

清华语言论丛

清华大学人文社会科学学院出版基金资助项目

文学语篇的 语用文体学研究

*Pragmastylistics of Dramatic Texts:
The Play off the Stage*

封宗信 著



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(京)新登字 158 号

内 容 简 介

本书属于跨学科研究:1)以文学语篇的交流性特征为出发点,在文体学、语用学和语篇分析相结合的基础上提出了语用文体学的分析模式;2)以文学批评和文体学研究涉及得最少的文学体裁——戏剧——为研究对象,深入探讨了戏剧语言的特征和戏剧文本的多重属性,把长期以来被传统的文学批评、戏剧批评和文学文体学研究所忽视的戏剧语言——舞台指令——纳入语用文体学研究的范围;3)通过对西方荒诞剧代表作家厄内斯库的三部剧本进行宏观和微观分析,指出了作者在同一文本中对待不同功能性读者的不同修辞手法以及戏剧语篇中复杂的作者-读者关系。本研究拓宽了语用学和文体学的研究范围和层面,同时也对西方戏剧批评和文学研究有一定贡献。

First Edition 2002

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图书在版编目(CIP)数据

文学语篇的语用文体学研究/封宗信著. —北京:清华大学出版社,2002

(清华语言论丛)

清华大学人文社会科学学院出版基金资助项目

ISBN 7-302-05980-2

I. 文… II. 封… III. ①文学语言—语用学—研究 ②文学语言—文体论—研究
IV. I045

中国版本图书馆 CIP 数据核字(2002)第 078715 号

出 版 者:清华大学出版社(北京清华大学学研大厦,邮编 100084)

<http://www.tup.tsinghua.edu.cn>

责任编辑:覃学岚

版式设计:刘 路

印 刷 者:世界知识印刷厂

发 行 者:新华书店总店北京发行所

开 本:787×960 1/16 印张:17.5 彩插:1 字数:311 千字

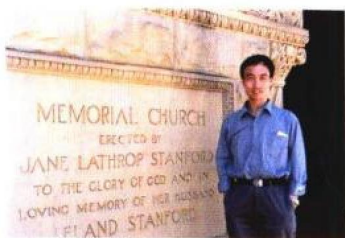
版 次:2002 年 11 月第 1 版 2002 年 11 月第 1 次印刷

书 号:ISBN 7-302-05980-2/H·436

印 数:0001~3000

定 价:33.00 元

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Acknowledgement

This book has been developed from my Ph.D. dissertation "Pragmastylistics and The-Theater-of-the-Absurd Plays" (1998) completed at Peking University, under the supervision of Prof./Dr. Shen Dan.

My special thanks go to all my supervisors at Peking University and Beijing Foreign Studies University. When I was studying linguistics, language and communication, and theoretical stylistics under the supervision of Professor Hu Zhuanglin in the M. A. program at Peking University, Professor Shen Dan started influencing me in stylistics and interface studies of language and literature. During my studies in the Ph. D. program in the same department, Professor Hu generously continued sharing with me many of his insightful ideas whenever I sought for advice, all the way to my completion of the Ph. D. dissertation. Both these professors have given me superb guidance plus unfailing encouragement in each of my attempts at academic pursuit. Their critical readings of my presentations for discussion and theses for publication, their constructive comments, and informative advice have been of utmost importance in my becoming academically trained. Their serious scholarship and academic practices, and above all, their agreeable personalities, have influenced me immensely.

My heartfelt thanks go to Professor Li Ruiying of Beijing Foreign Studies University, who supervised a graduate course at Peking University in 1993 and influenced me both academically and personally during my postdoctoral research at Beijing Foreign Studies University from the fall of 1998 to the summer of 2000.

My heartfelt thanks also go to Prof. Wang Fengxin, Prof. Jiang Wangqi, Prof./Dr. Gao Yihong, and Prof./Dr. Qian Jun of Peking University, for their valuable help on various occasions.

Much as I owe to my supervisors and all those who have helped me in one way or another, none of them shares in any sense any of the possible inadequacies and lapses likely existing in this book. Should anything happen to have been dealt with in a way other than it should have been more appropriately considered or organised, I myself ought to take the sole responsibility.

Last but not the least, I'd like to express my thanks to Tsinghua University, which supported me with "Young Scholars Research Fund" of the 985 Project and a "Special Fund in Humanities and Social Sciences" for the publication of this book.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Stylistics, which may be most commonly defined as “the study of style” (Wales, 1989: 437; Leech, 1985: 39), is a discipline that can be traced back to ancient Greece. However, modern stylistics started at the beginning of the twentieth century from Charles Bally, who developed and scientificised the classic rhetoric by making use of Saussurean structuralist linguistic theory, and it became well established as an academic discipline in the 1960s. The development of modern stylistics has benefited a lot from modern linguistics. Ever since its establishment, modern stylistics has been a field much debated by both literary critics and linguists. It is, and at the same time is not, an independent discipline due to its various characteristics, both theoretical and practical.

By this definition it is meant that stylistics is both disciplinary and multi-disciplinary. I would like to start from the amalgamic nature of stylistics. But issues concerning this discipline, such as linguistics as its basis, literature as its object of study, the relationships between language and literature have to be clarified. For, while stylistics is often the study of literature based on linguistic description and analysis, linguistics is, however, regarded as having nothing to do with literary studies. Literature is made out of language, whereas those involved in the studies of language and of literature for a long time in the past did not see that they were talking

about the same thing. Stylistics as a mediatory discipline, together with the developments of linguistic and literary theories of the 1980s and 1990s, can serve as a powerful tool for both more explicit linguistic description and analysis with less impressionistic and therefore more convincing literary interpretation. It is necessary, first of all, to discuss some problems concerning language studies and literature studies, linguistic and literary criticism, etc.

1.1 Language and Literature: A Special Relation

Language is the material for literary creation and the chief medium for literary communication, and hence the concept of rich exploitation of language would be meaningless without taking into account literature, which is deemed as “verbal art”, “verbal artefact” (Halliday, 1983: viii), and “a linguistic form of art” (van Peer, 1991: 127).

Although there has been a keen awareness of language in literary studies from Aristotle onwards, and although linguists have been attentively responsive to literature, the bridging between the two kinds of studies has not been stable. The essential relation of language and literature presumes that the two approaches are close neighbours working on the same ranch. Yet the division of labour leads different practitioners to assume different views on what they are doing, hence resulting in hostile attitudes toward each other's work.

In spite of the essential complementarity and seeming inseparability of the two, language studies, whether in the form of the pre-20th-century philology or in the form of the 20th-century modern linguistics, have been held in opposition to literary studies, with linguists (supposedly) giving little attention to literature or being reluctant to admit literary studies to their discipline and literary theorists being even less welcoming of linguistic criticism.

The general situation between language and literature studies can be characterised as one of disharmony. Literary scholars frown upon linguists' formalist methods of describing literary writing with stubborn rationality.

They feel that such an enterprise does not do any justice to the real "literary" nature of the works, and they therefore prefer to exclude linguistics and linguists from their field of study altogether. Since literature also deals with emotions and with the irrational side of human existence, they feel that little help is to be expected from an all-too-narrowly-defined rational approach. Linguists, on the other hand, are not satisfied with the work of literary scholars due to the looseness of their terms and their methods, their superficial linguistic knowledge and their lack of system. As a result, linguists also question the validity of many conclusions arrived at in literary scholarship.

1.1.1 The Opposition

The language/literature opposition can be traced to the traditional division of English studies, which, according to Roger Fowler (1971: 1-2), is most evidently reflected in the division of "the literature syllabus" and "the language syllabus" in British universities. At many universities in the 1950s, English departments were staffed by people with two different kinds of training and interests. As literary studies gained ascendancy, "language" was presented as an archaic irrelevance at best and an inimical source of potential contamination at worst. The position of the philologists became an entrenched defence under constant attack. The regular "Berlin Wall" down the middle of the English studies existed and the flavour of the dispute between the warring factions could be sensed. Fowler summarises the history of English studies in England as presenting "a lamentable spectacle of two close neighbours jealously fencing in their pastures and defending them at any cost, including irrational argument" (Fowler, 1971: 2).

Mary Louise Pratt (1977) describes language/literature opposition in America in a similarly humorous way, making an analogy that the Modern Language Association and the Linguistic Society of America have held their annual meetings at the same time and in the same city, but in different hotels. Both feel that their disciplines belong in each other's vicinity, but they do not change programs or street guides; so to get from one place to another you have to find your own way.

Roger Sell (1991: xii-xiv) summarises that the opposition of such is one between linguistic studies and literary studies in a more general sense. For, all too often, when the world's language specialists and literature specialists talked to each other, they have talked at cross purposes. Language study comprises everything from hard-core linguistics to conversation analysis, and literary study consists of everything from humanistic criticism to deconstruction. There has been some temptation to drop all dialogue and defensively cultivate one's own little patch. Ironically, those who try to bring the two sides together have sometimes been accused of understanding neither, and the situation is complicated by the further sub-specialisation in the field of language studies and literary studies alike.

Fowler's account concerns the situation in Britain, and Pratt's account concerns the situation in America. Sell's account covers the situation in general in the English-speaking world. The difficulty of communication between linguists and critics, and the problem of the applicability of linguistic methods and ideas to the study of literature are largely based on the paradoxical relationship of the two disciplines. On the one hand, it is impossible for literary studies to escape from linguistics. On the other hand, linguistics can not yet offer necessary concepts and methods of appropriate literary studies. While linguistics can not do without considering literary texts, literature offers special difficulties.

When specialists in either of the disciplines keep within their own circles, no perceptible tension can be observed. But whenever they start to interact, all sorts of frictions become obvious, and these frictions have been labelled as professional (syllabus) "division", neighbourhood "quarrel", "strife" (Fowler, 1971), and disciplinary (poetics/non-poetics) "opposition" (Pratt, 1977), which lead to mutual ignorance and lack of dialogue due to mutual "misunderstandings" (Sell, 1991), and mutual "mistrust" (van Peer, 1989). Fowler (1971: 3) attributes the opposition to a failure of the two disciplines to understand, or a reluctance to get to know, each other. In his opinion, the ignorance is mutual, and further, "the general level of knowledge about literature and criticism among linguists is higher than 'lettrists'". I do not dare to agree with Fowler on his last assertion, especially in the context I know, since there may be even stronger

oppositions from the literary side if practitioners of linguistics claim to work on the study of literature. However, it is undeniable that linguistics has become a valid and applicable tool in the study of language—all varieties of language, and linguists and stylisticians armed with the tool, especially since Halliday and Enkvist's first works, have paid more attention to literary aspects of language than literary scholars do to linguistic aspects of literature.

On the whole, the situation has been changing for the better. According to Sell (1991), changes have taken place due to a particular configuration of circumstances, and interdisciplinary studies have been well on the way with promising results and remarkable influence.

1.1.2 The *Rapprochement*

Current literary studies involve such issues as the position of literature within the larger sphere of culture, the relationship between literatures of different cultures, and the questions concerning the relation of literary to other cultural forms within the context of interdisciplinary studies. While the opposition of linguistic studies and literary studies can be seen from a larger sphere, an old problem still remains as an obstacle. Although there have been various types of definitions of literature and there are various ways of dealing with literary studies, the question "What is literature?" is still a chief concern. To find an answer, Russian formalists in an earlier period turned to linguistics and some recent trends turned to interdisciplinary approaches such as literary pragmatics. Still more recent studies have been carried out by empirical literary researchers in Northern Europe throughout the 1990s, who have turned to psychology and cognitive sciences for methodological breakthroughs.

In his preface to *Literary Pragmatics*, Sell (1991) attributes the *rapprochement* between linguistic studies and literary studies in Finland as a breakthrough outside the English-speaking world due to two reasons. First, the English department of Åbo Akademi University, Finland, is a foreign-language department, so that the linguistic aspects of literary texts would in any case receive some attention. Second, it is still a small department and is

much more likely to hold together intellectually. But I think that non-native English speakers are in a position free of traditional bias of the English world in terms of the language/literature opposition and thus they can see more rationally, or, at least, less passionately, the close relationship between language and literature. In this way, they can more actively apply new theories of linguistics and related disciplines to their work. Moreover, I do not think this "new" situation is alone in Finland or in other non-English-speaking countries. In a larger context including the English-speaking world, interface studies have been in progress with the growth of stylistics and discourse theories. Against the background of the opposition between language and literary studies, it is stylistics that has witnessed happy moments by trying to combine both approaches in the study of literature or literary texts. Works of such scholars as Jakobson (1960), Halliday *et al.* (1964), Halliday (1973), Enkvist *et al.* (1964), Leech (1977), Carter (1982), Carter and Simpson (1989), etc. have demonstrated close relations between linguistics and literary studies from interdisciplinary perspectives.

Studies of language and literature have also been connected in the field of language teaching from the 1970s onwards. Works include Fowler (1971, 1981, 1986), Halliday (1973, 1983), Widdowson (1975, 1978, 1986), Chapman (1982), Carter (1982, 1986), Carter and Burton (1982), Carter and Nash (1983, 1990), Cummings and Simmons (1983), Long (1986), Brumfit and Carter (1986), Burke and Brumfit (1986), Short and Candlin (1986), Carter and Long (1987), Carter and Simpson (1989), Durant and Fabb (1990). And more work has been done since 1990. Unlike Sell (1991), I do think that there are two more important reasons behind this *rapprochement*: First, the field of language teaching has taken a serious interest in literature, in departments of modern languages, of linguistics and applied linguistics, as well as in the department of English language and literature, forming a contrast to earlier oppositions in most British civic universities as described by Fowler. Even then (in the 1950s) University College London attached some importance to linguistic studies of literature. For example, in his introduction to *Linguistic Criticism*, Fowler (1986: 2) states, when he was a college student, "it was well accepted that commentary on language was a normal and essential practice within literary

criticism: essential for coaxing out the complexity of literary texts” . Second, applied linguistics has necessitated such an undertaking under the influence of the general trend of interface studies armed with modern linguistic theories and stylistical methodology. But this may be only one side of the story, because in the English-speaking world those involved in interface and interdisciplinary studies of language and literature are mostly on the linguistic side. One could say that linguists are making attempts of carrying out dialogues, but one-way only. Yet the situation is changing. For example, not only The Poetics and Linguistics Association chaired by Ronald Carter, Professor of Modern English Language at Nottingham University, is one of the several organisations promoting a dialogue between linguistics and literature, but also the Modern Language Association (MLA) has a Division on Linguistic Approaches to Literature. Nationally and internationally, linguistics and literary theory are no longer considered as separate disciplines but related fields of study that require each other's insights for meaningful access to literary texts.

1.1.3 The Language of Literature and Literary Language

The controversy concerning the problematic relations between language and literature studies can boil down to the nature of the language in literature: the language of literature vs. literary language. While literature is made of language, literary theorists do not agree on what literature is (See Eagleton, 1983; Carter, 1989b). Although the language of great literature of the world's masters can be labelled as “literary” , there is no satisfactory definition for literary language. When we say that the language of Shakespeare or Milton is by definition, literary, it is like telling someone what classic music is by pointing to his or her CD collection. This way of definition actually explains nothing. Moreover, it is hard to find certain features that can be exclusively literary, or even poetic in Russian Formalists' views. Formalists see literary language as a set of deviations from a norm, a kind of “linguistic violence” , and they see literature as a “special” kind of language in contrast to the “ordinary” language we commonly use

(Eagleton, 1983: 4). But deviant uses of language do not appear in literature alone, and it is impossible to find a list of words and constructions that have inherently deviant, violent, or special in all contexts of use. While Formalists presume “making strange” as the essence of literary language, they cannot explain whether an isolated utterance (from great works of literature) is literary. For example, when the famous modern Chinese poet Zang Kejia’s highly “literary” lines

While some people are dead
They are alive
While some people are living
They are dead

are pronounced by an obviously shallow, mundane, and pretentious actor in a recent bad TV theatre, it has served its best purpose of being disgusting and de-appetising.

Carter (1989b) points out that the term “literature” means different things in different periods of the history of English literature. He puts forward six criteria for “literariness” by seeing the relation between literary and non-literary language as a continuum. When he defines literary language, he considers the features of non-literary discourse and what he is actually defining is non-literary language rather than literary language. While Formalists and structuralists tried to define literary language by focusing on “poetic” language without giving due attention to non-poetic language, Carter seems to define literary language by emphasising non-literary language, similar to the way many contemporary literary theorists do in defining literature by saying what literature is NOT. Thus, Carter’s argument, although seeming closer to the truth, can not solve the problem noticed by Traugott and Pratt (1980: 20) that a religious poem is literature in an anthology while it is not literature in a collection of hymns. In his line of argument, the explanation could be like this. On the one hand, a religious poem experiences spatial changes by appearing in an anthology and in a collection of hymns. Hence, whether it is literature does not depend on its inherent linguistic features. On the other hand, when a religious poem appears in an anthology, it is literature; and when it appears in a collection of hymns, it is still literature, because it does not conform to his criterion of