Definitions of Stylistics

By
Dr. K.T. Khader
1. What is stylistics?

1) D. Crystal: Linguistics is the academic discipline that studies language scientifically, and stylistics, as a part of this discipline, studies certain aspects of language variation.

Investigating English Style
2) G. N. Leech: Stylistics is a linguistic approach to literature, explaining the relation between language and artistic function, with motivating questions such as “why” and “how” more than “what”.

- **Style in Fiction**
- **A Linguistic Guide to English Poetry**
3) W. V. Peer: Stylistics is developed from Russian Formalism via Prague Structuralism, following the concept of “estrangement”- “deviation from normal usages”.

Stylistics and Psychology
4) Halliday: Linguistics is not and will never be the whole of literary analysis, and only the literary analyst—not the linguist—can determine the place of linguistics in literary studies. But if a text is to be described at all, then it should be described properly, by the theories and methods developed in linguistics, whose task is precisely to show how language works.

- Descriptive Linguistics in Literary Studies
5) H. G. Widdowson: Stylistics involves both literary criticism and linguistics, as its morphological making suggests: the “style” component relating it to the former and the “istics” component to the latter. Stylistics is a means of relating disciplines and subjects, as shown in the following diagram:

Disciplines: linguistics ←→ literary criticism

Subjects: (English) language ←→ (English) literature

Style and the Teaching of literature
6) K.T.KHADER: Stylistics is an intensive study of literary text on an advanced level, by making out the particular effect of the particular choice of language in literary communication.

2. What is style?

According to Thomas S. Kane in Writing Prose: Style is a pattern of linguistic features distinguishing one piece of writing from another, or one category of writings from another. Therefore,
• 1) Style includes the writer’s way of thinking about his subject and his characteristic way of presenting it for a particular reader and purpose.

• 2) Style results from linguistic choices, which effectively express the writer’s unique thought and feeling.

• 3) Style is a means of discovery for both writer and reader.
• 4) Style sharpens expressive meaning as well as referential meaning, intensifying the tone of writing, making prose more persuasive.

• 5) Style is not mere ornament; rather it conveys important subtleties of meaning and evaluation, which define the nature of the writer, his basic attitudes, his presuppositions, his moral stance, and his relation to his subject and his reader.
• According to David Crystal in *Investigating English Style*:  

• There are four commonly occurring senses of the term *STYLE*:  

• 1) the language habits of one person: *Shakespeare, James Joyce, Hemingway UNIQUENESS.*  

• 2) the language habits shared by a group at one time: *the Augustan poets, the Old English ‘heroic’ poetry.*
• 3) say the right thing in the most effective way—good manners: ‘clear’ or ‘refined’ style.

• 4) evaluation and description of literature in literary criticism or appreciation: ‘good’ ‘effective’ ‘beautiful’ writing.

• According to G. N. Leech in *Style in Fiction*, there are some controversial views of style:

• 1) Dualism: between form and meaning “style as choices of *Manner* rather than *Matter*, of *Expression* rather than *Content*”; as a “way of writing” or a “mode of expression” originates from Aristotle’s literary theory.
Style as the “dress of thought”, claimed by Renaissance and rationalism, makes it some kind of “adornment” of thought or meaning. The Aesthetics of form (parallelism, alliteration…) tends to attract the reader’s attention more than the meaning does, as seen in poetic lines.

Style as “manner of expression”, as Richard Ohman put it, “A style is a way of writing” in which “the words on the page might have been different, or differently arranged, without a corresponding difference in substance.
• 2). Monism: “It is like body and soul: form and content to me are one” (Flaubert Dec. 12, 1857) originates from Plato’s literary theory.

• As argued by David Lodge, in Language of Fiction (1966), it is impossible
  • to paraphrase literary writing;
  • to translate a literary work;
  • to divorce the general appreciation of a literary work from the appreciation of its style, for the inevitable loss of the hidden, metaphorical meaning.
3) to classify these features into categories based upon a view of their function in the social context

By ‘features’ we mean particular choice of words, sequence of words, or way of utterance, so-called *stylistically distinctive features*

4. How is stylistics related to psychology?

Writing is an imitation of human thought

1) the function of punctuation --- segmentation --- room for feedback