

# Naming and Describing as a Textual-Conceptual Tool in Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*

Azhar H. Sallomi

English Department, Babylon University, Babylon, Iraq

Iman M. Obied

English Department, Babylon University, Babylon, Iraq

**Abstract**—The matter of the writer's choice between two or more ways of referring to the same thing or person in texts is closely linked with his/her ideological intention. The present paper detects the ideological interpretation of *Naming and Describing* as a textual-conceptual tool in Virginia Woolf's novel *Mrs. Dalloway* that tackles woman's trauma after the First World War. It aims to show how *Naming and Describing* tool is employed by Woolf to reveal woman's distress because of war. Additionally, it aims to indicate the ideology(ies) that lie behind the novelist's choice of a specific noun and ignoring others. Based on Jeffries' (2010) framework that presents three ways of naming, the extracts that expose woman's trauma are examined. The researchers conclude that the novelist dedicates the three ways of naming which are entitled: choice of noun, modification and nominalization for representing woman's trauma. Further, *Naming and Describing* tool assists in delivering negative ideologies such as hegemony, bullying, discrimination, and non-existence. This in turn indicates not only Woolf's denial to war which is the source of women's pain but also her plea to British women to constantly fight in order to gain their peace and delight.

**Index Terms**—naming and describing, trauma, ideology, critical stylistics, *Mrs. Dalloway*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Critical stylistics (henceforth CS) is an approach of language analysis that provides the missing links between critical discourse analysis which comprises ideology and stylistics that covers the textual choices (Coffey, 2013). This approach is related to the British researcher Jeffries (2007) who first studied the impact of feminist's ideology in society. Asensio (2016) states that the main concern in critical stylistics is ideology which is embedded in the discursive practices. For him, the task of the researcher is to describe the methods where ideology and language join.

Later on and more precisely in 2010, Jeffries presents a framework that contains a set of comprehensive toolkits including *Naming and Describing*. These toolkits help in uncovering the ideologies that lie behind the writer's language. According to Jeffries (2010, p. 5), the term 'ideology' denotes "those ideas that are shared by a community or society [...] are a very important aspect of the world that we live in, and they are, of course, communicated, reproduced, constructed and negotiated through language".

The present paper investigates how the writer's choice of a specific noun rather than others has a significant ideological intention. The British feminine novel *Mrs. Dalloway* is chosen as a sample for analysis in this study. In this novel, Virginia Woolf offers a portrayal of women as troubled and upset ones because of the First World War even though they are not directly involved in this event.

Accordingly, the researchers attempt to find answers to the questions that are listed next:

- 1- How does *Naming and Describing*, as a textual- conceptual tool, represent woman's trauma in *Mrs. Dalloway*?
- 2- What is the most/ least way of naming that indicates woman's trauma?
- 3- What is the ideological implication of *Naming and Describing* in the selected novel?

### A. Significance of Study

The significance of the study lies in employing the tool of *Naming and Describing* that is covered in Jeffries' (2010) framework of *Critical Stylistics* on Woolf's novel to bring into surface the hidden ideology of woman's trauma. Several studies have tackled this issue. The next paragraphs list some of these studies:

1- Srinivas's paper "**Physical and Psychological Victimization of Woman: Reading Alice Walker's *The Color Purple***" (2016) examines the concept of men's supremacy over women in Walker's novel *The Color Purple*. It aims to show how men's domination in society is usually accompanied by enhancement of women' misery. The study confirms the immoral effect of men's domination and its further physical and psychological consequences on women in any society.

2- Aksehir (2017) investigates the impact of the First World War on women in his study which is entitled "*The First World War and Women as the Victims of War Trauma in Virginia Woolf's Novels*". The researcher presents a portrayal of women as disappointed victims of First World War. Virginia Woolf's three novels: *To the Light House*, *Jacob's Room*,

*Mrs. Dalloway* are the data selected for the purpose of analysis. The study concludes that women have experienced the miseries of the war through enduring this sense of loss, anger, fear, lack, and the compulsory penalty of faithfulness.

3- In her dissertation that is named “**Bystander Intervention, Victimization, and Routine Activities Theory: An Examination of Feminist Routine Activities Theory in Cyber Space**” (2019), Leili employs Routine Activities Theory to scrutinize three classes of victimization. These types are: sexual violence, dating violence and stalking. A web centered analysis is utilized in this study to evaluate bystander interference in cyber violence and develop feminist routine activities theory. The researcher finds out that students favor to interpose in a direct manner. Further, bystander involvement programs will develop the feminist Routine Activities Theory literature.

The current study is apart from other similar studies in investigating the linguistic realizations that shape the tool of *Naming and Describing*. These linguistic triggers, that are mentioned in Jeffries’ (2010) framework of *Critical Stylistics*, comprise in their strata the novelist’s ideologies towards the concept of woman’s trauma. Other studies, unlike the present study, examine the same concept from psychological or literary perspectives by relying on theories of victimization.

### B. Hypothesis

It is hypothesized that *Naming and Describing* helps in uncovering the unseen ideologies that accompany woman’s trauma in Woolf’s *Mrs. Dalloway*.

### C. Aims of the Research

In line with the research questions that are stated above, the study aims to:

- 1- Detect the methods of naming which are employed by Woolf to expose woman’s trauma in the scrutinized novel.
- 2- Figure out the most/least way of naming that echoes the issue under study.
- 3- Uncover the hidden ideology(ies) which lie behind Woolf’s choice of particular nouns and neglecting others.

## II. CRITICAL STYLISTICS (CS)

CS is typical text-based stylistics with a definite critical goal (Jeffries, 2010). Norgaard et al. (2010) explain CS meaning by describing the term as being beneficial in scrutinizing the ways whereby the social meanings are clarified via language. Concerning the history of this term, it is first introduced at the University of Huddersfield, precisely with the publication of Jeffries’ (2010) book “*Critical Stylistics: The Power of English*”. Burke (2014) confirms the idea that stylistic tools reflect the literary impacts whereas critical discourse analysis tools display the contextual traits of powerful language. Jeffries thinks that connecting together these two categories of tools will be more fruitful and effective. She believes that such tools can be applied to power related issues and ideology in language. Accordingly, CS “bridges the gap noticed between stylistics and critical discourse analysis through evolving critical linguistics field to text analysis realm” (Jeffries, 2010, p. 14).

It is obvious then that the impression of CS lies in two things: Firstly, the supplement of the most comprehensive set of analytical toolkits. Secondly, linking the merits of critical discourse analysis and stylistics for the purpose of revealing the linguistic choices that embed the producer’s ideology in addition to any other social notions. In this sense, CS can be listed under the umbrella of critical linguistics as it is activated to uncover ideologies and power related issues in discourse.

Olaluwoye (2015) adds that CS is involved in uniting both the key text functions, which denote the real world, and text structures themselves. In Jeffries’ (2010) view, there could not be an identical bond between form and function. This would be a vital question to some positive - life aspects in language like poetry writing and metaphor which are used in everyday life, or to the negative aspects like manipulation and lying.

In brief, CS is an approach for describing texts due to textual – conceptual tools that signify the world which is created via the text itself. These tools are represented in the text through linguistic triggers that help to uncover the ideologies lying behind the text. This is the operational definition which is adopted in the present study.

## III. NAMING AND DESCRIBING

Different ways are used in texts to name the world. Jeffries (2010, p. 17) states that “in naming, there may be a certain choice between two or more ways of referring to the same thing.” That is, the name for a person may be changed with another one which refers for the same person. For instance, one can say *Mr. Brown* or *the Professor in the Canadian University*; each one of these two has an ideological intention. Linguists like de Saussure (1974), Saeed (2016) and Kroeger (2018), among many others, have discussed the idea of reference. For them, reference refers to the way people use language to describe things around them through using different expressions. Quirk et al. (1985, p. 343) mention that the choice of a noun sometimes “displays gender bias, and in turn ideology” as in using “*sales man*” instead of the neutral term “*sales person*”. Jeffries (2010) assumes that there are three essential ways where naming can evoke ideological meanings in texts. These ways are: choosing a name out of some available alternatives, adding information to the noun, and describing activities by verbs when they are changed into nouns by the process of nominalization.

## IV. THE IDEOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF NAMING AND DESCRIBING

The major formal counterpart to naming is the noun. The selection of nouns, in representing something, explains one side of the ideological possibility of naming. Moreover, a great deal of information can be implicated within the domain of noun phrase via the use of modifiers (Jeffries, 2010). Accordingly, the prototypical trend of naming things and people in English is achieved by nominal units that are attached to the head. Additionally, the ideological information can be affixed by modification to the inner structure of those nominal units. Naming can also be of ideological weight in nominalization which challenges the form- function simplicity of the prototypical order. In this order, nouns are words that name entities whereas verbs are words that name processes. Fowler (1991, p. 80) explains that naming may influence the ideological content of a text via “packaging up notions to be named or modified in different ways or even changing an action into something fixed through nominalization”.

## V. METHODOLOGY

### A. Data Description and Selection

Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*, which is published in 1925, is nominated as a sample for the present paper as it is one of her best eminent novels. Whitworth (2000, p. 48) states that “it has been mentioned in ‘Time’s list’ in 2005 as one of the best 100 English novels since the coming out of ‘Time’ in 1923”. Hence, the novel has its own noteworthy significance and an actual impact in British fictions.

### B. Method of Analysis

The study follows a mixed method of qualitative and quantitative approaches in the analysis. Fuentes (2008, p. 1592) mentions that these approaches complement each other in many ways and give “richer detail than either method can generate alone”. Regarding the current study, the qualitative approach is used by adopting a critical stylistic approach. This approach investigates various linguistic triggers that show social problems like women’s victimization in a specific text. The quantitative approach is done through the use of content analysis. For Krippendoff (1980, p. 21), content analysis is “a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from data to their context”.

### C. Procedures

For the analysis of data under study, the researchers have followed the steps that are listed next:

1. Examining carefully *Mrs. Dalloway*, detecting the concept of woman’s victimization, and finally identifying all the extracts that convey victimization.
2. Identifying the extracts that are speculations of female characters in the selected novel including Clarissa (the heroine in the novel), Lucrezia, Miss Kilman.
3. Illuminating the ideological ends of the text by unveiling the linguistic choices that each extract exploits to deliver a particular ideology about victimization.
4. Applying a quantitative analysis through the use of content analysis to quantitatively support the findings of the analysis.
5. For further clarification, a table is stated beneath each analyzed extract to display the ways of naming that occur in each sentence.

## VI. DATA ANALYSIS

### A. Qualitative Analysis of *Mrs. Dalloway*

#### Extract (1)

#### Clarissa speaks with herself while she is walking in Bond Street:

(1) “**this body, with all its capacities, seemed nothing—nothing at all.**” (2) “**She had the oddest sense of being herself invisible, unseen, unknown.**” (3) “**there being no more marrying, no more having of children now, but only this astonishing and rather solemn progress with the rest of them**” (4) “**up Bond Street, this being Mrs. Dalloway**” (p. 9).

This extract describes how Clarissa is ignored, disregarded and finally turned to a hidden thing as a result of this extensive indulge in the world of technology. Clarissa calls herself a “body” to denote how she considers herself as a thing with no soul, emotions and humanity although she has achieved a lot in her life. In using such noun “body” to refer to Clarissa, Woolf shows how women in British society, generally, are totally interwoven with this modern life of technology; they are as lifeless as machines that work continuously with no end. Woolf describes this growth as a ‘astonishing’ and ‘rather solemn’ for showing indirectly how Clarissa is shocked and traumatized by First World War which closely connected with these developments. The nominalization process that is represented in the words ‘marrying’ and ‘having’ denotes the lack significance of this act of marriage and bringing children. This justifies why Clarissa hates such progress which is linked with human’s trauma and likes to return back to the normal world where she can find her humanity.

In sentence (4), Clarissa asserts her real presence in Bond Street as a married woman. She is no more that lifeless ‘body’ whose name is ‘Clarissa’. Through her marriage from Mr. Richard Dalloway, Clarissa loses entirely her own identification and becomes recognized as a thing that relates to her husband. Hence, Woolf here confirms this concept of slavery and

disrespect in the British society. That is, woman in Woolf’s society is no more regarded as a human. Rather, she is an object that is created for the sake of man’s momentary ecstasy and delight. In this sense, she dislikes this technological progress as it leads to the harm of her humanity and distress. This, of course, indicates how Woolf criticizes the world of technology where humans have become machines without soul.

TABLE 1  
SYNTACTIC TRIGGERS IN THE FIRST EXTRACT

The Tool	The Syntactic Trigger
Naming	Choice of noun, the noun (body).
Describing	Modification, the modified noun (sense) and the modifier (oddest).
Describing	Modification, the modified noun (progress) and the modifiers (astonishing) and (rather solemn).
Naming	Nominalization, the nouns “marrying” and “having”.
Naming	Choice of noun, the word (Bond)

**Extract Two**

**Clarissa talks with herself about Miss Kilman while she is walking in the Bond Street:**

**(1) “all her soul rusted with that grievance sticking in it.” (2) “her dismissal from school during the war –poor embittered unfortunate creature!” (p. 10).**

Miss Kilman is the history teacher of Clarissa’s daughter, Elizabeth. Miss Kilman has exposed to discrimination in the British society for her Germanic origin. In the first sentence Clarissa introduces a gloomy sketch of Kilman which reflects the immense extent of pain that is resulted from poverty, insufficiency, and abuse. Such suffering seems to be infinite as appeared in this image of a “soul” that is marked with that stabbing pain. The occurrence of the noun “soul” before the modifier “rusted” confirms the scope of Kilman’s spiritual pain that has no expiration. Thus, such intense description of Kilman’s deep sorrow reveals not only Woolf’s sympathy towards the poor but also her appreciation to their life that has a goal. Clarissa illuminates further in sentence (2) how Kilman’s suffering increases during the war. As a result of society’s hostile - German bias, Kilman is fired from her teaching job. This explains why Clarissa describes Kilman as unlucky and offended person. Instead of naming Kilman a “woman”, Woolf categorizes her as a “creature” to highlight the humanity of women. Thus, women, similar to men, are persons who have the right of gaining individuality and dependence no matter what their ancestry or level of living is.

TABLE 2  
SYNTACTIC TRIGGERS IN THE SECOND EXTRACT

The Tool	The Syntactic Trigger
Describing	Modification, the noun (soul), the post modifier (rusted).
Describing	Modification, the noun (creature), the modifiers “poor, embittered, unfortunate”.
Naming	The choice of the noun, the noun (creature).

**Extract Three**

**Virginia Woolf describes Laucrezia’s state while she is sitting in Regent’s park:**

**(1) “To be rocked by this malignant torture was her lot. (2) “But why? She was like a bird hiding under the thin hollow of a leaf, who blinks at the sun when the leaf moves”. (3) “she was surrounded by the enormous trees, vast clouds of an indifferent world, exposed, tortured” (p. 54).**

Woolf presents Laucrezia as an upset woman who has experienced this act of psychological trauma as a result of her husband’s mental illness after the First World War. Laucrezia’s suffering is described as a “malignant torture” because it is produced by Septimus who is her intimate husband and lover. Through the word “like”, Woolf obviously parallels Laucrezia with a bird that hides under a leaf whose hollow is thin. Sentences (2) and (3) show this correspondence. That is, Laucrezia, similar to the bird, searches for protection and safety through nature that is represented in her marriage from a heroic soldier. Likewise, the bird hides under a leaf in order to find a shelter and a cover. However, both Laucrezia and the bird, unfortunately, have exposed to threat and danger as their source of protection (the soldier and the leaf) grows pitiful. This explains why the noun “hollow” is described as “thin” that refers to Septimus’s flaw. The image of the bird which flashes at the sun symbolizes the existence of hope in Laucrezia’s soul to defeat that pain. Woolf, in sentence (3), states how Laucrezia has exceedingly experienced various wicked acts that lead to her being totally depressed. Laucrezia is bounded by this unsympathetic and heartless husband with whom miseries are interminable. Her world is designated as “indifferent” to reflect the coldness of Septimus’s emotions towards her.

TABLE 3  
SYNTACTIC TRIGGERS IN THE THIRD EXTRACT

The Tool	The Syntactic Trigger
Describing	Modification, the noun (torture), the modifier (malignant).
Describing	Modification, the noun (hollow), the modifier (thin).
Describing	Modification, the noun (world), the modifier (indifferent).

**Extract Four**

**Laucrezia talks with herself while she is sitting in Regent’s park:**

**(1) “One cannot bring children into a world like this.” (2) “One cannot perpetuate suffering, or increase the breed of these lustful animals, who have no lasting emotions” (p. 73).**

Laucrezia criticizes openly the male group and the hazardous world she lives in since both epitomize the foundation for her unsaved and gloomy life. Woolf in this extract presents Laucrezia as a disappointed woman who suffers deeply from her husband’s selfishness and indifference. In Laucrezia’s view, bringing children to this world offers an opportunity for those children to experience the same torture that their mothers have practiced. In doing so, no end exists for this sense of pain. Woolf’s choice for the word “one” rather than “I”, for instance, in sentence (1) indicates that the act of bringing children is a shared issue between man and woman which has to be seriously considered. Laucrezia dislikes males with whom she finds merely momentary desires and passions. She calls them “animals” to denote their special trait of being emotionless. According to Laucrezia, males are “lustful animals” who are bounded by their instincts and temporary desires. She names them “lustful animals” to indicate indirectly two issues. First, males have emotions and reactions only in experiencing this act through which they can accomplish their plea. In other words, the emergence of passion is closely connected with lust which is definitely impermanent. Second, males sometimes resort to brutality and cruelty with women; it is the way through which their lust can be achieved. In this sense, they turn to animals who are directed by their instincts rather than their minds or passions. Thus, Woolf here indirectly refers to man’s tyranny which is determined by his lust and shows how these concepts of woman’s trauma and lust are entirely interrelated.

TABLE 4  
SYNTACTIC TRIGGERS IN THE FOURTH EXTRACT

The Tool	The Syntactic Trigger
Naming	Choice of the noun, the noun (one)
Naming	Choice of the noun, the noun (one)
Naming	The choice of noun, the noun (animals).
Describing	Modification, the noun (animals), the modifier (lustful)
Describing	Modification, the noun (emotions), the modifier (lasting).

#### B. Quantitative Analysis of Mrs. Dalloway

Regarding the circulation of *Naming and Describing* in *Mrs. Dalloway*, all syntactic triggers that belong to this tool are utilized for revealing woman’s trauma as shown in Table 5. Nevertheless, they are scattered as follows:

1. Modification is the most common type 15 (71.43%).
2. Choice of noun is the next in its distribution 5 (23.81%).
3. Nominalization is the last in its regularity 1 (4.76%).

TABLE 5  
DISTRIBUTION OF NAMING AND DESCRIBING IN *MRS. DALLOWAY*

No.	Syntactic Trigger	Frequency	Percentage
1	Modification	15	71.43 %
2	Choice of Noun	5	23.81 %
3	Nominalization	1	4.76 %
<b>Total</b>		<b>21</b>	<b>100 %</b>

## VII. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Through three women characters in *Mrs. Dalloway*, Woolf delivers several themes that all reflect woman’s inner suffering and pain because of The First World War. Clarissa, Laucrezia and Kilman share the same struggle with solitude that is basically caused by the horrible event of war. Further, they all have attempts to put an end to that struggle and gain real communion, peace and delight.

Starting with the heroine of *Mrs. Dalloway*, Clarissa, she experiences this sense of fear from death which is closely connected with the event of war. In presenting such character, Woolf wants to show the psychological impact the war has on women who are not directly involved in the battle area. Similar to Clarissa, Laucrezia deeply suffers from rather extreme state of emotionlessness and carelessness that is performed by her lover and husband, Septimus. Being a veteran in the army and witnessing the death of other soldiers including his friend, Septimus is affected mentally. This justifies his unresponsiveness and negligence to Laucrezia. Again, the war is the basic reason behind Laucrezia’s despair and loneliness. The third woman character in *Mrs. Dalloway* is the poor Kilman who suffers a lot for being dismissed from her job during the war for her Germanic origin. The other part of her suffering is related to the lack of males in her life because of her ugliness and unattractiveness. Thus, Kilman’s pain is partly caused by the war. The similarity in the source of struggle that the three women experience explains why themes like suffering, sadness, depriving, loss, absence, .... etc. are revealed through *Naming and Describing* tool. Such correspondence in those themes reveals the extent of likeness in the spiritual misery of women who witness the First world war. Table 6 below shows these themes as well as ideologies.

TABLE 6  
SUMMARY OF THE THEMES AND IDEOLOGIES WITH WOMAN’S TRAUMA

The Character	The Theme	The Ideology
Clarissa	Absence of love and Intimacy	Non-Existence
	Indifference	
	Carelessness	
	Loss of humanity	
Laucrezia	Lust	Hegemony
	Brutality	
	Spiritual Pain	
	Indifference	
	un safety	
Kilman	Spiritual pain	Non-Existence Discrimination Bullying
	Abuse	
	Poverty	
	Depriving	

As far as ideologies are concerned, Woolf devotes *Naming and Describing* tool to uncover some negative ideologies such as hegemony, bullying, non-existence, etc. that go along with woman’s trauma. Such kind of ideologies reflects Woolf’s extreme denial to woman’s distress in her society. Woolf who represents the voice of the voiceless women motivates the British women to constantly fight in order to gain their contentment and peace.

*Naming and Describing* has total spread 21 (12.88%) in *Mrs. Dalloway* as it, similar to any fiction, includes a full description to characters as well as places. Novelists commonly nominate their characters in specific nouns such as, for instance, “body” rather than “woman” in order to denote a particular idea. This justifies why the two linguistic realizations of this tool namely: modification and choice of noun are more frequent than nominalization with scattering 15 (71.43%) and 5 (23.81%) individually. The little circulation of nominalization 1 (4.76%), of course, relates to the fact that Woolf deliberately wants to show the performers of the violent acts that are achieved against women and lead to their misery. Revolving these acts in to entities and covering their actors through nominalization process will certainly fail to convey the novelist’s rejection to woman’s trauma.

VIII. CONCLUSION

In the light of the qualitative and quantitative analysis of the selected data, the study concludes the following:

- 1- *Naming and Describing* is closely linked with the writer’s intention. That is, Woolf’s choice of a specific way of naming is determined by what she wants her readers grasp.
- 2- The first two ways of selecting a name that are entitled: modification and choice of noun are more frequent than nominalization with circulation 15 (71.43%) and 5 (23.81%) separately. The little scattering of nominalization 1 (4.76%) is traced back to Woolf’s intention to show openly the actors of the cruel acts against woman rather than covering them. Adding to that, Woolf has no tendency to turn such acts to tangible entities and give them names through nominalization process as she strongly believes in woman’s independence.
- 3- Virginia Woolf devotes *Naming and Describing* tool to show various themes like unsafety, humiliation, indifference, brutality ...etc. These themes either refer to the shortage in woman’s life or to woman’s exposure to wicked acts.
- 4- Four negative ideologies are uncovered and brought to the surface through *Naming and Describing* tool. These ideologies are: hegemony, discrimination, bullying, and non-existence.
- 5- The negative themes and ideologies that are revealed through Woolf’s selection of particular nouns prove the novelist’s rejection to war which is the basic source of woman’s trauma in her society.
- 6- As she is a social activist who represents the voice of the voiceless in the British society, Woolf employs *Naming and Describing* in order to introduce an appeal for women to struggle for attaining their amity.

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**Azhar H. Sallomi** was born in Baghdad/ Iraq (1971); married and has one child; currently lives in Kerbala in Milad Quarter. She got her Bachelor Degree in English language and linguistics from Al-Mustansiria university/ Iraq (1989-1994). She got her Master Degree in English language and Linguistics from Al-Mustansiria university/ Iraq (2003-2005). Currently, she is a PhD. candidate at Babylon University/ Iraq in English language and Linguistics. She currently works at Kerbala university/ college of education for human sciences/ Iraq. She teaches both B.A. and M. A. students. Her research interest is in applied linguistics, critical analysis, and pragmatic analysis.

Prof. Azhar H. Sallomi participated in over eleven international as well as local conferences; participated in and presented more than eleven workshops and seminars. She published over twenty-four academic papers in local and international journals.



**Iman M. Obied** was born in Baghdad/ Iraq (1971); married; currently lives in Hilla, she got her Bachelor Degree in English language and linguistics from Babylon university/ Iraq (1999). She got her Master Degree in English language and Linguistics from Al-Qadisiyah university/ Iraq (2004). She got her PhD. Degree in English language and Linguistics from Babylon university/ Iraq (2020).

She currently works at Babylon university/ college of education for human sciences/ Iraq. She teaches both B.A. and M. A. students. Her research interest is in General linguistics, Critical Stylistic Analysis, Pragmatics and Stylistics.

Prof. Iman M. Obied participated in over ten international as well as local conferences; participated in and presented more than eight workshops and seminars. She published over 21 academic papers in local and international journals.