

THE SUBJECT MATTER AND SCOPE OF STYLISTICS IN MODERN
LINGUISTICS

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Annotation: This article provides a comprehensive overview of stylistics as a branch of linguistics. It examines the definition of the subject matter, the distinction between expressive means and stylistic devices, and the classification of functional styles. The study emphasizes the importance of stylistic analysis in understanding the multi-layered nature of communication, bridging the gap between linguistic form and communicative intent.

Keywords: Stylistics, Functional Styles, Expressive Means, Stylistic Devices, Connotation, Linguistic Analysis, Decoding.

Introduction

Stylistics is a fundamental branch of linguistics that investigates the principles and results of the choice and usage of lexical, grammatical, phonetic, and graphic means of language. In the hierarchy of linguistic sciences, stylistics occupies a unique position: it does not merely describe the structure of language (the "code"), but explains how that code is used to create specific effects. For university students, mastering stylistics is essential for developing "linguistic intuition" and the ability to interpret the hidden layers of any given text.

The Subject Matter of Stylistics

The subject matter of stylistics is often defined through the concept of stylistic marking. While general linguistics deals with the denotative (literal) meaning of words and sentences, stylistics focuses on:

Connotative meaning: The emotional, evaluative, or aesthetic overtones of a linguistic unit.

The expressive potential of language: How different levels of language (from sounds to sentence structures) can be used to emphasize an idea.

The interaction of meanings: How the dictionary meaning of a word interacts with its contextual meaning to create a figure of speech.

Classification of Functional Styles

A major part of the discipline is the study of Functional Styles—subsystems of language used in specific spheres of human activity. The standard academic classification includes:

Official Style: Used in law and business; characterized by stability, precision, and a lack of imagery.

Scientific Style: Aimed at logical proof and objective description; utilizes specialized terminology.

Publicist Style: Found in media; designed to inform and exert a persuasive influence on the audience.

Belles-Lettres Style: The language of imaginative literature (poetry, drama, prose) where the aesthetic function is dominant.

Colloquial Style: The informal, often spontaneous language of everyday social interaction.

Expressive Means (EM) and Stylistic Devices (SD)

The "tools" of stylistics are categorized into two groups:

Expressive Means: These are phonetic, morphological, or syntactic forms that exist in the language system for the purpose of logical or emotional intensification (e.g., interjections, pitch, or unusual word order). **Stylistic Devices:** These are conscious, intentional "models" of language use, such as metaphor, metonymy, irony, or oxymoron. An SD is essentially a "transformation" of a standard linguistic unit into an artistic image.

Practical Analysis (Example)

To illustrate the subject matter, consider the sentence: "The sun kissed the flowers." * Linguistic level: A simple SVO (Subject-Verb-Object) structure.

Stylistic level: The use of Personification (a stylistic device) shifts the text from the "Scientific/Neutral style" to the "Belles-Lettres style," creating an emotional image of nature rather than a biological description.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the subject matter of stylistics encompasses the study of all expressive possibilities of language. It provides the methodology for a deep, multifaceted analysis of texts, allowing us to see beyond the surface of grammar and vocabulary. As a discipline, it remains vital for anyone pursuing a degree in philology, translation, or communication studies.

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