

13 Stylistics

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13.1 Introduction

Stylistics has always caused controversy: there are those who deny its usefulness, and those for whom it is an essential branch of applied linguistics. This is partly because it has proved notoriously difficult to define, since it functions as an umbrella term, covering a range of different stylistic approaches to the study of texts. A further difficulty is that although stylistic analysis originated as a way of applying linguistic models to literary texts, it has become clear that such models can be applied to the analysis of any type of text: to non-literary registers as well as the literary (e.g., Bex, 1996). Consequently, the range of texts with which stylistics concerns itself has extended from an initial preoccupation with “literary” texts to include any kind, written or spoken. Furthermore, the range of disciplines from which stylistic theory and practice draws is no longer limited to linguistics, as was the case at its inception, but also includes pragmatics, literary theory, psychology, and social theory. What draws all these different aspects of stylistics together, though, is the centrality of the language of the text – be it poem, advert or E-text – to the consideration of its possible interpretation(s).

13.2 What is Stylistics?

In recognition of the difficulties in defining precisely what constitutes stylistics, many textbooks in the field begin with an attempt at definition (e.g., Short, 1988). One such definition (Thornborrow & Wareing, 1998, p. 4) identifies three key aspects of stylistics. These are:

- 1 the use of *linguistics* (the study of language) to approach *literary texts*;
- 2 the discussion of texts according to *objective criteria* rather than according to purely subjective and impressionistic values;

- 3 an emphasis on the *aesthetic* properties of language (for example, the way rhyme can give pleasure).

Even so, Thornborrow and Wareing proceed immediately to qualify their definition, as the remainder of this section demonstrates.

13.2.1 *Linguistics and literary texts*

Concerning the first key aspect, the use of linguistics in approaching the study of literary texts, Thornborrow and Wareing note that although initially stylistics may have concerned itself with the analysis of literary texts, it has become clear that the kinds of texts which lend themselves to stylistic analysis exceed the boundaries of what is commonly taken to be “literary.” Furthermore, as Thornborrow and Wareing point out, stylistics may have begun as a way of explaining how “meaning” in a text was created through a writer’s linguistic choices, but in recent years this position has shifted somewhat. Thanks to research in the field of pragmatics, even linguists have come to realize that meaning is not stable and absolute, but depends as much upon the processes of interpretation undertaken by a reader or listener as upon the actual linguistic structures that are used. Consequently, account has to be taken of contextual factors, which had been ignored in the past, such as the cultural background of the reader, the circumstances in which the particular text is read, etc. Rather than concern themselves exclusively with finding out “what a text means,” stylisticians have become “more interested in the systematic ways language is used to create texts which are similar or different from one another, and . . . [to] link choices in texts to social and cultural context” (Thornborrow & Wareing, 1998, p. 5).

This is not to say that stylisticians are no longer concerned with discovering meanings in a text, but that they have begun to take greater account of the relationship between the text and the context in which it is both produced and received, and to consider the text as a part of discourse, rather than apart from it (e.g., Carter & McCarthy, 1994). In this way, stylistics has shifted away from the Saussurian structuralism with which it was once commonly associated, and which saw the text as predominantly monologic, stable, and self-referential, toward a more Bakhtinian notion of dialogism and the recognition that artistic form and meaning emerge from the exchange of ideas between people (Carter & McCarthy, 1994, p. 10). Widdowson (1975) was among the first to examine such textual features as the speaker’s role in shaping meaning (the “I” of the text), point of view, and reader response, all of which have become focal points of later stylistic analysis, while issues of “literariness” and the place of imagination in text production and reception have become major areas of study.

13.2.2 *Objective criteria*

In terms of the second key aspect identified by Thornborrow and Wareing above, stylisticians hoped that by insisting that texts were discussed and interpreted

according to objective criteria, rather than through the application of subjective and impressionistic values, they would avoid many of the pitfalls associated with early-to-mid-twentieth-century literary criticism. Such criticism was (and in many cases, still is) based upon reading a text closely, and selecting features from it to comment on and analyze, with a view to forming judgments in terms of literary worth. However, the principle of selection at work was highly personalized, and often seemed to allow individual literary critics the power to select whatever criteria they wished in judging how “good” or “bad” a text was. Thus, two literary critics, say, could select two entirely different sets of criteria and reach diametrically opposite judgments concerning the merits of the same text. Consequently, stylistics was intended to provide a less intuitive, less personalized method of analysis, and one which was deliberately based upon the scientific discipline of linguistics in order to generate the necessary observable and replicable categories of description. As Thornborrow and Wareing point out, “By concentrating on the language of the text, and accepted linguistic methods of categorising and interpreting, it was argued that stylistics did not reflect the views of the individual critic, but an impersonal, reproducible ‘truth.’ Anyone approaching the text and conducting the same stylistic procedure ought to arrive at the same results” (Thornborrow & Wareing, 1998, p. 5).

Throughout the 1970s, and again more recently in the 1990s, stylisticians’ claims to objectivity have been much criticized, principally on the grounds that the selection of procedures from a given range, whatever its source – from linguistics as much as literary criticism – inevitably introduces a degree of subjectivity through the process of selecting from the various options. But as Wales points out below, few people today *would* claim that stylistics is totally objective, precisely because the decisions regarding which elements of a text anyone chooses to scrutinize are themselves subjective ones. Furthermore, the process of interpretation is made even more subjective when a variety of other intangible factors are taken into consideration which vary from reader to reader, such as their educational, social, and cultural backgrounds.

13.2.3 *Aesthetic properties of the text*

Thornborrow and Wareing’s third key aspect, the aesthetic properties of a text, may represent an area of interest for many stylisticians, but this is by no means true for all of them. Again, stylistics may have originated in trying to provide a description of aesthetics derived from linguistics, particularly in terms of the analysis of the sounds associated with poetry. Such an approach may generally form a part of the stylistic analysis of the formal properties of a text, particularly poetry. However, as the range of texts to which stylistic analysis can be applied has been extended, this approach no longer forms such an essential part of all analysis. Rather, as with so much else in stylistics, its continued role will depend upon a combination of the particular purpose of the stylistic analysis, and the type of text to which it is applied.

13.3 Text, Context, and Interpretation

Several other scholars have tried to define the term “stylistics,” though it is not surprising that an agreed definition remains elusive. Wales, in the first edition of her *Dictionary of Stylistics* (2001, pp. 437–8), offers the following attempt:

STYLISTICS: The study of style . . . Just as style can be viewed in several ways, so there are several stylistic approaches. This variety in stylistics is due to the main influences of linguistics and literary criticism . . . By far the most common kind of material studied is literary; and attention is largely text-centred . . . The goal of most stylistics is not simply to describe the formal features of texts for their own sake, but in order to show their functional significance for the interpretation of text; or in order to relate literary effects to linguistic “causes” where these are felt to be relevant . . .

In the second edition of the text, Wales (2001) reiterates her definition of stylistics as being a discipline principally concerned with describing the *formal* features of texts and the *functional* significance of these features in relation to the *interpretation* of the text. As such, it continues to have as much in common with literary criticism, especially practical criticism, as it does with linguistics. She points out that “Intuition and interpretative skills are just as important in stylistics as in literary criticism; however, stylisticians want to avoid vague and impressionistic judgements about the way formal features are manipulated (not that good literary criticism is necessarily vague or impressionistic” (2001, p. 373).

For their part, literary critics take issue with what they see as an “objective” approach to the interpretation of literary texts (e.g., see: Fowler, 1996; Mackay, 1996, 1999; for responses from stylisticians, see Short et al., 1998; Short & van Peer, 1999). Consequently, Wales (2001, p. 373) qualifies the earlier 1989 definition by saying that “Stylistics is only ‘objective’ (and the scare quotes are significant) in the sense of being methodical, systematic, empirical, analytical, coherent, accessible, retrievable and consensual.”

Short (1988) claims that it is not the purpose of stylistic analysis to come up with a “definitive” reading or interpretation of a text, but that undertaking an “objective” linguistic analysis of a text is one way of limiting the scope of possible interpretations, including misinterpretations. Stylistics, then, no longer pretends to lay any claim it might once have done to an objectively discovered “meaning” in a text based solely on the derivation of descriptive categories drawn from linguistics. Rather, it has moved away from this position to acknowledge the fact that linguistic categories by themselves are not sufficient, or the only factors which need to be considered in the act of interpretation.

As a branch of applied linguistics, then, stylistics drew upon developments in descriptive linguistics (especially in its earlier stages), and particularly so in relation to grammar, through which it developed many of its models and

“tools” for analysis. Throughout the latter half of the twentieth century and now into the twenty-first, it has also drawn upon developments in literary theory, and has been particularly indebted to reception theory for its shift in focus to include not only considerations thrown up by the *text*, but also to recognize how we as *readers* shape a text and in turn are shaped by it. Added to this have been developments in *cognitive linguistics*, which draws upon psychological theories of processing. Similarly, the study of *pragmatics* demands that the act of interpretation takes into account the structures of language actually in use. These issues are particularly important for an analysis of the language of drama, and also when considering interactional and contextual aspects of linguistic behaviour, including speech act theory and conversational analysis.

A further aspect of textual analysis with which some stylisticians concern themselves, and which others oppose, is the study of the extent to which interpretation is influenced by the perceived existence of tensions between the text and its reception in the wider *context* of social relations and sociopolitical structures in general: i.e., the ideology underlying the text (see: Fairclough, 1989; Kress, 1989; Mills, 1995). Stylistic analysis thus becomes embedded within a framework of *critical discourse analysis* (CDA). In this way, explorations of authority, power, and inequality feature as part of stylistic analysis, which pays attention to the formal features of the text and its reception within a reading community in relation to ideology. Haynes’ *Introducing Stylistics* (1992) and Mills’ *Feminist Stylistics* (1995) are two examples of such an approach. However, this development has been the subject of much controversy, not least because *all* texts chosen for analysis are generally selected in ways which inevitably throw up ideological considerations: e.g., newspaper reports, doctor–patient conversations, etc. (Fairclough, 1996; Toolan, 1997; Widdowson, 1995). Furthermore, the framework for textual analysis at an ideological level is nowhere near as fully developed as those which deal with its more formal, linguistic levels, and with which stylistics is more usually associated. Nevertheless, despite such criticisms, CDA has been the first attempt so far to formalize a methodology, which seeks to articulate the relationship between a text and the context in which it is produced and received.

From its earlier formalist and structuralist beginnings, then, stylistics has broadened to include three distinct but interrelated strands, any of which can independently form the primary focus of study, or lend themselves to viable combination with either or both of their alternatives. These strands are:

- 1 that which is concerned with the recognizably formal and linguistic properties of a text existing as an isolated item in the world;
- 2 that which refers to the points of contact between a text, other texts, and their readers/listeners;
- 3 that which positions the text and the consideration of its formal and psychological elements within a sociocultural context.

13.3.1 *Formal and linguistic properties*

The first area of study, which centers upon the formal and linguistic properties of a text, includes, for example, consideration of the ways in which writers (or speakers): make selections from the linguistic potentials of a given language so as to create an artefact manifesting certain formal properties (e.g., foregrounding); construct cohesion and coherence within a text so as to give it a dynamic (e.g., narrative structure); position themselves (and their characters) vis-à-vis their potential readers (e.g., modality, transitivity, point of view).

Of the three strands, this first one – being the oldest – has the most developed conceptual vocabulary and frames of reference. In the stylistics classroom, a common language or metalanguage exists for learning activities centered around the metaphorical concept of the stylistician’s “toolbox,” and includes the use of “checklists” of the kind offered by writers of textbooks in stylistics such as McRae (1997), Short (1988, 1996), and as is discussed further below (see Section 13.4.1). As Short (1988) points out, the techniques often associated with teaching English Language to non-native students of English are often employed in teaching these areas of stylistics to both native and non-native-speaking students. And, because this is the most developed area within stylistics, it tends to dominate pedagogic practice. Even so, there are other scholars, such as Carter and Long (1991), Clark (1996), and McRae (1997), who would argue that the value of a stylistic approach – as opposed to one drawn purely from English Language teaching – is that it allows for consideration of the cultural and social contexts implicit in the language of the text. Consequently, it provides much more scope for “reading between the lines,” and for considering what is absent or implicit in a text, than would a reading which focused solely on the linguistic codes governing the explicit use of language.

13.3.2 *Point of contact*

The second strand considers the point of contact between the text and the reader as an interactive, communicative act. It includes such considerations as the ways in which writers draw attention to other texts, both antecedent and contemporaneous (intertextuality), and studies how readers track texts during the act of processing (e.g., anaphoric devices). Here, as research into this area becomes more developed, a common metalanguage is beginning to emerge within the field of cognitive stylistics (see Section 13.5).

13.3.3 *Text and sociocultural context*

Finally, the third strand considers the text within its sociocultural context and considers, for example, the ways in which the readers “place” texts within a social framework (e.g., genre studies), and how texts mediate authority, power, and control (e.g., critical discourse analysis, feminist stylistics). At this point in the debate, critics like Fish (1980) bring the concept of the interpretative

community into the discussion, and this has had a major impact on affective stylistics. The particular concerns, philosophical outlook, and general worldview which the reader brings to bear on the text will obviously play a tremendous role in colouring her or his search for meaning in a text, and it is essential that this influence is acknowledged when applying the objective criteria that are deployed through the checklists of linguistic features contained within a text (see Section 13.4.1).

This strand shifts the point of focus away from a static and monologic view of the text which exists in its own world as a self-sufficient entity, toward one which is much more dynamic, cognitive, intertextual, and interpersonal. However, precisely how this third category fits in with or relates to the other two strands is an area which – as Toolan (1997) demonstrates – has yet to be fully explored, and this ambiguity is sometimes used as an excuse for failing to engage with it.

These categories of the areas of focus given above are not intended to be exhaustive and, quite clearly, within these various concentrations, stylisticians will concern themselves to a greater or lesser extent with detailed study of particular texts, working within the various frames of reference provided by some (but not all) of them.

13.4 Stylistics and Pedagogy

The pedagogic value of stylistics in terms of the teaching of representational language and how this works within a text, in both native speaker and non-native speaker contexts, has been defined by Short in these terms:

Stylistic analysis, unlike more traditional forms of practical criticism, is not interested primarily in coming up with new and startling interpretations of the texts it examines. Rather, its main aim is to explicate how our understanding of a text is achieved, by examining in detail the linguistic organization of a text and how a reader needs to interact with that linguistic organization to make sense of it. Often, such a detailed examination of a text does reveal new aspects of interpretation or helps us to see more clearly how a text achieves what it does. But the main purpose of stylistics is to show how interpretation is achieved, and hence provide support for a particular view of the work under discussion. (Short, 1995, p. 53)

Style in any context – but more particularly in the verbal, linguistic and literary context – has generally been defined rather vaguely and subjectively, so Short's practical way of looking at the issue is salutary.

13.4.1 Checklists

Stylistics has developed a plethora of checklists covering the linguistic features of texts and tools used by an author which can give a fingerprint to

any text – clues as to *how* it means rather than simply what it means. As Short suggests above, stylistics goes beyond meaning and content to examine how effects are created and achieved, and variations on this kind of checklist can be found in several textbooks (Clark, 1996; McRae, 1997; Simpson, 1997; Thornborrow & Wareing, 1998; Toolan, 1998). What they have in common is an intention to elucidate the *processes* in writing and reading, empowering the reader to develop language awareness, text awareness, and cultural awareness in the reading of all texts, whether “literary” or not.

13.4.2 *Literature in a foreign language*

Since stylistics deals essentially with the linguistic features of a text, its methods have been extensively applied to teaching literature in English for non-native speakers. For the remainder of this study, the term “L1” denotes native speakers, and “L2” non-native speakers.

Most L1 stylisticians ignore or are unaware of the problems of teaching English to non-native speakers as a second or a foreign language. Stylistics in an L2 context has entirely different dimensions and ranges of usefulness when compared with its possible application in language teaching generally, and then again, the differences between a second language teaching situation and a foreign language teaching situation lend further complexities to the issue. Literature in any shape or form was largely ignored in English as a second language (ESL) and English as a foreign language (EFL) until the publication of McRae and Boardman in 1984 and which, almost 20 years on, is still among the most widely used textbooks containing literary materials for language learning and development.

McRae’s distinction between *referential* and *representational* language use repositions the “literariness” of texts in relation to the processes the reader brings to bear on the text in the overall cognitive relationships between production and reception. In this way of thinking, *referential* language is purely transactional, with no requirement for processing and interpretation – the kind of language, in fact, usually provided in most textbooks for the teaching and learning of English as a second or foreign language. *Representational* language refers to any use of language, which makes an appeal to the imagination or to the affective side of the interlocutors: imagery, idioms, advertisements, modality, text worlds are all textual elements which are crucial to the processing of this linguistic material.

Pedagogic stylistics introduces representational language from the outset of language learning, and thus the discipline is intended to develop ongoing language awareness (of the target language and any other known languages), text awareness (genre, text-type and function, etc.), and wider cultural awareness. This attempted integration is now known as “Five Skills English,” moving on from the basic functional skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing which have dominated communicative language teaching for three decades.

This use of imaginative materials does not necessarily involve the use of literature as such, but has come to be identified as “literature with a small ‘l’” (McRae, 1997). The approach can involve the study of an idiomatic line such as, “This is not my cup of tea,” which would be difficult to imagine in a non-representational context, and can be deployed to help open up any kind of text, from the simplest decoding of a bus ticket to the highest literary expression. What the reader brings to the text is fundamental to the process of creating meaning.

Textual analysis, a mainstay of first language stylistics, is given less importance in a second or foreign language context. However, the linguistic tools of stylistics are precisely what EFL/ESL learners need in order to develop their approaches to reading any text, be it literature with a small “l” or institutionally-defined literary study. The checklist approach is the first systematic step toward the goal of acquiring this awareness.

Checklists featured in EFL textbooks using stylistics are similar to those described above, and commonly include some or all of the following: lexis, syntax, cohesion, semantics, phonology, graphology, dialect/variety, register, period/intertextuality, and function, among others.

What is developed in students as a result of routine reference to this kind of checklist are their capacities for *language awareness*, *text awareness*, and *cultural awareness*, all of which had been largely ignored in language teaching until the mid-1990s. L2 learners inevitably have a different kind of language awareness from that of L1 speakers; indeed, native speakers’ language awareness is often very limited. Most L1 speakers would not know that the verb “to go” is conjugated as “go/went/gone”; all L2 learners know this from the outset of their learning. Similarly the problem areas of English for learners, such as the present perfect tense or phrasal verbs, are simply taken for granted by native speakers. It has been noticeable in recent years that approaches developed in the EFL/ESL context are coming to be more widely applied in first language teaching (e.g., Carter et al., 2001).

However, a significant difference between the application of stylistics in L1 and L2 context is its *purpose*. The texts, which might be studied and analyzed using stylistic approaches actually mean *differently* for non-native learners. The reasons for reading and studying the texts are of a different order. *Process* becomes the key word. As before, there is no single correct interpretation which has to be excavated from somewhere in the depths of the text – no hidden secrets. Neither is there any single “correct” way of analyzing and interpreting the text, nor any single correct stylistic approach. In this sense the appropriate method is very much a hands-on approach taking each text on its own merits, using what the reader knows, what the reader is aiming for in his or her learning context, and employing all of the available tools, both in terms of language knowledge and methodological approaches.

13.4.3 *Approaching the text: analyzing the formal and linguistic properties*

In an L2 context, a first-year EFL class of near-beginners obviously has fewer linguistic tools than an advanced learners, but that should not preclude them from using stylistic approaches when reading texts. The use of stylistic approaches in a non-native speaker context is not vastly different from the approaches to reading and analysis in the native speaker context. One of the first things often demonstrated in a non-native speaker context is how very little should ever be taken for granted by either instructor or student.

For example, readers in Bangladesh interpreted the poem by Wordsworth commonly known as “Daffodils” without knowing what daffodils were, and read them as possibly being beautiful birds, “fluttering and dancing in the breeze” and “tossing their heads in sprightly dance” (see Appendix 1, lines 6, 12; also McRae, 1998, pp. 33–5.) This is simply a question of unfamiliar lexis, but the reading serves in a connotational sense to show how over-familiarity with predetermined lexical meaning can deny the reader the potential of meanings beyond lexical definitions.

A closer look quickly reveals that the poem contains many words – even pairs of words and longer phrases – which are highly charged: “golden,” “dancing,” “bliss,” and “pleasure” represent only a few. Productive analysis can result from allowing a class to discuss the differences between words like “crowd” (line 3) and “host” (line 4); between “host” and “company” (line 16). Students could be invited to consider the contrast between the actions performed by the speaker (the aimless “wandering” of line 1 and the recumbent position described in lines 19–20) and the “fluttering” and “tossing” of the daffodils’ “sprightly dance” (lines 6, 12). Similarly, they might reflect upon the inherent tensions between phrases like “little thought” and “pensive mood” (lines 17 and 20). How would they account for the contradiction between the “lonely” mood of the speaker in line 1 and “the bliss of solitude” in line 22? (Indeed, the students could eventually be asked to evaluate the assertion that the whole text should be read as charting a movement from that psychological state of loneliness to the appreciation of the bliss of solitude.) And of course students engaged in such an exercise would be encouraged to find other lexical tensions/binary oppositions of their own.

The poem’s syntax, too, can be a useful tool, as demonstrated – to give but one example – in line 11 (“Ten thousand saw I at a glance”) with its shift from the traditional subject-verb-object relationship. This is known as *foregrounding*, in that more emphasis is placed upon the word that should be the object – the daffodils in this case, “present” here in the elliptical omission. The reader must also ask the obvious question here: how many daffodils did the speaker see? The figure of “Ten thousand” does not represent the literal number (and indicates still less that the speaker actually *counted* them!), but

rather serves to confirm the word "host" in line 4. What matters most linguistically is that the daffodils are now in "subject position" within the reader's consciousness, and the "I" of the speaker is relegated to the less important "object position."

Attention could also be paid to Wordsworth's use in stanzas 2–4 of the cohesive pronouns "them" and "they," which take the place of the noun "daffodils." The "I" disappears, too, becoming "a poet" in line 15: a less personal, more general referent. Line 15 ("A poet could not but be gay") is in many ways one of the most significant lines in the whole text. The word "gay" here means joyful or happy (a synonym for "jocund" in the next line), but the syntax suggests ambiguity: is the poet gay or isn't he? The answer, of course, is "yes" – the positive meaning emerges despite the negative-seeming construction: he could not be anything but gay. It should, however, be noted how static the text has become by the end of this stanza with any verbs of movement firmly associated with the daffodils. The fact that the speaker only "gazes" is stated twice in one line (17), along with the suggestion that at this point in the account he is not even thinking.

Another important development in this third stanza is the change in verb tense in line 18 with "had brought" – a time shift which bridges the narrative past tense of the first three stanzas and the present tense we will find in the final stanza. The word "For" (line 19) opening stanza 4 is also vital here; as is so often the case, this connector carries the thrust of the text's movement forward, underscoring the contrast between "little thought" and what has actually happened after the speaker saw the daffodils (and still continues to happen for him).

As the paragraphs above suggest, by the time the reader reaches the last stanza she or he has encountered several sets of linguistic signals which have worked together to communicate a sense of movement that is occurring on many levels within the poem: the change in nature of the physical motions described by the speaker; the shift in focus from the passivity of the speaker to vibrant activity of the flowers; the shift in time from past to present; the fluctuation in the speaker's emotional barometer from sadness, through a kind of cautious cheerfulness to outright blissful serenity, etc. This process reaches its culmination in stanza 4, as the daffodils become unmistakable as the active subject of the text, as "they flash upon that inward eye" of the speaker (line 21). The "I" is in a completely passive, Zen-like state, ready to receive whatever might happen. The daffodils have taken him over: this happens "oft," and the connectors of time tell us the sequence, with "oft" (line 19) leading directly to "when" in the same line, which in turn leads to the main verb "flash" in line 21. Line 22 ("Which is the bliss of solitude") takes us inward and ends with a semi-colon, leading on to a "then" in line 23, thus completing a sequence through which the reader has traveled from the past tense of narrative preceding line 18, into the speaker's present experience (and presumably onward into his expectations for the future). Likewise, the reference to "that inward eye" represents the end of another journey initiated at the

opening of the text when the speaker's eye looked outward, thus confirming the shift in focus already noted from outer- to inner-self. The movement is completed only in the last line of the poem, where the climax of pleasure and harmony is reached – indicating the speaker's arrival at a "place" about as far away as it is possible to get from the lonely wandering of line 1.

This type of analysis reveals how much more than a mere description of natural beauty the poem "Daffodils" really is, making as it does significant points in the final stanza about the nature of human perception and the importance of remaining open to our impressions, for the sake of both our general happiness and ongoing spiritual development. But as highly worthy as that achievement is, that result represents a secondary objective for the exercise. The primary purpose of stylistics is to improve students' sensitivities toward language usage through the analysis of specific texts: a goal that would yield enormous benefits in both L1 and L2 contexts. To return to the case of Bangladeshi students, readers who do not know what daffodils are will undoubtedly have a very different experience of the Wordsworth text. But through the type of analysis outlined above, they would also receive a number of fundamental tools which would prove invaluable for unlocking the meanings of linguistic codes of all sorts, and which by doing so would also place in its true perspective their initial mistake of interpreting "daffodils" to mean "beautiful birds." And that lexical error, of course, raises another question which all future students of the poem – both L1 and L2 – should be asked to consider: do the objects described in the poem have to be flowers? Would the experience that the poem describes be substantially changed if we substituted another object for the daffodils, and if so, how?

13.4.4 *Approaching the text: the re-writing exercise*

The technique described above, in Section 14.4.3, represents the traditional literary activity of "close reading," coupled with a new emphasis on language awareness. Similarly, stylisticians also employ the technique of heuristic rewriting of texts as a pedagogic aid, rather than an end in itself (see Durant & Fabb, 1990, pp. 98, 186; and Pope, 1995). One of the most widely used texts in this area is the William Carlos Williams poem "This is Just to Say." Such an exercise often begins with the cross-genre "translation"/paraphrasing of a poetic text into the form of a prose note, followed by the formal analysis of every aspect of the adapted text as a basic part of the teaching and learning process, before the text is rewritten back into poetic form and compared with the Williams original. Such rewriting is an aid in particular to text awareness – helping learners into an awareness of how the text means rather than just what it means. The same technique can be applied by removing words, phrases, lines, or whole paragraphs/stanzas from a given text and analyzing what differences the changes would make.

A similar type of classroom activity became part of the focus of a recent study (Zyngier, 2000). On this occasion, the selected text was "I, too, sing

America," a poem by Langston Hughes (see Appendix 2). Students in Brazil, Eastern Europe, and England were asked to discuss a list of questions compiled by the PEDSIG members, half of which were aimed at eliciting a close analysis of the language of the poem: tenses, use of time, agency, referents, conjunctions, etc. The other half were related to the events and feelings related in the poem, and finished with a consideration of the poem's historical and social context, including the period in which it was written. The teacher, in summing up the session, commented that:

students reached the end of the discussion by providing five possible contexts: One group thought the poem was about North and South Americans divided by economical and political stages . . . Another group considered the black and white ever discussed theme, in which black people are said to be inferior to white people . . . Finally, others mentioned the contrast between rich/poor, employer/employee and Americans/immigrants . . . This activity helped students talk about the many interpretations a poem can have and enabled them to develop their power of argumentation by using examples from the text that conformed to their opinion . . . (Zyngier, 2000, p. 5)

The different possible interpretations center around one theme: that of prejudice. In the words of one student, "my group found that we had a kind of debate in the class as each group had a different interpretation. It was very interesting because, even though the interpretations were different, all the groups found that the poem was about prejudice . . ." (Zyngier, 2000, p. 5).

Following on from the discussion, students explored topics, which might lend themselves to expression in a similar style and highlighting similar tensions in historical context. The students were then asked to write such a poem themselves and – when finished – were invited to reflect upon this process. Typically, the main function of such an exercise is for students to experience for themselves the subtleties of language use evident in a text under discussion, by attempting to write either a text in a similar style, as was the case in this lesson, or to re-write it in a different one: a poem as prose, or a narrative from a different character's perspective, for example. By engaging in such an activity, students' intuitive knowledge of the linguistic structures associated with writing are brought to the surface or, conversely, explicitly-taught structures may become absorbed into a more intuitive layer of students' consciousness.

One student responded to this exercise with the following contribution – an original poem and prose commentary:

Revenge!

Yesterday I was a student
Sitting behind the class
I thought that I couldn't
Do the exercises best

Tomorrow I will be a teacher
 Standing in front of a class
 My students will think they can't reach
 The same things that I have passed.

First of all, I have used the contrast between past and future disposed in two different stanzas. The first stanza was written in the past tense and the second in the future. My intention was to show all my feelings as a student now, and then I thought about how teachers work, what they do and I could only see all the time that it looks like a revenge. So, I thought that it sounded not only a good and funny idea, but also a perfect title for my poem . . . I wanted to show my own feelings, as I am studying to be a teacher, someone who deals with these two sides: students' minds and a teacher's thoughts. I have noticed that it is easier to show feelings without hurting other people's ideas through the alteration of time. (Zyngier, 2000, pp. 6–7)

Regardless of the reactions recorded above, however, the primary function of such an exercise is still that of sensitizing students to language use, and more specifically to its complexity and capacity for referentiality (see also McRae, 1998). The by-product of such an activity may well be an improvement in the students' own linguistic competence in a specific context but, as with pedagogical stylistics generally, and as argued in Section 13.4.3 above, this is not its primary or overarching purpose. Nor can the undertaking of such an activity guarantee transference of linguistic skill from one pedagogic context to another. The primary focus is on creativity and multiplicity of meaning produced through and by patterns of language rather than upon the patterns of language themselves, or any consequent accuracy on the part of students in their reproduction. Instead, learning, understanding, making explicit patterns of language are emphasized as primary and necessary steps toward a stylistic interpretation of a text, and part of the process of textual interpretation rather than ends in themselves. Furthermore, the act of interpretation and the context within which it occurs are themselves located in a network of other contexts – social, cultural, economic, political – which all play a part, regardless of whether they remain implicit or are made explicit. It is these contexts, which are brought into play when a poem such as “I, too, sing America” is studied in a classroom, and account for the different nuances of discussion and interpretation made by students in the three recorded settings of South America, Eastern Europe, and England.

13.5 New Directions

Recently the second strand of stylistics identified in Section 13.3.2 above – namely, the point of contact between a reader, a text, other texts, and other readers – has been the focus of much attention. The spread of stylistic

approaches is now moving more and more into the area of cognitive stylistics. This is the most positive development in the field, both for native and non-native speakers, since it expands Short's aims into what Stockwell (forthcoming, 2002, pp. 6–7) describes as

a social and critical model for augmenting stylistic analysis . . . an analytical procedure that can account for what has long been the holy grail of stylistics: a rigorous account of reading that is both individual and social, and genuinely recognises the text as an intersubjective phenomenon and the literary work as a product of craftedness and readerly cognition.

This keen awareness of the sociopolitical background, which inevitably affects the production and reception of texts, is illustrated in the fact that areas such as deixis and modality have been attracting more and more attention within stylistics in recent years. The term deixis in linguistics "refers generally to all those features of language which orientate or 'anchor' our utterances in the context of proximity of space (here vs. there; this vs. that), and of time (now vs. then)," and is concerned with the "multi-dimensional nature" of texts and their dependence for meaning upon the situation or context in which they developed (Wales, 2001, p. 99). Similarly, modality reflects the increased interest in discourse analysis, and the growing fascination in the way texts contain, record, and sustain the variety of interpersonal relationships between authors, implied authors, narrators, and readers (Wales, 2001, p. 256). This focus upon the subtleties that shape our notions of/reactions to "point of view," and the deictic elements of texts, are represented in the discussion of classroom practices in Sections 13.4.3 and 13.4.4 above.

Consequently, those working in the field of stylistics are increasingly coming to recognise the interactive nature of roles played by the reader and the text in the activity of analysis and the construction of an interpretation. The text – for stylisticians as well as literary critics – is a heteronomous object, which only comes to life through a receiving consciousness. Learners often want there to be only one meaning to any text: stylistics gives them the tools, both linguistic and affective, cognitive, analytical and expressive, to explore the ranges of meaning potential and how that meaning is achieved.

See also 1 LANGUAGE DESCRIPTIONS, 2 LEXICOGRAPHY, 5 DISCOURSE ANALYSIS.

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APPENDIX 1

- I wandered lonely as a cloud
 That floats on high o'er vales and hills,
 When all at once I saw a crowd,
 A host, of golden daffodils;
 Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
 Fluttering and dancing in the breeze. 5
- Continuous as the stars that shine
 And twinkle on the Milky Way,
 They stretched in never-ending line
 Along the margin of a bay: 10
 Ten thousand saw I at a glance,
 Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.
- The waves beside them danced, but they
 Out-did the sparkling waves in glee:
 A poet could not but be gay, 15
 In such a jocund company:
 I gazed – and gazed – but little thought
 What wealth the show to me had brought.
- For oft, when on my couch I lie
 In vacant or in pensive mood, 20
 They flash upon that inward eye
 Which is the bliss of solitude;
 And then my heart with pleasure fills,
 And dances with the daffodils.

William Wordsworth (1807)

APPENDIX 2

- I, too, sing America.
- I am the darker brother.
 They send me to eat in the kitchen
 When company comes,
 But I laugh, 5
 An' eat well,
 And grow strong.
 Tomorrow,
 I'll eat at the table
 When company comes. 10
 Nobody'll dare
 Say to me,
 "Eat in the kitchen,"
 Then.

Besides,
They'll see how beautiful I am
And be ashamed.

15

I, too, am America.

Langston Hughes (1925)