Chapter V

5 Linguistic Stylistics: The Frame and the Tool

5.1 Definitions

5.2 Genesis of Linguistic Stylistics
   5.2.1 Traditional View on Style
   5.2.2 Modern View on Style
      5.2.2.1 Semiotic View
      5.2.2.2 Semantic View
      5.2.2.3 Style as Selection, Cohesion and Parallelism
      5.2.2.4 Style as Deviation
Linguistic Stylistics: The Frame and the Tool

5.1 Definition

Stylistics is the science of literature that studies ‘style’ scientifically and methodically for the ‘linguistic orientation’. It is an attempt to make literary criticism much more scientific, objective and precise. Indian Poetics characteristically identifies it as a study of ‘Bhava’ (notion), ‘Vidhava’ (the constituent symbol), ‘Shabdartha’ (sound meaning), ‘Shakti’ (power of words), ‘Aiankara’ (figures of speech and images), Chhanda (verse form) and Rasa (aesthetic pleasure) etc. of a literary text in a scientific way.

Since Style is the subject matter with which stylistics deals, it is necessary to define the word ‘style’ first. Alluding to the elusive nature of the concept ‘style’, Enkvist rightly said, "... most of us speak of it, even lovingly, though few of us are thrilling to say precise what it means...different people mean different things by the label ‘style’. One man’s style may be another man’s register and even a third man’s passion." (50). In the words of Halliday, style "has to do with these components or features of a literary composition which give to it individual stamp, marking it as the work of a particular author and producing a certain effect upon the readers” (20)

Widdowson says:

By ‘stylistics’ I mean the study of literary discourse from
a linguistic orientation and I shall take the view that what distinguishes stylistics from literary criticism on the other hand and linguistic on the other is that it is a means of linking the two. (Stylistics and Teaching of Literature, 3).

On the other hand *Roland Barthes* argues:

...the stylistic system is an interweaving of several codes: a linguistic code, a symbolic code, a psychological code, a mythological code etc... a full of a literary text requires much more than a proper interpretation of its linguistic code. A good reader of a literary work brings to the text much more than his linguistic competence. Information from every aspect of shared human experience (sociological, mythological, psychological etc.) can be interwoven into the linguistic code, depending on the intent and artistic ability of the author. The ‘good’ reader must be able to extrapolate these additional codes with the help of the signals, which the author has built into the linguistic code. (57-66)

*Geoffrey N. Leech* and *Michael H. Short* points out:

Stylistics as the study of relation between linguistic form and literary function cannot be reduced to mechanical objectivity. In both the literary and the linguistic spheres
much rests on the intuitions and personal judgement of the reader, for which a system, however, good, is an aid rather than a substitute. (Style in Fiction, 4).

In the words of Graham Hough:

Stylistics may be termed literary criticism in its objective form, with the arbitrary personal preference purged away. Effective style study must be somewhere between these two-between hard line linguistics and subjective criticism. Genuine literary style studies ought not to be merely catalogue of linguistic features, but should be diverted to the understanding of a work of art.

(Style and Stylistics, 43).

Describing the function of stylistics and the function it performs, Roger Fowler states:

A linguist-critic highlights the distinctive features of a text and the literary critic can benefit from it. No wonder, linguistic stylistics helps the literary critic ‘to locate literature as a patterned, valuable product...’ (Linguistic Criticism, 53).

5.2 Genesis of Linguistic Stylistics

Linguistic stylistics is now more than a quarter century old, and is widely accepted as an important tool of literary criticism. Graham
Hough asserts, the importance of stylistics in his book, *Style and Stylistics* as:

The claim of stylistics rests essentially on the proportion that the farthest ranges of a writer’s art, the depths of his emotional experience, the heights of his spiritual insights, are expressed only through his words and can be apprehended only through an examination of his verbal act (39).

The term ‘Stilistik’ is a German coinage that appeared sometimes in the early nineteenth century. In English the noun ‘Stylistics’ was first recorded in the year 1964. It was first attested in 1882-83 in *Old English Dictionary*. Saussure’s student Charles Bally (1865-1947) popularized the term ‘Stylistics’. His *La Stylistique* emphasized the ‘expressive value’ of language and conceived the effectiveness of content of the verbal structures that constitute the system. He also illustrated the term ‘Langue’ as the norm because of its logical and intellectual nature, and ‘Parole’ as deviation, because of its affective and impressive qualities of feeling and interest. Marcel Cressot in *Le Style et Ses Techniques* went a step ahead of Bally using literary as well as non-literary materials to survey the expressive possibilities of the French language. Leo Spitzer, a younger contemporary of Charles Bally (1887-1960) employed his knowledge
potential in perfecting ‘Stilforchung’ (Literary Stylistics) in Germany.

Spitzer believed that the author’s intention has to be something specific, definite and in principle discoverable.

5.2.1 Traditional View on Style

After dealing with the concept of stylistics, a historical study of the growth of stylistics is pre-requisite. The seeds of stylistics may be first of all traced in the conception of poetry as discussed by Aristotle in Poetics. His successor Longinus, a Greek critic considered Style as the shadow of a personality. His treatise, On the Sublime speaks about the elements that comprise ‘true sublime’, and provides ‘aesthetic pleasure’ – an experience of ecstasy. For Walter Pater, style was a forceful expression of the vision of an artist, ‘Mind-in-Style’ and ‘Soul-in-Style’ constitute to structural harmony in a work of art constituting a fusion of the writer’s personality with his art.

Traditional critics under minded the play of figures of speech in style. They regarded figures of speech as embellishments that decorated the prose. The great critic Quintillian believed that employment of a figure was just for substitution-theory of writing. I.A. Richards (1959:70) through his scholarly writings like The Principles of New Criticism (1921) and Practical Criticism (1929) asserted meaning as integral to style. According to him meaning comprised of four elements -
(a) Sense
(b) Intention
(c) Feeling and
(d) Tone

'Sense' implies conceptual meaning; 'intention' represented the conscious or unconscious object of speech; 'feeling' pointed at the attitudinal perspective and 'tone' suggested the speaker's qualitative relation with the hearer. Richard's contribution contained the seeds of modern linguistics that blossomed with flux of time.

5.2.2 Modern Views on Style

With the rise of significant development in the nineteenth century, linguistic tradition blossomed with the immense richness in the twentieth century. It was at this time that stylistics appeared as a seedling to flower in the year 1909 when Bally, C, a pupil of a French structuralist Saussure, first used it in his voluminous treatise on French Stylistics. 'Stylistique' as Bally named it first began to flourish in Britain and United States where its functional significance for interpretation of text was realized and was made applicable in the assessment of literary effect. This also paved way for further interpretation of Stylistics and with it Halliday and A.A.Hill rose to eminence. Halliday defines stylistics as, "...the scientific study of style, making the literary criticism much more scientific. Technically,
it studies the linguistic features of a literary text that is phonological, lexical, syntactic, semantic and pragmatic." A.A.Hill (1958:35) defines stylistics as, "...all those relationships among linguistic entities which are statable or may be non-statable in terms of wider span than those which fall within the limits of the sentence". Rene Welleck and Austin Warren believed that style is exploitation of language system and, therefore, literature can be well understood with a linguistic approach. They upheld the view that style had language as its raw materials but "...its study from linguistic point of view is a scientific way of looking at it which will help a student or a critic trace certain feature of individual style in a text." They asserted that elements like deviations and distortions aid to aesthetic achievement and enhance the text as a meaningful unit. Noam Chomsky (1955) made a shift from language to grammar where by he was subjected to severe criticism by scholars like Searle(1969), Jakobvits (1970), Hymes (1971) and Widdowson (1975). All these scholars believed language to be a socio-cultural tool of communication, or a pattern of social semeiotic, which forms in nexus for structure and function in a composite way. They dealt with what is called monodic concept of language.

The school, which rejects this concepts of language is initiated by Weinreich, U. (1954), Neuton (1972) and C .J. Bailey (1972) who suggested language as a reciprocal process of communication.
between cognitive faculty of human mind and its power of symbolization. According to them men are 'manipulators'. Ferdinand D. Saussure realizing the capacity of man to manipulate symbols developed his theory of semeology (sign, signifier, signified).

5.2.2 (a) Semiotic View on Style

Saussure believed that the language system is made up of science and this is the central fact of language. His notion of sign as a physical marker which carries information laid to the growth of a whole area of study of the operation of science in culture and society called semeotics. According to him a linguistic sign consists of two parts. The 'signifier' or the word and the 'signified' or the object, hence a 'sign' is a relationship between the two. Thus we have the concept that language is a system of symbolic science and the complexity of a language is because of the intents and inherent associative relationship between the 'signified' and the 'signifier'.

Pierce (1931) an American linguist gave a different interpretation to the theory of sign. He says:

...is something which stands to sometimes for somebody in some respects or capacity. It... creates in the mind (of addressee) an equivalent sign, or perhaps a more developed sign...the interpretation of the first sign. The sign stands for something, its object...in reference to the
sort of idea called the ground. (An Introduction to C.S. Peirce's Sementics, 135).

According to Pierce the sign is a tracheotomy-qualisigns, sinsign, and legisign. Qualisign signifies abstract qualities like colour, smell, sound, syaesthetic metaphors are qualisigns. On the other hand sin signs indicate gluttural sounds, traffic signals, the mating-calls of birds and animals and various shapes or smells that carry a significant message in a given context. Legisign includes language as well as para language patterns.

Ronald Barthes (1967) a French structuralist who upheld the view that, “Language is a signifying system of denotative order while literature is a signifying system of connotative order”. According to Barthes the signifying system is a combination of 'the plane of expression' and 'the plane of content'. In the connotative system the plane of expression is made of the science of the denoted system so that the first system becomes the plane of expression or signifier for literature (signified).

Derrida rejects the very distinction between signifier and signified as proposed by Saussure and believes “…everything signified function in turn as a signifier is an endless play of signification”. He believes that a text has no absolute fixed meaning, its interpretation depends on the application of the relevant cultural code. Friedrich, an
American structuralist, believes that an isolated symbol may be arbitrary but not the symbolic linguistic systems. He agrees that metaphor and similes are things that stand for or symbolize mental realities in the linguistic symbolic system rather than "words stand for things". This made him suggest two broad types of non-arbitrary nature of symbol in a language.

(a) The objectively symbolic character of language

and

(b) The subjective intuition of speaker.

5.2.2 (b) Semantic Views on Style

Semantic study of style refers to the study of meaning in a specific speech situation. In the ordinary discourse the sign directly points to the object where as in figurative speech one notices the violation of the norms of normal usage to focus prominence on either the signifier or the signified. The semantic style of signification recognizes with indebtedness the contribution of a host of scholars. Some noteworthy are enlisted below.

Todorov, T. (1983)

Todorov believes meaning to be infested with binary divisions. To him direct meaning embodies explicitness where as indirect suggestiveness of meaning.
Hill A.A. (1958)

Hill upholds the view that partial predictability is the nature of meaning. He observes that “for an item to be partially predictable on stylistic level, it occurrences must be partially describable in terms of spans wider than the sentence” (Hill 1958:180).


Leech outlines various types of meaning like- connotative meaning, social meaning, affective meaning, reflective meaning, collective meaning, associative meaning (signification) and thematic meaning operating both at lexical(word) level and syntactic (sentence) level.

While all these meaning become central to the use of language, all dimensions of literal and non-literal meanings can be synthesized into what we call stylistic meaning, or the study of verbal symbolism in literature, or the study of affective meaning in both literary and non-literary discourses or of the meaning emerging from the use of language in different contexts. All these dimensions of meaning, can be traced in stylistic devices, like, selection (with its restrictions and violations of selectional rules), parallelism (fore grounded regularity), cohesion and deviation.

Formalists like Jefferson, Brick, Tynyanov, Shklovsky, Vinokar, Jakobson and others believe that ordinary language practicably operates through habituation and automatizes the general perception of
things. To quote Shklovsky, as quoted in Fokkema and Kunne-Ibsch (1978:10) "... the device of art is the device of making things strange and the device of the implied from which enlarges the difficulty and length of the perception..." They believe that the formal devices act on ordinary words to renew our perception of them to de-familiarize them. It is this de-familiarization which changes our response to the real world but only at the coast of surrounding our habitual perception. Then there is the Prague school, consisting of Jakobson, Mukhařovský, Havranek who shifted the emphasis from 'form' and 'device' to 'functional structure', a set or totality of relationship. According to Mukhařovský and Jakobson, the theory of functional structure through Addresser—Message-Addressee involves referential, expressive, conotive, emotive, phatic and metalingual aspects of function as foregrounded reality, and all this involves linguistic deviation.

Fokkema and Kunne-Ibsch (1978:193) are of the view that figures of speech, especially, metaphor and parallelism are most significant of the foregrounding devices used in poetry, and they may be extended to the prose as well. Formalism also includes the views of Bakhtin and his supporters for whom language is a social phenomenon in which verbal signs becomes central to a class struggle, altering in their meanings. Bakhtin school holds the views that "language employed as a tool of expression in any
literary work is not author’s self but of the social class of which the
author is a member” (Bakhtin 1973:37). Language in Jakobson’s
model “Addresser, Message-Addressee” has emotive, vocative,
Imperative, phatic function, meta-lingual and referential function.
Jakobson does not make any interpretation of the reader’s
consciousness towards understanding of text where as Culler (1977:68)
points out, “the task of linguistics is not to explain how they have the
meanings which speaker’s of a language give them”. On the other
hand Iser (1978:36) views readers in two categories 'implied' and
'actual'. For him the implied reader is the one created in the text, where
as the actual reader may be one who has his own attitudes, beliefs and
convictions and his existing stack of experiences. Interpretation of text
is subjected to 'meanings' and 'significance'. Riffaterre (1978:81)
defines the term “meaning” as “referential meaning”. Significance
refers to signification and repetition of the same information or
thematic structure, which the words signify from semiotic reading of
the text. The semiotic text is paradigmatic (and variable). Scholes
(1982:109) on the semiotic strategy of interpretation demands
identification of syntactic, semantic and pragmatic levels of a text. A
literary object, therefore, must have a direct (conceptual) meaning.

The semio-linguistic approach recognizes that linguistic codes
have the capacity to represent several modes of signification at the
figurative and the non-figurative levels. The figurative or rhetorical language is also traditionally applied to prose as well as poetry. The classical Greek rhetoric is marked into divisions—tropes (meaning ‘inter change’) and schemes. Tropes are figures of lexical substitution, such as metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, irony etc. Schemes are figures of repetition (or devices of parallelism).

But in modern linguistics, tropes and schemes are characterized by deviations. Tropes may be seen as deviation at content level while schemes may be deviation at form (context) level. William Minto (1995:30) calls figures “the elements of which may be simple, or stirring or grand or touching, or witty or humorous”. Searle observes “In all figurative utterances, the speaker’s utterance meaning is different from the sentence meaning” (William Minto 1995:37). Ducrot and Todorov (1972:273-78) raise certain interesting doubts about the nature of deviation in figurative language. Their views are as follows:

(1) Whether every figure really has a deviation.
(2) Even if all figures are deviations, not all deviations are figures.
(3) How can a norm be distinguished from deviation?
(4) What is the relationship between the two meanings of a word that forms a figurative expression?

5.2.2 (c) Style as Selection, Parallelism, and Cohesion

Style is central to figurative language therefore, the two
perspectives style as selection (choice), and style as deviation provide not only expressive but aesthetic appeal to the text. *Gleason* observes ‘structuring of choices-choice of types of sentences, clauses, phrases, words, morphemes…and, graphological markers made within the framework of a language and a literary form.’ (*Structure and Structuralism*, 65).

**Concept of style as a Choice or Selection**

The concept of selection, like the concept of deviation, is the basic to modern stylistics. In fact, there is considered overlap between the two, for a deviation is generally an act of conscious choice. However, not all choices are deviant and here are some theories, which emphasize ‘choice’ as the chief determinant of style, for choice is involved in all levels of linguistic expression, phonology, lexis, of syntax choices at all levels are important for the study of style. An art of choice on the part of the author, which is stylistically significant, may be purely linguistic, or non-linguistic/paralinguistic with some linguistic consequences. *Richard M. Ohmann* observes:

If style does not have to do with ways of saying something…is there anything at all which is worth naming style? It flows that there exists content which can be expressed in language in more ways(or forms) than one. Since it is not possible for anybody to perceive
reality as a whole, the first act of choice occurs when one selects a portion of it for observation. Secondly, there is no single invariable way of looking at anything ....one observes in largely determined by ones perceptual stance. (Practical Criticism, 93).

Ohmann uses the term “epistemic choice” for these two kinds of choice, for they reveal “the very roots of a writer’s epistemology, the way in which he breaks up for manipulator, the refractory surge of sensation which challenges all writers and perceivers”(9). Ohmann points out that most of their “fundamental epistemic” choices are irrevocably made for any given writer by the particular language he writes in (10). This is so because to a large extent every language has its own peculiar way of segmenting reality, which, itself, is a continuous work.

This view of relationship between reality and language received powerful support by Heidegger (Erickson, 1970), who called “language the house of being” which is a distinguishing characteristic of man.

Parallelism is a deviation of different types. Leech calls it “foregrounded regularity”. Parallelism exploits the potential regularity of language through repetition of various linguistic elements at various levels of a verbal structure, ranging from phonemic to syntactic, parallelism can occur at all levels of linguistic formation, i.e.
phonological, morphological, syntactic, and semantic. Parallelism provides parallel ungrammatical or grammatical structure in syntagmatic order, which is called parataxis. It occurs at all linguistic levels.

Cohesion is a type of stylistic study of a text. There are various types of cohesion which includes—reference, substitution, ellipses, lexical relation, conjunction, endophoric (cataphoric and anaphoric). Defining cohesion Richard Bradford in his book Stylistics writes:

Linguistics has devised a number of methods to document the ways in which consecutive sentences create broader patterns of meaning. Textual cohesion, a term coined by Halliday and Hasan in their book Cohesion in English (1970) is the tracing of ‘ties’ between consecutive sentences. Each sentence in a text, following the first, is linked to the content of one or more preceding sentences by at least one tie. A tie is made by some constituent that resumes, relates or reminds us of something designated by a predicate or referring expression in a preceding sentence. (Stylistics, 109).

Halliday and Hasan take the view that cohesive relation creates the texture of a text. Emphatically marking out the familiar type of cohesive relationship Halliday and Hasan provided an illuminating
taxonomy of types of explicit markers of cognitive relation—
(a) **Additive**: and, or, further, more, similarity, in addition.
(b) **Adversative**: but, however, on the other hand, nevertheless.
(c) **Casual**: so consequently, for this reason, it follows from this.
(d) **Temporal**: then, after that, an hour later, finally, at last.

**Style as Deviation**

Deviation is a fundamental tool of figuration transmission, helping the reader or listener to identify it. It occurs on various levels and modes of discourse.

**Concept of Style as Deviation**

The concept of style as deviation brittles with practical difficulties, or it implies the concept of ‘norm’, which is elusive and hard to pinpoint. Darbyshire probably tried to illuminate all the difficulties relating to these concepts at one stroke, generally, the concept of norm to ascribe it to the abstract form (Darbyshire 1971:100).

Havranek and Mukařovsky of the Prague Linguistic circle were the first to systematize the concept of deviation, which is central to much recent stylistic theory. Havranek points out two mutually contrastive qualities of the use of language, automization and foregrounding. Automization is “such a use of the devices of the
language as is usual for a certain expressive purpose, that such a use that the expression itself does not attract attention...”(9). Where as, foregrounding on the other hand, “is the use of language in such that this use of it self attract the attention and is perceive as un-common, as deprived of automatization, as de-automatized, such as a live poetic metaphor...” (10).

Both Havranek and Mukařovský use the automization, foregrounding contrast to distinguish between standard language and poetic language. Thus:

In literature, deviation works at all levels making not only individual style and works but also the whole epoch and thus becomes a way of creativity it self (9-10).

T.S. Eliot’s use of Sanskrit in the concluding lines of The Waste Land: ‘Datta, Dayadhvan, Damyata, Shantih, Shantih, Shantih’ is an example of deviation in language.

Deviations occur in both figurative as well as non-figurative levels. While all figurative are involved in figurative deviations the focus is on deviations at registral level, dialectical level, language level.

(i) Syntactic Deviation

Syntactic deviation is a violation of syntactic norms or rules in a text. Classical figures of rhetories, like hypallage, anastrophe come
under first category while un-grammatical but acceptable sentences including semi-sentences fall under second category.

(ii) Semantic Deviation

Semantic deviation is a result of the writer's skill of the use of language. It is a deviation from its literal or sentence-meaning. Semantic deviation is seen as metaphor, metonomy, synecdoche, hyperbole, oxymoron, paradox, idioms and other tropes. Semantically redundant expression, like, a pleonasm also comes under this category.

(iii) Pragmatic Deviation (Contextual)

Pragmatic deviation enables a reader to understand speaker's intent meaning or referential meaning. Pragmatics, is in fact, a contextual deviation which may be seen in irony, hyperbole and litotes.

Deviation is measured by two parameters - grammatically goes with linguistic acceptability and acceptability of an utterance. Grammatically goes with linguistic acceptability and contextual acceptability of a structure.
Works Cited


