

Approaches to style in literature and rhetoric studies

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Introduction

- Introduction
- Stylistics in Dutch literary studies (Suzanne)
- Stylistics in rhetorical analysis of speeches (Maarten)
- Conclusion / discussion

Style in Dutch literary studies

- Why does stylistic research of literary texts occupy such a marginal position in Netherlandic studies?

What Is Stylistics and Why Are They Saying Such Terrible Things About It?

- Prof. Stanley Fish (UC Berkeley, 1972)

'Terrible Things'

1. Structuralism
2. Personality
3. Deviance
4. Poetry
5. Methodology
6. Generative linguistics

1. Structuralism

- Structure versus style
- *Merlyn* (1963-1967)
- A.L. Sötemann: *De structuur van Max Havelaar* (1966)
- W. Blok: *Verhaal en lezer* (1960)
- Frank Maatje: *Literatuurwetenschap* (1970)

1.1 Structuralism

- Structure: "The way in which in a literary work a world is created by means of words."

"Structuur is de manier waarop in een literair werk een wereld wordt opgebouwd door middel van woorden."

(Maatje 1970, p. 115.)

1.2 Structuralism

- "Style is, foremost, the special relation between somebody's use of speech on the one hand, and the supra-individual language which he uses on the other hand, and this insofar as that relation specifies something about his personality, is 'characteristic' for him."

(Maatje 1970, p. 59.)

1.3 Structuralism

- Style vs. structure
- An author or oeuvre has a style
- A particular novel has a structure
- No systematic linguistic approach

2. Personality

- Style vs. psychology
- Historical origin

- An author has style, a literary work has 'structure'

3. Deviance

- Deviance vs. choice
- Ordinary vs. 'literary' language use

4. Poetry

- Poetry vs. prose
- Focus on foregrounded elements
- Historical origin

5. Methodology

- Deviance vs. norm
- Prof. G.S. Overdiep (1885-1944)
- 'Standard language use' as norm

6. Generative linguistics

- Language-in-use vs. the language system
- Linguistics vs. literature studies

Conclusion

- Stylistics in Dutch Literature Studies
- Style vs. structure
- NWO project Stylistics of Dutch
- Micro-level and macro-level

The style of speeches

Ada Boerma vs. Thom de Graaf

- 'De burgemeester drukt niet in zijn eentje een stempel op de gemeente. De politieke besluitvorming is in eerste en laatste instantie aan de raad en aan het college. (...) De burgemeester heeft natuurlijk eigen taken, maar is niet een eerste en niet een **vijfde** wethouder. Ik ambieer die rol ook niet.'

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Purpose of the project

- A consistent method for critically evaluating the effectiveness of the style of speeches
- Micro-level vs. macro-level

1. Focus on literary texts

- Fowler (1986):

Linguistic Criticism is an introduction to the critical study of discourse; the chief emphasis is on those works of language hailed as 'literary', but I have tried to make it clear that all texts merit this sort of analysis (...).' (Fowler 1986: preface)

- Verdonk (1995)

2. Analyses of speeches

- 'American tradition'
- Cheng (2006)
- De Jong & Andeweg et al. (2004, 2005)

2.1 Interesting observations...

- Cheng (2006) analyses how Chen Shui-bian uses 'language rhetoric' to...
- ... defuse dangerously tense relations with China;
- ... repair crucial relations with the US government;
- ... gain public support in the country.

(Cheng 2006: 584)

2.1 Interesting observations...

- Identification strategies: use of *we*
- Key tokens of reference
- Classical rhetorical figures

2.2 ... but not systematic

- 'Random' choice of linguistic elements
- Other relevant stylistic devices?
- Trosborg (2000)

3.1 No explicit method

- Consistency: how can we analyze other speeches?
- Relatively few attempts to change this situation
- Netherlandic studies: Antoine Braet

3.1 No explicit method

- Braet: "What we want to know, is how a certain figure of speech affects or can affect the audience."
- ("Wat we willen weten , is welk effect op het publiek een bepaalde stijlfiguur heeft of kan hebben.")

(Braet 2007: 120)

3.2 Unsatisfying methods

- Braet (2007): 49 classical rhetorical figures...
- ... related to the different 'functions of language'...
- ... and the different constitutive factors in a speech event
(addresser, message, addressee, context, code)

3.2 Unsatisfying methods

- 'expressive figures' ↔ addresser:
 - *exclamation*
 - *hyperbole*
 - *anaphora*

- 'conative figures' ↔ addressee:
 - use of 'you'
 - *apostrophe*
 - *rhetorical question*

cf. Braet (2007: 122-134)

4. Subjective judgments

- We want to know: what is the effect a certain figure of speech has or can have? (cf. Braet 2007)
- Subjective judgments: 'figure X has effect Y'
- Subjectivity vs. intersubjectivity

4. Subjective judgments

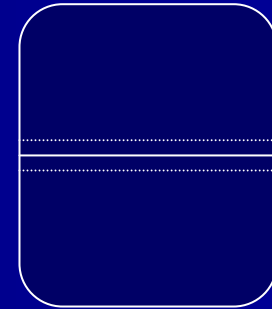
- A cognitive linguistic approach:
Verhagen (2005)
- What is the rhetorical, argumentative effect of scalar operators like *barely* and *almost*?

4. Subjective judgments

The tank is barely half full.

The tank is almost half full.

Verhagen (2005: 48)



=> effect: addressee is directed to draw a
negative / positive conclusion

4. Subjective judgments

- Analogously: what do figures of speech *do* at a micro-level?
- Subjective answer to that question, without linguistic underpinning
- Hard to judge the use of figures of speech at a macro-level intersubjectively

Summary

- Stylistics: focus on literary analysis
- Analyses of style: interesting observations, but...
 - ... not systematic;
 - ... no clear method, or an unsatisfying one
- Subjective judgments of classical rhetorical figures

'The style of speeches' (1)

1. The development of a consistent method

- How can judgments be made more intersubjectively?
- Can classical rhetorical figures be reinterpreted in terms of the effects of their component units?

'The style of speeches' (2)

2. Corpus analysis of a few classical rhetorical figures

=> hypotheses about their rhetorical effect(s)

3. Experiments

Questions?

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