CHAPTER 8

Style and stylistics

8.1 Introduction

It is possible to say approximately the same thing in any number of different ways. The word *style* is used to denote these "different ways". This word is derived from the Latin word *stilus*, which means *pen*. The form of letters is influenced by the way in which a pen (feather quill) is cut, yet it is possible to write the same letters with different pens; the letters only differ in their style. When we examine the use of the word "pen" in the expression "His pen is dipped in blood", we can see that "how to write" also means "how to formulate".

Historically, the analysis of style is based on the heritage of classical rhetoric. It is thus concerned with the question of which linguistic forms are appropriate to express an intended message in a given situation (Section 8.2). Depending on various perspectives, style can be defined in three possible ways: as a potential form for a particular content, as the text producer's choice of specific forms, or as a deviation from the recipient's expectation (Section 8.3). While style manuals oriented towards the broad public are based on a long tradition of normative conceptions, linguistic research on style relies on objective criteria (Section 8.4). More specifically, literary language differs from everyday language through the two features of equivalences and deviations from the norm of nonfictional discourse. These features result in the effect of foregrounding (Section 8.5). Contemporary trends in the discipline of stylistics include corpus-based methods as well as applications of pragmatic and cognitive-linguistic approaches to literary texts (Section 8.6).

8.2 Form, content and situation

The concept of style stems from old, classical **rhetoric**, the theory and practice of effective language use that can persuade a public in a special situation, e.g., to reduce a suspect's sentence or to gain support for going to war. Stylistics has a history of about 2,500 years. The Greek philosopher Aristotle (4th century B.C.) says in his famous *Rhetorica* that an orator has to use a style, a form for his material,

which is appropriate and also "unaccustomed" by using metaphors, for example. And the Roman rhetorician Quintilianus (1st century A.D.) presented in his *De Institutione Oratoria* four "virtues of style": correctness, perspicuity, appropriateness and ornamentation. Nowadays, questions concerning correctness are mainly dealt with in writing education. The perspicuity of a text is now studied in the cognitive approach to discourse, examining how people understand information in general communication (see Chapter 13) and in literary texts (see Section 8.6.3). The remaining two characteristics of style also play an important role in stylistic research. In fact, the tension between the appropriateness (to the situation) and the elegant deviation or ornamentation (to draw attention) still lies at the heart of discussions about good style.

The starting point for stylistic research is that the same content can be expressed in different forms. A well-known example is the following. When an individual wishes to tell about a man he or she had seen acting strangely on the bus that morning and who he or she had met again coincidentally that afternoon, there is an infinite number of ways to do so. Below are just two of the ways it may be done (see Queneau, 1947/1981):

(1) How tightly packed in we were on that bus platform! And how stupid and ridiculous that young man looked! And what was he doing? Well, if he wasn't actually trying to pick a quarrel with a chap who – so he claimed! the young fop! – kept on pushing him! And then he didn't find anything better to do than to rush off and grab a seat which had become free! Instead of leaving it for a lady! Two hours after, guess whom I met in front of the gare Saint-Lazare! The same fancypants! Being given some sartorial advice! By a friend! You'd never believe it!

(2) I was not displeased with my attire this day. I was inaugurating a new, rather sprightly hat, and an overcoat of which I thought most highly. Met X in front of the gare Saint-Lazare who tried to spoil my pleasure by trying to prove that this overcoat is cut too low at the lapels and that I ought to have an extra button on it. At least he didn't dare attack my headgear.
A bit earlier I had roundly told off a vulgar type who was purposely ill-treating me every time anyone went by getting off or on. This happened in one of those unspeakably foul omnibi which fill up with hoi polloi precisely at those times when I have to consent to use them.

Many differences can be pointed out between the two stories above. In (1) the accent is on the storyteller's surprise at meeting the same person again, while in (2) the focus is on the protagonist's experiences. Furthermore, in (2) a departure is made from chronological order. There are also differences in sentence structure and word choice. Still, the two stories have the same basic content. However,

it proves to be very difficult to describe the differences in vocabulary, grammar and discourse structure. And, even more important is the question to what extent these differences can be seen as stylistic variation, i.e., variation that can be linked to appropriateness and ornamentation.

In discourse studies the concept of style is often studied with a focus on **appropriateness**, which is mainly related to the situational context. This narrow use of the concept **style** is covered by the term **register**, in the sense of a church organ's registers that can make the same piece of music (the content) have various different sound "colors" (the forms). Register is the stylistic variation that can be explained with the situation, or more precisely, with the sixteen factors of the *speaking* model, introduced in Section 3.5. The influence of these situational factors is also evident in the terms used to denote different stylistic variations: telegram style (the *channel* factor), city hall style (the *setting* factor), and court ruling style (the *genre* factor), etc. In many studies the terms *style* and *register* are used without any distinction, but in cases where not only the formulation but also the relation between language use and situation is meant, the term *register* is commonly used (Schubert, 2016).

In the study of style and register the starting point is not only that some content can have different formulations but also that these different formulations highlight different aspects of the possible meaning that has to be conveyed. So in the example below there must be (slight) differences in meaning as a result of the formulation.

(3) a. John does not go to school, because Mary is ill.
b. Because Mary is ill, John does not go to school.
c. Mary is ill. So, John does not go to school.
d. John does not go to school. Mary is ill.

Following the theme-rheme distinction (see Section 5.3), in formulation (3a) the rheme is the illness of Mary, and in (3b) the fact that John does not go to school. The theme-rheme distinction presupposes what is called the principle of end-focus. This means that new information (the rheme) is mostly placed at the end of an utterance if there are no reasons to put some other information in focus, for example, by intonation in "Not Mary, but Jóhn does not go to school." So formulations (3a) and (3b) differ in focus on what the speaker wants to convey as kernel information. The first two formulations contain a clause and a subclause, a subordination, and the last two formulations have two full sentences, a coordination. Connecting or not connecting full sentences with connectives like "because" and "so" can highlight the salience of the relation. In (3c) the conclusion is more salient than in (3b) because of the use of "so", and in (3d) the explanation is a more independent proposition.

From a stylistic viewpoint there is no free variation in formulation. Each formulation has its own "stylistic" meaning. The assumption that there is a one-on-one relation between form and meaning is known as Humboldt's principle. This influential nineteenth-century German philosopher coined this principle in his research into linguistic change. To give a simple example, if a language adopts the word *bar* as well as the word *pub* (with more or less the same meaning), a difference in meaning will develop. Another example would be that if the same propositional content can be expressed in different ways, say in an active and a passive form, there must be a difference in meaning. Following Humboldt's principle every language has a tendency against homonymy, one form with different meanings, like *bank* ('edge of a river') and *bank* ('financial institute') and synonymy, different forms with one meaning, like *liberty* and *freedom*. Humboldt's principle forms the basis of much stylistic analysis: at first sight different formulations may appear equivalent, but application of the principle will enable us to recognize subtle shades of meaning and shifts in focus.

8.3 Views on style

One of the most challenging problems in stylistics is the problem of defining style. A description of all the differences between the two stories at the beginning of this chapter does not guarantee that the style has been mapped out. In the literature on stylistics a great deal of attention has been given to the definition of style. The numerous views on style can be divided into three categories, corresponding to the Organon model's division into symbol, symptom and signal (see Section 2.2).

First, when the symbol aspect of language (the reference to reality) is central, style can be seen as a possible form for a specific content. Second, from the angle of the symptom aspect of expression (from the perspective of the writer or speaker), style can be seen as the choice of specific forms. Third, from the angle of the signal aspect of persuasion (the perspective of the reader or listener), language can be seen as a deviation from a given expectation. Every interpretation, when viewed more closely, poses problems.

a. Style as a possible form for a specific content

When dealing with style as a possible form for a specific content, the question arises whether it is possible to alter the form of language without changing the content. At the word level, the main question is: Do true synonyms really exist? Do the words *dad*, *father* and *my old man* have the same meaning? In part they do, namely, the procreator of a child. The answer to the question whether or not synonyms

have the same meaning depends on the definition assigned to the word *meaning*. If the definition of meaning also includes a reference to the class of people who use certain words, for example, the fact that predominantly young children use the word *daddy* to denote their fathers, then there are no true synonyms and the conclusion must be drawn that the form does change the content at least partially.

A similar argument holds true for differences in sentence composition. (See the remarks on the difference between the active and the passive voice in Section 1.1.) The research into stylistic variation presupposes that the texts to be compared have something in common. This "something" may be called basic content, as in the two stories in the preceding section. In that case, however, the basic content in question is no more than "meeting on a bus". The propositional content of these stories is rather different. In discourse studies "that which remained unchanged" can be defined in a number of ways. It is generally used to refer to propositional content. The focus when texts are compared is then on differences in formulation. The phrase can, however, also be used to denote basic content, for example, sequences of events such as in the stories by Queneau given above. Sometimes, from a more pragmatic viewpoint, a more abstract definition is given. In this case it is assumed that only the illocutionary force remains the same. Within this definition different basic contents can be used, for example, to utter the same threat. The interpretation of style as a possible form for a specific content proves, therefore, to be too vague.

b. Style as a choice of specific patterns

To see style as choice patterns, one takes the point of view of writers or speakers, who have a number of different possibilities in phrasing what they would like to say. Here is a well-known example. If A and B are together in a room and A wants B to close an open window, then A can make this clear in a number of ways.

(4) a. Could you perhaps close the window?
b. Hey, can't that window be closed?
c. The window's open.
d. Close the window!
e. You should be careful about drafts, the way you're feeling.
f. I'm not paying to heat the outdoors.

When dealing with style as choice, it is necessary to know what choices writers or speakers have or had at their disposal. Some choices are partially determined by the situation. Perhaps A and B in the example above do not have a relationship in which orders would be appropriate. The style-as-choice approach is, however, suitable for determining in which way the situation limits choice, for

example, which factors in the situation might contribute to (4a) being preferable to (4b) in some cases.

c. Style as a deviation from expectations

In a third view, style is seen as a deviation from expectations. Owing to long-term exposure to certain routine patterns, readers and listeners develop expectations about the way in which a specific content can be given form, and about the choice of certain forms. When readers make a stylistic judgment about a given form of language use, it is apparently because the form deviates from what they are used to.

Take the institutionalized genre "State of the Union address" by American presidents, which is reasonably well-known. Because the genre is familiar, people have developed expectations concerning the language in such a speech. Here are three possible introductory sentences.

(5) a. In recent years our country has truly been put to the test. Many have lost their jobs. Thousands of young people were unable to find employment.
b. Our country has not had it easy in recent years. Among adults, but especially among young people, unemployment is high.
c. These last years have been tough, really tough. So many have lost their jobs! So many young people were never able to get one!

It is very likely that the style used in (5a) will be characterized as somewhat formal and that readers will evaluate the wording in (5b) as too informal for a State of the Union address. Words like *lively* will probably be found applicable to the style used in (5c). Formulation (5a) will in all likelihood be judged as the most suitable.

One problem with the style-as-deviation approach is that readers' expectations can be quite divergent. It has been suggested that a norm for language use be set and that every deviation from that norm be viewed as a stylistic characteristic. In order to do this, however, it is obvious that "normal" language must be characterized first. For this reason it has been suggested that related texts be used as a point of comparison, as a norm. In the stylistic analysis of, for instance, civil service style, the differences between civil service documents and murder mystery novels are not at issue, but the differences between these documents and editorials or informational leaflets are.

These three views of style can be recognized in current research, in which a great deal of attention is paid to the problem of describing differences between texts and measuring the effect of stylistic devices on the attitude of the reader.

8.4 Normative and objective analysis

In everyday usage, the concept *style* in itself is an evaluative concept, as we can see in expressions like "That guy has style!" In this context, style means "good style". This can explain why the study of style has a long tradition in a more qualitative and normative approach dealing with issues like: "How to produce a good text" or "How to avoid a 'complex', a 'rigid', a 'harsh' or an 'informal' style". Apart from this approach, attempts have been made to connect the rather vague stylistic qualifications, like the ones given in the previous sentence, to patterns in formulation. These two approaches are dealt with in this section.

a. The normative approach

In many languages style guides have been published in an educational setting in which the style virtue "perspicuitas", referred to in Section 8.2, plays a central role. These handbooks on clear or effective writing provide many hints and tips on how to produce a good text. One of the famous examples for the English language is the booklet *The Elements of Style* by Strunk and White (2000), originally published in 1918, and still influential in the 21st century. This guide to writing in a satisfactory style concludes with 21 suggestions, a few of which are given below.

(6) Some cautionary hints concerning good style
1. Place yourself in the background.
2. Write in a way that comes naturally.
3. Work from a suitable design.
4. Write nouns and verbs.
(…)
19. Do not take shortcuts at the cost of clarity.
20. Avoid foreign languages.
21. Prefer the standard to the offbeat.

Suggestions like these cause different problems for a discourse studies perspective. Let us look at the three most important ones. First, it is seldom clear how these suggestions can be implemented in producing discourse. What kind of stylistic devices must writers avoid or use in order to place themselves in the background? What is natural writing? Second, must these suggestions always be followed? In some cases, the use of a more unconventional style (see suggestion 21) or using foreign words (number 20) can be more effective in reaching your goals. And third, it is by no means clear that acting upon a piece of advice results in a better text. Is it really true that, whatever the circumstances, nouns and verbs should be preferred to adjectives and adverbs (suggestion 4)?

Anyway, hints on using a good style still play an important role in educational settings and organizations' corporate style guides. Their merits are that writers are focused on elements in discourse that before were neglected. Moreover, they provide a good starting point for criticizing the way in which content is molded into a form. Just one example of this language criticism will suffice in this section: the deceptive metaphor, as pointed out in the following remark from Section 3.4.

(7) Discourse is more than a message from sender to receiver. In fact, *sender* and *receiver* are metaphors that obfuscate what is really going on in communication.

It is first necessary to consider some information about this figure of speech, which was already mentioned as a stylistic device by Aristotle. The metaphor is a form of figurative language in which an object or concept is denoted using another object or concept. This assignment of one object or concept to another takes place on the basis of certain similarities between the two. Since the "base" of a mountain resembles the "base" of a human in some way, we can speak of the "foot" of a mountain. When human behavior begins to resemble that of a certain animal, the name of the animal is given to that individual: for example, a "sly fox". In everyday language many metaphors occur that are no longer considered to be figures of speech. These are called petrified or dead metaphors, such as the "head" of a nail or the "arms" of a chair. When the metaphor suggests a similarity that is non-existent, it is called a deceptive metaphor.

A general suggestion in normative stylistics is to use **figures of speech** – like metaphor, personification, irony, etc. – with a certain restraint, and that if they are applied, they must enlighten some aspects of the content. Example (7) is a formulation that can be criticized with regard to perspicuity. When discourse is characterized as a message from sender to receiver, then a similarity is suggested between a receiver and a listener, reader or addressee. In this telephone metaphor the suggestion is made that a listener picks up signals in a passive way. Nothing could be further from the truth. A listener or reader is obliged to take an active part in the communication process. For more on this, see the observations on coherence in Section 6.3.

b. The objective approach

In stylistic analysis there is a long tradition of describing differences in formulation patterns. In these descriptions mostly impressionistic and evaluative adjectives are used, which prompt critics to draw comparisons with tasting wines or advertising cars. Stylistic evaluations of someone's writing style, such as "colorless", "lucid" or "objective", may seem to have a fixed meaning, but it is often unclear

what is meant by these characterizations. A striking example is cited in *Grammar as Style* by Tufte (1971). High-school teachers of English were asked to characterize the style of the novel *In Cold Blood* (1966) by Truman Capote. The adjectives ranged the whole alphabet and many of them contradicted others. Here are some characteristics.

(8) Style-labels for Capote's *In Cold Blood*
alliterative, blunt, chiseled, discerning, elaborate, forceful, general, harsh, impressionistic, literary, meditative, natural, omniscient, prosaic, rambling, stylized, thoughtful, unconventional, vivid, wordy (Tufte, 1971)

Even if people agree about the characteristics of, for example, the language of bureaucracy, so-called **officialese** (see Section 14.5), it is unclear to what elements of style they must be linked. In different cultures government language is said to be difficult, impersonal and traditional. But it is unclear whether the difficulty is caused by the content, sentence length, sentence complexity or jargon, and whether, for example, a passive form always has to be labeled as impersonal. Actually, even more important is the argument that an official document has to be somewhat traditional, in accordance with the authority of the governmental institution that produced it.

This more qualitative approach in style analysis has inspired much stylistic research in discourse studies in attempts to detect in what stylistic elements documents may differ. If an objective description can be produced of the stylistic phenomena of certain documents, then there is a base for research into the link with stylistic labels given by readers and the effect of the message on the reader. In Table 1 below some elements are listed which have been featured in stylistic research.

Table 1. Some elements in stylistic research

Level	Feature
Content	number and sort of topics, propositional density, number of elaborations
Discourse structure	paragraph length, introduction, conclusion, rhetorical relations, argument structure
Syntax	sentence length, variation in sentence length, sentence-initial structure, number of relative clauses, sub- and coordination, passive voice, cleft constructions, nominalizations
Lexicon	word length, lexical diversity (type-token ratio), frequencies and ratios of various parts of speech (adverbs, qualifiers, function words, etc.), hapax legomena (words occurring only once), impersonal constructions, figures of speech
Usage	frequencies of characters, punctuation marks, spelling errors

Many different stylistic elements have been investigated in the research into **persuasive style**. In the following example, it is made clear how language intensity can be of influence. Which of the following styles is more convincing, the one used in (9a) or that in (9b)? Each of the two following paragraphs is the concluding segment of an address calling for the legalization of the sale of heroin.

(9) a. Legalizing the sale of heroin provides society with several advantages. It would *discourage* crime by making heroin relatively inexpensive and available to addicts. It would help in the fight against organized crime by taking away an important source of the underworld's income. Finally, it would *nearly* eliminate police corruption related to heroin trafficking by moving the sale of heroin outside their jurisdiction. Legalizing heroin would also be advantageous to the user. It would *gradually* reduce the number of heroin-related *injuries* due to disease and overdose. In addition, users would be able to better afford other health-related products.

b. Legalizing the sale of heroin provides society with several *clear* advantages. It would *deter* crime by making heroin relatively inexpensive and available to addicts. It would help in the fight against organized crime by taking away an important source of the underworld's income. Finally, it would *virtually* eliminate police corruption related to heroin trafficking by moving the sale of heroin outside their jurisdiction. Legalizing heroin would also be advantageous to the user. It would *sharply* reduce the number of heroin-related *deaths* due to disease and overdose. In addition, users would be able to better afford other health-related products.

These texts were used in experiments done by Hamilton et al. (1990). Three factors were investigated: language intensity, source credibility and gender. To test the effect of language intensity, the language was intensified in the b-version compared to the a-version (see the italicized words). The word "clear" was placed in front of "advantages". The word "discourage" was replaced by "deter", "nearly" by "virtually", etc. To test the effect of source credibility, the author in one case was said to be an Assistant Director of the Drug Enforcement Agency with degrees from Berkeley and Stanford, and in the other case the author was said to be a former addict. To test the effect of gender, the name of the author was varied simply by using either the name *John* or the name *Joan*. Before the subjects were shown the texts, they were asked about their views concerning the legalization of heroin.

The experiments showed that intensifiers had a positive influence on attitude change. There did not, however, appear to be a direct link between language intensity and attitude change. The text was perceived as being clearer due to the intensive use of language, and this clarity facilitated a change in attitude. In this

investigation, the large extent to which other factors outside language use are influential also became clear. Intensifiers had a positive effect if the source was seen as reliable; the same language was completely unconvincing if the source was felt to be unreliable. Other examples of research on convincing people using stylistic devices are dealt with in Chapter 12 on argumentation and persuasion.

It is remarkable that the concept of style is not confined to composition and formulation; choices in content and peculiarities in usage are sometimes considered stylistic phenomena as well. The analysis of spelling errors, for example, is important in what is called forensic stylistics, a branch of stylistics that is used to find additional proof in detecting the authorship of documents that play a role in legal cases (blackmail, etc.). In analyzing composition and formulation, the focus is on the elements that are countable, for example, the **type-token ratio (TTR)** as an indicator of lexical richness. This ratio is the number of different words (the types) divided by the number of words in a text (the tokens). The TTR of the previous sentence is 0.71 because words like *the* and *words* were used more than once (in total there are 15 types and 21 tokens in this sentence). This TTR can be an indicator of the difficulty of a text; more types can make a text more difficult. Another ratio is the noun-verb ratio. If it could be proved that some documents, e.g., bureaucratic documents, have a more **nominal style**, for example, than newspaper articles or novels (with a more verbal style), then this could be an explanation of impressionistic style labels for officialese such as "dull", "abstract" or "dry".

Of course, an analysis on the basis of these quantitative elements cannot produce a full-fledged description of the style. And many style elements shirk quantitative analysis. How could the strength of a good metaphor be measured, for example? The style of a document is as difficult to describe as the character of a person. An old French saying expresses this perfectly: "*Le style est l'homme même*" ("Style is the man himself").

8.5 Everyday and literary language

In a discussion of stylistic devices, poetry and other forms of literature inevitably come to mind as well. This leads to the issue of the distinctiveness of **poetic** discourse. Literary language does, after all, serve a very different purpose than, for example, informative language. Literary elements, however, can also be found in everyday language. But what makes a kind of language use **literary**? An important difference between everyday and literary language can be demonstrated by way of the following statement by Jakobson (1960), who was introduced in Section 4.2 on functions of communication. He was one of the first researchers to pay attention to

the poetic function in communication. This is his famous, but difficult statement about the poetic function.

(10) The poetic function projects the principle of equivalence from the axis of selection into the axis of combination.

For a better understanding of the terms **selection** and **combination**, two important aspects of language, the syntagmatic and the paradigmatic aspect, need to be discussed. These terms can best be explained using the concepts *horizontal* and *vertical*. The **syntagmatic** or horizontal aspect has to do with syntax, the combination of words in a sentence. The way these combinations are made is governed by fixed rules. The combinations possible in everyday language can be described using rules of grammar, for example, the rule that a verb like *to go* cannot be followed by a direct object. Sentence (11a) is not English, sentence (11b) is.

(11) a. *John went the school.
b. John went to school.

The **paradigmatic** aspect is the vertical aspect as in "paradigm" in the sense of a list of verb forms: *I walk*, *you walk*, *he walks*, etc. Instead of *John* in (11b), a word can be substituted from a whole list of other words such as *the man* or *the girl*. The same holds true for the words that follow "John" in the sentence. In this way it is possible to generate a sentence like: "Pete drove to the beach."

In everyday language the paradigmatic selection process is simply a matter of choosing words that are categorically equivalent. "Equivalent" in this case means that the elements must have something in common. *John* can be replaced by *Pete* but not by *is* or *the*. The commonality can consist of both words being the same kind of word, or of both words possessing the same meaning element, in this case a person doing something.

The syntagmatic element involves the horizontal axis of combination, while the paradigmatic element involves the vertical axis of selection. Jakobson's remark implies that in poetic language the syntagmatic axis is somehow special and that this special quality has to do with the choice based on equivalence along the paradigmatic axis. It might be said that in poetic language, the syntagmatic axis is of lesser importance than the paradigmatic axis because the syntagmatic axis is influenced by the paradigmatic one.

Consider the following example. When individuals wish to make it clear that they would rather take the car instead of the train, they have a number of possibilities, including those in (12):

(12) a. Give me the car any day.
b. Driving is nice.

c. It's great to be behind the wheel.
d. Alive when I drive.

Example (12d) is by far the most poetic. The influence of **equivalence** from the paradigmatic selection axis on the horizontal combination axis is obvious in the first and the last word. In everyday language the equivalence is limited to one position on the combination axis; in (12a) and (12b), another word may be chosen for "car" or "nice". In poetic language, equivalence manifests itself in multiple positions. In the example above, the words "alive" and "drive" are phonologically equivalent because they rhyme. This type of equivalence is called **projection**. Equivalence is obviously not just a question of rhyme. Jakobson also mentions the repeated use of the same grammatical construction and makes special note of the parallelism phenomenon, for example, the repetition of the same syntactic patterns in different lines of poetry. This kind of repetition does not have to be contained in a single text. A sentence can also have a poetic function on the basis of intertextuality, for example, because the structure of that sentence is reminiscent of the structure of a sentence from another kind of discourse. This is the case in the following example taken from a commercial advertisement for sweatshirts.

(13) Quiet type seeks acquaintance with provocative sweatshirt.

The structure of this sentence bears a distinct resemblance to the type of syntax often seen in personal advertisements (also known as "lonely hearts ads"). This form of **parallelism** is, in Jakobson's view, responsible for the poetic character of such a sentence.

Equivalence can thus manifest itself at various linguistic levels in the form of rhyme, meter, lexical repetition or syntactic parallelism. In addition to equivalence, literary language is marked by **deviation** from the norms of everyday language, as realized by unconventional metaphors, ungrammatical syntactic constructions, etc. For instance, in the first line of the famous poem *anyone lived in a pretty how town* (1940) by the American poet E. E. Cummings, the interrogative adverb *how* is used in the slot of an attributive adjective. Hence, this is an obvious case of syntactic deviation. Since both equivalence and deviation make linguistic features stand out against the background of unmarked everyday language, the two terms are summarized under the label of **foregrounding** (Leech, 2008). In other words, equivalent and deviant features are in the textual "foreground", since they are perceived as more prominent by recipients.

Jakobson's statement explains clearly the difference between language with a focus on the encoded message and other types of language use. Insight into this poetic function is important for discourse studies because this function often occurs in nonliterary discourse, for example, in advertising texts, graffiti, flyers and

newspaper headlines. Also stylistic techniques such as pleonasm (e.g., "a round circle"), metaphor or personification (e.g., "the wind howls") cannot be studied adequately without reference to this poetic function.

8.6 Contemporary approaches to stylistics

As the preceding chapters have shown, style as a meaningful choice can principally be analyzed with regard to all kinds of genres. However, the discipline of present-day stylistics is chiefly focused on literary discourse, as indicated by the definition in the introductory survey *Key Terms in Stylistics* (Nørgaard, Busse and Montoro, 2010).

(14) Stylistics is the study of the ways in which meaning is created through language in literature as well as in other types of texts. To this end, stylisticians use linguistic models, theories and frameworks as their analytical tools in order to describe and explain how a text works as it does, and how we come from the words on the page to its meaning.

Other comprehensive handbooks of stylistics (e.g. Burke, 2014; Stockwell and Whiteley, 2014) confirm this interest of stylistics mainly in literary texts. As the handbooks further point out, literature can be viewed from a multitude of linguistic angles. Three of the central linguistic models employed for stylistic research are **corpus linguistics**, **pragmatics** and **cognitive linguistics**. Their main methods and objectives will be outlined in the following. Examples from prose, drama and poetry will be used for the sake of illustration.

8.6.1 Corpus stylistics

Corpus stylistics uses methods of corpus linguistics for the stylistic investigation of literary discourse. Corpus research can contribute tremendously to the esthetic appreciation of stylistic choices, since it provides tools that produce statistics on the basis of large electronic databases, which are called **corpora** (singular *corpus*). In this way, literary texts can be displayed and searched in numerous ways, relying on quantitative principles. Corpus stylistics is located within the broad interdisciplinary area of digital humanities, which applies methods of computing to disciplines of the arts (Mahlberg, 2014).

Quantitative data can support the description of the particular styles of specific works, authors, literary genres or even periods of literary history. A basic starting point is the determination of lexical repetitions in a text, forming the foundation for so-called concordances. A **concordance** is a display format that

presents a selected keyword at the center of a line, accompanied on both sides by its verbal co-text in a selected corpus. With the help of concordances, recurring word combinations can be pointed out and analyzed with respect to their contextual meaning.

For instance, the difference between everyday language and stylistic effects of literary discourse can be illustrated through concordances of the noun *shoulder*. In a corpus of British newspaper language, this noun chiefly occurs in combinations such as the following: the metaphorical *cold shoulder*, the medical condition of a *dislocated shoulder*, the *hard shoulder* of a highway or the meals of a *lamb/pork shoulder*. Such typical and frequent word combinations are called **collocations** (see also Section 6.2). In comparison, a concordance of this noun in Charles Dickens's novel *Nicholas Nickleby* (1839) shows a very different co-textual use. It has been demonstrated that of the forty occurrences of *shoulder* in this novel, sixteen follow two major patterns (Figure 1).

who had been looking anxiously over his	*shoulder,*	'can this really be the case?
he had turned away, and looked over his	*shoulder*	to make this last reply
legs nearest Nicholas, looked over his	*shoulder*	in breathless anxiety. Brother
observed the coachman, looking over his	*shoulder*	at Nicholas with no very
with great alacrity; looking over his	*shoulder*	every instant, to make quite
a blind man; and looking often over his	*shoulder*	while he hurried away
retired; looking stealthily over his	*shoulder*	at Ralph as he limped slowly
this compliment, but looked over Ralph's	*shoulder*	for an instant (he was
friend. Nicholas laid his hand upon his	*shoulder.*	'I can't do it,' said the
said Nicholas, laying his hand upon his	*shoulder:*	'it was the wrong servant
Nicholas, laying his hand upon his	*shoulder;*	'and if I did, I have neither
Charles, laying his hand upon his	*shoulder,*	bade him walk with him
said Nicholas, laying his hand upon his	*shoulder.*	'Be a man; you are nearly one
Nicholas, laying his hand on Newman's	*shoulder.*	'Before I would make an effort
said the old man, laying his hand on the	*shoulder*	of Nicholas, and walking him
that she actually laid her hand upon the	*shoulder*	of the manageress for support

Figure 1. Concordance of the noun *shoulder* in *Nicholas Nickleby* (adapted from Mahlberg, 2014)

As the concordance shows, two very common collocations are *looking/looked over … shoulder* as well as *laid/laying his hand (up)on … shoulder*. The first pattern typically has the function of locating characters in fictional space and creating an atmosphere of suspense, suggesting that dangers might be present behind a

character's back. The second pattern evokes closeness and intimacy between characters, underlining Nicholas Nickleby's social relationship with other fictional individuals. Due to the considerable distance between the individual instances of the noun *shoulder*, it is unlikely that a manual analysis of the novel could discover this phenomenon.

One prominent example of a **corpus tool** on the web is the project *CLiC* ("Corpus Linguistics in Cheshire"), which provides an online platform at the University of Birmingham. The works of Charles Dickens and other 19th-century authors can easily be searched for key terms or collocations on this website (<http://clic.bham.ac.uk/>). For the sake of further corpus compilation, digital versions of literary texts in the form of free e-books can be retrieved from the sites of Project Gutenberg (<http://www.gutenberg.org>) and the Oxford Text Archive (<https://ota.ox.ac.uk/>).

A keyword search can be meaningful not only for the production of concordances but also for a comparison of frequencies of specific lexical fields. For instance, quantitative peculiarities can be found in Joseph Conrad's short novel *Heart of Darkness* (1899) (Stubbs, 2014). In this text, Africa is portrayed as the mysterious Other from a colonial Eurocentric perspective that is exposed as hypocritical and complacent. A keyword search demonstrates that the lexical field of VAGUENESS is strongly represented in the novel, as exemplified by lexemes such as *dark/ly/ness* (52 instances), *shadow/s/y* (21 instances) or *gloom/y* (14 instances). Since the text consists of only about 40,000 words, these quantities are quite significant. Through these lexemes, an obscure and enigmatic quality is attributed to colonial Africa. Arguably, an attentive reader might notice the recurrence of these content words without the assistance of a computer. However, what about high-frequency function words? A corpus search reveals that indefinite pronouns with *some*, which express vagueness as well, are also very common (Table 2).

Table 2. Indefinite pronouns per 1,000 token words (adapted from Stubbs, 2014)

	Heart of Darkness	Fiction	Mixed written texts
some	2.6	1.5	1.5
something	1.3	1.0	0.4
somebody	0.2	0.1	0.05
sometimes	0.6	0.2	0.2
somewhere	0.2	0.2	0.03
somehow	0.2	0.1	0.04

The statistical results of *Heart of Darkness* are compared here with two reference corpora. One consists of prose fiction, while the other contains a variety of written

discourse. The frequencies in Conrad's novel per 1,000 running words are in all cases significantly higher than in the two other corpora. These findings confirm the observation that the characters and the geographical locations in *Heart of Darkness* often remain unspecified, opaque and somewhat elusive. The lowest percentages of indefinite pronouns appear in the corpora of mixed written texts, probably owing to the factual contents of the genres included.

Despite their undisputable usefulness, corpus stylistic methods face several analytical limits. First, corpus searches cannot replace the careful reading of a literary work as a whole, which is necessary to comprehend character and plot developments. Second, a given search word must be sufficiently frequent in a text for a corpus search to yield any significant results. Third, empirical data must always be complemented by a context-related qualitative analysis, since frequencies alone do not enhance esthetic appreciation. Fourth, in order to gain deeper literary insights, it is enlightening to relate text-based statistics to historical and sociocultural information, which is usually not quantifiable.

8.6.2 Pragmatic stylistics

Pragmatics deals with interlocutors' intentions and interpretations of utterances in specific situational contexts, including concepts of communicative cooperation and politeness (see Chapter 2). Many pragmatic approaches can be beneficially instrumentalized for stylistic analyses (Black, 2006). For a start, it is important to realize that literary texts are based on an extended model of communication. On the one hand, there is the fictional world with the individual characters; this is best labeled the **character-to-character level**. On the other hand, there is the **author-to-reader level**, which refers to the production and reception of literature. This distinction has significant consequences for pragmatics, as the context is completely different on the two levels. For instance, by no means does impoliteness between characters imply impoliteness between author and reader. Furthermore, the illocutionary force of utterances by characters does not necessarily coincide with the message conveyed by a literary text to the recipient.

By applying Grice's cooperative principle and the conversational maxims to literary texts (see Section 2.4), the idiosyncratic discursive style of peculiar characters can be unveiled. For instance, in the Sherlock Holmes novels by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, the protagonist's utterances are commonly marked by an exaggerated degree of informativity. Typically, Holmes tends to elaborate extensively on scientific details and forensic inferencing. This excessive verbosity foregrounds the detective as highly intelligent and eccentric in an entertaining way (Lambrou, 2014). Accordingly, the application of the cooperative principle underlines the

fact that language in literature functions as a stylistic characterization device for fictional individuals.

In addition, like specific characters entire subgenres can be pragmatically marked. One case in point is the so-called **Theatre of the Absurd**, as represented by writers such as Samuel Beckett or Tom Stoppard. The subversive intention behind the dialogues here closely corresponds with a non-observance of the cooperative principle and conversational maxims among the different characters (Lambrou, 2014). See the short extract from Stoppard's play *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* (1966), which turns two minor characters from Shakespeare's *Hamlet* into protagonists (Example 15).

(15) ROSENCRANTZ. What's the matter with you today?
GUILDENSTERN. When?
ROSENCRANTZ. What?
GUILDENSTERN. Are you deaf?
ROSENCRANTZ. Am I dead?
GUILDENSTERN. Yes or no?
ROSENCRANTZ. Is there a choice?
GUILDENSTERN. Is there a God?

The two characters here obviously behave in an uncooperative way. For instance, questions are continuously answered with counterquestions. This coincides with rapid topic change and disrupted coherence. While such an interaction seems uncooperative at the character-to-character level, the theater audience and readers will search for an interpretation that makes the text appear cooperative at the author-recipient plane. For instance, such seemingly absurd dialogues could be read as a comment on miscommunication between human beings or on the vanity of human existence.

In order to determine social and emotional relations between literary characters, it is furthermore useful to include tools of conversation analysis (Chapter 9), speech act theory (Section 2.3), politeness theory (Section 2.6) and discourse topic analysis (Section 5.6). For instance, the distribution of illocutionary forces such as promises, threats or orders among individuals can be revealing with respect to power relations. Moreover, interpersonal conflicts can be deduced from the fact that felicity conditions are not fulfilled or that perlocutionary effects are not achieved in dialogues. On this basis, it is possible to formulate a number of key questions which can be employed to highlight the interpersonal relationship between characters (Figure 2).

a. *Turn-taking patterns*	Who has the most turns?
	Who speaks the most words?
	Who initiates and who responds?
	Who interrupts whom?
	What address terms are used?
	Who allocates turns to whom?
	Are there dispreferred second pair parts?
b. *Speech act patterns*	What speech acts are used by the different characters?
	Are any of the speech acts ambiguous?
	Are any of the speech acts indirect?
	Are all felicity conditions fulfilled?
	Do the intended perlocutionary effects of the speech acts succeed?
c. *Politeness patterns*	Are the characters' politeness behaviors reciprocal?
	In what ways, if any, are face threatening acts mitigated?
	Are there any examples of impoliteness?
d. *Discourse topic*	Who controls the topic of talk?

Figure 2. Key questions for the analysis of literary dialogue (adapted from Short, 2014)

Usually, an individual who is more powerful or higher in the social hierarchy is marked by more frequent and longer conversational turns. In addition, such characters typically initiate conversations, control topics, interrupt others more often, allocate turns, employ fewer politeness strategies and use non-deferential address forms (Short, 1996). Such categories are applicable to all forms of **literary dialogue**. Obviously, they are particularly relevant to the dialogic genre of drama. The usefulness of the key questions can thus be elucidated through their application to a dramatic extract, such as the beginning of George Bernard Shaw's play *Major Barbara* (1905) (Example 16).

(16) [*Context: Lady Britomart, a woman of about fifty, is writing at her desk in a rather grand room. Her son, Stephen, a young man, comes in.*]

STEPHEN. What's the matter?

LADY B. Presently, Stephen. (*Stephen walks submissively to the settee and sits down. He takes up a Liberal weekly called* The Speaker.)

LADY B. Don't begin to read, Stephen. I shall require all your attention.

STEPHEN. It was only while I was waiting ––

LADY B. Don't make excuses, Stephen. (*He puts down* The Speaker.) Now! (*She finishes her writing; rises; and comes to the settee.*) I have not kept you waiting very long, I think.

STEPHEN. Not at all, mother.

LADY B. Bring me my cushion. (*He takes the cushion from the chair at the desk and arranges it for her as she sits down on the settee.*) Sit down. (*He sits down and fingers his tie nervously.*) Don't fiddle with your tie, Stephen: there is nothing the matter with it.

STEPHEN. I beg your pardon.

In this dialogue, the audience can infer from the characters' discursive behavior that Lady Britomart is a very dominant mother, while Stephen is her obedient and deferential son. She initiates individual exchanges and brusquely interrupts and silences her son, whose turns mainly have a responsive function. She speaks more words and allocates turns to him in accordance with her own time schedule. As is usual in parent-child discourse, he addresses her as *mother*, while she uses his first name. In terms of illocutions, Lady Britomart mainly employs direct orders, typically realized as imperative clauses. The perlocutionary effects are mostly successful, as Stephen complies with her commands. The mother's face threatening acts are not mitigated, whereas Stephen uses polite speech acts such as excuses and utilizes downtoning mitigation devices (e.g. "only", "not at all"). Lady Britomart has complete control over the topic, as she keeps her son waiting for the opening of the envisaged conversation. As far as stage directions are concerned, it should be noted that they exclusively address recipients at the author-reader level of dramatic communication.

In recent years, pragmatic stylistics has been expanded to include **postcolonial literature** as well (Schubert and Volkmann, 2016). Due to interferences between native languages and English in postcolonial societies, Western discursive conventions have undergone processes of cultural adaptation (see Section 15.6). Since English functions as a lingua franca and second language in many countries of Africa, Asia and the Caribbean, local literary texts also reflect new pragmatic patterns of interaction. For instance, owing to multilingualism in postcolonial countries, code-switching between English and indigenous languages is a common phenomenon. In case one participant is not familiar with one of the languages used, code-switching can be regarded as a form of non-cooperation that may aim at linguistic exclusion.

Furthermore, due to a strong sense of community in numerous African societies, polite behavior is geared not only towards individuals but also towards the "collective face" of social, religious, or ethnic groups. As a consequence, individual members of a community feel responsible for keeping any face damage from their group. For instance, consider the following extract from the play *The Gods are not to Blame* (1968) by Nigerian author Ola Rotimi (Anchimbe and Janney, 2017). Here the protagonist, King Odewale, explains to his brother Aderopo that he killed

a man in order to defend the honor and thus the collective face of his tribe (see italicization).

(17) ADEROPO. It is nothing, your highness … It is the way the gods meant it to happen.
ODEWALE. Do not blame the gods. Let no one blame the powers. My people, learn from my fall. The powers would have failed if I did not let them use me. They knew my weakness: the weakness of *a man easily moved to the defense of his tribe*. I once slew a man in Ede. I could have spared him. *But he spat on the tribe I thought was my tribe*. The man laughed, and laughing he called me *a 'man from the bush tribe of Ijekun'*. And I lost my reason.

The tribe's collective positive face was damaged by the insult "man from the bush tribe of Ijekun". As Odewale's narrative demonstrates, the members of a tribe are expected to defend the integrity of their community. Hence, discursive strategies in literary works may not only illustrate practices of intercultural communication but also comment on the construction of ethnic or national identities.

8.6.3 Cognitive Poetics

Since cognitive-linguistic approaches to literary texts greatly increased in the 1990s, a **"cognitive turn"** in stylistics was diagnosed (Stockwell, 2002). The discipline of cognitive poetics investigates mental processes in the production and reception of literary texts (see also Chapter 13), taking into account the esthetic effects of linguistic patterns (Freeman, 2014). One salient cognitive-linguistic approach is **conceptual metaphor theory (CMT)**, which considers metaphor as a tool to perceive and make sense of reality. Along these lines, a new impulse to the long literary and stylistic research tradition in metaphors was given when George Lakoff and Mark Johnson published their seminal study *Metaphors We Live By* (1980). They demonstrated that much of what we call literal or non-metaphorical language is in fact metaphorical. They did not mean the so-called dead or petrified metaphors in isolated cases, like *the leg of a table*, but the hidden ones that are still alive, the metaphors we live by, such as the following ones:

(18) It is easy to punch holes in his arguments.

(19) That cost me a lot of time.

(20) The refrigerator is acting up again.

(21) He's not hitting on all eight cylinders.

Since criticism of an argument is often seen as being destructive to the argument, the expression "punch holes" in (18) can be seen as an ARGUMENT IS WAR metaphor. As time is often viewed as an economic factor, the TIME IS MONEY metaphor is not illogical in (19). Assigning human traits to machines is also not uncommon; (20) is a personification. Nor is it strange for humans to be described in terms from the world of machines as in (21), which exemplifies the MAN IS A MACHINE metaphor.

Lakoff and Johnson viewed a metaphor as a cognitive device for understanding one kind of thing or experience in terms of another. We need such a device because we have concepts that are not grounded in experience, say "abstract concepts", about which we want to communicate. Therefore, our imaginative capacity projects or maps one (mostly concrete) domain, e.g., "money", onto a more abstract domain, e.g., "time", so that the second domain is understood in terms of elements from the first one. The **donor domain**, the **source**, functions as a vehicle that transfers elements of meaning to the **target**, the **recipient domain**, also called the tenor. Below are some examples with the target domain "idea" and different source domains (in brackets) to communicate about ideas:

(22) 1. That idea has been fermenting for years. (FOOD)
2. His ideas will live on forever. (PEOPLE)
3. His ideas have finally come to fruition. (PLANT)
4. We're really turning out new ideas. (PRODUCT)
5. That idea just won't sell. (COMMODITY)
6. He ran out of ideas. (RESOURCE)
7. That's an incisive idea. (CUTTING INSTRUMENT)

This cognitive approach to metaphors has received much attention because it gives more than the precise propositional approach in understanding what the "literal reality" is; it also provides a method for studying our less clear imaginative mechanisms. How should this mapping from one domain onto another be understood? To what extent must these different domains have something in common? Which roles do these mappings play in communication? In the following, an example of research on non-literary discourse will be given, followed by an analysis of poetry.

A good example of the omnipresence of metaphors in our communication is provided by Ponterotto (2003). In this study the focus is on how participants in a conversation that seems to consist of incoherent and incomplete segments succeed in making themselves understood. Why is there no conversation clash? One of the keys in an answer to this question can be the use of metaphors. Below is a fragment from a conversation between two friends about intimate relationships. Try to find the metaphorical expressions in this text taken from Ponterotto (2003).

(23)

B: And Mhmm, I don't know … even though we had a big relationship I can't see the sense of getting married.
A: Oh!
B: Sometimes you go through life and you're really serious about someone but … you just don't keep going and you have things to do.
A: Six months ago … I met him, six months later … he moved to Australia and a month, two months later he got accepted to university.
B: Yeah!
A: So he took off thinking "Yeah we see each other in six months back in a month for another [two months"]
B: [Yeah.]
A: so I said, "OK, I'll see you in a couple of months." So three times … it happened, that separation
B: Mmmm.
A: and it's the fourth time in a month.
B: It's just so hard to maintain a [long distance]
A: [Six months ago he used to talk about it]
B: relationship. Yeah, it's very very difficult.
A: Mhmmm, when you can't work things out but six months ago we used to talk about marriage.
B: Yeah.
A: It was really serious, but now it's like, mhmm, weaving out of it. But it's easier to hang on rather than let go … and that's why I came here …

In her analysis, as shown in Table 3 below, Ponterotto points out nine metaphors. Ponterotto argues that speakers A and B together construct the thematic structure of the text: they negotiate the metaphorical overlap. Speaker B moves from UNDERSTANDING IS SEEING to LIFE IS A JOURNEY to LOVE IS A JOURNEY and finally to LOVE IS HARD WORK, which is then picked up by speaker A, who repeats LOVE IS HARD WORK, subsequently implying that as a result LOVE IS A COLLABORATIVE WORK OF ART, which then triggers the concept of danger: LOVE IS A PRECIPICE.

Table 3. The nine metaphors in Example (23)

	Conversation fragment	Metaphor	Speaker
1.	I don't *see the sense* of getting married.	UNDERSTANDING IS SEEING.	B
2.	Even though we had *a big relationship*.	SIGNIFICANT IS BIG.	B
3.	Sometimes you *go through life*.	LIFE IS A JOURNEY.	B
4.	You just don't *keep going*.	LOVE IS A JOURNEY.	B
5.	*It's so hard*.	LOVE IS HARD WORK.	A, B
6.	To maintain *a long distance relationship*.	LOVE IS CLOSENESS.	B
7.	You can't *work things out*.	LOVE IS WORK.	B
8.	Now it's sort of like, mhmm, *weaving out of it*.	LOVE IS A COLLABORATIVE WORK OF ART (knitting or quilt making).	A
9.	But it's easier *to hang on* than *to let go*.	LOVE IS A PRECIPICE.	A

The conceptual representations of both speakers meet at the point LOVE IS HARD WORK, which becomes the negotiated agreement of the problem announced at the beginning of the conversation. This cognitive metaphor seems to bind the conceptual perspectives of both speakers. According to Ponterotto the metaphor thus plays a role in the planning, execution and monitoring of discourse production. On the one hand, it holds everything in place, on the other, it permits constant re-elaboration.

Although conceptual metaphors frequently occur in everyday language, they appear in particularly condensed, unconventional and original ways in poetry. This becomes most obvious in the cultural movement of **Surrealism**, which radically undermined rational and realistic representation of experience, partly as a reaction to World War I. An early example is the poem "And the Seventh Dream is the Dream of Isis" (1933) by the English poet David Gascoyne (Stockwell, 2002). A mere extract of this poem already reveals unorthodox verbal imagery (Example 24).

(24) there is an explosion of geraniums in the ballroom of the hotel
there is an extremely unpleasant odour of decaying meat
arising from the depetalled flower growing out of her ear
her arms are like pieces of sandpaper
or wings of leprous birds in taxis
and when she sings her hair stands on end
and lights itself with a million little lamps like glowworms

Basically, the poem comprises a collage of images which show a relatively low degree of coherence. The text is thus similar to a painting by the Spanish surrealist Salvador Dalí. The "explosion" as a source domain is mapped onto the target domain of a striking colorful impression, so that it constitutes the conceptual metaphor SEEING IS BEING HIT. However, several other images, such as malodorous flowers growing from an unnamed woman's ear, diseased birds in taxis or hair lit by tiny lamps, do not match readers' ordinary **mental models** based on their world knowledge (see Section 13.3). Since in these cases metaphorical mappings are quite difficult to construct from the perspective of real-world experience, the poem frames an alternative world that must be conceptualized as irrational. In this way, the text represents central ideas of surrealist ideology, which considers reality illogical and incoherent.

Another important cognitive approach that deals with the construction of textual coherence is **schema theory**. Readers have a certain amount of world knowledge on everyday situations that is stored in long-term memory in the form of cognitive schemata (e.g. riding on a bus, celebrating a birthday party, etc.) (see Section 13.2). Schemata are configurations of knowledge that are acquired through

experience and can be dynamically adjusted during a person's life-time. They are commonly used to fill in gaps of unexpressed meaning in literature during the interpretive process (Emmott, Alexander and Marszalek, 2014). If schemata include common social roles and corresponding activities, they form a mental script (see Section 13.3). For instance, if the characters in a novel go out for dinner, the text does not need to spell out all the tedious details of the whole process, since readers are familiar with the so-called restaurant script. Schematic knowledge also plays a decisive role in the following passage, taken from Audrey Niffenegger's novel *The Time Traveler's Wife* (2003). Here a woman makes observations in the bathroom of a man she was recently intimate with (Example 25).

(25) And then I notice that there are two toothbrushes in the white porcelain toothbrush holder. I open the medicine cabinet. Razors, shaving cream, Listerine, Tylenol, aftershave, a blue marble, a toothpick, deodorant on the top shelf. Hand lotion, tampons, a diaphragm case, deodorant, lipstick, a bottle of multivitamins, a tube of spermicide on the bottom shelf. The lipstick is a very dark red. I stand there, holding the lipstick. I feel a little sick. I wonder what she looks like, what her name is. I wonder how long they've been going out.

The first-person narrative perspective here evokes a character-bound focalizer (see Section 7.5). In this way, the reader directly experiences the inference processes of the character. The schema under discussion is a man's medicine cabinet, established by typical items such as "shaving cream" and "aftershave". However, readers who are aware of the typical slots that constitute this schema will notice that several other items, such as "tampons" and "lipstick", are not typical props of the schema. Hence, through the eyes of the character, readers will jump to the conclusion that the man meets, or at least met, another woman. Correspondingly, the pronouns "she", "her" and "they" presuppose the existence of this other lover. Readers can only comprehend the character's emotional response ("a little sick") if they make the same inferences.

Alternatively, literary texts have the ability to construct schemata of their own. For instance, science fiction novels commonly develop schematized knowledge that includes alien intruders, space battles or time travel, as in Herbert G. Wells's novel *The Time Machine* (1895) (Stockwell, 2002). As a result, everyday schemata can be transformed, and readers will adapt their conceptions and inferencing strategies accordingly. Literature may thus cause **schema refreshment**, whenever it revises and rearranges existing schemata of, for instance, future public transportation or intercultural encounters. Literature therefore differs from many non-literary genres such as advertisements, which typically have the function of

schema reinforcement, as they confirm existing assumptions through the use of social stereotypes or other commonplace notions.

As is well known, successful literary texts strongly depend on credible fictional characters. But how does **characterization** work? In general, readers' interpretation of characters is based on the combination of two types of inferential procedures (Culpeper, 2001). On the one hand, the text itself provides **bottom-up** cues in the words of the narrator or the fictional individuals. On the other hand, the characterization process strongly depends on **top-down** inferencing, based on the readers' previous schematic knowledge (McIntyre, 2014). This includes stereotyped and culture-dependent conceptions of social roles that are fulfilled, for instance, by ethnic or professional groups. Once again, Sherlock Holmes can serve as an adequate example (see Section 8.6.2). This famous character is shaped both by his deviant, overly meticulous verbal behavior and by stereotypes of quirky and sharp-witted private investigators potentially entertained by readers. Accordingly, the collaboration of textual cues and stored knowledge leads to a multi-faceted and dynamic characterization that is continually updated during the reception process.

8.7 Summary

Stylistics is the investigation of motivated textual choices by text producers and their contextual effects on recipients. It has its origins in classical Greek and Latin rhetoric, which is traditionally defined as the art of effective public speaking for persuasive purposes. As a result, there is a normative tradition of style manuals which address a wide audience of non-linguists rather than an academic readership. In contrast to this prescriptive agenda, linguistic stylistics adopts a purely descriptive approach that objectively examines the use and functions of orthographic, syntactic, lexical and discursive devices. While the normative approach is mainly interested in the production of non-fictional genres, contemporary stylistics chiefly examines the literary language of drama, poetry and prose.

The language of literature can be described with regard to Jakobson's poetic function of communication, based on the principles of equivalence and deviation. For a comprehensive discussion of literature, stylisticians apply a wide range of theories and methods to fictional texts. In this chapter, three of them were briefly introduced. Corpus stylistics is a computer-assisted research method that deals with large amounts of data and produces quantitative results that might remain unnoticed in a manual analysis. Pragmatic stylistics is a subdiscipline that examines literary discourse with the help of pragmalinguistic approaches such as the cooperative principle, speech act theory or politeness theory. Cognitive poetics is concerned with mental processes during the production and reception of

literature. Salient research fields are conceptual metaphor theory, schema theory and inferencing strategies in characterization. As regards current trends and possible future topics in stylistics (Burke, 2014), underresearched areas are reader response studies as well as the style of comics, film, non-linear interactive hypertext fiction and further multimodal genres in new digital media.

Questions and assignments

Questions

8.2.1 Which of Grice's maxims (see Section 2.4) are of particular importance to stylistic research? What other maxims could be formulated from a stylistic perspective?

8.2.2 Which factors from the *speaking* model (see Section 3.5) are of importance in the following types of language?

emotional style, formal style, legalese, officialese, persuasive language, social workers' jargon, stock exchange language.

8.3.1 Describe, using parameters P and D from politeness theory (see Section 2.6), when which of the utterances (4a) and (4b) would be appropriate.

8.3.2 If style can be seen as a variation in form of approximately the same content, what in (4e) and (4f) in Section 8.3 is that same content?

8.4.1 Metaphoric language is usually not suitable for providing precise descriptions. Consider the term *text grammar*, which is often used in discourse studies. Explain why this term is a metaphor, and try to point out why it is deceptive in this case.

8.4.2 What is the type-token ratio of the first three sentences of this chapter?

8.5.1 Using Jakobson's statement, explain the poetic function of "Life is a disaster in spite of your master's" (read on a banner during a students' protest).

8.6.1 A search of the *British National Corpus* shows that typical collocations with the noun *priest* are (in descending order of frequency) *lecherous*, *maxi*, *ordained*, *nun*, *deacon*, *Jesuit*, *celibate*, *fr* [i.e. Father], *atonement* and *parish* (Jeffries and McIntyre, 2010). In which way can this information be significant for the interpretation of the following poem by the British poet Roger McGough from the year 1967?

Vinegar
Sometimes
i feel like a priest
in a fish & chips queue
quietly thinking
as the vinegar runs through
how nice it would be
to buy supper for two

8.6.2 Apply the key questions for the analysis of literary dialogue (see Figure 2 in Section 8.6.2) to the following extract of George Bernard Shaw's play *Pygmalion* (1913). In this scene, the phonetics professor Higgins, supported by his colleague Colonel Pickering, teaches the Cockney flower girl Eliza Doolittle the pronunciation of the British upper class.

HIGGINS. Say your alphabet.
LIZA. I know my alphabet. Do you think I know nothing? I don't need to be taught like a child.

HIGGINS. (*thundering*) Say your alphabet!
PICKERING. Say it, Miss Doolittle. You will understand presently. Do what he tells you; and let him teach you in his own way.
LIZA. Oh well, if you put it like that – Ahyee, bayee, cayee, dayee –
HIGGINS. (*with the roar of a wounded lion*.) Stop. Listen to this, Pickering. This is what we pay for as elementary education. This unfortunate animal has been locked up for nine years in school at our expense to teach her to speak the language of Shakespeare and Milton. And the result is Ahyee, bayee, cayee, dayee. (*to Eliza*.) Say A, B, C, D.
LIZA. (*almost in tears*). But I'm saying it. Ahyee, bayee, cayee –
HIGGINS. Stop! Say a cup of tea.
LIZA. A cappata-ee.

8.6.3 Explain whether or not the term *metaphor* is a metaphor.

8.6.4 Prove that in a metaphor such as "time is money" not everything is projected or mapped from one domain onto the other.

8.6.5 Below is a fragment of conversation from the movie *Scent of a Woman* as cited in Ponterotto (2003). Name the italicized metaphors.

GEORGE: What did he say?
CHARLES: Nothing.
GEORGE: What do you mean … nothing?
CHARLES: He said the same things he said to both of us, only he said them over to me.
GEORGE: You know what he's doing? He's *good cop-bad copping us.* He knows I'm *old guard* and you're *fringe*. He's going to *bear down on me* and he's going to *soft soap you*. Did he soft soap you, did he?
CHARLES: No.
GEORGE: Chas, I detect a slight *panic pulse* from you. Are you panicking?
CHARLES: Yeah, a little.
GEORGE: Come on, you're on scholarship, right?
CHARLES: Yeah.
GEORGE: You're on scholarship from Oregon at Baird. You're a long way from home, Chas.
CHARLES: What has that got to do with me being on scholarship?
GEORGE: I don't know how it works out there. But how it works here … we *stick together*. It's us against them, no matter what. We don't *cover our ass*. We don't tell our parents. *Stonewall everybody*. And above all … never … never … never … *leave* any of us *twisting in the wind* … And that's it.

Assignments

8.2.1 In Section 8.2 it is argued that free variation in language has a function (Humboldt's principle). Compare this with free variation in nature, which has no function (the form and color of the human eye or the form of one type of tree). Try to formulate arguments against Humboldt's principle, one outside linguistics (e.g., free variation in nature) and one within linguistics (e.g., by looking at homonyms and synonyms).

8.3.1 Collect a few definitions of the concept of style, describe the differences and try to categorize them according to the three approaches to style mentioned in this section.

8.4.1 Form a group with some fellow students. All members are to provide a text they have written themselves. Provide normative as well as objective stylistic criticism of each other's texts.

8.5.1 Take an advertisement text and try to analyze which stylistic or literary techniques (such as pleonasm, metaphor and personification) were used in writing this text.

8.6.1 Analyze a sports report in the light of the metaphor "all game is war game".

8.6.2 Pick a science fiction novel and identify plot elements that cause schema reinforcement or schema refreshment.

Bibliographical information

8.2 Stylistics has a rich history, particularly in the fields of rhetoric and literary theory. Aristotle mentions the two style requirements of *appropriateness* and *unaccustomedness* in Book 3, Chapter 1. Quintilianus mentions the style virtues in books 8 and 11 of his work *The Orator's Education*. A good and accessible publication on these and other classical rhetoric works is that by Kennedy (1994). Lanham (1991) is handy for a first introduction to rhetoric.
It is only in later interpretations of von Humboldt's (1836) work that he is credited with having introduced a principle. Von Humboldt himself, however, never spoke of a principle. The examples of the Queneau (1947/1981) story variations are translations by Barbara Wright.
The term *register* was introduced by Reid (1956) and later popularized by systemic functional linguistics (Halliday, 1978). Central figures in contemporary register research are Biber and Conrad (2001). For further research into the related terms of register, genre and style see the textbook by Biber and Conrad (2009). A good starting point for further study of register is Ghadessy (1993). Urszula Clark (1996) provides a practical introduction to stylistic analysis with exercise material and good explanations requiring no prior knowledge of the necessary grammatical terminology. For current trends in register research see the essay collection by Schubert and Sanchez-Stockhammer (2016).

8.3 A good English-language survey concerning definition problems is provided in Enkvist (1973). Key terms in stylistics are defined by Nørgaard, Busse and Montoro (2010). For an outline of approaches to stylistics see the essay collection by McIntyre and Busse (2010) as well as the handbook by Sotirova (2016).

8.4 Table 1 is inspired by overviews in the publication by McMenamin (2002), which is a good introduction to stylistic analysis from a forensic perspective. Another recommendable starting point for style analysis is the classic introduction by Crystal and Davy (1969). See also the more recent textbook by Jeffries and McIntyre (2010).

8.5 A detailed discussion of literary language from a linguistic perspective is provided by Leech (2008). The interface of literary criticism and linguistics is investigated by König and Pfister (2017).

8.6 Weber (1996) gives a good overview of the field of stylistics in the last four decades of the last century, also touching upon developments in critical and cognitive stylistics. A book-length corpus study of Dickens's prose fiction is provided by Mahlberg (2013). For a commented list of easily accessible online corpus tools and practical recommendations in the field of corpus stylistics see Mahlberg (2014). Several case studies in the area of pragmatic literary stylistics can be found in Chapman and Clark (2014).
For more research on cognitive poetics see Semino and Culpeper (2002) as well as Brône and Vandaele (2009). Since the concept of metaphor is one of the most studied subjects, a vast quantity of literature is available. A very stimulating publication in this respect is still Lakoff and Johnson (1980). A fine overview of research on metaphors is provided by Ortony (1993). There is also more social-psychological research into metaphors and their persuasive effects. A good overview of the research in the past decades is given by Barcelona (2003). For studies on figurative language in general consult Dancygier and Sweetser (2014).
Current reader response research uses experimental methods to examine the actual cognitive reception of literary works by real readers (Canning and Whiteley, 2017).