

English Renaissance Low Style: An Investigation of Lexicon and Its Field of Discourse

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イギリス・ルネサンス期の修辞学は、古典ギリシャ・ローマ期の学問的復興を受けて発展していったとされる。そして、この古典期の伝統は、イギリス・ルネサンス期のLow Style・Middle Style・High Styleに分類される三種の文体研究にも色濃く残っている。

本稿ではイギリス・ルネサンス期のLow Styleを取り上げ、その言語的特性を語彙の観点から特定することを目的した。基本的な理論枠組としてSystemic Functional Grammarを採用し、また言語分析の枠組としてGregory & Carroll (1978) 及びCarter (1987) を用いた。更に、言語資料としてWilliam Turnerの*A New Booke of the Natures and Properties of All Wines* (1568) を用い、register及びfield of discourseの概念から論じた。

キーワード：English Renaissance Rhetoric・Low Style・Field of Discourse

1. Introduction: The Aim of the Present Study

Renaissance ideas of style were inherited from Classical rhetoric, particularly influenced by “the recovery of the greater Cicero” by Gherardo Landriani, Bishop of Lodi in 1422 (Baldwin 1939: 44-45). In their discussion of style (*elocutio*), one of five stages of composition originally classified by Aristotle, Renaissance rhetoricians follow their classical predecessors in recognising a tripartite division: Low Style, “analogous to the Attic, or unornamented, brief style”; Middle Style, “analogous to the Rhodian, somewhere between Low and High Styles”; and High Style, “analogous to the Asiatic, or ornamented, full style” (Lanham 1968: 113). It is generally agreed that these three levels of oratorical style owe their development to the Roman rhetoricians, though Greek writers such as Aristotle refer to “the propriety of stylistic level to generic function” in their works (Nash 1989: 11). This classification of styles is usually ascribed to Theophrastus, a pupil of Aristotle, though there is no unanimous agreement on the question of an originator or an original date (D’Alton 1962: 73). This conception of three styles made its appearance in the *Ad Herennium*, and was then formally defined by Cicero, who distinguishes them in terms of function; that is, Low Style for “proof,” Middle Style for “pleasure,” and High Style for “persuasion” (xxi. 69). These functions are associated with the orator’s duty, the *officia oratoris*, discussed by Aristotle, that is, “to instruct” (Low Style), “to delight” (Middle Style) and “to move” (High Style) his audience (D’Alton 1962: 73). This classification of three styles, however, tells us little about the way in which each style is

realised through particular linguistic features. The aim of this paper will be to discuss some of the linguistic characteristics of the Low Style in the English Renaissance. I will search for linguistic features associated particularly with the Low Style's function of instruction. In the discussion, I will examine some English Renaissance texts with reference to the vocabulary of Low Style. Finally, I will refer to problems that persist in such a study.

2. Linguistic Features of Low Style

2.1 Introduction

As we have seen, Low Style is said to comprise unornamented language with non-emotional content, discharging the function of instruction. As to the function of instruction, it is possible to construe its meaning as subject matters with a technical colouring that aims at giving information to its addressees. In this study, therefore, the function of the Low Style is regarded as the transmission of information.

Before turning to a closer examination of the lexical characteristics of Low Style, a few remarks should be made concerning the application of Systemic Functional Grammar to an analysis of the linguistic features of Low Style. The main reason for employing Systemic Functional Grammar can be explained by the structural interpretation that each part should carry on a connection with the entire text. As has been seen, the discussion of the three styles was carried out by the Classical and Renaissance rhetoricians on the grounds that each style serves an important function: Low Style that of "instruction," Middle Style of "delight or pleasure," and High Style of "persuasion." In fact, we can fairly say that each function should be reflected in each style. This shows how significant the relationship between the function of Low Style and its rhetorical elements would be in examining the linguistic features of Low Style. In this respect, we can underscore the validity of a Systemic Functional approach, which can exemplify how language is structured for use, namely, how linguistic features of a text are construed as achieving certain functions or purposes intended by the addresser.

The application of Systemic Functional Grammar to the study of Low Style also draws another strength from the fact that the semantic system of Grammar can be discussed in terms of the context of situation, that is, register. The concept of register is related to "the fact that the language we speak or write varies according to the type of situation"; and consists of three variables of field "what is actually taking place" (type of social action), tenor "who is taking part" (role relationships), and mode "what part the language is playing" (symbolic organisation) (Halliday 1978: 32; 143). Halliday corresponds these variables to the three meanings of the semantic system: field to the ideational meaning, tenor to the interpersonal meaning, and mode to the textual meaning. This shows that semantic meanings and situational meanings overlap in language use. The relation between the three semantic meanings and Low Style in respect to the intended function of the text has been mentioned. As for register, it can also be used to point out the same relationship due to its prediction of language use, since "given that we know the situation, the social context of language use,

we can predict a great deal about the language that will occur, with reasonable probability of being right” (Halliday 1978: 32). This predictability is closely related to the organisation of the text constructed by the addresser, endeavouring to achieve its intended function. Register can also be understood as a means to identify the language use of Low Style.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

Discussing the lexical characteristics of Low Style allows us to offer a description of word choices being made in a text in terms of its informative feature: technical terms. What seems to be significant is the use of technical terms which reflect their field of discourse. Classifying fields of discourse into two, technical and non-technical ones, Gregory and Carroll describe technical fields as follows:

Many specialist roles in our society so restrict the language used to realize them verbally that they become fully comprehensible only to those acquainted with that specialization and its characteristic verbalized actions. (1978: 30)

In transmitting the information to the addressee, the addresser ought to be careful in disambiguating the text; however, this does not always entail the employment of common words in the text. This is because the lack of technical terms might hinder the addresser from producing clarified texts, lead to excessive wording and a failure to transmit the information clearly. Therefore we connect the employment of technical terms with the informative text. In addition, as technical fields have their own particular lexicon, they are likely to employ either “items proper only to themselves” or “items common to the language as a whole but with their meaning specified through regular co-occurrence with other items” (Gregory and Carroll 1978: 30). Carter, who discusses core vocabulary in terms of field of discourse, supports this. One might point out a contradiction in the relations between words with technical character and core vocabulary which is concerned with the neutrality of words by reference to simplification and unmarkedness. However, we can clear up this contradiction by taking Carter’s account into consideration, namely, for specific purposes technical words can be core in a quite crucial sense (1987: 41). In other words, core words fitting specific purposes can recall their fields of discourse. At any rate, the lexical items, technical words and common words with specific purposes, can all contribute toward constructing the text which is appropriate to its specific field. Therefore, it would be possible to argue that this feature of core words seem to be closely related to its instructive feature of Low Style. On the whole, the lexicon of texts in Low Style can affect the proper functioning of the three features.

3. Lexicon

In the above-mentioned analytical framework, the function of the lexicon in relation to technical terms reflecting their field of discourse was based on Gregory and Carroll (1978) and Carter (1987). An examination of William Turner’s text on wine also helps us form an important conception of the field of discourse. In the following discussion, we will discuss

the relationship between lexicon reflecting the field of discourse and the transmission of information.

Turner's text, belonging to the informative genre of Handbooks, intends to give information about wine to general readers. In this sense, there is no doubt that, in Turner's text, the dominant field of discourse is that of wine. In fact, the word wine occurs throughout the text. A close look at the text, however, clearly reveals that the text consists of several topics in relation to wine, which also constitute sub-fields of discourse. From three selected samples of Turner's text, we can find two major topics emerging: (i) general knowledge of wine and (ii) physical effects of wine consumption upon human bodies.

The following table presents typical lexical sets related to each topic, and what is clear from Table 1 is that technical terms found in specific topics are distinctly shown in their fields of discourse. For example, *astriction* does not occur in the topic of general knowledge of wine, while *Rhennish* does not occur in the topic of important effects upon human bodies. Technical terms seem to reflect their own fields of discourse, presenting the information in an appropriate way, so that the addressee should understand its content clearly. Accordingly, lexical sets conveying specific meaning in relation to their fields of discourse can enable the addresser to transmit intended propositional information appropriate for the field of discourse to the reader and the addressee to understand the field of discourse shown in the text.

Table 1 Word List for Fields of Discourse in Turner's Text

(i) General Knowledge of Wine:

(a) Nouns:

General:	<i>grapes, nature, raisins, ripenesse, substauce, wine</i>
Properties:	<i>earthlinesse, terrestritie</i>
Taste:	<i>sharpenesse, sweetenesse, taste</i>
Colour:	<i>cleare, clearenesse, color</i>
Area:	<i>Fraunce</i>
Name:	<i>Albanum, Cauchanum, Cecubum, Must (Mustum)</i>
Latin	<i>aquosa</i>

(b) Verbs

General:	<i>drinke, grow, heate, smell, press</i>
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(c) Adjectives

General:	<i>ripe, sour</i>
Properties:	<i>colde, earth, fine, greene, grosse, hot, midle, newe, olde, pleasant, small, strong, subtill, thick, thin, vnfinde, waterish, waterye</i>
Taste:	<i>biting, sharpe, swete</i>
Colour:	<i>blacke, bright yellow, troubled, red, redishe yellow, yellow, white</i>
Area:	<i>Clared, French, Gascone, Italian, Rhennish</i>
Name:	<i>Mustish</i>

(ii) Physical Effects of Wine Consumption:

(a) Nouns

Medicine:	<i>agues, appetite, astriction, belly, bladder, bloud, bodie, Cholerichke, complexion, conueyance, diet, digestion, disposition, gout, grossenesse, head, head aches, helth, humors, gall, iuice, kidneys, Melancholike, norishmentes, medicines,</i>
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	<i>meate, patients, phisicke, rewme, sharpenese, sicknesse, sinewes, stomacke, stone, veynes, water, vessels, vrine, winde</i>
Poison:	<i>bitings, choking mushromes, Coriander, Eugh, Hemlocke, Iria, iuice, Litharge, Opium, Pharicum, poison, poppy, stingins, todestooles, Wolfes bayne</i>
(b) Verbs	
Medicine:	<i>abide, bake, breede, conuey, digest, dispose, driue, engender, gather, hang, nourish, rost, sicken, smite, sweate, swound, tarie, trouble, vex</i>
Poison:	<i>bite, sting</i>
(c) Adjectives	
Medicine:	<i>bitter, burning, euill, good, gross, hard, hurte, norishing, sicke, yellow</i>
Poison:	<i>cold</i>

Table 1: The list shows types of words reflecting fields of discourse in Turner's text as to (i) topics and (ii) parts of speech.

On the other hand, words which are highly technical, such as the translation of foreign words, might be a cause of unintelligibility to the addressee. The investigation of Turner's text, however, shows how he avoids obscurity caused by highly technical words:

(1) wines in dede are thin, white, and waterish, and therefore are called (¥Oligophora¥), that is, wines that can abide but small menging of water with them. (B5R: 18-21)

Example (1) shows that juxtaposing the information as to the property (*thin, white* and *waterish*) of wine, Turner introduces the technical term *Oligophora*; further, he adds its physical effect. In this way, Turner handles highly technical words, especially the translation of foreign terms, with care. This shows that the employment of highly technical terms can be possible without causing any ambiguity, and helps to transmit information to the addressee precisely.

Common words with specific purposes are exemplified in Turner's text in terms of highly polysemous words. With respect to specialised words used for general knowledge of wine in Table 1, there are some words which are not limited to their occurrence in a specific field. For instance, adjectives such as *swete, strong, thin* and *thick* are employed in showing their special meaning, properties or taste, within the field of wine. These adjectives, however, can be used in different fields in order to signify different meanings. Similarly, the noun *iuice* is used in both the fields of medicine in (2a) and poison in (2b) as physical effects of wine consumption:

(2) a. And in the booke of good and ill iuice he [Galen] sayth thus. (B3V: 3-4)

b. . . .or y=e= poison called Iria or Opium, which is the iuice of Poppy. . . . (E1R: 22-23)

Addressees find no difficulty in understanding this transition of meanings across the fields of discourse, since *iuice* in (2a) denoting humours is shown by the co-occurrence of the

attributive adjectives *good* and *ill*, while *iuice* in (2b) signifying the liquid pressed out from flowers is shown by the co-occurrence of a prepositional phrase *of Poppy*. The addressee can consider to which field words belong while interpreting the text. Even though these polysemous words appear to cause ambiguous interpretations, the addressee can understand these words clearly by referring to fields of discourse to which the words belong, which do not produce any ambiguity.

In summary, in Turner's text, specialised words reflecting their fields of discourse have great importance to informative genre with reference to transmitting the content clearly and appropriately, as well as to disambiguating the text.

4. Conclusion: An Evaluation of this Study

In this study, we have discussed what linguistic features can be associated with Low Style in the English Renaissance in terms of the lexical aspect. The fundamental analytical framework was established through Halliday. Considering the fact that the analysis of the lexicon discussed within Systemic Functional Grammar explained the way in which the informative features are realised in Turner's text, it can be said that the application of the Grammar to the syntactical features exemplifies how the stylistic characteristics function in the text.

The present study has revealed how lexical features of Low Style endorse the role of information-giving. It must be remembered, however, that the analysis has been based on a synchronic perspective. It would certainly be interesting to carry out a diachronic study of the relationship between the linguistic features of Low Style and stylistic characteristics. A further development could be the examination of Low Style as advocated by the Royal Society in the late seventeenth century. In this case, particular attention would be paid to its establishment as scientific English.

There are some scholars who broaden the applications of the concept of Low Style to the study of literature or popular literature. For example, Gilbert classifies Low Style into two: the Low Style and the secular Low Style to deal with "any subject . . . falls outside the areas described by the high or middle styles" (1979: 13). On the other hand, Rhodes applies the term *Low Style* to Elizabethan comic prose (1980: 18-36). The investigation of lexical features of Low Style as an informative genre has revealed that it differs from popular literature whose language is often described as "rambling, crazy-paved and ungrammatical text" (Darton 1966: 82) or from lower-class English which exhibits three interdependent features, namely, colloquialism, incorrectness and old-fashionedness (McIntosh 1986: 12). A deeper study of the differences between the two Low Styles is desirable, though this should possibly be addressed through an examination of different linguistic features in both Low Styles.

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