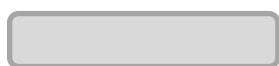


Stylistics from Traditional to Cognitive Approaches A Theoretical Perspective

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Stylistics from Traditional to Cognitive Approaches

A Theoretical Perspective

الأسلوبية من المناهج التقليدية إلى المناهج المعرفية – دراسة نظرية

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Abstract

Stylistics is constantly undergoing significant evolution since its classical origin in poetics and rhetoric. It is an interdisciplinary field that can bridge the gap between linguistics and literary studies. Based on the formalist traditions of the Russian formalists and Prague structuralists, stylistics has gradually expanded to incorporate cognitive sciences as analytical tools, maintaining empirical precision at its heart. The paper endeavours to highlight the preliminary concepts in stylistics, namely literariness and foregrounding, before charting the

developmental pathway that the discipline has followed to finally become a fully-fledged discipline, including linguistic and literary stylistics. The methodological eclecticism this field exhibits is also highlighted, throwing light on its aptitude to embrace both computational development and cognitive models. The paper also offers insights into cognitive stylistics alongside other closely aligned fields, such as cognitive poetics and cognitive rhetoric, to account for textual engagement and mental processes involved in reading

literature. The dual focus on both linguistic precision and the experiential parameters of cognitive stylistics is examined, with a particular emphasis on both traditional and cognitive approaches, highlighting the pivotal roles of the author, text, and reader in generating meaning. The paper finally offers two key conclusions: firstly, stylistics can best work as an

operable tool based on replicable methodologies, coupled with its eclectic potential, and secondly, it highlights the essential role of cognitive stylistics in accounting for the close link between readers' engagement and the textual structures that evoke it.

Key words: *cognitive stylistics, eclecticism, interdisciplinary, reader, literary text.*

المُلخَص

احتضان كل من التطور الحاسوبي والمناهج المعرفية. يقدم البحث أيضاً رؤى حول الأسلوبية المعرفية إلى جانب المجالات الأخرى المتوافقة بشكل وثيق، مثل الشعرية المعرفية والبلاغة المعرفية، لمراعاة الارتباط النصي والعمليات العقلية عند قراءة الأدب. وتتم معاينة التركيز المزدوج على كل من الدقة اللغوية والمعلومات التجريبية للأسلوبية التقليدية والمعرفية مع تسليط الضوء على الأدوار المحورية للمؤلف والنص والقارئ في توليد المعنى. ويخلص البحث أخيراً في استنتاجين رئيسيين: أولاً، يمكن للأسلوبية أن تعمل بشكل أفضل كأداة قابلة للتطبيق تعتمد على المنهجيات القابلة للتكرار التطبيقي عندما تقترن بإمكانياتها الانتقائية، وثانياً، تسلط الضوء على الدور الأساسي

تشهد الأسلوبية باستمرار تطوراً كبيراً منذ أصله الكلاسيكي في البوطيقا والبلاغة، وهو يمثل مجاًلاً متعدد المجالات يمكنه سد الفجوة بين الدراسات اللغوية والدراسات الأدبية. استناداً إلى الأسس الشكلانية للشكليين الروس والبنويين في براغ، توسعت الأسلوبية تدريجياً لتشمل العلوم المعرفية كأدوات تحليلية، مع الحفاظ على الدقة التجريبية في الصميم. ويسعى البحث إلى تسليط الضوء على المفاهيم الأساسية في الأسلوبية، وهي الخاصة الأدبية والأبراز النصي، قبل رسم المسار التطوري الذي اتبعه هذا العلم ليصبح في نهاية المطاف علماً مكتملاً، بما في ذلك الأسلوبية اللغوية والأدبية. يتم أيضاً تسليط الضوء على الانتقائية المنهجية التي يعرضها هذا المجال، مما يلقي الضوء على قدرته على

الكلمات المفتاحية: الأسلوبية المعرفية، الانتقائية، متعدد المجالات، القارئ، النص الأدبي.

للأساليب المعرفية في تحليل الارتباط الوثيق لانغمار القراء بتأثرهم بهيكلية النص.

1. Introduction

Stylistics has been chiefly concerned with style in language and is mainly, yet not exclusively, used in investigating literary texts from a linguistic perspective. Scholars trace the origin of this discipline to rhetoric, relating it mainly to the third canon of ancient rhetoric known as ‘elocutio’ by the Romans (Burke, 2023; Wales, 2011, p. 372). At the inception, Prague structuralists also contributed to rigorous textual analysis, proving their faithfulness to the text.

Ever since, stylistics has progressed significantly beyond its ancient forebears to go beyond text boundaries and include what, on the whole, constitutes the hub for generating meaning, namely the author, the text, and the reader. The

flexible and interdisciplinary nature of stylistics, on the other hand, has allowed it to overlap with other linguistic fields and varied sciences. This trait, as a result, has gained the discipline an eclectic nature, enabling it to borrow linguistic methods and tools suited to investigating diverse genres of texts. Advances in computational technology and the ‘cognitive turn’ have further refined the discipline, allowing for the analysis of large corpora of language with greater precision and empiricism, while also addressing the experiential and cognitive parameters involved in reading literature (Stockwell, 2009, 2020). This research, therefore, starts by outlining the archetypal stylistics discipline, tracing back its genesis and historical origins, then laying out its foundational stages and what

it means and why it is essential in studying literary texts.

2. Stylistics

The current discipline of stylistics is constantly evolving, but it has first taken root in formalist academia with a distant history dating back to antiquity and the classical study of rhetoric. It has long been thought of as the study of style based on its origins in classical rhetoric, which is considered ‘one of the earliest precursors of stylistics as a discipline’(Gibbons & Whiteley, 2018, p. 4).

Some scholars attributes the origin of this discipline a little further back to the ideas and concepts developed by (Spitzer, 1948; Wellek & Warren, 1949) in the late forties (Lodge, 2002).The actual inception of stylistics, nonetheless, was first noticed in the UK and the USA in the sixties, and was vastly instigated

by proponents of Russian Formalists and Prague Structuralists, namely Viktor Shklovsky (1893-1984) and Roman Jakobson (1896-1982).

Perhaps Shklovsky is best known for his contribution to stylistics in his seminal article, Art as technique in 1917. He proposes the notion of defamiliarisation (*ostranenie* in Russian, also translated as estrangement), which later appears in the first chapter of his book *Theory of Prose* published in 1925, later translated into English by Benjamin Sher (1990). Elaborating on this notion, he notes that estrangement is vital in creating literary effects and ‘by enstranging objects and complicating form, the device of art makes perception long and laborious. The perceptual process in art has a purpose all its own and ought to be extended to the fullest’ (Shklovsky, 1990, p. 6).

From this formalist standpoint, Shklovsky attests that defamiliarisation is the revealing descriptor of literariness, a notion developed by the Prague structuralist, Jakobson (1921), to distinguish literary texts from non-literary ones (Ekegren, 1999, p. 44).

Jakobson, in his most influential paper *Linguistics and Poetics*, published in 1960, captures the notion of literariness as the ‘poetic function of language’ that is simply realised by ‘the principle of equivalence from the axis of selection into the axis of combination’, basing this hypothesis on verse, which is replete with metaphor (Jakobson, 1960). Stylistics, in turn, mainly concerns itself to analyse the textual patterns that are responsible for creating the literary or poetic effect felt by readers. Although there is a widely-held belief nowadays that the traditional explanation of literariness

is deemed unsatisfactory as the general assumption made by post-modernist cognitive psychologists places literary comprehension within discourse processing.

From a reader-response’s perspective, nonetheless, literariness is said to be based on three factors: ‘foregrounded textual or narrative features, readers’ defamiliarizing responses to them, and the consequent modification of personal meanings’ (Miall & Kuiken, 1999, p. 121). Within the same school, another notion which is related to stylistics, known as foregrounding, is introduced and defined as ‘a sufficient criterion of literariness’ (Lodge, 2015, p. 5). In this regard, Jan Mukařovský, who is also a Czech scholar, defines foregrounding (*aktualisace* in Czech) as ‘the aesthetically intentional distortion of linguistic components’ (Cited in Lodge, 2015, p. 4). Foregrounding, in this matter,

can be realised through deviation or parallelism (For more examples in this respect see Simpson, 2004).

The notions defamiliarisation, literariness, and foregrounding represent the cornerstones of every stylistic study done ever since. Nevertheless, in order to understand what stylistics is, one should delineate what is meant by ‘style’ among all the shadings of meaning nowadays that the word ‘style’ conveys across different contexts. The explanation here, nonetheless, shall be confined to what ‘style’ is insofar as stylistics and language are concerned.

Looked at from this perspective, the word ‘style’ etymologically refers to a writing tool and it ab initio comes from the Latin lexical word ‘stilus’ referring to an archaic writing instrument made of wood, bone, or the like (Verdonk, 2005). The meaning, yet, evolved from this

sense to include the writer’s unique manner of expressive writing. This has led the word to undergo certain semantic alteration, expanding the meaning ‘from an instrument for writing to a manner of writing’ (Verdonk, 2005, p. 196).

In addition, of central importance to stylistics is the focus on why one textual feature, i.e. style, is chosen over possible alternatives, relying on either the ‘element of choice’ (Jeffries & McIntyre, 2010) or the ‘variation of language use’ (Nørgaard et al., 2010). Put simply, not only does stylistics address the word choice at its own accord, but it also indicates what possible variation in which the language is used.

The textual/verbal form or style, as a result, represents the foundation of stylistics, which can mainly be attributable to its ‘distinction, variation, and choice’(Wales, 2005,

p. 213). Wales then defines the study of style, i.e. stylistics, ‘as the perception of a distinct mode of expression in verbal or written form’ (Wales, 2011, p. 397).

Stylistics can, therefore, be understood as a linguistic subdiscipline that concerns with the systematic study of style and language, which can be influenced by aspects such as historical background, genre, and authorial context (Leech, 2008, p. 1). Stylistics, consequently, can offer expansive analytical tools for examining literary texts. It is not, however, mainly pertinent to indicating ideological meaning in these texts (Tabbert & Ibrahim, 2023, p. 27).

Stylistics also best operates on literature, and, throughout history, literature has been considered as the most well-celebrated form of language. Hence, it has become vital

that the structures and aesthetic effects of literature should be explored employing our latest and best understanding of how language functions, viz., leaning on our linguistic knowledge to study literature since ‘any literary text is by definition made *of* and *by* language, so the obvious tools for analysis are the tools of the linguist’ (Green and LeBihan, 1996, p. 3, original italics).

Contrary to Jakobson’s (1960) notion of literariness being the poetic function of literature, some scholars discredit the idea that stylistics should only focus on analysing literary texts, owing to its ability to lend itself well to any type of text, literary or non-literary, because ‘there is in fact no reason why this should be the case’(Jeffries & McIntyre, 2010, p. 1). Others also disprove altogether the notion of dichotomising language into literary and ordinary (non-literary) language,

stressing the common ground both exhibit, which stylistics can address. In his seminal article, How ordinary is ordinary language, Fish states that language is ordinary as opposed to literary and '[t]he alternative view would be one in which the purposes and needs of human communication inform language and are constitutive of its structure' (Fish, 1973, p. 49).

Based on the arguments above, there tend to be two directions regarding the focus of stylistics as per their alignment towards either linguistics or literature. Others, on the other hand, stress the importance of stylistics as a discipline that could bridge the gap between the two extremes of the argument, stating that 'linking of the language of linguistics and the analysis of literary texts is essentially the domain of stylistics' (Green & LeBihan, 1996, p. 18).

Owing to the premise based on the two directions, two different names are proposed, namely linguistic stylistics and literary stylistics, based on the approaches utilised to serve, generally, either the linguistic discipline on the whole or literary criticism in its practical applications. Both, however, represent two approaches within the broader field of stylistics, each with its own focus and methodology. As a result, linguistic stylistics places more emphasis on the linguistic aspect than the literary and highlights the utility of its analytical tools (Green & LeBihan, 1996).

Linguistic stylistics also prioritises rigorous linguistic analysis. On the other hand, literary stylistics, which sometimes appears under other names, as practical or New Criticism, integrates precise methods into traditional literary criticism. Both approaches, nonetheless, contribute to a deeper understanding

of the interconnectedness between language and literature, highlighting different aspects of textual analysis and interpretation. To illustrate this viewpoint, the analyst deems it necessary to present the following

figure, albeit aware that, by rendering mental relations into spatial ones, one might not fully capture their complexity and may fall into reducing some aspects of the argument:

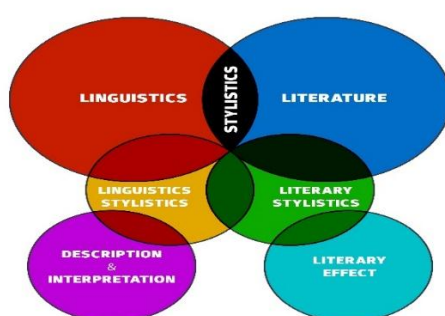


Fig 1. Linguistic and Literary Stylistics and their Overlapping Domains.

Linguistic stylistics, nonetheless, is said to adhere to single-levelled rigorous analysis, whereas literary stylistics tackles language organisation eclectically, at a multi-levelled analysis of texts, breaking down the effects which are converged in its style. In this respect, Carter and Simpson state that the ‘distinguishing feature of work in *literary stylistics* is the provision of a

basis for fuller understanding, appreciation and interpretation of avowedly literary and author-centred texts.[...] In general, analysis will be *multi-levelled*’ (Carter and Simpson, 1989, p. 6, my emphasis). For example, linguistic stylisticians opt to focus on one aspect of the text, i.e. it could be a phonological, syntactic, or lexical single-levelled analysis, whereas literary stylisticians

embrace the text in its totality, at all levels, to address the effect that the text evokes.

On the same front, as regards stylistics being the melting pot of both linguistics and literature, scholars advocate for approaching literature from a linguistic perspective, combining literary and linguistic studies into what is known as stylistics. Roman Jakobson (1967) asserts that literary and linguistic studies are complementary and interdependent. Consequently, he criticises linguists who discard the aesthetic effects of literary texts and focus solely on the form of the language, neglecting its poetic function. On the other hand, any literary critic who confines themselves to traditional critical approaches without considering linguistic methodologies is also limited in fully understanding the depth of literary texts. Jakobson captures this perspective in his

famous quote; ‘a linguist deaf to the poetic function of language and a literary scholar indifferent to linguistic problems and unversant with linguistic methods are equally flagrant anachronisms’ (Jakobson, 1967, p. 322).

In addition, stylistics has been defined by various names, such as practical criticism, literary linguistics, and linguistic criticism. The choice of name often depends on which discipline is employed to serve the other, reflecting discrepancies in understanding what stylistics encompasses. Practical criticism, recognised by literary scholars as a form of New Criticism, uses linguistic methodologies to explore literary textual phenomena (Bressler, 1994; Green & LeBihan, 1996). Literary linguistics, the most recent term, acknowledges stylistics as an established linguistic subdiscipline that borrows tools and

methodologies from various linguistic branches to analyse both the form and aesthetic effects of literary texts.

Linguistic criticism, attributed to Roger Fowler and popularised by his seminal monograph *Linguistic Criticism* (1996), views literature, like any type of ordinary text, as a form of social discourse (Wales, 2011, p. 401), as opposed to the widely held belief by literary criticism. In this respect, Fowler introduces the term as a reaction to literary criticism practices ‘as *an alternative* to and improvement on *literary criticism*’(Fowler, 1996, p. 49, italics added). By proposing literature as a social discourse, he ascertains the foundation of his approach in terms of dealing with

literary texts as any type of social exchange purported as a discourse between writers and readers.

Although the different labels above could suggest different approaches to literature, they all, nonetheless, share the same methodologies and frameworks that are drawn from the linguistic discipline. The labels, in this respect, can also indicate the historical context through which stylistics has evolved and developed. They, however, capture the same notion, i.e. they all approach literature from a linguistic perspective. The diagram below illustrates the interrelationship of such terms:

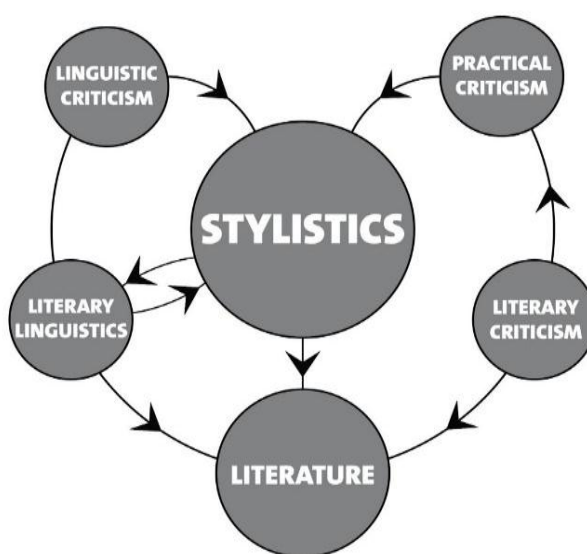


Fig. 2. Stylistics and its Foundational Terms

On a related note, the rhetoric, poetics, formalism, structuralism, as well as functionalism of earlier times that contributed to lay the foundation of *traditional* stylistics have been superseded by the corpus, critical, cognitive, pedagogical, pragmatic, gender, multimodal, and neuroscientific techniques that are now utilised in *contemporary* stylistics. It's likely that at first glance this diversity, Burke (2023) asserts, can create an illusion that it

is fragmenting the field. This could not be, however, further from the reality because, at many different levels, interdisciplinary research is precisely what the field of stylistics is intended to do (Burke, 2023, p. 2). Based on Burke's argument, the diagram below provides an overview of the foundational influences of core models and studies that have contributed to both traditional and contemporary stylistics:

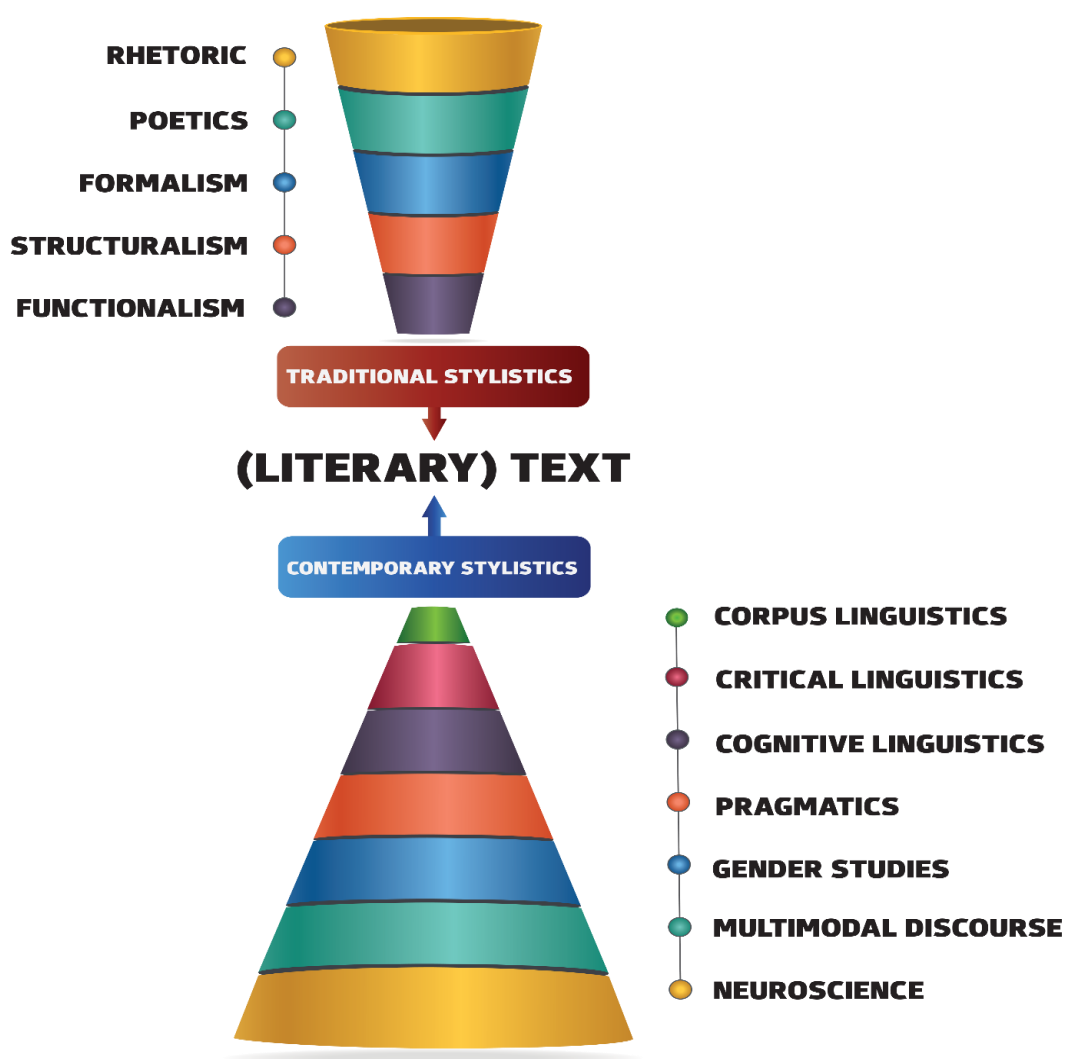


Fig. 3 Foundational Influences on Traditional and Contemporary Stylistics.

Based on the notion that stylistics draws upon analytical tools pertaining to different disciplines within linguistics, stylistics is said to be inherently eclectic (Jeffries, 2000; Sotirova, 2016). Eclecticism, in this respect, is solely based on the notion

of drawing upon different theoretical methods and approaches to form a whole cohesive model which can address diverse genres of texts. Relating it to formalist and structuralist origins, Jeffries and McIntyre (2010) note that ‘stylistics

... is eclectic in its use of theory, though it originated in literary theories of formalism and took on the theory of structuralism as developed by Saussure' (p. 10). Saussure's structuralism has, therefore, been vital for establishing the notion of language as a system of signs which had a huge impact on both stylistics and other literary theories. This, in turn, results in conducting comprehensive stylistic enquiry that can encompass mixed and multi-faceted methodologies such as models derived from disciplines such as corpus linguistics and sociolinguistics (Lugea & Walker, 2023). In this respect, Jeffries and McIntyre (2010) also assert that not only is stylistics eclectic based on the theories it draws upon, but it is also 'eclectic in its use of methodologies' (p. 11).

In this respect, Leech (2008) stresses the interdisciplinary nature of stylistics, making it both genuine

and demanding, owing to the complex nature of bridging multiple disciplines. Despite the perceived incompatibility between aesthetic principles and beliefs, many scholars, whether they lean towards cognitive or formalist approaches, often adopt a genuinely interdisciplinary and eclectic methodology (Sotirova, 2016, p. 16).

Jeffries and McIntyre (2010), on the other hand, note that stylistic research should exhibit falsifiability, i.e. the propensity of any hypothesis to be testable or refutable, and state that stylistic studies must be conducted in a manner that is clear and transparent, allowing others to replicate and potentially refute the findings.

Lugea and Walker (2023, p. 253) also tackle the implication of the interdisciplinary nature of stylistics, elaborating on its methodological rigor. They note that stylistics, albeit

eclectic in nature, can establish a robust and valid research procedure. Stylisticians seek to address the inherent issues of subjective impressions in literary analysis by striving to make their evaluations ‘rigorous, replicable, and retrievable’(Simpson, 2004, p. 4). Stylistics, then, promotes objectivity contrary to the subjective trend that literary critics tend to embrace in literary studies, stressing that objectivity can be measured through linguistic description. In a related context, this discipline ‘was born of a reaction to the subjectivity and impression of literary studies[...] Stylistics, in short, is an attempt to put criticism on a scientific basis (Fish, 1980a, pp. 69–70). Corpus stylistics, for example, puts any stylistic interpretation on a quantifiable ground, thus moving from the close reflective analysis that traditional stylistics has exhibited towards a more empirical

quantifiable method (McIntyre & Walker, 2019).

Therefore, the diverse approaches of stylistics, they argue, should not discredit the rigorous applicability of this field which builds up its replicable nature that others can refute, reapply, or reproduce (for instances of the rigorous applicability of stylistics see Short, 1996; Leech and Short, 2007). The crux of the eclectic nature of stylistics propels the stylistic applications across different texts and genres because stylistics investigates the *how* language operates. Leech and Short note the objective of stylistics is to find the link between language and the poetic effect and ‘the motivating questions are not so much *what* as *why* and *how*’ (Leech and Short, 2007, p. 11, original emphasis).

Given its comprehensive applicability, Stylistics is then

founded and deeply grounded at all levels of language, and texts in particular. This trait enables, and probably necessitates, this enterprise to address how linguistic patterns are employed from multiple aspects in literature. This focus on the linguistic choices highlights the panoptic or holistic use of stylistics in analysing texts. It is, therefore, essential to examine how language patterns operate at every level of the text: the micro-level concerning individual word choices, the meso-level as regards the patterns across sentences, and the macro-level addressing the text as a whole and its contextual implications. Stylistics could then address all these levels combined or each at a time (Giovanelli & Harrison, 2018, pp. 133–134).

On the other hand, the traditional compartmentalisation of the English language into distinct areas in the literary studies field often limits the

scope of analysis and understanding. However, stylisticians, who operate at the interface of linguistics and literary studies, challenge this fragmented approach (Cushing & Giovanelli, 2019). They argue for a more integrated perspective that highlights the interconnectedness of language and literature. This holistic view allows for a more profound and detailed examination of texts, highlighting patterns and connections that might otherwise be overlooked. Cushing and Giovanelli, therefore, point out that stylisticians are interested in both linguistics and literary texts, and as a result, ‘reject many of the ways that English has been carved up into compartmentalised areas of study’(Cushing & Giovanelli, 2019, p. 203).

By bridging the gap between linguistics and literary criticism, stylisticians foster a comprehensive understanding of literary works,

emphasising the importance of viewing English as an interlinked, interdependent discipline. In other words, stylisticians adopt linguistic models in analysing literary texts, taking into account literary schools such as feminism or realism and how stylistic approaches could shed light on the bits of texts that manifest these ideas.

Furthermore, Sorlin (2014) adopts a neologism to define stylistics as being *indisciplinary*, in addition to being interdisciplinary, in nature. That is, stylisticians adopt an ‘indisciplinary’ approach, not because they lack a defined field, but because they purposely opt to disregard conventional disciplinary boundaries, endeavouring to evince that stylistics can provide the most comprehensive interpretation of a text possible via adopting tools and theories from a range of different disciplines. In other words, the term, *indisciplinary*, as opposed to

disciplinary, can be defined as an approach that calls for blending or integrating different frameworks and approaches into a workable expansive model, thereby contending the traditional outlining or boundaries that are put for a specific discipline. Put simply, stylistics runs counter to the concept ‘disciplinary’, in the sense that it draws on different approaches or models. As a developed field, stylistics is applying our linguistic knowledge to all aspects of language because stylistics views ‘style as the way we *inhabit* language’ (Sorlin, 2014, p. 12, original emphasis).

Since the topic of this paper concerns the theoretical stages and advances of stylistics, it is believed that stylistics as a methodological approach could be effective in breaking down literary texts. Of a close link to stylistics is cognitive stylistics, widely known as cognitive poetics (Stockwell, 2002), developed

out of stylistics which concerns with the ‘readerly knowledge and experience, feelings and emotions, imagined worlds, metaphors, allegories, and the valuations of social significance and personal affect’(Stockwell & Whiteley, 2014, p. 3). The latter which is part of the study will be elaborated on in the coming section.

3. Cognitive Stylistics

Cognitive stylistics is considered by some scholars as the future trend of stylistics (Hamilton, 2006). It originates from the latter, which is considered ‘the proper study of literature’ (Stockwell & Whiteley, 2014, p. 1). The core proposition for ‘proper study’ stems from the notion as to which approach is deemed fit to do proper criticism and analysis for literature. This has led to different approaches proposed by critics as regards investigating meaning in

literary texts. Meaning in literature itself is closely associated with the tripartite interaction between the author, the text, and the reader. This interlinked relationship suggests that one of the three aforementioned components is essential to the meaning of any literary text. Consequently, literary theorists have long engaged in fierce debates about which component holds primacy in determining the meaning of a literary text. Therefore, it seems rational to explore the major approaches to investigating texts and their meaning and interpretations based on the three elements which, in turn, contribute to the literature of cognitive stylistics.

Since its inception, proper criticism of literature has been thought of as adopting the traditional historical and biographical approach. In other words, the meaning of a poem, or any form of literature, is approached based on its origin, i.e. exploring the

historical context of the text and to establish how authors' lives are closely related to their texts as regards their interpretations (Bressler, 1994). In this sense, the meaning of the text lies in the interaction of the poem, i.e. the literary text, with the author's intention alongside its historical setting. This approach is widely disparaged by cognitive stylisticians because this approach views literature as 'simply an excuse for historical tourism' (Stockwell, 2009; Stockwell and Whiteley, 2014; Mahlberg, 2022).

Another criticism, on the other hand, is reader-oriented. Put simply, the proponents of this approach claim that the meaning of the literary text is generated due to the interaction of readers with the text. This critical approach to literature posits that readers are solely responsible for the meaning-making process. Contrary to the historical approach, the

adherents of reader-response criticism give no or little credence to the biographical element of the author or the historical setting of his/her writing (Fish, 1980; Bressler, 1994, p. 36).

Another approach comes to existence as a reaction to the evasive standpoint that previous approaches adopt towards the language of literature. Conversely, this approach adheres to the formalist approach to literature, placing more emphasis on the text itself and its language structure. Scholars who adopt such criticism claim that the literary text is the sole source of meaning, viewing the text as an autonomous entity where its meaning lies solely in the formal textual features (Stockwell, 2009). This approach is known as the New Criticism which argues against the approaches previously delineated (for a detailed discussion of New Criticism, see

Ransom's (1979) titled *The New Criticism* first published in 1941).

In response to earlier approaches, New Criticism has emerged as the dominant method of textual analysis in American universities from the late 1930s until the early 1960s owing to the publication of the monograph *Understanding Poetry* (Brooks & Warren, 1938).

Although New Criticism, also known as practical criticism or formalism, has become a strong influence in the 1940s, its origins can be traced back to two famous critics and authors, T. S. Eliot and I. A. Richards who have played an influential role in establishing this formalistic approach. Proper criticism should focus on the poem itself, rather than the poet. In other words, the poet does not fill the poem with personal feelings and emotions, but instead uses language to express universal, impersonal

emotions and feelings shared by all people (Eliot, 1966).

From the objective view regarding art, the New Critics postulate that a poem, or any form of literature, should be considered as an autonomous object, unrelated to the author's personal emotions or intentions. In this respect, they contend the *intentional fallacy*, i.e. the misapprehension that an expression of the author's personal experiences can amount to the text's meaning. A literary text, as per the New Critics' view, is seen as a public text which abides by the conventions of public discourse, and should be understood irrespective of the author's individual context or lexis. Based on this assumption proposed by New Criticism, the role of the author, social context, and historical situations are therefore marginalised vis-à-vis the text's interpretation.

Moreover, the New Critics discount the importance of the reader's response to the text, highlighting its irrelevance to the literary text's interpretation. The misconstrued notion, known as the '*affective fallacy*' misinterprets a literary text's meaning as its psychological effects on the reader. The New Criticism adherents argue that accounting for readers' psychological effects when reading a poem would risk being drawn into impressionism or relativism, which suggests that a poem can have countless valid interpretations, thus undermining objective criticism (Wimsatt & Beardsley, 1954). The consequences of both intentional and affective fallacies are, therefore, essential to understanding how stylistics, then cognitive stylistics is brought to the fore. The analyst, therefore, deems necessary to further elaborate on the two notions (for a detailed account

of the two fallacies see Wimsatt and Beardsley, 1954).

Intentional fallacy, according to new critics, is a misconception about the poem and its origin, which involves assigning meaning to the poem, or any literary text, based on its origins, including the psychological motivation behind writing it, the author's intention and personal backgrounds, as well as the text's social context and historical setting. The type of criticism based on who writes, what intention or historical origin that propels writing the text is generally ascribed to the genetic fallacy, implying that looking into the author's intentions and personal background leads to a misinterpretation of the text's true meaning. Such an approach results in an emphasis on biography and relativism (Bressler, 1994; Wimsatt & Beardsley, 1954, pp. 3–18).

Affective fallacy, on the other hand, is a misapprehension of the poem and its results which entails assigning meaning to the poem, or any literary text, based on the psychological effects it brings about on readers rather than the text itself, i.e. ‘what it is and what it does’. This approach to interpreting poems, literary texts in general, leads to

impressionism and relativism, where reader responses to the text can lead to subjective and varied interpretations (Wimsatt & Beardsley, 1954, pp. 21–39). The diagram below illustrates, albeit reductively, the premises discussed earlier based on the adversarial comments by (Wimsatt & Beardsley, 1954):

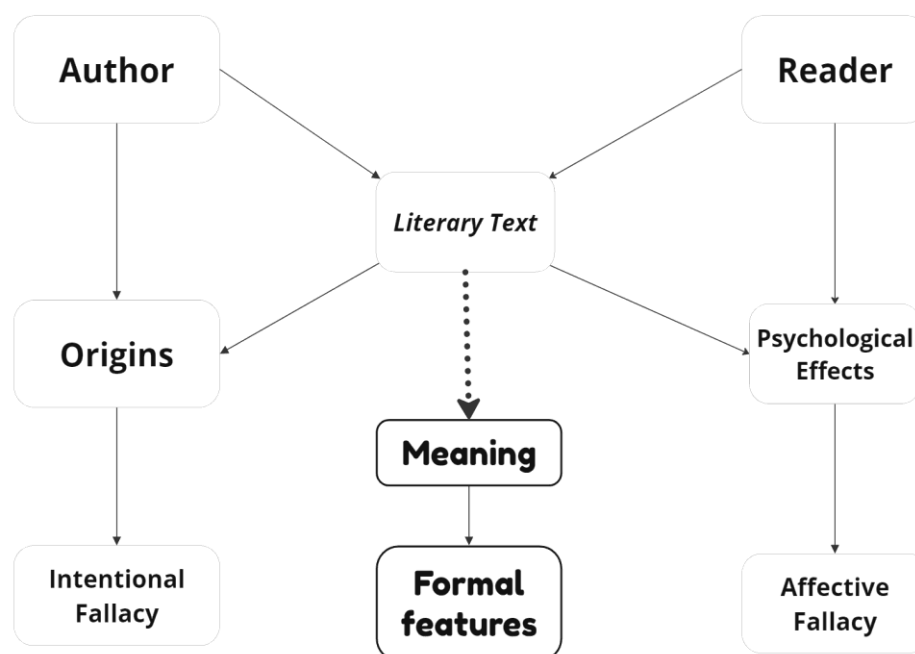


Fig. 4. Wimsatt and Beardsley's (1954) Argument Regarding Textual Interpretation

Fish (1980a) counters Wimsatt and Beardsley's (1954), attributing meaning generation to the reader's interpretative strategies rather than the text's formal features. The interpretation stemming from the reader's experience nullifies any objectivity that textual formal features can provide. Fish pronounces that neither the authorial intention nor the formal features exist objectively outside the reader's assumptions (Fish, 1980a; Lodge and Wood, 2002). In this respect, he notes, 'what my analyses amount to are descriptions of a succession of decisions made by *readers* about an author's intention (Fish, 1980a, p. 161, my emphasis).

The compositional linguistic methods developed out of the critical formal approaches previously discussed were the cornerstone of traditional stylistics in its formative years. Up to this point, stylistics has seemed to adopt the writerly

perspective in its comprehensive linguistic application, i.e. accounting for the writer's style and word choice and structure in generating meaning. This perspective overlooked any readerly account of 'the mental processes that inform, and are affected by, the way we read and interpret literary texts' (Simpson, 2004, p. 39). That is why, Fish (1980b) criticises stylisticians at that time for being overtly sticklers for proper analysis regardless of the reader's role in assigning meaning to literary texts. Instead, he advocates for a new form of stylistics that takes the readerly aspect into account in analysing literature. He calls this form *affective stylistics*, which solely hinges on the interpretive strategies of readers, giving them an active role in assigning meaning to texts. This captures the core of what cognitive stylistics is and what it endeavors to achieve. In this regard, he comments that this trend is 'not the end of

stylistics but a new or “affective” stylistics in which the focus of attention is shifted from the spatial context of a page and its observable regularities to the temporal context of a mind and its experience’ (Fish, 1980b, p. 69, original emphasis).

As a response to the limitations of these traditional approaches, cognitive stylistics emerges as a more nuanced framework, examining how meaning is constructed through the interaction of language, thought, and reader interpretation.

From this point onward, cognitive stylistics has emerged as a natural evolution of traditional stylistics, so to speak, driven by the cognitive turn (Simpson, 2004; Stockwell, 2009). Stylistics and cognitive stylistics are often categorised under the broad umbrella of literary theory. However, the differences in their methodologies stand in stark contrast

to literary theories. Unlike traditional literary theory, stylistics and cognitive stylistics rely heavily on empirical evidence (Görmez & Tunç, 2021).

Stylistics and cognitive stylistics are interlinked disciplines, although the latter, some argue, is subsumed under the former. In this respect, both stylistics and cognitive stylistics address how language constructs meaning and influences interpretation. As discussed in the previous section, stylistics mainly concerns exploring the linguistic features of literary texts to show their stylistic effects and communicative functions. Cognitive stylistics, on the other hand, explores the mental processes and conceptual frameworks that readers construct while engaged in reading, which is considered a readerly oriented perspective on language. Both fields are thus interconnected as both address the connection between text,

reader, and context. Simpson marks the shift from the writerly-oriented stylistics analyses which address textual features to the readerly orientated approach as the beginning of cognitive stylistics ‘to supplement, rather than supplant, [and] make explicit the links between the human mind and the process of reading’ (Simpson, 2004, p. 39).

Ever since, the study of stylistics and cognitive stylistics has evolved through the integration of various theoretical perspectives and methodologies. Early influences such as systemic functional linguistics, Russian formalist linguistics, and reader response theories have laid the groundwork for contemporary approaches. These foundational theories emphasise the importance of context, reader interaction, and the functional aspects of language in literary analysis.

Stockwell (2009) claims that the ‘cognitive turn’ in literary studies occurred in the early nineties. It is argued that I. A. Richards’s contribution to practical criticism in the 1920s marks the beginning of approaching literature from a cognitive stylistic perspective, highlighting his practice of cognitive stylistic inquiry into poems (West, 2013). On a related note, some scholars ascertain that Richards’s techniques in analysing poems secures his place as ‘an eloquent and influential precursor to the interdisciplinary work wedding literary criticism and cognitive psychology’ (Goodblatt & Glicksohn, 2003, p. 208). Claiming the same proposition, ‘Richards’s science of criticism represents the first sustained attempt to establish a set of principles for a science or theory of literary criticism, [which] anticipated the contemporary movement in literary studies known

as cognitive stylistics' (West, 2013, pp. 12–13).

In recent decades, cognitive stylistics, then, has emerged as a firmly grounded field that connects cognitive science with literary studies. Theories such as conceptual metaphor theory, text world theory, and schema theory have expanded our understanding of how readers mentally construct and navigate fictional worlds. Cognitive stylistics explores how linguistic features evoke cognitive responses and shape readers' experience (Brône & Vandaele, 2009).

From a readerly perspective, Gibbons and Whiteley (2018) note the close interlink between the language of a text and its readers, stating that stylistics is concerned with how meaning emerges from textual traits and readers' interactions. They also refer to the relevance of incorporating cognitive

stylistic approaches to literature by relying on insights from cognitive science. Treating text as cognition, cognitive stylistic approaches can, therefore, offer deeper insights into pinpointing linguistically the interpretations at which readers reach when engaged in reading and the aesthetic effects that resonate from this engagement.

The diagram below provides a comprehensive overview of the foundational influences, core frameworks, and theoretical models that underpin stylistics and cognitive stylistics, highlighting their interdisciplinary nature and the breadth of their academic inquiry (Mason, 2019).

As shown in the diagram, the progression from these early influences to more specialised frameworks like transitivity, modality, and cognitive grammar highlights the dynamic and

multifaceted nature of stylistic and cognitive stylistic research. This evolution reflects the ongoing interconnectedness between linguistic theory, cognitive science, and literary criticism. The diagram situates these fields within a broader intellectual context, mapping out

their interconnected influences and models that constitute the landscape of stylistics and cognitive poetics, highlighting their importance and relevance. The diagram below is taken verbatim from (Mason, 2019, p. 15):

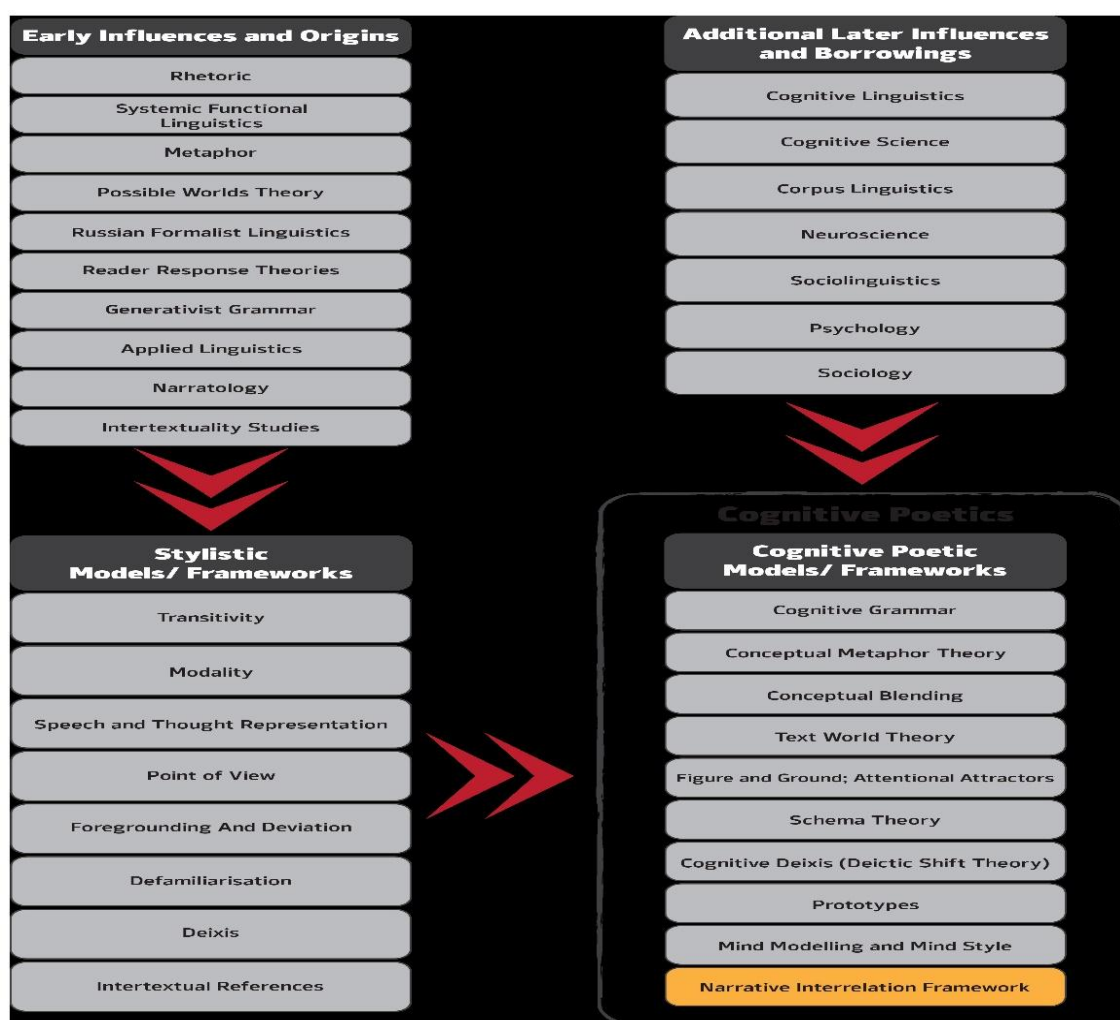


Fig. 1.5 Stylistics and Cognitive Stylistics Totally Adopted from Mason (2019)

Cognitive stylisticians, then, affirm their adherence to the text and its structure, although they acknowledge that what literary texts pose regarding the psychological effects and feelings triggered in the reading mind are sometimes influenced by the reader's own embodied experiences. In other words, textual patterns and readers' embodied experiences interact to evoke the textuality, i.e. the textual characteristics that influence readers' interpretation, which can be measured by cognitive stylistic approaches. Understanding this notion aids in comprehending how literature functions aesthetically, i.e. interpretations go deeper and beyond texts. Cognitive stylistics accounts for the dynamic interactions between the text and the reader via underpinning the readerly cognitive processes while reading rather than just focusing on what readers read on a page as mere formal textual patterns.

4. Cognitive Stylistics, Cognitive Poetics, or Cognitive Rhetoric?

In addition, different names and labels for this enterprise have been proposed and adopted based on their focus areas and

methods. The proposed labels for cognitive stylistics mentioned by West (2013, p. 13) which he uses interchangeably include cognitive poetics, cognitive rhetoric, or cognitive aesthetics. Some scholars opt to adopt cognitive poetics as a term to refer to the study of literature through using frameworks and methodologies developed in cognitive science and psychology (Simpson, 2004).

In this respect, cognitive poetics aims to understand how readers comprehend and interpret literary texts by underpinning the mental processes employed when readers are engaged in reading. Although the name is first introduced by Reuven Tsur (1983, 1992) in his seminal books; *What is cognitive poetics* and *Towards a theory of cognitive poetics* to focus on poetry only, the discipline has since taken a wider application in Stockwell's (2002) introductory publication *Cognitive poetics: an introduction* printed in 2002, accompanied by Gavins and Steen's (2003) complementary monograph *Cognitive poetics in practice* (Brône & Vandaele, 2009; Gavins & Steen, 2003; Stockwell, 2002; Tsur, 1983, 2008).

The aforementioned publications offer a comprehensive introduction to the field, highlighting how cognitive science concepts such as mind modelling, embodied cognition, conceptual metaphor and other cognitive models can be applied to the analysis of literature. Ever since, the term has been widely popularised and adopted by esteemed scholars in various UK and European institutions. Stockwell generally introduces cognitive poetics which is a discipline with deep concern for reading literature ‘since *cognition* is to do with the mental processes involved in reading, and *poetics* concerns the craft of literature’ (Stockwell, 2002, p. 1, original italics).

Another name retained by other scholars is cognitive stylistics, a discipline that focuses on the language of literary texts. This term is basically related to examining how linguistic choices affect readers’ perceptions and interpretations, incorporating insights from cognitive science into stylistic analysis. Semino and Culpeper’s (2002) seminal monograph promote this term which comprises of a wealth of influential articles that explore various approaches to cognitive stylistics, incorporating practical applications of

cognitive theories such as text world theory, schema theory, cognitive grammar and others to literary texts.

In the same vein, cognitive stylistics can be defined as the approach that conflates linguistic analysis with cognitive theories in a way that accounts for the linguistic choices and their relation to cognitive structures and processes. Elsewhere, Semino and Culpeper map out this discipline as ‘a rapidly expanding field at the interface between linguistics, literary studies and cognitive science’ (Semino and Culpeper, 2002, p. ix).

Another term, cognitive rhetoric is closely interlinked with rhetoric, the classical founding discipline of traditional stylistics. Publications such as Mark Turner’s (1991) seminal book *Reading minds: the study of English in the age of cognitive science* has laid the foundation of the term, which is now known as cognitive rhetoric. This discipline also adopts cognitive theories to study the persuasive elements of texts and how they influence readers’ minds (Turner, 1991). In this respect, the term posits merging rhetorical analysis with cognitive science to understand how texts persuade, move, and affect readers cognitively and

emotionally. Also, cognitive rhetoric applies to both literary and non-literary texts, political discourse in particular, focusing on how texts persuade and influence. Perhaps, another influential publication that specifically adopts the term is authored by Sam Browse (2018) in his book, *Cognitive rhetoric* that is mainly concerned with political texts (Browse, 2018). Cognitive rhetoric, therefore, basically analyses rhetorical techniques and their cognitive effects on persuasion and influence, integrating cognitive concepts such as megametaphor; a concept which is deeply grounded in text world theory (see also Werth, 1999 for further details).

Although each term emphasises how readers interpret and respond to texts, whether through linguistic features, i.e. cognitive stylistics, overall cognitive engagement which is at the core of cognitive poetics, or persuasive techniques, viz. adopting cognitive rhetoric, it is believed that such distinctions between them might be more a matter of terminological preference (Semino & Culpeper, 2002). In other words, while adopting different names may suggest emphasising different fields, these terms

can be generally used interchangeably because they basically share the same cognitive approach to literary analysis. Therefore, the choice between them could rely on individual or institutional preferences rather than on significant methodological or theoretical differences. In addition, academics tend to choose different terms based on their specific research focus or academic tradition, but this does not necessarily imply fundamentally different approaches. Accordingly, Semino and Culpeper comment:

A relatively minor aspect of variation lies in how contributors prefer to label the enterprise they are involved in. Some use *cognitive stylistics*, others *cognitive poetics*, yet others explicitly present the two as synonymous. (Semino and Culpeper, 2002, p. x, italics mine)

All in all, in spite of the expansive explanation of stylistics and cognitive stylistics which both have been generating heated debates and polemics, it could be argued that there remain areas yet to be explored. The analyst here concurs that there are avenues where the theoretical aspect of stylistics could further be investigated to present an accurate picture of the facts about the topic. Drawing from

cognitive psychology, cognitive linguistics, cognitive stylistics, ultimately, stands as a comprehensive fully-fledged discipline that can account for the readers' cognitive processes evoked by the textual patterns in a literary text.

5. Conclusion

1. Although stylistics is disparaged for its eclectic nature, this element gives it an interdisciplinary virtue for analysing a wide diverse of text genres.
2. Stylistics and cognitive stylistics are often categorised under the broad umbrella of literary theory. Their methodologies, however, stand in stark contrast as both rely heavily on empirical evidence.
3. The shift from the writerly-oriented traditional stylistics to the readerly orientated approach marks the beginning of cognitive stylistics.
4. Stylistics and cognitive stylistics are interlinked disciplines, although the latter is subsumed under the former, and therefore, both stylistics and cognitive stylistics

address how language constructs meaning and influences interpretation.

5. Cognitive stylistics plays an essential role to account for the close link between readers' engagement and the textual patterns in texts.
6. Cognitive stylistics accounts for the dynamic interactions between the text and the reader via underpinning the readerly cognitive processes while reading rather than just focusing on what readers read on a page as mere formal textual patterns.
7. While adopting different names for cognitive stylistics, such as cognitive poetics or cognitive rhetoric, may suggest emphasising different fields, these terms can be generally used interchangeably because they basically share the same cognitive approach to literary analysis. Therefore, the choice could rely on individual or institutional preferences rather than on significant methodological or theoretical differences. In addition, academics tend to choose different

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terms based on their specific
research focus or academic
tradition, but this does not

necessarily imply fundamentally
different approaches.

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