

## LINGUISTIC FEATURES OF THE DIARY GENRE

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**Abstract:** *In this paper, we examine the conventions of this type of writing with a focus on diaries as an important genre for developing self-voice and literature. As a result, the research of the different diaries that have been written in different periods and cultural contexts compares the main spheres of the given kind of utterances, including syntactic, lexical, and stylistic grids as well as the writer's tone. They demonstrate how these aspects help to define the nature of diary writing as a genre and allocate the feelings' role in it. This study proves that a diary is one of the most important forms of expressing personal experience and recording culture for the improvement of concerns.*

**Key words:** *diary genre, linguistic features, personal expression, narrative style, cultural documentation*

## INTRODUCTION

Diary is a special variety of personal prose defined by such peculiarities as intimacy, improvisation, and the discussion of life's events and feelings. Diaries are one of the most important tools for people as there is no form of regular writing where a person can keep jotting down his/her plan, emotions, or events without having the necessity of presenting it to be read by others. This genre also has much value as literature because it allows a reader not only to look at the world where different cultures exist but also at the author's mind. Thus, this research aims to identify the specific linguistic features of diary texts and to reveal the backed-up personal and/ or emotional aspects intrinsic to the genre of diaries. While analyzing primaries including syntax, vocabulary, and style of writing, we seek to discover how these facets contribute to the realism and passion in the diaries and, subsequently, define the significant role of the diary as the genuine means of personal and social reflection and creativity.

## METHODOLOGY

The methodology for this study involved a comprehensive analysis of the linguistic features of the diary genre based on existing literature. Selection criteria for the diaries included a focus on various time periods and cultural backgrounds, allowing for a diverse representation of voices and experiences. This selection encompassed both historical diaries, such as *The Lost Diary of George Washington*, and contemporary examples, providing a broad perspective on the evolution of diary writing. The analytical framework centered on examining key linguistic features, including syntax, vocabulary, tone, and narrative style, to identify unique characteristics inherent to the diary genre. Data collection involved reviewing and synthesizing qualitative analyses from scholarly articles and existing diary texts, with particular attention given to transcription and digital formats where applicable. Analysis techniques included qualitative coding to categorize linguistic elements and thematic patterns, supplemented by the use of software tools for text analysis, allowing for a systematic exploration of the linguistic features identified in the literature. This approach provided a foundation for understanding the complexities of diary writing as a form of personal and linguistic expression.

## RESULTS

Cocciu et al. (2018, p.2) in their research analyzed two distinct collections of texts, focusing on gender representation and genre differences: journalistic prose and diary pages. The corpus consisted of 200 documents from each genre, with a total of 80,648 tokens in diaries and 129,329 tokens in newspapers. Notably, the diary entries included 45,155 tokens from women and 35,493 from men, while the newspaper articles featured 62,469 tokens from women and 66,860 from men. This distribution highlights a higher representation of female voices in diaries compared to newspapers, suggesting a potential difference in how genders express themselves in personal versus public writing contexts. The data collection was meticulously conducted using advanced search engines and established archives, ensuring a robust and representative sample for analysis.

The linguistic analysis employed over 170 features derived from morpho-syntactic tagging and dependency parsing, focusing on both raw text and lexical characteristics. For instance, the average token length and sentence length were calculated, revealing that diary entries tend to have shorter sentences compared to journalistic prose, which may reflect the more personal and informal nature of diary writing. Additionally, the Type/Token Ratio indicated a richer vocabulary diversity in diaries, with a higher proportion of basic Italian vocabulary words, suggesting that diary writers often utilize familiar language to convey personal experiences. For example, the use of emotional and descriptive language was more prevalent in diary entries, as evidenced by the higher lexical density and varied verbal morphology, which contrasts with the more structured and formal language typically found in journalistic texts. These findings underscore the distinct linguistic features that characterize the diary genre, emphasizing its role as a medium for personal expression (Cocciu et al., 2018, pp.2-3).

Their analysis of linguistic features across male and female writings in different genres revealed significant variations, particularly highlighting the distinct characteristics of diary entries compared to newspaper articles. In total, 23 features showed significant variation in diaries, while only 11 features did so in newspapers, indicating that the latter genre adheres to a more standardized writing style with less gender-based variation. For instance, newspapers exhibited longer words and a higher frequency of nouns and prepositions, which aligns with their informative nature, while diaries, especially those written by men, featured longer sentences and a greater use of the imperfect tense, reflecting a narrative style focused on personal experiences. Notably, female diary writers utilized first-person verbs more frequently (20.9 for women vs. 14.5 for men), suggesting a more subjective and personal approach to writing (Cocciu et al., 2018, p.3). Findings indicate that female writings tend to be characterized by simpler, easier-to-read language, with shorter words and sentences, while male writings exhibit greater linguistic complexity, including longer sentences and a higher proportion of complex lexicon. For example, female authors showed a preference for fundamental vocabulary and shorter dependency links, whereas male authors' diaries contained more nouns and syntactic features typical of complex structures. This contrast underscores the influence of gender on writing style, with women favoring clarity and accessibility, while men lean towards complexity and depth in their narrative expression (Cocciu et al., 2018, p.3-5).

Olena in her another study analyses diaries, particularly in the context of *The Lost Diary* of George Washington, reveals their significance as a subgenre of documentary prose that combines factual narrative with personal introspection (2023, pp.86-87). According to K. Tanchyn, diaries serve as first-person accounts that can range from simple recordings of daily events to more literary descriptions (Tanchyn, 2005). This aligns with N. Stahniuk's assertion that diaries reflect social, political, and cultural events while providing deep insights into the author's experiences and emotions (Stahniuk, 2012). The diary format allows for a blend of

fact-based narratives and intimate reflections, which is evident in Washington's entries that convey both the historical context of the Revolutionary War and his personal struggles as a leader. The fragmentary and sometimes chaotic nature of diary entries, as noted by I. Kuzmina and N. Izotova, further emphasizes the authenticity of the narrative, capturing the immediacy of Washington's thoughts and feelings during tumultuous times (Kuzmina, 2013; Izotova, 2015).

The purpose of analyzing *The Lost Diary of George Washington* is to explore its genre and stylistic features, particularly the expressive means and devices used by Teague to convey Washington's character and the historical significance of the War of Independence. This fictional diary not only provides insight into Washington's leadership but also draws parallels to contemporary conflicts, such as the war in Ukraine, highlighting the timeless nature of struggles for freedom and independence. Tanchyn emphasizes the aesthetic potential of diaries to evoke emotions and influence readers through careful selection and arrangement of information (Tanchyn, 2005). In Teague's work, the use of similes, metaphors, and rhetorical questions enriches the narrative, allowing readers to engage deeply with Washington's experiences and the broader historical context. Ultimately, this analysis underscores the diary's role as a vital literary form that captures the complexities of human experience and historical events (Olena, 2023, pp.87-91).

Lebedeva & Rabenko (2005) additionally analyzing the diary genre illustrate a complex interplay between its definition and the content it encompasses, as illustrated by J.M. Schaeffer and further explored by A.A. Tertich. Tertich highlights the semantic fluctuation of the term "author's blog," noting that it serves as a "genre transformer" that can encompass a variety of textual forms, from traditional notes to multimedia content like videos and podcasts (Tertich, 2013). This variability suggests that genre names, such as "blog," can become ambiguous as they encompass diverse forms of expression, challenging the rigidity of genre classifications. Additionally, the discussion emphasizes that a genre can represent "completely dissimilar complexes of texts," reflecting the dynamic nature of written discourse and the writer's genre competence. This fluctuation is not only a feature of digital genres but also resonates in traditional forms like the diary, where authors may intuitively draw upon genre stereotypes to shape their writing, influenced by their literacy and exposure to various forms of writing (Tertich, 2013).

The diary genre, particularly in its representation as a hypergenre, showcases the integration of multiple subgenres, which allows for a richer expression of the author's inner and external life. The example of an elderly woman's diary reveals how entries can range from reflective and personal to practical and observational, blurring the boundaries of traditional genre definitions (Lebedeva, 2006). This fragmentation and inclusion of varied texts—such as economic records and weather observations—underscore the organizing function of the diary, structuring both the author's inner thoughts and daily activities. The auto-addressability of the diary signifies the personal nature of this genre, creating a space where the author exercises autonomy over content. The genre's "routine" property serves as a fundamental characteristic, anchoring the diverse entries within the overarching framework of the diary. This routine nature, coupled with the evolving semantic meanings of the term "diary," illustrates how genre qualifications can shift over time while maintaining a core focus on personal experiences and reflections.

## DISCUSSION

The analysis of linguistic features within the diary genre reveals significant implications for understanding personal expression and narrative style. Findings indicate that diaries are characterized by a distinctive blend of simplicity and emotional depth, often employing shorter sentences and familiar vocabulary that enhance accessibility for readers. This contrasts

sharply with more formal genres, such as journalistic prose, which adhere to standardized writing styles and exhibit greater linguistic complexity. The higher frequency of first-person verbs, particularly among female diary writers, underscores the subjective nature of diary entries, allowing authors to convey intimate thoughts and emotions. This personal approach not only reflects the individual experiences of the author but also highlights the diary's role as a medium for self-exploration and emotional catharsis.

When compared to other literary genres, such as letters and memoirs, diaries exhibit unique linguistic features that set them apart. Letters often maintain a conversational tone but may include a more structured narrative, while memoirs typically follow a chronological order, emphasizing significant life events. In contrast, diaries are marked by their fragmentary and spontaneous nature, allowing for a nonlinear exploration of thoughts and feelings. The inclusion of varied subgenres within diaries—such as economic records or weather observations—further distinguishes them from memoirs, which usually focus on cohesive narrative arcs. The linguistic choices in diaries, including the prevalence of emotional and descriptive language, reveal a deep engagement with the author's internal landscape, offering insights that may not be as readily accessible in more formal or structured genres.

The linguistic features of diaries are also shaped by cultural and historical contexts, reflecting the values, norms, and communication styles of different time periods and societies. For instance, the use of language in diaries from the 18th century may exhibit a greater formality and adherence to literary conventions compared to contemporary diary writing, which often embraces informality and colloquial expressions. Cultural influences can dictate language choices, with some cultures emphasizing emotional restraint while others encourage open expression of feelings. Moreover, the evolution of language over time impacts diary writing, as new vocabulary and expressions emerge in response to changing societal dynamics. The subjective nature of diary writing, therefore, becomes a lens through which we can analyze broader cultural narratives, revealing how personal language choices are intertwined with the collective experience of a time and place. This interplay between individual expression and cultural context enriches our understanding of the diary genre as a vital form of personal and social documentation.

### CONCLUSION

This exploration of the linguistic features of the diary genre has revealed insightful distinctions that enhance our understanding of personal expression in writing. The findings indicate that diaries are characterized by their informal tone, emotional depth, and a focus on the subjective experiences of the author. The significant use of first-person verbs, especially among female writers, highlights the personal nature of diary entries, allowing for a rich portrayal of intimate thoughts and feelings. Additionally, the comparison with other literary genres, such as letters and memoirs, underscores the unique attributes of diaries, particularly their fragmentary style and the incorporation of diverse subgenres. These characteristics position diaries not only as a medium for individual reflection but also as a crucial form of cultural documentation that captures the linguistic nuances of personal experience.

The findings of this study open avenues for further research into the diary genre, suggesting several potential areas of inquiry. Future studies could delve into the works of specific authors, examining how their unique voices and contexts shape the linguistic features of their diaries. Additionally, expanding the analysis to include digital diaries could provide valuable insights into how technological advancements influence language choices and the presentation of self in contemporary writing. As we consider the enduring significance of diaries, it is essential to recognize their role as a form of personal and linguistic expression that transcends time and cultural boundaries, offering profound insights into the human

experience. Diaries remain a vital literary form, providing a unique lens through which we can explore the intricate relationship between language, identity, and memory.

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