A Study of Underlexicalization in Zoya Pirzad’s Novel We Will Get Used to It

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Abstract

The process of human communication and the act of transferring meaning to other individuals are among the most important functions of language. Language is namely a mental system the meaning of which is above all manifested through a sound system. Considering the mental nature of literature, what is employed in the form and structure of a literary work is in great part a mental construct principally originating in the author’s mind, and underlexicalization is a tool used by authors to foreground their writing. The current research studies Zoya Pirzad’s novel, We Will Get Used to It, for the concept of underlexicalization, a term popularized by Roger Fowler, referring to the lack of sufficient vocabulary to express ones meaning and intentions. The reflection of this lexical deficiency, which binds linguistics, literary criticism, and stylistics, is analyzed as it is mirrored in the thoughts and actions of the fictional characters at hand.

Keywords: Foregrounding, Underlexicalization, We Will Get Used to It, Zoya Pirzad.
1. Introduction

Literary critics and linguists have long argued over the permissibility and advisability of employing linguistic ways and means in the area of literary studies. For the sake of convenience, one can say that while almost everybody embraced the theoretical justification of such integration, they practically defied it. For instance, in 1958, Roman Jakobson introduces the linguistic model by saying that the study of poetry deals with the structure of language, just as analyzing painting concerns the study of images. Since linguistics is the universal science dealing with the study of structure, the study of poetry should be considered as a complement to linguistics. (Fowler et al., 2010)

In return, literary critics do not subscribe to this theory by arguing that linguistics is not a proper critical tool. For instance, Beatson believes that linguistics has a scientific nature, whereas literature retains a mental or speculative nature, which makes it inaccessible to science (Fowler et al., 2010). Unlike Beatson and Jakobson, Fowler believes that linguistics can have an utterly proper application to literary studies where it can manifest the different aspects and dimensions of a literary text, and such an approach should be a model with the following features: first, it should supply a comprehensive elucidation of the overall aspects of linguistic structures in a text; second, it should clarify the functions of the so-called linguistic structures present in a given text, with special reference to those functions that produce ideas in the minds of readers; third, it should prove that textual meanings are formed in a social structure and context. (Fowler et al., 2010)

Underlexicalization, popularized by Roger Fowler, contains all the above mentioned requirements, and it is such an element that relates to both linguistic features and is relevant to a scientific terminology and research method dealing with linguistic structures, that is, the main concern of linguistic inquiry. On the other hand, stylistics also is a critical endeavor that employs linguistic findings in analyzing literary texts. Thus, one can say that underlexicalization is closely connected to stylistics, too. Also, stylistics is an activity closely associated with literary criticism, yielding countless critical inquiries into literary texts with its peculiar terminology and methods, unlike most other critiques. Therefore, it can be established that underlexicalization is also associated with literary criticism, although stylistics is not included in books on literary criticism, regardless of the many common grounds traditional criticism and stylistics share. Stylistics is not restricted to the analysis of literary texts, because it does not believe in the autonomy and independence of literature in terms of its language, and it holds that literary language is just like any other form of language open to analysis and inquiry.

Fowler (2010) believes that stylistics employs specialized terms and concepts borrowed from linguistics. Such terms as transitive, underlexicalization, collocation, and cohesion. These labels cannot be put in everyday terms as they demand explication and even an ontological justification as to what functions they may serve. In addition, stylistics more than other literary sciences claims scientific objectivity with practitioners of stylistics stressing the fact that any person can learn and apply stylistic means and methods. Hence, a major goal in stylistics is the disambiguation of literature and literary criticism. Accordingly, stylistics attempts to reveal the interrelations of literary discourse with other forms of written language. The aim of this rather prolonged introduction is to show that underlexicalization is a part of stylistics, although it is closely associated with such literary sciences as literary criticism and linguistics, and above all to show that stylistics attempts to diagnose and uncover the interrelations existing between linguistics, literary criticism and stylistics.
2. The Theoretical Background
The current study is among the very few works done on underlexicalization with a focus on Persian literature. Only the following researches have been conducted in the area of general lexicology the titles of which are reproduced exactly as provided by the authors themselves in the first and second items:

1- Diction and its Role in Acceleration of the Narrative of Shahnameh’s in Literary Arts, Spring-Summer 2011, volume 3, number 1(4); Pages 47-62 by Jahedjah A., and Rezaei L.

2- Variety in Diction in Naser Khosrow’s Diwan in A Special Issue Commemorating Hakim Naser Khosrow Qobadiani Balkhi, in Nameye Parsi (Persian Letters), 2004, Volume 8, Number 2; Pages 42-70, by Bostan Shirin, K.

3- The Importance of Structural Elements of Words in the Word Choice of Poetry in Researches in Mystical Literature (Gowhar-e Guya), Spring 2007, Volume 1, Number 1; Pages 153-180, by Omranpour M. R., Department of Persian Language and Literature, Arak University, Iran.

Thus the current research would first deal with the interrelations of linguistics, literary criticism, and stylistics with the aim of displaying how underlexicalization can aid a researcher in understanding style in a work. Then such terms as lexis and underlexicalization would be studied in order to conduct a study of underlexicalization in Zoya Pirzad’s novel, We Will Get Used to It.

2.1 What is Literary Criticism?
In the Persian tradition, the view of contemporary Persian critics and scholars is quite different than the classic understanding of naqd or criticism as both a term and a discipline. Sirus Shamisa (2005) believes that among old Persian scholars, literary criticism was meant to deal with the defects and shortcomings of a work, looking into the height and descent of form and meaning, drawing on the implications of the word naqd, for to them naqd meant the discrimination of the pure from the impure.

In present times, the modern conception of literary criticism does not relate this endeavor to pinpointing the defects and shortcomings of a work, for literary criticism tackles superior literary works and looks more into such works for the roots of their excellence rather than the sources of the mediocre or the commonplace. Shamisa (2005) argues that a literary critic by analyzing a literary work attempts to first clarify its structure and meaning to the reader, and then to explain those laws that had led to the sublimity of that work. Thus the nature of literary criticism refers on one hand to the explanation of a literary work by drawing on literary rules and on the other hand relates to its attempt to unveil those dormant or inherent sources of novelty and excellence in such a work.

Literary criticism is a creative work and a literary critic occasionally demonstrates as much taste and creativity as an author. Although an author or poet is not fully acquainted with all the subtleties of literary sciences, a literary critic should instead be well-versed in most if not all such technicalities, for such considerations are the basis of any literary analysis. Thus one can come to understand the important position of literary criticism in the development of literature and its subdivisions. On the importance of literary criticism in literature, Shamisa (2005) raises two key points by first saying that it is alongside literary criticism that literature and literary sciences would ever evolve and survive, for a literary critic employs only the most efficient tools, and that by examining prominent works critics discover new means and tools, ultimately to enrich their own national literature.

Nowadays, literary criticism is thriving and expanding at such a high rate that it might dissolve into the critical approach it employs to study a work. Literary theory involves theorization about different areas of literature, and accordingly the current research relies on the linguistic and stylistic approach of Roger Fowler, focusing on the use of underlexicalization.
Much has been said on literary criticism, so much that nowadays one major branch of literary studies deals with the study of criticism, in the sense of metacriticism. Graham Hauf (1986) writes of three stages in the development of literary criticism by referring to the traditional stage wherein the meaning of a poem is what it signifies, that is, what the poem is saying; by mentioning the symbolist stage wherein a poem is apocalyptic in nature, where it guides one to discover what it does not say; and by speaking of the modern period wherein the symbolic aspect of a work is analyzed, and where the critic attempts to reveal the apocalyptic structure and essential nature of a poem.

2.2 Linguistics

The nature of language is such that every person takes interest in it, and assumes that producing a definition of language lies within the scope of their authority or expertise. Such an event reminds us of the fact that language is a peculiar phenomenon independent of other human faculties, for it is as vast and multifaceted as to enable every person to look into it and find the reflection therein of their own capacities, needs, and interests. Milanian (2003) believes that language possesses such a high cultural status that somehow all the cultural interests of a nation may be established based upon it. Likewise Ferdinand de Saussure (1999) believes that language possesses the dual nature and aspects of the individual and the social which are essential to the understanding of each other. Moreover, it is simultaneously a fixed system and a form of evolution. This phenomenon is at each given moment both new and old.

Often when critics have a literary subject under consideration, they face a dilemma. Such a difficult situation relates to the concern with such a fact that if they study a certain linguistic aspect of the work, they might be incapable of comprehending all the intricacies of the work. On the other hand, they encounter an event when they have to simultaneously study a given work from different viewpoints. Here, they would face such bulk of somehow loosely connected linguistic ambivalence or complexity, and as such encounter the demanding multidisciplinary nature and quality of linguistic inquiry. Hence, the authors believe that there is only one outlet for this problematic situation and that is the immediate engagement with language by admitting the fact that language is the setting and context for all the ascending and descending levels in human speech and thought.

Hall believes (2003) that there is no vacuum or void in language. Language is used as a means of communication within a human community, and as such is meaningful. The inherent note in Hall’s words is the communicative function of language. The fact stressed here is that language possesses meaning and it is a community or a society that produces a language. Now, one may ask which function of language is of prime importance. Certainly the answer to this question would be the communicative function, for all literary works produced so far have aimed at reaching and communicating with their audience. Any communication between an author and their audience requires the existence of a community which would act as their living context and environment. During this process of communication, we may encounter words that incite us into thinking as to why the author has used such words to communicate.

In the current research, as mentioned earlier, underlexicalization is considered among those factors that bring about conflict, and impel the reader to seek the inherent relations the author has incorporated into the texture of their work, and such usage is undoubtedly in line with literary foregrounding. In order to understand this authorial technique one should first get acquainted with the nature and aim of foregrounding.
2.3 Foregrounding
It has often been said that literariness is basically inherent in the system of language in such a way that literature is distinguishable from that language which is used for ordinary or nonfictional purposes. Culler (2003) believes that literature is a language that foregrounds language itself, and when a text falls in the framework of literature one pays attention to auditory images or other linguistic formations usually overlooked.

Safavi (2002), too, believes in what Mokarovsky proposes by saying that literary language displays maximum foregrounding as a deviation from linguistic norms. Mokarovsky expands Havranek’s view and concludes that literary language does not aim at communication but at self-reference, which is also stressed by Jakobson. Thus language becomes literary only when the message focuses on the message itself. Safavi further argues that foregrounding is possible in two forms. First, deviations should occur from the automatic rules of language. Second, rules must be added to the existing rules of language. Hence, foregrounding is possible through deviation from the norm and addition of rules. Shafiee Kaddkani (1989) casts foregrounding in two categories, that is, the musical and textual, and the textual relies on the lexical distinction and peculiarity of lexis in the sentential structure.

Leech (1969) poses three maxims for deviations from the norms of language, that is, foregrounding: first, foregrounding takes place when deviation from the norm relates to a concept, that is, when it is functional; second, foregrounding takes place when deviation from the norm relates to a speaker, that is, when it is directed; third, foregrounding takes place when deviation from the norm following the addressee’s judgment expresses a concept, that is, when it is purposive.

Leech’s third proposition seems to be more satisfactory, for it sees the realization or recognition of meaning as being independent of the author’s intentions and wholly the responsibility of the reader. Thus, the creator or author of the work would no longer have any share in their own art. Meanwhile, among the different types of foregrounding, it is through stylistic foregrounding, which is the main focus in the current research, that Zoya Pirzad employs such a language that reflects the colloquial arrangement, with underlexicalization as one of its instances. In order to better acquaint oneself with the subject of underlexicalization, one had better look into the subject of stylistics first.

2.4 Stylistics
Stylistics is a critical approach that employs linguistic methods and findings in order to analyze literary texts. The introduction of stylistics in the 20th century and its practical use was meant to show that the overall meaning and effect of literary texts on readers arises from and is rooted in the technical aspects of the language used in such works of art. In the current research, stylistics is principally juxtaposed with practical criticism. Stylistics, being a mode of literary criticism, has certainly led to the production of much critiques which are peculiar in their focus on the quality of expression and significance. It should be noted that linguistics, as a scientific branch in the study of language, and not a tool for language learning, is the main focus in the current research.

Stylistics is different than other forms of critical theory, for this approach defies relativism. To stylistics, literary language is not a sheer object of sanctity and praise but more a source of data to which stylistic tools should be applied. Delivering a brief history of stylistics, one should say that in modern terms stylistics lies in the area of the humanities, and it has a long history traditionally being known as rhetoric. In the 19th century, rhetoric was assimilated into linguistics. At that time, linguistics was better known as philology and was almost directed toward historical surveys of language. In the 20th century, the historical bent was replaced by a structural view of language as a system of communication, and linguists turned to such questions as how meaning is created and
maintained. It was prior to WWI that a revitalized form of rhetoric emerged which laid emphasis on literary style and its effects on the reader. (Fowler et al., 2010)

The aim of stylistics is to represent systematically an explicit scientific interpretation based on measurable explicit evidences. It also emphasizes the linkage between literary language and everyday routine language. As Hossein Payandeh indicates in Linguistics and literary criticism, a translated collection of linguistic theorists’ articles criticized by Peter Barry, from among the expressions being utilized in stylistics, some are derived from linguistics. These expressions are part of technical terms in a technical realm of study related to rational probations. Moreover, there is no function attributed to these expressions outside the mentioned realm. Unless the addressees have technical knowledge about this realm, none of these expressions are recognizable without significant explanation about their meaning and their raison d’etre. (Fowler et al., 2010)

Stylisticians believe that the surface aspect of stylistics is understandable and applicable by every individual; therefore, one of the functions of stylistics is illumination based on which stylistics is to depict relations between literary language and other written forms of communication. Stylistics as introduced in linguistic books pursues and addresses the following: first, stylisticians seek firm undeniable evidences to account for the sum of intuitive impressions attributed to literary works. In other words, they put the burden of understanding on the addressee’s shoulder after which they would explain the text by employing a technical language; second, stylisticians supplement literary works with modern analyses by using linguistic concepts and clues, that is to say, they look into the texts with an of expert’s eye in order to investigate whatever is hidden from the eyes of ordinary readers. Presumably, investigating these aspects of significance eventuates in the recognition of points by which text interpretation undergoes and evolution; third, generally, stylisticians seeks to determine literary meaning and its creation methods. It also deliberates affirmation of points which play an important role in literary works’ impression and effect. (Fowler et al., 2010)

2.5 Underlexicalization
Everything mentioned above was to state the problem of underlexicalization in an inevitable close relation with linguistics and literary criticism on one hand, and stylistics on the other hand. In this part of the current research the authors have opted to illustrate underlexicalization, and introduce this issue as a means for literary foregrounding.

Underlexicalization considers a technical aspect of language in a critical literary analysis. As there have been no specific studies done on underlexicalization, the authors would mainly rely on Roger Fowler who states the significance of underlexicalization. Wales (1989) believes that underlexicalization is one of the innovations of Roger Fowler referring to the lack of sufficient vocabulary or lexis in the process of stating a specific concept.

Peter Barry speaks of underlexicalization by referring to those who lack sufficient vocabulary or those who will refer to an unknown concept as thing or stuff. Moreover, the speaker may forget something’s name and attempt to use a descriptive phrase as an alternative for it, like that thing which one can get. These are some examples of underlexicalization each of which are somehow different from each other. Meanwhile, stories which address children include children language which in turn is a representation of underlexicalization. (Fowler et al., 2010)

Fowler himself has mentioned some cases and aspects of underlexicalization in the introduction to William Falkner’s Sound and Fury. He has published these samples in a journal series called Articles on Style and Language. Peter Barry has commented that what we discover from Fowler is that the author has employed this linguistic aspect to disturb the readers’ minds, and that this sort of language plays an important role since it is crystal clear that such disturbance in expression reflects
a disturbed mind and mentality, and that the author can display it by disturbing different language features. Whenever a character uses words which are representative of underlexicalization in order to address his surroundings, we come to understand that their language suffers serious lack, and this stands for a linguistic clue and evidence. (Fowler & et al., 2010)

3. Discussion
Zoya Pirzad is a contemporary Iranian novelist and short story writer, whose mother was Armenian and her father was a Muslim from Russia. She went to school in Abadan City and her childhood was spent in the 1960’s. She wrote mostly the life experiences and traditions of Armenians living in Iran. On the content of her works, Mirabedini (2007) comments that in most of her works Zoya Pirzad has considered the bad fortune of women and how that is repeated in each generation. Later on, Zoya Pirzad went to Teheran and got married. She gave birth to two sons whom she named Sasha and Shervin. Currently she lives in Germany. Before she began writing short stories, she had translated several literary works. Zoya Pirzad is among those authors who have flourished in novel writing in the last two decades. She has illustrated the real social position of women in the contemporary society of Iran. Zoya Pirzad’s novel, We Will Get Used to It (2004), is 226 pages and has been published for over 27 times. In this novel:

Arezu, a 41-year-old divorcée, begins running the real estate agency that once belonged to her father. In Iran, such work is dominated by men. Outside the office, Arezu struggles to satisfy her mother and daughter, shallow characters preoccupied with shopping and entertainment. Her one comfort is Shirin, a friend and colleague at the agency. Both women are independent and wary of men. But then Arezu falls in love with a client, over the objections of her mother, daughter and even Shirin. Arezu is emblematic of middle-aged women in Iran, caught between tradition and modernity. She has rejected prejudices against a woman working in what is seen as a man's job, and left her husband. But her weaknesses become apparent when she yields to society's bias against a middle-aged woman's remarriage; she believes she has no choice but to continue caring for her daughter. (http://www.nytimes.com/2005/06/29/books/women-writing-novels-emerge-as-stars-in-iran.html?_r=0)

Underlexicalization is explicitly utilized in We Will Get Used to It. Zoya Pirzad Has made use of this technique for twenty six times in the novel. She has used this technique as means to foreground her subject matter. This discussion attempts to display Zoya Pirzad’s use of underlexicalization in the novel. The first instance of such usage is related to a man called Naeem, who is a pantry man in a Real-estate agency called Arezu Sarem:

There were two knocks on the door and there came Naeem with a tray in his hand and a flyer under his arm. He held the glass of water in front of Arezu’s face and put the flyer on the table. It is sent from double faced glass manufacturing company. They said we should send it to …” Arezu drank the water and shook her head to say that she already knew that. She was also looking at Shirin over the glass who was trying not to burst into laughing. The door remained half closed and Arezu grabbed the phone. “I should finish it right now or we will have no comfort hanging with Mahmunir and her double layered spy”. (Pirzad, 2013, pp. 11-12)

In this part of the novel, the author is seeking a special purpose as she has substituted the phrase double layered with double faced. The careful reader who is aware of this function realizes that the author is trying to depict Naeem, a clerk in Arezu Sarem, as a spy working for Mahmunir,
Arezu’s mother. Here, the underlexicalization is considered an instance of foregrounding as deviation from the norm.

The second and the third instances of underlexicalization also involve Naeem, and that is when Arezu wants to send Naeem on a couple of errands: to take Mahmunir’s clothes from the laundry and to purchase some nuts:

Naeem came in. He was looking for Mahmunir’s clothes for laundory, he was holding the laundry bill. “Do I really have to make the purchases for Thursday’s ceremony from now?!?” Arezu stared at him for a while, “laundry not laundory, and as for the purchases I will let you know later. Close the door well as you leave.”

Naeem went toward the door, “I knew it, and I should go to Tavazon [balance] to buy the nuts in this … traffic. When the door closed Shirin Burst out and started laughing. She wondered, “Why should your mother always purchase her needs from Tavazo‘ [modesty] Store?” (Pirzad, 2013, pp. 11-12) (Brackets added by the authors)

Using the word laundory instead of laundry and substituting Tavazon for Tavazo‘ are examples of underlexicalization. According to Leech, these samples are a kind of deviation from routine or ordinary language and do foreground the subject matter. In fact, these samples are purposeful and place the burden of comprehending the text on the readers themselves, and there is no need for the author to intervene for such stylistic deviations from the norms of language. The current research approves of Leech’s words and the style is such that lexis is used in such a manner to foreground and highlight a significant difference in meaning through sentence structure.

Deviation from the norm reveals several concepts. First, it introduces Naeem as a pantry man and states that one should not expect him to utter all his words correctly. Second, this technique introduces Naeem as an illiterate person, and that in Arezu’s thinking he still willingly plays the role of a double layered/faced spy to fulfil the wishes and orders of Mahmunir. Moreover, Naeem is loyally devoted to Mahmunir and not Arezu. Another point lying low in the plot is Naeem’s dissatisfaction with his job and his desire to cut loose, although that is close to impossible, and he cannot quit his job. However, the readers of the current research may not all be in the same pool of though, because when a text is purposeful, comprehension is totally up to the each and every reader.

Another instance of underlexicalization is seen in the incorrect determination of the words Ba Pa [footed or on foot, that is, slow] and Baad Pa [light footed or express]. This example is seen in two parts of the story:

Tahmine dropped her head down and looked at the floor as Naeem opened the back door of the agency. The lady called and ordered some fruits. So he went out and bought some. “There is a package delivered with your name on it. I put it on the table. I don’t know who has sent it. The Ba Pa delivery guy brought it.”

Shirin asked, “What delivery guy, was it?”

Arezu corrected and said, “The Baad Pa delivery guy.” (Pirzad, 2013, pp. 11-12)

The second instance:

Shirin looked over her desk and said, “Hi dear,” and pointed to Arezu’s table. “It has come with Ba Pa delivery.” (Pirzad, 2013, pp. 11-12)

In this section of the novel we see that the phrase Ba Pa is delivered to Arezu once by Naeem and once by Shirin. Such style is applied to introduce the text as a dynamic whole in which everyday readers are involved. In this part we are witnessing the utterances of the speaker (author) who has orientated the text. In order to foreground the subject matter, the Zoya Pirzad has created a
society for herself in order to be able to contact people. This very underlexicalized verbal contact and communication exposes us to such terms and phrases that invite and drive us as readers to self-reflection.

There are several instances of underlexicalization all over the book, like the use of the word **Azhu**, as a term of endearment and spoiling or even belittling, instead of the correct form of the first name **Arezu**:

- A sturdy woman put the plate of nuts on the table and said, “Very good, how is my dear **Azhu**? Come and sit right next to me …” (Pirzad, 2013, p. 34)
- Shirin stared at the clay bowl, all over which the sun was carved, and said, “Those days, Naeem was alive. I and your mother were still dressed in black. She looked at **Arezu** and said, “Missy **Azhu** was ten kilograms lighter than what she is now.” (Pirzad, 2013, p. 68).
- Aayeh held the telephone away on her shoulder and quietly asked, “why?! Did you steal something or did you kill somebody?” Then she turned toward the wall and murmured, “Missy **Azhu** is invited to Mr. Zarju’s over dinner.” (Pirzad, 2013, p. 137)
- Aayeh tied her hair on the back of her head and pointed to **Arezu** as she was slowly speaking, “Dear **Azhu**! Stop kidding around.” (Pirzad, 2013, p. 128).
- … the parrot was a gift from Naeem and Nosrat at one of **Arezu**’s birthdays. They had taught it to say **Arezu**, but even until the last day when it flew away through the open doors of its cage, it used to say **Azhu** instead of **Arezu**. (Pirzad, 2013, p. 213)

In this part of the current research, the authors should first note that literature has a subjective and abstract nature and significance. In other words, whatever is used in the structure of literature is actually a creation of an author’s mind. However, the current authors are not attempting to determine the truth or falsity of the Zoya Pirzad’s thinking, in fact, they are trying explore and demonstrate the her intentions in writing and the goals that she has aimed for.

In the above five examples, one can see that the self-indulgent term **Azhu** is repeatedly applied instead of its correct mature form, **Arezu**. Zoya Pirzad may have a special intention in using this technique, as it is understandable from the last example. In fact, she states that we are living in a society whose people are the ignorant followers of traditions who are never capable of innovation, so the last time the so-called term **Azhu** is being pronounced or written mistakenly, she speaks about a parrot which used to say **Azhu** instead of **Arezu**. Although these lines are narrated last, but in actual terms of time and action, they have happened earlier than the other four examples. These are some challenges to which the author invites the readers.

The following sample of underlexicalization is considered different than other samples:

- The lady had ordered that the wall should be built next to the boxtree, but that stupid ghoul said that the engineer had insisted that the wall should be built next to the water faucet. The mean man didn’t listen to the lady even after she had shouted at him more than once. I am afraid he has laid the wall up here (pointing to his knees). (Pirzad, 2013, p. 56)

In this part of the novel, Zoya Pirzad attempts a more common language just as she mentions his knees in order to show the height of the wall. Such pointing and reference is mostly colloquial and is found in spoken language. The truth is that the author should use underlexicalization to foreground the fact that the readers deal with a dynamic story and course of events in which they play no part other than closely observing the characters’ actions and behavior in a three dimensional context and setting. These seemingly detached readers have to analyze the story on their own.

Another sample presented by Zoya Pirzad is as follow:
When Shirin bought her Peugeot, Aayeh gave the dog to Shirin as a gift, and started behaving and talking like children. “Cute little puppy you take care of your gorgeous aunt.” (Pirzad, 2013, p. 73)

Here, Child talk and such a tone is characteristic of underlexicalization as a deliberate and carefully planned technique. The author has also made use of the word thing in order to refer to the main subject:

Arezu responded to Naeem, who was about to come in while whispering to himself: “A package …, the day before yesterday …, that thing …;” by saying “Yes I noticed that, thank you, the water, please.” (Pirzad, 2013, p. 92).

Later in the novel, Zoya Pirzad has taken into account some other underlexicalization samples:

Mahmunir had held Aayeh’s hands and Aayeh was still screaming while standing up the chair. Suddenly Arezu came out from under the table and told them: “Don’t be scared, please don’t be scared, Shirin is wrong. It is a thing, that thing.” “What was it Shirin?” Then she burst out laughing. After that Shirin came out from under the table and stood there and was apologizing for mistaking Arezu’s’ shoes for a mouse.” (Pirzad, 2013, p. 121)

Underlexicalization is represented and applied at those moments when the characters lack the right and proper words to represent their ideas and meaning and actually cannot place or remember any word, and try to define them using the word thing, the effect of which is to both reflect and effect a disturbed frame of mind in both the character and reader, respectively.

Here are the rest of the examples. Now their understanding and analysis should serve to exercise the minds of the readers.

... I bought a size by size refrigerator for my daughter’s dowry. I also bought a flat screen TV, and a Macroveen. I bought all of them from Dubai. They were supposed to get married early this month.  
Arezu took back her purse from Naeem, went to the office, closed the door and turned to Shirin. “Good morning! Don’t you need a size by size refrigerator or a Macroveen?” (Pirzad, 2013, p. 107).

Some other examples:

The crunching sound of the sizzled rice started, lasted, and finished, then Aayeh said, “I told you for such and so many times that Tahmineh is not my friend. She is some years older than me.” (Pirzad, 2013, p. 181)

Mahmunir released the gold chain that had stuck to her blouse button. “Leave it honey. Didn’t you recognize your mother? Now my daughter has become Dr. … What was the name of that lady doctor in The Village Doctor TV show?”
Naeem turned his head from the dishwasher. “Dr. Miker.”
Nosrat picked the dishes from the floor and stared at Naeem. Dr. Michael. (Pirzad, 2013, p. 119)
As Arezu was holding the teapot in one hand and the tea filter in the other hand, she pressed her lips against each other, and as she recalled mother reminding everything a hundred times, she recalled what Aayeh used to say. “Azu! Missy! Don’t repeat one thing for I don’t know what times.” (Pirzad, 2013, p. 134)
Aayeh said, “Marjan and her mother were committing suicide. They have taken a wedding coordinator [instead of the Persian phrase below].” Mahmunir asked, “What have they taken?” Aayeh answered, “I mean …,” and she looked at Shirin and Arezu. Arezu who was sitting at the dining table stood up. “Bargozar konandeye Aroosi [instead of the above English phrase].” Aayeh went on by saying, “It is Mr. … I can’t recall his name. He arranges all sorts of ceremonies. Weddings, birthdays, and funerals.” (Pirzad, 2013, p. 214) (Brackets added by the authors)

Marjan told me the name of the dishes which I couldn’t bear in mind. They must have been the same regular dishes. She started the list with what Naeem used to call nazilia, that is, lasagna, to sweet rice, rice and beans, and a whole roasted lamb with parsley in the mouth.” (Pirzad, 2013, p. 216)

Mahmunir kissed Aayeh. “You’re my darling beauty! We will wash up right now and then get dressed, and then I will take you on an outing.” (Pirzad, 2013, p. 244)

Mahmunir was stultified as she was standing by the doorsteps. “Shut up? Don’t insult my loved ones. Your father …, she pulled at the necklace. Your father married into my family. If he was a real estate agent …, she pulled at the necklace. If he was a real estate agent …, she pulled at the necklace, I …, she pulled at the necklace. I …, the necklace chain broke. (Pirzad, 2013, p. 248)

As she was leaving, Shirin asked, “How is it that Arezu hasn’t come along? She said, “It is no longer the time to be together.” She straightened herself and rubbed the armchairs’ handles. “What she meant and buried by those words I could not figure out.” (Pirzad, 2013, p. 256) [Authors’ note: Ma’na and Madfoon is used instead of Ma’na and Mafhoom; ma’na is meaning, madfoon is buried, and mafhoom is the gist]

4. Conclusion

Underlexicalization is among those tools that cause verbal communication to undergo conflict and complexity to such an extent that the reader would be compelled to struggle in order to discover the relations and ties the author has employed in the texture of their work. Such language use is undoubtedly conducive to literary foregrounding. Underlexicalization popularized by Roger Fowler is an element that also relates to linguistics by referring to linguistic features and functions bearing upon terminology, scientific studies, and structures in language. This linguistic factor is closely related to literary criticism as well.

Underlexicalization studies a technical aspect of language in a critical interpretation of literature. The employment of underlexicalization is quite evident in the novel, We Will Get Used to It, as Zoya Pirzad has applied this technique twenty six times in the novel. Undoubtedly, the intention of the novelist through the application of this technique is the introduction of some deviation from linguistic norms aiming at foregrounding. In fact, such foregrounding is according to Leech intentional or purposive, for it compels the reader to diagnose or recognize meaning in the absence of the author thus projecting the stylistic deviation from the norm.

For a better reflection of foregrounding and objectification, Zoya Pirzad creates a society in her text wherein individuals can communicate. Such an act of communication foregrounds such lexis that compels us as readers to think, and underlexicalization is one such linguistic concept and function. The authors of the current research do not intend to prove the novelist as being right and/or wrong in her thinking. The main objective of this research is to partly clarify the intentions and aims behind the novelist’s act of writing, as in foregrounding where the function of literary genres is the main focus of interest. Such an approach makes it clear that underlexicalization is an instance of stylistic deviation from the norm.
Zoya Pirzad’s main aim in such mode of composition and expression is nothing but the foregrounding of the literary text in order to incite the reader to think of the text at disposal as a living, dynamic entity and setting wherein the reader can be present and closely witness all the actions of the characters without taking part in the actual current of the three-dimensional events in the plot. The audience as addressee or reader assumes the role of an analyst without being involved in the course of events. The use of such a lexical technique or approach serves best to puzzle or upset the reader, so that the lexical representation and integration of an imprecise and confused language in the form of underlexicalization leads to the kind of revelation intended by Zoya Pirzad as the novelist.
References


Pirzad, Z. (2013). *We will get used to it*. Tehran: Markaz Publication.


