

## 12 Psycholinguistics and Stylistics

Psycholinguistics studies the mental processes and representations involved in language production and interpretation, esp. the types of knowledge, e.g., factual (encyclopedic), linguistic (linguistic competence), pragmatic (incl. the 'rules of speaking') and intertextual. It appears that there is also a kind of 'stylistic' knowledge (or competence which forms a part of the communicative competence), i.e., recognition of a text as an instance of its type and awareness of the (in)acceptability of the particular configurations of chosen elements (cf. Dolník and Bajžíková 1998).

Of relevance for stylistics are the ways this knowledge is organized in the form of mental structures called *scripts* (in various theories also termed *frames*, *macrostructures*, *schemata*, *scenarios*, *story-grammars*, *mental models*, etc.) as well as the ways these scripts are activated in communication. Scripts as types of mental templates help create certain expectations about the nature of stereotypic events (see, e.g., Ferenčík (1993) for the ways readers activate various scripts while interpreting a text referring to the procedure of doing laundry in a coin-operated laundromat) and 'force' interpreters to understand events in a conventional way. For example, the 'shopping in the supermarket' script will consist of a *goal* (obtain food), *actors* (customers, checkout clerks, etc.), their *roles* and participation (verbal and non-verbal: *Can I help you?* or *May I have...?*), *props* (carts, goods on display, scales, etc.) and *actions* (go, select, weigh, pay, etc.). Scripts are not fixed once and for all - once acquired they are tested, refined, amended or discarded. Also, they offer considerable flexibility for the development of personal 'styles' which are determined by the personality type, the state of the development of mental processes (abstraction, generalisation, categorisation, inference), personal preferences, the amount and variety of acquired experience stepping into interpretation as background knowledge, etc.

Due to their stereotypical nature, many scripts involve formulaic language with relatively little possibility of variation, e.g., openings of service encounters (*Can I help you? How can I help you? What seems to be the trouble?*). Signalling the opening of a narrative is conventionally enhanced via *Did I ever tell you about?* which, upon listener's expected (and preferred) go-ahead *No. What was that about?* grants a narrator the right to hold the floor as long as s/he deems necessary to complete a story (for the individual stages of story forming the 'story script' see Narration, 6.3.1). Descriptive passages tend to have templates as their blueprints (e.g., describing an apartment, one tends to begin at the entrance door rather than on the balcony). In telling funny stories or joking, humorous effect is often achieved by flouting the expected template; parodies are based on imitating the stereotypic situations and associated language (as is also the theatre of the absurd).

In fact, speech events and speech acts are based on various scripts, and any departures from these can result in these acts being carried out infelicitously (improperly). For example, if a marriage ceremony is to be felicitous, besides required actors and props, the prescribed formula (including the performative verb *pronounce*) must be uttered: *I now pronounce you man and wife.*

It appears that psychological processes associated with text production and processing have important stylistic implications.