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Zh. Oraztayeva[1], A. Bakitov[1]
[1]Al-Farabi National University, Almaty, 050000, Kazakhstan

FIVE PERSPECTIVES ON AGEISM: A PHILOLOGICAL EXPLORATION OF MODERN NARRATIVES

Ageism is a sociolinguistic phenomenon, which is capable of influencing both social attitudes and literary narratives, contributing to the formation of how age and aging are conceptualized. Although studies have investigated distinct ageist stereotypes, fewer have inspected the implicit lexical and narrative strategies that lead to or confront ageism in modern literature.
This study investigates the depiction of aging and youth in five 21st-century novels (Kazuo Ishiguro's Never Let Me Go*, Han Kang's* The Vegetarian*, Fredrik Backman's* A Man Called Ove*, Richard Powers'* The Overstory*, and Ocean Vuong's* On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous*) through an integrated close reading and corpus-based approach. The close reading detects recurring themes of self-discovery, societal norms, and transformation in the representation of youth. Additionally, the close reading analyses how aging is portrayed in relation to authority, wisdom and intergenerational dynamics. A corpus-analysis using AntConc, a corpus analysis tool, supports these qualitative findings by inspecting the frequency of age-related terms disclosing a largely positive discourse focused on wisdom, resilience, and social bonding rather than separation and deterioration.*
The results show that "old" exhibits the highest frequency, "elderly" appears infrequently, and "young" repeatedly linked to identity formation and self-discovery throughout the corpus, collectively challenging conventional representations of aging and old age in contemporary fiction.
Key words: ageism, aging, ageist language, 21st-century novels

MAIN PROVISIONS

This study analyzes the five 21-st novels (Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* [1], Han Kang's *The Vegetarian* [2], Fredrik Backman's *A Man Called Ove* [3], Richard Powers' *The Overstory* [4], and Ocean Vuong's *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous* [5]) in order to investigate the representation of ageism in modern literary discourse.

The close reading of five novels discloses repetitive themes in the depiction of youth and aging. Youth is often linked to self-discovery and social norms, whereas aging is connected to resilience and prudence. Some narratives oppose orthodox age prejudices, representing older characters as active and powerful. Corpus analysis suggests that *old* appears more frequently than *young* and *elderly*. However, the presence of *old* is often in neutral or non-age related contexts. *Young* is frequently applied in character descriptions, whereas *elderly* exists less often, predominantly as a descriptive modifier. These results emphasize shifting linguistic and narrative patterns in the portrayal of age in modern-day literature.

Ageism has been thoroughly studied through psychological and sociological frames. R.N. Butler [6, 243] introduced the term *"ageism"* to depict prejudice and discrimination based on age. Later, other scholars, such as T.D. Nelson [7, 4], have expanded the definition of ageism, emphasizing the multidimensionality of ageism with the various forms of social bias in literary output. Ageism exhibits through the description of older and younger characters in ways that that strengthen or confront normative assumptions. Analytical age studies further impact how narratives manifest aging as a process enriched with cultural interpretation in preference to a mere biological reality.

Philological study presents a valuable lens for analyzing age-related terms relying on the study of language in historical and literary contexts. The advent of lexical items, such as *"elderly" "aged"* and *"senior"* show how linguistic choices conduce to perceptions of ageing individuals. In addition to that, etymological analyses provide insights into the development of age-related concepts from the perspective of history, unveiling changes from respect to marginalization within particular cultural

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narratives. This philological approach sheds light on a nuanced understanding of how language forms and maintains ageist ideologies.

Sociolinguistics studies how language both shows and shapes societal standards, and attitudes toward age are no exception to this trend. The framing of age with the assistance of language can be found in lexical choices, discourse structures, and effective strategies. Research in this area has revealed that age-related language elements are not neutral descriptors but convey undertones shaped by cultural and social norms. Linguistic relativity indicates that the way societies frame age impacts on the way it is addressed and acknowledged. For example, sociolinguistic forms, such as memes are also playing an important role in challenging and perpetuating ageist ideas [8]. Additionally, corpus linguistics and narrative analysis enable the use of discourse-based approach to inspect the frequency and contextual application of age-related language in contemporary texts. In contemporary literary works, age operates as both a symbolic and linguistic structure forming character identities and thematic expansion.

Literature frequently uses age as a metaphor for wisdom, deterioration, innocence, or change, perpetuating cultural discourse about various life phases. Language forms age by means of metaphorical expressions (e.g., *"over the hill", "in the prime of life"*) depicting aging in mostly favorable or unfavorable lights. Along with literature, media can develop societal attitudes, and recent representation changes aim to challenge ageism, sexism, and limited diversity [9, 61]. One more study that sheds light on the representation of older people in the media studies the contribution of news coverage to ageism [10]. By studying these portrayals, this study seeks to reveal the subtle biases integrated into the more expansive discourse on ageism in contemporary philological and sociolinguistic contexts. This theoretical basis paves the way for the subsequent analysis of modern narratives, displaying the sophisticated interrelation between language, literature, and social perceptions of aging.

From a philological perspective, this research supports the gradual development of age-related language and its implication for literary studies. By detecting and analyzing these patterns, this study conduces to broader discussions on linguistic inclusivity, highlighting the need to critically engage with the ways in which literature either reinforces or resists ageist stereotypes.

INTRODUCTION

The 21st-century has undergone social radical changes, which were stemmed from demographic modifications, forming social standards, and elevated cognizance of inclusivity. These transformations assisted the aging population appear as a central focus, encouraging critical discussions about age, identity and representation. Synchronously, the literary portrayal has refused and affected these more expansive cultural discourse, examining themes of youth and aging in innovative ways. In spite of this situation, the research of ageism – the misconception and biases against people founded on their age – has become prominent as a key area of investigation. Cultural changes in the 21st-century have been conducive to the formation of literary portrayals of age. The emergence of cross-generational narratives boosted the attention to marginalized voices, and transitions from conventional archetypes emphasize the awareness of the complexities of aging. Nevertheless, in collaboration with these improvements, literature continues to be a space where ageist stereotypes are capable of persisting, propagating reductive views of youth as naïve and of old age as inherently strenuous. Such depictions not only mirror sociable attitudes but also assist to form them, highlighting the need for thorough investigation. Although these themes are important, there is a still notable gap in philological analysis targeting the linguistic and narrative of juvenility and age in modern literature. Despite the fact that ageism has been researched in sociological and psychological contexts, its connection with language and storytelling – principal methods through which cultural attitudes are conveyed and strengthened – has drawn fairly limited interest. This hiatus emphasizes the demand for a nuanced investigation of how 21st-century texts manage and subvert age-related stereotypes.

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The topic was selected due to the increasing academic focus on ageism and the growing contribution of literature to shape and reflect contemporary social assumptions about youth, aging, and cross-generational relationships.

The relevance of the study is determined by the ongoing presence of age-related stereotypes in modern discourse and the insufficient philological examination of how contemporary literary narratives linguistically generate and resist perceptions of age and aging.

The aim of this article is to explore the linguistic and narrative construction of age and ageism in five selected 21-st century literary texts with the assistance of a philological analysis of age-related stereotypes, discursive patterns, and transforming attitudes towards youth and aging.

The objectives of this study are:

- to investigate linguistic and narrative portrayals of youth and age in five 21st- representative texts;
- to detect repetitive stereotypes and changes in age depictions;
- to identify the impact of these representations on cultural interpretations of aging.

The object of the research is the literary representation of ageism in five contemporary novels: *Kazuo Ishiguro's* Never Let Me Go*, Han Kang's* The Vegetarian*, Fredrik Backman's* A Man Called Ove*, Richard Powers'* The Overstory*, and Ocean Vuong's* On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous.

The subject of the research is the literary and linguistic construction of age, youth, aging and age-related stereotypes in selected literary works.

The study hypothesizes that present-day literary narratives increasingly challenge dominant age-related biases and provide more sophisticated and multi-aspect representations of youth and aging.

The scientific novelty of the research stems from the philological examination of ageism through the integrated analysis of linguistic and narrative devices in contemporary literary discourse.

The significance of the research is correlated to its contribution to the presentation of a framework for examining portrayals of aging in modern narratives, ageism studies and literary linguistics.

Through this investigation, this article strives to contribute to the ongoing discourse on ageism by presenting a philological framework for studying the plots that mold our perception of youth and aging in the modern world.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study will particularly use manual qualitative analysis integrated with corpus-based linguistic devices where relevant. Corpus-based methods enable the acquisition of quantitative and systematic insights into lexical frequency, recurring linguistic patterns and collocations associated with age representation. However, as it is common for literary discourse to contain implicit meanings, contextual nuances, irony, and symbolic portrayal, quantitative findings may not fully disclose the complex features of age-related discourse. Therefore, qualitative analysis and close reading are employed to interpret the narrative and contextual functions of the detected language patterns. The combination of these approaches creates the possibility to merge empirical linguistic findings with textual interpretation in literary analysis, strengthening the reliability and validity of the research outcomes. Computational frequently used text analysis software, such as *AntConc* [11,103], will be used to examine frequency patterns of age-related linguistic items, such as *old*, *elderly*, *young,* in the target five novels.

The terms *old* and *elderly* were selected as P. Peters relates both of them to ageism [12, 22]. According to him, the former (*old*) is free from any negative ageist tones if elderly people use it affirmatively, while it bears a pejorative tone when used by others to refer to elderly people. In terms of the latter term (*elderly*), he defines it as a neutral lexical item. Regarding the term (*young*), it was selected for the analysis as it represents a specific life stage connected to ageism and is included in the the *Cambridge Essential English Dictionary* [13, 463], which ensures its conceptual connection to age and ageism. It is also related to the target learners' vocabulary levels, making it relevant to pedagogical and linguistic analysis. The inclusion of these three words facilitates a dual approach. To

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clarify, examining how frequently and in what contexts these words occur in 21st-century novels is capable of detecting ageist tendencies. In addition, the absence of these terms may indicate avoidance, neutrality, or insufficient representation of certain age groups. The outline of the main research stages is presented below.

Firstly, the study compiled and prepared the corpus of five contemporary novels for analysis using *AntConc.* The selection of the five novels was based on the following criteria:

- The novels were published in the 21st century, thus helping to concentrate on contemporary literary discourse.
- The novels reflect diverse cultural and literary origins, such as British, Korean, Swedish, American, and Vietnamese-American viewpoints.
- All works address themes linked to age representation, such as identity, memory, intergenerational relationships, social exclusion, mental shift and age perceptions.
- The novels contain substantive linguistic and literary material well-suited for philological and discourse-oriented analysis.

All texts were carefully prepared by removing paratextual elements, such as footnotes, acknowledgements, publisher information, page numbers, and other additional materials. The cleaned texts were then converted into plain text (.txt) format to enhance compatibility with the corpus analysis software, *AntConc.* The compiled corpus involved five individual text files. The corpus was restricted to a selection of five works in order to ensure analytical depth and comparative examination of repetitive and different depictions of age and ageism. The text files are provided below with the quantity of tokens:

1. Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* (2005) – 100968 tokens
2. Han Kang's *The Vegetarian* (2007)- 53748 tokens
3. Fredrik Backman's *A Man Called Ove* (2012) – 93947 tokens
4. Richard Powers' *The Overstory* (2018) – 178399 tokens
5. Ocean Vuong's *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous* (2019)- 60560 tokens

The total size of corpus consisted of 487622 tokens.

The next stage of the analysis involves examining the corpus for occurrences of the target three words (*old, elderly, young*) in the texts in order to detect age-related representation patterns. In addition to the occurrences of the key words, their frequency lists and concordances were generated with the assistance of *AntConc*. The corpus of the novels was analyzed using several *AntConc* functions, such as Word List, Concordance (KWIC), Cluster and File View. The study applied the Word List function to detect the frequency of age-related lexical items within the corpus. The Concordance (KWIC) was used to study the contextual usage and semantic environment of selected lexical items in the narratives. In addition, the Cluster function enabled the identification of recurrent lexical connections and immediate contextual structures associated with age-related terminology. In terms of the File View, it was employed to inspect the more expansive textual context of specific concordance lines and lexical instances within the novels. The combination of these corpus-based functions facilitated both quantitative and contextual analysis of age-related discourse in the literary texts under examination.

The last phase of the analysis employs a philological methodology to identify the linguistic contribution of the detected age-related terms to age-centered stereotypes. The study will apply the next strategies:

- *Lexical analysis:* detection and classification of age-related terms and expressions, evaluating their connotations and functions in character portrayal, dialogues, and narrative structures.
- *Semantic changes:* investigation of how age-related language has developed in 21st-century texts in comparisons with earlier literary practices, identifying shifts in meaning, usage, and associations.
- *Contextual analysis:* examination of the narrative and sociopolitical indicators of age-related language, taking into account how it forms character perception, plot development and thematic evolution.
- *Comparative analysis:* The comparative aspect of the study is mainly cross-cultural rather than cross-linguistic. Although the novels under examination present diverse cultural and literary contexts,

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namely British, Korean, Swedish, American and Vietnamese American viewpoints, the analysis focuses on English-language texts. Accordingly, the study does not seek to conduct a multi-lingual corpus comparison. Rather, it examines the construction of age-related discourse and portrayals of ageism in various cultural narratives in contemporary literary works.

Relying on the insights from close readings and corpus analysis, this study presents a framework for comprehending 21-st century portrayals of age in literary and linguistic environment. This model combines linguistics with narrative analysis to emphasize:

- The role of linguistic preferences in framing age-related stereotypes;
- Thematic repetitive patterns in contemporary representations of aging;
- The impact of sociocultural factors on ageist and anti-ageist language.

This multifaceted framework proposes a comprehensive approach to researching ageism in modern narratives combining findings from philology, sociolinguistics and literary analysis.

RESULTS

1. Corpus Analysis Findings

The first objective of this analysis was to identify the widespread nature of common age-descriptive words and assess their contribution to potential ageist connotations. Table 1 shows the frequency of age related lexical units (*elderly, old, young*) in five modern novels. The figure obtained with the assistance of a corpus analysis tool, *AntConc*. The outcome of the analysis shows that the presence of *old* is significantly more frequent, accounting for 504 occurrences, as opposed to *elderly* and *young,* at 14 and 137 respectively [Table 1].

Table 1. Frequency of age-related terms (old, elderly, young) in the target five novels

No.	Novel	old	elderly	young
1	*Never Let Me Go*	66	0	8
2	*The Vegetarian*	18	1	24
3	*A Man Called Ove*	177	9	44
4	*The Overstory*	189	3	44
5	*On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous*	54	1	17
Total		**504**	**14**	**137**

To complement the frequency analysis, attention shifts to the clusters of *old* to explore its semantic prosody. The corpus analysis identified 293 cluster types related to *old*. However, only the 20 most frequent and semantically important clusters are presented due to limitations of article length [Table 2]. The findings reveal that *old man* is the most frequent cluster, appearing 51 times in *A Man Called Ove*, *The Overstory*, *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous*, and *The Vegetarian*. The second most recurring cluster is *old and*, with 23 occurrences across all five novels under examination. It is followed by *old woman* with 11 occurrences across three novels: *A Man Called Ove, The Overstory, and The Vegetarian.* Other relatively frequent clusters are *old guy* and *old in*, both appearing nine times. With respect to other clusters, such as *old growth* and *old sod,* both of them have a frequency of 7. The clusters *old as*, *old days*, *old friend* appear in the novels 6 times. The table also demonstrates that *old* is found in multiple semantic contexts. The clusters, such as *old man*, *old woman*, *old guy* and *old lady,* directly refer to human age and identity, while others (*old farmhouse, old bus, old story* and *old days*) represent objects, places, relationships, or abstract references. Moreover, several clusters, including *old growth* and *old frien*d, show that the word *old* is not only related to age-based representations but also functions as a marker of duration, familiarity and continuity [Table 2]. Taken together, the data indicate that the word *old* is distributed throughout the corpus and presents both literal and figurative uses across the novels under examination.

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Table 2. Frequency and distribution of "old" clusters across the selected novels

No.	Cluster	Rank	Frequency	Range	Source Text
1	old man	1	51	4	*A Man Called Ove, The Overstory, On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous, The Vegetarian*
2	old and	2	23	5	*A Man Called Ove, The Overstory, On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous, The Vegetarian , Never Let Me Go*
3	old woman	3	11	3	*A Man Called Ove, The Overstory, The Vegetarian*
4	old guy	4	9	2	*The Overstory, Never Let Me Go*
5	old in	4	9	4	*A Man Called Ove, The Overstory, On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous, The Vegetarian*
6	old growth	6	7	1	*The Overstory*
7	old sod	6	7	1	*A Man Called Ove*
8	old as	8	6	3	*A Man Called Ove, The Overstory, On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous,*
9	old days	8	6	2	*The Vegetarian , Never Let Me Go*
10	old friend	8	6	3	*The Overstory, On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous, Never Let Me Go*
11	old girl	11	5	1	*A Man Called Ove*
12	old Ove	11	5	1	*A Man Called Ove*
13	old farmhouse	13	4	3	*The Overstory, On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous, Never Let Me Go*
14	old he	13	4	2	*A Man Called Ove, The Overstory*
15	old lady	13	4	1	*A Man Called Ove*
16	old story	13	4	2	*The Overstory, On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous*
17	old tjikko	13	4	1	*The Overstory*
18	old bus	18	3	1	*Never Let Me Go*
19	old by	18	3	1	*A Man Called Ove*
20	old had	18	3	2	*A Man Called Ove, The Vegetarian*

The following table shows the clusters containing the word *elderly*, detected through a corpus analysis of five novels applying *AntConc* [Table 3]. The most common cluster is *elderly man*, occurring nine times in *A Man Called Ove.* The remaining clusters appear only once in the corpus. Three clusters, such as *elderly Chinese*, *elderly owners*, *elderly woman*, occur in *The Overstory*. Regarding *elderly patients*, this cluster is also found only once in *The Vegetarian*. Similarly, *elderly couple* occurs once in *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous.* The findings indicate that the authors used the word *elderly* relatively infrequently in the selected literary works.

Table 3. Frequency and distribution of "elderly" clusters across the selected novels

No.	Cluster	Rank	Frequency	Range	Source Text
1	elderly man	1	9	1	*A Man Called Ove*
2	elderly Chinese	2	1	1	*The Overstory*
3	elderly couple	2	1	1	*On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous*
4	elderly owners	2	1	1	*The Overstory*
5	elderly patients	2	1	1	*The Vegetarian*
6	elderly woman	2	1	1	*The Overstory*

Having examined *elderly,* the analysis now focuses on *young.* In general, the novels have 137 clusters with *young*. Due to space limitations, Table 4 demonstrates the most frequent clusters with the word *young* detected in the novels under examination. The findings reveal that the dominant cluster is *young man*, occurring 34 times across all five novels. The second most frequent cluster is *young woman*, with 9 occurrences. The cluster *young woman* is present in all novels except *Never Let Me Go*. It is followed by the cluster *young men*, with the frequency of 8. It is worth noting that *young men* occurred only in *A Man Called Ove.* Other frequently appearing clusters are *young and* (6

occurrences) and *young people* (5 occurences). *Young and* was detected in three novels , such as *The Overstory, On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous, Never Let Me go.* Regarding *young people*, the cluster was present in all novels except *Never Let Me Go.* The remaining clusters of *young* shows lower frequencies, and can be found in only one or two novels. These include descriptive and relational combinations, such as *young girl*, *young child*, *young doctor* and *young son*. In addition, more contextual or grammatical combinations include *young as*, *young to*, and *young he* [Table 4]. On the whole, the results suggest that the lexical item *young* is widely distributed throughout the corpus and mainly associated with neutral descriptive references to age, gender and social identity.

Table 4. Frequency and distribution of "young" clusters across the selected novels

No.	Cluster	Rank	Frequency	Range	Source Text
1	young man	1	34	5	*A Man Called Ove, The Overstory, On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous, The Vegetarian , Never Let Me Go*
2	young woman	2	9	4	*A Man Called Ove, The Overstory, On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous, The Vegetarian*
3	young men	3	8	1	*A Man Called Ove*
4	young and	4	6	3	*The Overstory, On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous, Never Let Me Go*
5	young people	5	5	4	*A Man Called Ove, The Overstory, On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous, The Vegetarian*
6	young a	6	4	2	*The Overstory, On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous*
7	young girl	6	4	2	*On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous , The Vegetarian*
8	young as	8	3	1	*On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous*
9	young he	8	3	2	*A Man Called Ove, The Overstory*
10	young child	10	2	1	*The Vegetarian*
11	young doctor	10	2	2	*A Man Called Ove, The Vegetarian*
12	young free	10	2	1	*The Overstory*
13	young life	10	2	1	*The Overstory*
14	young managed	10	2	1	*The Overstory*
15	young son	10	2	2	*The Overstory, The Vegetarian*
16	young to	10	2	2	*On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous, Never Let Me Go*
17	young adulthood	17	1	1	*The Overstory*
18	young again	17	1	1	*On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous*
19	young anymore	17	1	1	*The Vegetarian*
20	young can	17	1	1	*The Overstory*

2. Close Reading and Narrative Interpretation Results

The table below presents the results of a close reading and narrative interpretation of five modern novels [Table 5]. The novels reveal how youth is portrayed through themes of self-discovery, societal expectations, activism and vulnerability. As regards the depiction of aging, it is portrayed through authority, wisdom, isolation and the rejection of traditional stereotypes. The novels, such as *A Man Called Ove* and *The Overstory,* challenge conventional negative perceptions of aging by representing older characters with experience, emotional resilience, and intergenerational wisdom. On the contrary, *Never Let Me Go* presents the absence of natural aging, focusing more on the controlled and restricted use of youth. Youth is also a primary topic of *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous.* The novel reflects mostly unfavorable features and struggles of youth, which challenges the idea that youth is always positive, inherently fresh and admirable. Similarly, *The Vegetarian* concentrates on the difficulties of youth by highlighting that young people are not always willingly

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resistant. Rather, they are often compelled to respond to social expectations using the tools available to them, such as silence.

Taken together, the selected novels demonstrate the diverse and complex portrayals of youth and aging in contemporary discourse. The study reveals that modern narratives are not limited to common age-related stereotypes by presenting difficult intergenerational relationships and individual experiences.

Table 5. Themes and descriptions of youth and aging in the target five novels

No.	Novel	Main themes	Depiction of youth	Depiction of aging
1	*Never Let Me Go* (Kazuo Ishiguro, 2005)	Power, agency, the value of youth	Idealized but controlled youth	Absence of natural aging
2	*The Vegetarian* (Han Kang, 2007)	Societal expectations, transformation	Rejection of norms	Older figures shown as authoritative
3	*A Man Called Ove* (Fredrik Backman, 2012)	Resilience, isolation, intergenerational bonds	Young characters learn from Ove	Challenges stereotypes of aging
4	*The Overstory* (Richard Powers, 2018)	Ecology, wisdom, intergenerational knowledge	Younger activists emerging	Aging linked to trees and wisdom
5	*On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous* (Ocean Vuong, 2019)	Identity, trauma, cultural displacement	Self-discovery, intergenerational struggles	N/A (focus on youth)

DISCUSSIONS

The findings of the five selected novels are discussed separately below:

1. *Never Let Me Go (Kazuo Ishiguro, 2005)*

The frequency data reveal a remarkably low instance of *old* (66), a complete absence of *elderly*, and only 8 occurrences of *young*. This rare presence of age related vocabulary highlights the novel's dystopian framework, in which age representation is detached from the traditional aging process. The recurrent clusters *old days* and *old friend* indicate that *old* functions largely as a temporal and relational descriptor rather than a marker of physical aging. This pattern may indicate that the novel prioritizes interpersonal attachment and memory over direct representations of age and aging.

2. *The Vegetarian (Han Kang, 2007)*

The novel employs *young* (24) more often than *old* (18), reflecting the thematic opposition between youthful resistance and older authoritative presence. The only cluster with *elderly* is *elderly patients*, which frames aging through a clinical and institutional framework. To continue, the cluster *young anymore* conveys an identity crisis tied to lost youth. Collectively, these patterns suggest that novel depicts aging as a socially controlled process rather than a natural life course.

3. *A Man Called Ove (Fredrik Backman, 2012)*

The second highest occurrence of *old* (177) and the highest frequency of *elderly* (9) belong to this novel, making it the most linguistically age-focused novel in the corpus. The cluster *elderly man* together with culturally specific phrases, such as *old sod*, *old girl*, and *old Ove,* indicate that aging is depicted as a deeply personal and socially grounded experience. This implies that the novel's lexical choices present old age as a sign of resilience and individuality, challenging ageist assumptions.

4. *The Overstory (Richard Powers, 2018)*

The word *old* reaches its highest occurrence (189) in this novel. In addition, it displays the broadest range of clusters, including *old growth, old tjikko,* and *old farmhouse.* This tendency demonstrates that the novel shifts the semantic scope from human aging to ecological contexts. This non-anthropocentric understanding of oldness represents the clearest challenge to ageist discourse. Regarding the term *young,* its clusters, such as *young and, young he, young free, young life* and *young managed,* indicate that the text conceptualizes youth as a dynamic process, rather than as a stable

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identity formation. In combination, the lexical patterns construct *the Overstory* as the most radical text in the corpus, extending the semantic boundaries of age and youth beyond the human domain.

5. On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous (Ocean Vuong, 2019)

Although the title of the novel focuses on the temporary nature of human experience, it evokes themes of memory, inheritance and intergenerational relationships with the assistance of a moderate frequency of *old* (54) and its clusters, *old farmhouse, old story,* and *old friend*. The word *elderly* occurs only once in the cluster *elderly couple*, indicating that old age is not the primary thematic focus of the novel. Turning to youth, *young* occurs in clusters, such as *young girl*, *young to* and *young again*, linking youth to longing and self-discovery rather than to a stable identity. Thematically, aging is largely absent from the novel's central focus [Table 5]. Therefore, the findings indicate that the novel does not represent ageism either thematically or lexically.

Collectively, the frequency and cluster analysis of *old* , *elderly* and *young* across the five novels suggest that ageism in contemporary literary discourse is complex. Age is framed differently over the texts: Ishiguro omits aging institutionally, Kang frames it as social regulation, Backman humanizes old age, Powers represents old age in an ecological semantic field, and Vuong emphasizes youth as a site of memory and aspiration. Overall, these philological patterns show that contemporary literary works through language negotiate, challenge and reframe ageist ideologies.

CONCLUSION

The study examined the linguistic representation of ageism in five contemporary novels by analysing the frequency and the clusters of the age-related lexemes, *old*, *elderly*, and *young*. The findings demonstrate that age is a semantically rich and ideologically loaded domain in contemporary literary language.

The remarkably higher frequency of *old* compared to *elderly* and *young*, shows that literary discourse under examination is inclined towards more culturally charged and connotatively complex lexemes in communicating age-related meanings.

The limited presence of *elderly* in the corpus reveals that contemporary fiction has a tendency to minimize institutional age-defining units, preferring instead context-driven lexical choices.

The cluster analysis further shows that age lexemes vary their discursive meanings throughout the corpus depending each novel's thematical and ideological orientations.

The close reading detects thematic trends that highlight self-development, intergenerational relationships, and transforming outlook on aging, whereas the corpus-based analysis provides additional evidence for these insights by presenting a lowered correlation between aging and unfavourable implications, such as emotional isolation or melancholic reflection.

Future research could develop this investigation by analysing a broader range of literary works, revealing cultural differences in the portrayal of aging, or examining how emerging linguistic trends impact on age perceptions.

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Эйджизмге бес көзқарас: қазіргі нарративтердің филологиялық зерттеуі

Ж.Қ. Оразтаева[1], А.Т. Бақытов[1]
[1]Әл-Фараби атындағы қазақ ұлттық университеті, Алматы, 050000, Қазақстан

Эйджизм – бұл әлеуметтік көзқарастар мен әдеби баяндауларға әсер етуге қабілетті әлеуметтік-лингвистикалық құбылыс, ол жастың және қартаюдың қалай түсінілетінін қалыптастыруға ықпал етеді. Зерттеулерде әртүрлі эйджистік стереотиптер қарастырылғанымен, қазіргі заманғы әдебиетте эйджизмге әкелетін немесе оған қарсы тұратын имплицитті лексикалық және баяндау стратегияларын зерттеген жұмыстар аз. Бұл зерттеу XXI ғасырдың бес романы (Never Let Me Go – Кадзуо Исигуро, The Vegetarian – Хан Кан, A Man Called Ove – Фредрик Бакман, The Overstory – Ричард Пауэрс, On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous – Оушен Вуонг) арқылы қартаю мен жастықтың бейнеленуін кешенді терең талдау және корпусқа негізделген әдіс арқылы зерттейді. Терең талдау жастықтың көрінісіндегі өзін-өзі тану, әлеуметтік нормалар және трансформация сияқты қайталанатын тақырыптарды анықтайды. Сонымен қатар, терең талдау барысында қартаюдың билік, даналық және ұрпақаралық динамикамен байланысы талданады. AntConc корпустық талдау құралының көмегімен жүргізілген корпус-талдау осы сапалық нәтижелерді қолдайды, жастықты ажырау мен тозу ұғымдарына емес, даналық, төзімділік және әлеуметтік байланысқа бағытталған негізінен оң дискурсты анықтайды. Нәтижелер көрсеткендей, бұл бес роман қартаюды өмірдің белсенді және маңызды кезеңі ретінде суреттеу арқылы дәстүрлі эйджистік көзқарастарға қарсы шығып, қазіргі заманғы әдебиетте жастың бейнеленуіне тереңірек қайта қарауға ықпал етеді.

Кілт сөздер: эйджизм, қартаю, эйджистік тіл, XXI ғасыр романдары

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Пять взглядов на эйджизм: филологическое исследование современных нарративов

Ж.К. Оразтаева[1], А.Т. Бакитов[1]
[1]Казахский национальный университет имени Аль-Фараби, Алматы, 050000, Казахстан

Эйджизм — это социолингвистическое явление, способное влиять как на социальные установки, так и на литературные нарративы, способствуя формированию представлений о возрасте и старении. Хотя исследования рассматривали различные эйджистские стереотипы, гораздо меньше изучены имплицитные лексические и нарративные стратегии, которые ведут к эйджизму или противостоят ему в современной литературе. В данном исследовании анализируется изображение старости и молодости в пяти романах XXI века (Never Let Me Go – Кадзуо Исигуро, The Vegetarian – Хан Кан, A Man Called Ove – Фредрик Бакман, The Overstory – Ричард Пауэрс, On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous – Оушен Вуонг) с помощью интегрированного подхода, сочетающего глубинный анализ и корпусный анализ. Глубинный анализ выявляет повторяющиеся темы самопознания, социальных норм и трансформации в изображении молодости. Кроме того, анализируется, как старение представлено в контексте власти, мудрости и межпоколенческой динамики. Корпусный анализ с использованием инструмента AntConc подтверждает эти качественные выводы, исследуя частотность возрастных терминов, выявляя в целом позитивный дискурс, сосредоточенный на мудрости, стойкости и социальных связях, а не на изоляции и упадке. Результаты показывают, что эти пять романов противостоят традиционным эйджистским предубеждениям, изображая старение как активный и значимый этап жизни, тем самым способствуя более глубокому переосмыслению представлений о возрасте в современной литературе.

Ключевые слова: эйджизм, старение, эйджистский язык, романы XXI века.

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G. Sarseke
L. Gumilyov Eurasian National University, Astana, 010000, Kazakhstan

REPORTING VERBS IN KAZAKH ACADEMIC WRITING: CORPUS-BASED STRUCTURAL AND DISCOURSE PATTERNS

This study investigates reporting verbs in Kazakh academic writing, an area that has received little linguistic or pedagogical attention. Reporting verbs are central to citation practices, as they allow writers to attribute ideas, findings, and evaluations to other scholars while positioning their own contributions within disciplinary discourse.

A specialised corpus of 110 peer-reviewed research articles across eleven humanities and language and literature disciplines was compiled, yielding 356,498 tokens. From an initial inventory of 5,984 verb lemmas, semantic screening identified 17 candidate verbs with potential reporting functions. A stratified sample of 1,398 concordance instances was manually annotated for discourse function, resulting in 939 confirmed reporting cases.

Quantitative analysis revealed that reporting functions are concentrated in a small set of recurrent verbs (ait, jaz, anyqta, ūsyn, baianda), while lower-frequency items (e.g., habarla, paiymda, tūjyrymda) contribute to functional diversity. Disciplinary distribution analysis showed variation in reporting density, with literature, religious studies, and linguistics exhibiting the highest normalised frequencies. Qualitative analysis classified reporting verbs into three activity-based categories: discourse acts, research acts, and mental acts. These categories highlight how Kazakh academic writers attribute statements, present findings, and evaluate prior scholarship.

The findings reveal both lexical concentration and functional heterogeneity, suggesting that Kazakh academic discourse relies on a core repertoire of verbs while maintaining flexibility in expressing stance and attribution. This study contributes to corpus linguistics and discourse analysis by providing empirical evidence on reporting practices in Kazakh, offering insights for academic writing pedagogy, and extending reporting verb frameworks to typologically diverse languages.

Key words: reporting verbs, citation practices, Kazakh academic writing, corpus linguistics, discourse analysis.