

# [﻿history and development of stylistics essay sample](https://assignbuster.com/history-and-development-of-stylistics-essay-sample/)

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Stylistics can be said to have started in the form of rhetoric. Rhetoric, originally seen as the study of oratory and prose, developed in Greece in the 5th Century B. C. By the end of the 3rd and 2nd Century B. C. it had evolved into a systematic study. In Rome, rhetoric developed later, around the 1st century B. C. As a study classical rhetoric is associated with Aristotle of Greece and Cicero and Quintelian of Rome. Classical rhetoric entailed two stages: arrangement and verbal expression. Arrangement involved the organization of a speech into introduction, exposition, elaboration and finally conclusion. Verbal expression involved stylistic choices involving the choice of words (lexicon), the ordering of those words (syntax), the collocation of words on the basis of their meanings, figures of speech, and the rhetorical devices at the level of sentences. Certain forms of expression were seen as either classic or vulgar, where classic (elevated) belonged to the upper classes ad vulgar to the lower classes. These ideas were revived during the time of the Renaissance in Europe, from the 14th to the 16th Centuries, a period remembered for its artistic forms.

In the 17th and 18th centuries, the novel emerged and the rhetorical devices became part of the style of prose. By the 19th century any work of prose that made use of the rhetorical devices of arrangement and verbal expression was known as elegant, and that which did not use the rhetorical devices was as inelegant in style. Another development that took place at this time was in the field of prosody. The traditional poetic composition made use of the relationship between stressed and unstressed syllables to create rhythmic patterns. The regularity rhythmic patterns are referred to as metre. By the 19th Century, prosody and rhetoric merged in the study of stylistic whereby rhetoric lost part of its prestige as the study of oratory or effective public speaking.

Russian Formalism.
In the 1920s school literary theoreticians emerged in Russia who opposed the interpretations of literature which were based on intuition and the impressionsism arising out of one’s knowledge of the life-histoty of the author. The most well-known exponent of Russian Formalism was Roman Jacobson (1986-1982) whose work focused o n defining the qualities of poetic language. According to Jacobson, the poetic function of language is realized in those communicative acts where the focus is on the message for its own sake. The contribution of the Russian Formalists was two-fold:-

i. Their methodology took account of the features that distinguish a work art from other works; ii. They came up with a view of literary form that went beyond the purely linguistic choices to include strategies of organization.

The Prague Linguistic circle (Structuralism)
Roman Jacobson emigrated to Czeehoslovakia in 1920, where he began collaborating with Czech literary scholars such as Jan Mukarovsky (1891-1975), establishing the Prague Linguistic Cicle in 1926 which was to become famous as the birth plce of structuralism. Like Jacobson, Mukarovsky was interested in identifying formal and functional distinctiooooooons between literary and non-literary writing, noting that literary textx deviate from what he termed the ‘ standard language’ (Mukarovsky, 1964). He theorized on the phenomenon which he called foregrounding. The analogy here was that certain linguistic features in a poem were placed in the foreground, against a background of linguistic norms and conventions.

These conventions and norms he referred to as ‘ standard language’ According to Mukarovsky, the consequence of deviation is the creation of a defamiliarising effect for the reader, something he claimed to be one of the hallmarks of literature. In turn, Jacobson (1960) suggests that defamiliarisation also results frfom structural patterning in texts, later known as parallelism. Shklovsky’s (1917, 1925) notion of defamiliarisation (‘ estrangement’) or making strange also entailed a political notion because he stressed that the function of art is to make people look at the world from a new perspective. These concepts-deviation parallelism, and foregrounding are the foundations of contemporary stylestics.

1. A. Richards and Practical criticism.
The English critic 1. A Richards Published a book in 1929 entitled “ Practical Criticism”. Like the Russian Formalists, Richards was reacting to readings of literary texts and were overly influenced by extraneous considerations such as the history of the period, the literary tradition to which the text belonged, the life-history and psychology of the author, and the political and philosophical expectations of the reader. Richard Championed the need to put the literary text at the centre of our inquiry. The reader must pay attention to what is going on the printed page, and not speculate on the psychic make-up of the author and the like. Basically, he advocated for practical criticism as opposed to theoretical criticism. In addition to traditional literary categories such as tone, poetic thought and feeling, originality, diacticism, sentimentality, sincerity andn the like, Richards proposed a critical procedure which would entail a close scrutiny of stylistic elements in a given text. Figures of speech such as metaphors, similes, personification and sound effects such as rhythm and metre were to be carefully studied and accounted for.

Practical criticism wa interested in the psychological aspects of how readers comprehend texts. Both essentially proceed on the techniques of close reading. While this approach is viewed by today’s stylisticians as too imprecise in analytical terms, David West has criticism with readers’ processing of a text makes it a direct precursor of contemporary cognitive stylistics. Practical criticism became a trend in England and America, and the critical works of T. S. Elist and F. R. Leavis belong to it. In 1941, John Ransom’s book entitled. The New criticism was published and it had an impact on American literary scholarship, leading to the emergence of a school of literary criticism which was called New Criticism. This school was new in the sense that they placed emphasis on practical criticism and textual commentary. They argued for the primacy of the literacy text, and its relative autonomy from the life of the author and the social and cultural environment in which he grew. The new critics were basically restating the position of Richard’s practical criticism. In their critical procedures, they were concerned about what they called “ the rhetorical structure of the literary text. They were concerned with such rhetorical strategies as figures of speech, images, paradox irony, etc.

Exploratio in-literary stylistics.
While stylistics had so far concentrated on using linguistic tools to explain literary effects, it had also been the subject of criticism for its eclecticism, its lack of a methodological and theoretical foundation, and its alleged base in literary criticism. A major1 focus on poetry also caused some suspicion in linguistic circles. In the 1960s and early seventies these criticisms were addressed in part through the development of a branch of stylistics that focused particularly on style in non-literary language. The work of Crystal and Davy, and Enkvist, is particularly important here. Crystal and Davy’s concern was how particular social contexts restrict the range of linguistic options open to speakers, while Enkvist proposed that this could work the other way too; i. e. that a speaker’s stylistic choices could affect the context for his or her addressees (think, for instance, about the informal lexis and grammar often used in adverts for high street banks, and how this is designed to effect a context of informality for customers). Work in non-literary stylistics, however, appeared to stall at this point, and it was not until much later that it picked up again. The reasons for this are perhaps the lack of linguistic frameworks able to deal with the contextual issues at the heart of Crystal and Davy’s and Enkvist’s work. Systemic-functional linguistics and stylistics

The basis of stylistics in linguistics has always meant tharfan advance in the latter inevitably impacts on the former, and so it was in the 1970s and early eighties. So^e of the attacks levelled at stylistics were circumvented by its becoming particularly practical and by the movement of stylistics into the areas of language teaching and pedagogical stylistics. Furthermore, Halliday’s work on systemic functional grammar related form to function within the context of the language system as a whole and had particular influence on the study of prose fiction. For example, Roger Fowler (whose own Essays on Style and Language, 1966, is a seminal work in early stylistics), used Hallidayan-style transitivity analysis to uncover point of view patterns in text. The influence of Halliday’s work can also be seen in Leech and Short’s now famous Style in Fiction.

The impact of pragmatics and discourse analysis
During the late seventies. and early eighties, advances were also made in the developing field of pragmatics, where the focus was on how context affects meaning. Carter and Simpson (1989) is an exemplar of how this work influenced the development of stylistics in the 1980s. These advances enabled for the first time the serious stylistic study of drama. Burton (1980) is an early attempt at using pragmatic and sociolinguistic insights in the study of dramatic discourse, and Short’s (1981) article on discourse analysis applied to drama is a groundbreaking study of how such insights can be used to uncover aspects of characterization. Advances in pragmatics and their concern with context also facilitated a renewed interest in non-literary stylistics (see Carter and Nash’s Seeing Through Language) and the ideology-shaping nature of texts (e. g. Roger Fowler’s Linguistic Criticism). There is a crossover here, of course, with work in Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), though CDA-inspired work that is unremittingly stylistic in approach continues today. From cognition to corpora

Into the 1990s there was a growing concern with the cognitive elements involved in comprehending and processing texts, and this movement gave rise to the branch of the discipline now generally known as cognitive stylistics or cognitive poetics. Of course, all forms of stylistic analysis have always considered text comprehension to a certain extent, and in this respect current work in cognitive stylistics can be seen as directly related to earlier investigations into the ways in which readers process texts. Among such earlier work is the Practical Criticism of I. A. Richards and the later reader-response work of, for example, Fairly and Alderson and Short.

Advances in computer technology in recent years have also “ had a significant impact on the direction in which stylistics is heading. The construction and analysis of large-scale linguistic corpora is easier than ever before and this has enabled a return to some of the original concerns of stylistics – namely, the extent to which foregrounding is quantifiable and whether authorial style really is as distinguishable as critics have claimed. These were questions that were largely unanswerable before the development of corpus linguistics. Nowadays, the ease with which it is possible to analyze a text computationally means that there is almost no excuse not to use evidence from corpus studies to support qualitative analysis. Stylistics, then, has come a long way since its beginnings and it should be clear that it is very much a forward-looking discipline. As such, there is clearly much to look forward to as stylistics continues to develop.

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