



## SOLITUDE AND ITS LANGUAGE MANIFESTATION IN ERNEST HEMINGWAY'S THE OLD MAN AND THE SEA: A PSYCHOLINGUISTIC INSPECTION



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### ABSTRACT

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Santiago, the old man in Earnest Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea* fishes alone in a small boat in the Gulf Stream and for almost three months he fails to catch a single fish, which entices him to embrace the challenge to go out too far not to be back until and unless he succeeds in catching a big fish. Solo he goes far out leaving the smell of the land behind and baits his hooks deep in the sea. His solitary waiting begins thereby and he watches birds as well as flying fishes. But the thing most needed to accompany him is his language, of which he makes a successful display through his unattended thoughts, expressions and utterances. He talks to himself, to the birds, to his hands, and to the fish he ultimately succeeds in hooking. The linguistic presentation that the old man demonstrates in his solitary days and nights while he struggles with Marlin, the fish he catches expresses a great deal regarding the conjunction between solitude and language. This article regards that the psychological standing the old man holds during his utter loneliness deep in the desolate sea has much to do with the kind of thoughts and language exposures he produces. Accordingly the researcher gives critical perusal to the novella and intends to delineate the prevalent inter-connection between solitude and language in the light of psycholinguistics.

**Contribution/ Originality:** This study recognizably contributes to significant exploration regarding the language manifestation with relation to human portrayal in Ernest Hemingway's famed novel, *The Old Man and the Sea*. Moreover, it concentrates on the necessary correspondence between human existence and the semblance of language use, which leads to profound knowledge relating to the inevitable incorporation of human mind and linguistic mechanism.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

In the writing titled "Loneliness makes your brain work differently, study shows", Richards (2015) mentions a 95-year-old couple calling 999 because they want someone to talk to. In addition, Richards (2015) describes that lonely people actually become more alert to their surroundings, possible threats and strangers because their brain turns to be more active during loneliness. Hence, the question regarding whether loneliness influences one's thought and language obtains a perceptible semblance in *The Old Man and the Sea* where Santiago, the old fisherman happens to be alone far out in the sea and denotes considerable volume of monologues that lucidly signifies the

relation between his solitude and language. From the moment the boy Manolin, his once fishing companion wishes good luck and bids adieu to him, he is left to be on his own with his inner thoughts and the vast sea around as well as the sky above. He comes across no humans but himself, birds and fish with whom he talks and shares his feelings. Almost for three days, Santiago remains absolutely lonely deep in the open sea only to be struggling with marlin, the big fish. During this outcast period, he effectuates only monologues to accompany himself, keep himself awake and understand many unusual senses that can only be deciphered in solitude and isolation.

While amidst the outright solitude in the middle of the desolate waters, the old man establishes and feels a profound connection between himself and the sea along with its creatures. Consequently, he receives the sole hold to actuate his thoughts out as he becomes surrounded by some un-interrupting listeners. Moreover, he attains some aspired human attributes which are divine and make him sublime to be gracious to all beings no matter humans or beasts. As a result, Santiago talks to birds and fishes in an intimate manner and shows that he really feels for them. He feels sympathetic to fishes and almost thanks them to be his bait and food. Especially, the old man gets emotionally attached to the giant marlin he hooks and struggles to bring under control. He can perceive the greatness of the fish and sense how courageous and resolute it is, which is why, he gratefully calls the fish, "Brother" (Hemingway, 1996). Furthermore, deserted on the infinite water, waiting for the fish to get exhausted and surrender, and struggling with hunger, wound and sleep-deprivation, the old man gains a strong dependence on the almighty Creator to whom he promises to remain grateful and obedient if he succeeds in catching the fish. Subsequently, when he has to fight the sharks, he emerges to be in a testing phase of his life where he has to protect his hard-earned achievement and prove his worth as well. Nonetheless, he gets defeated by the enemies, but not by the fish for which he has suffered the ordeal. This entire happening in Santiago's life reveals some of his notable thoughts and linguistic expressions which, this article considers, have strong correspondence with the loneliness he has undergone.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Xie (2008) states that Hemingway occupies a remarkable position in American literature by virtue of his objective and terse prose style, which elaborates mostly his experience as a journalist and depicts factual understandings mainly. The novel fundamentally exhibits the attributes of the old man, Santiago's life from simple and natural point of view. In addition, it illustrates the inner thoughts that emerge from Santiago's unconsciousness and constitute the motto of the novel (Xie, 2008). The author tends to present the protagonist in the light of the choice he makes, which defines his existence and essence (Li-juan, 2016). Similarly the novella delineates the instances of human effort in an isolated existence through Santiago whose awareness of his individual role in the universe allows him to exploit more authentic effort to retain his self and position in the society (Shakury, 2017). As such, the old man finds himself in a place where he encounters dilemma of decision and he is to prove himself. Nevertheless, while struggling to retain his being, he feels love and respect for all phenomena of life like humans, birds, sea creatures and the element of the universe itself (Shakury, 2017). Muhammed (2011) finds that Santiago gets alienated from the society due to his failure in being parallel to the successful persons as defined by the society. Gray (2018) too suggests that one of the major themes of *The Old Man and the Sea* is isolation that acts on Santiago who fishes alone in a skiff in the Gulf Stream and has gone eighty-four days without catching a fish. The same has been ascertained by Rani (2016) who explores that the protagonist of *The Old Man and the Sea* is isolated from his society and, in fact, from the whole world because of some influencing factors like failure, anxiety, despair and loneliness. Notwithstanding, Muhammed (2011) considers Santiago to have won his struggle and people's heart as well. He opines that although the old man belongs to the commonplace individuals in the community, he raises himself to the level of classical hero by dint of his commendable natural insights and stimuli for self-analysis, which are amply represented through his empathy for sea creatures, his dreams and his moral strength.

According to Sharma (2016) through Santiago, Hemingway portrays the fact that a man is necessarily to confront unconquerable elements which he must fight with courage and fortitude, and exhibit substantial grace even under unmitigated pressure. *The Old Man and the Sea* is more than a story regarding an old man and a giant fish, it is more about human's feelings of his inner strength and resolution as well as his response to other creatures (Sharma, 2016). As a matter of fact, Santiago symbolizes the default nature of human beings who do not like to accept defeat, but fight relentlessly no matter how much they suffer (Sandamali, 2015). Additionally, Chakraberty (2013) investigates humanism and ethical aspects in *The Old Man and the Sea* and comes to the understanding that the novel sheds considerable light on the human and spiritual elements of man's life. Likewise, the theme of interdependence of human relationships is adequate in *The Old Man and the Sea* where Santiago alone in the deep sea almost recurrently feels as well as displays the absence of Manolin, his companion (Tripathi, 2016). Moreover, Chakraberty (2013) focuses on the lengthened loneliness the old man goes through and comments that it holds and exposes much pride in the fact that the protagonist is an old man and he fishes alone deep in the sea, which means he is not to be diminished with time's passage. In addition, in the novella, Hemingway portrays a man's interaction with himself from the point of view of existentialism (Li-juan, 2016).

Reviewing a considerable number of researches and studies on Earnest Hemingway and his much talked about and much read novella, *The Old Man and the Sea*, I understand that although one of the researchers, Xie (2008) studies Hemingway's language style and writing techniques in the mentioned story, the researcher basically focuses on the syntactic elements and ingredients that the novelist makes use of, and does not employ any thought on the way Santiago's solitude makes as well as assists him tailor his language, which may signify the stature of his psychology. Besides, a good number of researchers (Muhammed, 2011; Sandamali, 2015; Li-juan, 2016; Rani, 2016) have considered *The Old Man and the Sea* from versatile point of views, like alienation, existentialism, man's struggle, syntactic analysis and the like. Nonetheless, fewer critical studies have so far focused the discernible connection between the old man's lingering loneliness and his language treatment that we come to know by reading his thoughts and expressions. This inspires the current research to pursue a close link between Santiago's circumstances and his thinking as well as linguistic deliveries.

### 2.1. Solitude and Language in the Novella

Rani (2016) maintains that the alienation and subsequent loneliness the old man goes through in *The Old Man and the Sea* constitute who Santiago is, what his characteristics are. Since Santiago is alone and is bored about being lonely, he starts talking to himself though he knows that people will think him crazy if they find him talking, but he does not care for he enjoys the company (Gray, 2018). In addition, Rani (2016) thinks that in this novel, Hemingway also demonstrates the ideology of man facing challenges, struggling alone, displaying utmost determination, activating peerless courage, encountering defeats majestically and living through raising head with dignity.

As the old man patiently continues to hold the line not to let the fish go away, he finds a companion worth talking to. He says softly aloud, "Fish, I'll stay with you until I am dead" (Hemingway, 1996). He can feel that a kind of respect towards his adversary has begun to grow in his soul, which he expresses, "Fish, I love you and respect you very much. But I will kill you dead before this day ends" (Hemingway, 1996). Even to the small birds that came toward the skiff from the north, Santiago asks, "How old are you? Is this your first trip?" (Hemingway, 1996). The lonely old man feels compassionate and friendly to the small bird and wishes luck for it, "Take a good rest, small bird, then go in and take your chance like any man, bird or fish" (Hemingway, 1996). The pain in his stiffened back encourages him to continue talking to the small bird for conversing with somebody helps him forget the incessant pain and go on with his pursuit. He apologizes to the bird, "Stay at my home, if you like, bird, I am sorry I cannot hoist the sail and take you in with the small breeze that is rising. But I am with a friend" (Hemingway, 1996).

Moments pass and he feels the pressing presence of loneliness which time and again made him remember the necessity of Manolin, the young boy and his companion, beside him at this dire occasion. He utters aloud, "I wish the boy were here and that I had some salt" (Hemingway, 1996). Santiago even talks to his own hand, "How do you feel, hand? I'll eat some more for you" (Hemingway, 1996). The lengthened accompaniment with the hooked and struggling marlin gets the old man to be kind and sympathetic to the fish, which is why when he eats, he wishes if he could feed the fish and thinks the fish to be his "brother" (Hemingway, 1996). Besides, he can feel that he is absolutely lonely, which makes him realize "no man was ever alone on the sea" (Hemingway, 1996). Yet, Santiago has the gift of thinking lucidly being alone in the wide open sea and it helps him to grasp the distinction between humans and fish like marlins. That is why, he says, "But, thank God, they are not as intelligent as we who kill them; although they are more noble and more noble" (Hemingway, 1996).

Desolate in the vast waters, he receives a kind of spiritual awakening for which he proclaims, "I am not religious. But I will say ten Our Fathers and ten Hail Marys that I should catch this fish, and I promise to make a pilgrimage to the Virgin of Cobre if I catch him. That is a promise" (Hemingway, 1996). Moreover, being fatigued with the unending waiting for the fish to finish its struggle, Santiago lets himself move into various thoughts, like if the fish could be watched from an airplane. He thinks, "I would like to fly very slowly at two hundred fathoms high and see the fish from above" (Hemingway, 1996). He feels sympathetic to the fish and does not want to cause any disturbance to it at the time of sunset since he knew dusk is a difficult time for all fishes. Accordingly he contemplates, "I had better keep the fish quiet now and not disturb him too much at sunset. The setting of the sun is a difficult time for all fish" (Hemingway, 1996).

Subsequently, the old man asks after the marlin, "How do you feel, fish? I feel good and my left hand is better and I have food for a night and a day. Pull the boat, fish" (Hemingway, 1996). While waiting, he looks at the sky and thinks the stars to be his distant friends, which make him say aloud, "The fish is my friend too. I have never seen or heard of such a fish. But I must kill him. I am glad we do not have to try to kill stars" (Hemingway, 1996). Similarly, observing the majestic stamina and determination of the fish, he starts esteeming it and keeping it in high regards like a man does to another (Hemingway, 1996).

Then he was sorry for the great fish that had nothing to eat and his determination to kill him never relaxed in his sorrow for him. How many people will he feed, he thought. But are they worthy to eat him? No, of course not. There is no one worthy of eating him from the manner of his behavior and his great dignity. (p. 59)

Santiago emerges to be quite improvising throughout this man vs fish combat where he has been sleep deprived and exhausted. As a result, he talks to himself aloud,

But you have not slept yet, old man. It is half a day and night and now another day and you have not slept.

You must devise a way so that you sleep a little if he is quiet and steady. If you do not sleep, you might become unclear in the head (Hemingway, 1996).

In the probable approach of danger, the old man warns himself, "You better be fearless and confident yourself, old man. You're holding him again but you cannot get line. But soon he has to circle" (Hemingway, 1996). He looks at his wounded hand, and to mean his still intact fortitude he says, "It is not bad. And pain does not matter to a man" (Hemingway, 1996). He appreciates the good job and risk implemented by his hand when he personifies his left hand and says, "You did not do so badly for something worthless. But there was a moment when I could not find you" (Hemingway, 1996). Even after this long waiting and exhaustion, Santiago does not want to give up, and he seeks divine aid with a view to succeeding in his pursuit. He reflects, "I could not fail myself and die on a fish like this. Now that I have him coming so beautifully, God help me endure. I'll say a hundred Our Fathers and a hundred Hail Marys. But I cannot say them now" (Hemingway, 1996). In fact, by talking to himself, the old man supplies patience and courage to his inner self. As such, he says, "I have no cramps. He'll be up soon and I can last. You have to last. Don't even speak of it" Hemingway (1996).

The old man puts himself in the position of his guardian who on different occasions tells him the dos and don'ts. Thereby he guides himself, "Now you are getting confused in the head. You must keep your head clear. Keep your head clear and know how to suffer like a man. Or a fish" (Hemingway, 1996). In the same manner, he displays remarkable patience and determination not to ever surrender to defeat, for which the more the struggle ripens, the more the old man feels surprised at the majesty of the fish. He says to him, "You are killing me, fish. But you have a right to. Never have seen a greater, or more beautiful or a calmer or more noble thing than you, brother. Come on and kill me. I do not care who kills who" (Hemingway, 1996). Furthermore, while fighting with the sharks, Santiago demonstrates unmitigated resolution. He articulates his indefatigable thought, "But man is not made for defeat. A man can be destroyed but not defeated" (Hemingway, 1996). He continuously seeks inspiration from his baseball hero, DiMaggio who he believes would be surprised and happy to know the way he fights with the sharks. He thinks, "I wonder how the great DiMaggio would have liked the way I hit him in the brain" (Hemingway, 1996).

The old man is almost never seen to despair, rather he instructs himself to remain positive in every situation. He advises himself, "Think about something cheerful, old man. Every minute now you are closer to home. You sail lighter for the loss of forty ponds" (Hemingway, 1996). He loses his harpoon and as the last resort lashes his knife to the butt of one of the oars and says, "Now, I am still an old man. But I am not unarmed" (Hemingway, 1996). Nevertheless, he feels sorry for what he has done and what the sharks are doing to the fish. He regrets, "I wish it were a dream and that I had never hooked him. I'm sorry about it fish. It makes everything wrong" (Hemingway, 1996). Yet, even after losing almost the whole fish to the attackers, he resumes to continue fighting, "Now they have beaten me. I am too old to club sharks to death. But I will try it as long as I have the oars and the short club and the tiller" (Hemingway, 1996). Even when the half of the fish has been snatched and devoured by the sharks, the old man does not retire from talking to it in a friendly manner. He says,

Half fish, Fish that you were. I am sorry that I went too far out. I ruined us both. But we have killed many sharks, you and I, and ruined many others. How many did you ever kill, old fish? You do not have that spear on your head for nothing (Hemingway, 1996).

Despite the approach of night and the fact that he is helpless against the bunch of sharks to attack the fish, Santiago's determination does not shrink. He utters, "I'll fight them until I die" (Hemingway, 1996).

### 3. CONCLUSION

Santiago's is the story of humanity and the struggles as well as sufferings a man must go through in the life path to survive and accomplish. It is about the notion of success and failure, and mostly relating to the determination and toil that man has to put into force every moment of his existence. It touches the crucial question of effort and gain. Does only a palpable achievement glorify the effort? Does a fight bear no value for the side that gets defeated in the end? Hemingway does vividly appear not to support the idea of "winning means success" or "success means winning" in his novella, *The Old Man and the Sea*. Rather he depicts the majesty of resolution and optimism in an attempt. Moreover, the novelist portrays the fact that there should be the presence and effectuation of affirmative human qualities in the process of battling for one's sacred mission, which is why Santiago emerges to be humane and compassionate to all beings including birds and fish. As such, we find noticeable fellow feelings in the little boy, Manolin who has barely reached adolescence and experienced the myriad convoluted issues of human life. This whole saga of manliness and humanity receives notable manifestations through Santiago's thoughts and expressions mostly. We get to know his personality, his psychic mechanism, his fortitude and above all his humanism through the language he displays while alone and isolated.

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