

**Annotation****THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INDIVIDUAL STYLE AND
SOCIAL LANGUAGE UNITS IN LITERARY DISCOURSE****Nuraliyeva Shoxista**

Teacher of Foreign languages chair, FSU

Nurmatova Mubina

Student of Fergana State University

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This article examines the relationship between individual style and social language units in literary discourse, arguing that literary meaning is co-constructed at the intersection of idiolectal choices and socially shared linguistic configurations. The study synthesizes insights from stylistics, sociolinguistics, discourse analysis, and systemic-functional linguistics to frame “individual style” as a pattern of motivated selections and “social language units” as repertoires including register, sociolect, and genre-linked norms. Methodologically, it combines qualitative discourse analysis with corpus-informed profiling of narratorial and character speech, triangulating collocational tendencies, appraisal resources, transitivity patterns, and indexical cues across a purposive sample of contemporary Anglophone fiction. Results indicate that authors’ stylistic signatures are legible not apart from but through social language units they orchestrate: narrative voice calibrates registers for stance management; character idiolects weave sociolectal markers to perform identity; and style-shifting across scenes functions as a discourse-level resource for heteroglossia and plot dynamics. The discussion articulates implications for theory (style as social action), method (mixed-methods stylistics), and pedagogy (teaching style via register awareness), while acknowledging limits of genre scope and language coverage. The article contributes a model in which “individual style” is best understood as a selective reconfiguration of social language units, yielding an integrated account of variation, meaning, and effect in literary discourse.

Keywords: style; idiolect; sociolect; register; heteroglossia; dialogism; indexicality; stylistics; discourse; corpus

Annotation

Ushbu maqola badiiy diskursda individual uslub va ijtimoiy til birliklari o'rtasidagi munosabatni tahlil qiladi hamda ma'no idiolektal tanlovlar bilan ijtimoiy jihatdan umumiy bo'lgan til konfiguratsiyalari kesishmasida hamkorlikda qurilishini ta'kidlaydi. Stilistika, sotsiolingvistika, diskurs tahlili va tizimli-funksional lingvistika qarashlari sintezlanib, “individual uslub” motivatsiyalangan tanlovlar naqshi sifatida, “ijtimoiy til birliklari” esa registr, sotsiolekt va janrga bog'liq normalarni o'z ichiga olgan repertuar sifatida tushuntiriladi. Metodologiyada sifatli diskurs tahlili korpusga tayangan profil bilan birlashtirilib, muallif nutqi va obrazlar dialoglari kollokatsion tendensiyalar, baholash (appraisal) resurslari, tranzitivlik naqshlari va indeksik signallar bo'yicha o'lchanadi. Natijalar shuni ko'rsatadiki, muallifning uslubiy imzosi ijtimoiy til birliklari orkestratsiyasi orqali ko'rinadi: hikoyachi ovozinin registr tanlovi munosabatni boshqaradi; qahramon idiolektlari sotsiolekt belgilari orqali identitet ijro etadi; sahnalar bo'yicha uslubiy almashish geteroglossiya va syujet dinamikasi uchun diskurs darajasidagi resursga aylanadi. Munozara nazariya (ustlub – ijtimoiy amal), metod (aralash

yondashuv) va ta'lim (registr ongini rivojlantirish) uchun oqibatlarni yoritadi hamda janr va til qamrovi cheklovlarini tan oladi. Maqola individual uslubni ijtimoiy til birliklarini selektiv qayta konfiguratsiya qilish sifatida tushuntiruvchi integrativ modelni taklif etadi.

Kalit so'zlar: uslub; idiolekt; sotsiolekt; registr; geteroglossiya; dialogizm; indeksikallik; stilistika; diskurs; korpus

Annotation

В статье исследуется связь между индивидуальным стилем и социальными языковыми единицами в литературном дискурсе, показывая, что смысл создается на пересечении идиолектных выборов и коллективно разделяемых языковых репертуаров. Обобщая выводы стилистики, социолингвистики, анализа дискурса и системно-функциональной лингвистики, автор трактует «индивидуальный стиль» как мотивированный узор выборов, а «социальные языковые единицы» — как наборы регистра, социолекта и жанровых норм. Методологически работа сочетает качественный анализ дискурса с корпусно информированным профилированием речи автора и персонажей, сопоставляя коллокационные тенденции, ресурсы оценки (appraisal), модели транзитивности и индексальные маркеры в целенаправленной выборке современной англоязычной прозы. Результаты показывают, что авторский «почерк» распознается не вне, а через организованные социальные языковые единицы: повествователь калибрует регистры для управления позицией; идиолекты персонажей вплетают социолектные признаки для конструирования идентичности; переключение стиля между сценами служит ресурсом гетероглоссии и динамики сюжета. В дискуссии обозначаются теоретические (стиль как социальное действие), методические (смешанные методы стилистики) и педагогические (обучение через осведомленность о регистрах) следствия, а также признаются ограничения жанрового и языкового охвата. Работа предлагает интегративную модель, согласно которой «индивидуальный стиль» — это селективная переконфигурация социальных языковых единиц в литературном дискурсе.

Ключевые слова: стиль; идиолект; социолект; регистр; гетероглоссия; диалогизм; индексичность; стилестика; дискурс; корпус

Introduction

How do the singular traces of an author's voice emerge within language that is, by definition, social? This article addresses the relationship between individual style and social language units in literary discourse. We understand individual style as a patterned set of motivated, recurrent choices in lexis, syntax, semantics, and discourse organization that readers recognize as a signature. By social language units we mean the conventionalized repertoires that circulate in communities—registers, sociolects, dialectal features, and genre-normed routines—which carry indexical meanings of identity, setting, and stance. While literary studies often treat style as a unique imprint, sociolinguistics and discourse studies insist that all usage is socially embedded. We argue that literary style is best conceptualized as a selective reconfiguration of social language units, such that idiolectal distinctiveness is achieved through the orchestration, blending, and strategic deviation from socially available patterns (Simpson 2014; Wales 2011; Gee 2014). Our approach integrates tools from systemic-functional linguistics to model interpersonal and ideational choices (Halliday and Matthiessen 2014), critical discourse analysis to situate discourse as social practice (Fairclough 2014; van

Dijk 2014), and corpus-assisted stylistics to gauge patterned variation (Baker and McEnery 2015; Mahlberg 2013). We ask: which social units mediate stylistic distinctiveness? how do narratorial and character voices redistribute them? and what methodological blend best captures their interaction?

Literature Review

Stylistics has long defined itself as the principled study of how linguistic choices create aesthetic and interpretive effects. Simpson characterizes stylistics as “a method of textual interpretation in which primacy of place is assigned to language,” emphasizing systematic description to connect form with function (Simpson 2014). Wales (2011) complements this view by cataloguing style as a set of “linguistic habits” recognized across texts, while warning that any account of individual style must acknowledge the gravitational pull of convention and genre. From discourse analysis, Gee (2014) frames “language-in-use” as inextricably tied to social activities, identities, and values; this notion supports a reading of literary discourse where narratorial stance and character speech are practices that inhabit and transform social repertoires. Systemic-functional linguistics contributes a multi-layered model in which register is encoded through choices in field, tenor, and mode, connecting ideational content, interpersonal stance, and textual organization (Halliday and Matthiessen 2014). Such an account clarifies how individual style can recalibrate register variables to re-key social meanings.

Critical discourse approaches insist that discourse is a form of social action, in which texts enact, legitimize, or contest social relations (Fairclough 2014; van Dijk 2014). While literary texts are not reducible to institutional discourse, their styles often appropriate institutional registers—legal, bureaucratic, scientific—to produce irony, critique, or estrangement. Johnstone (2018) adds a micro-analytic focus on indexicality, showing how recurrent forms accumulate social meaning across contexts; this is crucial for analyzing how an author’s signature reuses community-wide cues in distinctive ways. Cognitive stylistics, meanwhile, stresses the reader’s processing of texture, foregrounding, and schema interplay (Stockwell 2020). It offers mechanisms—such as deviation and parallelism—for how social norms are perceived and how deviations trigger stylistic salience. Methodologically, corpus approaches enable analysts to uncover distributional facts that elude intuition: collocation networks, dispersion across character sets, and keyword profiles relative to genre baselines (Baker and McEnery 2015; Mahlberg 2013). Bednarek (2018) demonstrates how media genres laminate colloquial and institutional registers, illustrating how register mixing is a resource for character construction—an insight readily transferable to prose fiction. Finally, sociolinguistic variation studies provide frameworks for linking micro-choices to social meaning, foregrounding how variation is structured by audience design, style-shifting, and identity performance (Tagliamonte 2012). Taken together, these traditions suggest that individual style and social language units are not opposed but mutually constitutive: the former is legible only against the patterned availability of the latter, while the latter are continually reanimated through idiolectal use in literary discourse.

Materials and Methodology

We adopted a mixed-methods design combining corpus-assisted stylistics with qualitative discourse analysis. The corpus comprised a purposive sample of contemporary Anglophone novels (2010–2020), selected to balance first- and third-person narration, diverse

genres (literary, crime, speculative), and varied sociolectal landscapes. Texts were prepared with speaker attribution tags for dialogue, enabling the separation of narratorial voice from character speech. Quantitatively, we profiled each text and voice tier using frequency lists, keyword analysis against a general fiction reference corpus, and collocation windows (± 4) for salient lemma sets (Baker and McEnery 2015). We then extracted concordances for indexical markers (honorifics, terms of address), register cues (technical lexis, bureaucratic bundles), and stance resources (evaluative adjectives, modal verbs), triangulating with dispersion and character-level distributions (Mahlberg 2013).

Qualitatively, we implemented a layered coding scheme informed by systemic-functional linguistics—transitivity for ideational profiling, appraisal for evaluative stance, and tenor markers for interpersonal alignment (Halliday and Matthiessen 2014)—and discourse-analytic attention to positioning and identity performance (Gee 2014; Johnstone 2018). Analysts coded a stratified sample of scenes per text, focusing on style-shifts across setting changes and interlocutor configurations. Reliability was supported through double-coding with negotiated agreement and codebook refinement. Throughout, we treated “individual style” as emergent from patterned selections, and “social language units” as repertoires indexed by register, sociolect, and genre conventions (Simpson 2014; Wales 2011). This integrative methodology allows us to connect distributional regularities with interpretive claims about how authors orchestrate social resources to produce distinctive stylistic effects.

Results

Three robust patterns emerged. First, narratorial voices consistently calibrated register to manage proximity with readers: intimate, conversational tenor rose in reflective passages (increased second-person address, boosters like *really*), while expository stretches mobilized formal bundles (in sum, moreover), yielding an author-specific “register signature” that recurred across texts (Halliday and Matthiessen 2014; Simpson 2014). Second, character idiolects intertwined sociolectal markers with stance-taking: colloquial contractions, dialectal phonology in orthography, and community-specific lexis clustered with evaluative adjectives and modal particles to perform identity and affiliation. For instance, a working-class adolescent voice combined nonstandard negation with intensifiers to project solidarity, while a professional voice hybridized technical terms with mitigating modality to project expertise yet approachability (Johnstone 2018; Tagliamonte 2012).

Third, style-shifting operated as a discourse resource: scenes involving institutional settings triggered register-mixing—legal or bureaucratic phraseology embedded within colloquial frames—to create irony or critique, especially when filtered through free indirect discourse. Authors differed in the density and placement of such mixes, producing distinctive textures despite drawing on the same social units (Fairclough 2014; van Dijk 2014). Corpus indicators supported these claims: keyness profiles identified overused stance bundles by narrator tier, while collocation networks around terms of address revealed character-group-specific addressivity patterns (Baker and McEnery 2015; Mahlberg 2013). These findings corroborate the thesis that idiolectal distinctiveness is realized through the orchestration and re-keying of socially shared repertoires.

Discussion

The results support a model in which “individual style” is not a *sui generis* residue separable from social language, but a selective reconfiguration of socially available repertoires.

From an SFL perspective, authors achieve distinctiveness by reweighting field–tenor–mode resources—e.g., coupling informal tenor with technical field to humanize complexity—thus producing recognizable register signatures (Halliday and Matthiessen 2014). From discourse-analytic and CDA standpoints, the observed register-mixing in institutional scenes enacts social critique: incorporating bureaucratic formulae into intimate frames exposes institutional rationalities to ironizing uptake, aligning readers affectively and ethically (Fairclough 2014; van Dijk 2014; Gee 2014). Indexicality theory clarifies how recurring cues—address forms, modal styles—accrue authorial meaning across a corpus, becoming part of how readers recognize a voice (Johnstone 2018; Wales 2011).

Methodologically, the study demonstrates the value of corpus-assisted stylistics for bridging micro- and macro-levels: quantitative profiles direct attention to recurrent selections that qualitative analysis can interpret functionally (Baker and McEnery 2015; Mahlberg 2013). It also shows that appraisal resources and transitivity patterns are useful comparators across narratorial and character tiers, facilitating claims about stance and ideation alignment (Simpson 2014). Pedagogically, the findings recommend teaching style through register awareness: students can learn to diagnose how texts recalibrate social units to achieve effects, thereby demystifying “voice” without reducing it to mere ornament (Stockwell 2020). Limitations include language scope (English only), genre focus (prose fiction), and reliance on a purposive sample; future work should test the model across languages and media, including drama and serial television, where dialogic density and multimodal cues may differently mediate the style–social unit interface (Bednarek 2018). Even within these limits, the convergence of evidence strengthens the claim that stylistic individuality emerges through the social.

Conclusion

This article has argued that individual style in literary discourse is best conceptualized as a selective, strategic reconfiguration of social language units. Drawing on complementary frameworks in stylistics, systemic-functional linguistics, discourse analysis, and corpus methods, we showed how narratorial and character voices deploy register, sociolect, and genre conventions to craft distinctive textures. Our results highlighted three mechanisms—register calibration in narration, sociolect-inflected stance in character speech, and scene-specific style-shifting through register-mixing—that together render authorial signatures legible. The theoretical implication is that style should be approached as social action anchored in communities of practice, not as isolated deviation; the methodological implication is that mixed methods can productively join distributional regularities to interpretive claims; and the pedagogical implication is that voice can be taught as orchestrated social repertoires. While further cross-linguistic and cross-genre validation is needed, especially in multimodal narratives, the proposed model integrates individual and social dimensions without collapsing one into the other. In so doing, it refines our understanding of how literary texts mobilize the social life of language to produce singular aesthetic and ethical experiences.

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