

# Functional Styles of the English Language

Oniani T. G.

Professor, The State Teaching University of Physical Education and Sport. 49-Chavchavadze Avenue 0162, Tbilisi-Georgia

**Abstract:** *We have defined the object of linguo - stylistics as the study of the nature, functions and structure of SDs and EMS, on the one hand, and the study of the functional styles, on the other. We have outlined the general principles on which the notions of EMS and SDs rest.*

**Keywords:** Functional Styles, English Language

## 1. Introduction

It's now time to outline the general principles on which functional styles rest. *A Functional Style of Language is a System of Interrelated language Means Which Serves A Definite Aim in Communication.* A functional style is thus to be regarded as the product of a certain concrete task set by the sender of the message. Functional styles appear mainly in the literary standard of a language.

The literary standard of the English language, like that of any other developed language, is not homogeneous as it may seem. In fact the standard English literary language in the course of its development has fallen into several subsystems each other of which has acquired its own peculiarities which are typical of the given functional style. The members of the language community, especially those who are sufficiently trained and responsive to language variations, recognize these styles as independent wholes. The peculiar choice of language means is primarily predetermined by the aim of the communication with the result that a more or less closed system is built up. One set of language media stands in opposition to other sets of language media with other aims, and these other sets have other choices and arrangements of language means.

What we here call functional styles are also called registers or discourses.

In the English literary standard we distinguish the following major functional styles:

- 1) The language of belles-lettres.
- 2) The language of publicistic literature.
- 3) The language of newspapers.
- 4) The language of scientific prose.
- 5) The language of official documents.

As has already been mentioned, functional styles are the product of the development of the written variety of language.\*Each FS may be characterized by a number of distinctive feature, leading or subordinate, constant or changing, obligatory or optional. Most of the FSs, however, are perceived as independent wholes due to a peculiar combination and interrelation of features common to all with the leading ones of each FS.

ch FS in subdivided into a number of substyles. These represent varieties of the abstract invariant. Each variety has basic features common to all the varieties of the given FS and peculiar. Features typical of this variety alone. Still a

substyle can, in some cases, deviate so far from the invariant that in its extreme it may even break away.

We clearly perceive the following substyles of the five FSs given above.

The belles-lettres FS has the following substyles:

- a) The language style of poetry;
- b) The language style of emotive prose;
- c) The language style of drama.

The publicist Ic-FS comprise the following substyles:

- a) The language style of oratory;
- b) The language style of essays;
- c) The language style of feature articles in newspaper and journals.

The newspaper FS falls into:

- a) The language style of brief news items and communiques;
- b) The language style of newspaper headings and
- c) The language style of notices and advertisement.

The scientific prose FS also has three divisions:

- a) The language style of humanitarian sciences;
- b) The language style of "exact" sciences;
- c) The language style of popular scientific prose.

The official document FS can be divided into four varieties:

- a) The language style of diplomatic documents;
- b) The language style of business documents;
- c) The language style of legal documents;
- d) The language style of military documents.

The classification presented here is by no means arbitrary. It is the result of long and minute observations of factual material in which not only peculiarities of language usage were taken into account but also extralinguistic data, in particular the purport of the communication. However, we admit that, this classification is not proof against criticism. Other schemes may possibly be elaborated and highlighted by different approaches to the problem of functional styles. The classification of FSs is not bound to reflect more than one angle of vision. Thus, for example, some stylistic consider that newspaper articles should be classed under the functional style of newspaper language, not under the language of publicistic literature. Others insist on including the language of everyday- life discourse into the system of functional styles. There are only two main functional styles: the language of science and that of emotive literature.\*

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It is inevitable, of course, that any classification should lead to some kind of simplification of the facts classified, because items are considered in isolation. Moreover, substyles assume, as it were, the aspect of closed systems. But no classification, useful though it may be from the theoretical point of view, should be allowed to blind us as to the conventionality of classification in general. When analyzing concrete texts, we discover that boundaries between them sometimes become less and less discernible. Thus, for instance, the signs of difference are sometimes almost imperceptible between poetry and emotive prose; between newspaper FS and publicistic FS; between a popular scientific article and a scientific treatise; between essay and a scientific article. But extremes are apparent from the ways language units are used both structurally and semantically. Language serves a variety of needs and these needs have given birth to the principles on which our classification is based and which in their turn presuppose the choice and combination of language means.

We presume that the reader has noticed the insistent use of the expression "language style" or 'style of language' in the above classification. This is done in order to emphasize the idea that in this work the word 'style' is applied purely to linguistic data.

The classification given above to our mind adequately represents the facts of the standard English language. For detailed analyses of FSs where in addition to arguments for placing this or that FS in a given group, illustrations with commentary will be found.

## 2. Varieties of Language

The functioning of the literary language in various spheres of human activity and with different aims of communication has resulted in its differentiation. This differentiation is predetermined by two distinct factors, namely, the actual situation in which the language is being used and the aim of the communication. The actual situation of the communication has evolved two varieties of language--- the spoken and the written. The varying aim of the communication have caused the literary language to fall into a number of self-sufficient systems. Of the two varieties of language, diachronically the spoken is primary and the written is the secondary. Each of these varieties has developed its own features and qualities which in many ways may be regarded as opposed to each other. The situation in which the spoken variety of language is used and in which it develops, can be described concisely as the presence of an interlocutor. The written variety, on the contrary, presupposes the absence of an interlocutor. The spoken language is maintained in the form of a dialogue, the written in the form of a monologue. The spoken language has a considerable advantage over the written, in that the human voice comes into play. This is a powerful means of a modulating the utterance, as are all kinds of gestures, which, together with the intonation, give additional information. The written language has to seek means to compensate for what it lacks. Therefore the written utterance will inevitably be more diffuse, more explanatory. In other words, it has to produce an enlarged representation of the communication in order to be explicit enough.

The forms of the written language replace those of the spoken language when dissemination of ideas is the purpose in view. It is the written variety of language with its careful organization and deliberate choice of words and constructions that can have political, cultural and educational influence on a wide and scattered public. In the long process of its functioning, the written language has acquired the utterance, which is an essential point in the written language. The gap between the spoken and the written varieties of language, wider or narrower at different periods in the development of the literary language, will always remain apparent due to the difference in the circumstances in which the two are used. Here is an example showing the difference. "marvelous beast, a fox. Great places for wild life, these wooded chines; so steep you cannot disturb them—pigeons, jays, woodpeckers, rabbits, foxes, hares, pheasants—every mortal thing"

Its written counterpart would run as follows: "what a marvelous beast a fox is! These wooded chines are splendid places for wild life. They are so steep that one can't disturb anything. Therefore one can see every imaginable creature here – pigeon, jays, woodpeckers, rabbits, foxes, hares and pheasants" The use of the peculiarities of the spoken variety in the written language, or vice versa, the peculiarities of the written language in lively speech, will always produce a ludicrous effect." the written language is constantly being enlivened by expressions born in conversation but must not give up what it has acquired in the course of centuries. To use the spoken language only, means not to know the language"\*

It must be borne in mind that the belles-lettres style there may appear elements of colloquial language but it will always be stylized to a greater or lesser degree by the writer. The term 'belles-lettres' itself suggests the use of the written language. The spoken language by its very nature is spontaneous, momentary, fleeting. It vanishes after having fulfilled its purpose, which is to communicate a thought, no matter whether it is trivial or really important. The idea remains, the language dissolves in it. The written language, on the contrary, lives together with the idea it expresses. The spoken language cannot be detached from the user of it, the speaker, who is unable to view it from the outside. The written language, on the contrary, can be detached from the writer, enabling him to look upon his utterance objectively and giving him the opportunity to correct and improve what has been put on paper. That is why it is said that the written language bears a greater volume of responsibility than its spoken counterpart.

The spoken variety differs from the written language phonetically, morphologically, lexically and syntactically. Thus, of morphological forms the spoken language commonly uses contracted forms, as 'he'd' (he would). It must be remembered that we touch upon the differences between the two varieties of the English language within standard (literary) English. However, some forms of the vernacular do make their way into the oral (spoken) variety of standard English. They are, as it were, on the way to be admitted into the standard. Such are, for example, the use of don't instead of doesn't, as in "it's a wonder his father don't take him in his bank" (Dreiser); he instead of him, as in "I

used to play tennis with he and Mrs. Antolini''(Salinger); I says, ain't, them instead of these or those, as in Them's some of your chaps, aren't they?'; Leggo== 'let's go, hellova= 'hell of a' and others.

These morphological and phonetic peculiarities are sometimes regarded as violations of grammar rules caused by a certain carelessness which accompanies the quick tempo of colloquial speech or an excited state of mind. Others are typical of territorial or social dialects. The following passage is illustrative in this respect:

'Mum, I've asked a young lady to come to tea tomorrow. Is that all right?'

'You done what?' asked Mrs. Sunbury, for a moment forgetting her grammar.

'You heard, mum.' (Maugham)

Some of these improprieties are now recognized as behind legitimate forms of colloquial English. Prof. Whitehall of Indiana University now admits that "Colloquial spoken English often uses them as the plural form of this and that, written English uses these and those. "Them men have arrived"\*

The most striking difference between the spoken and written language is, however, in the vocabulary used. There are words and phrases typically colloquial, on the one hand, and typically bookish, on the other. This problem will be dealt with in detail in the next chapter. Such words and phrases as 'sloppy', 'to be gone on somebody' and so on. The spoken language makes ample use of intensifying words. These are interjections and words with strong emotive meaning, as oaths, swear-words and adjectives which have lost their primary meaning and only serve the purpose of intensifying the emotional charge of the utterance. for example:

'I'd sure like to hear some more about them people.' (Don . Gordon)

'In fact you bought to be darn glad you went to Burtingame'' (L.Ford)

'He put my goddam paper down...'' (Salinger)

The words 'here' and 'there' are also used to reinforce the demonstrative pronouns, as in:

'If I can get a talk with this here servant..' said Weller.

'That there food is good''

There is another characteristic feature of colloquial language, namely, the insertion into the utterance of words without any meaning, which are appropriately called "fill-ups" or empty words. To some extent they give a touch of completeness to the sentence if used at the end of it or, if used in the middle, help the speaker to fill the gap when unable to find the proper word. Illustrative is the use of "and all" in Holden's speech in Salinger's novel "The Catcher in the rye." Here are some examples:

'She looked so damn nice, the way she kept going around and around in her blue coat and all'

'...splendid and clear-thinking and all.'

'...he is my brother and all.'

Such words and set expressions as well, so to say, you see, you know, you understand, and all, as well as what may be called "mumbling words" like -m-m, er-r, also belong to the category of fill-ups. The syntactical peculiarities of the spoken language are perhaps not so striking as the lexical ones, but more than any other features they reveal the true nature of the spoken variety of language, that is, the situational character of the communication. The first of them is what is erroneously called ellipsis, that is, the omissions of parts of the utterance easily supplied by the situation in which the communication takes place. These are in fact not omissions in which the communication takes place. These are in fact not commissions, but the regular absence of parts unnecessary in lively conversation when there are two or more people speaking. Here are some absolutely normal and legitimate constructions which have missing elements in the spoken variety of language, elements which are, however, indispensable in the written language:

'tell you what.'

'who you with?'' (Who are you with)''

'Ever go back to England?''

A second feature is the tendency to use the direct word-order in question or small omit the auxiliary verb, leaving it to the intonation to indicate the grammatical meaning of the sentence, for example:

'Scrooge knew Marley was dead'' (Dickens)

'Miss Holland look after you and all that?''

Unfinished sentences are also typical of the spoken language, for example, 'If you behave like that I'll...'

There is a syntactical structure with a tautological subject which is also considered characteristic of colloquial English. It is a construction in which two subjects are used where one is sufficient reference. Usually they are noun and pronoun, as in:

'He was a kind boy, Harry'

'Helen, she was there. Ask her.'

In the spoken language it is very natural to have a string of sentences without any connections or linked with and, that servant of all work, for example:

'Came home late. Had supper and went to bed. Couldn't sleep, of course. The evening had been too much of a strain'

It has already been pointed out that the spoken variety of language is far more emotional than its counterpart, due mainly to the advantage the human voice supplies. This emotiveness of colloquial language has produced a number of syntactical structures which so far have been little investigated and the meaning of which can hardly be discerned without a proper intonation design. Here are some of them:

'Isn't she cute!''

'Don't you tell me that''

'A which she is!''

You are telling me!''

The characteristic syntactical features of the written variety of language can easily be perceived by the student of language. As the situation must be made clear by the context, the utterance becomes more exact. That means the relations between the parts of the utterance must be precise. Hence the abundance of all kinds of conjunction, adverbial phrases and other means which may serve as connectives. As someone has said, a clear writer is always conscious of a reader over his shoulder. He must explain. Most of the connecting words were evolved in the written language and for the most part are used only there. Such connectives as 'moreover, 'furthermore, 'likewise, 'similarly, in connection with', 'nevertheless, and so on. Have and have a decidedly bookish flavour and are seldom used in ordinary conversation. Another semantical feature of the written language is its use of complicated sentence-units. The written language prefers hypotaxis to parataxis; long periods are more frequent than short utterance. The monologue character of the written language forcibly demands logical coherence of the ideas expressed and the breaking of the utterance into observable spans; hence units like the supra-phrasal unit and paragraph.

The words and word combinations of the written language have also gained recognition as a separate layer of the English vocabulary. Richard D. Altick, Prof. of English at the Ohio State University, calls many phrases that tend to the bookish "space-wasters". There are despite the fact(=although), in the matter(=about), a long period of time(=a long time), in the capacity of (=as) and others. However, these "space-writer" cannot always be so easily dispensed with, not to take into consideration who frequently over-indulge in bookishness of expression. The syntactical structure, no matter how complicated it may be, reflects the essential difference between the two varieties of language, and is accepted without question. Any syntactical pattern of the written variety will always show the interrelation between the parts of the utterance, so there is nothing to hinder the reader in grasping the whole. This is the case with prose writing.

With regards to poetry, the situation is something different. Rescent observations on the peculiarities of the language of modern English and American poetry have proved that it is mainly the breach of syntactical laws that hinders understanding to a degree that the message becomes undecodable. Coherence and logical until backed up purely linguistic means is therefore and essential property of the written variety of language.

The bookish vocabulary, one of the notable properties of the written language, may, on the contrary, go beyond the grasping powers of even the most intelligent reader and may very frequently need interpretation.

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