Role of Stylistics in Learning English as a Second Language

Naushad Umarsharif Shaikh, M.A., B.Ed., Ph.D.

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Hain Aur Bhi Duniya Mein Sukhanwar Bahut Achay….
Kehatay Hain Ke Ghalib Ka Andaaz-e-Bayan Aur…
~ Mirza Asadullaa Nkhaan Ghalib

There are many good poets and writers be they …
Galib is said to have unparalleled style of expression.

Abstract

Stylistics is an area of study that is growing and developing fast. Its central concern is the way cognitive and communicative effects are achieved by means of linguistic choices. It, therefore, covers literary studies and linguistics as well as discourse studies. One of the types of stylistics, Pedagogical Stylistics, has proved to be very fruitful for learners.

The present paper focuses on the pragmatic functions of Stylistics, playing a vital role in learning, teaching and acquisition of English as second language. The paper also focuses on the history, functions and aim of Stylistics in L2 and its role in solving the problems faced in learning L2.

The paper concludes by stating the role of Stylistics in learning English as a second language and how it is practically helpful in acquiring the same.

Keywords: discourse, applied linguistics, second language, literary analysis, rhetoric discourse analysis, lingual problems.

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Introduction

We may learn or acquire English as one of the languages from the same source/s but develop varying individual patterns and different choices of words and phrases. This is what makes a person a poet, novelist, an orator, or a famous literary figure. Ultimately, it is the individual's choice of words in speaking and writing which makes us speakers and writers with different structures of sentences and words.

Stylistics is a field of study that is growing and developing fast. Its inner concern is the way cognitive and communicative effects are achieved by means of linguistic choices. It, therefore, encompasses literary studies and linguistics as well as discourse studies.

History and Recent Trends in Stylistics

At the time when structuralism was at its most influential phase in Czechoslovakia, Denmark and the USA, a school known as *The New Criticism* originated in Cambridge, Great Britain. The main representatives were I. A. Richards and W. Empson, who introduced new terms, mainly the method of structural analysis called *close reading*. They devoted great effort to the study of metaphor and introduced the terms *tenor* and *vehicle* which are still in use. The New Criticism represents progress in stylistic thinking and their theory is applicable even today. They also have followers in the USA (e.g. C. Brooks, R. P. Blackmur, R. P. Warren).

British stylistics is influenced by M. Halliday (1960's) and his structuralist approach to the linguistic analysis of literary texts. British tradition has always been the semiotics of **text-context** relationships and **structural analysis of text**: locating literature into a broader social context and to other texts.

British Stylistics and Linguistic Criticism reached its most influential point at the end of the 70s (Kress, Hodge: *Language as Ideology*, 1979; Fowler, R. et al: *Language and Control*, 1979, Aers, et al.: *Literature, Language and Society in England 1580-1680*, 1981).

Definitions

Definitions of Stylistics

Stylistics is the study of style. Style can be viewed in several ways. Similarly, there are several different stylistic approaches. This variety in stylistics is due to the main influences of Linguistics and Literary Criticism.

The goal of most stylistic studies is not simply to describe *the formal features of texts* for their own sake, but to show their *functional significance* for the interpretation of the text; or to relate literary effects to linguistic causes.

Identifying the formal features of any texts is to read and understand the style of the target text and focus the choice of words, and selection of the phrases.

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Stylistics is the study and interpretation of texts from a linguistic perspective. As a discipline it links literary criticism and linguistics, but has no autonomous domain of its own. (Widdowson, 1992, and Simpson, P. 2004)

The preferred object of stylistic studies is literature, but not exclusively "high literature" but also other forms of written texts such as text from the domains of advertising, pop culture, politics or religion.(Simpson, P. 2004)

According to Katie Wales in *A Dictionary of Stylistics*, 2nd ed. (Pearson, 2001), "The goal of most stylistics is not simply to describe the formal features of texts for their own sake, but in order to show their functional significance for the interpretation of the text; or in order to relate literary effects to linguistic 'causes' where these are felt to be relevant."

Types of Stylistics

Stylistics has been classified further under different tags to describe certain analytical procedures in stylistics. They are as follows:

1. General Stylistics or Stylistics

This is stylistics viewed from the broad notion of the linguistic study of all types of linguistic events from different domains of life.

2. Literary Stylistics

This is the type of analysis that focuses on literary texts.

3. Textualist Stylistics (Textlinguistics)

This is the type of stylistics which focuses on the "empty technology" of a text.

4. Interpretative Stylistics

This is the practice engaged in by most stylisticians nowadays. It involves the analysis of the linguistic data in a (literary) text, the unraveling of the content or artistic value of the text and the marrying of these two.

5. Formalist and Functional Stylistics

These terms may be viewed as alternatives for textualist stylistics and interpretative stylistics respectively as discussed above.

6. Evaluative Stylistics

This is a term used by Richard Bradford to designate the type of analysis which uses linguistic tools to assess or measure the worth or merits and demerits of a text.

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7. Discourse Stylistics

This is the stylistic approach which employs the procedures and terminology of discourse analysis in the explication of literary language use.

8. Contextualist Stylistics

This has various factions that are united in their emphasis on the ways in which literary style is formed and influenced by its contexts.

9. Phonostylistics

This has been described by Hartman and Stork as "the study of the expressive function of sounds" (223).

10. Sociostylistics

This is actually a subject which studies, for instance, the language of writers considered as social groups.

11. Feminist Stylistics

According to Sara Mills', "Feminist Stylistics is the one that uses linguistic or language analysis to examine texts".

12. Computational Stylistics

This is a sub-discipline of computational linguistics.

13. Expressive Stylistics

This approach emphasizes an identification of how the style, the linguistic elements, reveals the personality or "soul" of the author.

14. Pedagogical Stylistics

This refers to the employment of stylistic analysis for teaching and learning purposes. Literary texts may sometimes be difficult for learners to appreciate.

15. Radical Stylistics

This is a term introduced by D. Burton in 1982 to designate a stylistic approach which tends to go beyond the identification of the artistic effects of language use to analyse how language is used to express different ideologies of world views.

16. New Stylistics

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This is a rather vague term used to denote some fresh models of stylistic analysis. Such models cease to be "new" as soon as "newer" models evolve.

Aims of Stylistic Analysis

"Stylistic analysis, unlike more traditional forms of practical criticism, is not interested primarily in coming up with new and startling interpretations of the texts it examines. Rather, its main aim is to explicate how our understanding of a text is achieved, by examining in detail the linguistic organization of the text and how a reader needs to interact with that linguistic organization to make sense of it.

Often, such a detailed examination of a text does reveal new aspects of interpretation or help us to see more clearly how a text achieves what it does.

- Doing stylistics enriches our ways of thinking about language.
- Doing stylistics improves the basic skills of the language.
- It is helpful for both teachers and learners to go for stylistic analysis.
- It is helpful for ESL and EFL learners.
- Stylistics as an independent discipline provides the students with all the necessary material to skim as well as muse deeply into literary texts to decode the native competency of the language.
- To develop the skills and approach of analyzing language to improve receptive skills of the target language.
- To identify the limitations as ESL or EFL learners and acquire the compositions and sentence structures which have less grammatical support.
- To know the limitations and acquire idiomatic expressions as idioms are generally impossible to translate between languages.

Stylistics Today

Modern stylistics is positively flourishing and witnessed in a abundance of sub-disciplines. Today, Stylistic methods are enriched by theories of discourse, culture and society be it feminist, cognitive or discourse stylistics.

Stylistics has also become a much valued method in language teaching and in language learning. Moreover, stylistics often forms a core component of many creative writing courses. Stylistics is a method of textual interpretation in which primacy of place is assigned to language.

Language and Stylistics:

The reason why language is so important to stylisticians is because the various forms, patterns and levels that constitute linguistic structure are an important index of the function of the text. The text's functional significance as discourse acts in turn as a gateway to its interpretation. While linguistic features do not constitute a text's 'meaning', an account of linguistic features nonetheless serves to ground a stylistic interpretation and to help in explaining why certain types of meaning are possible.

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Why should we do stylistics?

1. To do stylistics is to explore language, and, more specifically, to explore creativity in language use.
2. Doing stylistics enriches our ways of thinking about language, whereas exploring language offers a purchase on our understanding of (literary) texts.
3. This method of inquiry sheds light on the 'rules' of language because stylistics shows us how these rules are broken in certain texts . The practice of stylistics conform to the following three basic principles cast mnemonically as three 'Rs':
    *   stylistic analysis should be rigorous.
    *   stylistic analysis should be retrievable.
    *   stylistic analysis should be replicable. (Simpson, P. 2004)

Functions of Stylistics

In today's materialistic and professional world, we need to stress upon the utility and functions of any idea or technique, etc.

What has been the primary interest of stylistics for years is the analysis of the type, fluctuation, or the reason for choosing a given style as in any language a single thought can be expressed in a number of ways depending on connotations, or desired result that the message is to produce. Therefore, stylistics is concerned with the examination of grammar, lexis, semantics, as well as phonological properties and discursive devices. It might seem that the same issues are investigated by sociolinguistics, and, indeed, that is the case. However, sociolinguistics analyses the above mentioned issues seen as dependent on the social class, gender, age, etc., while stylistics is more interested in the significance of function that the style fulfills.

Functions

Learners of different levels can be improved with the help of stylistic analysis as one can put learners to the exercises according to their difficult areas and in the areas where improvements are expected:

*   Stylistics examines oral and written texts in order to determine crucial characteristic linguistic properties, structures and patterns influencing perception of the texts.
*   Thus, it can be said that this branch of linguistics is related to discourse analysis, in particular critical discourse analysis, and pragmatics.
*   Owing to the fact that at the beginning of the development of this study the major part of the stylistic investigation was concerned with the analysis of literary texts, it is sometimes called literary linguistics, or literary stylistics. Nowadays, however, linguists study various kinds of texts, such as manuals, recipes, as well as novels and advertisements.

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- In addition to that, in the recent years so called 'media-discourses' such as films, news reports, song lyrics and political speeches have all been studied within the scope of stylistics.
- Each text scrutinized by stylistics can be viewed from different angles and as fulfilling at least a few functions.
- Thus, it is said that texts have interpersonal function, ideational function and textual function. When describing a function several issues are taken into consideration. Therefore, **interpersonal function** is all about the relationship that the text is establishing with its recipients, the use of either personal or impersonal pronouns is analyzed, as well as the use of speech acts, together with the tone and mood of the statement and this leads to develop the basic skills of learns.
- The **textual function** is the reference of sentences forwards and backwards which makes the text cohesive and coherent, but also other discursive devices such as ellipsis, repetition, anaphora are studied.
- In addition to the above, effectiveness of chosen stylistic properties of the **texts** is analyzed in order to determine their suitability to the perceived function, or contribution to overall interpretation.
- What is more, it is thought that being acquainted with stylistics makes students more aware of certain features of language and to implement the knowledge in their language production on all levels: phonological, grammatical, lexical and discursive. Also empirical findings support the view that stylistics helps students improve their reading and writing skills.
- Linguists dealing with a sub-branch of stylistics called pedagogical stylistics support the view that this field of study helps learners to develop better foreign language competence.

Second language (L2) Acquisition and Problems

As we all know, the process of the second language acquisition is different from that of the first language acquisition. Learning a second language not from infancy, but at school, or even later is also another different situation. Therefore, the very circumstances of language acquisition are different, and thus the process itself shows certain distinctive features.
 In applied linguistics and language methodology various manners of second language learning/acquisition are acknowledged.

There are uncountable factors affecting the process of second language acquisition. Most of the time, a positive transfer doesn't work at all. Therefore, learners have to know the structure and pattern of the sentences in the second language to achieve fluency, accuracy, appropriateness to reach higher level.

Transfer

What is characteristic of second language acquisition, but not of the first language acquisition process is so called transfer. This term denotes the act of trying to apply the pronunciation, word order, vocabulary or some expression form the mother tongue to the target language learnt at the moment. When the transfer is

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successful, for example a word from the learners' native language has been used while using the target language and such a word indeed exists in the target language (either with different pronunciation, or not) the learner has benefited from a positive transfer. However, when in a similar attempt the learner tries to use a structure, or a word from the native language, but such a word, or structure does not exist in the target language the learner makes use of the negative transfer.

Looking at the problems of ESL learners in the basic areas of target language, learners can be offered different stylistic assignments to develop their acquisition of the language. It is better to have target oriented assignments to reach the higher results. It is observed that while learning ESL learners switch on to transfers as they are not exposed to structure and grammar of ESL sufficiently. If we facilitate them with the books and exercises in which stylistics aspects are well practiced I think they would prefer the native styles and patterns immediately instead of transfers. So teachers can apply the student oriented exercise to bring them near to the native skills.

Pedagogical Stylistics

As this application of stylistics proved to be fruitful for both learners and teachers, different patterns of facilitating to L2 learners have been discussed here.

Hence, a teacher may analyse the linguistic patterns in the text, breaking down complex linguistic units to smaller ones, converting excerpts in verse form prosaic form, hyperbaton (syntactic inversion) to regular forms in the belief that such will help the learner to grasp the message therein.

Wales remarks on this as follows: Because of its eclecticism, stylistics has increasingly come to be used as a teaching tool in language and literature studies for both native and foreign speakers of English; what can be termed pedagogical stylistics. (438)

Carter and McRae claim that stylistics in its pedagogical application "has been accused of tending towards the simplistic" (xxxi). However, since the aim of teaching and learning is to make things clearer or simpler than they seem, pedagogical stylistics would be considered a positive development.

Learners can be exposed to the stylistic patterns which would help them understand and improve their language near to the native standard in writing and reading to a good extent, depending on the learners' capacity.

What is more, it is thought that being acquainted with stylistics makes student more aware of certain features of language and to implement the knowledge in their language production on all levels: phonological, grammatical, lexical and discursive. Also empirical findings support the view that stylistics helps students improve their reading and writing skills.

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These strategies consist of a close reading of the model, followed by an intensive study of the features of the given text and writing assignments:

1. Reading for stylistic analyses and
2. Exposing them to exercises

Learners' Activity

- Learners read the model carefully before and make observations on their copies to the model.
- Learners reread the text and then questions on following stylistic aspects could be asked;
- Sentence structure
- diction
- verbs
- word choice, etc.
- Different texts could be used for the activity. The exercise offered to the students should be more specific and limited.
- Give students writing assignments. The purpose of this assignment should be to insure the students understanding of rhetorical and grammatical principles to be used or applied.
- Another purpose is to reinforce their reading skills, since they must necessarily read the model text (paragraph) carefully in order to write about it.
- (supervisor or teacher should guide them during the activities)
- Students can be given liberty to select the structural and stylistic features unless required to improve aspects.
- The practicing of the same will develop learners' ability to understand certain kinds of stylistic features and learn how important it is to be able to choose the proper set of features that will communicate their intended meaning.

Important Activities

- Supervisor or teacher should
- comment on the relative strengths and weaknesses of each,
- make suggestions for improvement.
- reinforce this procedure by writing marginal and
- summary comments on their worksheets.

These activities would definitely result into improving the targeted stylistic features in reading and writing skills.

Stylistics to Analyse and Develop Lexical Awareness and Competency of Learners

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Learners also face problems in lexis, style, and appropriateness. Different types of exercises can be designed to develop the learner's awareness in the desired areas.

Activities

Activity One

1. Select a text form any English language newspaper.
2. Give learners worksheets

Assign learners to:

1. list nouns which is stylistically inappropriately used
2. list nouns which are inappropriately used or given
3. find out Incorrect verbs which fail to convey the intended meanings
4. find odd, verbs used in wrong forms

Activity Two

1. Select the two texts on physical exercises or cookery.
2. Give learners worksheets

Assign learners to:

1. List all types of verbs used in imperative forms.
2. List all verbs in past and past participle forms.
3. List all verbs related to action or processes.
4. Assign them to provide synonyms for the verbs with actions.
5. List the different words with same or almost same in meaning.
6. Ask them to rewrite the texts or paragraphs using alternate words and verbs

Various tasks can be framed and exercises based on the different stylistic features could be given to the learners:

1. Find out grammatical faults.
2. Lexical items used incorrectly
3. Collocations which learners feel wrong
4. Uses and misuses of prepositions
5. Adjective order and mistakes
6. Pronouns and reflexive pronouns
7. Order of nouns and pronouns in sentences. Etc.

Examples

He and I played carols or
I and me played carols or
He and me played carols or

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I and he played carols.

In using a language to express the meaning, a speaker has a linguistic choice that allows him or her to change the order of groups of words or in other words, the speaker is given an allowance to use many ways of language use, for example: when a speaker intents to know the time, he or she may use his or her own expressions to the language offers such as:

What's the time?
What time is it, please?
Would you mind telling the time, please?
Tell me the time, please.
I'd like to know the time.

Those are the different forms of expression of getting same information for time. The first and the second are interrogative forms, the third is requesting form. The fourth one is imperative form, while the last one is declarative form.

Most of the linguistics choices that a speaker makes are unconscious. He or she never makes a conscious choice among the available language forms. He or she had chosen the best form to express or to convey the meaning.

Worksheets and Evaluation Sheets

Stylistic analysis of the written assignments of the learners could be done on the basis of following criteria:

Essay relevant	D	C	P	F	Essay has little

Structure:

The Essay has little relevance					The Essay is relevant to topic
Superficial Relevance of Topic					Topic covered in depth

Style

Clumsily written					Fluent piece of writing
Unnecessarily Repetitive					Succinct writing

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Mechanics

Many Ungrammatical Sentences					Sentences grammatical
Incorrect Spellings					Correct Spellings

Appropriate Use of Verbs, Noun and Prepositions

	Inappropriate Use	Appropriate Use
Prepositions		
Verbs		
Conjunctions		
Nouns and pronouns		
Articles		
Idioms and phrases		

Name: **Date:**

Text's author and title/Comment?   _____   _____   _____
Consider the text's rhetorical situation. What is behind its creation? What is its audience?   _____   _____   _____
What is the author's purpose? Inform the audience? Persuade? Explain?   _____   _____   _____
Cite a passage that illustrates the author's message (embodied thought/logos) and discuss it.   _____   _____   _____
Cite additional content that develops / supports / illustrates the writer's message. What claims does the author make? How does the author assert his presence and knowledge?

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_____
_____
_____

_____

Conclusion

Stylistics, as an independent discipline, provides 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. It is within the scope of the present article to introduce stylistics to the English learning community in general and to the ESL and learners in particular.

Stylistics being a multidisciplinary discipline there are different approaches of stylistic analysis. It is required to know the following facts about the application of stylistic analysis to reach to the qualitative results as well as producing target and result oriented materials for learners. Pedagogical stylistics proved to be scientific as it is based on analysis of learners' performance and putting them to the target oriented exercises on selected areas. Therefore we can conclude as follows:

- Stylistic analyses of student reading and writing assignments have really proved to be very useful medium of motivating students and helping them in improving their acquisition of the language.
- Learners can be exposed to different exercises by means of working with a wide variety of texts including literary (artistic) texts, stylistics can function as a bridging discipline between literary and linguistic courses.
- Different stylistic aspects can be applied and achieved by assigning them different and problem oriented exercises.
- The resourcefulness of teachers or supervisors is expected.
- The analysis of the language learners, dividing them in levels and giving them target oriented exercises, affects the results.

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Naushad Umarsharif Shaikh, M. A., B.Ed., Ph.D.
Department of English
Faculty of Science and Arts Khulais
King Abdulaziz University
Jeddah, PBO-80230
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.
drnaushadumar@gmail.com
nushaikh@kau.edu.sa

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