

2 Style and the Scope of Stylistics

The concept of style has a wide currency since it is applied to various spheres of human activity characteristic of an individual (*to have a personal style*), a distinct personality (*the style of Hemingway*), periods (*the baroque style*), individual tone adopted in conversation (*a patronizing style*), mode of tradition (*to live in style*), living, fashion, etc. Generally speaking, possibilities of selection from inventories of largely 'synonymous' choices enable particular ways (i.e., 'styles') of their arrangement. In verbal communication, these inventories are represented not only by the systems of linguistic (viz. phonological, morphological, lexical and syntactic, i.e., the 'classical' inventory of *microstylistics*), paralinguistic (viz. graphological and suprasegmental features, including paralanguage) and non-linguistic choices (e.g., background music, the quality of printing paper), but also by thematic, textual (*macrostylistic*, e.g., cohesion) and macro-compositional (e.g., genre) features, including types of speech act, the type of code, etc. Their relevance for the stylistic enquiry lies in their significance (or, more accurately, in their appropriateness) in relation to the intended function of discourse (the sense of stylistic appropriateness or suitability can be seen as a part of communicative competence, cf. Richards et al., 1985). Style as a situationally distinctive use of language (Crystal 1987) then can be seen as an agent integrating all 'style-making' (pragmatic) means and acting as a unifying principle of text construction which pervades all textual levels and which performs, besides this integrating function, also aesthetic, semantic and characterizing functions (cf. Hausenblas 1987, Macurová 1993, Čermák 2001, Vachek 1974).

The majority of approaches to style agree upon the central concepts of *selection* and *composition* (or, using the Classical rhetoric terms, *elocutio* and *dispositio*) as being present in every communicative behaviour. However, the scope and the nature of resources (i.e., paradigmatic choices) and their arrangement (i.e., syntagmatic choices) have been the matter of many discussions. Earlier approaches saw style as a result of something being added to or of something deviating from an ordinary use of language (also called *foregrounding*, e.g., the use of figures of speech, tropes, archaisms as means of ornamentation), or as a result of an individual will (the individualist theory); some approaches even abolished the concept of style altogether (the organic theory) (cf. Barnouw et al. 1989). The rise and the development of linguistics impressionism gave way to positivist approaches which adopted methods of linguistics and other sciences, e.g., statistics for the purpose of authorship identification (*stylostatistics*, *forensic linguistics*, *quantitative stylistics*), computer science (*corpora-based stylistics*), etc. In the English-speaking world, stylistics has mostly been associated with analyses of literary works (*literary stylistics*) and has been close to literary theory and criticism (cf. Widdowson 1992, Hoffmannová 1993, Miššiková 1999), or with approaches differentiating 'good' from 'bad' style (*evaluative stylistics*) and offering instructions on 'clear, elegant, effective and sophisticated' use of (esp. written) language (e.g., Macpherson 1997; note also the existence of various stylesheets, stylebooks and manuals of style, as well as of writing courses and writing centres at American universities, cf. Knoblauch and Brannon 1984, Harris 1986). In the most recent decades, stylistic explorations have been developing in the framework of functional linguistics and sociolinguistics (*sociostylistics*), linguistic pragmatics (*pragmatic stylistics*), discourse analysis (*discourse stylistics*), critical discourse analysis (*radical stylistics*), cognitive science (*cognitive stylistics*, *processing stylistics*), etc. (cf. Hoffmannová 1993).

The very nature of style and the problem of its definition and characterization has stirred much discussion and uncertainty; in fact, this situation parallels a similar problem of offering all-embracing and universally accepted definitions of other basic linguistic units (e.g., word or

sentence). From among several hundred existing definitions of style we may adduce here only a few. Style is seen as “any particular and somewhat distinctive way of using language“ (Trask 1997:210), “a system of interrelated language means which serves a definite aim in communication“ (Galperin 1977:33), “projev možnosti variace v komunikaci“ (Čermák 2001:46), “typový n. individuální způsob organizace textu a volby lexémů a gramatických prostředků z alternativních, především široce synonymních, resp. ekvivalentních“ (Čermák 2001:286), “individual, unifying character found to be present in any work resulting from intentional activity“ (V. Mathesius, cited in Vachek 1974:114), “spôsob prejavu, ktorý vzniká cieľavedomým výberom, zákonitým usporiadaním a využitím jazykových a mimojazykových prostriedkov so zreteľom na tematiku, situáciu, funkciu, autorov zámer a na obsahové zložky prejavu (Mistrík 1997:30).

The width of the definition of style delimits the area of operation of stylistics justifying thus its *raison d'être* in relation to other competing approaches (esp. text linguistics and pragmatics). In a narrower sense, style can be seen as a conscious or unconscious selection from existing optional language features (*linguostylistics*); obligatory structures of language, such as most of the segmental phonology, the mutation plural, the fixed sequence of auxiliary verbs within complex verb phrases, offer, however, few or no stylistic options at all. It has been suggested that stylistics, employing the concepts and procedures of linguistics in studying the language of (esp. non-literary) texts, may form a separate linguistic stratum with a basic unit of *styleme*. Stylistics, however, parallels the 'basic' strata in that it draws on their resources; in fact, almost all expressive means of individual linguistic planes can potentially become stylemes. In the wider understanding of the scope of stylistics, which counts on the function of style as an integrator of elements functioning at every level of text structure, stylistics touches upon various other approaches concerned with particular aspects of text. The following subchapters present an overview of those areas of research and attempt to pinpoint their relevance for stylistics, while focusing primarily on the linguistic stylistic resources as these are of main interest for a student of style with a philological background. Since any use of language is an act of communication, we consider it necessary to begin with the theory of verbal communication. This procedure also corresponds with the functional approach to the investigation of style (i.e., the structure of text is motivated by the function it is to perform, cf. Dolník and Bajzíkóvá 1998) which we are trying to implement here.