

KÖNYVISMERTETÉSEK

Gábor Tolcsvai Nagy (2005): *A Cognitive Theory of Style*.

Metalinguistica 17. Frankfurt am Main:

Peter Lang GmbH. 162 pp.

A Cognitive Theory of Style presents a model which helps to grasp and interpret style in its complexity. The book offers an illuminating summary of Tolcsvai Nagy's previous contributions to style (*A magyar nyelv stilisztikája — The Stylistics of the Hungarian Language, 1996*), cognitive linguistics and text linguistics (*A magyar nyelv szövegtana — The Text Linguistics of the Hungarian Language, 2000*) in a consistent, detailed and clear framework.

Primarily based upon Langacker's and Lakoff's principles of cognitive linguistics, the theory enhances the results of pragmatics, discourse analysis, text linguistics, Halliday's functional linguistics, as well as sociolinguistics and literary hermeneutics.

The cognitive approach may greatly contribute to the interpretation of style in several ways. The usage-based nature of cognitive linguistics can reveal not only much of the stylistic potential and socio-cultural components of language but also of the stylistic structure of various texts. Moreover, the study of cognitive processes makes it possible to model the linguistic knowledge of speaker and listener as well as verbal interaction itself.

The book is divided into five big chapters, several subsections and a summary: the titles of the chapters and subsections represent both the components of the entire style model and their systems, i.e. an outline of style theory.

Divided into 6 subsections, Chapter 1 (*Grounding the notion style*) depicts the former and present interpretations of the notion of style, elaborating on the basic assumptions that play a role in this cognitive theory of style. The author starts out from Sandig's folk categories of style (1986) to indicate that speakers' naïve judgements represent aspects that have an essential function even in the cognitive model of verbal interaction (1.1). After reviewing the history of scholarly reflections on style from the ancient Greeks until the late modern and post-modern periods (1.2), he points out that a shift has occurred from structuralism, concerned with standard language as a reference point, clearly distinguishing between contents and form and ignoring the historical and interactional character of language, to complex interpretations of style which integrate the results of pragmatics,

discourse analysis, register theory, sociolinguistics and semantics. As a consequence, “*recent theories of style define style as a complex phenomenon relative to ‘inner’ factors of the language system and textual structure and cohesion, and on the other hand ‘outer’ factors (act, situation, context)*” (21).

After presenting the possible directions of style analysis, the author gives a basic overview of cognitive linguistics (1.4) and, primarily following in the footsteps of Langacker and Lakoff, summarizes the features of this aspect that can play a major role in his approach to style. Since cognitive linguistics has worked out much of the description of minor semantic structures, the author assumes that a cognitive theory of style placed in a systematic framework also has to integrate pragmatic and discursive factors. In Tolcsvai Nagy’s opinion “*this assessment is fundamental for a cognitive theory of style, because now there is a chance to give a more functional view of style in synthesizing domains traditionally labelled syntax and pragmatics by the usage based model of cognitive linguistics*” (29).

Building on previous conclusions, subsection 1.5 summarizes how the notion of style can be interpreted within a cognitive framework. A major factor that gives rise to style is the variability of language. So far cognitive linguistics has analysed this from a semantic perspective. Specifically, different linguistic expressions not only determine contents, but also the way in which those contents are construed and portrayed. While in Langacker’s theory this construal only involves imagery, Tolcsvai Nagy also extends this aspect to style, which is novel in his analysis. In the cognitive approach, the foreground-background relation plays a vital role: things are not only presented on their own but also in the foreground of other things. The author applies this theory to style: according to his interpretation, a linguistic expression can gain its stylistic value when standing out in the background of other expressions with similar functions.

Subsection 1.6 outlines the entire style model presented in the book, describing the three aspects enhanced in the approach of the complexity of style: the stylistic potentials of language, the socio-cultural factors and the stylistic structure.

The most extensive part of the book (*The stylistic potential of language*), Chapter 2 deals with some basic phenomena of grammar as a linguistic potential from the perspective of style, focusing on the semantic structures of nouns and nominals, verbs and clauses, metaphors, blends and rhetorical figures. In presenting a number of phenomena, the author first sketches out their basic cognitive interpretation and then analyzes literary fragments, mainly by Joyce, to point out the roles these factors may play in the style of a text. In the case of nouns, verbs, clauses and sentences, Tolcsvai Nagy considers non-prototypical occurrences and realizations in terms of potential stylistic effects (2.1-2.4). At this point, Tolcsvai seems to be somewhat

inconsistent since he emphasises the less usual and non-prototypical realisations. However, it is conventionality and prototypicality which may give usual and prototypical forms a neutral stylistic effect in the stylistic structure.

The theory of metaphor (2.5) is of outstanding importance in the history of cognitive linguistics (cf. Lakoff–Johnson 1980). In this sense, metaphor is the result of mappings between two conceptual domains, and metaphorism basically defines the representative capacity of language. In analyzing poetic metaphors, Lakoff and Turner (1989) already dealt with the stylistic potentials of this general semantic structure. They proposed that everyday metaphorical expressions become poetic via certain semantic operations, such as extension, elaboration, questioning and composing. As an extension of this theory, Tolcsvai Nagy contends that the stylistic role of metaphors is determined by different scalar features, such as the degree of conventionality of the source and the target domains or the semantic distance between them. Since the author adopts a context-based approach to style, he not only takes into account the composition of metaphors, but also the way in which they are integrated in discourse.

By means of expressive illustrations, Tolcsvai Nagy presents the phenomenon of blending (2.6), by which two mental spaces are joined according to the principles of a generic domain in order to create a fourth domain called the blend. For demonstration he chooses the conventional expression “*head of department*” as an example. In order to make the potentials of style more tangible, he goes on to analyze a more poetic expression (*chaosmos*), and explains that the potential of style consists of the conceptual distance between the input spaces in blending, the number of projections, the coherence of the blend, and the degree of its conventionality.

By analyzing an addition and a hypallage, subsection 2.7 (a cognitive interpretation of rhetoric figures) suggests that classical rhetoric theory should also be interpreted in a novel way.

Regarding stylistic potentials, Tolcsvai Nagy not only employs the results of cognitive linguistics but also improves them in a constructive way. His assessments justify that all linguistic phenomena can possess stylistic values through a comparison process: “*Concerning style, comparison is a matching process, in which two (or more) composite structures, whatever their size, are mapped onto each other to establish the difference between them in terms of cognitive processes involved in the formation of the given composite structures*” (83).

Chapter 3 describes the complex socio-cultural components of style. Sociolinguistic and other values within cognitive linguistics already emerged in Langacker’s theory, who claimed that these factors can always

be attributed to the meaning matrix of certain expressions, in a less central position than the meaning of a word though. One of the major results of Tolcsvai Nagy's style model is the detailed presentation enhancing the socio-cultural factors with all their relevant components. As the socio-cultural factors of style, he characterizes five cognitive domains derived from the cognitive model of verbal interaction: the domains of attitude, situation, value, time and language varieties. These domains build up to continua and can be divided into different subdomains which overlap at the edges.

The author proposes that there is a neutral subdomain within four of the five domains and that neutrality, in his view, "*does not mean something without style, but something that has no foregrounded (figured) component in that domain*" (87).

These domains have parallel distributions, i.e. some of their subdomains typically go hand in hand: the book presents these co-occurrences via demonstrative examples and detailed charts, e.g. if a language phenomenon is neutral in terms of attitude, then so is it in other domains, or if something is familiar in the domain of attitude, it is generally informal in terms of situation and is characterized as deprivation in terms of value. These co-occurrences create the informal, the neutral and the formal protostyles.

One of the methodological assets of Tolcsvai Nagy's book is that he monitors the role of socio-cultural factors in style attribution also by means of tests. As a pioneer in Hungarian stylistic research, he has encouraged his survey respondents to place the words and expressions of two pieces of daily news in the subdomains of the above mentioned domains. This part of the book is essential because it is impossible to get direct access to style attribution of the speaker and the listener, thus the different style attributions belonging to the same text and the problem arising from their differences can only be solved through empiric research.

Style is always a component of text meaning, and certain linguistic expressions only become relevant in context during the process of verbal interaction. Therefore Chapter 4 (*Style and text*), which describes the structure of style, is an important part of the entire approach. Cognitive linguistics attaches great importance to the processual character of language: the structure of style is inseparable from the operations of text construction and text comprehension. The stylistic structure of text includes the relations between stylistically foregrounded elements, the relations between these elements and the coherence factors and the relations between these elements and the text type characteristics.

As an attempt to present the structure of style, Tolcsvai Nagy analyzes a number of texts. This includes the recipient's statements about the stylistic structure, and the heterogeneity and homogeneity of the daily news items

examined in the previous chapter. The author emphasizes that the socio-cultural factors operating in the two texts in a different way exert a great influence on the different interpretations of complete texts as complex structures.

Touching upon all components of the style model, the author points out “*that a cognitive theory of style cannot be worked out without modelling the speaker’s and the listener’s knowledge of style*” (117). Therefore Chapter 5 (*Style in verbal interaction*) complements previous approaches by describing the dynamism of verbal interaction and the stylistic knowledge of the speaker and the listener. Simple but expressive illustrations show the speaker’s and the listener’s attitude to different style schemata. The language horizons of interaction partakers can overlap to an extent that they will judge a stylistic phenomenon in the same way. However, it is also possible that their different horizons will make them evaluate certain features in different ways. On the basis of the test results of daily news items, Gábor Tolcsvai Nagy sets the notion of style attribution apart from stylistic effect. Style attribution is a categorization made on the basis of language and socio-cultural knowledge, while stylistic effect is a mental and emotional state resulting from on-line stylistic attributions.

The literary text plays an outstanding role in the tradition of stylistic interpretation. In the light of the cognitive theory, the questions of literary style basically coincide with those of ordinary texts. The style of literary texts only deviates from the style of everyday communication in a few points, such as the way of reception, the greater extent of complexity and extensiveness of the stylistic system, the more intensive predominance of the stylistic potentials of language, and hence a greater mental effort to understand them.

Tolcsvai Nagy’s work is a concise synthesis of a new theory of style, which reinterprets and applies the results of cognitive style research, while being able to integrate the results of traditional interpretations of style. In addition, the publication of the book in English is vital since in spite of the growing popularity of cognitive linguistics, so far no comprehensive theory has been created for a cognitive approach to style. Such ideas were sparsely presented in various analyses using cognitive principles (cf. Semino–Culperer 2002). Its publication in the series *Metalinguistica* will certainly help the book to find its way to international discourse on style.

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Adamik-Jászó, Anna: Literacy in Hungary. Past and Present

Budapest: Dinasztia Educational Publisher – The National Educational Library and Museum, 2006. 102 pp.

The book is a comprehensive survey of the history of elementary reading instruction in Hungary, from the foundation of the first school in 996 up to the present days. The author, Anna Adamik-Jászó, is professor of linguistics at Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest. Her field of research is Hungarian Language Teaching Methodology, especially the Methodology of Reading. She has developed a language and literature programme for the first eight grades.

The first two chapters briefly survey the following questions: who the Hungarians are; what should be known about their origins and about their history since the foundation of the state in 1000 A. D.; what the basic characteristics of the Hungarian language are. The latter is important when reading methods are determined by the features of this Finno-Ugric (Uralic) language, which differs considerably from Indo-European languages. Hungarian is an agglutinative language, abounding in suffixes. Its orthography is relatively easy thanks to the transparent phoneme-grapheme correspondences; consequently the phonics method can be applied to reading instruction, but the length of word forms also makes the syllable an important reading unit. All these linguistic phenomena make it almost impossible to use the whole-word method.