Integrating Stylistics in English as a Foreign Language Classes

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Abstract

The present paper aims at showing the importance of using stylistics in the English as a foreign language (EFL) classroom. The main feature of stylistics is finding out the significance of the use of certain linguistic patterns. The goal of this paper is to investigate what style means in relation to literary language, what methods can be used to tackle literary style and how these methods may be applied to solve some pedagogical problems of EFL teaching. Using stylistics in the EFL classroom can help both the teacher and the learner to overcome all the language and cultural barriers that hinder the teaching learning process.

Key-words: stylistics, EFL, style, literary language.

Abstrakt

Der vorliegende Aufsatz möchte die Wichtigkeit aufzuzeigen, Stylistik im EFL-Klassenzimmer zu thematisieren. Das Hauptmerkmal der Stilistik ist die Bedeutung des Gebrauchs bestimmter sprachlicher Muster herauszufinden. Ziel des Beitrages ist es, zu untersuchen, was Stil im Verhältnis zu Literatursprache bedeutet, welche Methoden zur Diskussion über Stil verwendet werden können und wie diese Methoden zur Lösung einiger pädagogischer Probleme des EFL-Unterrichts dienen können.

Schlüsselwörter: stylistik, EFL, stil, literatursprache.

الملخص

يهدف هذا البحث إلى إبراز أهمية استخدام الأسلوبية في الفصول الدراسية للإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية. إن الميـــزة الرئيسة للأسلوبية هي معرفة دلالة استخدام أنماط لغوية معينة. و المقصد من هذه الدراسة هو التحقيـــق فـــي ماهيـــة الأسلوب فيما يتعلق باللغة الأدبية، و في الطرق التي يمكن استخدامها لمعالجة الأسلوب الأدبي وكيفيـــة تطبيـــق هـــذه الطرق لحل بعض المعضلات في تعليم الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية. يمكن أن يساعد استخدام الأسلوبية في الفصول الدراسية للإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية كل من المعلم والمتعلم في التغلب على جميع الحواجز اللغوية والثقافية التي تعرقل عملية الـــتعلم و التعليم.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الأسلوبية، الانجليزية كلغة أجنبية، الأسلوب، اللغة الأدبية.

1. Introduction

Stylistics, a link of style and linguistics, is a discipline which has been approached from a number of perspectives. Its definitions vary, based on the theory that is followed. When we carry out the different activities that are linked to our field, either in spoken or written forms, we often employ devices of thought and the rules of language; however, there are variations so as to alter meanings or keep the same sense in various ways. Thus, the concept of style is based on the use of language in different ways for the intent of achieving a common target, which is negotiating meanings.

2. Style and Stylistics

Stylistics is a blanket term which has assumed diverse senses from different linguists. However, it can only be stated to be the study of style. Style has been defined as the description of the variability forms of linguistic items in authentic language use. Leech (1969: 14) quotes Aristotle as maintaining that "the most effective means of achieving both clarity and diction and a certain dignity is the use of altered form of words."

In addition, Stylistics is described as a study of the various styles that are there in either a given utterance or a written text. The consistent appearance of certain structures, elements in a speech, an utterance or in a given text is one of the major concerns of stylistics. The latter requires the use of traditional levels of linguistic description such as sounds, form and meaning. Linguistic stylistics is concerned with the varieties of language and the exploration of some of the formal linguistic features which distinguish them. The usefulness of stylistics is that it enables the direct understanding of utterances and texts, thus increasing our pleasure of analysing texts.

2.1. The Concepts of Style and Stylistics

The concepts of style and stylistic variation in language are based on the fact that within the language system, the content can be set in more than one linguistic form (Verdonk 2010). Hence, it is possible for it to work at all linguistic levels. Therefore, style can be considered as a choice of linguistic means, as deviation from the norms of language use and as recurrent features of linguistic forms. Stylistics examines a wide range of language varieties and styles that are possible in creating different texts.

Stylistics is concerned with the study of the language of literature or the study of the language habits of particular writers and their writing patterns. From the foregoing, stylistics can be regarded as the techniques of explication which can help us to define objectively the author's use of language.

The main objective of stylistics is to enable us to understand the purpose of the author's choice of certain linguistic manners to convey his message. Therefore, stylistics is concerned with the examination of grammar, lexis, semantics as well as phonological properties and discursive devices. It is more interested in the significance of function that the selected style fulfils.

2.2. The Nature and Goals of Stylistics

Stylistics makes a bridge between language and literature. It studies language use in both literary and non-literary texts. To do that, it uses insights from various fields such as literature, psychology, sociology and so on. Therefore, while it has its own focus, it is multidisciplinary in nature. Stylistics looks at style in different ways. First, style is regarded as choice since each writer/speaker has a distinctive option at the different levels of language description in a text. Second, style is regarded as deviation since what does not conform to the standard use of language is said to be stylistically significant, and this can also be at any level of language description. Third, style is regarded as the situation, that is the context in which a text comes to life and that could be physical, socio-cultural or pragmatic. Fourth, style is

regarded as a temporal phenomenon, and this deals with the time of relevance of style. A good example is Old English versus Modern English. Fifth, style is regarded as the individual and this tackles certain features that are associated with particular individuals (idiolects).

Stylistics deals with a whole range of human discourses. The practice of this discipline is targeted at achieving certain objectives (Leech and Short 1981):

(1) To set up discourse peculiarities: Stylistics studies the peculiarities that describe the discourse of a genre. For example, stylistics helps us identify the main differences between British English style and American English style.

(2) To arouse appreciation of discourses: Stylistics involves the understanding of a discourse to increase our enjoyment. It opens the reader's mind to the form and function of a particular choice of discourse. Stylistics is sensitive to various linguistic choices in a given text.

(3) To create linguistic habits: The style of any writer is the product of certain linguistic habits that are related to some social and cultural factors. The goal of stylistics is to find out the linguistic choice of a given writer. Chapman (1973) maintains that any stylistic analysis tries to determine the artistic values that support the choice of the writer. Stylistics is regarded as sort of analysis for learning language and developing understanding for the way it works. The knowledge of stylistics also results in a good analysis of speaking and writing habits to find out patterns which typically distinguish one variety of language from the other. A number of factors, namely situations, mode of communication, context, socio-linguistic constraints, as well as the need to conform to linguistic appropriateness, account for variation across genres. According to Crystal and Davy (1969), the objective of stylistics is to analyze language habits, identifying some features which are limited to types of social context.

(4) To make critical judgments: Applying stylistics on a discourse can give an aid to the stylistician to construct a critical judgment that is based on veritable data which are generally objective.

To come to the goals mentioned above, stylistics focuses on certain features of a text. Through graphological features, a stylistician may describe the physical appearance of a literary text. Some of these characteristics include the significant use of punctuation marks, the use of italics, capital letters, and underlining to create stylistic effects. The spotlight of any syntactic analysis is the identification of the effects created by the sentence variety in a text. Such aspects as ellipses, parataxis, hypotaxis, right and left-branching sentences are considered significant features. For example, dislocation in syntax is rarely used to demonstrate the dislocation in human thoughts (stream of consciousness) and this is highly manifested in William Faulkner's novels. The stylistic use of words may generate denotative, connotative, collocative, affective, thematic, or stylistic meanings based on the speaker's or writer's intention. Certain distinctive use of words may help us to recognize the context of a text, its genre, its communicative function, its author and so on.

3. Using Stylistics in the EFL Classroom

Stylistics is usually defined as the analysis of the writer's lexical and rhetorical choices (Lazar 2007). However, the linguistic points of significance in the text are the main concern of this discipline (Zoubir 1997). Stylistics, which is the close study of style in the literary text itself, aims at reaching two goals (Lazar 2007). First, it attempts to enable students to produce meaningful interpretations of the target text. Second, it tries to increase or expand learners' knowledge of English. Therefore, the main objective of using stylistics is to help students to read and study literature more competently (Widdowson 1974).

In the teaching process of literature, traditional criticism has been used, relying on students' intuitions to form critical judgments (Widdowson 1974). Learners of English are sometimes given a literary text and asked to appreciate spontaneously its literary features without clarifying how this can be done. The teacher ought to take into account that his/her students' intuitions and readings about English may be different from those of the native English learners, because their linguistic, cultural and literary backgrounds are not the same (Arab 1998).

Literary texts are usually rich is several layers of meanings, and can be effectively mined for creating debates and exchanging views. Literature increases language awareness. Asking learners to examine sophisticated or non standard examples of language in literary texts makes them more aware of the norms of language use (Lazar 2007). By analysing different literary texts in EFL classes, teachers motivate their learners to develop their attitudes towards the target language. These values and attitudes relate to the world outside the EFL classroom. Therefore, students may feel a real sense of achievement at understanding a literary text. Besides, literary criticism tends to suggest that understanding any literary text is the outcome of a mystic revelation that is not given to anyone (Lazar 2007). Asking students to appreciate a text without providing them with a clear strategy for doing so may make them bored and demotivated.

The teacher, therefore, needs particular strategies to enable his/her learners to reach an aesthetic appreciation of a text which connects its particular linguistic devices with intuitions about its meanings (Lazar 2007). To do so, there may be only one way which is the use of stylistics—a discipline that makes use of "the apparatus of linguistic description" to study how meanings in a text are communicated (Leech and Short 1981: 74).

4. Conclusion

Stylistics makes a combination of linguistics and literary criticism (Widdowson 1975). The linguist is often concerned with the linguistic codes abilities and their different cultural backgrounds. Thus, s/he should have recourse to the field of stylistics which builds a bridge between linguistics and literary criticism. Having stated all this, the researcher hopes that she has given the impression that stylistic analysis of literary language has pedagogical implications for EFL teaching.

5. References

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