



## Cognitive Stylistic and Its Analysis

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### Abstract

Cognitive stylistics goes beyond stylistic accounting for literary interpretation via linguistic models to investigate the commonalities and the idiosyncrasies in reading experiences based on cognitive scientific insights into the relationship between the mind, language and the world.

**Keywords:** Cognitive stylistics, mind style, darkness, friend, the metaphor, simile, personification, socio-cultural, literary texts, conceptual metaphor

### Introduction

Cognitive stylistics is a sub-discipline in the field of applied linguistics. Stockwell observes, “Cognitive stylistics provides a new way of thinking about literature involving the application of cognitive linguistics and psychology to the literary texts”.

He also notifies that cognitive stylistics is more concerned with presenting a descriptive and detailed account of linguistic features of a text in a mechanistic and non-evaluative way. In confirming, the connection between literature and psychology, Freeman suggests that literary texts are “the products of cognizing minds”, and he describes interpretations as “the products of other cognizing minds in the context of the physical and socio-cultural worlds in which they have been created and read”. In this respect, Stockwell asserts that cognitive stylistics looks at people as cognitive human beings who rely on their background knowledge and experiences to understand literary texts. Obviously, cognitive stylistics offers important means for the reader to have a clear view of text and context, circumstances and uses, knowledge and beliefs. It can, thus, be seen as a starting point for readers to understand and approach how a literary context is built. The analysis has been conducted in the light of “a widespread cognitive turn in the history of literature”, and aims to address the important issues of interpretation, as well as the nature of literary connections. The study exploits the concept of a “mind style” to describe the individual features of world-view that are cognitive in origin and include thinking, language and behavioral patterns that can be attributed to authors, narrators or characters. Considering the importance of the linguistic expressions of a particular conceptualization of the world, the value of metaphors is emphasized as one of the most powerful tools of human cognition for the construction of mind style.

In other terms, cognitive stylistics explores, how certain types of metaphorical images can only be understood by using the reader’s knowledge, beliefs and inferences. Furthermore, cognitive stylistics, as Jeffries and McIntyre demonstrate, takes into account the cognitive processes by which readers respond to particular aspects of texts. It attempts to capture how



readers employ their real life schematic knowledge in the interpretation of literary texts. These two scholars also confirm that literary texts contain triggers in which stimulate aspects of readers' prior knowledge to allow them to construct a mental representation of the world of the text. One of the most important point to be added here, Stockwell states that many scholars, who work in the field of cognitive stylistics, expanded the boundaries of linguistic analysis of literature by using different theories such as schema theory, conceptual metaphor theory, text world theory, blending theory, mental space theories etc. All these theories provide frameworks for the analysis of literature and focus on reading and cognition.

**Cognitive stylistics** combines the kind of explicit rigorous and detailed linguistic analysis of literary texts that is typical of the stylistic tradition with a systematic and theoretically informed consideration of the cognitive structures and processes that underlie the production and reception of language. Stylistic analysis tends to make use of linguistic theories or frameworks in order to explain or predict interpretation. What is new about cognitive stylistic is the way in which linguistic analysis is systematically based on theories that relate linguistic choices to cognitive structures and processes. This provides more systematic and explicit accounts of the relationship between texts on one hand and responses and interpretation on the other. What makes cognitive stylistics somewhat different is its relationship to cognitive science. It is meant that cognitive theory of linguistic and the cognitive psychology of reading are two fields that relate directly to cognitive stylistics. Reading processes and cognition have become useful avenues of exploration for those in stylistics. By including the human mind, cognitive stylistics opens up new area for literary study. That is to pay attention to the mind when conducting a stylistic analysis. While cognitive stylistics is intended to supplement rather than supplant existing methods of analysis, it does aim to shift the focus away from models of text and composition towards models that make explicit the links between the human mind and the process of reading. Finally, it is important to say that in cognitive stylistic analysis, the focus must be given to the language and mind and how readers respond as they did, and why they did so resulting in approaching different and creative possibilities of interpretation of the text.

**Developments in Cognitive Stylistics** Some of the essential keys and devices are used to transfer, modify and blend mental constructs are schema theory, text world theory, conceptual metaphor and mental space theory, which play a pivotal role in cognitive stylistics.

We also regard the two labels as largely overlapping, but have adopted "cognitive stylistics" in the title of this volume in order to emphasize a concern for close attention to the language of texts. A more significant aspect of variation within this book is to do with the particular cognitive approach adopted in each chapter. Not surprisingly, most chapters are influenced by cognitive linguistics as associated with the work of Langacker, Lakoff and others. Indeed, it could be argued that the rise of what we call cognitive stylistics at this particular point in history is partly due to the increasing influence of cognitive linguistics and, more specifically, of cognitive metaphor theory in the Lakoff tradition. However, those contributors who draw from this particular paradigm differ in how exactly they position themselves in relation to it. Freeman, Hamilton, Popova and Steen see cognitive stylistics as part of the cognitive linguistic paradigm. Others treat cognitive linguistics as one of the cognitive theories or paradigms that can feed into cognitive stylistics - a position that we also share. The chapters by Semino, Stockwell and van Peer & Graf draw both from cognitive linguistics and from other theories from psychology and cognitive



science generally. Emmott, and also Steen, assess the potential of cognitive linguistics in accounting for the phenomena they discuss. The remaining chapters are largely independent of the cognitive linguistics paradigm. Shen develops and tests out his own cognitive theory of figurative language use in poetry, but spells out its relationship (and compatibility) with cognitive metaphor theory. Attardo and Culpeper propose their own frameworks for the study of humour and characterisation respectively, drawing from the tradition of text processing research. Finally, Tsur presents his theory of “cognitive poetics” as “a far cry from” or, in some respects, “even diametrically opposed” to “what goes nowadays under the label “cognitive linguistics.” The ordering of chapters in this volume roughly follows this account of their respective theoretical positions.

I consider this study my contribution to the field of (cognitive) stylistics; specifically, the growing body of work in the emerging field combining of linguistics and cognition. Furthermore, this detailed study of language with regard to readers, focusing in depth on one particular novel with a specific narrative technique, offers a possible explanation on how point of view invites readers’ empathy and/or change their knowledge-based schemata.

In view of what has been discussed earlier, the following are the main findings:

- Cognitive stylistics as one of the most forefront fields of cognitive linguistics can provide a systematic and scientific approach to discuss author's and reader's understanding of the world and explain how these interpretations are reflected in discourse organization. It tries to explain the way the cognitive processes are involved in meaning and meaning construction.

- Grammar of language cannot be determined simply on the linguistic level alone, but it must take into account the cognizing processes of the embodied mind. In other words, grammatical forms are not simply a matter of syntax or logical relations, but arise from the interaction and integration of the ways by which experience can be conceived . When the grammar of a poet diverges from conventional ways, the reason for divergence lies in the way the poet experiences and conceives the world. Therefore, a conceptual model is needed underlying the choices a poet makes.

- Mental spaces or the conceptual integration can help construct grammars that conceptualize the poet's world view. They are interacted and used not only in creation conceptual integration networks, but also can be used generally to model dynamic mapping in the thought and language.

- Dickinson use of the self-anaphor in projected mental spaces has the effect of making the self deictically present – grounding the self- in the past, not any self but the self as subject agent in the originating space. A world of possibilities can be created, a world in which things can happen and be made to happen through the agencies of the self. So new thoughts can be created and different aspects of the world views from the mental spaces.

- The language of poetry should be examined carefully and deeply with emphasis on the conceptual processes of the embodied mind. Therefore, the analysis shows that different interpretations arise because of readers selecting different topologies and projections to make sense of the text according to their own knowledge, experience, and motivations.

- The study shows the significance of conceptual metaphor (as one of cognitive stylistics devices) which is used in creating new ways of mapping the real world on the textual world. Metaphor is not just a stylistically attractive way of expressing ideas by means of language but



also a way of thinking about things. It is an epistemic mapping process across conceptual domains, and can play a very important role in text world through our knowledge of the real world.

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