

Gábor Tolcsvai-Nagy
A magyar nyelv stilisztikája [Hungarian Stylistics]
 Budapest: Nemzeti Tankönyvkiadó, 1996.

In *A magyar nyelv stilisztikája* [Hungarian Stylistics], Gábor Tolcsvai-Nagy updates a long-time standard *A magyar stilisztika vázlatja* [Sketch of Hungarian Stylistics], originally published in 1958 and continually reprinted. However, the two works are quite different both in approach and in scope. Fábíán et al. (1958) takes a bottom-up approach, building stylistics from the constituent parts of language (phonetics, lexicon, grammar). This is a “functional stylistics” (Tolcsvai-Nagy’s term), where an author has particular goals and chooses various linguistic elements to perform these functions. Thus, Fábíán et al. devote the bulk of their discussion to the enumeration and exemplification of the items in the Hungarian stylistic toolkit.

Tolcsvai-Nagy, on the other hand, takes a diametrically opposed approach, building top-down from the level of the text itself. “[A] stílus elsősorban a szöveg része, a beszélő annak részeként működteti, és a hallgató annak részeként érti meg valamiképpen.” (108–109) Language, rather than consisting of a pre-determined toolkit, is,

egyén, közösség, egyéni tudás és cselekvés, valamint közösségi hagyománymondás közötti viszonyban folyamatosan konstituálódó szemiotikai rendszer, amely a múltbeli példák alapján különböző módon és mértékben férhető hozzá az egyének számára, s amelyet különböző módon és mértékben állandósíthat és/vagy módosíthat nyelvi megnyilatkozásaival (hozzájárulásaival) az egyén. (32)

Given these perspectives, a different (non-grammatical) basis must be selected for the identification of stylistic categories. Since Tolcsvai-Nagy locates the speaker and hearer in the text, he is able to identify the following cognitive bases for stylistic structure: “feltűnőség – semlegesség, dominancia – kiegyensúlyozottság – hiány, azonosság – ellentét, egyszerűség – összetettség, linearitás – hierarchizáltság.” (112)

Using these cognitive bases, Tolcsvai-Nagy identifies the following three major stylistic categories: “szociokulturális változók,” “a nyelvi tartományok stíluslehetőségei,” and “a stílus szerkezeti lehetőségei.” (134) Each of these categories contains subcategories, which can be used to characterize style: “szociokulturális változók” involve “magatartás, helyzet, érték, idő, hagyományozott nyelvváltozatok;” “a nyelvi tartományok stíluslehetőségei” involve (using relatively uncharged linguistic terminology) “hangzás, szó, szótár, mondat, jelentés,” and “a stílus szerkezeti lehetőségei” involve “szövegszerkezeti stílusjellemzők, módosított alakzatrendszer.” (134) These categories are quite persuasive, but the reader is left wondering whether others could also be found (a problem inherent to taxonomies). Certainly, Tolcsvai-

Nagy allows for complex interactions among subcategories, covering aspects of intertextuality, differing effects on readers with differing knowledge, and so on.

Since the 1958 stylistics manual focused so heavily on linguistic resources to be deployed for stylistic effect, a somewhat closer comparison is warranted with respect to this category, Tolcsvai-Nagy's second major category. The 1958 *Sketch* utilizes a traditional grammatical framework for dividing and carefully exemplifying the various stylistic tools. The present work acknowledges the strong influence of Noam Chomsky on linguistics, but takes a strong cognitive stance opposed to the concept of the modularity of linguistic systems. Nevertheless, the linguistic possibilities are divided into areas based on more or less the same principle – with some seepage. For example, symbols and metaphors are included under “meaning.” A strength of the current work is that it includes a section on intonation. However, none of these sections is the exhaustive catalogue that could be found in the previous work, a statement that can be generalized for the sociocultural and structural sections as well. Perhaps this is not a detriment, however. Readers in search of a catalogue may refer to the 1958 book, or to such works as Mrs. Zoltán Zsuffa's *Gyakorlati magyar nyelvtan* [Practical Hungarian Grammar], 1993 (2nd ed. 1994), which contains an extensive stylistic section.

Thus, overall, Tolcsvai-Nagy's *Stylistics* offers a serious treatment of the theoretical issues involved in approaching the concept of stylistics, together with an outline of what aspects should be included in such study. It certainly is not a handbook of stylistic tools, which could be used by a writer or analyst, but other works (Fábián et al. 1958, Zsuffa 1993, as well as various works exemplifying terms from Greek rhetoric) fill this gap nicely. However, a more serious gap in the present volume is found in its neglect of the concept of genre. Certainly, a static, structural approach to genre would be inappropriate here, but given Tolcsvai-Nagy's definition of language above (p. 32 in his book), genres that are continually instantiated and recreated through practice would fit into the system quite naturally. More fundamentally, one wonders whether a *performance*-based stylistics might be more appropriate to Tolcsvai-Nagy's approach than a *text*-based stylistics. The following definition of performance will help to clarify this point.

Fundamentally, performance as a mode of spoken verbal communication consists in the assumption of responsibility to an audience for a display of communicative competence. This competence rests on the knowledge and ability to speak in socially appropriate ways. Performance involves on the part of the performer an assumption of accountability to an audience for the way in which communication is carried out, above and beyond its referential content. From the point of view of the audience, the act of expression on the part of the performer is thus marked as subject to evaluation for the way it is done, for the relative skill and effectiveness of the performer's display of competence. Additionally, it is marked as available for the enhancement of experience, through the present enjoyment of the intrinsic qualities of the act of expression itself. Performance thus calls forth special attention to and heightened awareness of the act of expression and gives license to the audience to regard the act of expression and the performer with special intensity. (Bauman 1977: 11)

It is not difficult to see how this definition, when extended to include written performance, is consonant with Tolcsvai-Nagy's approach. In the present volume, Tolcsvai-Nagy has already surveyed and synthesized findings from a staggering array of literary, linguistic and other fields, from Western European, American and Hungarian sources, drawing a wide range of insights and motivating delimitations for the concept and field of stylistics. His resultant cognitive and text-based groundings are certainly useful. However, the current reviewer would recommend a grounding in the interdisciplinary area of performance studies (cf. Bauman & Briggs 1990/1997 for a survey), particularly if the work is translated into English.

References

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Indiana University, Bloomington

Laura Knudsen

CONTRIBUTORS

Richard ACZEL	University of Cologne, Cologne, Germany
László BORHI	Indiana University, Bloomington, IN, U.S.A.
Thomas COOPER	Indiana University, Bloomington, IN, U.S.A.
Mirko DOMBROWSKY	Universität zu Köln, Köln, Deutschland
Péter HAJDU	Institut für Literaturwissenschaft, Budapest, Ungarn
Frank J. KEARFUL	Bonn University, Bonn, Germany
Laura KNUDSEN	Indiana University, Bloomington, IN, U.S.A.
Ernö KULCSÁR SZABÓ	Eötvös-Loránd-Universität, Budapest, Ungarn
Christof SCHEELE	Indiana University, Bloomington, IN, U.S.A.
Anikó SOHÁR	Miskolc University, Miskolc, Hungary
Kristóf SZABÓ	Universität zu Köln, Köln, Deutschland
Mihály SZEGEDY-MASZÁK	Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest, Hungary
James T. WILSON	Indiana University, Bloomington, IN, U.S.A.
Péter ZIRKULI	Université de Bordeaux, Bordeaux, France

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