

Book reviews

Stylistics: A Resource Book for Students

Paul Simpson, Routledge, London, 2004, xiv + 247 pp., ISBN 0-415-28104-0 (hardback)/0-415-28105-9 (paperback)

Pragmatic Stylistics

Elizabeth Black, Edinburgh University Press Ltd., 2006, x + 166 pp., ISBN 0-7486-2040-0 (hardback)/0-7486-2041-2049 (paperback)

The literature on stylistics has recently been enriched by two contributions directed primarily at students, postgraduates and beginning researchers. Both of the publications serve as comprehensive and insightful textbooks on stylistics. Paul Simpson's book entitled "Stylistics: A resource book for students" acquaints readers with a plethora of issues most salient in contemporary stylistics, while Elizabeth Black's "Pragmatic Stylistics" provides an advanced introduction to the domain in question, focusing on the pragmatic analysis of literary discourse.

Paul Simpson's resource book constitutes a most palatable introduction to pivotal notions in contemporary stylistics, enabling students to familiarise themselves with the concepts, patterns and levels facilitating stylistic description. Upon perusal, readers should be fully equipped with indispensable heuristic tools applicable to texts subject to their own studies. One of the greatest merits of the book is its accessibility to the inexperienced, as it presupposes no prior knowledge on the readers' part and clearly delineates semantic concepts and proposals forming the essential skeleton of the linguistic field. The overview of theories is amply illustrated with exemplification derived from diversified literary sources ranging from Shakespeare's to Welsh's works. The author enables readers to follow his train of thought and hence presents how semantic ruminations should be conducted. In addition, the book abounds in activities which engage readers provoking their own analyses and apply the knowledge acquired. Also, the author intertwines the short units with recapitulations of the previous section or sections, which allows students to consolidate their knowledge. What also helps comprehension is illustrations, i.e. figures and tables, which display proposals which would be difficult to capture via coherent text. The book is written in a pleasurable, entertaining style devoid of any redundant terminological hair-splitting.

The volume boasts an innovative two-dimensional structure anchored in four sections: A: introduction, B: development, C: exploration and D: extension, along which the author pursues twelve strands embracing stylistic topics. Each of the sections may serve as a self-contained entity for study during linear, viz. 'vertical' perusal. As a result, students acquire a coherent picture of stylistics from the perspective of both theory and practice, starting from the

basics and gradually expanding their knowledge. On the other hand, each of the topics can be pored over 'horizontally' across the numbered units from each of the sections, which allows for gradual development of knowledge along each strand. In other words, the latter pattern of reading leads addressees from the most rudimentary issues to the level of expertise in the particular area. Given this structural complexity, the book opens with a description of the volume and guidance as to how to read it according to either paradigm. Complex as the structure may seem initially, it actually simplifies the process of reading and gradual absorption of knowledge. The contents are presented, first chronologically and then cross-referenced in accordance with the twelve topical units, most of which are composed of four entities (A–D).

In the introduction (section A), 12 key concepts in stylistics are elucidated, which provides readers with essential information. In section B, entitled 'the development,' readers are afforded insight into related notions and need to draw from the foundations laid out in section A, adding more details and triggering students' interest in intricacies of the topics in focus. In section C readers are encouraged to undertake their own exploration and investigation. The author's premise is thus that the most beneficial way to study stylistics is to apply the knowledge gained to practical activity. Hence, he provides language data and guides students through their own investigation, deliberately avoiding to offer clear-cut conclusions, the aim being to motivate readers to resort to the newly acquired knowledge and arrive at their own conclusions. The final section D, i.e. 'the extension', enables students to make a comparison between their own competence in the field of stylistics with the research conducted by acclaimed experts. Simpson has chosen a wide-ranging selection of excerpts from acknowledged writings by notable scholars.

Each string, i.e. topic, is developed in consecutive sections proceeding from generalities to details, which the author has found crucial. Hence, section A focuses on rudimentary notions which, when gathered, produce a broad picture of stylistics. More meticulous description and exploration of related issues follows in the next two sections enriched with activities for students and sample analyses. The first strand introduces the field of stylistics answering the most fundamental questions while the second one is engaged with the levels of language. What comes next is the analysis of style and grammar, also juxtaposed with sentence styles and genres. The fourth strand is targeted at the sound pattern of poetry and relevant issues such as rhythm and metre, whereas the next topic is narrative, its structure and sociolinguistics. Further the author concentrates on the inherent idiosyncrasy of style and hence transitivity, which may characterise literary genres, and analyses the idiosyncrasy of style dependent on the point of view. The eighth strand elucidates the notion of representation of speech and thought. To balance this view, Simpson also relates to dialogic structure of discourse. The next two strands belong to the cognitive perspective, the first elaborating on the realm of cognitive stylistics in general and the second analysing two tropes, viz. metaphor and metonymy. The last strand, maintained only in section A, presents the notion of verbal humour in the light of stylistic research. It would seem quixotic to attempt to criticise the content matter itself as Simpson aims primarily at conscientious summary of widely supported proposals, refraining from transparently subjective interpretations. Simpson's major input is thus his subjective selection of resources, both scholarly and literary, as well as authorial analysis of the literature quoted.

Section D serves a supplementary function, providing an array of original scholarly texts. The author motivates his choice of excerpts with a twofold claim; namely that the collection gathered originates from sources, which are easily accessible, even if of varied difficulty, and that their relevance to stylistic studies is unquestionable. The author's intention is to cover a wide range of topics yielding vital background to the discipline and simultaneously familiarise readers with significant research areas. Notably, those are compatible with the twelve strands maintained

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