Present</i>	1	2, 30
Mood		<i>Indicative</i>	40	90, 90

Sentence type	44	<i>Imperative</i>	2	4, 50
		<i>Interrogative</i>	2	4, 50
		<i>Simple</i>	24	54, 50
		<i>Compound</i>	6	13, 60
		<i>Complex</i>	10	22, 70
		<i>Compound Complex</i>	3	6, 80
	44	<i>Exclamatory</i>	1	2, 30
		<i>Others</i>	0	0, 00
Diction type	44	<i>High</i>	0	0, 00
		<i>Low</i>	44	100, 00
Connotation and Denotation		<i>Connotation</i>	1	2, 30
	44	<i>Denotation</i>	43	97, 70
	44	<i>Meaning</i>	44	100, 00

Source: Primary data Excel (2018)

b) The narrator's selected sentences

Table 2: Frequency of diction and syntax for each 19th sentence on the 19th line of every even page after seven pages

Label	Total number of sentences	Features	Number	%
Aspect	50	<i>Perfective</i>	48	96, 00
		<i>Imperfective</i>	2	4, 00
Tense	50	<i>Past</i>	35	70, 00
		<i>Present</i>	9	18, 00
		<i>Present and Past</i>	5	10, 00
		<i>Future time</i>	0	0, 00
		<i>Future and Present</i>	1	2, 00
Mood		<i>Indicative</i>	49	98, 00



	50	<i>Imperative</i>	0	0, 00
		<i>Interrogative</i>	1	2, 00
Sentence type	50	<i>Simple</i>	21	42, 00
		<i>Compound</i>	11	22, 00
		<i>Complex</i>	15	30, 00
		<i>Compound Complex</i>	0	0, 00
		<i>Exclamatory</i>	3	6, 00
		<i>Others</i>	0	0, 00
Diction type	50	<i>High</i>	1	2, 00
		<i>Low</i>	49	98, 00
Connotation and Denotation	50	<i>Connotation</i>	1	2, 00
		<i>Denotation</i>	49	98, 00
	50	<i>Meaning</i>	50	100, 00

Source: Primary data Excel (2018)

c) Main characters' selected sentences

A. Sadie's selected sentences

Table 3: Frequency of diction and syntax for each Sadie's 8th and 16th uttered sentence per chapter

Label	Total number of sentences	Features	Number	%
Aspect	24	<i>Perfective</i>	23	95, 80
		<i>Imperfective</i>	1	4, 20
Tense	24	<i>Past</i>	20	83, 30
		<i>Present</i>	3	12, 50
		<i>Present and Past</i>	1	4, 20
		<i>Future time</i>	0	0, 00
		<i>Future and Present</i>	0	0, 00

Mood	24	<i>Indicative</i>	23	95, 80
		<i>Imperative</i>	0	0, 00
		<i>Interrogative</i>	1	4, 20
Sentence type	24	<i>Simple</i>	9	37, 50
		<i>Compound</i>	2	8, 30
		<i>Complex</i>	8	33, 30
		<i>Compound Complex</i>	4	16, 70
		<i>Exclamatory</i>	1	4, 20
		<i>Others</i>	0	0, 00
Diction type	24	<i>High</i>	0	0, 00
		<i>Low</i>	24	100, 00
Connotation and Denotation	24	<i>Connotation</i>	0	0,00
		<i>Denotation</i>	24	100, 00
	24	<i>Meaning</i>	24	100, 00

Source: Primary data Excel (2018)



B. Carter’s selected sentences

Table 4: Frequency of diction and syntax for each Carter’s 8th and 16th uttered sentences per chapter

Label	Total number of sentences	Features	Number	%
Aspect	20	<i>Perfective</i>	20	100, 00
		<i>Imperfective</i>	0	0, 00
Tense	20	<i>Past</i>	17	85, 00
		<i>Present</i>	1	5, 00
		<i>Present and Past</i>	2	10, 00
		<i>Future time</i>	0	0, 00
		<i>Future and Present</i>	0	0, 00
Mood	20	<i>Indicative</i>	20	100, 00
		<i>Imperative</i>	0	0, 00
		<i>Interrogative</i>	0	0, 00
Sentence type	20	<i>Simple</i>	6	30, 00
		<i>Compound</i>	6	30, 00
		<i>Complex</i>	6	30, 00
		<i>Compound Complex</i>	2	10, 00
		<i>Exclamatory</i>	0	0, 00
		<i>Others</i>	0	0, 00
Diction type	20	<i>High</i>	0	0, 00
		<i>Low</i>	20	100, 00
Connotation and Denotation	20	<i>Connotation</i>	0	0, 00
		<i>Denotation</i>	20	100, 00
	20	<i>Meaning</i>	20	100, 0

Source: Primary data Excel (2018)

Table 5: Synoptic table of diction and syntax frequency in Rick Riordan's TSS

	Aspects	Chapters	Narrator	Sadie	Carter	Ranking	
						Total	Rank
	Sentence features	44 (100%)	50 (100%)	24 (100%)	20 (100%)	138 (100%)	-
Aspects	Perfective	37 (84, 1%)	48 (96, 0%)	23 (95, 8%)	20 (100%)	128 (92, 75%)	1 (High)
	Imperfective	7 (15, 9%)	2 (4, 0%)	1 (4, 2%)	0 (0, 0%)	10 (7, 24%)	2 (Lower)
	Past	21 (47, 7%)	35 (70, 0%)	20 (83, 3%)	17 (85, 0%)	93 (67, 39%)	1 (High)
	Present	15 (34, 1%)	9 (18, 0%)	3 (12, 5%)	1 (5, 0%)	28 (20, 29%)	2 (Low)
	Present and Past	5 (11, 4%)	5 (10, 0%)	1 (4, 2%)	2 (10, 0%)	13 (9, 42%)	3 (Lower)
	Future time	2 (4, 5%)	0 (0, 0%)	0 (0, 0%)	0 (0, 0%)	2 (1, 45%)	4 (a) (Lower)
Tense	Future and Present	1 (2, 3%)	1 (2, 0%)	0 (0, 0%)	0 (0, 0%)	2 (1, 45%)	4 (b) (Lower)
	Indicative	40 (90, 9%)	49 (98, 0%)	23 (95, 8%)	20 (100%)	132 (95, 65%)	1 (High)
Mood	Imperative	2 (4, 5%)	0 (0, 0%)	0 (0, 0%)	0 (0, 0%)	2 (1, 45%)	3 (Lower)
	Interrogative	2 (4, 5%)	1 (2, 0%)	1 (4, 2%)	0 (0, 0%)	4 (2, 99%)	2 (Lower)
	Simple	24 (54, 5%)	21 (42, 0%)	9 (37, 5%)	6 (30, 0%)	60 (43, 48%)	1 (High)
Sentence type	Compound	6 (13, 6%)	11 (22, 0%)	2 (8, 3%)	6 (30, 0%)	25 (18, 12%)	3 (Low)
	Complex	10 (22, 7%)	15 (30, 0%)	8 (33, 3%)	6 (30, 0%)	39 (28, 26%)	2 (Low)
	Compound Complex	3 (6, 8%)	0 (0, 0%)	4 (16, 7%)	2 (10, 0%)	9 (6, 52%)	4 (Lower)
	Exclamatory	1 (2, 3%)	3 (6, 0%)	1 (4, 2%)	0 (0, 0%)	5 (3, 62%)	5 (Lower)
	Others	0 (0, 0%)	0 (0, 0%)	0 (0, 0%)	0 (0, 0%)	0 (0, 0%)	6 (Lower)
	High	0 (0, 0%)	1 (2, 0%)	0 (0, 0%)	0 (0, 0%)	1 (0, 72%)	2 (Lower)
	Low	44 (100%)	49 (98, 0%)	24 (100%)	20 (100%)	137 (99, 28%)	1 (High)
Diction type	Denotation	43 (97, 7%)	49 (98, 0%)	24 (100%)	20 (100%)	136 (98, 55%)	1 (High)
	Connotation	1 (2, 3%)	1 (2, 0%)	0 (0, 0%)	0 (0, 0%)	2 (1, 45%)	2 (Lower)
	Meaning	44 (100%)	50 (100%)	24 (100%)	20 (100%)	138 (100%)	-



IV. DISCUSSION

The above mentioned table displays the synoptic results for the frequency of diction and syntax in synthesis converted into percentage and rank of sample diction and syntactic features as selected from different characters in the story. It shows the recapitulation of the overall situation of the analyses achieved in the preceding tables, i.e. table 1 to table 4. It is in this perspective that TSS readers can easily be aware of both qualitative and quantitative picture of the paper better understanding regarding aspect, tense, mood, types of sentences, diction type, denotation, connotation and meaning.

Having a glance at the results yield above, a careful reader may wish to know why the perfective aspect is the most predominant in all sentences throughout the novel (92, 75%) and not imperfective (7, 24%). A tentative answer to such a curiosity would be that, the writer conveys the message to his audience to refer to events conceived as bounded and unitary without reference to any flow of time. It has to be acknowledged that this high use of perfective aspect can be applied to actions or events situated in the past. For example, when considering the narrator's statement "*A good try, she admitted*" on page 261 of the novel, the 26th sentence, chapter 13, one may notice that the sentence expresses a perfective aspect since it is in the past and does not refer to any flow of time. Another reason is that writers center their story on perfective aspect because it does not trigger readers' understanding of literary works. If the writer expresses on going, continuous and habitual events, this solely gives reference to the imperfective aspect just as long as the time flows. Contrary to imperfective aspect lowly used in TSS (7, 24%), the writer expresses situations conceived as continuously existing as time flows. For example, "*I'm travelling with the Kanes.*" (See chapter 10, 11th sentence uttered by Sadie, page 171 of the novel). In this sentence, there is no idea of completion of the action as time flows progressively.

The next observation has to be made on the high use of the past tense throughout the novel (67, 39%). Careful readers may intend to know why the writer decided to use the past tense in 93 sentences out of 138 selected. The reason may be that he proceeds in this way in order to express past events when telling the story. As it is known, writing, particularly writing narratives involves telling stories and people narrate past experiences and not present ones. It is in this sense that Riordan, writing TSS, brings to life past events and in so doing, past tense is appropriate and prevails over any other tense. Characters' actions, reactions and interactions reflect past events. These utterances are expressed to show that the experience that characters lived at that time is no longer the same with what is experienced today.

Another point is that, the writer used a high rate of the past tense to tell the story and made it spread from generation to generations. However, human beings are story lovers and story tellers. They love telling stories to friends always in the past even though it is an event that takes place few minutes ago. Humans are most of the time

affected by past events and wish to escape them for the future if they are awful experiences. Past events lead readers to sympathize with 'x' or 'y' character in the narrative. One is likely to feel pity, sad or happy or even dislike a given character's behavior and/or misbehavior.

In addition, past tenses are much easier to believe. By this I mean that a character may be retelling a story than it is to believe that s/he is announcing the story as it happened. Human beings retell stories to friends or family members all the time, and they always do it obviously in the past. Reading TSS in the past, one feels much more natural, which is a large advantage on the part of readers. In the same perspective, very rarely one would find a reader disliking a book for the simple reason that it is written in the past imperfective tense. The past tense is a great option and for some writers, easier to write, but it is not to say it does not have its own hurdles to present tense. It is worth pointing out that past tenses tend to be easy to establish a connection with readers. Neither past nor present tense is greater than the other. They both have strengths and weaknesses. They are hurdles to overcome once one decides how s/he would like his/her book feel like. Therefore, choosing which one prevails over the other becomes markedly easier.

As far as the mood is concerned, all sentences uttered by the narrator, main characters (Sadie and Carter) bear the indicative mood. They are used in 132 (95, 65%) out of 138 selected sentences. This high use of the indicative mood may result from the writer's techniques to convey the meaning to his audience. The mood is a grammatical category connected to tense and aspect in order to state clearly different points. This entails the idea according to which some elements presented in the novel can be grasped with ease. Something worth mentioning here is that, since the writer's mind is not accessible to readers, they are requested to decode the message by themselves. This can be possible if readers pay much attention to the style that he has used to structure different sentences. Another point is that the indicative mood helps both the reader and author identify certain points that were not clearly stated in the narrative. These points are related to grammatical, linguistic or stylistic features. The imperative mood has been used in only 2 sentences (1, 45%) for the simple reason that, Riordan, when building up sentences from main characters, referred to Carter as the one leading the team. A team-leader is not there simply to provide orders in an imposing and/or rude way. He is supposed to be the team-guider, humble, cool, with no hatred qualities inside him/herself, confident, etc. In short, he should not be characterized by any negative traits. Carter has to use an informal language to make his teammates believe in his innovative ideas that would help them capture Apophis and defeat him. Carter did not need to use imperative sentences when addressing his band of young magicians and allies who were willing to overcome the snake god Apophis. He had to use sentences expressing a language that would please everybody making part of his team.



Another focus has to be made on the high use of simple sentences in TSS representing (43, 48%) of 60 sentences out of 138 selected. This is because simple sentences have the most basic elements that build up grammatical structures.

They also enable readers grasp the meaning conveyed in the narrative. A question that any reader may ask is to know why the future time, imperative, compound complex sentences and others have not been highly used throughout the novel. A tentative answer is that authors convey meaning to readers using different techniques. These techniques can be related to choice of words (diction) and sentence building (syntax). No one is allowed to blame them for that. It depends upon their own choices. This cannot prevent researchers to criticize the ways they used to convey meanings to readers. That is why readers are suggested to pay attention to authors' choice of words and arrangement of sentences. Simple sentences have been more used than compound, compound complex, exclamatory, other types of sentences. Riordan proceeds in such a way because he knows that simple sentences convey meaning easily to readers. The reason for this is that simple sentences bear simple structures, terms, styles, grammatical categories, etc. They facilitate readers' understanding of literary works. He knows that including choppy, run – together, crocodile, balanced, wordy, periodic or loose sentences would mislead readers' understand of TSS.

The diction type mostly used in TSS is low (99, 28%). The writer decided to use such a high level of "low diction" because he wanted all his characters to react as peers (friends) or familiar to each other. Characters' low conversations or dialogues make better understanding of the narrative. By low conversation I mean every hearer has easy access to meaning of the novel at hand. In so doing, Riordan found worth making his characters participate in one way or another in the plot of events in TSS. Characters use the everyday language by reacting as comrades, peers, relatives, acquaintances, etc. and adapt this language to the level of every reader. Riordan had to convince his audience by using a language common to anybody using and/or speaking the same language.

The synoptic table also displays the high rate usage of words' denotative meanings (98, 55%). This favours readers' understanding of sentences' primary senses. The high use of words' denotative meanings does not trigger readers' understanding of TSS. The explicit or covert meaning of sentences helps readers get the first message stated before they are given additional or associate senses. The connotation being used at a lower level (1, 45%), is seen in the following Carter's reaction: "*I was in love with a birdbath*" (see chapter 4, page 53 of the novel, sentence number 7 in table 1). Here, "birdbath" is a bowl filled with water for birds to wash and drink from, usually in a garden or yard. This is the denotation of "birdbath". It can stand for "prostitution" or "prostitute" to mean that it is a bowl filled with water for everybody to come and drink or wash in (connotation). This is inhuman. "Birdbath" symbolizes a girl or lady who delivers herself to any man coming for sexual affairs or love (marriage) proposals. The lady grants easily but her target always falls into goo. She will later on find herself busy performing such a kind of life until she dies. In this particular context, Carter expresses his disappointment using "birdbath" in an indirect way. He does not want to hurt his girlfriend by saying that she is a "prostitute."

Finally, the analysis proved that all selected sentences were assigned additional meaning apart from their denotative and connotative conveyance (100%). As matter of

fact, this would enable readers to have a clear picture of each sentence's conveyed meaning in TSS. The following tables prove the column of meaning.

Chapters	Page number	Sentence number	Sentences
Chap 1	1	(First) 1	If you're listening to this, Congratulations! You survived Doomsday.
	16	(Last) 2	No one leaves this place alive.

Source: Primary Data (2018)

ChapN°	Page N°	Sentence N°	N° of words	N° of verbs	Aspect	Tense	Mood	Sent . type	Dictio n type	Deno tation	Conn o tation	Meaning
1	1	1	10	2	Imperf ective	Prese nt & Past	Indica tive	Com plex	Low	Ok		Encourage ment for survival in whatever possibilities.
	16	2	6	1	Perfect ive	Prese nt	Indica tive	Sim ple	Low	Ok		Fear to survive because nobody left the battle field alive if he is not trained.

(Source: Primary data 2018)



CONCLUSION

This survey made an analysis of diction and syntax in Rick Riordan's *The Serpent's Shadow*. It is the result of the unpublished fifth year research paper. It aimed to study the way writers convey meaning in their literary works in general and Rick Riordan's *The Serpent's Shadow* in particular. The gap behind this idea was to know whether or not readers' misunderstanding of such works of art is due to the writer's choice of words, i.e. diction and/or the way s/he puts those words together to form meaningful and grammatical utterances, i.e. syntax. To make this study successful, a good number of questions had to be put forth. Following the results and hypotheses depicted from those questions, it is of a paramount importance to mention that the hypothesis to the first research question has been confirmed for the simple reason that for readers grasp the meaning conveyed by writers of literary texts, they have first to look at the way they chose words to build sentences. If the study of diction and syntax is ignored, readers should have difficulties in comprehending the message for the latter is the key of our daily communication. This is to mean that if word choice and sentence formation are not studied, both aspect must affect negatively the understanding of literary texts. The second question was to know the words that can hinder the understanding of TSS. The hypothesis to this questions was also confirmed. The main reason was that words bearing solely connotative meanings do not favor the understanding of literary texts. Connotative words are unspoken meanings and emotions associated with words. For example, when reading a poem describing a "snake". The denotation is very simple. It means a "limbless reptile". But the connotation of "snake" is far more complex. It evokes "feelings of danger, betrayal (like Adam and Eve), or even wisdom, depending on cultural contexts and personal experiences. This is what makes literature very rich and multilayered. Regarding the last research question, it intends to know the types of sentences which can be the obstacle for grasping the meaning conveyed in literary works. The hypothesis on this question was confirmed for the simple reason that complex and complex compound sentences including wordy, choppy, run-together, crocodile, loose, unbalanced, etc. sentences are seen as setbacks in literary text interpretations. That is why the present study analyzed 138 selected sentences on a basis of three main criteria and that enabled readers of this article get rid of such problems.

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