

英语文体学研究概论

The Introduction to English Stylistics Research

洪宇 王卓 贺晓光 著

中国铁道出版社
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内 容 简 介

本书主要介绍英语文体学的起源(对于逻辑学和修辞学的深入语用的研究),以及英语各种文体的特点和在不同的语境中的应用情况。在阐释了各种英语文体之后,又适当地进行了与同一内容的汉语文本之间的问题比较和分析。

本书适合作为从事英语文体研究人员的参考用书,也适合作为普通高等学校学生在练习英文写作时的参考用书。

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FOREWORD

西方的文体研究起源于古希腊、罗马的修辞学。早期的研究注重文体的劝说功能。1909年巴依的《法语文体论》出版，标志着西方现代文体学的开端。20世纪60年代初西方现代文体学发展成为独立的学科。60~70年代是西方现代文体学的兴盛期，注重研究文体的形式和功能；80年代话语文体学兴起，注重分析会话，注重交际双方的相互作用过程；90年代社会历史与文化文体学蓬勃发展，注重揭示和批判语言中蕴涵的意识形态和权利关系。近年来的一个发展趋势是不同文体学派竞相发展，不断有新的文体学派形成。

1980年王佐良的《英语文体学论文集》出版，标志着我国外语界文体学研究的正式开始。文体学在教学、翻译、功能语体研究等方面的应用，以及文体学与其他学科的关系已经日益紧密了。20世纪90年代以来，外语界在文体学这门学科中所关心的问题主要有：什么是文体；什么是文体学；文体学的任务；体裁的研究；研究分析的不同方法；对个人风格的研究；文体学的发展方向；文体学的研究对象；文体学的解释力；文体学与符号学；文体学与叙事学；文体学与翻译学；文体测量学；跨学科交流；文体学与外语教学等。其中，许多问题都需要今后继续深入研究。

文体学为什么会有这种功效呢？

首先，从文体学和语言学的关系上讲，文体学有其自己的特点。从语言学的角度讲，文体学是语言学的一个分支，研究语言的某个方面，即它所表现出来的某些特点，而语言学是对语言整体的研究。但从文体学的角度讲，它是一个特殊的、跨学科的学科。它不仅把文学和语言学联系起来，还可以把语言学和许多与语言相关的学科联系起来，如社会语言学、心理语

言学、话语分析、会话分析、批评话语分析、体裁研究与符号学等。这也显示了文体学研究的独特特点。同时，文体学和语言学在研究重点上是有区别的。语言学以语法作为研究的中心，把组词造句作为研究的主要对象，同时它也以聚合关系作为研究的重点，无论形式主义还是功能主义都是如此。只有这些语言特征，才能表现出不同的文体特色，才能在文体分析中进行研究。

其次，从文体学研究的重点和出发点上讲，文体学研究的出发点是已经产出的语言，已经在语境当中使用的语言。这样，从语料上讲，它是活的语言，不是根据语法规则推导出来的语言。与它相伴随的还有情景语境、文化语境、交际目的、交际对象等。文体学研究的重点是发现语言的文体，以及为了发现语言的文体而建立起来的一系列理论模式、研究方法、问题分析程序及语料的选择方法等。

由此可见，文体学是一门研究语言运用的科学，涉及在什么条件下用（情景语境、文化语境、交际目的等），如何用得合适，如何才能取得预期的效果及用什么样的语言等。在外语教学和学习中，根据文体学的理论和研究重点来认识外语学习，指导自己的外语学习，培养自己的文体感（即交际教学法所提倡的合适性，或可接受性），会使自己的教学和学习更接近语言运用的实际，所使用的语言更容易达到交际目的，更适合语境等。

本书全部使用英文进行编写，以力求对英语文体学的起源、特点和在不同语境中的应用进行原汁原味地、精确地阐述，并研究如何才能将文本用得合适，使文体学在应用中取得预期的效果。

由于学识疏浅，书中疏漏和不足之处敬请学术界前辈、文体学和语言学同行及广大读者斧正。

著 者

2016年10月



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Chapter 1 General Introduction

1.1 Definition of Style

1.1.1 Language

First, we need to clarify our views on language. We must be clear about what language is, or how we should look at language.

There are many definitions of language, or many ways of looking at it. Modern linguistics which began with Saussure's lectures on general linguistics in 1906-1911 regards language as a system of signs. Meanwhile, American structuralism represented by Bloomfield regards language as a unified structure, a collection of habits. From the late 1950s on, the fact that "man talks" and the implications of this human capacity have been at the centre of investigation in the linguistic sciences. The transformational-generative (TG) linguists headed by Noam Chomsky have been concerned with the innate and infinite capacity of the human mind. This approach sees language as a system of innate rules. The approach advocated by the systemic-functional linguists headed by M. A. K. Halliday sees language as a "social semiotic", as an instrument used to perform various functions in social interaction. This approach holds that in many crucial respects, what is more important is not so much that "man talks" as that "men talk"; that is, that language is essentially a social activity.

The philosophical view of language or a language is related to the actual occurrence of language in society — what are called language activities. People accomplish a great deal not only through physical acts, such as cooking, eating, bicycling, running a machine, cleaning, but also by verbal acts of all types: conversation, telephone calls, job application, letters, notes scribbled to a roommate, etc. All utterances (whether a word, a sentence, or several sentences) can be thought of as goal-directed actions. Such actions as carried out through language are speech acts. Social activities in which language (either spoken or written) plays an important role, such as conversation, discussion lecture, etc. are speech events.

Most of these events are sequential and transitory (that is, they occur in sequence and can not last for a long time). It is difficult to examine them at the time of their occurrence. So we have to record the events. Any such record, whether recalled through memory, or committed to a tape, or written down on paper, or printed in a book, of a speech event is known as a text.

Language is often compared to a code, a system of signals or symbols used for sending a message, a piece of information. In any act of verbal communication (both spoken and written, primarily spoken), language has been regarded as a system for translating meanings in the addresser's (the speaker's/writer's) mind into sounds/letters, i. e. encoding (meaning-to-sound/letter), or conversely, for translating sounds/letters into meanings in the addressee's (the hearer's/reader's) mind, i. e. decoding (sound/letter-to-meaning), with lexis and grammar as the formal code mediating between meaning and sound/letter.

But we must keep in mind that, unlike other signaling codes, language code does not operate in a fixed way — it is open ended in that it permits generation of new meanings and new forms (such as metaphorical meanings, and neologisms); i. e. it is in a way creatively extendible.

Text, then, is verbal communication either spoken or written seen as a message coded in a linear pattern of sound waves, or in a linear sequence of visible marks on paper.

1.1.2 Style

Now we come to the question of style. The word style has been used in many ways. The definitions are as follows:

Buffon: Le style, c' est l' homme meme.

Emerson: A man's style is his mind's voice.

Swift: Proper words in proper places make the true definition of a style.

Enkvist :

(1) Style is the very thought itself.

(2) Style is ingratiation. It involves saying the right thing in the most effective way.

(3) Style is a shell surrounding a preexisting core of thought. It is regarded as addition to central core of thought or expression.

(4) Style is choice. It is the choice between alternative expressions.

- (5) Style is a set of individual characteristics. It is the man himself.
- (6) Style is deviation from a norm.
- (7) Style is a set of collective characteristics.
- (8) Style is the relation among linguistic entities that are stable in terms of wider spans of text than the sentence.

Style may refer to a person's distinctive language habits, or the set of individual characteristics of language use; style may refer to a set of collective characteristics of language use; style may refer to the effectiveness of a mode of expression, which is implied in the definition of style as "saying the right thing in the most effective way" or "good manners", as a "clear" or "refined" style advocated in most books of composition; style may refer solely to a characteristic of "good" or "beautiful" literary writings. This is the wide-spread use of style among literary critics, as "grand style" "ornate style" "lucid style" "plain style", etc., given to literary works.

Of the above four senses of style, the first two (especially the second) come nearest to our definition of style. To be exact, we shall regard style as the language habit of a person or group of persons in a given situation. As different situations tend to yield different varieties of a language which, in turn, display different linguistic features, so style may be seen as the various characteristics of language that a person or group of persons make in various social contexts.

Here we can use Ferdinand de Saussure's distinction between *langue* and *parole*. *Langue* is the system of rules common to speakers of a particular language (such as English), i.e. the general mass of linguistic features common to a language as used on every conceivable occasion. *Parole* is the particular uses of this system, or selections from this system, that a person or group of persons will make on this or that occasion. Style, then, belongs to *parole*. It consists in choices from the total linguistic repertoire of a particular language.

All linguistic choices are meaningful, and all linguistic choices are stylistic. Even choices which are clearly dictated by subject matter are part of style. In our discussion, however, stylistic choice is limited to those aspects of linguistic choice which concern alternative ways of rendering the same subject matter, or those forms of language which can be seen as equivalent in terms of referential reality they describe, or, in other words, the "synonymous expressions" in transmitting the same "message".

We are interested in the way in which choices of codes are adapted to communicative functions for advertising, news reporting, science thesis, including the aesthetic function for literature. Hence the occurrence of different functional styles and of the various styles of literature.

When we look at style in a text, we are not likely to be struck by local or individual choices in isolation, but rather at a pattern of choices. If, for instance, a text shows a repeated preference for passive structures over active structures, we are likely to consider this preference a feature of style. But local or specific features may also be noteworthy features of style if they form a significant relationship with other features in a coherent (consistent) pattern of choice. Consistency in preference is naturally reduced to “frequency”: To find out what is distinctive about the style of a text, we just measure the frequency of the features it contains. The more we wish to substantiate what we say about style, the more we will need to point to the linguistic evidence of texts, and linguistic evidence has to be couched in terms of numerical frequency.

Yet it is worth our note that a feature which occurs more rarely than usual is just as much a part of the statistical pattern as one which occurs more often than usual, and it is also a significant aspect of our sense of style.

1.2 Definition of Stylistics

What is stylistics? You may very well be asking this question. Here are definitions from different sources:

“A branch of linguistics which studies the characteristics of situationally — distinctive uses of language with particular reference to literary language, and tries to establish principles capable of accounting for the particular choices made by individuals and social groups in their use of language.”

(The Fontana Dictionary of Modern Thought, 1977, 2nd, 1988).

Stylistics can be defined briefly as “the study of style”. However, if we examine it closely, we can find that it is not as simple as it seems. Before the 1950s, stylistics was mainly concerned with the study of literary works. So Widowson defines style as “the study of literary discourse from a linguistic orientation” and he says further, “I shall take the view that what distinguishes stylistics from literary criticism on the one hand and linguistics on the other is that it is essentially a means of linking the two”. Leech holds exactly the same view,

and defines style as “the study of the use of language in literature”, a “meeting-ground of linguistics and literary study”.

From these definitions, you can see that stylistics is concerned with the idea of “style”, with the analysis of literary texts, and with the use of linguistics. “Style” is usually understood within this area of study as the selection of certain linguistic forms or features over other possible ones. For example, what makes the writing of Jane Austen or E. M. Forster distinctive, and some would say, great, is not only the ideas expressed, but the choices they made from the language available to them. A stylistic analysis of the styles of these writers could include their words, phrases, sentence order, and even the organization of their plots.

The writers whose “styles” have in the past tended to most interest stylisticians (people who practice stylistics) have usually been the so-called “canonical” texts — those found on traditional undergraduate English degree reading lists. The methods used to analyze “style” have been drawn from linguistics, the study of language.

We can say that some key aspects of stylistics are: the use of linguistics (the study of language) to approach literary texts; the discussion of texts according to objective criteria rather than according purely to subjective and impressionistic values; emphasis on the aesthetic properties of language (for example, the way rhyme can give pleasure).

To complicate matters, however, we need to qualify this definition slightly. For example, the first point made above states that stylistics is the study of literary texts through linguistics. However, the definition of what is “literary” is contentious. It is often treated as a self-evident category, but in fact our assumptions about what is “literary” frequently depend on the judgments of the academics who select the texts on university degrees, and on the major publishing houses like Faber and Faber. The plays and poems of Shakespeare and the novels of Dickens are generally agreed to be literary while adverts and newspaper reports are usually agreed not to be literature. However, reports and adverts may share linguistic structures and functions with texts written by Shakespeare or Dickens. Defining “literariness” is in fact a very grey and ambiguous area; consequently, the kind of texts which we will be looking at, using the methods of stylistics often exceed the boundaries of what is commonly taken to be “literary”.

Now let us examine the second part of the definition further. Is it true that

stylistics is objective (i.e. scientific and not influenced by the opinions or personality of the analyst) rather than subjective and impressionistic (depending on “get feelings” or reflecting the emotions and culture of the analyst) ?

The scholars who developed the process of stylistic analysis originally claimed it to be objective in order to emphasize the contrast between stylistics and its precursor literary criticism. Literary criticism was and still is the practice (usually conducted at universities) of reading an extract from a text closely, and selecting features from it to comment on and analyze perhaps to show how the passage or poem was typical or atypical of a specific writer's work, or of a period or genre (i.e. a particular kind of writing), and importantly, to assess how good or bad a piece of literature it was. Thus literary criticism involved explicit value judgments, but on criteria which individual literary critics could select for themselves. Another critic might select quite different criteria, and thus reach a quite different judgment about how “good” or “bad” the text was.

This method of analysis has been popular on university degree courses in English Literature for most of last century. The process of stylistics was developed to provide a less intuitive, less personal method of analysis — one which would depend instead on the observable facts, the language of the text, and a scientific discipline to interpret them: linguistics. By concentrating on the language of the text, and accepted linguistic methods of categorizing and interpreting, it was argued that stylistics did not reflect the views of the individual critic, but an impersonal, reproducible “truth”. Anyone approaching the text and conducting the same stylistic procedure ought to arrive at the same results.

Nowadays, however, few people would claim that stylistics is totally objective, and not many people would want it to be. Exactly, which elements of a text you decide to scrutinize is a subjective decision — not everyone would agree about what the significant elements are. Even more subjective is the process of interpretation. It is now widely acknowledged that your personal history and current circumstances influence the way you interpret what you read. For example, if you were someone who had never studied literature or linguistics before, your interpretation of this chapter would be very different from what it would be if you were either an “old school” literary critic, or you had a professional background in linguistics.

Stylisticians can disagree both at the level of interpretation which is

dependent on the reader and context in which the text is read and also at the philosophical level of how texts should be analyzed and for what purpose. For example, in *Feminist Stylistics*, Sara Mills suggests that stylistics can be used to demonstrate the way gender is represented and constructed by texts, and that stylisticians can use this information to uncover the ways in which society operates to the disadvantage of women. Overtly political practices such as these are supported by some stylisticians and opposed by others.

What remains central to the practice of stylistics is the application of linguistic knowledge to describe the ways that writers use language, and the choices that they make in creating texts. This part of stylistics can be seen as systematic and objective, in so far as stylisticians can describe and draw attention to the formal features of a text. Once these features have been identified, however, the interpretive process is much more subjective.

The final part of our definition that stylistics deals with the aesthetic properties of texts, is also true some of the time but not all of the time. What makes a text attractive (for example, its metre or its metaphors) is an area of interest to many stylisticians. But as we said above, some stylisticians have agenda that are quite different.

Therefore we will have to stretch our original definition of stylistics somewhat. We will be looking at texts — some will be traditional literary texts, but others will not. We will be looking at the data of the texts (language) and analyzing it according to linguistic categories and theories. However, linguists would acknowledge that the preference for some categories or theories over others is not ever entirely objective. We will be emphasizing the aesthetic properties of language, but we will not be exclusively concerned with aesthetics.

However, in the last three or four decades, the object of analysis in stylistics is not restricted to literary works any more but expands its scope of analysis into the study of non-literary texts. So we can say now that stylistics can be defined as “the study of discourse or text on the basis of modern linguistic theories”.

English stylistics has developed on the basis of traditional rhetoric which can be traced back to the time of the great Greek civilization with Plato and Aristotle as pioneering figures. But it was not until the late 1950s that stylistics became a field of academic inquiry. Linguistically, it was initiated by the development of two most influential theories of linguistics: Chomsky’s transformational