

The origin of Stylistics and its Modern Trends

Lecture 1



What is stylistics?

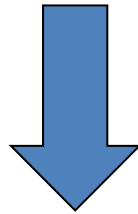
“nobody has ever known what the term *stylistics* means, and in any case, hardly anyone seems to care”

(Jean-Jacques Lecercle 1993: 14)

Stylistics



from Lat. “stilos” (a sharp stick used for writing on wax tablets)



not only an instrument for writing, but
manner of writing

Stylistics and Rhetoric



Rhetoric – art of composition and delivery of speeches

Rhetoric

- **Ancient Greece:** art of persuasion
- **Ancient Rome:** art of good speaking (public speaking and influencing audiences by eloquent speakers)
- **Mediaeval Europe:** art of decorating speech (style as applied ornament)

Stylistics

borrowed from rhetoric

1. technical equipment
2. traditional object (STYLE)

Stylistics and Structural Linguistics



- XX century - crucial period in development of linguistics
- **Ferdinand de Saussure:** language as a structure and a system of different levels

Structural Linguistics

- concentrated on the structure of languages
- more in common with the anthropologist or the social scientist's point of view than with the historian or the aesthetician's
- philology and linguistics diverged, as their interests and methods became different

The First Linguistic Work on Style



1905 - Charles Bally
“Précis de Stylistique”

- was concerned neither with writers nor even with literature in general
- was interested in language and its functions

Ch. Bally's Main Ideas

- one of language functions - to express feelings
- language - **a set of means of expression which are simultaneous with thought**
- proper object of stylistics – to investigate **how feelings are expressed by means of language and special devices**

Literary Approach to Style



Leo Spitzer

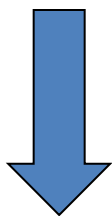
- never tried to establish the stylistic system of a language
- was more interested in the world view of the writer

Leo Spitzer's Main Ideas

- Language - a creative activity of the individual rather than a system of signals shared by the group
- doubted the possibility to offer a reader “a step-by-step algorithm” which can be applied to a work of art
- emphasized subtle psychological and cultural phenomena whose study tended to escape from the text

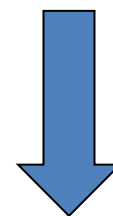
LINGUISTIC STYLISTICS vs LITERARY STYLISTICS

Charles Bally's
approach



Linguistic Stylistics
(лингвостилистика)

Leo Spitzer's ideas



Literary Stylistics
(литературоведческая
стилистика)

Linguistic stylistics

1. investigation of the inventory of special language media which by their ontological features secure the desirable effect of the utterance (SDs and EMs)
2. certain types of texts which due to the choice and arrangement of language means are distinguished by the pragmatic aspect of the communication (FS of language)

Literary stylistics (literary criticism)

- sphere of linguistic and literary science which deals with the peculiarities of a writer's individual manner of using language means to achieve the desired effect

Model of Communicative Act

R. Jakobson: six components of any speech event

- addresser
- addressee
- message
- code
- contact
- context

Language – a code to shape information into the message. The supplier of the information - encoder. The addressee - decoder of the information contained in the message.

Before Structural Linguistics

- No opposition between literary and linguistic studies
- The same interests, the same problems

1. Come in, will you? = Please, come in. =
Come in. = Get the hell in here.

2. The old man is dead. = The old bean has
kicked the bucket. = The gentleman well
advanced in years has attained the
termination of his terrestrial existence.

- the same proposition (subject-matter) but different manner of expression (depends upon the situational conditions of the communication act)
- stylistics investigates synonymous linguistic means for the purpose of finding out their spheres of applicability

Functional Stylistics

the focus on the correlation between the message and the communicative situation

Affective Stylistics

- M. Riffaterre
- focus on the effect of the message, on the output of the act of communication, on its attention-compelling function
- features of linguistic utterance that are intended to impose the encoder's way of thinking on the decoder

Leningrad School of Decoding Stylistics

- I.V. Arnold
- reader - not a passive recipient of the writer's way of thinking
- theory and practice of text interpretation
- focus on the receiving end, on decoding and the addressee's response

Trends in Stylistics

1. Linguistic Stylistics
2. Literary Stylistics
3. Functional Stylistics
4. Affective Stylistics
5. Stylistics of Decoding

Modern Stylistics

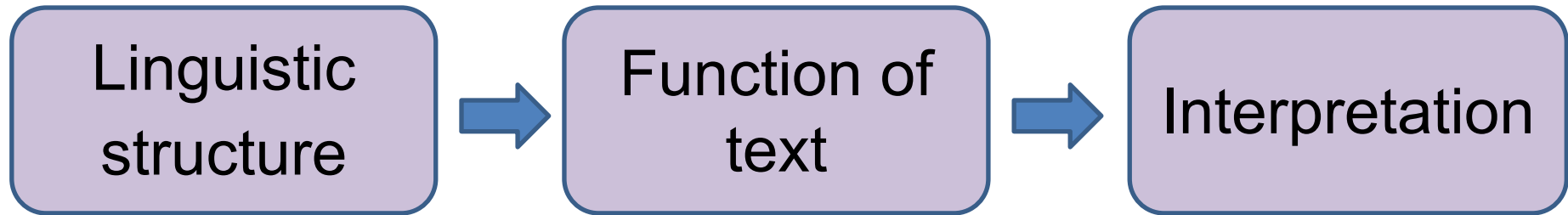
- feminist stylistics
- cognitive stylistics
- discourse stylistics
- a method in language teaching and language learning
- creative writing

What is stylistics?

a method of textual interpretation in which primary role belongs to *language*

(Paul Simpson 2004: 2)

Text interpretation



Meaning of a text

Language as a function in context (time, place, cultural and cognitive contexts)



Thank you!

