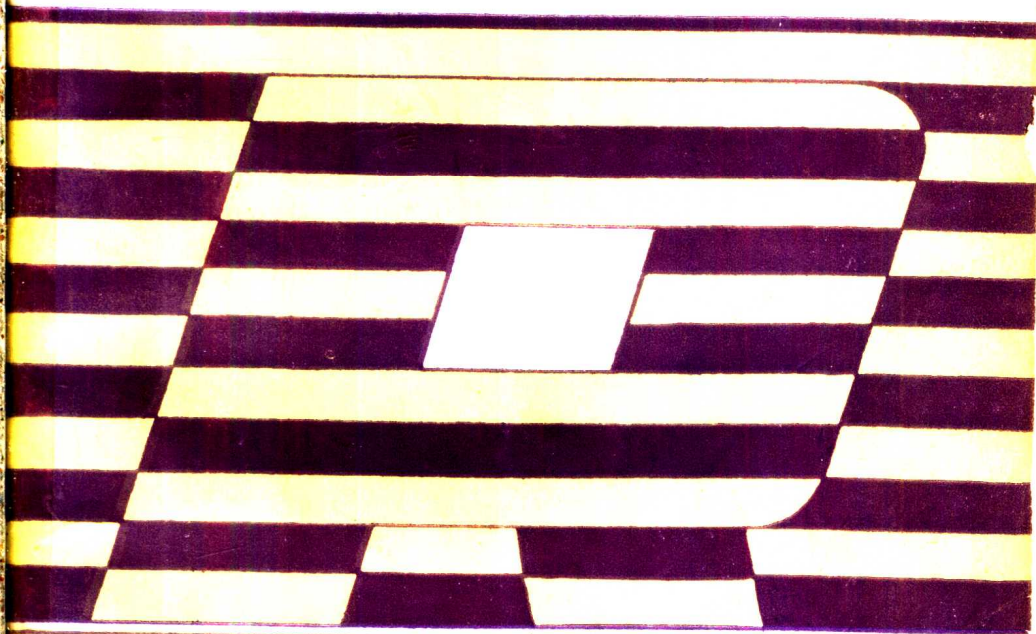


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READINGS IN STYLISTICS

英语语体学和文体学论文选



上海外语教育出版社

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程雨民 主编

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序

文体学是一门有发展前途的学问。它的实用性强。人们的眼光一旦从单句进到整文,就无法不注意语篇的类别、对象、作用、特征种种,弄清楚了这些,有助于更有效地传达思想感情。同时文体学在理论上探讨频繁。它同历史上的修辞学、现代的符号学、文学理论等关系密切,而应用到文学文章上又同文学批评难解难分。本世纪初以来,从现代语言学原理出发的文体学者致力于建立一套严格、系统的方法论,也颇有成就,但总的说来,这一学科还是开放的,流动的,还在跨越若干门类寻求新的综合。我以为这正是文体学可喜的一点。

这一部论文集反映了上述情况:几种观点并陈,没有一种是“指令性”的权威结论。但是这里也收纳了一些同行学者珍视的论文,有的带有里程碑的性质,编者们还加了简明注释,这就会十分有助于刚刚起步的研究者。这类论文合集是国外学术出版物中的新现象之一,许多学科都有,而且越编越精,起到了总结和创导的作用,许多散见于偏僻地方的学报的重要论文赖以保存与传播,实在是嘉惠士林,有功于学术。我国研究者常苦于外国材料难得,一定更会欢迎这类论文合集的出版。所以编者们是做了一件好事,值得我们大家感谢。

王佐良

1984年8月1日

Introduction

For a very long time, until the London school of linguists came along, language had been conceived as something homogeneous, having a unified standard form. Any deviation from this standard was either dialectal – therefore uncultivated, or substandard -- therefore bad. As for the different linguistic expressions, within the standard form, of the “same” thought, they were taken as different ways to “dress” the thought, and evaluated according to the principles of rhetoric, derived from no less an authority than Aristotle.

Chomsky basically followed this line when he emphasized, without making prescriptive remarks, the linguistic competence of the “ideal” speaker-listener as distinguished from actual linguistic performance which is full of various kinds of “mistakes”.

For the London School (Malinowski, Firth, Halliday, and others), however, language is a social behaviour, and it is primarily linked not to thought – which has a unique pattern for all human beings – but to concrete situations. Situations not only call for the use of language, but also determine the type of language to be used and the meaning it is to acquire.

The study of language use in close connection with contexts of situation led to the discovery of “diatypic varieties” (variously called “professional varieties”, “registers” or “styles”), as distinguished from and existing side by side with “dialectal varieties”. A summary of the

achievements made by the British linguists in this respect is to be found in “The Users and Uses of Language (Excerpts)” (Halliday, McIntosh and Stevens (1964), Chapter 4, Sections 4 and 5).

An inspiring, if impressionistic, discussion of “style” in a narrower sense, as distinguished from “professional varieties”, is provided by the American linguist Martin Joos in *The Five Clocks* (1962).

The three other articles in PART ONE serve to illustrate how the method of concrete linguistic analysis is applied to the study of linguistic style.

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Since the 1920s, under the influence of New Criticism, the main trend in literary criticism in the West has been characterized by a careful scrutiny of the text. Features of language use naturally attract more attention in this approach. As this happened at a time when modern linguistics seemed to be opening up, one after another, new inventories of descriptive and analytical tools of considerable precision for the study of language, it was only natural that efforts were made to apply the “precise tools” to the analysis of literary style. John Spencer and Michael Gregory’s monograph *An Approach to the Study of Style* (1964) was one of the pioneer works representing these efforts. H.G.Widdowson’s article “An Approach to Stylistic Analysis” (1974) places its emphasis on the role of stylistics in the teaching of literature and in language learning.

The application of linguistic methods to literature in general and to the different genres of fiction, poetry and drama is exemplified respectively by an article by R. Ohmann: “Literature as Sentences”, an article by G. Leech: “‘This Bread I Break’ – Language and Interpretation” (1965), an excerpt from G. Leech and M. Short’s book *Style in Fiction* (1981) and a chapter from M. Coulthard’s *An Introduction to*

Discourse Analysis (1977). J. P. Thorne's "Generative Grammar and Stylistic Analysis" (1970) is an illustration of how the principles of generative grammar are also found to be applicable to the stylistic analysis of literary texts.

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Although the application of techniques and concepts of modern linguistics to the study of literature is sometimes given the name of "new stylistics" (e.g. in R. Fowler, 1975), it is only fair to point out that its exponents have all along been clear about the tentative nature of the new approach, as may be seen in these two passages included in the present anthology:

It is in our decision to use descriptive linguistics as a component in the study of style, a component which aids in developing, modifying, and making more explicit our responses to the use of language in a text, it is in this that we diverge from, without rejecting or ignoring, the literary critic's traditional approach.

John Spencer and Michael Gregory,
"An Approach to the Study of Style"

In brief, stylistics takes the language as primary and artistic values are regarded as incidental to linguistic description: literary criticism, on the other hand, takes artistic values as primary and refers to language in so far as it serves as evidence for aesthetic assessments. Stylistics renders an essential service to language learning in that even if the learner does not develop an appreciation of literature as literature, he will have acquired an awareness of the way language functions in at least this form of communication: he will

have developed an awareness of literature as language.

H. G. Widdowson, "An Approach
to Stylistic Analysis"

It is in this light that we view Stanley Fish's "What Is Stylistics and Why Are They Saying Such Terrible Things About It ?" not as a repudiation of stylistics, but both as a reminder that the limited purpose of stylistics may sometimes be forgotten, and, more positively, as a call for the improvement of the new approach by basing the analysis on the reader's experiences -- a not uncommon practice in the traditional approaches:

... I am calling not for the end of stylistics but for a new stylistics, what I have termed elsewhere an "affective" stylistics, in which the focus of attention is shifted from the spatial context of a page and its observable regularities to the temporal context of a mind and its experiences.

Does this mean a return to the dreaded impressionism ? Quite the reverse. The demand for precision will be even greater because the object of analysis is a process whose shape is continually changing. In order to describe that shape, it will be necessary to make use of all the information that formal characterizations of language can provide, although that information will be viewed from a different perspective ...

Stanley E. Fish, "What is Stylistics
and Why Are They ... ?"

Stanley Fish's criticism as well as Spencer and Widdowson's reservations justify a separate part which will give the readers some idea

about “the literary critic’s traditional approach”. We believe that one has only to take into consideration the analytical depth of the articles in **PART THREE** to feel convinced that, indeed, this approach should not and could not have been “rejected and ignored”.

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All the articles included in the three parts fall into the two categories of exposition and concrete analysis. The one general topic that has been left out is the discussion of technicalities of analysis, which is too varied to be captured with any degree of comprehensiveness in an anthology of this size.

June, 1984

Cheng Yumin

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PART ONE

LINGUISTIC STYLE

Discourse Analysis (1977). J. P. Thorne's "Generative Grammar and Stylistic Analysis" (1970) is an illustration of how the principles of generative grammar are also found to be applicable to the stylistic

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The Users and Uses of Language

(Excerpts)

A dialect is a variety of a language distinguished according to the user: different groups of people within the language community speak different dialects. It is possible also to recognize varieties of a language along another dimension, distinguished according to use. Language varies as its function varies; it differs in different situations. The name given to a variety of a language distinguished according to use is 'register'.

The category of 'register' is needed when we want to account for what people do with their language. When we observe language activity in the various contexts in which it takes place, we find differences in the type of language selected as appropriate to different types of situation. There is no need to labour the point that a sports commentary, a church service and a school lesson are linguistically quite distinct. One sentence from any of these and many more such situation types would enable us to identify it correctly. We know, for example, where 'an early announcement is expected' comes from and 'apologies for absence were received'; these are not simply free variants of 'we ought to hear soon' and 'was sorry he couldn't make it'.

It is not the event or state of affairs being talked about that determines the choice, but the convention that a certain kind of language is appropriate to a certain use. We should be surprised, for example, if it

was announced on the carton of our toothpaste that the product was 'just right for cleaning false teeth' instead of 'ideal for cleansing artificial dentures'. We can often guess the source of a piece of English from familiarity with its use: 'mix well' probably comes from a recipe, although the action of mixing is by no means limited to cookery – and 'mixes well' is more likely to be found in a testimonial. .

The choice of items from the wrong register, and the mixing of items from different registers, are among the most frequent mistakes made by non-native speakers of a language. If an L_2 English speaker uses, in conversation, a dependent clause with modal 'should', such as 'should you like another pint of beer, ...', where a native speaker would use a dependent clause with 'if', he is selecting from the wrong register. Transference of this kind is not limited to foreigners, the native schoolboy may transfer in the opposite direction, writing in his Shakespeare essay 'it was all up with Lear, who couldn't take any more of it'.

Linguistic humour often depends on the inappropriate choice and the mixing of registers: P. G. Wodehouse exploits this device very effectively. Fifty years ago the late George Robey used to recite a version of 'The house that Jack built' which ended as follows: '... that disturbed the equanimity of the domesticated feline mammal that exterminated the noxious rodent that masticated the farinaceous produce deposited in the domiciliary edifice erected by Master John'.

Dialects tend to differ primarily, and always to some extent, in substance. Registers, on the other hand, differ primarily in form. Some registers, it is true, have distinctive features at other levels, such as the voice quality associated with the register of church services. But the crucial criteria of any given register are to be found in its grammar and its lexis. Probably lexical features are the most obvious. Some lexical items suffice almost by themselves to identify a certain register; 'cleanse' puts

us in the language of advertising, 'probe' of newspapers, especially headlines, 'tablespoonful' of recipes or prescriptions, 'neckline' of fashion reporting or dressmaking instructions. The clearest signals of a particular register are scientific technical terms, except those that belong to more than one science, like 'morphology' in biology and linguistics.

Often it is not the lexical item alone but the collocation of two or more lexical items that is specific to one register. 'Kick' is presumably neutral, but 'free kick' is from the language of football. Compare the disc jockey's 'top twenty'; 'thinned right down' at the 'hairdresser's (but 'thinned out' in the garden); and the collocation of 'heart' and 'bid' by contrast with 'heart' and 'beat'.

Purely grammatical distinctions between the different registers are less striking, yet there can be considerable variation in grammar also. Extreme cases are newspaper headlines and church services; but many other registers, such as sports commentaries and popular songs, exhibit specific grammatical characteristics. Sometimes, for example, in the language of advertising, it is the combination of grammatical and lexical features that is distinctive. 'Pioneers in self-drive car hire' is an instance of a fairly restricted grammatical structure. The collocation of the last four lexical items is normal enough in other structures, as in 'why don't you hire a car and drive yourself?'; but their occurrence in this structure, and in collocation with an item like 'pioneer' or 'specialist', is readily identifiable as an advertising slogan.

Registers are not marginal or special varieties of language. Between them they cover the total range of our language activity. It is only by reference to the various situations, and situation types, in which language is used that we can understand its functioning and its effectiveness. Language is not realized in the abstract: it is realized as the activity of people in situations, as linguistic events which are manifested in a

particular dialect and register.

No one suggests, of course, that the various registers characteristic of different types of situation have nothing in common. On the contrary, a great deal of grammatical and lexical material is common to many of the registers of a given language, and some perhaps to all. If this was not so we could not speak of 'a language' in this sense at all, just as we should not be able to speak of 'a language' in the sense of a dialect continuum if there was not a great deal in common among the different dialects.

But there tends to be more difference between events in different registers than between different events in one register. If we failed to note these differences of register, we should be ignoring an important aspect of the nature and functioning of language. Our descriptions of languages would be inaccurate and our attempts to teach them to foreigners made vastly more difficult.

It is by their formal properties that registers are defined. If two samples of language activity from what, on non-linguistic grounds, could be considered different situation-types show no differences in grammar or lexis, they are assigned to one and the same register: for the purposes of the description of the language there is only one situation-type here, not two. For this reason a large amount of linguistic analysis is required before registers can be identified and described. It is one thing to make a general description of English, accounting, to a given degree of delicacy, for all the features found in some or other variety of the language. Most native speakers will agree on what is and what is not possible, and the areas of disagreement are marginal. It is quite another thing to find out the special characteristics of a given register: to describe for example the language of consultations between doctor and patient in the surgery.

For such a purpose very large samples of textual material are needed.

Moreover much of the language activity that needs to be studied takes place in situations where it is practically impossible to make tape recordings. It is not surprising, therefore, that up to now we know very little about the various registers of spoken English. Even studies of the written language have only recently begun to be made from this point of view. For this reason we are not yet in a position to talk accurately about registers; there is much work to be done before the concept is capable of detailed application.

While we still lack a detailed description of the registers of a language on the basis of their formal properties, it is nevertheless useful to refer to this type of language variety from the point of view of institutional linguistics. There is enough evidence for us to be able to recognize the major situation types to which formally distinct registers correspond; others can be predicted and defined from outside language. A number of different lines of demarcation have been suggested for this purpose. It seems most useful to introduce a classification along three dimensions, each representing an aspect of the situations in which language operates and the part played by language in them. Registers, in this view, may be distinguished according to field of discourse, mode of discourse and style of discourse.

'Field of discourse' refers to what is going on: to the area of operation of the language activity. Under this heading, registers are classified according to the nature of the whole event of which the language activity forms a part. In the type of situation in which the language activity accounts for practically the whole of the relevant activity, such as an essay, a discussion or an academic seminar, the field of discourse is the subject-matter. On this dimension of classification, we can recognize registers such as politics and personal relations, and technical registers like biology and mathematics.