

THE BELLES-LETTERS STYLE AS A FUNCTIONAL STYLE

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Abstract: This article discusses the concept of functional stylistics, an essential trend in the study of language that examines the various sets or "paradigms" of language units across different levels of linguistic hierarchy. It emphasizes the relationship between norm and function in defining style, highlighting the significance of these notions in understanding communicative situations.

Keywords: Functional stylistics, language, style, communication, paradigms, belles-lettres, fiction.

Functional stylistics, which has become and remains an international, very important trend in style study, deals with sets, "paradigms" of language units of all levels of language hierarchy serving to accommodate the needs of certain typified communicative situations. This theory of style study involves consideration of such notions as norm and function in their relation to style.

There are a great many classifications of language varieties that are called sublanguages, sub-styles, registers and functional styles that use various criteria for their definition and categorization. The term generally accepted by most scholars is functional styles. According to I. R. Galperin functional style is defined as "a system of coordinated, interrelated and inter conditioned language means intended to fulfill a specific function of communication and aiming at a definite effect." It is the coordination of the language means and stylistic devices which shapes the distinctive features of each style and not the language means or stylistic devices themselves.

The word "belles-lettres" (from the French *belles lettres* - fiction) is used in different meanings: in a broad sense - fiction (this word usage is now obsolete); narrower, narrative prose. Belles-lettres is also considered as a link in mass literature, and even identified with it [1,55].

We are interested in a different meaning of the word: belles-lettres style is literature of the "second" row, non-exemplary, non-classical, but at the same time having undeniable merits and fundamentally different from the literary "bottom", i.e., the middle space of literature.

The belles-lettres style has a cognitive function as well as an aesthetic one, it follows that it has something in common with scientific style. The purpose of the belles-lettres style is not to prove but only to suggest a possible interpretation of the

phenomena of life by forcing the reader to see the viewpoint of the writer. The belles-lettres style rests on certain indispensable linguistic features, which are:

1. Genuine, not trite, imagery achieved by purely linguistic devices;
2. The use of words in contextual and very often in more than one dictionary meaning, or at least greatly influenced by the lexical environment;
3. A vocabulary which will reflect to a greater or lesser degree the author's personal evaluation of things or phenomena.

Belles-lettres style is heterogeneous. In its sphere, first of all, the circle of works that do not have artistic scale and pronounced originality, but discuss the problems of their country and era, meet the spiritual and intellectual needs of contemporaries, and sometimes descendants, are significant. This kind of fiction expresses "the needs of the present, the thought and question of the day" and in this sense is similar to "high literature", invariably touching it. "A piece of prose writing that is **belletristic** in style is characterized by a casual, yet polished and pointed, essayistic elegance. The belletristic is sometimes contrasted with the scholarly or academic: it is supposed to be free of the laborious, inert, jargon-ridden habits indulged by professors. "Reflection on literature has most often been belletristic: practiced by authors themselves and (later) by journalists, outside academic institutions. Literary study, beginning with research on the classics, became a systematic academic discipline only in the 18th and 19th centuries." [2, 27]

In its broadest sense, the term *belles-lettres* (from the French, literally "fine letters") can refer to any literary work. More particularly, the term "is now generally applied (when used at all) to the lighter branches of literature" (*The Oxford English Dictionary*, 1989).

The belles-lettres functional style has the following substyles: a) the lang style of poetry; Its first differentiating property is its orderly form, which is based mainly on the rhythmic and phonetic arrangement of the utterances. b) the lang style of emotive prose; Apart from metre and rhyme, what most of all distinguishes emotive prose from the poetic style is the combination of the literary variant or the language, both in words and syntax, with the colloquial, variant. c) the language style of drama;

The first thing to be said about the parameters of this variety of belles-lettres is that, unlike poetry, which, except for ballads, in essence excludes direct speech and therefore dialogue, and unlike emotive prose, which is a combination of monologue (the author's speech) and dialogue (the speech of the characters), the language of plays is entirely dialogue. *belles-lettres style* embraces numerous and many-sided genres of imaginative writing. The purpose of the belles-lettres style is not to prove but only to suggest a possible interpretation of the phenomena of life by forcing the reader to see the viewpoint of the writer. This is the cognitive function of the belles-lettres style [3,147].

Of all the functional styles of language, the most difficult to define is the belles-lettres style. Franz Kafka defines this style as “organised violence done on ordinary speech”. Literary works create their own world. Each is a unique entity. Just as a painter uses paint to create a new image, a writer uses words to create a text. An important thing to recognise about literary works is just how carefully and consciously they are crafted. Words are the raw material of literature and literary writers stretch them to their limits.

D. Crystal (1996) said that the literary language is the art in making the unnatural appear natural. For example, a playwright or novelist may write a dialogue which is naturalistic – i. e. it employs colloquialism, dialect words and so on – but this dialogue is very different from spontaneous speech. It will contain no non-fluency features, it will probably be less repetitious and more dramatic than ordinary speech.

Other forms of literature make no attempt to appear natural – in fact they deliberately surprise the readers’ expectations. They might use familiar words in unfamiliar ways as e. e. cummings does, or they might coin new words as Gerald Hopkins does. Perhaps we expect poets to use deviant language, but prose writers like James Joyce do it too. The belles-lettres style is a generic term for three substyles in which the main principles and the most general properties of the style are materialized. These three substyles are:

1. the language of poetry
2. emotive prose
3. the language of the drama

Each of these substyles has certain common features. First of all comes the common function which may be called “aeshetico-cognitive”. This is a double function which aims at the cognitive process and, at the same time, calls for a feeling of pleasure. This pleasure is caused not only by admiration of the selected language means and their peculiar arrangement but also by the fact that the reader is led to form his own conclusions. Therefore, the purpose of the belles-lettres style is to suggest a possible interpretation of the phenomena of life by forcing the reader to see the viewpoint of the writer. Nothing gives more pleasure and satisfaction than realizing that one has the ability to penetrate into the hidden tissue of events, phenomena and human activity and to perceive the relation between various seemingly unconnected facts brought together by the creative mind of the writer.

From all this it follows, that the belles-lettres style must select a system of language means which will secure the effect sought. The belles-lettres style rests on certain indispensable linguistic features, which are:

1. genuine, not trite, imagery, achieved by purely linguistic device
2. the use of words in contextual and very often in more than one dictionary meaning

3. a vocabulary which will reflect to a greater or lesser degree the author's personal evaluation of things or phenomena
4. a peculiar individual selection of vocabulary and syntax, a kind of lexical and syntactical idiosyncrasy
5. introduction of the typical features of colloquial language.

The belles-lettres style is individual in essence. Individuality in selecting language means and stylistic devices is one of its most distinctive properties [4,98].

1. Language of poetry. The first substyle we shall consider is verse. Its first differentiating property is its orderly form, which is based mainly on the rhythmic and phonetic arrangement of the utterances. The rhythmic aspect calls forth syntactical and semantic peculiarities which also fall into a more or less strict orderly arrangement. Both syntax and semantics comply with the restrictions imposed by the rhythmic pattern, and the result is brevity of expression, epigram-like utterances, and fresh unexpected imagery. Syntactically this brevity is shown in elliptical and fragmentary sentences, in detached constructions, in inversion, asyndeton and other syntactical peculiarities.

2. Emotive prose. The substyle of emotive prose has the same common features as have been pointed out for the belles-lettres style in general., but all these features are correlated differently in emotive prose. The imagery is no so rich as it is in poetry, the percentage of words with contextual meaning is not so high as in poetry, the idiosyncrasy of the author is not so clearly discernible. Apart from metre and rhyme, what most of all distinguishes emotive prose from the poetic style is the combination of the literary variant of the language, both in words and syntax, with the colloquial variant. It would perhaps be more exact to define this as a combination of the spoken and written varieties of the language, inasmuch as there are always two forms of communication present – monologue (the writer's speech) and dialogue (the speech of the characters).

It follows then that the colloquial language in the belles-lettres style is not a pure and simple reproduction of what might be the natural speech of living people. It has undergone changes introduced by the writer. Thus we find elements of the newspaper style in Sinclair Lewis's "It Can't Happen Here", the official style in the business letters exchanged between two characters in Galsworthy's novel „The Man of Property“, the style of scientific prose in Cronin's "Citadel" where medical language is used.

But all these styles under the influence of emotive prose undergo a kind of transformation. Passages written in other styles may be viewed only as interpolation and not as constituents of the style. Present day emotive prose is to a large extent characterized by the breaking-up of traditional syntactical designs of the preceding periods. Not only detached construction, but also fragmentation of syntactical models,

peculiar, unexpected ways of combining sentences, especially the gap-sentence link and other modern syntactical patterns, are freely introduced into present-day emotive prose.

3. Language of the drama. The stylization of colloquial language is one of the features of plays which at different stages in the history of English drama has manifested itself in different ways revealing, on the one hand, the general trends of the literary language and, on the other, the personal idiosyncrasies of the writer. Thus the language of plays is a stylized type of the spoken variety of language. The analysis of the language texture of plays has shown that the most characteristic feature here is to use the term of the theory of information, redundancy of information caused by the necessity to amplify the utterance. This is done for the sake of the audience [5,287].

The language of plays is entirely dialogue. The author's speech is almost entirely excluded except for the playwright's remark and stage directions. The language of the characters is in no way the exact reproduction of the norms of colloquial language, although the playwright seeks to reproduce actual conversation as far as the norms of the written language will allow. This variety of belles-lettres style has used the norms of the literary language of the given period.

In conclusion, we identify key linguistic features that characterize the belles-lettres style, particularly the use of genuine imagery created through linguistic devices, which sets it apart from both high literature and lower literary forms. Ultimately, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of functional stylistics and the unique attributes of the belles-lettres style within the broader literary context.

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