THE ABC OF STYLISTICS: A PRELIMINARY INVESTIGATION

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Abstract: *This article examines the concept stylistics, its root and categories. The term gained ground in the 1960s and continues to flourish till date. It is a term that features in both literary and non-literary writings.*

Introduction

The term 'Stylistics' is derived from the word Style. In German, it is known as *stylistik* and to the French, they call it *stylistique*. Stylistics has been the subject of various scholarly books, articles and other write-ups. Thus, its parts need to be brought to limelight for better explanation and understanding. It is against this background that the essay examines, rigorously, the ABC of Stylistics by investigating and showing its genesis, definitions, concepts and categories.

Stylistics: The Genesis

The term "stylistics" (German *stylistik* and French *stylistique*) is derived from the word "style". Stylistics is a recent development in an attempt to study style; though it, like human shadow, seems to be with man for cennturies. This implies that man has always been conscious both about how he wears dress and how he makes use of different occasions. Although Stylistics is a twentieth century phenomenon, its studies started since the 18th C during which period classical works were the models. It came after the study of elocution in classical rhetoric (Ducrot and Todorov, 1972). It gained prominence and became established in the 1960s in Britain (UK) and America (US) (Mc Arthur, 1996).

It had also expanded in continental Europe particularly France due to contribution of Charles Bally and Leo Spitzer. Charles Bally, a student of Ferdinand de Saussure , wrote a monumental piece of work (1909) on French Stylistics which brought about wide spread knowledge to the continent on the viable nature of Stylistics as a researchable area of linguistics; where linguistic 'eyes' can be used to view literary texts. On the other hand, Leo Spitzer's approach to style (which was a decade after Bally's) was known as *Expressive Stylistics* and was concerned with the positive relationship between the stylistic features of a text and the author's psychological mood (Mc Arthur, 1996: 914). In his later works, Spitzer's emphasis was put on the stylistic devices of an author's work instead of the author himself.

By these explanations, one can see the side of each of the pioneer developers of the field of Stylistics --- Bally and Spitzer. The former on the side of linguistic Stylistics while the latter on the side of literary Stylistics (Ducrot and Todorov, 1972).

The Term 'Stylistics':

The term 'Stylistics' is a contested one. Different individuals and groups of linguists, literary critics, anthropologists, psychologists argue on the definition of the term. For this reason, it deserves a mention of some of these definitions with a view to arriving at a given definition for the purpose of our research.

Stylistics is simply defined as the study of styles. This implies that style is central to the study of Stylistics. In his definition Stylistics, Tom Mc Arthur (1996:914) says, it is 'the branch of linguistics that studies style, especially in works of literature'. In the same vein, Chapman (1973) cited in Fakuade (1998) defines Stylistics as 'the linguistic study of different styles'. The same idea is also shared by Turner who states that,

'Stylistics is that part of linguistics which concentrates on variation in the use of language, often, but not exclusively, with special attention to the most conscious and complex use of language in literature' (Turner, 1973:7).

He further states that, 'Stylistics is the branch of linguistics, but one concerned specially with treatment of variables in the entire text'.

Oladosu in (Lawal 1997) further argues that, Stylistics is the art of using linguistic rules and regulations to characterise a literary output'. In his view to reinforce the above definitions, Widdowson (1975) argues that Stylistics is 'the study of literary discourse from a linguistic orientation'. And Osuji (1982) who shares the

same view opines that, linguistics makes a taxonomic analysis of how language works, while stylistic analysis, on the other hand examines how linguistic devices are used to portray and reinforce the meaning of a text. Even Leech and Short (1981) believe that stylistic study is the application of linguistic knowledge to the study of style.

All the exponents above are trying to show that Stylistics is subordinate to linguistics since it is the linguistic features that are used in analysing literary texts.

A more comprehensive definition of the term, in supporft of the superiority of linguistics over Stylistics (though in a fair form) is given by Allan Bullock et a thus:

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A branch of linguistics which studies the characteristics of situationally distinctive uses of language with particular reference to literary language, and tries to establish principles capable of accounting made by individual and social groups in their use of language. (Bullock et al, 1988).

A more open opinion portraying the superiority of linguistics over Stylistics is that of A.Clusennaar who opines that,

'My own assumption has been that the mere linguistic description of a text is just applied linguistics, not Stylistics' (Clusennaar, 1976:15).

In fact, she gives stylistics no room at all. On the other hand, there are some scholars who see Stylistics as a field of knowledge that can be viewed independently just like linguistics. Their arguments are to counter other scholars' views as seen above, and even views such as one presented by Crystal and Davy (1985) that since 'linguistics is the academic discipline which studies language scientifically' then, 'Stylistics, studying certain aspects of language variation, is therefore essentially a part of this discipline. For instance, Ollmann strongly believes that,

'Stylistics is not a mere branch of linguistics but a parallel discipline which investigates the same phenomena from its own point of view'.

This means that, 'Stylistics has the same divisions as linguistics and that there are phonological, lexical and syntactic levels in the study of style', (Turner, 1971:30). The same notion is shared by Halliday (1971). It is also shared by Babajide (2000). According to Babajide,

'It is reasonable to claim that Stylistics as a discipline emanated from the elocution aspect of classical rhetoric. This is well established in the fact that it is extremely difficult to talk about style without necessarily traversing the threshold of rhetoric'. Babajide in (Babajide 2000: 123).

From the foregoing opinions, we can see Stylistics as a discipline which is equal to linguistics. Both can achieve their goals independent of each other. However, there are many other scholars who try to moderate the two extremes. For example, Widdowson (1990:4) argues that,

'Stylistics is an area of mediation between two disciplines… that Stylistics can provide a way of mediating between two subjects: English Language and literature'.

This implies that from the above view, Stylistics is neither a discipline nor a subject but seeks to mediate between disciplines and subjects. Fakuade (1998) reinforces widdowson's view by saying that, Stylistics is the confluence between the literary and linguistic rivers; though Goatly (1993), in his own view sees Stylistics, as essentially, a comparative exercise.

An appraisal of all the definitions of the term, by different scholars, will convince us that there is no single definition of Stylistics which is globally agreed upon. But we can agree that language is the medium of expression in literature. That a work of literature is established out of language That the study of literature is mainly a study of language in operation. Tzvetan Todorov, on talking about literature and by extension Stylistics is quoted as saying,

'It has language as both its point of departure and its destination. Language furnishes literature its abstract configuration as well as its perceptible material – It is both mediator and mediatized. Hence literature turns out to be not only the first field whose study takes language as its point of departure, but also the first field of which a knowledge can shed new light on the properties of language itself.' (Todorov, 1977:20).

The above is trying to explain that the clear relationship between language and literature is what is known as Stylistics in both linguistic and literary circles. We can conclude by saying that most scholars agree that Stylistics is the linguistic study of style, though they differ sharply as to what constitutes the essence, aims, and methods of investigating style. (Rasheed in Kakaki, 2000).

Divisions of Stylistics:
Stylistics as a serious multidisciplinary attempt to study style, and as a field that attracts increased interest in its study, is categorised into different groups by different scholars. Generally, there are three divisions of stylistics around which the Schools of Stylistics are established. These are: Linguistic Stylistics, Literary Stylistics and Pedagogical Stylistics.

However, the first scholar that seems to divide Stylistics into different groups is Guiraud (1971) who argues that present-day Stylistics is categorised into two antagonistic schools. These are: The 'traditional Stylistics' and the 'new Stylistics' The former originates with Charles Bally, a disciple of Ferdinand de Saussure while the latter with Roman Jacobson derived from Prague School of Structuralism. However, there is a contrary view on the division of Stylistics into schools. To Taylor,

'It is perhaps unwise, if not uncommon to speak of 'schools of Stylistics'. Few stylisticians agree on a theoretical definition of the term 'style' and fewer still on the correct methods of stylistic analysis. This is probably due to the composite nature of the concept of style: an amalgam of psychological, sociological, literary, and linguistic notions which are both commonsensical and theoretical' (Taylor, 1980:42).

Indeed, the categorisation has been a success since it was possible to apply some of these models to the study of the many forms of style. The major categorisations include:

Sociolinguistic Stylistics
In his effort to explain the notion of Sociolinguistic Stylistics, Martin Joos (1968) states:
'The social occasion and its adequate style are dynamically correlated, of course: in one direction of this correlation, the speaker uses the style that suits the occasion; in the other direction, the speaker defines the occasion for the listener (and for himself) by his 'choice' of style.

The above explains that the theory is partially based on the concept of 'choice'. It is also partially based on the interest of the sociolinguist in varying communicative situations which result from varying factors – setting, topic, participants. The theory also explains that there is appropriate method of language use for every given situation. It is believed that situation determines the choice in style. Its main variety is Reference centred/Mimetic stylistic model whose direction is on the relationship between style and the subject represented by the style. However, the model has limited applicability in dealing with basic elements of a literary text; although its strong point is its useful nature in view of the concept of register. M.A.K. Halliday contributed a lot in popularising the concept.

Pedagogical Stylistics:
Pedagogy is the practice of teaching or the study of teaching. When Stylistics is used as a tool in explaining English as a Foreign language (EFL) and English as a second language (ESL), then it is known as Pedagogical Stylistics (Mc Arthur, 1996:315). In other words, as H.G Widdowson explains:
'Stylistics can serve as a means whereby literature and language as subjects can by a process of gradual approximation move towards both linguistics and literary criticism, and also a means whereby these disciplines can be pedagogically treated to yield different subjects. Thus stylistics can, I suggest, provide for the progression of a pupil from either language or literature towards either literary criticism or linguistics. (Widdowson, 1990:4).

In appraising the above, we can see that Pedagogic Stylistics provides the means whereby the learner, with his own experience of language, can relate a piece of literary writing. When such a relationship is established, it can readily serve as a source from which a teaching approach deriving from it, can carry out its operations.

Practical Stylistics:
One important assumption of Stylistics is that, in interpreting literary texts, knowledge of language is a useful basis. This is viewed by the term,. Practical Stylistics. In his attempt to bring to lime light the notion of Practical Stylistics Carter states that, it is:
'A process of literary text analysis which primary interpretative procedures, used in the reading of a literary text are linguistic procedures'. (Carter, 1982:4).

The above explains that in reading literary texts, readers are first of all involved in a response to language. This means that the theory welcomes the relevance of linguistic approaches to literary discourse analysis. It also requires that interpretation/analysis of a text be done within both linguistic and literary angles. On the other hand, the exponents of this theory see the relevance of Roman Jacobson's opinion that:

'If there are some critics who still doubt the competence of linguistics to embrace the field of poetics, I privately believe that the poetic incompetence of some bigoted linguists has been mistaken for an inadequacy of the linguistic science itself. All of us here, however, definitely realize that a linguist deaf to the poetic function of language and a literary scholar indifferent to linguistic problems and unconversant with linguistic methods are equally flagrant anachronisms (Jacobson, 1960:377).

Structural Stylistics:
Structuralism started in Paris in the early 1960s. The pioneer proponent was said to be Roland Barthes (Rutherford, 1971). In his effort to explain the theory of structural stylistics, Talbot J. Taylor opines that:
'The discipline of Structural Stylistics, as it appears in the writing of Charles Bally, Michael Riffaterre, Roman Jacobson (who referred to the discipline as 'poetics') and the generative stylisticians, arose in order to explain certain common sense intuitions about verbal communication that are not explicable (Taylor, 1980:16).

Thus the theory developed from the attempt to apply, to the analysis of texts, the Transformational Generative Grammar model. The models under this school include: Generative stylistics and the Systemic stylistics.

Affective/Reader-Centered Stylistics
The main concern of this theory is to account for the varieties of the readers' response to the language of the text(s). Michael Riffaterre (1971) states that:
… the object of the analysis of style is the illusion that the text creates in the mind of the reader.

His belief is that, the concern of Stylistics must be that, the message should be seen as an impression which is subjectively established in the mind of the addressee instead of being an objective reality. The proponents of this theory (Riffaterre inclusive) believe that literary style emerges (out of the writer's desire) so as to surmount the difficulties faced by the reader in the communication of the writer's message. Riffaterre further maintains that the communication function of a message is determined by the reader's response. The nature of response depends not on the language but on other factors such as literary experience and culture which are all peculiar to the individual.

Speech Acts/Expressive Stylistics:
The idea of Speech Act Stylistics rests on John R. Searle's (1960) hypothesis. According to him,
If the basic unit of communication (the speech act) is considered along with the principle of expressibility, series of analytic connections would be discovered between the notion of speech acts, what the speaker means, what the sentence (or other structure unit) uttered means, what the speaker intends, what the hearer understands, and what the rules governing the linguistic elements are.

The main focus of this stylistics is on the execution and correlation of the message and the expression. What is important to the Speech Act theory is the expressibility principle which shows that, whatever can be meant can at the same time be said; and that usually, we mean more than we actually say.

Code-Centred/Objective Stylistics:
This form of Stylistics deals with the language structure and its component units. Applying the model means investigation and classification of the particular selection and combination of language units.

Functional Stylistics:
The emergence of this model is the result of the controversy between the Monists and Dualists in their attempt to define the actual relationship between the content and the form. The Monists' belief is that, *Manner* or *Expression* and *Matter* or *Content* are like body and soul: the change in form means, a change in content. This idea is also shared and supported by the New critics who, according to Belsey (1980):
Consistently urged that there was no distinction between form and content, that texts cannot be understood as ideas wrapped in emotions, or meanings decorated with imagery.

On the other hand, Dualists believe that, style involves choices of *Manner* or *Expression* rather than *Matter* or *Content*. Hence language performs various functions and any piece of language is likely to be the result of choices made on varying functional levels. However, language is assigned different functions by different functionalists. Adekunle listed these scholars with what each one of them terms to be the language function. The lists goes thus: I.A. Richard's (1929) functions are: Sense, feeling, tone, and intention; R. Jakobson's (1961) are, referential, emotive, connotive, phatic, poetic and metallinguistic; M.A.K. Halliday's functions are, ideational interpersonal and textual; Jakobson. (1960) believes that the function of an utterance depends on its

orientation to one or more of his six constitutive factors of the speech event. Some Functionalists identify, (a) the purely communicative style, (b) the technical style, (c) the aesthetic style, and (d) the persuasive or publicistic style, arising from these various functions of language. What distinguishes one style from another is its function or the aim envisaged by the author. For instance Alexander Stich (1973) explains that:

Whereas individual utterances have a potentially infinite variety of functions, the standard literary language has very few.

Adekunle further says that:

The contribution of this model to stylistics is the idea of (a) functional varieties of language and (b) the application to the study of style of the idea of the multifunctional nature of the units of a language: the simplest utterance is capable of conveying more than one kind of meaning (referential, directive or social). The pluralist element of the functionalist approach makes it possible for many extra linguistic communicative factors to be related to the structure of language in the process of stylistic analysis of all types of texts (Adekunle, 1985:33).

Conclusion

Based on the presentations above, we can draw a conclusion that we have fully explored the actual parts of Stylistics. This is done by thoroughly discussing its root, meaning, concept and divisions. We have realised that the term 'Stylistics' is coined from the word 'Style'. Its numerous meanings have also been given together with its categories.

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