

People's Democratic Republic of Algeria
Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research
Echahid Hamma Lakhdar University
Faculty of Arts and Languages
Department of the English Language



Course Title:

Stylistics: Lectures for Master II

Students of English

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General Course Information

Course Title: Stylistics

Target Audience: Master II students of English

Coefficient: 03

Average Teaching Weeks: 15 weeks

Number of sessions per week: 02 session

Course Delivery Modality: Lecture /tutorial

Evaluation Criteria:

The preparation of the weekly assigned texts and readings

Active participation in the class

Written tests

Final exam

Course Objectives

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

1. Define and explain the fundamental concepts of stylistics, style, and literary language.
2. Describe the historical development of stylistics and its relationship to linguistics and literary criticism.

3. Identify and apply the main levels and methods of stylistic analysis.
4. Analyze the concepts of literariness, poetic language, defamiliarization, and foregrounding in literary texts.
5. Apply Jakobson's model of language functions and other key stylistic theories to textual analysis.
6. Examine narrative features such as narrative voice, point of view, and focalization in prose fiction.
7. Analyze characterization through linguistic and stylistic features, including speech representation, lexical choice, and idiolect.
8. Conduct a comprehensive stylistic analysis of literary texts using appropriate theoretical and analytical frameworks.

Prerequisites:

To successfully engage with this Stylistics course, Master 2 students should possess a solid foundation in linguistics and literary studies. They are expected to be familiar with the basic concepts of language analysis, including phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics, as well as fundamental approaches to literary criticism and textual interpretation. Students should also have prior knowledge of major literary genres, narrative elements, and critical reading techniques. In addition, the course requires the ability to analyze texts systematically, apply theoretical concepts to literary and non-literary discourse, and engage with academic readings in English. These prerequisites will enable students to understand stylistic theories, conduct linguistic analyses of texts, and critically evaluate the relationship between language, style, and meaning.

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Case Study: The Tell-Tale Heart by Edgar Allan Poe

Lesson One: Introduction to Stylistics

Introduction

Stylistics is one of the most important modern critical and linguistic approaches that focuses on the rigorous scientific study of literary and non-literary texts, based on the analysis of language as a tool for expression, creativity, and influence. Stylistics arose from the interaction between modern linguistics and literary criticism, combining an interest in the linguistic structure of a text with the exploration of its artistic and semantic aesthetics.

The study of literature is no longer limited to impressionistic judgments and personal taste, but now relies on the objective analysis of language and style. This has given stylistics a prominent place in contemporary literary and linguistic studies.

Stylistics is closely linked to the concept of "style," as it seeks to explain the linguistic characteristics that distinguish one literary text from another, or that make a writer stand out with a particular mode of expression.

The Concept of Stylistics

Definition of Stylistics

The word "stylistics" is derived from the word "style," which means path, method, or approach. In critical and linguistic terminology, stylistics is the science that studies the linguistic and aesthetic characteristics of texts. Definitions of stylistics vary according to different critical and linguistic schools.

Charles Bally views stylistics as the study of expressive means in language, especially those related to the affective and emotional values conveyed by words and structures (Bally, 1909). Bally focused on the affective aspect of language, considering that humans use language not only to convey information but also to express their feelings and emotions.

Roman Jakobson, on the other hand, linked stylistics to the poetic function of language, arguing that literary language is characterized by its focus on the form of the message itself, not just its content (Jakobson, 1960). Thus, the study of rhythm, repetition, symmetry, and displacement became an essential part of stylistic analysis. Geoffrey Leech defines stylistics as the systematic application of linguistic methods to literary texts in order to interpret their artistic and aesthetic impact (Leech & Short, 2007).

Based on these definitions, we can say that stylistics is:

A scientific method for analyzing texts.

- Relies on linguistic and linguistic tools.
- Aims to reveal the artistic and aesthetic characteristics of a text.
- Links linguistic form with literary meaning.

The Concept of Style

Definition of Style

Style is the specific way in which a writer uses language to express their thoughts, feelings, and worldview. Therefore, style reflects the writer's personality, culture, and artistic experience. Buffon famously defined style as, "The style is the man himself" (Buffon, 1753/1993). He meant that a writer's style represents their intellectual and psychological personality.

Jakobson argues that style arises from selection and organization within the linguistic system; the writer chooses specific words and structures from among multiple linguistic possibilities. M. A. K. Halliday, however, views style as a reflection of the social function of language, where styles change according to the occasion and social context (Halliday, 1978).

The Relationship Between Style, Language, and Literature

Stylistics is based on the connection between three main elements:

1. Language

2. Literature
3. The Reader

Language represents the raw material of the literary text, while literature transforms this language into a work of art imbued with aesthetic and humanistic significance.

Stylistics maintains that literary beauty lies not only in the ideas themselves, but also in the way these ideas are linguistically expressed. Therefore, word choice, sentence structure, rhetorical devices, and sound rhythm are all elements that contribute to the formation of style.

Lesson Two: The Historical Origins of Stylistics

The roots of stylistics can be traced back to ancient Greek rhetoric, particularly to Aristotle, who focused on the study of poetic language and oratory in his two books, *Poetics* and *Rhetoric*.

Aristotle emphasized:

- Clarity of expression
- Influence on the audience
- Suitability of style to the context
- Figurative language and metaphors

Aristotle believed that literary language differed from ordinary language because it aimed to create artistic pleasure and psychological impact (Aristotle, trans. 2007). Rhetoric also developed among the Romans, especially with Cicero and Quintilian. They focused on the arts of persuasion, oratory, and linguistic embellishment.

Linguistic vs. Literary Stylistics

Stylistics occupies a middle ground between linguistics and literary studies, and thus, different approaches to understanding the nature of stylistic analysis have emerged within it. One of the most important of these approaches is the distinction between what is known as linguistic stylistics and literary stylistics. This distinction is not merely a terminological difference, but rather reflects a difference in perspective regarding the literary text itself: Is it a linguistic structure to be analyzed scientifically, or an aesthetic experience to be understood interpretively?

First: Linguistic Stylistics

Linguistic stylistics is based on the fundamental idea that a literary text can be studied as a linguistic system, and that its beauty or impact can be interpreted through precise linguistic analytical tools such as phonetics, syntactic structure, lexicon, and textual cohesion.

This approach is closely linked to modern linguistics, especially with the development of works such as those by M.A.K. Halliday emphasized that language is a functional system used to convey meaning within different social contexts, and not merely a means of literary expression.

This trend was also influenced by the work of Geoffrey Leech and Michael Short, who presented a clear analytical model in their book *Style in Fiction*, asserting that literary text analysis should be based on a precise and verifiable linguistic description.

Characteristics of Linguistic Stylistics:

Linguistic stylistics is characterized by the following:

- Reliance on objective analysis
- Utilization of linguistic tools (grammar, phonetics, semantics)
- Focus on “How does language work?”
- Attempt to minimize subjective and impressionistic interpretation

Example: “It is raining heavily on the city.”

Linguistic analysis does not ask:

Is the image beautiful?

Rather, it asks:

- ✓ What type of verb is used?
- ✓ What is the nature of the grammatical structure?
- ✓ Is there a lexical choice that carries a specific meaning?
- ✓ How does the structure contribute to the production of meaning?

If the text were changed to:

"The sky collapses upon the city as rain"

The analysis would then focus on:

- ✓ The metaphor in "the sky collapses"
- ✓ The transformation of nature into an agent
- ✓ The semantic shift in the verb

In other words, the goal is to explain how the effect is produced through language itself. This approach views literature not as an "aesthetic mystery," but as something that can be explained scientifically like any other linguistic system.

Second: Literary Stylistics

Literary stylistics, however, starts from a different angle: it sees the literary text not merely as a linguistic structure, but as an aesthetic and human experience, and that stylistic analysis should serve to understand meaning and artistic effect.

This approach is more closely related to the literary critical tradition, but it uses language as a supporting tool, not as an end in itself.

Characteristics of Literary Stylistics:

- Focus on meaning and interpretation
- Attention to the reader's aesthetic experience
- Using linguistic analysis as a means of understanding meaning
- Openness to the psychological and social context

Example: "You are the poem that time has not written."

In literary stylistics, it is not enough to analyze the metaphorical structure alone. The question arises:

What emotional experience does this simile convey?
How does the text reshape the concept of love and time?
What human image does it construct?

Here, language becomes a guide to a deeper meaning, not merely an analytical structure. The position of this approach is that it holds that a literary text cannot be reduced to linguistic rules alone, because a large part of its meaning is linked to:

The reader
Context
Human experience

Third: The fundamental difference between the two approaches

The basic difference can be summarized as follows:

Linguistic stylistics	Literary stylistic
Begins with language	Begins with the literary text
Strict structural analysis	Interpretation and exegesis
Objectivity	Subjectivity
Concerned with “How does the text work?”	Concerned with “What does the text mean?”

Fourth: Are they opposing approaches? Here is a very important point emphasized by many contemporary researchers.

- M.A.K. Halliday argues that language cannot be separated from social meaning, and therefore, linguistic analysis and literary interpretation cannot be completely separated.
- Geoffrey Leech also asserts that modern stylistics is an interface discipline that combines linguistic precision with literary interpretation.

In other words:

The goal is not to choose one approach over another, but to use them together in an integrated way.

A unified applied example

"The city left silently, as if it were forgetting its own names."

- Linguistic Analysis:

Metaphor in "left the city"

Personification of the city

Simile: "as if it were forgetting its own names"

Semantic shift in verb attribution

- Literary Analysis:

A feeling of loss and alienation

The city is portrayed as a living being that loses its memory

Creating an emotional experience of migration or separation

Founding Figures of Modern Stylistics

1. Roman Jakobson

Roman Jakobson is considered one of the founders of structural linguistics and a leading figure in bridging linguistics and literature in the 20th century. Born in Russia, he later moved to Europe and America, where he was influenced by the Russian Formalist school and later by

the Prague School of Linguistics. His most important work is *Linguistics and Poetics* (1960), which is considered a cornerstone of modern stylistics.

His central contribution lies in introducing a model of linguistic communication comprising six elements (sender, receiver, message, context, code, and channel), linking each element to a specific linguistic function. He further developed the concept of the “poetic function,” where language becomes focused on the form of the message itself, not just its content. This idea was revolutionary because it shifted literary analysis from content to the structure of language.

Jakobson argues that what distinguishes literary language is not the subject matter, but rather the way in which language is organized within the text. This is why he famously said, “The subject of literary studies is not literature, but literariness,” meaning that true study should focus on the linguistic characteristics that make a text literary.

2. M.A.K. Halliday

M.A.K. Halliday is considered the founder of Systemic Functional Linguistics, a field that radically changed the way we understand language. Halliday argues that language is not merely an abstract system of rules, but a social system used to achieve communicative functions within a context.

In his works, *Language as Social Semiotic*, he explains that language is inextricably linked to society, and that meaning is inseparable from the context in which it is used. He also introduces the concept of the “three functions of language” (experiential, interactional, and textual), which help in analyzing how meaning is constructed within texts.

Halliday's contribution to stylistics is crucial because he grounded linguistic analysis in social context, allowing literary texts to be understood as social acts rather than mere linguistic constructs. His influence is therefore profound in modern linguistic stylistics and discourse analysis.

3. Geoffrey Leech

Geoffrey Leech is one of the most prominent linguists who contributed to the development of applied stylistics, particularly in the study of English literature. His most important works include *A Linguistic Guide to English Poetry* and *Style in Fiction*, co-authored with Michael Short, which has become a fundamental reference in the analysis of narrative style.

Leech argues that style can be studied scientifically by analyzing linguistic choices within a text, such as vocabulary, grammatical structure, and patterns of repetition and deviation from the norm. He developed the concept of "stylistic deviation," which refers to the departure of literary language from its usual usage to achieve an aesthetic or semantic effect.

Leech's fundamental contribution is that he transformed stylistics into a rigorous applied field combining linguistics and literary analysis, allowing for the systematic study of literary texts rather than relying solely on critical impressions.

4. Michael Riffaterre

Michael Riffaterre is one of the most important theorists in semiotic stylistics, focusing on the relationship between the text and the reader in the production of meaning. Riffaterre argues that literary meaning is not grasped directly upon first reading, but rather is gradually formed through linguistic signs within the text that prompt the reader to reinterpret it.

In his works, such as *Semiotics of Poetry*, he proposes the idea of the "model reader" who possesses the ability to detect internal connections within the text and understand the allusions and repetitions that generate deeper meaning. He also emphasizes that a literary text functions as a system of signs that refer to one another within the text itself, and not merely to external reality.

Riffaterre's contribution is significant because he shifted the focus from the text as a closed structure to the act of reading itself, making the reader an essential element in the production of stylistic meaning.

5. Jan Mukařovský

Jan Mukařovský is one of the leading figures of the Prague School of Structuralism and played a key role in developing the fundamental concepts of modern stylistics, particularly the concept of "foregrounding."

Mukařovský argues that literary language is characterized by certain elements that become unusually prominent within the text, whether through repetition, deviation, or parallelism. These prominences draw the reader's attention to the language itself, not just to the meaning.

In his work, he distinguishes between everyday language, which aims for rapid communication, and literary language, which disrupts this automatic communication in order to create an aesthetic experience. He also emphasizes that literariness is not a fixed characteristic but rather the result of a specific organization of language within the text.

His main contribution is to shift the focus from "what the text says" to "how the text makes its elements stand out within its structure."

6. Norman Fairclough

Norman Fairclough is considered one of the founders of Critical Discourse Analysis, a field closely related to modern critical stylistics.

Fairclough argues that language is not neutral but reflects power relations and ideology within society. In his book *Language and Power*, he explains how texts can be analyzed to reveal the hidden structures of social and political domination.

His fundamental contribution to stylistics is the introduction of the ideological dimension into language analysis, which broadened the scope of stylistic study beyond aesthetics to include the analysis of power and social meaning within texts.

7. Stanley Fish

Stanley Fish is one of the leading theorists of Reader-Response Theory. Fish argues that literary meaning does not exist independently within the text but is formed within an “interpretive community” of readers who share the same cultural norms.

In his book *Is There a Text in This Class?*, he explains that different readers can produce different meanings for the same text because reading is not a neutral process but a culturally oriented activity. His contribution to stylistics lies in shifting the focus from the text to the reader, thus redefining the relationship between language and meaning.

8. Terence Hawkes

Terence Hawkes is a scholar who contributed to the dissemination of structuralist and post-structuralist concepts in literary and stylistic criticism. He is best known for his book,

Structuralism and Semiotics, in which he provided a simplified explanation of how literary analysis moved from critical impression to scientific analysis based on signs and structures.

Hawkins argues that a literary text cannot be understood solely through its direct meaning, but rather through the systems of signs it produces within a culture. He also explains that style is not merely "linguistic embellishment," but a semantic system that reflects the organization of thought within the text. His primary contribution lies in simplifying structuralist thought and connecting it to literary and stylistic studies, making it an important educational resource for students in this field.

9. Jonathan Culler

Jonathan Culler is considered one of the most prominent structuralist and deconstructionist theorists in literary criticism. In his book, *Structuralist Poetics*, he attempted to explain how literature can be analyzed through internal systems and rules similar to those of grammar.

Culler focuses on the idea of "literary competence," meaning that the reader possesses implicit knowledge of literary patterns that helps them understand texts. He also argues that meaning is not fixed within the text but is formed through the reader's interaction with textual structures. His contribution to stylistics is significant because he connects structural analysis with the reader's role in producing meaning.

10. Leonard Bloomfield

Leonard Bloomfield is a pioneer of American structural linguistics who indirectly influenced stylistics through his focus on the rigorous scientific analysis of language.

In his book *Language*, Bloomfield advocated for the study of language as a system that can be objectively described without relying on psychological or interpretive meaning. This approach later influenced linguistic stylistics, which relies on the precise description of linguistic structures within texts.

His contribution to stylistics lies in establishing the idea that language can be analyzed in a rigorously scientific manner, thus paving the way for the development of stylistic analysis methods based on accuracy and objectivity.

Conclusion

It can be said that the difference between linguistic stylistics and literary stylistics is not a difference in subject matter, but rather in the angle of analysis:

The former views the text as a linguistic system that can be scientifically deconstructed.

The latter views the text as a human experience that needs understanding and interpretation.

However, the modern trend in stylistics tends to integrate the two, so that linguistic analysis becomes a means of understanding literature, not a replacement for it.

Lesson Three: Modern Stylistics

Introduction

Modern stylistics emerged as an important field of study in the twentieth century through the integration of linguistic analysis and literary criticism. It developed in response to the need for more systematic and objective methods of examining literary texts, moving beyond purely impressionistic interpretations. By focusing on the relationship between language and meaning, stylistics seeks to explain how writers use linguistic choices to create particular effects and convey their ideas. As a result, it has become a valuable tool for understanding the artistic and communicative dimensions of language.

The growth of modern linguistics played a crucial role in shaping stylistics as an academic discipline. Theories and methods drawn from linguistics provided scholars with analytical frameworks for examining textual features such as vocabulary, syntax, cohesion, imagery, and discourse patterns. This interdisciplinary nature enabled stylistics to bridge the gap between language study and literary analysis, offering a more precise way of exploring how texts function and how meaning is produced. Consequently, stylistics has gained recognition in both literary studies and applied linguistics.

Today, modern stylistics is a broad and dynamic field that encompasses a variety of approaches and perspectives. Its applications extend beyond literature to include media discourse, political speeches, advertisements, and other forms of communication. As the discipline has evolved, several distinct types of stylistic analysis have emerged, each emphasizing different aspects of language and interpretation. Understanding these types is

essential for appreciating the scope of modern stylistics and its contribution to contemporary textual analysis.

1) Types of Stylistics

1. Expressive Stylistics

This stage emerged with Charles Bally, who was influenced by his teacher, Ferdinand de Saussure. It focused on:

- Emotion and sentiment in language
- Expressive function
- The effect of language on the recipient
- The difference between ordinary and literary language

Bally believed that the speaker chooses their words and structures to express a specific psychological state; therefore, style is linked to the speaker's emotional state. The Importance of Bally's Contribution lies in:

- Transforming the study of style into a scientific linguistic study.
- Focusing on everyday, spoken language.
- Emphasizing the expressive function of language. (Bally, 1909)

2. Structural Stylistics

Structural stylistics emerged as a result of the influence of structural linguistics on literary studies. Jakobson is considered one of its most important representatives. Jakobson developed a model of the functions of language, including the poetic function, which focuses on the form of the message.

He believes that literature is characterized by the use of:

Parallelism

Rhythm

Repetition

Displacement

Alliteration

He considers these elements to make language captivating and give the text its artistic value (Jakobson, 1960).

Structuralist stylistics is associated with the Prague School of Linguistics, particularly the work of Jan Mukarovsky, who introduced the concept of “deviation” or “departure,” meaning the departure of literary language from ordinary language in order to achieve aesthetic effect. Mukarovsky believed that literary language reorganizes reality, making it more impactful and evocative. (Mukarovsky, 1964)

3. Functional Stylistics

Functional stylistics developed with the work of M. A. K. Halliday. This school views language as a social tool that performs multiple functions within society. Halliday argues that stylistic analysis must consider:

- Context
- Speaker
- Recipient

Halliday identified three main functions:

- ✓ Intellectual function: conveying ideas and meanings.
- ✓ Social function: organizing relationships between individuals.
- ✓ Textual function: achieving coherence and cohesion within the text. (Halliday, 1978)

The Importance of Functional Stylistics

- ✓ It linked language to society.
- ✓ It focused on discourse analysis.

- ✓ It expanded the scope of stylistics to include non-literary texts.

4. Generative and Transformational Stylistics

This stage was influenced by the work of Noam Chomsky. It focused on:

Deep structure and surface structure

The speaker's creative ability

The mental rules of language

It viewed style as a result of the transformations the writer makes to the basic linguistic structure.

5. Cognitive Stylistics

This is considered one of the modern trends that links language to mental and perceptual processes. Among its most prominent pioneers are Paul Simpson and Peter Stockwell

Its main ideas focuses on:

- How the reader perceives the text
- The effect of language on imagination
- The mental processes during reading

It posits that understanding a literary text depends on the interaction between:

The text

The reader

Previous knowledge (Simpson, 2004)

Classical Rhetoric



Russian Formalism



Prague School



Structuralism



Modern Stylistics

2) Levels of Stylistic Analysis

1. The Phonetic Level :

This level studies:

Internal music

Sound repetition

Alliteration

Rhythm

Rhythm

This is clearly evident in poetry.

2. The Morphological Level

This level studies:

Word forms

Derivation

Tense

Pronouns

Morphological forms can carry psychological and temporal connotations.

3. Syntactic Level

This level focuses on analyzing:

Nominal and verbal sentences

Inversion

Ellipsis

Repetition

Sentence length

4. Semantic Level

This level studies:

Metaphor

Symbolism

Semantic fields

5. Pragmatic Level

This level focuses on the relationship between:

Speaker
Recipient
Context

3) Characteristics of Stylistics

Among the most important characteristics of stylistics are:

1. Scientificity

It relies on systematic linguistic analysis.

2. Objectivity

It strives to avoid subjective judgments.

3. Integration

It combines language, literature, and criticism.

4. Comprehensiveness

It studies all levels of the text.

5. Focus on the Text

It focuses on the text itself rather than solely on the author's life.

4) Importance of Stylistics

The importance of stylistics is evident in:

Scientifically analyzing literary texts.

Uncovering the aesthetics of language.

Understanding the author's personality. The development of modern literary criticism.

The analysis of media, political, and religious discourse.

Stylistics also helped move beyond traditional impressionistic criticism toward a more precise and objective approach.

The Difference Between Rhetoric and Stylistics

Stylistic	Rhetoric
Modern	Ancient
Descriptive/Analytical	Prescriptive
Focused on Text Analysis	Focused on Persuasion

Focused on Linguistics	Reliant on Grammar
Focused on Structure and Meaning	Focused on Ornamentation

Conclusion

Stylistics has evolved from ancient rhetorical roots into a modern critical and linguistic approach that combines scientific and aesthetic analysis of texts. A large number of theorists have contributed to its development, such as Bally, Jakobson, Halliday, Simpson, and Lesch, who shifted the study of literature from subjective judgments to systematic linguistic analysis.

Today, stylistics is considered one of the most important contemporary critical approaches because it helps in understanding how language functions within a text and in revealing the secrets of literary creativity and aesthetic impact.

Lesson Four: Literariness

What Makes a Text Literary?

Let us begin with a seemingly simple question, yet one that has been among the most influential in modern literary criticism:

What makes a text literary?

Consider the following two texts:

The weather is beautiful today.

The sky breathed a soft light over the city.

You will immediately notice that the second sentence sounds more “literary” than the first. But the question we should be asking is not: *Which sentence is more beautiful?*

Rather:

Why does the second sentence seem literary at all, even though it says something similar to the first?

- Here we arrive at the fundamental problem that the pioneers of Russian Formalism started with at the beginning of the 20th century: Is literature defined by its subject matter? Or by its form? Or by something deeper within language itself?

These critics rejected the idea that literature is understood through its themes (love, war, nature...) or through the author's biography or moral message. Instead, focus on a more precise question:

What makes a literary text “literary” in and of itself?

This question is the starting point for a very central concept in modern criticism called literariness.

What is literariness?

Literariness is not the name of a type of text, but rather the set of characteristics that make a text perceived as literary.

In simpler terms:

- Not all texts about love are literary.
- Not all beautiful texts are literary.
- Not all texts written with emotion are literary.

Literariness is the specific way in which language is constructed within a text in such a way that we engage with it differently from everyday language. This is why Jakobson famously said:

“The subject of literary studies is not literature, but literariness.” (Jakobson, 1921/1987) This statement is not merely a definition; it represents a revolution in our way of thinking:

Instead of asking: *What does the text say?*

We begin to ask: What makes it say it in this way?

The Shift from “Content” to “Method”

In the old critical tradition, the focus was often on:

What does the writer want to say?

What is the moral idea?

What is the social message?

But the Formalists posed a completely different question: *What happens within language itself when a text becomes literary?*

This shift is very important because it moves the analysis from the outside in:

From the writer’s life → to the structure of the text

From the idea → to the formulation

From the message → to the method

Therefore, it can be said that for the Formalists, literariness is not “what is said,” but “how it is said.”

Why are themes insufficient for understanding literariness?

Let us take a simple example:

Text 1:

I love you.

Text 2:

You are the light that rearranges my inner darkness.

The theme is almost the same: love.

But it's clear that the second text is treated as a literary text.

So the important question is:

Has the idea changed? No.

Then what has changed?

What has changed is the way language is constructed: the imagery, the relationships between words, the imagination, and the linguistic reshaping of reality.

Literature is not just about "beauty." It is a common misconception that literature means "beautiful language." However, formalists reject this simplification.

A text can be beautiful but not literary in the artistic sense, and a text can be shocking or harsh but still highly literary. Therefore, literature is not ornamentation or traditional rhetoric or "polite" style. Rather, it is the way language is organized in such a way as to produce a specific effect on perception.

Literature as an Intrinsic Property of the Text

One of the most important ideas of the Formalists is that literariness is not something external to the text (such as the author's intention or the reader's taste), but rather it exists within the structure of the text itself. This means that: Literature is not a “description” of the text, but rather the “way” of the text.

In other words, a literary text is not different because it “carries a different meaning,” but because it constructs its meaning in a different way.

An Analytical Example

Let us take the following sentence:

The leaves fell from the tree in autumn.

This is a simple declarative sentence, its purpose being to convey information.

Now:

The tree plucked its yellow leaves and sent them to the ground.

The basic information hasn't changed much, but the method has changed completely.

What happened here?

The tree became a living being performing an action.

The leaves became “leaves.”

The action is no longer a natural description but an imaginative construction.

So, what makes the text seem literary?

Not the subject matter, but the reshaping of reality within language.

Literature and Liberation from Everyday Language

In everyday life, we use language functionally:

To ask for something

To explain something

To convey information

But in a literary text, language is not merely a means of communication; it becomes an end in itself.

Here, an important question arises for students:

Do we use language in literature simply to say something, or to create a new way of saying it?

Formalists tend toward the latter.

Literature as a System of “Techniques”

Formalists, including Viktor Shklovsky and Boris Eichenbaum, argue that literature is not an “obscure essence,” but rather a system of artistic techniques.

These techniques include:

- ✓ The indirect choice of words
- ✓ Specific sentence structure
- ✓ Creating unusual relationships between elements
- ✓ Organizing narrative in a different way

Therefore, literariness is not something we look for outside the text, but something we observe in how the text functions.

Literature is Not Static

A very important point: Literature is not a fixed property across time.

What was considered literary in the 19th century might seem commonplace today.

Example:

Her eyes are like the sea.

This image might have been striking in a particular historical context, but today it is very commonplace.

This means that literariness is changing because it is linked to:

Cultural expectations and reading habits.

An introduction to post-literariness

If literariness is what makes a text literary, then the following question becomes natural:

How is this literariness achieved within language?

In other words:

- ✓ *What does language do to become literary?*
- ✓ *What processes occur within the text?*
- ✓ *What distinguishes literary structure from ordinary structure?*

These questions will later lead to more detailed concepts concerning the mechanisms at work within a text

Ordinary Language



Literary Devices



Literariness



Artistic Effect

Conclusion

The concept of literariness can be summarized in the following points:

Literariness is not the subject matter of the text, nor its moral value, nor its superficial beauty. Rather, it is the specific way in which language is constructed within the text in such a way that it makes us perceive it as a text distinct from everyday language. The Russian Formalists insisted that the study of literature should focus on this internal characteristic rather than external factors. Therefore, the central question is not “What does the text say?” but “How does the text make us see what it says in a different way?” (Jakobson, 1921/1987).

Lesson Five: Poetic Language

Introduction: *Is Literature Simply a Means of Conveying Meaning?*

Let us begin with a question that may seem simple: If the purpose of language is to convey information, why don't poets and storytellers write directly?

Why doesn't a poet say:

"I am sad." Instead of saying: "I carry within me an endless winter."

And if both sentences convey almost the same meaning, why do we feel that the second is more literary and beautiful?

This question is the true starting point of stylistics, and it is also the question that many schools of criticism attempted to answer during the twentieth century, especially the Russian Formalists, the Prague School, and Roman Jakobson. Understanding the concept of poetic language is the essential gateway to understanding subsequent concepts such as defamiliarization and foregrounding.

What is meant by poetic language?

-When we speak of poetic language, we do not mean only the language of poetry in the narrow sense, but rather literary language in general. Poetic language is language that not only conveys information but also draws the reader's attention to the mode of expression itself. In everyday language, our focus is usually solely on meaning.

-When someone says,
"It's cold."

We don't pay attention to the sentence structure, word order, or rhythm; we focus on the information it conveys.

-In literature, however, the situation is different.

-When a poet writes, "The cold bites the fingers of morning."

We are not only interested in the idea of cold, but also in the way it is expressed. Here, language itself becomes the object of our attention.

Roman Jakobson and the Central Question

Roman Jakobson is one of the most important theorists who attempted to explain the unique characteristics of literary language. In his famous article, *Linguistics and Poetics* (1960), he posed a question that has become one of the most prominent in stylistic studies:

"What makes a verbal message a work of art?"

That is: "What makes a particular linguistic message a work of art?"

Note that Jakobson does not ask: **"What is literature?"**

He asks: **"What makes language literary?"**

This is a crucial difference.

The Functions of Language According to Jakobson

Jakobson believes that language doesn't perform just one function. When we speak, we might aim to:

Convey information.

Express feelings.

Influence others.

Establish social communication.

Talk about language itself.

But he added a very important function: ***The Poetic Function***

This is the function where the focus shifts to the message itself. That is, the attention is not only on what is said, but also on how it is said.

When Jakobson published his famous study, *Linguistics and Poetics*, in 1960, he was attempting to answer a crucial question:

Do we always use language for the same purpose?

His answer was: No.

Language is not merely a tool for conveying information; it can perform different functions depending on the element being addressed during the communication process (Jakobson, 1960).

Jakobson started from a communication model consisting of:

Addresser

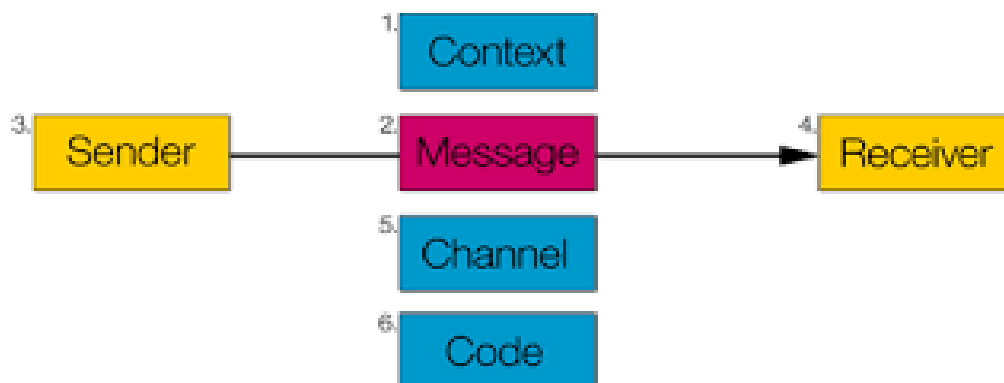
Recipient

Message

Context

Contact

Code



He argued that each of these elements produces a specific linguistic function when it becomes the focus of attention.

First: The Referential Function

What is it?

The referential function emerges when the focus is on the context or topic being discussed. In other words, when the primary purpose of speech is to convey information, describe a fact, or refer to something that exists in the external world. Jakobson states that this is the dominant function in scientific and informative discourse (Jakobson, 1960).

A simple example:

Algeria is located in North Africa.

Here, the speaker is not expressing their feelings. Nor attempting to influence the listener. Nor discussing the language itself. They are simply presenting information.

Another example:

The temperature today is 28 degrees Celsius.

This is a descriptive sentence par excellence.

A question for students:

When someone reads a geographical report or a scientific article, what are they most interested in? The form of the language or the information?

Usually the information. This is why the descriptive function is dominant in scientific texts.

Second: The Emotive Function

What is meant by it?

It appears when the focus is on the sender themselves, that is, on their feelings, attitudes, and emotions. The primary goal here is not to convey information, but to express the speaker's psychological state. Jakobson states that this function reveals the speaker's attitude toward what they are saying (Jakobson, 1960).

Example:

I am so happy today!

The goal is not simply to convey information. But to express the feeling of happiness.

Another example:

Oh my God! How frightening this scene is!

The sentence reveals the speaker's fear more than it describes the scene itself.

My heart is breaking with sorrow.

The heart may not be literally breaking. But the phrase conveys the intensity of the emotion.

Why is this function so prevalent in poetry? Because poetry is often associated with personal feelings:

Love
Sorrow
Fear
Longing

Therefore, we find the expressive function prominent in lyric poetry.

Third: The Conative Function

What is it? It appears when the focus is on the recipient. That is, when the speaker tries to influence the listener's behavior or prompt them to do something.

Example:

Close the door.

The speaker isn't describing anything. Rather, they want the listener to carry out a command.

Another example:

Please sit here.

Fourth: The Phatic Function

This is one of the six phatic functions identified by Jakobson in his theory of linguistic communication. The phatic function is a linguistic function used to open, maintain, or ensure the continuation of communication between a speaker and a listener, without the primary goal being to convey new information.

When we use this function, we are not aiming to present an idea or information, but rather to ensure that communication is still ongoing and that the other party is paying attention.

"Hello? Can you hear me?"

"Yes, yes... go on."

"How are you?" (In some contexts, it may simply be to initiate a conversation and not to request actual information.)

"Hmm... right" (to show the listener is paying attention.)

Its function in communication:

- To open a conversation
- To maintain contact
- To test the quality of the channel (phone, voice, attention)
- To end or extend a conversation socially

According to Jakobson, the opening function is less concerned with the content itself and more with maintaining communication between the two parties.

Fifth: The Metalingual Function

What does it mean? It appears when language is used to talk about language itself. That is, when the linguistic code becomes the subject of discourse.

Example

What does the word "stylistics" mean?

Here, we use language to explain language.

Another example:

The word "book" is a noun, not a verb.

What is the difference between a metaphor and a simile? Here, language is talking about linguistic elements. Why is this function so common in education? Because teachers explain language using language itself.

Question for students: When a grammar teacher explains a linguistic rule, are they talking about the external world or about language itself?

_They are talking about language itself. This is the essence of metalinguistics.

Sixth: The Poetic Function

Why is it the most important function in stylistics? Because it is the function that Jakobson focused on most in his study.

What does it mean? It emerges when the focus shifts to the message itself.

That is, when the speaker is as concerned with the form of expression as with the content.

Jakobson argues: "The poetic function projects the principle of equivalence from the axis of selection into the axis of combination" (Jakobson, 1960, p. 358).

This is the most famous phrase in his essay. What does this mean practically? It means that the text begins to rely on:

Repetition

Rhythm

Alliteration

Assonance

Parallelism

Rhetorical devices

So that the language itself becomes captivating.

Example

Ordinary sentence: I want freedom.

Poetic sentence: I want a freedom that opens the windows of the soul.

The basic meaning is present in both sentences.

But the second one makes us focus on the mode of expression.

Another example:

We dream of freedom.

We dream of justice.

We dream of the future.

Here, parallelism and repetition draw our attention.

A poetic example:

If the people one day desire life,

Then fate must respond.

We notice the rhythm, balance, and sound coherence. These elements make the message itself the focus of attention.

Comparison of the six functions:

It is raining.

The same event can be expressed in different ways:

Referential:

It's raining heavily.

(Information)

Emotive:

What beautiful rain!

(Feeling)

Conative:

Take your umbrella before you go outside.

(Effect on the listener)

Phatic:

Do you see the rain?

(Maintaining interaction)

Metalingual:

The word "raining" means to fall heavily.

(Linguistic Explanation)

Poetic

The rain plays music on the windowpanes.

(Focus on the Message and its Form)

Classification	Strongest Factor	Function	Examples
Referential	Context	description, contextual information	Our business hours are 9am-5pm, Monday through Friday.
Emotive	Addresser	interjection/expressions of emotional state	Oh, man... Awesome! Whew!
Conative	Addressee	concerned with demanding; vocative or imperative addressing of the receiver	Go on, open it! Shoo. Get out of here. Check this out.
Phatic	Contact	concerns channels of communication; performance social task as opposed to conveying information; to establish, prolong or discontinue conversation	Hey! Mmmm.. How about that? Really? No way!
Metalinguistic	Code	requires language analysis; using language to discuss language	Noun, adjective, code-switching Water is a non-count noun, right?
Poetic/Aesthetic	Message	involves choosing words carefully, the art of words, often self-reflective	But, soft! What light through yonder window breaks?

Jakobson's Six Communicative Functions of Language

Conclusion

Jakobson argues that any communication process comprises six basic elements, each generating a specific linguistic function. Language may be used to convey information (referential function), to express feelings (expressive function), to influence others (instructive function), to maintain communication (communicative function), to talk about language itself (metalingual function), or to draw attention to the message itself (poetic function). The poetic function is of particular importance in stylistic studies because it explains how language transforms from an ordinary means of communication into a literary language with aesthetic effect (Jakobson, 1960).

It can be said that the concept of poetic language represents the first theoretical foundation of stylistics. Jakobson explained that literary language differs from ordinary language because it focuses on the message itself, making the form of expression part of the meaning. The writer is not only concerned with what they say, but also with how they say it. Through parallelism, rhythm, repetition, and phonetic and semantic relationships, language becomes more prominent and impactful. This leads us to the question that will guide us to the next lesson: How does literary language make familiar things seem new? This is the question that Shklovsky's concept of defamiliarization will answer.

Lesson Six: Defamiliarization

Introduction:

Why don't we notice the things we see every day?

Let us start with a simple experiment. Imagine taking the same route to university or work every day. In the first few days, you might notice the trees, buildings, people, and shops. But after weeks or months, you'll find yourself crossing the same road without paying attention to most of its details.

The question is: Have the things around you disappeared? Of course not. But your mind has become accustomed to them. They have become so familiar that you no longer truly see them.

This simple idea is the starting point upon which Viktor Shklovsky built his famous theory of defamiliarization, which is considered one of the most important concepts in modern literary criticism and stylistics.

What is defamiliarization?

The concept of alienation appeared in Shklovsky's famous essay: *Art as Technique* (1917). The original Russian word is: *Ostranenie* which is usually translated as: Defamiliarization.

Making Strange
Estrangement
Removing Familiarity
Making the Familiar Strange

Shklovsky's Definition

Shklovsky believes that the function of art is not to convey information, but rather: "to make familiar things seem unfamiliar." Why? Because humans live in a state of constant habituation. The things we see daily become automatic in our perception. We don't truly see them; we recognize them quickly and then move on. This is where literature comes in.

Literature re-presents things in a new way that makes us see them anew, as if we are seeing them for the first time (Shklovsky, 1965). To understand defamiliarization, we must first understand another concept:

Shklovsky argues that a large part of our lives is based on habit. When we hear:

"The sun rises."
We do not stop to think.

And when we say:
"The trees are green."
We feel no surprise.

Perception becomes rapid and automatic. What happens when life becomes automated? Shklovsky presents a very bold idea: *Habit kills our sense of things*.

The more we become accustomed to something, the less attention we pay to it. He goes even further, saying that a person may live a large part of their life without truly noticing their surroundings.

A Question for Discussion

How many times have you looked at your hand today? Probably not. Not because your hand is not there. However, because it is so familiar. Art against Automation
Shklovsky believes that art emerged to resist this automation.

The function of literature is not to facilitate understanding. Quite the opposite. Its function is:

To make understanding more difficult, slower, and more conscious.

This may seem strange. We usually think that good communication is easy communication. But literature is not a scientific report. Literature wants you to stop, to reflect. to see the world anew. One of his most famous ideas is: "The purpose of art is to give a sense of things as they are perceived, not as they are known." (Shklovsky, 1965)

This statement requires reflection. What is the difference between knowing something and perceiving it?

Example

"This is a tree."

You know what a tree is. But you don't reflect on it. But if a poet describes it as: "A green hand waving to the sky." Then you stop. And you begin to see it in a new way. Here, you do not just know about it. You perceive it anew.

How does literature achieve defamiliarization?

Here, an important question arises: *How does literature make things strange?*

Shklovsky argues that literature employs a range of stylistic devices that disrupt automatic perception.

First: Unfamiliar Description

Instead of naming the object directly, the writer describes it in a novel way.

Example

A horse runs.

Four columns of muscle tear through the ground like a storm.

Here, the horse is not mentioned directly. The reader needs time to grasp the meaning. What happened? The process of identifying the object is delayed. This is the essence of defamiliarization.

Second: Changing the Perspective

One of the most common alienation techniques is to view things from an unusual perspective.

Example

How does one perceive war?

Usually, from the perspective of soldiers or commanders. But what if the writer described war from the point of view of a child? Or a horse? Or a tree? Familiar things suddenly become different.

Tolstoy's famous example

Shklovsky greatly admired the works of Leo Tolstoy. In some of his texts, Tolstoy describes things as if the narrator is seeing them for the first time. He does not use the usual labels. Instead, he describes functions, movements, and details. This forces the reader to rediscover the object.

Third: Metaphor and Figurative Language

Metaphor is one of the most powerful tools of defamiliarization.

Example

Ordinary sentence:

Night fell.

Literary sentence:

Night swallowed the last rays of light.

Why is this defamiliarization? Because night doesn't literally swallow anything. But the image makes us see darkness in a new way.

Fourth: Slowing down reading

This is a key point for Shklovsky. He believes that literature prolongs the process of perception.

Example

The sentence: ***The man died.***

This is read quickly. But:

His years fell all at once to the ground.

It requires reflection. Why? Because meaning isn't given directly. It requires interpretation. The

Relationship Between Alienation and Poetic Language

In the previous lesson, we saw that Jakobson says poetic language makes us pay attention to the message itself. Shklovsky explains how this happens. It can be said that: Poetic language is the result. While: Defamiliarization is one of the mechanisms that achieves this result.

Example

Ordinary Sentence: ***The city was crowded.***

Literary Treatment ***The city breathed from a thousand mouths at once.***

What happens to the reader? First, they pause. Then they try to understand the image. Then they imagine the city as a living organism. And so they are forced to see the city in a new way.

Is defamiliarization Only Found in Literature?

Some students might think that defamiliarization is exclusive to poetry and the novel. But it can be found in: Cinema, Painting, Advertising, Theatre, Photography.

Example

Instead of an advertisement saying: "*This is a fast car.*"

It might say: "*A monster devouring the road.*"

Here we observe a clear defamiliarization.

Criticisms of the defamiliarization Theory

Despite its importance, the theory has been subject to some criticism..

Objection 1 Does all literature rely on alienation?

Some critics argue that many literary texts do not aim to make things strange.

Objection 2

What is familiar and what is strange?

It varies from reader to reader. What seems strange to one person may be commonplace to another.

Objection 3 If a technique is repeated so often, doesn't it also become familiar? This is an important question. A metaphor that was striking a hundred years ago might be commonplace today.

From defamiliarization to Stylistic Prominence

In the 1930s, scholars of the Prague School, particularly Jan Mukařovský, developed Shklovsky's ideas. Instead of focusing solely on making things strange, they began to study the linguistic methods that make certain elements stand out more within a text. Hence the concept of: Foregrounding (Stylistic Foregrounding) It can be said that:

-Shklovsky asked: Why does literature make things strange?

-Mukałowski asked: How does this strangeness manifest itself within language?

A comprehensive analytical example:

Text:

"The sky was combing its hair over the sea."

How does the reader interpret this? At first, they feel strange. The sky doesn't comb its hair. Then they begin to interpret. Perhaps the clouds are the hair. Perhaps the wind is the comb. What did the writer achieve? They stopped the automatic reading. They captured attention. They created a new image. They prompted the reader to participate in the production of meaning. These are all the aims of estrangement.

Conclusion:

Shklovsky believes that humans live in a world of automatic perception, where things lose their ability to attract attention due to repetition and familiarity. Hence comes the function of art: to resist automation by making the familiar strange. This is achieved through unusual description, metaphor, changing the perspective, and slowing down the perception process.

Literature does not aim to make things easier to understand, but rather to make us see them anew. This concept formed the basis from which the theory of stylistic foregrounding later emerged in the Prague School (Shklovsky, 1965).

Lesson Seven: Foregrounding

Introduction

Foregrounding, or stylistic prominence, is one of the most important concepts in stylistics and modern literary criticism. The term refers to how a writer or poet makes certain linguistic elements more prominent and attention-grabbing than others, such that the ordinary reading of the text is interrupted, and the reader becomes more aware of the language itself and the aesthetic message it conveys.

The concept emerged clearly in the works of the Russian Formalist school and was later developed by scholars of the Prague School, subsequently becoming one of the fundamental concepts in the stylistic analysis of literature and poetry (Mukařovský, 1964; Leech, 2008).

First: Definition of Foregrounding

The writer's use of unusual or distinctive linguistic devices to draw the reader's attention to a specific part of the text and highlight its aesthetic or semantic significance (Leech, 2008).

In other words, when a reader reads an ordinary text, they expect familiar linguistic structures. But when the reader encounters an unusual structure, a striking repetition, or an unexpected rhetorical device, that element stands out and becomes "foreground," while the other elements remain in the background.

Second: The Historical Background of the Concept

1. Russian Formalism

The idea originated with the Russian critic Viktor Shklovsky, who introduced the concept of defamiliarization. Shklovsky believed that the function of literature is to make

familiar things seem unfamiliar so that the reader sees them in a new way. People become so accustomed to everyday things that they cease to notice them, while literature revitalizes our perception of them (Shklovsky, 1965).

According to Shklovsky, literature not only presents information but also deepens the process of perception itself. Therefore, writers use unusual techniques that slow down the reading process and make the reader focus on language and meaning.

Example

Instead of saying: "*The sky was full of stars.*"

A poet might say: "*The stars pierced the black cloak of night.*"

The second sentence is more striking because it breaks with conventional expression and presents a new image.

2. The Prague School

Jan Mukařovský developed the concept and named it Foregrounding or Actualization. Mukařovský believed that literary language differs from everyday language because literature disrupts the familiar use of language and makes the reader notice the linguistic form itself (Mukařovský, 1964).

He believed that the aesthetic function of a text is achieved when language deviates from usual norms, thus highlighting certain elements within the text.

3. Roman Jakobson

Roman Jakobson linked stylistic prominence to the poetic function of language. Jakobson believed that poetry focuses on the message itself, that is, on the form of language and not just its content (Jakobson, 1960).

When a text pays attention to sounds, repetition, rhythm, and parallelism, it makes language itself an object of attention.

Fourth: How Does Foregrounding Achieve Its Effect?

Leech and Short (2007) argue that stylistic foregrounding is not merely a linguistic technique used to embellish a text, but rather a mechanism that directly influences how a reader receives and understands it. When a reader encounters an unfamiliar linguistic expression or a strikingly recurring pattern, their reading process changes. Instead of skimming the words, they become more attentive and reflective, searching for the meanings and implications behind the writer's linguistic choices. This effect can be understood through four main processes:

1. Stylistic Foregrounding Slows Down the Reading Process

In everyday life, we read or listen to language in a semi-automatic way; most structures are familiar and predictable. When we say: "*The sun rose in the morning.*"

The reader doesn't need to exert much effort to understand the sentence because it follows common linguistic patterns. But when a writer uses an unexpected structure or an innovative image, this automatic reading is disrupted. The reader pauses at the phrase and tries to understand it, which slows down the reading process.

This is what Shklovsky (1965) referred to when he spoke of "defamiliarization," arguing that literature makes familiar things seem strange in order to force the reader to reconsider them.

Example 1

Regular Sentence:

"Night fell."

Sentence with Stylistic Emphasis:

"Night swallowed the last breath of light."

Upon reading the second sentence, the reader cannot skim it; they wonder:

How can night swallow?

Why was the verb "swallowed" used instead of "fall"?

What is the relationship between light and breath?

This mental pause slows down the reading and increases attention.

Example 2

Regular Sentence:

"The city was quiet."

The sentence with emphasis:

"The city wore a heavy silence."

The reader pauses because cities don't actually "wear" anything. This semantic shift prompts reflection on the intended meaning.

Leech and Short argue that slowing down the reading allows the reader to notice linguistic details they might not have noticed if the language were straightforward and direct (Leech & Short, 2007).

2. Stylistic emphasis draws the reader's attention to specific elements (Directing Attention)

One of the most important functions of foregrounding is that it acts like a spotlight on a specific part of the text. The writer doesn't want all words to be equally important; rather, they aim to highlight specific words or ideas. When the text deviates from the familiar pattern or repeats a particular element, the reader's attention is automatically drawn to it.

Example 1: Repetition

I will never forget his voice.
I will never forget his laughter. I will not forget his absence.

The structure is repeated: "I will not forget" three times. This repetition makes the reader focus on the idea of "memory" and not forgetting.

Example 2: Fronting

Regular sentence:
I loved freedom.

Sentence with emphasis:
I loved freedom.

Here, the word "freedom" precedes the verb.

The reader's attention is drawn to the concept of freedom more than any other element in the sentence.

Mukařovský (1964) argues that the prominent element emerges from the background of the text and becomes the focus of attention; therefore, it is called foregrounding.

3. Stylistic Foregrounding Encourages Deeper Interpretation

When language is very direct, the meaning is often clear and straightforward. However, when a writer uses prominent or unfamiliar language, the reader senses that there is additional meaning behind the words, and thus begins the process of interpretation. In other words: Foregrounding does not give the reader a ready-made meaning, but rather encourages them to discover it.

Example 1

Silence is screaming throughout the room."
The literal meaning is impossible.
Silence cannot scream.

Therefore, the reader begins to search for a deeper meaning: Is it psychological tension? Is there a feeling of loneliness? Is silence more expressive than words?

Example 2

"His eyes were an endless autumn."

The reader understands that the image is not meant literally as autumn.

They begin to interpret the image: Sadness? Withering? Aging? Loss? Thus, meaning emerges from the process of interpretation.

Leech and Short emphasize that literary texts rich in stylistic flourishes allow for multiple readings because the reader actively participates in the production of meaning rather than passively receiving it (Leech & Short, 2007).

4. Stylistic Emphasis Creates an Emotional and Aesthetic Response

The ultimate goal of literature is not merely to convey information, but to influence the reader's emotions. Emphatic language has a greater capacity to evoke: Sadness, Joy, Fear., Surprise and Admiration. This is because it makes the experience more vivid and present.

Example 1: Plain vs. Emphatic Expression

Plain Expression:

The soldier died.

Emphatic Expression:

The soldier fell, leaving the sun alone above the barricades.

The second sentence is more impactful because it presents an emotional image and a visual scene.

Example 2

She was crying. vs.: Tears were carving furrows on her face.

The second expression evokes stronger emotions because it embodies the pain in a sensory way.

Example 3: Parallelism and Rhythm

We will resist pain.

We will resist fear.

We will resist defeat.

The repetition here not only draws attention but also generates a sense of strength and determination.

Jakobson (1960) argues that the poetic function of language draws the reader's attention to the form of the message itself, and this attention to form contributes to creating aesthetic pleasure and emotional impact.

The Relationship Between the Four Points

It is important to note that these processes do not occur separately, but rather interact: Deviation or parallelism attracts the reader's attention. The reader then stops reading quickly. Then they begin to search for meaning.

Finally, they experience the aesthetic or emotional impact resulting from this discovery.

A Comprehensive Practical Example

Text: "*And the night crept over the city like a wounded soldier.*"

- First: Slowing Down Reading. The reader pauses at the verb: "crept over" because it is unexpected in the context of night.
- Second: Focusing Attention. The focus shifts to the image of the night, not just the event.
- Third: Deep Interpretation. The reader begins to ask: Why a wounded soldier? Does the image symbolize war? Does it symbolize sadness or weariness?
- Fourth: Emotional Impact. Feelings of melancholy, sadness, and pity are generated.

Thus, the four functions of stylistic prominence are achieved simultaneously.

Types of foregrounding

1. Deviation

Definition of Deviation

Deviation is one of the most important mechanisms of stylistic foregrounding. It refers to a writer's or poet's departure from familiar or expected linguistic patterns. When a reader encounters an unusual linguistic structure or unfamiliar use of words, their attention is automatically drawn to that element, making it more prominent within the text (Leech, 2008).

Geoffrey Leech argues that deviation occurs when a text violates the reader's linguistic expectations, whether these expectations are phonetic, lexical, grammatical, or semantic. Through this departure from the norm, language itself becomes the focus of the reader's attention, rather than merely a means of conveying meaning (Leech, 2008).

Jan Mukařovský (1964) argues that literary language differs from everyday language because it "activates" or "highlights" linguistic elements by disrupting their normal usage.

Why do writers use deviation?

Writers use deviation to achieve several goals:

- ✓ To capture the reader's attention.
- ✓ To create new and unexpected images.
- ✓ To express emotions more effectively.
- ✓ To add aesthetic value to the text.
- ✓ To encourage the reader to think and interpret.

If all texts used language in a conventional and direct way, literature would lose much of its artistic power.

How does deviation work?

Deviation works by breaking the reader's expectations. When a reader reads a sentence like:

"The sun set behind the mountains."

They don't feel any surprise because the structure is familiar. But when they read:

"The sun committed suicide behind the mountains."

They pause immediately because the verb "committed suicide" is not usually used with the sun.

This pause is the beginning of the stylistic highlighting process.

Types of Deviation

Leach (2008) classified deviation into several main types, the most important of which are:

First: Phonological Deviation

This occurs when a writer manipulates sounds in an unusual way to achieve a musical or aesthetic effect. In poetry especially, a writer may frequently use a particular sound to evoke a specific psychological feeling.

Example:

"The whisper of love was gentle in the stillness of the night."

We observe the repetition of the letter "h":

whispered – love – gentle – stillness

Analysis:

This repetition is not random. Rather, it creates a soft rhythm that suggests tranquility and peace.

Second: Lexical Deviation

This refers to the use of new or unfamiliar words or the invention of new terms. Sometimes called: Neologism (Linguistic Coining or Lexical Innovation).

Example:

My soul was clouded this evening.

The verb "was clouded" is uncommon. The writer derived it from the word "cloud."

Analysis:

The reader understands the meaning even though the word is unfamiliar. This is what makes it stand out. It expresses sadness or melancholy in a more poetic way than saying:

"I felt sad."

Literary Example:

In modern poetry, we find words like:

"I became wild"

"I snowed"

"I rained"

These are innovative words that deviate from standard language usage.

Third: Grammatical Deviation

This occurs when a writer deviates from the usual grammatical order or uses unfamiliar syntactic structures.

A. Inversion

Example:

Regular Structure:

"I loved the homeland."

Deviated Structure:

"I loved the homeland."

Analysis

Introducing the word "homeland" makes it stand out.

It's as if the writer is saying: *What matters to me above all else is the homeland.*

B. Omission of elements from the sentence

Example

Instead of: I love you very much.

The poet says: I love you... very much.

Omission creates a semantic gap that allows the reader to participate in constructing the meaning.

C. Incomplete sentences

Example

If you only knew...

The sentence is grammatically incomplete. But this incompleteness expresses emotion or hesitation.

Fourth: Semantic Deviation

This is the most common type of deviation in literature. It occurs when words are used in a way that seems illogical or literally impossible.

Metaphor

Example

The sea is smiling.

The sea is not literally smiling. But the reader understands that it refers to the beauty or tranquility of the waves.

Personification

Example

The sky became angry.

The sky doesn't actually get angry. But the writer attributes human qualities to it.

Paradox

Example

Silence screams.

This phrase is logically impossible. But it expresses a profound psychological state.

Analysis of the phrase "Silence screams"

Literally:

Silence = absence of sound.

Screaming = the loudest sound.

Therefore, there is a contradiction. But literarily: Silence can be more expressive than words.

And herein lies the beauty of deviation.

Fifth: Graphological Deviation

This occurs when the writer manipulates the visual form of the text.

Example

No

No

No

I will not give up

The visual distribution of words draws the reader's attention.

Example Writing a word in capital letters:

NEVER Or using unusual punctuation:

Why? . It makes the reader notice the written form, not just the meaning.

Sixth: Dialectal Deviation

It occurs when a writer uses a local dialect within a text written in formal Arabic.

Example

In an Arabic novel:

"What's up?"

Within a formal text.

Analysis

The abrupt shift from formal to colloquial Arabic makes the phrase stand out and gives the character a specific social and cultural identity.

Seventh: Registered Deviation

It occurs when a writer uses language belonging to a specific field within an unexpected context.

Example

In a love poem: "You are the unsolvable equation in my life."

The language of mathematics enters an emotional context.

It creates surprise and a new image.

A complete analytical example of deviation

Text: *"The city was slowly drinking the rain."*

Where is the deviation?

The verb: to drink. It is usually used with living beings. But the city does not drink.

Type of deviation

Semantic deviation.

Why did the writer use it?

To portray the city as a living being.

Its effect on the reader:

It grabs attention.

It slows down the reading.

It prompts interpretation.

2. Parallelism

Parallelism is the second most important foregrounding mechanism, alongside deviation. While deviation relies on breaking linguistic rules or expectations, parallelism depends on the systematic repetition of specific linguistic patterns to capture the reader's attention and highlight a particular idea, meaning, or feeling (Leech, 2008).

Parallelism can be defined as: The systematic repetition of a linguistic, phonetic, semantic, or syntactic structure within a text, creating a noticeable pattern that attracts the reader's attention and gives the text rhythm and semantic coherence (Leech & Short, 2007).

The Difference Between Deviation

<i>Deviation</i>	<i>Parallelism</i>
Based on breaking expectations	Based on repeating expectations
Creates prominence through difference	Creates prominence through similarity
Unusual linguistic element	Recurring linguistic element
Relies on surprise	Relies on regularity and rhythm

The Theoretical Basis of Parallelism

The concept of parallelism is closely linked to the ideas of Jakobson (1960), who believed that poetry relies heavily on relationships based on similarity and repetition. He argues that the poetic function of language makes the reader notice the recurring relationships between words, structures, and sounds.

Why Do Writers Use Parallelism?

Parallelism serves several functions:

1. Creating Rhythm It makes the text more musical.
2. Emphasis It highlights a particular idea through repetition.
3. Organization It helps connect the parts of the text.
4. Emotional Impact It increases the power of the message and its psychological effect.
5. Facilitating Recall Parallel sentences are easier to memorize and recall.

Types of Parallelism Parallelism can appear at different levels of language.

First: Syntactic Parallelism

This occurs when the same grammatical structure is repeated in several sentences or phrases.

Example

I like to read in the morning.

I like to walk in the evening.

I like to meditate at sunset.

Analysis

The repeated structure is: I like + noun + prepositional phrase. This repetition creates rhythm and organizes the ideas.

Literary Example

We will work for the homeland.

We will sacrifice for the homeland.

We will live for the homeland.

The structure is repeated: We will + verb + for the homeland. It is highlighting the idea of patriotism, enhancing the feeling of enthusiasm, and giving the text a strong rhetorical rhythm.

Second: Lexical Parallelism

This occurs when the same words or phrases are repeated.

Example

I don't want war.

I don't want hatred.

I don't want injustice.

Analysis

I don't want . Repeated three times. It makes the reader focus on the speaker's refusal.

Freedom is ours.

Dignity is ours.

The future is ours.

Repetition of the word: Ours, reinforces the sense of belonging.

Third: Phonological Parallelism

Occurs when certain sounds or sound patterns are repeated.

Example:

Peace be upon Salma if she is safe.

Repetition: S

Analysis

The repeated sound creates a musical harmony.

Fourth: Semantic Parallelism

Occurs when meanings or ideas are repeated even if the words are different.

Example:

Joy came to our hearts.

Joy entered our souls.

Analysis

Joy $\approx$ Delight
Hearts $\approx$ Souls

The meaning is repeated in different forms. It is to reinforce and solidify the idea.

Fifth: Antithetical Parallelism

This is a special type of parallelism that relies on repetition with a contrasting meaning.

Example

We remember the past to build the future.

Analysis

Past $\leftrightarrow$ Future. The structure is parallel, but the meanings are contrasting.

➤ Parallelism in Poetry

Poetry is the field that most frequently uses parallelism.

Example

I will dream despite the pain.
I will dream despite the failure.
I will dream despite the darkness.

Analysis

Repetition: I will dream despite

Poetic rhythm.
Emphasis on determination.
Creation of textual unity.

Parallelism in Rhetoric

Many speakers use parallelism because it increases impact and persuasiveness.

Example

We want better education.
We want better health.
We want a better future.

It makes the message clear and memorable.

Parallelism in Literary Texts

Example

She laughed when everyone laughed.
She cried when everyone cried.
She was silent when everyone was silent.

Analysis

Repetition in: was + verb + when + everyone

It makes the character seem completely integrated into their surroundings.

How does parallelism achieve stylistic prominence?

According to Leach and Short (2007), parallelism achieves prominence by:

1. Grabbing attention

When the reader notices a recurring pattern.

2. Creating anticipation

After the first sentence, the reader expects the pattern to continue.

3. Emphasis

Repetition makes the idea clearer.

4. Enhancing Cohesion

It connects the parts of the text together.

5. Creating Rhythm

Especially in poetry and rhetoric.

Why did the writer use it? To emphasize the spirit of defiance.

Its Effect on the Reader

- **First: Attracting Attention**

The reader notices the repetition immediately.

- **Second: Rhythm**

An internal rhythm is created.

- **Third: Emphasis**

The idea of resistance is reinforced.

- **Fourth: Emotional Effect**

The reader feels strength and determination.

Theorists' Views on Parallelism

Roman Jakobson (1960)

He argues that parallelism is one of the essential foundations of the poetic function of language, since poetry is based on relationships built upon similarity and repetition.

Geoffrey Leech (2008)

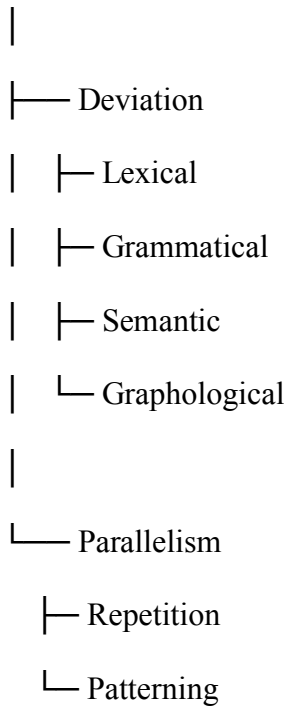
He considers parallelism one of the two main sources of stylistic prominence, alongside deviation.

Leech & Short (2007)

They believe that parallelism captures the reader's attention through regularity and repetition, and leads to highlighting important ideas and feelings within the text.

Parallelism refers to the regular repetition of similar linguistic elements at the phonological, lexical, grammatical, or semantic level. Unlike deviation, which achieves prominence through departure from the norm, parallelism achieves it through regularity and repetition. Parallelism contributes to creating rhythm, enhancing textual cohesion, emphasizing meanings, and creating a strong aesthetic and emotional effect on the reader (Jakobson, 1960; Leech, 2008; Leech & Short, 2007).

Foregrounding



Conclusion

Foregrounding is a cornerstone of stylistics; it explains how a literary text captures the reader's attention and makes them perceive language differently. The concept originated with the ideas of the Russian Formalists, was further developed by Mukarovsky and the Prague School, and later became a key theoretical framework in the works of Leach, Short, and others. Stylistic prominence is achieved primarily through deviation and parallelism, which give the text its aesthetic and persuasive power.

Lesson Eight: Introduction to Narrative Stylistics

Why do we care about narrative style in the first place?

When we read a story or novel, we often focus on what happened: Who killed whom? Who loved whom? And how did the events end? But there is a much deeper question that must be asked: Would the same story be understood in the same way if its narrative style were changed?

Consider this simple example:

Text 1: "The man arrived home. He was tired. He fell asleep immediately."

Text 2: "The man dragged his feet toward the house, as if the road was rejecting his arrival. And when he entered, he entered not just as a body, but as a complete collapse of exhaustion. Then he surrendered to sleep as a drowning man surrenders to water."

The event is almost the same, but the effect is completely different. This difference is what Narrative Stylistics studies.

What is Narrative Stylistics?

Narrative stylistics is a branch of stylistics concerned with studying how narratives are constructed linguistically, not just what a text tells. More precisely: It is the study of how language is used to shape a story, not just the story itself. It doesn't just ask:

What happened? But rather: *How was it told? Who is telling it? From what perspective is it presented?*

Why do we study narrative within stylistics and not just in literature?

A student might ask: *Isn't narrative a literary subject? Why do we study it in stylistics?*

The answer is that narrative is not simply a “story,” but rather a complex linguistic and organizational choice. Stylistics focuses on language, therefore it studies narrative because:

1. It is constructed through language (not just ideas)
2. It relies on the choice of specific words and phrases
3. It changes the meaning of an event depending on how it is presented
4. It reveals the writer's worldview

Key Idea:

- The same event can have entirely different meanings depending on how it is told. This means that narrative is not neutral.
- Narrative is not a mere representation of reality. It is a common misconception to believe that a novel or story "represents reality." But narrative stylistics argues the opposite:
- Narrative is not a representation of reality, but rather a reconstruction of it through language.
- Even the simplest story involves:
 - Choosing a point of view
 - Arranging events
 - Deleting some details and adding others
 - Using a specific linguistic style

All of this makes narrative an interpretation of reality, not a copy of it

The Difference Between Story and Discourse

This is one of the most important concepts in this lesson.

First: Story

A story is: The events as they occurred in the fictional world (What happens) That is:

Who did what?

When?

And in what “real” order within the narrative world?

Example:

A man woke up

He left the house

He went to work

He returned in the evening

Second: Discourse Discourse is:

The way the story is told linguistically (How it is told) That is:

- The order of events in the text
- The narrative style
- The choice of narrator
- The language used
- The details that are highlighted or omitted

Example: “The man woke up to a strange noise. It wasn’t an ordinary day... and what happened later at work changed his life completely.”

We observe here:

The order has been changed

Details have been removed

Suspense has been added

Key Difference

Story	Discourse
What happened	How it was told
Abstract events	Linguistic organization of events
Relatively fixed	Changeable

What is the idea behind narrative analysis?

Narrative analysis in stylistics does not just understand the story; it analyses:

1. Who tells the story?

Is the narrator inside or outside the story?

Is the narrator trustworthy?

2. Who sees the story?

Do we see the events from a character's perspective? * Or from an external perspective?

3. How are the events presented?

Their order

Their pace

Their focus

4. How is language used?

Direct or poetic?

Simple or complex?

Conclusion

Narrative stylistics is the study of how narrative is constructed through language, not just the story itself. It focuses on how events are presented and on the relationship between the story (events) and the discourse (narrative technique). Through this distinction, we understand that narrative is not a neutral transmission of reality, but a reshaping of it through language. Therefore, any true narrative analysis must ask not only “What happened?” but also “How was what happened told? And why was it told in this way?”

Lesson Nine: Narrative Voice and Point of View

Who is really telling the story?

When we read a novel or story, we tend to automatically focus on the events. But there is a deeper question that has a greater impact on understanding:

Who is speaking within the text? And who is guiding our perspective on the events?

It may seem that the author is the one narrating, but the truth is that there is always a “narrative voice” within the text, and it may be close to the author or completely separate from them. This voice is what we call in stylistics: The Narrator

First: Who is the Narrator?

The narrator is: The voice that presents the story to the reader within the text. It is not always the actual author, but rather a “linguistic entity” created within the text to perform the function of narration. This means that: The author writes the text, but the narrator is the one who “tells” the story within the narrative world.

Why is this important? Because the method of narration is not neutral. The choice of narrator determines:

What we see

How we see it

What we know and what we don't know

How we feel about the characters

In other words:

The narrator doesn't just tell the story, but guides our understanding of it.

Second: Types of Narrators

1. First-Person Narrator

In this type, the narrator is a character in the story. Uses the pronoun: I / We

Example:

"I left the house feeling strangely uneasy."

Characteristics:

- ✓ Participates in the events
- ✓ Offers a limited personal perspective
- ✓ May be subjective
- ✓ Has limited knowledge of what they see or feel

Impact on the reader: Makes the reader:

Close to the character

Empathize with them

But doesn't see the whole picture

Important question: Can we trust a narrator who always says "I"?

Not necessarily, because it could be: Biased Or completely unaware Or even misleading

Illustrative example:

"I thought everyone liked me, but I later discovered I was wrong."

Here we see that the narrator acknowledges the limits of their knowledge.

2. Third-person narrator

In this type, the narrator uses: He/She/They

Example: "The man entered the room and closed the door behind him."

Its characteristics:

- It is not usually a character within the story.
- It appears more neutral.

- It can get close to or away from the characters.

But it is not a single type. The third-person narrator is divided into two important types:

3. The Omniscient Narrator The word “omniscient” means: All-knowing

Its characteristics:

- It knows everything about the characters.
- It knows the past, present, and future.
- It knows the characters' inner thoughts.
- It may comment and make judgments.

Example:

"Ahmed entered the room smiling, but what no one knew was that he was thinking of leaving the city tomorrow, while his mother was in the next room crying silently."

What do we notice? Narrator:

- Knows what's inside and outside
- Sees more than any character
- Controls the amount of information

Impact: Gives the reader:

- A comprehensive picture
- A sense of control over events
- Sometimes distance from the characters

4. Limited Third-Person Narrator

Here, the narrator: Uses "he/she" But only knows what one character knows

Example:

"Ahmed entered the room and felt that something was off, but he couldn't understand why."

Characteristics:

Gets close to the mind of one character
Doesn't reveal everything
Creates mystery and tension

Difference between:

Omniscient Narrator	Limited Narrator
Knows everything	Knows only part
Explains all characters	Focuses on one character
Presents a complete picture	Presents a partial view

Narrator

|

|— **First Person ("I")**

|— **Second Person ("You")**

|— **Third Person ("He/She")**

|— **Omniscient**

|— **Limited**

Point of View Here we move to a different but related concept.

What is point of view?

Point of view is: "Through whose eyes do we see the events?"

That is:

Who perceives the story?

Who interprets the world within the text?

A simple example:

One event: A person is holding a knife in a kitchen. But it can be presented in two ways:

- ***From a child's point of view:*** "I saw my father holding something shiny, and I was scared."
- ***From a chef's point of view:*** "He was chopping vegetables quickly and precisely."
- ***From a police officer's point of view:*** "I noticed that the knife was suspiciously clean."

What do we observe? The same event, but: The perception is different. The interpretation is different. The feeling is different. The difference between point of view and narration. This is one of the most important questions in narrative style.

First: Narration

It is: "How is the story told?" That is:

Type of narrator
Language style
The order of events

Second: Point of View

It is: "Who sees the events?" That is:

Point of View
Inner Awareness
Psychological Filter

Example Same Event:

"A man entered a room where another person was."

Narration:

It can be: First-person pronoun, Third-person pronoun Or direct style

Point of View:

The frightened person sees the man as a threat

The other person sees him as a friend

The reader might see him as mysterious

So the fundamental difference is:

Narration

Point of View

Who narrates

Who sees

The form of the narrative

Question for Students

Can we have one narrator but multiple points of view? Answer: Yes. This is what makes the modern novel more complex and beautiful.

Conclusion

The narrative voice and point of view are two essential elements in understanding how a story is constructed linguistically. The narrator is the voice that presents the events and can be first-person or third-person, and may be omniscient or omniscient. Point of View is the way we see the events within the text, that is, the angle of view from which the story is presented. The difference between narrative and point of view is that the former relates to the narrator, while the latter relates to the observer. Through this distinction, we understand that narrative meaning does not come solely from the events themselves, but also from the way they are presented and the angle from which they are perceived.

Lesson Ten: Focalization

Why don't we always see the story the same way?

When we read a narrative text, we might feel that we “see” the events clearly, but the truth is that what we see within the story is not a neutral view, but rather a filtered view through a specific angle. Let's take the same example: “The man entered the room.”

The event might seem simple, but the real question is: Who sees this entry? And how do they see it?

Do we see it through the eyes of a frightened character? Or through the eyes of a neutral narrator? Or through the eyes of someone who knows everything? This is the essence of the concept of focalization, a concept primarily developed by Gérard Genette in narrative theory.

What is Focalization?

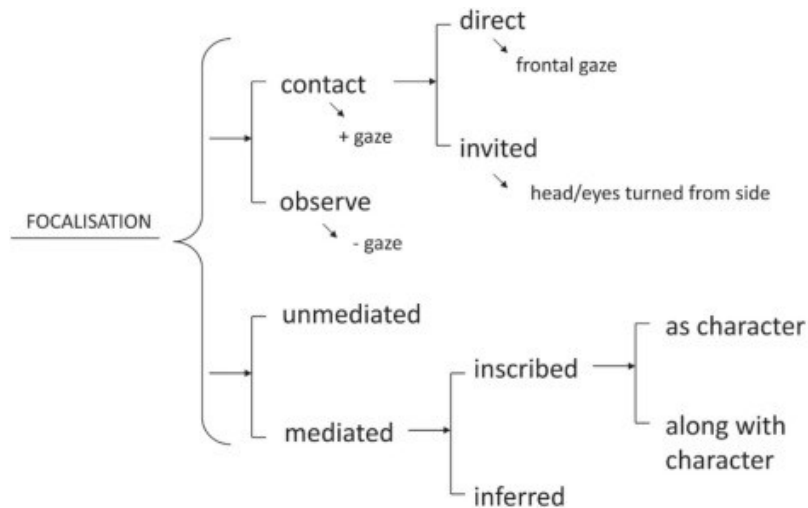
Focalization is: The angle of vision or perspective from which events are presented within a text. In simple terms: It's not just who's telling the story that matters. In addition, who is seeing it. Focalization answers the question: *"Where do we see the story from?"*

A very important distinction.

Narrator: Who is speaking?

Focalization: Who is seeing?

The narrator may be the same person, but the point of view is completely different.



First: Internal Focalization

In this type, we see the events from inside the mind or consciousness of a character within the story. That is, we: See what only one character knows.

Example:

"Ahmed entered the room and suddenly felt that something unusual was happening, but he didn't know why."

What's happening here? We are inside Ahmed's consciousness. We only know what he knows. We feel what he feels. But we don't know the whole truth

Its characteristics:

- Limited to the psychological view of one character
- Creates ambiguity
- Makes the reader empathize with the character
- Prevents complete knowledge

Question for students: Is the truth in the text what we see or what the character sees?

In this type: What we see = what the character sees only.

Second: External Focalization

Here we see the events only from the outside, without entering the characters' minds.

Example: "The man entered the room. He sat on the chair. He looked at the floor. He didn't speak."

- *What do we observe?*
- We don't know what he's thinking.
- We don't know his feelings.
- We only see outward actions.

Characteristics:

A superficial view of events.

Focus on outward behavior.

Creates psychological ambiguity.

Resembles a "surveillance camera." It makes the reader ask: Why is he doing that? But without a direct answer.

Third: Zero Focalization Also called: Omniscient perspective. Here, the narrator knows more than all the characters combined.

Example: "Ahmed entered the room smiling, but he was hiding deep anxiety. At the same time, his mother was in the other room thinking about traveling, while neither of them knew that fate had a big surprise in store for tomorrow."

What's happening here? We know Ahmed's feelings. We know his mother's feelings. We also know the future. We know more than the characters.

Its characteristics:

- Comprehensive knowledge
- Freedom to move between minds
- Revealing information unknown to the characters
- Sometimes the narrator's commentary

It gives the reader a sense of control and a complete view of the narrative world

Comparison between the three types

Type	What do we see?	Level of knowledge
Internal	One character's mind	Limited
External	Only behavior	Very limited
Zero	Everything	Comprehensive

-A very important question for students : Does focalization mean "who is telling the story"?

Answer: No. Because: The narrator may be the same but the focalization can change within the text.

-Why is focalization important in narrative analysis? Because it determines:

- The amount of information we know
- The angle of understanding

- The level of tension
- The reader's relationship to the characters

In other words: Focalization determines how we perceive the story, not just how it is told.

Example

Same event: "*The thief entered the house.*"

1. Internal Focalization: "The thief felt his heart racing as he entered the house, but he tried to calm down."
2. External Focalization: "A man entered the house quietly. He opened the door and closed it behind him."
3. Zero Focalization: "The thief entered the house, unaware that the police had been watching him for an hour, and that the homeowner had left just minutes before."

The Key Difference Between Point of View and Focalization

Point of View : Who sees? (General Perspective)

Focalization : Who focuses perception within the text?

More precisely:

Point of View = General Perspective

Focalization = The mechanism of distributing perspective within the text

Conclusion

Focalization is a fundamental concept in narrative that defines the perspective from which events are presented. He is not concerned with who tells the story, but rather with who sees and understands what happens within it. Gérard Genette distinguished between three main

types: internal focalization, which limits knowledge to the consciousness of a single character; external focalization, which is limited to outward behavior; and zero focalization, which provides a comprehensive and complete view of events. Through this concept, we understand that a story is not only what happens, but also how what happens within the text is perceived.

Lesson Eleven: Characterization in Stylistics

What is Character in Stylistic Analysis?

When we read a novel, we might think that characters “exist” like people in real life. But in stylistic analysis, we assume something entirely different:

Character is not a real entity within the text, but rather a linguistic construct produced through stylistic choices. In other words, we don't study “Who is the character?” but rather ask: How is character constructed within language? This shift in the question is the essence of narrative stylistics in the study of characters.

1. Character as a Linguistic Construct

In stylistics, character is not presented directly, but is constructed gradually through language. Every word, description, action, or dialogue contributes to forming a mental image of the character.

For example: “The man entered the room.”

This sentence says nothing about the character. But when we read:

“The man entered the room angrily and slammed the door behind him.”

We notice that the language has begun to construct an “emotional identity” for the character.

Therefore: Character is not only what is said about it, but also how it is said about it.

2. Direct vs. Indirect Characterization

There are two basic methods for character development:

A) Direct Characterization:

“Ahmed was brave.”

Here, the narrator directly tells us about the character's trait. However, this method is considered stylistically weak because it:

- Decides instead of showing
- Does not leave the reader to draw conclusions

B) Indirect Characterization:

Ahmed faced the man without taking a single step back.

Here, we do not say “brave,” but rather we demonstrate bravery through the action. This type is the most important in stylistics because:

- It relies on language to construct meaning
- It allows the reader to participate in interpretation

3. Dialogue and Speech Style

Dialogue is one of the most powerful tools in shaping character.

Compare:

“I don’t agree with this decision.”

and

“No... I absolutely do not like this decision. Do what you want!”

We observe that:

- The first style is calm and formal
- The second is emotional and direct

Therefore, character is understood from:

- ✓ Tone of voice
- ✓ Sentence length
- ✓ Vocabulary type
- ✓ Degree of formality

4. Speech and Thought Representation

This section is directly related to narrative stylistics.

a) Direct Speech:

Ahmed said: “I am tired.”

b) Indirect Discourse:

Ahmed said he was tired.

c) Free Indirect Discourse:

He was tired... Why did he feel so exhausted?

Herein lies the most important aspect of stylistics: We move from “external speech” to “internal thought.” This is what makes the character more psychologically complex.

5. Point of View and Focalization in Character Presentation

A character is constructed not only through what they say, but also through:

Who sees them and how they are seen.

If we see a character through a child's eyes: "The man was very scary."

If we see them through a doctor's eyes: "He looked tired and ill."

So, focalization changes:

- ✓ The judgment of the character
- ✓ The interpretation of their behavior
- ✓ The reader's feeling about them

6. Lexical Choice and Character Connotations

The words used to describe a character are not innocent.

Compare:

1. "The man entered"
2. "The man sneaked in"
3. "The man broke in"

Each verb conveys a different image:

1. Entered → Neutral
2. Sneaked in → Stealthy/Secret
3. Broke in → Aggressive

Therefore: Vocabulary is a tool for character development, not merely a means of description.

7. Idiolect

Each character within a text can possess their own "language."

For example:

- An educated character uses complex vocabulary
- A simple character uses short sentences
- A nervous character uses repetition and emotional outbursts

This is called: Idiolect = The character's individual linguistic style. This is very important because it makes characters: Distinctive and recognizable, sometimes even without their name

8. Applied Character Analysis (Integrated Model)

Let us take this passage:

“Khaled **entered** the room **without greeting** anyone. He sat **silently**, then **said in a low voice**,
‘No one understands me here.’”

Stylistic Analysis:

- The verb “entered” without embellishment** → Neutral opening
- “Did not greet” → Negative social behavior
- Silence → Psychological isolation
- Direct internal dialogue → A feeling of rejection

The character is constructed here as follows:

- Isolated
- Unsociable
- Feels misunderstood
- Tends to withdraw

However, all of this is not stated directly, but rather constructed linguistically.

Conclusion

In stylistics, character is not “information” presented by the text, but rather the result of linguistic interaction within the text. It is constructed through indirect description, dialogue, lexical choice, representation of speech and thought, and point of view. Therefore, studying character is not about “Who is she?” but about “How is she constructed within language?”

Lesson Twelve: Stylistic Analysis of Literary Texts

Case Study: The Tell-Tale Heart by Edgar Allan

1. Narrative Voice: The Unreliable First-Person Narrator

The story is narrated by a first-person narrator (“I”), which immediately places us inside a subjective consciousness. The opening line establishes this dominance:

“True!—nervous—very, very dreadfully nervous I had been and am...”

The repetition (“very, very”) and fragmented syntax reflect a disturbed mental state. The narrator tries to convince the reader of his sanity while simultaneously revealing instability.

This aligns with the concept of the unreliable narrator, a key idea in narratology: the narrator’s version of reality cannot be trusted.

According to narratological theory (especially later developed by critics like Wayne Booth), unreliable narration occurs when the gap between narration and truth becomes visible. Here, the narrator insists:

“Why will you say that I am mad?”

But the exaggerated defensiveness ironically suggests madness.

Stylistically, the narrative voice becomes a tool of self-incrimination.

2. Focalization: Internal and Psychological Vision

The entire story is dominated by internal focalization (Gérard Genette). We see only what the narrator perceives:

“I heard all things in the heaven and in the earth. I heard many things in hell.”

This is not realistic perception; it is psychological distortion. The narrator’s sensory world is exaggerated to supernatural levels.

Effect:

- The reader is trapped inside a paranoid mind.
- Reality becomes subjective and unstable.

Genette's focalization theory explains that in internal focalization, the narrative is restricted to one consciousness. Here, that consciousness is distorted, making perception unreliable.

3. Speech and Thought Representation

The text heavily uses direct speech to simulate inner monologue:

“It is the beating of his hideous heart!”

This exclamation blurs the boundary between:

- perception (hearing)
- imagination (hallucination)
- reality (sound of heartbeat)

The absence of mediation makes thought appear as immediate truth.

Effect:

- Intensifies psychological tension
- Eliminates narrative distance
- Creates dramatic immediacy

Free direct expression of thought increases emotional proximity (a key idea in stylistics of consciousness).

4. Repetition and Lexical Foregrounding

One of the strongest stylistic features is obsessive repetition:

“very, very slowly”

“louder! louder! louder!”

“nervous—very nervous”

Repetition here is not ornamental, it reflects mental obsession and anxiety.

Function:

- Mimics heartbeat rhythm
- Creates increasing tension
- Reflects breakdown of rational thought

This connects to foregrounding theory (Jan Mukařovský), where linguistic deviation (repetition, exaggeration) draws attention to form and produces aesthetic + psychological effect.

5. Syntax: Fragmentation and Emotional Pressure

Poe frequently uses:

- short clauses
- broken rhythm
- sudden pauses

Example:

“I moved it slowly—very, very slowly.”

The syntactic structure mirrors the narrator’s psychological state:

- fragmented syntax = fragmented mind
- hesitation = anxiety

Effect:

The reader experiences mental instability linguistically, not just semantically.

6. Semantic Field: Death, Fear, and Sensory Hyperactivity

The dominant lexical fields include:

- death (“dead”, “corpse”)
- sound (“heartbeat”, “listened”, “louder”)
- fear (“nervous”, “terror”, “mad”)

The repetition of auditory vocabulary is crucial:

“I heard all things...”

Sound becomes a psychological obsession.

Interpretation:

The story is not just about murder, it is about auditory hallucination and guilt projection.

7. Point of View vs Reality Distortion

Although the narrator controls the story, the reader gradually realizes a contradiction:

- He claims control and precision:

“I was never kinder to the old man...”

- But reveals irrational obsession:

“It was the eye of a vulture...”

The point of view is internally coherent but externally false.

This creates what stylistics calls a gap between discourse and reality, forcing the reader to reconstruct meaning critically.

8. Sound Symbolism and Phonological Pressure

The climax revolves around sound:

“It grew louder—louder—louder!”

The phonological repetition of /l/ and /d/ sounds creates:

- rhythmic escalation

- auditory simulation of heartbeat

Effect:

Language imitates perception—reader “hears” the anxiety.

9. Psychological Characterization through Language

The narrator is not described directly; instead, he is built through linguistic behavior:

- obsessive repetition → anxiety
- self-justification → guilt
- sensory exaggeration → paranoia

This reflects the idea that in stylistics, character is constructed linguistically, not described psychologically.

Final Interpretation

The Tell-Tale Heart is a model text for stylistic analysis because it demonstrates how:

- narrative voice constructs madness
- focalization traps the reader inside a disturbed mind
- repetition becomes psychological evidence
- language itself becomes unreliable

Key stylistic conclusion:

The story does not simply describe madness, it produces madness through linguistic structure.

Theoretical Anchors Used

- Gérard Genette → focalization (internal perspective)
- Jan Mukařovský → foregrounding and deviation
- Narratology (unreliable narrator theory – Booth tradition)

- Stylistics of repetition and sound symbolism
- Cognitive stylistics (mental representation through language)

Required Reading Materials

Students are required to read the following texts:

1. Jakobson, R. (1960). *Linguistics and Poetics*. In T. A. Sebeok (Ed.), *Style in Language* (pp. 350–377). MIT Press.
2. Shklovsky, V. (1965). *Art as Technique*. In L. T. Lemon & M. J. Reis (Eds. & Trans.), *Russian Formalist Criticism: Four Essays* (pp. 3–24). University of Nebraska Press. (Original work published 1917)
3. Mukarovsky, J. (1964). *Standard Language and Poetic Language*. In P. L. Garvin (Ed. & Trans.), *A Prague School Reader on Esthetics, Literary Structure, and Style* (pp. 17–30). Georgetown University Press. (Original work published 1932)
4. Poe, E. A. (1843/2003). *The Tell-Tale Heart*. In *The Complete Tales and Poems of Edgar Allan Poe*. Modern Library.
5. Genette, G. (1980). *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method* (selected chapters). Cornell University Press.

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Stockwell, P. (2002). *Cognitive poetics: An introduction*. Routledge.

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