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Theories and Practices of English Stylistics

英语文体学

理论与实践

董　莉　编著

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BRIEF INTRODUCTION

As an inter-disciplined branch of learning, stylistics covers many fields such as linguistics, literature, pragmatics, etc. It can improve our writing skill, or appreciation of literary works, or even communicative ability need to understand the basic theories and principles of stylistics.

The book consists of three parts. Part One is devoted to a comprehensive study of stylistics in theory. Important concepts, varieties of stylistic meanings, and the effective procedures of analysis in particular are explored in detail. Part Two attempts to introduce stylistic varieties, each of which is closely related to the theories presented previously. Part Three is surely very important and interesting as there stand in front of you quite a few world-wide and historical giants in literature. These famous writers set us excellent examples in their stylistic practices. Time and space find no limitations to them, as they will forever shine in the sky of human literature and thought around the globe.

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Preface

As an inter-disciplined branch of learning, stylistics covers many fields such as linguistics, literature, pragmatics, etc. Those who wish to improve his writing skill, or appreciation of literary works, or even his communicative ability need to understand the basic theories and principles of stylistics. It is for this purpose that we write and compile the present book.

The book consists of three parts. Part One is devoted to a comprehensive study of stylistics in theory. Important concepts, varieties of stylistic meanings, and the effective procedures of analysis in particular are explored in detail, hoping that they will help the senior students to lay a solid foundation. Part Two attempts to introduce stylistic varieties, each of which is closely related to the theories presented previously. Not only do we examine the stylistic features of different kinds of literary works like poetry, fiction and drama, but also we introduce various kinds of prose writing, which is organized in logic, or in space, or in time. This part will be of benefit to those who intend to make rapid progress in oral or written works. Part Three is surely very important and interesting as there stand in front of you quite a few world-wide and historical giants in literature. These famous writers set us excellent examples in their stylistic practices. Time and space find no limitations to them, as they will forever shine in the sky of human literature and thought around the globe.

It needs to be indicated that in the book great importance is attached both to the theoretical introduction and pragmatic analysis of necessary examples with a view to achieve academic and practical values as well.

My deep thanks go to Professor Dong Junmin, Guo Qunying for their great personal help, and Cambridge University Press in particular for its

highly instructive *The Cambridge Companion to Literature* published in 1998 from which I have got much inspiration and quoted a few remarkable comments in discussion.

Dong Li

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Part

One

Stylistic Theories

Chapter 1

Introduction to Stylistics

1. Stylistics is not mysterious

Talking about stylistics, some people think that stylistics is so mysterious that it is far away from us. Actually, stylistics is a branch of learning that studies different styles. Style is with us every day and everywhere. Everybody has his or her own style. Whatever you say, or whenever you do something, you have already used a kind of style: formal or informal, written or spoken, elegant or commonplace, conventional or deviated, etc. Hence, style is like one's shadow. It always follows him.

Moreover, some students often say that style or what they might call "good style" or "literary style", is something that can be added to plain thoughts or a plain statement of facts, as icing can be put on to a cake. A student once said to us, "I have written my report, but I have brought it to you to put some style into it." We could not put "style" into it. It was already written in a certain style, though it may not have been a very good style. We could have re-written it in a different style. Then it would have been our arrangement of facts, our choice of words. Every writer is expressing himself in a certain style, though it may not have any very marked features. In the words of Cardinal Newman: "Matter and expression are parts of one; style is a thinking out into language."

2. How to understand stylistic meaning

According to G. Leech (1974), meanings of meaning can be broken down into various ingredients or types: denotative, connotative, stylistic, affective, reflected, collocational and thematic. Stylistic meaning is often talked about by those who major in linguistics or literature. Unlike denotative meaning which refers to a word's literal sense, and connotative meaning which refers to its implied ideas, stylistic meaning is that which a piece of language conveys about the social circumstances of its use. We

"decode" the stylistic meaning of a text through our recognition of different dimensions and levels of usage within the same language. Firstly, we recognize some words or pronunciations as being dialectal, i.e., as telling us something of the geographical or social origin of the speaker. Secondly, other features of language tell us something of the social relationship between the speaker and the hearer. We have a scale of "status" usage, for example, descending from formal and literary English at one end to colloquial, familiar, and eventually slang English at the other. For example:

(1) My beloved parent has joined the heavenly choir.
(2) My dear father has passed away.
(3) My father has died.
(4) My old man has kicked the bucket.

Each of these statements communicates the same fact that his father has died. But the words which express the fact are different in each case. The matter is the same, but the manner has changed. In other words, each sentence is written in a different style. Next is about the term "synonym". If we understand synonymy as complete equivalence of communicative effect, it is indeed hard to find an example that will disprove this statement. But there is much convenience in restricting the term "synonymy" to equivalence of conceptual meaning, so that we may then contrast conceptual synonyms with respect to their varying stylistic overtones:

- Steed (poetic)
- Horse (general)
- Nag (slang)
- Gee-gee (baby language)

- Domicile (very formal, official)
- Residence (formal)
- Abode (poetic)
- Home (general)

- Cast (literary, biblical)
- Throw (general)
- Chuck (casual, slang)

- Diminutive (very formal)
- Tiny (colloquial)
- Wee (colloquial, dialectal)

The next sentence will show you how a poet can express himself in a special way:

*You **pays** your money and*
*You **doesn't** take your choice.*

— E. E. Cummings

The two sentences look ungrammatical, but are specially designed to express the meaning that the transaction is unfair or irregular as is seen in the ungrammatical form. They remind us of a new perspective in looking at the style.

3. What is style

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 pre-existing core of thought. It is regarded as an 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.

4. What is stylistics

G.W. Turner (1973) says, "Stylistics is that part of linguistics which concentrates on variation in the use of language.... Stylistics means the study of style, with a suggestion, from the form of the word, of a scientific or at least a methodical study." Widdowson (1975) gives a further explanation, "By stylistics, I mean the study of literary discourse from a linguistic orientation and 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."

In a word, stylistics is an inter-disciplined branch of learning which studies various differences between formal and informal, between deviant and normal, between magnificent and plain, between professional and popular, between foreign and domestic, between this and that individual.

5. Development of modern stylistics

Modern stylistics starts from the publication of Charles Bally's *Traite de Stylistique Francaise* in 1909. Since then it has experienced three stages.

The first stage (1900s – 1930s) — This is the period of birth. During this time, linguistics turned its attention from diachronic study to synchronic study, from the historical study of language evolution to the study of language system's structural components and their relations; stylistics excluded literary texts, limiting its range to spoken discourse. Under the influence of Saussure's structural linguistics, Bally attempted to make structural dichotomy analysis on literary styles. He held the view that style was the component part of content. To make stylistic study scientific, he divided content into conceptual and non-conceptual. The conceptual content was intellectual while the non-conceptual content affective which was the object of stylistic study. The affective content

was composed of natural effect and evocative effect. However, his methods of division are too subjective, depending on intuition and lacking the strictness of scientific studies.

The second stage (1930s–1950s) — This is the period of development. The representative stylisticians are L. Spitzer, E. Auerbach, J. Marouzeau, M. Cressot, etc. Some of them put forward the "theory of choice", defining style as deviance from the norm. Spitzer worked out the "philology cycle" model, directing the attention to literary works and the writer's particular way of using language materials, and interpreting them psychologically and culturally. Jacobson put up the "theory of function", distinguishing six functions of language: emotive, conative, referential, poetic, phatic and metalinguistic. In different cases, different functions predominate. In literary language, it is the poetic function that predominates. The information and code of the poetic function, together with the metalinguistic function, are what the stylistics studies. "The poetic function projects the principle of equivalence from the axis of selection into the axis of combination" (Jacobson, 1958). That is, the poem, as a kind of special language information, whose surface relations between the codes are controlled not only by combination rules, but also by equivalence rules, presents large number of linguistic phenomena of equivalence: rhyme, rhythm, balance, parallelism, and the like. Jacobson also studied linguistic stylistics. He used the statistical method to make detailed analysis of the text, resulting in that modern linguistics broke away from impressionism since then.

The third stage (1950s – present) — This is a period of prosperity. The publication of Chomsky's *Syntactic Structures* brings about a revolution in the field of linguistics. The rapid development of modern linguistics exerts a strong impetus to the study of style. At this stage, stylisticians apply different theories of linguistics to stylistic analysis, such as structural linguistics, Transformational Generative grammar,

Systemic Functional grammar, Speech Act theory, Conversational Analysis theory, etc.

However, stylistics is often considered as both an old and a young branch of learning. It is old, because it originated from the ancient "Rhetoric"; it is young, because the word "stylistics" first appeared only in 1882, and the first book on stylistics was written by a French scholar Charles Bally in 1902 and was published in 1909: *Traite de Stylistique Francaise*. Consequently, a number of more coherent and systematic works of both a theoretical and a practical nature were published in the field. Now, stylistics has developed into an inter-disciplinary area of study with explicit aims and effective techniques, and promises to offer useful insights into literary criticism and writing practice.

6. Suggested works on stylistics for students

(1) *The Five Clocks*
        Martin Joos, 1962
(2) *Linguistics and Style*
        N. E. Enkvist, J. Spencer & M. Gregory, 1965
(3) *A Short Guide to English Style*
        Alan Warner, 1968
(4) *Investigating English Style*
        David Crystal & Derek Davy, 1969
(5) *Linguistics and Literary Style*
        D. C, Freeman, 1970
(6) *Literary Style*
        Seymour Chatman, 1971
(7) *Linguistics Stylistics*
        N. E. Enkvist, 1973
(8) *Meaning and Style*
        S. Ullmann, 1973
(9) *Stylistics*
        G. W. Turner, 1973
(10) *Learning How to Mean*
        Halliday, 1975

(11) *Prose Style and Critical Reading*
     Robert Cluett, 1976
(12) *Language and Situation*
     M. Gregory & S. Carroll, 1978
(13) *Varieties of English*
     G. L. Brook, 1979
(14) *Variety in Contemporary English*
     W. R. O'Donnel & Loreto Todd, 1980
(15) *Style in Fiction*
     G. N. Leech & M.H. Short, 1981
(16) *Essays in Modern Stylistics*
     D. C. Freeman, 1981
(17) *Style and Communication in the English Language*
     R. Quirk, 1982
(18) *The Stylistics of Fiction*
     M. J. Toolan, 1990
(19) *Style: Text Analysis and Literary Criticism*
     D. Freeborn, 1996
(20) *Stylistics: A Practical Course-book*
     L. Wright, 1996

7. Linguistics, stylistic analysis, and literary criticism

As discussed above, stylistics is an interdiscipline across two academic fields – linguistics and literary criticism. In principle, stylistic analysis can be performed on non-literary texts, but it is a fact that most people who call themselves stylisticians work on literature. Thus stylistics applies the tools and methodology of linguistic description and lays claim to a place within literary criticism. In fact, stylistic analysis is a fundamental part of the core of criticism. This core of criticism actually has three parts: evaluation, interpretation and description. The three parts are logically ordered:

Description → Interpretation → Evaluation

(mainly linguistic)