



## NEVER LET ME GO: UNDERSTANDING THE LANGUAGE USED

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### Abstract

**Purpose of the study:** The study aims at analysing Never Let Me Go in terms of the language used in his novel by Nobel prize winner, Kazuo Ishiguro, a Japanese writer. The language used in the novel which is a science fiction novel, with the futuristic vision which is quite difficult to understand in one reading, and hence this paper can create interest and inquisitiveness in the reader.

**Methodology:** For the literary analysis of the words in the study, Motifs and Symbolism are used as a technique to analyse the words and language used in Never Let Me Go. Literary analysis of chosen words and language is used as a research method in the novel.

**Main Findings:** It is indicated in this study that the novel is narrated in first person singular form. Kathy's voice in Never Let Me Go seems consistent. A reader feels a clear sense of Kathy's character through her discipline of speaking.

**Applications of this study:** It is shown in this study of Never Let Me Go in terms of the language used, can be useful to the students studying in graduates/post graduates of Literature studies. The in-depth analysis of the language, words, etc used in the novel makes it interesting to the students.

**Novelty/Originality of this study:** The language using style in Never Let Me Go is realistic and reflects on the period of the novel set i.e., the 1990s and colloquial language used by the author. Certain words like a euphemism, possible, donor, carer, unzipping, gifted, othering used by the narrator has an inner meaning which is being analysed in this paper. This could help the reader to understand the narration and take pleasure in reading the novel.

**Keywords:** *Euphemism, Possible, Donor, Carer, Unzipping, Gifted, Othering, Colloquial.*

### INTRODUCTION

[McKay et al. \(1995\)](#) rightly expressed that a language is a verbal form of communication that is used to communicate one's observations, thoughts, feelings, needs, describe things, society, and ideas to inform, persuade and entertain others. Ishiguro's novel Never Let Me Go (NLMG) a scientific narration inspired several readings and explanations by readers as it induces critical imagination on one hand and the other hand confuses the reader to think straight and conclude on the meaning of the narrative. His novel is seen as a brilliant, dystopian novel with a futuristic time zone with an element of interest for the future of humankind. [Gabriele \(2009\)](#) reasons that NLMG does not use elaborate scientific language but uses ordinary and simple language is 'made strange'; words and phrases like 'carer' 'donor' 'donation' etc.

The language used in the novel NLMG does not reveal the underlying meaning of the words in the first reading, but the specific words depict the opposite of reality and truth of clones and their lives. Throughout the novel, while reading it the reader has to guess the original meaning behind the non-scientific words used which makes it interesting for the reader to read between the lines and look at the author's perception and creative beauty of the words used. The use of simple words instead of scientific words when referring to the clones and their lives are evident to the reader and also establish the fact that Kathy the narrator who is also not aware of the truth of clones and is left with the knowledge gained while at Hailsham as a student. This creates suspense in the reader's mind on why Kathy as a narrator does not know the truth till the end.

[Iser \(2005\)](#) in his book "How to do Theory" referred to reception aesthetics and said reading is performance. He says that performance is done as the author designates it. A word is segregated to find out the meaning of the dialogue. Hence the reader in a situation where he is constantly engaging himself in getting the meaning and rebuilding the incidents in the narration. It is similar to connecting stars in the night sky. The beginning of the narration or literary work are fixed and the lines joining them are variables.

The study focuses on the narrative forms in Never Let Me Go in which the first-person narrative developing the perspective of cloning. This was actually represented by Kathy, an active narrator disclosing the concept of clones supposed to be 'less than human' and treated like a duplicate. Through this indirectly emphasising humanity all through the novel. Through the analysis the language used in the narrative and the different words used to kindle the feelings, emotions, and the strategy used in bringing empathy with 'a form of life that eludes traditional sympathy'. Ishiguro through Kathy brings in the humanity concept in a very effective way with the help of clones. Kathy is very expressive using expressions with silence and through animal language like 'poor creatures'. They are referred to as poor creatures by their teachers at Hailsham and the student's artwork consists of animal drawings majorly. Tommy also is seen drawing creative animals drawings at the cottage when he is an adult.

Literature and media have reciprocal adaptive relations with each other. Literature is also can be conveyed with different channels as well as media. At present days, the most important thing is, literature can also be conveyed by using modern technological tools, drawings, sculptures sounds, and traditional way is through words. Language is the traditional and common career of literature. Language also can be seen as a soul of literature. In general, a language is a communication tool between humans and in a specific community. In the same way, literature is also to be treated as one of the communicative channels between writer and audience. Language also can be said as a medium of literature. [Sapir \(1921\)](#), [Gardiner \(1933\)](#), [Sweet \(1901\)](#), [Robins \(1964\)](#), [Chomsky \(1957\)](#), and other linguists defined language as associated with human feelings and expressions.

Language and literature are associated with each other. Language is the fundamental unit of literature and so that, literature cannot be created without language. In other words, language is primary and literature is secondary. People started to use sign language at an early stage during old times. The need for a common language for communication became inevitable amongst people and found specific words to convey their thoughts to others. Finally, sequence of words formulated in a sentence(s) with grammar rules. Different cultures and different religions produced different languages in the world. Human society succeeded language with sound for communication and then the art of writing came into existence. The writing of language with sound or without sound is preserved and such a preserved written property is recognized as literature.

In the present study, *Never Let Me Go* (NLMG) written by Kazuo Ishiguro with the theme of the human clone is discussed in terms of the language used by the author and its effects on readers/students.

The language used in the novel looks simple and ordinary to read. The students graduate and post-graduate need to focus on these words and to get the original meaning, need multiple readings. As a science fiction novel (NLMG), and with a futuristic vision is quite difficult to understand in one reading, and hence the paper can/will create interest and inquisitiveness in the reader. Thus, the objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To study and understand the language used in NLMG.
2. The in-depth analysis of the language, words, etc. used in the novel.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

[Laiche \(2018\)](#) in his research paper ‘The Importance of Never Let Me Go by Kazuo Ishiguro in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century’ spoke about the significance of the information that no one is immortal and knew that as clones they will also die one day. The narration of NLMG also depicted the innocent, simple, and unforgettable memories of their Hailsham days. Hailsham is pictured as a very protected, lively with cheerful clones and innocent childhood. Kathy as a narrator expresses the childhood experience at Hailsham along with the other clone students who also are glad to express their feelings. The school management had to handle the clones with extra care to see that they have an innocent childhood without any worries. [Dawes \(2009\)](#), in his research paper, ‘Human Rights in Literary Studies’ said it is difficult to convert pain into language is to have control over it and to reveal the originality of the pain inflicted. Dawes referred to Kathy’s expression of pain as a clone that she underwent after the truth of their life (organ donors) is revealed but with the truth suppressed in their childhood. The narrator through Kathy can control and navigate the story through the reader’s eye in the society. This mechanism works as a powerful tool as Kathy can reveal her inner emotions and the reader is empathetic on her experiences, realises the fact of who is human and who is not in the dystopian society. The reader concludes the concept of clones and the inhumanness behind them. Similarly [Gabriele \(2009\)](#) in his paper ‘Science and the Cultural Imaginary: The Case of Kazuo Ishiguro’s Never Let Me Go’, said that the language used in NLMG was not of scientific language but instead a normal, colloquial language used strangely with words like ‘carer’, ‘donor’, ‘fourth donation’, ‘complete’, ‘deferral program’ and words like carer and donor frequently used in the narration by Kathy. Griffin concluded the words used in the novel as normal but with strangeness implied to it.

[Whitehead \(2011\)](#), through his paper ‘Writing with Care: Kazuo Ishiguro’s ‘Never Let Me Go’” referred to ‘caring’ similar to that of labour that had value in the society as the protagonist Kathy made a significant and constructive difference to others (averting ‘agitation’) giving dogmatic vibration to Ishiguro’s language, referring to preventing confrontation, discontentment, acquittance due to endless incidents and less rewarding due to inevitable organ donations. When carers are taken into consideration, the society surrounding them at Hailsham were aware that they could not change the future of these clones but could only keep them occupied so that they could finally get ready to become donors themselves willingly. A donor is a clone in the novel who gets ready consciously to donate organs knowingly well that they will be complete (die) soon. They get prepared for their last phase of the journey in life who may not have any experience of a carer. They reconcile with what is told to them by society not questioning anyone as to why they were made donors/carers. They get injected with minimal information since childhood about their later becoming donors or carers by the time they become adults. [Pandey \(2011\)](#) in her research paper ‘Cloning Words’: Euphemism, Neologism, and Dysphemism as Literary Devices in Kazuo Ishiguro’s Never Let Me Go’ that the ironic and the underlying meaning of the words in the narration is made clear slowly through the growth of the clone as organ donation was supposed to be a voluntary and not pressurised to do so. Eventually, it is the harvesting of organs that takes place and not exactly donation as the clones perceive. According to [de Villiers & Slabbert \(2011\)](#) in his study ‘Never Let Me Go: Science Fiction and Legal Reality’ referred to their upbringing in Hailsham where the clones get injected with

information slowly little by little and they are made to accept the reality that their only purpose of existence was for organ donations which would take them to death or 'complete'. When they get to know the reality after Hailsham's schooling, the clones find it difficult to understand the concept but later they reconcile to the situation. They realise that they had been manipulated since childhood by not revealing their true reason for existence but are unknowing kept in dark so that they could be kept innocent. Later when they are adults they are informed about their true nature of existence.

On the other hand, [McDonald \(2007\)](#) observes that NLMG depicts the opposite of powerful speaker in his research paper "Days of Past Futures: Kazuo Ishiguro's Never Let Me Go as Speculative Memoir" and says the children in the novel are depicted as 'special' and 'gifted' by their guardians and Keith refers to the ultimate 'completion' as their murders which is a loud reminder to the society. Keith also concluded that the usage of language in controlling cruelty is very evident in the novel. [Carroll \(2010\)](#) argued in his research paper "Imitations of Life: Cloning, Heterosexuality and the Human in Kazuo Ishiguro's Never Let Me Go" on Kathy's perception of the donor. As a 'Carer' she had settled well and known to take care of 'donors' and lead them to death without them facing any kind of restraint. The irony was she was appreciated was doing that. Kathy's behaviour was the opposite of what society would not expect "mass production of human clones in the service of therapeutic medical technology has become normalised". [Snaza \(2015\)](#) referred to the term 'donor' as an understatement word that could be used instead such as 'subject' or 'condemned' but the author chose not to do so. He suggests that the readers are not aware of what normal people call donors otherwise in other human societies. Snaza also interprets another meaning to the word 'donor' which is just the opposite of the first one. Clones as donors do not willingly donate their organs as they are taken forcefully without giving any choice. So naming it as 'donation' is the heartless way of abusing them. This thought is strengthened by the final donation where the 'donor' gives all organs without bothering about themselves and this concept is called 'completing'.

[Wang \(2016\)](#) in her study "The Inconsistencies of Memory" elicited that the protagonist 'Kathy' on some occasions could not remember the exact words spoken but could remember the occasion. Kathy herself declared that she could not remember the exact words that were spoken to Ruth on a special occasion but could feel it. The author argues that these inconsistencies of feeling and thoughts are the nature of 'normal' humans. However, she is of a different opinion and says that her donors to whom she was associated, complained about fading memories and Kathy expresses her surprise. She opined that she remembers those incidents that she wanted to remember and would never forget. Nina concludes that these inconsistencies of memories are proof of Kathy's humanness and its ability to change. [Vichiensing \(2017\)](#), examined the concept of 'othering' in a research paper titled "The Othering in Kazuo Ishiguro's Never Let Me Go" and went back to the post-colonial theories. He said in NLMG, other than the concept 'othering' the author described the beautiful side of love, friendship, sacrifice, and memory and its impact on the clones' lives. People perceive that clones are not human, with no freedom and emotions however, the author depicts that their artwork had souls in them as a result of their relationships and emotions showcasing theirs as humanness. Matave has focused on the concept of the othering process in NLMG to raise awareness of the consequences of othering. [Yu-min \(2017\)](#), researched Life in Kazuo Ishiguro's Never Let Me Go and examined two words 'normals and clones' and their true meaning of being human beings and their lives in the perspective of Jacques Derrida's concept of deconstruction. He argued that Ishiguro misrepresented the true essence of life and death to his readers in the perspective of clones and representing it back in a more realistic sense later through the reading. According to the nature-culture structurality concept, Kathy as a clone comes as the center into which the other clones in the story act as freeplay in the real world. On the other hand, normals are in the center and the clones act as Freeplay due to the structurality of power in the institutes with Miss Emily's rule is the Freeplay of authorship. Again the author of the NLMG acts as a centre and the novel the Freeplay. [Boschetti \(2017\)](#) explained in her research "Memories in Kazuo Ishiguro's Never Let Me Go: A Clone's Humanity" the role played by memory in the novel. Francesca tries to demonstrate the process of remembering to bring in an element of humanity expressed by Kathy as a clone. This allowed her to take stalk of her life before she could start her first organ donation. This researcher analysed the meaning of life of a clone as a 'carer' and 'donor' and the impact of memory to hide from the pain and emptiness in their lives. The clones seem human due to their feelings, emotions, and their memories like that of humans. Kathy due to her experiences and her memories keeps her humanness till the end. [Taketomi \(2018\)](#) in his research paper "Reading Never Let Me Go from the Mujo Perspective of Buddhism" analyses the imagination of children playing in Ishiguro's novel, with a special focus on NLMG. The imaginative play, actions, and enacting role that they could imagine to avoid the miseries and facing them. The role of children in the novel along with the guardians and Madam helps the readers to look at a different perspective such as the Mujo view of Buddhism. The shades of death were alluring heavily on the readers reminding the nature of life. [Yan-ling \(2021\)](#) through his study in "Traumatic Memories in Kazuo Ishiguro's Never Let Me Go" argued that Kathy the protagonist and narrator in NLMG expresses her perceptions from her memories of the other clones and their trauma. She is in the centre of all incidents and knows all her friends' trauma and experiences her own and expresses the cultural trauma of the clones in her words. The reality clones lives are revealed in Kathy's words to the readers to create interest all through the narration.

## METHODOLOGY

The present study examines words and phrases, layers of meaning, inner-depth of the word, literary techniques, and how the language kindles the feeling, emotions of the reader regarding Never Let Me Go. For the literary analysis of the

words in the study, Motifs and Symbolism are used as a technique to analyse the words and language used in *Never Let Me Go*. Literary analysis of chosen words and language is used as a research method for this study.

## ANALYSIS/DISCUSSION

The novel is set during the 1990s with a first-person narrator named Kathy, a female protagonist. The textual language used in the novel fits with Kathy's style to speak. Language usage in any form of literature is an important section. Kathy, as a first-person narrator of her life's events, makes readers involved in the novel. Kathy uses common words to express her feelings but it is also observed during the study of the novel that Kathy makes some literary references to fictions, which reflect on the reality of her educational career at Hailsham. She expresses as:

*"I was lying on a piece of old tarpauling reading, as I say, Deniel Deronda, when Ruth came wandering over and set down beside me."* (Ishiguro, 2005, p.94)

Kathy's narration is quite interesting in terms of the language used by her. One of the aspects of language used by Kathy seems like a fertile soil which enables to grow seed on becoming a flower. It means the language acceptance level is quite good in the novel. The characters including Kathy seem very polite in terms of using language in their talks which reflects on none of them can rebel against their forthcoming roles and duties as donors. They all know that they are middle-aged and their lives will finish in the same way. Kathy's pain becomes a powerful tool through language in the novel. She believes that her position as a donor is nothing but a gift from society to her. Dawes (2009) reflects on transforming pain into language as:

*"To transform pain into language is to exert control over it, to undo pain's original theft of autonomy."* (Dawes, 2009, p. 408)

Kathy's language as a narrator takes control over the issue of how the reader understands the society and interprets Kathy's character as a donor. It is also observed that the simple words used by the author had different connotations to them from within. From the outer world, Hailsham school looked simple to the external world. But the life of clones in the boarding school is not normal like others outside the boarding school and non-donors in the society. Gabriele Griffin comments on the language used in the novel as:

*"In Never Let Me Go, there is, seemingly – no import of scientific language. Instead ordinary or everyday language is 'made strange' ....."* (Gabriele, 2009, p. 645)

The novel represents vocabulary such as "donor", "carer", "fourth donation", "her own kind" with repetition through characters' speech to establish a closed world by a female protagonist. In this way, the language used by the author is not only simple but the use of scientific vocabulary is avoided to use as can be seen in other science fictions. The vocabulary used in the novel also creates an impression of something happening wrong in the human society from the initial pages of the novel by the reasons of keeping away scientific words in narratives. This makes the reader comfortable to understand the novel and its use in academics. Kathy's level of education also reflects on her language as a narrator. The use of everyday words makes the reader informed that clones especially at Hailsham have not a real understanding of how Kathy and her co- donors came to be beyond the reality that was created to die for saving the lives of others.

Kathy and her companions get an opportunity to select the next step on being or not a donor or a carer after completing Hailsham's life. The role of carer is similar to the donor but a carer is also a clone but chooses to wait to be a donor. A carer has to visit donors and constitute good bonding with donors Anne Whitehead argues on the meaning of carer as:

*"Is caring viewed in this light, a form of labor that is socially valuable because Kathy is making a positive difference to others (preventing agitation), or given the political resonances of Ishiguro's choice of word here – is it a means of preventing resistance and unrest, securing passive compliance through endless, exhausting activity and minor compensation?"* (Whitehead, 2011, p. 61)

Carers' visiting to donors in the society does not have fruitful results in terms of help to donors but simply a way for society to keep carers occupied till they become donors. Donors' role to donate organs and they have no option. They are well-trained towards their role in society. Anjali Pandey argues as:

*"The ironic and antonymic meaning of the word in the novel is soon made apparent."* (Pandey, 2011, p. 388)

The word "donation" does not reflect on the forceful or coerced act but reflects on voluntarily commitment. Kazuo Ishiguro crafts the novel by only using words or phrases but reflects on multiple meanings. From the time, Kathy and her companions so-called students in the novel but become carers or donors after completing themselves. They are brought up very close to society. Kathy's feeling on the society is commented by Griffin as:

*"Her measured account suggests normalcy, the everydayness of what she describes."* (Gabriele, 2009, p. 351)

Kathy's narrations on society create particular strangeness in the world where she lives in. She is unsure about evaluating societal values in her world to which she belongs during the journey of becoming a carer or donor. The clones are ornamented with the words like; student, carer, donor in the novel. Kathy and her companions keep saving the life of



people in the society by completing themselves is the essence of their human nature during their duties as carer or donor. They remain ignorant and do not react to the reality behind their organs.

Kazuo Ishiguro pods readers to view organic sense in which specific terminology of fiction is used in the novel. The language used by the author also reflects on questions raised on having a soul to clones. The term “reality” on having a soul in clones in the novel is differently reflected in the novel. If the clones have no soul, they should be treated as a normal human and make free to live as a normal human. If there is no soul in the clone, there should not be any discrimination between normal humans and clones. It is a bare fact that society treats clones as inferior to humans. Kathy’s statement on Gallery’s importance and their future donations are reciprocally associated with each other. It is such as:

*“...about how one day we will start giving donations. I don’t know, why but I have had this feeling for some time now, that it’s all linked in, though I cannot figure out how.” (Ishiguro, 2005, p31)*

The power of words can be seen in the novel. The language allows atrocities to continue. It also permits society to believe that everything is alright and nothing is to be changed. The clones compel to believe that nothing can be changed and their path of life is true. There is no other way to carry on their lives till their completion. Griffin comments as:

*“At the heart of Never Let Me Go is the question of the relative status of the clones and of it means to be human.” (Griffin, 2009, p. 653)*

Kazuo Ishiguro uses some words in the novel are seem very indicative. The word “possible” is used by the donors as a noun. Ruth is clear with the word “possible” that she has seen her “possible” in a magazine advertisement. It is also studied that many times Kathy uses capitalized words as a narrator. The reason behind it that exchanges happen four times during a year and In fact, the students see forward to themselves indicates their hungriness of being something with excitement. The word” unzipping” used by the author in the novel seems for a particular meaning. The word “unzipping” makes the donation process manageable in the eyes of the students in Hailsham School in sense of a joke.

Kathy’s narration seems as building a sense of despairing which also gives chance to readers for brainstorming on the language used by the author. The narration is quoted as follows:

*“I tried to run to him, but the mud sucked my feet down. The mud was impending him, too, because one time when he clicked out, he slipped and fell out of view into the blackness.” (Ishiguro, 2005, p. 212)*

The words used such as: “mud”, “kicked”, “out of view”, “sucked “,” down, “fell”, “tried”,” impending”,” time”,” blackness” are creating a sense of despair.

In the novel, the word “complete” is also used by the author in sense of not end of donation or also can be said as the death of the donor. Such usage of a word can be interpreted as a euphemism. It means the author avoided using offensive or unpleasant word(s) for the death of the donors.

Another narration used by the narrator on the theme of exchangeable words is quoted and interpreted in the following manner.

*“You poor creatures “she repeated, almost in a whisper. Then she turned and went back into her house.”(Ishiguro, 2005, p. 210)*

The words phrase “you poor creatures” used by the author through the narrator in the novel is not in sense of sociological of financial poverty but Madame believes the two persons as inhuman. The word “creatures” is exchangeable with “animal” or “human being”. Madame uses such a word phrase to betray her deep discomfort with clones. The word “guardian or guardians “used by the author implies safety but also indicates restraint. The word “feeling” used by the author through the narrator is also very significant in terms of naming negative emotions. Kathy narrates on Tommy as:

*“I used to be able to do it twice in a row easy. But I can’t any more Than that feeling come right to the fore and I had have to put my hand over his mouth. Whenever he said, things like that,, just so we could go on lying there peace. I’m sure Tommy felt it too, because we had always hold each other very tight after times like that, as though that way we’d manage to keep the feeling away.” (Ishiguro, 2005, p.184)*

Kathy uses such word(s) during her narratives as the protagonist in sense of “emotions” but she refers to “that” feeling or “the” feeling instead of labeling the feeling in a particular frame.

The words used by Kathy H as narrator such as: “I’d (Ishiguro, 2005, p. 355) “, I’m”, (Ishiguro, 2005, p. 187), and we’d (Ishiguro, 2005, p. 230) seem as well dominated to other characters as a narrator. Such type of first-person narratives is used 763 times in the novel (Zafar et al., 2019, p. 91). The author also used joint words to evaluate an alternative style of writing. The joint words are such as: some response”,”fromtrash”, “feltI”. The term “Miss” is used for Hailsham guardians in the novel. “Miss” seems prominent in the novel on its usage before the name of guardians or teachers. As for example; Miss “Emily” (head of Hailsham), Miss” Lucy.” These words indicate rosy and ugly sides too.

## CONCLUSION

The language used by the first-person narrator reflects on the themes of the novel in such a way that would create a specific image of readers. Kathy and her companions use a combination of formal as well as informal language. Kazuo Ishiguro crafts the novel as more realistic through the language. The author also allows readers to perceive there is no discrimination between clones in a separate school and the human through various incidents. Kathy all through takes the readers with her perception of making them believe that there was no discrimination till the time they turned into donors for donation or being a carer and later to complete. The language used in the novel makes way for the readers to involve and connect with Kathy and go through her pain along with her explanation and perception all along with her narration. The readers empathize with her in her explanations. To conclude the language used by the author seems to be *colloquial language*.

## LIMITATION AND STUDY FORWARD

Out of the many novels of Ishiguro, this study focuses on *Never Let Me Go* (2005) which was recognised as the best novel. It was considered as the best science fiction novel written in a futuristic tone. The limitations of the study are; the simple words with inner depth in it, other forms of narration is not the focus of this study; the inner depth of the words are not understood by the reader in the first reading and the study only focuses on the analysis of the language. The further study can be focused on the other aspects of literary structure, the characters associated, literary criticism, etc.

## AUTHORS CONTRIBUTION

The co-author Dr. Aju Aravind has helped in getting the valuable resources from the library and online which helped in developing this research paper as per the quality of the journal. The co-author helped in conceiving the research gap and implementation of the research. He also helped in analysing the research concept and conclude the research.

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