

1 Introduction

The fact that every time we decide to use language to interact with the world we are confronted with enormous possibilities of choice (the very decision to use language as a specific human way of interacting with the environment is itself a matter of choice) is supported by our intuition. The nature of this choice-making process, however, lies mostly beyond our intuition. The awareness of the possibilities of selection from alternative options and reflection on them began in the ancient rhetorical tradition of influencing audiences by eloquent speakers; rhetoric as the study of the effective use of language, along with poetics and the art of dialogue, offered a guise for the types of stylistic investigations as they are developed today. The concept of style (Lat. *stilus* denoted a pointed tool for inscribing wax tablets) has gone through various transformations over the centuries; it was only Charles Bally who gave an impetus to the rise of the systematic study of style by the publication of his work on French stylistics in 1909. By pointing out that linguistic stylistic resources form a system, Bally is said to have established stylistics as a separate linguistic discipline (stylistics then can be viewed as a field of research with a long tradition but a relatively recent 'disciplinehood'). The developments in stylistics in the past century have been marked most notably by the rise of structuralism, the separation of linguistic stylistics from literary stylistics, broadening the scope of enquiry by including non-literary texts (incl. the language of conversation in the most recent approaches) and the appearance of diverse approaches within stylistics resulting in the rise of a number of sub-branches.