SUBJECT MATTER OF STYLISTICS. THE MAIN TRENDS IN STYLE STUDY

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Abstract*: This article delves into the fundamental aspects of stylistics, a field dedicated to analyzing how language use varies according to context, function, and intention. The main trends in stylistic study are explored, including formal stylistics, which analyzes language structures; functional stylistics, which examines the communicative functions of language; cognitive stylistics, which focuses on mental processes involved in understanding style; and sociolinguistic approaches, which consider the role of social variables in shaping language. By reviewing these different perspectives, the article offers a comprehensive overview of stylistic analysis and its significance in various fields, particularly literature, linguistics, and communication studies*

Keywords: *Stylistics, linguistic style, language use, stylistic analysis, formal stylistics, cognitive stylistics, discourse analysis, functional stylistics, sociolinguistics.*

Stylistics is the branch of linguistics that examines the use of language in varying contexts, with a particular focus on how language choices create particular effects on readers or listeners. It explores how different elements of language — such as vocabulary, syntax, phonology, and discourse — shape style, tone, and meaning in both literary and non-literary texts. The field of stylistics intersects with a wide range of disciplines, including literary criticism, cognitive science, and sociolinguistics. This article provides an overview of the subject matter of stylistics, highlighting key trends in the study of style, from formalist approaches to contemporary trends in cognitive and functional stylistics. The

discussion also covers the relationship between language, society, and cognition, showing how stylistic analysis contributes to our understanding of communication in both written and spoken forms

Formal stylistics centers on the analysis of linguistic features, such as syntax, phonology, lexis, and grammar, to understand how these elements contribute to the overall aesthetic effect of a text. This approach primarily examines the form of language, whether in poetry, prose, or other types of writing, to uncover how stylistic devices like metaphors, similes, and parallelism enhance meaning and emotional impact. According to Geoffrey Leech, formal stylistics involves identifying and interpreting the specific choices made by an author to create a particular stylistic effect [1]. This method is deeply connected to structuralism, which emphasizes the analysis of language in terms of its internal structures and the relationships between linguistic elements.

Functional stylistics draws on systemic functional linguistics, a theory developed by Michael Halliday. This approach explores how language is used in different contexts to achieve specific communicative goals, such as persuading, informing, or entertaining. Functional stylistics highlights the interplay between linguistic form and function, examining how language reflects social roles, relationships, and situations. In this framework, style is not just about individual linguistic features but about how language functions in communication and how speakers choose language based on context and intent [2]. This approach has broadened the study of style beyond literary texts to include everyday language use, advertisements, legal language, and political discourse.

Cognitive stylistics is a relatively recent development in the field, merging insights from cognitive linguistics with stylistic analysis. Cognitive stylistics focuses on how readers process stylistic features like metaphors, narrative structures, and other literary devices. It is concerned with understanding how language affects the reader's mental representation and interpretation of a text. As Paul Stockwell explains, cognitive stylistics examines how cognitive processes such as perception, memory, and inference play a role in how readers

construct meaning from stylistic elements in the text [3]. This approach brings an interdisciplinary perspective, integrating linguistics, psychology, and literary theory.

Sociolinguistic stylistics explores how social factors such as gender, class, ethnicity, and identity influence language use and style. This approach is concerned with how language reflects social structures and power dynamics, examining how variations in style correspond to different social settings and interactions. Deborah Tannen's work on discourse analysis highlights how conversational styles vary across cultures and communities, and how stylistic choices can reflect and reinforce social roles [4]. Discourse-based approaches to stylistics look at how language works in real-world communication, such as political speeches, advertisements, and media texts, examining how style functions in shaping public opinion and social behavior.

In conclusion, stylistics is a multifaceted field that provides valuable insights into the ways language is used to convey meaning, evoke emotion, and communicate intentions. From the analysis of linguistic forms and structures to the study of how language reflects social contexts and cognitive processes, stylistics contributes significantly to understanding communication in its many forms. The main trends in stylistic study, including formal, functional, cognitive, and sociolinguistic approaches, offer diverse perspectives on how language functions and how style shapes our interactions with text and speech. As stylistic analysis continues to evolve, it remains a critical tool in the study of literature, communication, and language in society.

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