Stylistics: Theory and Practice, by Ikenna Kamalu

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Ikenna Kamalu's book *Stylistics: Theory and Practice* is a contemporary handbook on modern stylistics. It demonstrates how practitioners of stylistics can effectively identify language patterns and peculiarities of discourse within a given linguistic framework. It opens with a discussion on the subject of language, representation and ideation in discourse, at a multi-level dimension. The book is remarkably alert to the ways in which language in varied discourse modes imbricates the main currents, trends, literary ideals and ideological thrusts prevalent in every society and age. Drawing from the gains of applied sociolinguistics, it extends its analysis to other fields such as literature, text grammar, pedagogy, popular culture, semiotics, rhetoric, metaphor analysis, and jurisprudence. This is to demonstrate that the principles of linguistics are applicable in diverse fields of human endeavour.

Significantly, for literary criticism, *Stylistics: Theory and Practice* provides an interdisciplinary synergy between the field of linguistics and that of literature. It also by implication proposes a content-form symmetry via a linguistic stylistics analysis of texts. In a self-reflexive manner, the book provides answers to burgeoning questions such as the following: What is style and stylistics? How does the notion of style, the practice of stylistics and the gains of rhetoric open up discourse and language use for further interrogation and deeper understanding of texts?

There is a wide range of critical traditions, arguments, disagreements and positions the book embraces and shares a historical link with. They go as far back as the classical traditions of Aristotelian Rhetoric (p. 1), particularly "elocution" (style), which is the third aspect of rhetoric (p. 4). The book also engages with the modern linguistic paradigm of Ferdinand de Saussure, the aesthetic practice of the Russian Formalists, the quest for a unified theory or the organismic principles of literary text embarked upon by the Praque Linguistic Circle, the text-based criticism of American Formalists and New

Critics, and the focus on grammaticality by the Generative Grammarians. These schools of thought serve as a backdrop for the emergence of modern linguistic stylistics within the systemic orientation. Beyond theories, the book provides a praxis for text hermeneutics. And a noteworthy contribution of the text to existing knowledge in the field of stylistics is its appropriation of the Euro-Western linguistic theories and traditions into an African context to explain sociolinguistic realities, African worldviews, ontology and epistemic nuances.

Stylistics: Theory and Practice is structured into seven chapters. Each chapter, with a sense of detail, discusses an aspect of style, stylistics and the theories around these. The book's scope ranges from the conceptualisation, evolution and approaches to style and stylistics to discussions on discourse stylistics, with particular focus on the functionalist view of language. Essential topics such as levels of stylistic analysis, cohesion and coherence, foregrounding, and language and point of view are also succinctly discussed in the book. The principle behind the method and style of writing in the book is to guide African scholars, teachers and students new to the approach on how to carry out linguistic stylistic analysis of any text. Beyond the mere identification of figures of speech, point of view or techniques which are common in literary analysis, *Stylistics: Theory and Practice* makes provision for the linguistic grounds of such practice.

Contained in the preliminary pages are notational conventions, abbreviations (p. xv) and their meanings. There are also graphical representations of Bronisław Malinowski's configuration of context (p. 71), John Haynes's levels of language in relation to situation and ideology (p. 75), and Haynes's configuration of setting and text in relation to ideology (p. 82). There is an index to guide readers to significant parts of the book (pp. 228–34), a preface by the author (pp. vi–vii), a foreword by Professor Onyemaechi Udumukwu (pp. viii–x), and an introduction by Dr Chijioke Uwasomba (pp. xi–xii). All of these help the student, scholar and teacher understand what the book is about and how it achieves its purpose.

The linguistic views of M. A. K. Halliday resonate within *Stylistics: Theory and Practice*. This is obvious, and also deliberate, since the critical approach for the practical analysis of texts adopted in *Stylistics: Theory and Practice* revolves on the Systemic Functional Linguistics model (see Halliday 2003; 1978; Halliday and Matthiessen 2006; 2014). There are also traces of the intellectual rigour and finesse of African scholars across the field of linguistics and literature who influenced the author's views on the subject. These scholars include Obododimma Oha, Niyi Osundare, Ayo Ogunsiji, Nkem Okoh and Romanus Aboh.

Chapter one of *Stylistics: Theory and Practice* provides a diachronic overview on the question: what is style and stylistics? It underscores the distinction between the concept of style and that of stylistics. It traces the origin of "stylistics as an academic discipline [which emerged in the] twentieth-century" (p. 1). The author, Ikenna Kamalu, traces the

origin of style to the field of rhetoric. Rhetoric emerged in classical Greece (p. 4), and as a liberal science it continued from the Greeks to the Romans. The Romans, however, made improvements in the field by creating the five cannons or genres of rhetoric which are *inventio* (invention), *dispositio* (disposition), *elecutio* (style), *pronuntiatio* (delivery), and *memoria* (memory) (pp. 3–4). Other technical dimensions of rhetoric—the notions of logos, pathos and ethos—which Aristotle categorised as principles of stylistics are also discussed in the book (p. 7). Interestingly, the author explains that the initial concerns of the Greco-Roman rhetoricians were on "the tropes and devices that were used by orators for effective argument and persuasion" (p. 3).

Issues such as the slippery nature of style and its application in varied fields, ranging from fashion to choreography and fine art, are highlighted using the simile "style is like a chameleon" (p. 2). The closest definition provided in the book on what constitutes style is an etymology from the Latin word "stilus" which refers to a device for writing on the waxed surface of a tablet (p. 2).

In a very lucid manner, chapter one of the book presents a clear explanation of the various views on style which include style as the linguistic characteristics of a work of art (p. 10). These linguistic features are the lenses through which an analyst provides explanations for language use, whether in terms of the lexical, semantic, graphological, syntactic, or phonological aspects of language. There is also a view of style as "the way language is used in a particular genre, period, or school of writing" (p. 10) and style as the individual, or as the French naturalist Buffon asserts, "style is the man himself" (p. 11). In the book, it is explained that there is style as choice, a conscious selection of a language by a sign user (p. 12). There is also a notion of style as deviation from a norm (p. 14). Norm is the common core or standard form from which language users draw. A departure from it is a deviation and this deviation may be quantitative or qualitative.

On the other hand, stylistics is explained in the book as the study of "fictional, factual and visual resources and discourses" and how they communicate "diverse meanings to their readers or viewers" within a context (p. 7) or within the linguistic study of literature. The author stresses that stylistic analysis is facilitated through language, since "our knowledge and experience of the world are words and meanings mediated by language" (p. 7). He argues that in the practice of stylistics as an activity, the stylistician should pay close attention to the levels of language: lexis, grammar, semantics, phonology, the sound patterns and graphology. The book shows that stylistics does not aim at an objective description but to show functional roles and significance in textual analysis. The scope of stylistics the book highlights is broad within the parameters of psychology, cognitive psychology, cognitive science, education, and literary theory. As the book indicates, modern stylistics is guided by three founding traditions: Anglo-American literary criticism, structuralism, and the emerging field of linguistics (p. 21).

Chapter two of the book presents a diachronic and synchronic discussion on the approaches to style and stylistics. It sees language as the tree upon which the branches of stylistics spread. It identifies 15 main branches of stylistics, including multimodal stylistics. Multimodal stylistics interrogates more than one mode of meaning construal or representation. There is also critical stylistics, informed by insights from critical linguistics and critical discourse analysis. Another branch is forensic stylistics, which is the application of linguistic stylistic principles in a forensic context. Narratology is another branch of stylistics which the book outlines, and it explains how language informs narrative structure. The first to use the term narratology was Tzvetan Todorov, while Gerald Prince articulated its three dimensions of enquiry: the nature of form, function and narrative (pp. 31–32). There is also formalist stylistics which is peculiar to the Russian Formalism school, the St Petersburg School and the Moscow Linguistic Circle, with a focus on the *literariness* of a text, that is, that which makes literature what it is (pp. 33–34). The book also shows the distinctiveness of functionalist stylistics, as a contrast to the formalist tradition. While there are several models of the functionalist approach, a popular strand practically explained in the book is the Systemic Functional Linguistics model by Halliday.

Pragmatic stylistics as explained in Kamalu's book shows an intersection between pragmatics and stylistics. On the other hand, it explains that pedagogic stylistics is concerned with the use of stylistic tools for the teaching of language. An aspect of stylistics in African-oriented discourse which has not received much critical attention is feminist stylistics. This approach investigates the representation and production of texts with an alertness to gender bias and legitimation of prejudice, or how language is ideologically deployed to represent men and women in texts or discourses. Historical stylistics is another important approach discussed in the book to explain language within a time and period, or situation before the present moment, while reader response stylistics shows how language analysis explains the role of the reader in literary interpretation.

The discussion of the empirical study of literature is another high point of the book which explains the use of a quantitative approach in literary analysis. There is also the emotion stylistic approach which explores how a text affects the reader, for instance, how the cathartic element in tragedy affects the reader. Cognitive stylistics or cognitive poetics applies the discipline of cognitive linguistics, cognitive psychology and artificial intelligence to the study of literature. Cognitive stylistics asks two basic questions: what do people do when they read and what happens to people when they read? There is film stylistics too as noted in the book and it is concerned with the stylistics of film, while corpus stylistics is the application of corpus linguistics to the analysis of a literary text.

Several hands-on guidelines and examples are provided in *Stylistics: Theory and Practice* to give clear explanations on the ways a scholar or student can carry out linguistic stylistic analysis and those elements or features they should look out for. The

book notes that the practitioner must pay attention to the observations of structural linguistics and sociolinguistics. In addition, it underscores that attention should be given to the dimensions of variations, whether phonological or lexical, to sociocultural elements, spatio-temporal features, social grouping, intelligibility, individuality, interference, medium, the participation and participants in a discourse, features of explicitness, attitude, discourse field, intention, appropriateness of style or form to purpose, and how region affects style usage.

The functional stylistics paradigm within which the book is written belongs to the Objective Style in the Prague School terminology. This paradigm acknowledges the place of situational factors in meaning sharing. Three stylistic devices, intellectualisation (rational), automatisation (expressive) and foregrounding (call attention), are crucial in this framework, and automisation and foregrounding are complementary (p. 61). Kamalu notes in the book that the notion of foregrounding is quite popular in stylistics, and Jan Mukařovský and Roman Jakobson have significantly contributed to its advancement (p. 61). In undertaking linguistic stylistics, a student must give attention to linguistic features such as register, field of discourse, mode of discourse, tenor of discourse, style of discourse, the notion of text-type, norm and deviation, which are all lucidly explained in the book. The generative approach to stylistic analysis by Richard Ohmann is also a model examined in the book (p. 65).

In chapter three, the author accentuates the significance of social context in the study of language in discourse stylistics (p. 70). This is made possible by breakthroughs made by Bronisław Malinowski in his ethnographic and anthropological approach, J. R. Firth with his perspective on context, and finally M. A. K. Halliday with his Systemic Functional Linguistics (pp. 71–72). While other scholars like Richard Hudson, Erik Enkvist, John Spencer and Michael Gregory have come up with their own models of functional linguistics, Kamalu contends that Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics model is the most prominent paradigm (pp. 72–73). This is based on the assumption that it sees language in terms of function, meaning construal, and context—whether situational or cultural (p. 73).

A justification for the Systemic Functional Linguistics model in the words of Kamalu is that "stylisticians find SFL attractive because it is a choice-based linguistic model … [and] makes a distinction between system and structure" (p. 77). While the term system is based on a paradigmatic relationship, the term structure on the other hand is based on a syntagmatic relationship (pp. 77–78). To illustrate this distinction, case studies are drawn from (1) a telephone conversation between President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan and General Mohammadu Buhari after the March 2015 general elections and (2) Uwem Akpan's *Say You're One of Them*. The book also provides insight into the tenor of discourse between interlocutors, whether an immediate or a wider tenor, and the role of transitivity in meaning construction and explication. Other areas included in chapter

three are mood, theme, rheme, information structure (given and new), and at the end of the chapter there are practical exercises for classroom or workshop activity.

Chapter four provides further examples of practical analysis in stylistics. For scholars and practitioners, this part of the book shows that a stylistic analysis can begin with the lexico-semantic level (identification and use of vocabulary in a text). An example is drawn from the vocabulary usage of a campus social group—the Kegite group (p. 104). Another example is from Femi Osofisan's play *Midnight Black Out* to show how words are used to communicate humour, sarcasm and irony (p. 105). Other levels of analysis a stylistician should pay attention to, as highlighted in the book, are phonetic and phonological dimensions, onomastic elements of language, graphological and multimodal elements, as well as a semiotic analysis of pictorial representations of social meaning. At the grammatical level, the author demonstrates that linguistic resources such as phrasal groups, nominal groups and personal pronouns are carriers of social and ideological meanings in context. Substantial examples are drawn from Ben Okri's *The Famished Road* and *Infinite Riches*.

Practical explanations on how elements in a text are linked or connected and how they generate meaning due to their effective interlinkage or their ability to "hang together" in unity across sentences are provided in chapter five. This is studied in terms of cohesion and coherence and how they play out in a text. Other aspects of cohesion accounted for in the book include the essence of situational context and background knowledge in facilitating proper interpretation. Kamalu argues that cohesion necessitates coherence and is facilitated by the use of pronouns, lexical repetition, ellipsis, coordinators and subordinators in a text. Kamalu draws an example from Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* to demonstrate that a text can be cohesive without being coherent. The types of cohesion discussed in the book are grammatical cohesion (references, substitution, ellipsis, and conjunction), lexical cohesion, repetition, synonyms, near synonyms, collocation, and superordinates/hyponyms (p.169).

Chapter six of the book explores foregrounding, a derivative from the free translation of the Czech term *aktualisace*, as a stylistic feature (p. 181). The overall essence of foregrounding outlined in this chapter is to call attention to an aspect of a discourse taken for granted. This is closely related to the term "defamiliarisation" which was central to Russian Formalism (p. 181). Kamalu therefore presents foregrounding as a method of defamiliarisation (p. 182). However, foregrounding is demarcated in the book as appearing in two formats: foregrounding as linguistic deviation and foregrounding as linguistic repetition. As a form of deviation, foregrounding can be found on five levels: lexical, grammatical, semantic, phono-graphological, and graphological. Kamalu stresses further in the book that foregrounding is motivated prominence (p. 184). To show how this plays out, the author presents a practical analysis using Niyi Osundare's poem "My Miss Take."

The place of language in representation and the legitimation of ideological perspectives in narratives, whether literary and non-literary, is the focus of chapter seven. The chapter zooms in on point of view as an essential aspect of understanding the ideological perspectives of narratives. Kamalu states that this is "one of the most important elements of narrative discourse" (p. 195). The book presents point of view as an ideological, temporal, spatial, and psychological plane (pp. 199–200). Within point of view are instances of deixis, the narratees, the embedded narrative system, the idea of the fabula, and the problematisation of the first-person pronoun "I" (pp. 209–210). This leads to the classification of narrators into extradiegetic, autodiegetic and intradiegetic narrators. Kamalu contends that point of view or narrative perspective could be ideologically motivated.

The language in which the book is written is clear and accessible, even though there are some technical terms entrants to the field may find challenging to grapple with at first glance or reading. The book is tailor-made for African students, and it draws extensively from African backgrounds in terms of the examples it uses for explication. This is very important for pedagogical purposes. While the examples drawn revolve around prose, poetry, drama and political discourse, which is a wide range of genres, an aspect of analysis which is not covered in the book is the application of stylistic principles in explaining the oral literature of Africa. This is an open prospect for further research. The paper quality and binding of the book reflect a knack for excellence by the publishing company, while the abstract art used for the cover page appeals to the imagination.

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