

CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

The Mathematical and Linguistic Analysis of Style

Style as a concept figures in such varied branches as literature, fine arts and psychology. Owing to its central role in the aesthetic appreciation of any work of art it has been studied from time immemorial. Modern linguistics with its emphasis on formal rigour has also dealt with it in an attempt to redefine the direction and methods of stylistics on the basis of the insights gained through linguistic research in recent times. The purpose of such studies has been not just to extend the sphere of linguistics, but to apply sound principles and methods of linguistics in an area where language has a special communicative function.^{1,2} The general problem

¹ "Linguistic stylistics must be an application, not an extension of linguistics; this is the only way to ensure the theoretical validity of the statements made." HALLIDAY (70), p.302.

² In a literary work considered as a work of art, the principal interest is centered on the signs themselves and any interest on the referents in the 'fictional' world is secondary to it. In normal communication the signifiés are the foci of attention.

then is to define style or atleast give it an operational definition and to test how far linguistics can help to shape stylistics as a reliable tool for understanding the structure of a literary work. The work reported here applies itself specifically to Thomas Mann's novel *BUDDENBROOKS* and attempts to describe his style by employing the methods of mathematical and descriptive linguistics. The first task is to clarify the notion 'style', so that it can be used as a technical term with unambiguous reference thereafter.

Starting with the rather commonplace idea that style is the manner of speaking or writing, we define style as the set of all characteristics which go to define this manner. The features considered might be phonological, morphological, syntactic or semantic. In Chapter II we have justified taking such a broad view of style. The advantages of such a definition are that it can lead to fruitful studies as well as permit separating different styles as understood in ordinary usage of the term: style of an author, style of a genre, style of a period etc.

The assumption under which this study has been carried out is that a literary work of art is autonomous. If it were held, for instance, that the intentions of an author when he wrote the work must influence our judgement of a

work then its influence also on style (defined as a set of characteristics) will have to be evaluated if the features considered are semantic categories. If style is defined as a set of characteristics, the significance of these characteristics as found in a work can be explicated only by contrasting with other sets of characteristics, in other words with a norm, or several norms. Theoretically it cannot be decided whether the norm shall consist of another work by the same author or a different author, of all the remaining works of the author, or all the works of the author including the work under study, of all the works of all the contemporaries in the same form (say, novel) or of all spoken and written matter pertaining to that period. If the norm shall represent the 'population', the question becomes: what shall be our population? In practice the population is specifically chosen by the investigator to support or to test his intuitively formed hypotheses, the only validity of the norm being the results. If the results are interesting, the norm is considered adequate.

For our study we have considered BUDDENBROOKS as the population. This is valid only on the assumption mentioned above. Our justification rests on two facts. Firstly it is conceded that a gifted writer has such mastery over the

language that he can vary the characteristics of his writing, i.e. his style, according to his will. Within the same work the combinatorics of these characteristics change dynamically so that each chapter can be contrasted with the others, each paragraph with the others and so on, down the levels even up to rhythm. Any section of the text has therefore according to our definition style. Secondly WICKMANN (287) has shown that statistically too the components of dispersion exist even between the different passages in the same work. Both these considerations support our decision to treat primarily BUDDENBROOKS as the norm.

The hypothesis which we are testing is : phrase structure is a significant stylistic characteristic. In this study phrase structure has been defined on the basis of a finite number of rules of production of the form $\phi \rightarrow \phi (w)$. Automatic formal rules of grammar like the necessity of using a determiner before a noun have been disregarded. A noun phrase "the man" can be expanded into "the old man with the child" where old and with the child are modifiers of the same rank introduced by the production rules : $N \rightarrow N(A)$ and $N \rightarrow N(P)$ and $P \rightarrow P(N)$. Although these rules are applied functionally, the structures which are being analysed would be dismissed by transformational grammarians as belonging just to surface structure.

In our opinion there is hidden system in surface structure just as there is in deep structure. Surface structure can be a complex matter. In the above expression, the child can be expanded further at a higher rank by the clause which was limping badly. By means of phrases and clauses the structure of a simple sentence consisting of a noun phrase and a verb phrase with minimal fillers can be expanded both linearly as well as vertically by applying the production rules at the same rank or at higher ranks. The range of choice available to the writer is so large - the rank can go up to 8, 9, 10 without impairing comprehension and at each rank several rules are applicable - that in a novel of about 500 pages there will be recurrent traits of the author manifested in the frequencies of application of each rule. If the same rule is found with high frequency in different samples we may conclude that it is an invariant stylistic characteristic of the author. Whether it is due to language or due to his personal choice will have to be tested. If the distribution of high frequency rules varies from sample to sample it will indicate that the author is changing his style and it will have to be checked whether there is any thematic correlation to the change in the structure of syntax. Such a procedure will provide an exact scientific basis for interpretation. The work is thus regarded as a contribution to literary

criticism as well as providing a defense of descriptive linguistics on a crucial point of contention with transformational grammarians, namely the importance of 'surface structure'.

As a purely qualitative linguistic analysis the participle constructions have been investigated. These refer to participles which have been extended by adverbials and nominals and to participles which are used without the auxiliary in perfect or past perfect tenses.

den Kopf ein wenig zur Seite geneigt, sprach er
Reisen ...,die er mit seiner Gattin unternommen

The participles are functionally ambivalent in that they exhibit the characteristics of the noun as well as the verb. A study of these constructions with rigorous linguistic methods has not been attempted so far. The current work attempts to set up formal criteria for sub-categorizing the participles and thereby provide additionally also elucidation for the phenomenon of auxiliary deletion frequently applied by Thomas Mann. It has been assumed here that although it is not possible to demarcate exactly where syntax ends and where semantics begins, semantic relationships and syntactic relationships are functionally related, i.e. there is a one-to-one or many-to-one correspondence between the semantic structure of sentences and their

syntactic structures. On this assumption distribution criteria and structural tests have been applied to determine the syntactic structure of phrases and clauses.

In both types of analyses a criticism could be voiced that the corpus is limited and conclusions derived therefrom do not have validity for language as a whole. To this we would like to reply that the study has placed a greater emphasis on depth than on extensive coverage of material. Conflicting assumptions have been made and diametrically opposed points of view have been proposed regarding corpus, deep structure vs. surface structure, linguistic tests, even fundamental concepts like phonemes so that it has become necessary and urgent to test the soundness of these assertions coming from the various schools of linguistics. The results suggest that the methods of different schools can be fruitfully combined and applied to shed some light on language. Further, the work is an illustration of the application of linguistics to literary criticism. It does not purport to resolve the linguistic controversies of the current era.

The study deliberately avoids semantic criteria and makes no attempt to classify the verbs semantically or to discover stylistic features in the semantics of Thomas Mann. Indirectly however the study of syntax brings into focus

some common denominators of semantics and to that extent we have also concerned ourselves with semantics.