

CONCERNING THE SCOPE AND ASPECTS OF LINGUISTIC STYLISTICS

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With the rapid growth of interest in linguostylistics¹ in recent years, some crucial problems (i. e. the object, the boundaries, and the character of linguostylistics, etc.) have been discussed in numerous publications².

One thing is certain that the object of linguostylistic research should necessarily embrace regularities, peculiarities and potential valency of the effectiveness of a linguistic sign in usage. The conception of linguostylistics as related to other linguistic disciplines (even resting on the latter), and to the theory of literature, seems to be generally accepted³. The idea that linguostylistics is a very inclusive science and, in many cases, the interdisciplinary value of linguostylistic research leave no doubts either⁴.

The character of linguostylistics, i. e. whether it is an analytico-descriptive or a prescriptive discipline⁵ seems to cause discussions, and the solution of the question is hindered by a misleading preconception that every linguistic science ought to be concerned with only one aspect of the linguistic sign, and also by a point of view adopted to suit the aims of a theorist.

Viewed both theoretically and practically, linguostylistics is no more descriptive than a prescriptive science. In as much as linguostylistics describes and appreciates discourse functionally, viz. describes the structure, the content and functional effectiveness of linguistic means and stylistic devices in definite contexts, it is a descriptive discipline. Description here is generally related to the effectiveness of the concrete meaning of separate linguistic units (i. e. the meaning of language in action, rather than the effectiveness of the categorial meaning). It is in the former that the concrete character of linguostylistic studies becomes apparent, and the idea of linguostylistics as being predominantly a science of speech rather than that of language has been formed and persists.

Descriptive linguostylistics deals with general theoretical aspects of linguistic communication: functions of speech, discourse and discourse analysis, varieties of

¹ Linguostylistics here is used to denote a science which deals with problems of style in language (in all its manifestations, imaginative literature including), as opposed to general stylistics which may deal with questions of style in art in general and even with questions of style in life.

² See, for example, *Literary Style: A Symposium*, ed. by S. Chatman. London and New York, OUP, 1971; *Style in Language*, ed. by Th. Sebeok. New York, 1960; О. С. Ахманова, Л. Н. Натан, А. И. Полторацкий, В. И. Фатющенко. О принципах и методах лингвистического исследования. Изд-во МГУ, 1966; И. Р. Гальперин. О понятиях „стиль“ и „стилистика“. — ВЯ, 1973, № 3; В. А. Кухаренко. Лингвистическое исследование английской художественной речи. Одесса, 1973, and others.

³ Cf. *Literary Style: A Symposium*, p. 47–155.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 65.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 65–66.

language, and others. Descriptive linguistics invariably includes the theory of functional styles and analysis, appreciation and evaluation of imaginative literature⁶, as a most refined product of man's verbal activity, which stands somewhat apart from all the other language pronouncements. Functional appreciation of discourse in general, the appreciation of language effective in different fields of extralinguistic as well as linguistic activity (i. e. functional styles), a description of the making and technique of a literary text, and the establishment of stylistic value of concrete linguistic units or categories make up the corpus of descriptive linguistics.

Linguistics acquires a prescriptive character when scholars attempt to establish norms of generally accepted — standard usage, and of effective usage, i. e. linguistic usage answering the aims of the speaker and the requirements of the context of situation to perfection. Works dealing with prescriptions in linguistic usage consider problems of acceptability as those of recurrence, and it is always a specialist in the field, who, on the basis of a thorough analysis of an enormous corpus of linguistic material, attempts to judge what ought to become acceptable in linguistic activity of a certain community. However, prescriptive linguistic studies⁷, based on the material of the most widely spread and most extensively described languages, have, in due course of time, lost popularity among both specialists in the field and laymen.

The question of effective English usage has been considered on purely utilitarian grounds and attempts have been made to establish handy linguistic norms and even appreciate their value in terms of profit⁸. The role of correct language and effective linguistic communication, however, can by no means be reduced to utilitarian value. Correct language reflects the culture of individuals, societies and generations and may acquire aesthetic value even in daily communication. Effective linguistic usage is of utmost importance to a student. Though attempts to prescribe rules to linguistic usage and to establish a comparative trend in linguistic studies have been ignored⁹, the practice of foreign language learning reveals a desperate need for linguistic prescriptions.

Thus, for example, recent research and publications concerning modern English usage have announced definite changes and drastic deviations from the previously accepted linguistic standard of English. Some authors have even gone so far as to assume that standard English with its received pronunciation (RP) and definite conventions in the choice of vocabulary and selection of structures does not exist¹⁰, that what English people actually use abides by no standard and that the only

⁶ Most of linguistics research has been carried out pertaining exceptionally to a literary text. See, for example, Bonamy Dobrée. *Modern Prose Style*. Oxford, 1935; *Essays on the Language of Literature*, ed. by S. Chatman and S. R. Levin. Boston, 1967; R. Fowler. *The Languages of Literature*. London, 1971; *Language and Style Series*, ed. by S. Ullmann. Oxford, 1966, and others.

⁷ Cf. A. Warner. *A Short Guide to English Style*. London, OUP, 1961; H. Dean and K. D. Bryson. *Effective Communication*. Prentice Hall, 1965; *Sprachkommunikation*. Berlin, 1968, and others; "Modern English Usage" by H. W. Fowler is, perhaps, most often used and referred to both by specialists and laymen, students of English, as well as by native speakers as one of the authoritative sources.

⁸ See, for example, *Readings in the Language Arts*. N. Y., 1968; S. Payne. *The Art of Asking Questions*. New Jersey, 1965, and others.

⁹ Cf. *Literary Style: A Symposium*, p. 45—75.

¹⁰ Cf. B. Foster. *The Changing English Language*. N. Y., 1971; Hans P. Guth. *English for a New Generation*. N. Y., 1973.

means to retain liveliness and impressiveness of the English language is a constant incorporation of slang or more or less neutral varieties of Black English and other dialects (i. e. what was some time considered substandard) into a generally accepted linguistic standard. Though there still exists a tendency to analyse the causes of faulty usage and errors against the background of the linguistic norm of English, what is current in the works of London University (R. Quirk, D. Crystal, D. Davy, Jack C. Richards), it is generally believed that the standard, which was established and improved through years, is no more than a language of the élite, and a symbol of social inequality, and is actually no longer practised.

If the problem of the so-called standard linguistic usage may be rejected by a native speaker as a mere linguistic convention, more or less stable standard is indispensable to a foreigner, and it is here that prescriptions to linguistic usage become imperative¹¹. The standard has to be established. Linguistics, both applied and theoretical, cannot help being concerned with what is linguistically appropriate in 'good' writing and speaking, and hence with means for adequate stylistic equivalence in case of bilingualism. All these and many other similar problems are the object of prescriptive stylistics — the end toward which its efforts should be directed.

Finally, it ought to be mentioned, that the current division of aspects in linguostylistics, viz. phonological stylistics, lexicological stylistics, syntactical stylistics, etc. holds no ground, as it disperses the object of this discipline. Though identification of stylistic features pertaining to definite levels of linguistic analysis is valid in linguostylistics for analytical purposes, linguistic style may be consistently defined only by outlining the synthetic effect of stylistic features pertaining to the functioning of linguistic units of all the levels. Thus the distinguishing of aspects in linguostylistics according to the levels of linguistic analysis may be accepted for the sake of methodological consistency in linguostylistic analysis. Otherwise, linguostylistic research seems to offer no grounds for developing phonological, lexicological, syntactical, etc. stylistics as subbranches of general linguostylistics. A reasonable approach therefore would be to distinguish descriptive stylistics, which incorporates stylistics of a literary text, and prescriptive stylistics.

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APIE LINGVISTINĖS STILISTIKOS APIMTĮ IR POBŪDĮ

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Reziumė

Straipsnyje, remiantis naujausiais darbais ir anglų kalbos medžiaga, svarstomos lingvistinės stilistikos, besiformuojančio ir didelį susidomėjimą keliančio mokslo, problematikos įvairovė, jo pobūdis ir tikslas. Lingvistinės stilistikos objektas, jo interdisciplinarini i klausimai, manoma, yra išspręsti. Tebera diskutuojama, ar ji yra deskriptyvinis ar rekomendacinis mokslas. Straipsnyje teigiama, kad jis yra tiek deskriptyvinis, tiek rekomendacinis mokslas, nes, be bendrųjų teorinių lingvistinės komunikacijos proceso klausimų, kaip: kalbos funkcijos, funkciniai stiliai, situacinė kalbos įvairovė, kalbos priemonių efektyvumo apibūdinimas ir kita, lingvistinė stilistika turi rekomenduoti, kaip efektyviai vartoti kalbą. Lingvistinės rekomendacijos aktualios, studijuojant užsienio kalbą, tuo labiau, kad pastaruoju metu anglų kalbos specialistai neigia norminės anglų kalbos priimtinaumą kalbantiems gimtąja kalba.

¹¹ This particular problem has been especially dealt with in "What Is the English We Use?" by O. S. Akhmanova and R. F. Idzelis. Moscow, MGU, 1973.