

AN INTRODUCTION TO STYLIST

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Abstract:

Stylistics, as an independent discipline, provides our students with all the necessary material (investigation tools) to skim as well as muse deeply into literary texts, which seem to them too difficult and perhaps, sometimes, unapproachable. A lot of the stylistic characteristics such as repetition; the use of special names, appositives, action verbs, and adjectives shifted out of order are deliberate because they straddle the line between writing and thought; they contribute to the creation of four images: the mood, the conflict, the setting and the character and above all they add clarity to relieve the boredom of reading long passages. Stylistics attempts to help those who do not know these devices and techniques not to lose comprehension and fail to fully grasp what is really being conveyed. To be able to understand and make use of such devices correctly and effectively, we must characterize their uses and find an adequate representation for teaching them. It is within the scope of the present article to introduce stylistics to the English learning community in general and to the fourth year students in particular.

ملخص:

إن الأسلوبية كدراسة جديدة تزود طلبتنا بالمواد الأساسية التي تمكنهم من الدراسة الصحيحة للنصوص الأدبية والتعمق فيها، لأن هذه الأخيرة تبدو أحيانا صعبة جدا. ولما كانت بعض الخصائص الأسلوبية كالترار، استعمال بعض الأسماء الخاصة، الجمل الاعتراضية و أحيانا الصفات في غير مواضعها هي تقنيات يعيها الكتاب عن قصد، فهي تساهم في صنع الكثير من مكونات الخيال كالمكان و الزمان و الشخصيات وتخفف فوق كل ذلك من ثقل قراءة النصوص الطويلة. و الأسلوبية في الأخير تحاول مساعدة كل الذين يجهلون تلك التقنيات و الخصائص على الفهم الصحيح و السليم لكل م يقرأون. لذلك فإننا من خلال هذه المقالة نحاول تقديم الأسلوبية والتعريف بها لدارسي اللغة الانجليزية و خاصة طلبة السنة الرابعة.

Introduction:

In this article we want to draw attention to the relationship between linguistics and literature, between language and the literary product. We want to show that ' *language is quite literally the material of the literary artist.*'(1), that ' *Every literary work, one could say, is merely a selection from a given language, just as a work of sculpture has been described as a block of marble with some pieces chipped off*'(2). For these reasons, we have chosen some areas for a scrutinizing analysis such as style, types of stylistics, and the concern of stylistics.

The need for teaching English all over the world and the everlasting hope to join the south of the globe with its north, for many different reasons, has necessitated collaboration between linguists and literary men. It has led to the creation of many overlapping areas amongst hosts of related disciplines. '***One of these areas of overlap is the study of style. Here literary and linguistic studies meet; and the modern descriptive linguists must, in this field, seek also the assistance of the historian of language...***' (3) said John Spencer. Spencer's words reveal the existence of a mutual concern between linguistics and literature. This concern is the study of style which requires the intervention of the historian who is expected to provide a wide range of perspectives of the whole field. Moreover, style which is, by nature, an individual quality, is looked at as the outcome of several intermingling factors.

We have already spoken of the borderline area between linguistics and literature and have said that it is, by definition, the study of style or **stylistics**. However, we have not so far distinguished between the nature of this study according to both linguists and literary critics. There is, in fact, only a little difference between the two. It is rather a question of interest and scope:

'...it would be sanguine to expect the tunnels of the linguists and the literary critics automatically to meet in the middle of the mountain. To the former, the investigation of style is essentially a scientific

description of certain types and sets of linguistic structures that occur in a given text, and of their distribution. On the contrary, the literary scholar must be more preoccupied with matters outside the text. That he will study the reader's responses and his thinking of given textual stimuli with features that lie beyond the text itself but are part of his past experience recalled by stimuli in the text'(4).

The linguist studies style on a scientific basis. He describes how the writer uses some linguistic structures in his text, and how these structures are distributed in that text. That is, his study seems more mechanical, for it neither looks at other elements outside the text nor does it regard the writer's mood or attitude as an appropriate material for this kind of investigation. Whereas, the literary critic places himself as a reader; he studies the way he reacts to the text either positively or negatively. Regardless of the emotions raised by the piece of writing, the literary critic accounts for the setting, the motives, the interests of the writer and, perhaps, the economic and political circumstances of the period when that piece was written.

(1), (2): Wellek, R. and Warren, A. (1963) *Theory of Literature*. Harmondsworth : Penguin (p.174)

(3) ;(4): John Spencer (quoted in E.N. Enkvist and M. Gregory, *Linguistics and Style*, OUP, 1964, p.ix

Style, being an abstract term, is not easy to define. So far, what has been discovered about it is that it is personal; i.e. each person differs from others in the way he utters a word such as giving an opinion, expressing an idea or even saying something about himself or the world outside. Here are some definitions of style which reflect the diversity of people's views and how each personality

perceives the point:

1// Buffon (1753): ‘Style is the man himself’.

2// Gibbon: ‘Style is the image of character’.

3// F.L.Lucas: ‘Style is a means by which a human being gains contact with others; it is personality clothed

in words, character embodied in speech’.

4// Emerson: ‘A man’s style in his mind’s voice’.

5// Murry: ‘Style is « the flesh, bone and blood » of the writer’.

6// Cleath Brooks and Robert Pen Warren: ‘this term (style) is usually used with reference to poet’s manner of choosing, ordering, and arranging his words. But, of course when one asks on what grounds certain words are chosen and ordered one is raising the whole problem of form’.

7// ‘...style is one of the areas where linguistics, pragmatics, and aesthetic reality overlap’ (E.N. Enkvist and M. Gregory, 1964, p.47).

From these definitions one might notice two important points. The first is that **style**, as it is understood, is what differentiates an individual from others. It is the way or the techniques he uses to address any outsider; it is what characterizes his talk, his walk and above all his behavior. The second consists in the idea that each individual forms his speech or writing in a way that the other individuals do not. It is a question of how to use words and expressions in order to convey meaning. This is known as literary **style**.

The definitions mentioned above reflect differences in views as well as in ways of perception. This is only because the fields of study are not the same, i.e. the outcomes are dependent on the inputs on the one hand, and are proportional to circumstances on the other hand. On

the whole, it is difficult to get into the depths of style; it is difficult to determine its real components and how it is improved throughout the years. Indeed, *'It is difficult to tell what constitutes style and how one cultivates style, is style a man or his work, his body, his heart, or soul, or the words he uses, an embellishment, choice, personality, psyche, deviation from norm, set of individual or collective features, or the words he uses, or the way in which he uses them.'* as stated by E.N. Enkvist and M. Gregory (*Linguistics and Style*, 1964, p.13).

(1) to (6): Vorshney, R.L (1980). *An Introductory Test Book of Linguistics and Phonetics*, India: Students store, pp.358-89.

I-Stylistics:

Stylistics has so far been defined by hosts of linguists as the scientific study of language at work. Namely, it is the linguist who investigates, compares and evaluates the uses of language, especially its uses in literature. He investigates a writer's or a poet's style in terms of the usages of words phrases and sentences; he describes the common as well as the random features of a writer's style which produce an effect upon the readers. Then, the linguist compares these features with the common usage of the language; he checks the additions (new forms), the deviations from norms (the rules of language) and the density of these features in a piece of work so as to carry out a statistical analysis showing how meaning is conveyed. John Lyons, in an attempt to define stylistics, says *'Stylistics, more commonly, is the scientific study of 'style'. But the term 'style' here has to do with these components or features of a literary composition which give to it individual stamp, making it as the work of a particular author and producing a certain effect upon the reader'* (quoted in R.L. Vorshney, 1980, p.354) . According to John Lyons, stylistics is the

study that looks at how style achieves effect by means of some devices which distinguish an author from others. Therefore, this study links the author's individual devices and the aesthetic aspect. Stylistics is also regarded as '*...a borderline discipline which faces the student with a double challenge: linguistics and literary criticism...*' (R.L. Vorshney, 1980, p.354). This view uncovers the fact that any stylistic work is, unquestionably, a co-operative effort between the linguist and the literary critic.

This view implies, on the other hand, that any 'reliable' stylistician is the one who combines together rules of general linguistics, literary 'critical' criteria and artistic gifts. He values every side in his analysis for what it might add as evidence to better understand a text and ultimately appreciate it.

Some linguists consider stylistics '*...as the study of individual expression or the linguistics of parole....*' (E.N. Enkvist and M. Gregory, 1964, p.22). This consideration or definition hints at other concepts. It reveals that each style has its own, unique and inimitable, features and that stylistics is a study based on comparisons between norms and deviations. In addition, it sets as a compulsory task the setting up of a corpus of reference to determine the frames of the stylistic analysis, for it exceeds the boundaries of the sentence to groups of several pieces and parcels of 'language at work'.

The inclusion of the term 'stylistics' in the English lexicon dates back to the first half of the nineteenth century after having appeared in both German and French. 'In *English, the noun 'stylistic' is found as early as 1846...*' stated R.L. Vorshney in his book, *An Introductory Test Book of Linguistics and Phonetics* (p.355). However, stylistic studies or stylistics as an independent discipline appeared only in the late twentieth century; and therefore it is fairly recent.

Modern stylistics depends mainly on the analytical methods and descriptive intentions of linguistics. Whereas, modern literary stylistics adds to its linguistic sources of analysis the interpretive goals of modern literary criticism. That is, the cooperation between linguistics and literary criticism has pushed 'literary stylistics' to establish a fuller analysis of language at work. Moreover, the use of linguistic procedures has made the interpretation and description of style empirical.

The origins and roots of modern stylistics are entrenched in the works of Charles Bally (1865-1947) and Leo Spitzer (1887-1960). Bally's work, for instance, was realized in Jules Marouzeau's *Précis de Stylistique Française* (1946) and Marcel Cressot's *Le Style et Ses Techniques* (1947). This implies that Bally's work '*...offered literary stylistics a relatively precise methodology for describing the components and features of a text. In place of an open-ended and evaluative process, linguistics both underwrote the need for a more precise analytical attitude toward language study and provided specific categories for categorizing sound, rhythm, and eventually syntax...*'(1). It also implies that Bally tried to carry out a pure linguistic analysis; he looked at text as any instance of language because it equals parole from a structural point of view, and as such linguistics and only linguistics can provide a precise analysis. It can provide a feasible as well as logical scrutiny, for it looks only at devices and components inside the text. This limits the study of style to the borders of text. Spitzer, however, had a different view (process) toward language analysis. His work '*....., strives to unite the analytical description with a critical interpretation that relates the style to a larger conceptual or situational frame...*' (2). Spitzer did not emphasize the use of linguistic analytical techniques without relying on interpretive methods. He wanted to create an analytical frame in which the linguist and the literary critic cater for a unified account for the internal and external mechanisms which make the text

hang together. Moreover, he tried to add to the analytical sources of linguistics interpretive tools that help broaden the scope of investigation. This is only because, sometimes, it is impossible to spot meaning without exploring external elements. This is how modern literary stylistics basically functions.

II-Types of Stylistics:

So far, we have seen that linguistics and literature meet on a borderline area known as stylistics. This latter draws its power and techniques from both disciplines; it relies on literary critical interpretation and linguistic methods in its analysis and investigation of literary production (works). The core of this investigation, as we have also seen, is the language management; i.e. one might go along with Vorshney's formulation: 'the *problem of stylistic reconstruction involves all aspects of language: sounds, vocabulary, morphology, syntax and semantics*' (R.L.Vorshney, 1980:354-55). This implies that stylistics has different types; it is categorized according to the areas with which it is concerned. These types are:

(1); (2): www.press.jhu.edu/books/hopking guide to literary theory /stylistics. (17/ 06/ 2004)

- **Phono-stylistics** or stylistics of sounds. It deals with recurrences of phonological characteristics such as verse, rhyme, alliteration, assonance..., etc. It also deals with onomatopoeia and rhythm. Phono-stylistics links the repeated sounds and what they might hint at outside the poem (context) or in other poems. For example, onomatopoeia is defined as words containing sounds which are similar to the noises they describe. This gives it the possibility to be seen as an available medium for creating situations outside the poem. That is

meaning is projected from inside the poem to the environment and vice versa.

- **Lexical stylistics** or stylistics of the word investigates phenomena such as word-formation, synonymy, and use of foreign words and so on. Its subject matter is vocabulary; it counts for strangeness in the building of words such as the use of uncountable words in the plural form by some writers; it counts for the use of borrowed words which reflect the influence of foreign culture on writers who spend most of their lifetime abroad and keep writing in their mother tongue, or writers who specialize in travel writing.
- **Syntactical stylistics** or stylistics of the sentence focuses and concentrates its examination on the components of the sentence, sentence structure and higher units of combination. It studies the internal relations between the constituents of the sentence such as how phrases or clauses interrelate and interact to produce meaning or to add information to sustain the theme. None of these parts can stand alone, but is needed for a specific function within the sentence. It also throws light over larger units like complex sentences and paragraphs.
- **Psycho-stylistics**, which was first proposed by Professor Leo Spitzer, is concerned with distinguishing the type of style through the analysis of the author's psyche. It studies the majority of an author's achievements by determining the common subjects he writes about. The solutions which he proposes reflect his own problems. These latter characterize his style - they define it according to its main functions (describing, narrating...).
- **Socio-stylistics:** It studies the varieties of language in a single text. It explores the register or, sometimes, the registers from which an author takes his material and forms his 'imagery'. The common registers of an author's achievements indicate in a way or in another the literary trend the author belongs to; they indicate how an author's style is built up, and thus its analysis is carried out easily.

III- The concern of stylistics:

Stylistics, as we have seen and as its types suggest, takes its

material (i.e. its tools of investigation) from general linguistics. This allows it to target one of its chief concerns which consist in comparing and contrasting the language of a literary work with the present usage. Its main concern, so to speak, is the investigation of any device which aims at some specific expressive end. René Wellek and Austin Warren state that stylistics ‘ *cannot be pursued successfully without a thorough grounding in general linguistics, since precisely one of its central concerns is the contrast of the language system of a literary work of art with the general usage of the time.*’(1). In other words, the function of stylistics is determined by its concerns as well as the areas of its interest as suggested by its name. So ‘*A first step in stylistic analysis will*

be to observe such deviations as the repetitions of sound, the inversion of word order, the construction of involved hierarchies of clauses, all of which must serve some aesthetic function such as emphasis or explicitness or their opposites– the aesthetically justified blurring of distinctions or obscurity’(2). To be more obvious, any stylistic analysis must establish some general aesthetic aim omnipresent in a whole work, for it is not difficult to analyze the style of a ‘genuine’ author as Henry James, or even the style of an author of little artistic importance but one who cultivated his idiosyncrasy. Idiosyncrasy in writing means a lot of years of experimentations and attempts to refine one’s style. It also means acquisition of skills; it means that any author develops his way of writing by means of the aesthetic usages of words, expressions, proverbs and so on. The starting point of this evolution is a bare minimum of endowed competence.

Conclusion :

In this article we have argued that literature is part and parcel of language, that it is an instance whereby the literary artist achieves some aesthetic work. In this instance, the literary artist is aware of both the words he uses and the 'Way' in which he uses them. From a linguistic point of view, literature is regarded as **parole** because it is unstable, variegated, and above all individual. That is, each author can be distinguished from others by the literature he produces or rather by his style. On the other hand, language is viewed as **langue**, i.e. it includes all the material that an author needs.

Style or **the management of language** as referred to by some linguists is the subject matter of stylistics. It is studied in terms of its constituents though they are difficult to describe or to determine. Yet, it is possible to treat it by focusing on the author's specific and common features as well as his random ones throughout several works. In other words, any brilliant novelist or poet has undoubtedly cultivated his style by treating lots of subjects and trying out many genres. He has added to his gifted skills new traits which make up his style and differentiate him from all other literary artists. This is why we have included as a title in this article '**The concern of stylistics**' to provide the readers with a brief description of how stylistics functions or how it approaches its content, object of study. We have rather revealed some of the truth behind this new discipline and have provided our fourth year students with some knowledge of using any stylistic device to better understand literary texts.

Bibliography:

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(1); (2): René Wellek and Austin Warren, *Theory of Literature*, Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, 1963, p.177&180