

Style in cognitive linguistics: the perspective from genre

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Plan

- Why genre?
- How genre?
- How style?
- How cognitive linguistics?

Why genre?

Positioning stylistics

- Linguistics
- Poetics
- Discourse analysis (*tekstwetenschap*)
- Rhetoric and communication / applied linguistics (*taalbeheersing*)

Style in linguistics

- Literary stylistics
 - Leech 1969; Leech & Short 2006 [1981]
- General stylistics
 - PALA, *Language and Literature, Style*
- Not sociolinguistics
 - Biber & Finegan 1994
 - Cf. notion of a speech style with respect to gender and class

Style in linguistics

- *Style as a complex linguistic phenomenon: language varieties*
- *Patterns of selection and co-occurrence of formal and semantic categories*
- *From checklist to computer program*

Style in poetics

- Cognitive stylistics
 - Semino & Culpeper 2003
- Not cognitive poetics
 - Stockwell 2002; Gavins & Steen 2003
- Not empirical poetics
 - Schram & Steen 2001

Style in poetics

- *Style as element of texts*
- *Attention to conventional relations between style and text, including text type, such as literature*
- *From corpora to single texts, and back*

Style in discourse analysis

- Part of discourse analysis
 - Van Dijk 1997; Hamilton, Schiffrin, & Tannen 2001
- Relation with Critical Discourse Analysis
 - Wodak & Meyer 2001

Style in discourse analysis

- *Style as part of culturally situated discourse events*
- *Attention to conventional relations between style and discourse (configurations of context, text, language)*
- *From texts to users*

Style in rhetoric

- Rhetoric and communication (Applied linguistics)
 - English/Language for Special Purposes
 - Contrastive rhetoric (Connor 1996)
 - Document design (*Document Design*)
- Goal-directed verbal interaction
 - Cf. cognitive psychology (Clark 1996, Kintsch 1998)
 - Cf. social psychology (Clark 1996, O'Keefe 1990)

Style in rhetoric

- *Style as part of design and effective communication*
- *Element in intended function, observed effect*
- *From unconscious habitus to deliberate manipulation of language*

So why genre?

Style

- is a language variety
- is a part of texts (and text types)
- is a part of conventionalized discourse events
- is a part of a design

Danger of too much focus on one aspect at expense of others

Balanced integration of all aspects in one performance-oriented model of usage via *genre*

How genre?

Perspectives on genre events

- As linguistic event—language forms; relation with recognizability of genre category
- As psychological event—individual experience, variation, and differences; relation with expertise and performance
- As social event—experience between people; relation with (mis)understanding, design, editing, advising, testing
- As cultural event—experience between groups of people; relation with formal training, imitation, transformation

Soc-sci assumptions about genre

- Language use as joint co-ordination (Clark 1996)
- People have knowledge about language use in the form of a repertoire of genre schemas (Van Dijk & Kintsch 1983; Kintsch 1998)
- Knowledge schema drives text production and reception
- Model of knowledge schema can therefore guide analysis of relevant properties of texts

Genre schemas

- Genre schemas afford knowledge about:
 - linguistic forms (cf. surface text)
 - conceptual structures (cf. text base and situation model)
 - communicative functions (cf. communication model)
- Extend into model for text analysis

Genre as MF-MD category

- Text
 - Form (general-particular, problem-solution, etc.), content (fiction/fact, etc.), type (narrative, argument, etc.), structure (L/R branching, tweezer, etc.)
- Context
 - Participants (roles, aims, perspectives), setting (*locale*, props), domain (norms), medium, channel
- Code
 - Language (English, Dutch, etc.), language variety (sociolect, dialect, register), style (?, ?)
 - Other codes (visual, music, gesture)

Genre Categories

- Genre categories are hierarchically ordered in levels of abstraction, as in prototype theory
 - Genre as basic level
 - Subgenres as subordinates
 - Broader classes of text as superordinates
- Basic level is easier to distinguish from competitors, for analysts and learners and users, than either subgenres or super genres
- Genre categories at all three levels can be described with reference to all dimensions and features of discourse

Comparing genres

- Comparison between genres:
 - *Conversation, novel, newspaper article, academic article (see handout)*
- Comparison between subgenres:
 - *Front page, editorial, background article (see HO)*
- Comparison between 'super' genres:
 - *Fiction, narrative, literature, talk, journalese (see HO)*
- Comparison between levels:
 - *E.g. journalese, newspaper article, editorial*

Genre-based comments on style

- Theoretical model that requires further theoretical and empirical research
- But helps in positioning style in study of usage:
- In usage, language typically reflects all text and context dimensions of genre
 - Cf Biber 1988, 1989, 1995
- By contrast, style reflects idiosyncratic pattern of choice and combination within those constraints
 - E.g. a particular text—or set of texts—as more or less involved than usual, more or less narrative than usual, and so on

Two senses of 'style'

- Proposed genre model can explain that there are two distinct senses of 'style':
- 'Style1' is way of doing discourse, including genre variables like medium, type, professional register and so on (discourse notion of 'style')
 - *Language of fiction, lg of narrative, lg of persuasion, lg of politics, lg of talk, lg of internet, etc.*
- 'Style 2' is way of doing language itself, given previous constraints (language sense of 'style')
 - *Language of Jane Eyre, lg of The Times, lg of Bush and Blair, lg of Johan Cruyff*

So how genre?

- Knowledge schema of MD-MF usage event
- Includes code as one dimension, with number of variables
- Within code, structure of linguistic code in text can reflect properties of text and context dimensions (style 1: 'discourse style', includes register)
- Structure of linguistic code in text can exhibit additional patterning within constraints of discourse style (style 2: 'style proper')

How style?

Genre approach in stylistic terms

- Discourse style studies (incl register / language variety) as background ('primary norms')
 - capture linguistic reflection of textual and contextual properties of genre
- Style proper of individual genre event in foreground ('secondary norm')
- Style proper and 'internal deviation' or 'local variation'
- Deviance > prominence > relevance
 - Statistical > psychological > literary research

Primary norms: Biber

- 1 million word corpus
 - LOB (written, 1961), London-Lund (spoken, 1953-1987)
- 67 language variables
 - 16 major grammatical cats: tense/aspect, place/time adverbials, pro-forms, questions, passives, etc.
- 23 genres
 - Including novels, conversations, etc.
 - 481 texts
- 5 dimensions (see handout)
 - Positive vs negative poles
 - Variables per dimension / pole

Illustration: conversationalization in *The Times*

- Conversationalization of public discourse
 - Fairclough 1994
 - In effect a shift in primary norms
- Anecdotal evidence from doctor-patient interactions, university prospectuses, and media interviews
- Corpus-linguistic, quantitative, statistical test, against background of genre-theoretical framework (Steen 2003b)
- Editorials in *The Times*, from 1950-1995

The language of ...

	<i>Editorials</i>	<i>Conversations</i>
1. Involved vs informational production	-10.0	35.3
2. Narrative vs non-narrative concerns	-0.8	-0.6
3. Explicit vs situation-dependent reference	1.9	-3.9
4. Overt expression of persuasion	3.1	-0.3
5. Abstract vs non-abstract information	0.3	-3.2

The style of ... editorials in *The Times*

	1950-1970	1975-1995
1. Involved vs informational production	10.1	13.3
2. Involved vs informational production	312.8	335.7
3. Narrative vs non-narrative concerns	41.0	41.2
4. Overt expression of persuasion	29.6	36.3

Discussion (1)

- *The Times* they are a-changing
 - The individual style of the newspaper has become more 'conversational'
- May be due to the need for *The Times* to compete with less formal newspapers
 - *If* the *Guardian* and the *Daily Telegraph* can be judged to be less formal
 - And/or *if* the tabloids can be seen as a genuine competitor since the sixties

Discussion (2)

- The times they are a-changing
 - But if all newspaper reporting has become more conversational, then it is not necessarily the style of *The Times* which has been changing, but the register within which it operates, as well as perhaps the domain and other dims, affecting the discourse style
 - This might be due to, for instance, the increased effect of news on television since 1975
- This alternative explanation can only be framed by an encompassing genre approach to style proper and discourse styles

Discussion (3)

- The two explanations may also be valid at the same time
 - This raises the question of which of the two developments is stronger
- Whether the individual style of *The Times* has changed relative to any changes in the primary norm (discourse style) of newspaper writing can only be determined by looking at a broader historical corpus including other newspapers

Comments (1)

- Style always a relational term:
 - *style of editorials*
 - *style of editorials in The Times*
- For discourse style, we therefore have as many categories as there are genres, subgenres, and super genres
 - Question remains whether we should call this “style of” or “language of”, emphasizing comparability with register and other language varieties that possess soci-cultural recognition and value
- For style proper, we therefore have as many categories as there are producers or groups of producers of genre events

Comments (2)

- Style remains complex, multi-dimensional and multi-feature phenomenon in itself
 - E.g. Biber 1988, Leech & Short 2007 [1981]
- Descriptive labels for dimensions of style in Biber already controversial
- Descriptive labels for complete categories of style even more questionable
- So: relational descriptions (e.g. conversational style) based on quantified corpus work
 - Provides basis for interpretation and comparison
 - When better alternatives on this basis, then also relate to terms for style in speech community

So how style?

- MD-MF model of language varieties
- Two levels of abstraction:
 - Discourse styles can reflect discourse properties of genre
 - Style proper can reflect properties of individual (groups of) producer(s)
- Suggestion to label categories of style by their discourse basis
 - in genre or producer

How cognitive linguistics?

Activity

- Rank order 10 personal ads in terms of most to least prominent (i.e., eye-catching) style
 - 2 minutes
 - Read through all of them first, then give score on separate score sheet
 - Keep original texts for reference

Stylistics and cognitive linguistics

- Differences between editorials in *Times*
- Issues of deviance, prominence and relevance
- Cognitive-linguistic approach:
 - Unconscious mental representation of discourse styles and styles proper
 - Attention and awareness
 - Understanding and appreciation

Deviance

- Editorials in terms of deviance
- But formal instead of semantic/conceptual
- Cognitive linguistics and semantic/conceptual categories for style:
 - Metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, etc.
- Other semantic/conceptual categories:
 - Image schemas, blends, etc.
 - Frames, scripts, scenarios, schemas, etc.
- But how?

Counting metaphors

- At formal linguistic level vs at conceptual level?
- At conceptual level: determined deductively vs inductively?
- Whether deductive or inductive approach: at level of complex or primary metaphor?
- For all of this: at level of words, phrases, clauses, discourse units, sentences, etc?

Looking at scenarios: love scenarios

- Simple love scenario
- Causation in love stories
- Is content dimension of any 'love story'?
- Is basic for content dimension of personal ads
 - Can explain some of language of personal ads (discourse style)
 - But not all (see other dimensions)
- More individual expressions, hinting at style proper?
 - Relation with prominence?

Metaphorical aspects of love

- But content and style
- Conceptual level:
 - Choice for conceptual metaphors?
 - Use / manipulation of which metaphors?
 - Content, at most discourse style, but can contribute to stylistic prominence
- Linguistic level:
 - Expression of these metaphors?
 - Style proper
 - Can contribute to stylistic prominence

Advantage of genre model

- Which metaphors belong to expression of content (love story)?
- Which metaphors belong to expression / reflection of other genre dimensions?
- Is the variation between metaphors and their linguistic forms part of discourse style (due to general variation) or part of style proper (due to individual patterning)?

Cognitive linguistics and deviance

- No problems for formal categories?
- Substantial problems for identification and demarcation of metaphors and other conceptual categories, such as love scenario and other scenarios
- How many classes of conceptual categories need to be distinguished for study of semantic / conceptual side of style?
 - Metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, etc.
 - Frame, script, scenario, schema, etc.
- How can this be done reliably, with a view to quantified corpus work?

Cognitive linguistics and prominence

- Theoretical interest in prominence in cognitive linguistics: attention and figure/ground
 - E.g. Langacker (2001) on attention frames in Current Discourse Space
 - E.G. Talmy (2000) on all language structure as attention-driven and attention-guiding
- But not systematically related to quantified formal and semantic study of style yet
 - “How do we get from deviance to prominence”?
- And not related to experience of language users yet
 - From semiotic to behavioral

Cognitive linguistics and relevance

- In literary analysis: role of stylistic feature in complete genre event
- In general analysis: idem
 - but with reference to explicitly postulated intended function and presumed effect
- Ultimate need to go from semiotic approach to behavioral approach
 - to test semiotic assumptions against language users' cognitive processes and products

Towards an applied cognitive stylistics

- From behavioral studies to applied studies with reference to style
 - Document design, editing, translation ('optimization')
 - Communication advice, training, testing
- Research program in effective communication
 - Genre and style in Language, Cognition, Communication

Conclusion

- Why genre?

Because appropriate level of abstraction for study of style in usage events

- How genre?

MD-MF model of knowledge schema which can be related to both verbal interaction and culture as well as to texts

- How style?

MD-MF model of language varieties as reflection of discourse properties of genre vs individual properties of (groups of) producer(s)

- How cognitive linguistics?

Study of formal and conceptual features of language as contributing to deviance, prominence, relevance