DE GRUYTER

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SOCIAL STYLISTICS

TOPICS IN ENGLISH LINGUISTICS [TIEL]

2. Variability in sociolinguistics and stylistics

2.1. Introduction

One of the aims of this study is to show that the language used by newspapers shows a linguistic consistency that is greater within one particular section of one particular paper than it is across different sections or different newspapers, that is to say that the language produced by various journalists working for the same section of the same paper is often, in some relevant respects, more alike than that produced by journalists working for different sections or different papers. In short, I want to show some of the stylistic differences and similarities across the British national daily newspapers.

Unfortunately, style is a notoriously ill-defined notion. The definitions given to it by researchers in the fields of sociolinguistics, and textlinguistics alone show a great variety, a variety that becomes almost bewildering if definitions in the fields of rhetoric and literary criticism are taken into consideration.

However, things are not quite as bad as they seem, and I am going to offer a definition that subsumes many of the sociolinguistic approaches to stylistic variation, albeit at the cost of ignoring approaches in the fields of rhetoric and literary criticism. Furthermore it will allow us to see more clearly in what respects the different sociolinguistic approaches differ, and how they still can be said to be dealing with the same phenomenon.

As a first step, I shall survey what could be called traditional stylistics, that is to say an approach to style that is fundamentally based on comparing frequencies of features in a given corpus with an explicit, or sometimes implicit, norm corpus. I shall then go on to demonstrate how such an approach relates to the two mainstream sociolinguistic methodologies of correlational studies on the one hand and of the ethnography of speaking on the other. This background will enable me to elucidate the notions of variety, in general and the notion of style, as one of its hyponyms, in particular.

I reject the standard sociolinguistic views of style as a correlate of the amount of attention paid by the speaker to his or her speech, because of insurmountable difficulties in basing such a categorisation on operational criteria. In its place I suggest that the audience in the form of addressees, bystanders or overhearers should be taken as the decisive factor that can be correlated with linguistic differences to establish different styles.

I shall round off this chapter by reviewing some recent approaches to the language of the media and placing them in the triangle of traditional stylistics, correlational sociolinguistics and the ethnography of speaking.

2.2. Three approaches to the concept of style

2.2.1. Traditional stylistics

There is a lay notion of the concept of style, which equates style with the elevated and aesthetically pleasing forms that are used, for instance, by celebrated authors in their writings. Some newspapers, accordingly, are claimed to "lack style" altogether.

This is of course not what traditional stylistics takes style to be. Every single text has got a style in as far as it has formal properties that can be compared with those from other texts. A stylistic analysis will try to single out those features that help to distinguish the texts under comparison. One particular feature may occur in only one text and not the other, or it may appear with a frequency that is appreciably different from one text to the other. In Winter's (1969: 3) words:

> A style may be said to be characterized by a pattern of recurrent selections from the inventory of optional features of a language. Various types of selection can be found: complete exclusion of an optional element, obligatory inclusion of a feature optional elsewhere, varying degrees of inclusion of a specific variant without complete elimination of competing features.

The frequency of a feature has to be seen in relation to the length of the text so that we should talk in terms of density, that is to say the frequency of a feature within a well-defined stretch of text (cf. Enkvist 1973: 23). The length of the text may be defined in number of pages of printed text, for instance, or in number of running words, or any other operational measurement for the length of a text.

> The recognition and analysis of styles are squarely based on comparison. The essence of variation, and thus of style, is difference, and differences cannot be analysed and described without comparison. (Enkvist 1973: 21)

The texts that are to be compared have to be sufficiently similar as far as their context of production is concerned in order to allow for a valid comparison. In Enkvist's (1973: 24) terms they have to be contextually related. Thus it probably does not make sense to compare an Old English poem, the *Beowulf* for instance, with a passage of twentieth century legal prose, but one might consider comparing different instances of legal prose over a certain period of time, or one might compare some poems with a number of plays by the same author. The guiding principle will always be to keep as many non-linguistic features as possible constant over all the texts to be compared in order to be able to assign the linguistic differences with more confidence to those few features that do vary (cf. Enkvist 1980 for a categorisation of contexts from a stylistic point of view).

The two texts under investigation can have the same status, and style is then seen as the difference between the two, but often one text is assigned the status of a norm against which the style of the other text is seen as a deviation. Enkvist broadens his definition to such an extent as to allow for norm texts that are implicit and exist only in the expectations which readers and analysts bring to bear on the text under investigation. This has the advantage of bridging the gap between linguistic stylistics and literary criticism, because it shows the essential similarities between the literary critic, who attempts to single out the unique features of a text, i.e. those features that deviate from expectations based on previous reading experiences, and the linguist, who compares empirically the features of clearly specified text samples. However, in the following I use the term traditional stylistics to refer more specifically to linguistic stylisticians who work with well-defined norm texts as a basis for comparison (see, for instance, the collection of articles in Dolezel and Bailey 1969).

Traditional stylistics correlates language varieties with the context and situation of its production, but it usually does not make any distinctions between regional, social or historical varieties, diglossic levels or genres. All these varieties could be viewed by traditional stylisticians as styles (cf. Enkvist 1973, Crystal and Davy 1969). The failure to discriminate between different types of contexts is felt by many critics to be a serious shortcoming (e.g. Levinson 1988: 162), but this limitation is not inherent in the methodology. The methodology consists mainly in comparing texts and correlating the differences with the contextual differences.

All that is needed to distinguish different types of varieties is a stringent categorisation of the contextual features. This problem is in no essential way different from the one encountered by the correlational sociolinguist, who, as I will show below, also has to categorise the contextual features in order to distinguish sociolects, dialects, historiolects and so on.

Winter (1961) is an early and pertinent example of this approach. He tries to delimit styles on the basis of the relative frequency of certain syntactic features. The main features which he establishes for every text of his German corpus are the percentage of clause initial elements that are subjects rather than objects or adverbials, the percentage of words that are finite verbs (which gives a rough indication of clause length); and the percentage of finite verbs that occur in main clauses (which is a measure for sentence complexity). His large corpus consists of some 30 to 50 literary and scientific texts written within the last two hundred years (he does not use exactly the same corpus for all his tests).

He categorises his texts into the four stylistic groups of stage prose, fictional prose, factual prose and scientific prose. The results show that stage prose, which he takes to be a rough approximation to spoken language, has – in relation to the entire corpus – a consistently high percentage of subjects in clause initial position, a high percentage of finite verbs (indicating short clause length); and a consistently high percentage of finite verbs in main clauses (indicating little complexity). In all these cases the opposite is true for the scientific texts, whereas the two categories of fictional and factual prose show a far greater variation.

Thus Winter takes his entire corpus as a norm and compares it with its subparts on the basis of the relative frequency of syntactic features. He calls the two styles that he can most confidently set off against the entire corpus primarily spoken and primarily written German (1961: 216). If his results are somewhat less than convincing it is exactly because he fails to categorise his data more rigorously. He completely ignores the historical differences and any possible regional differences, and he includes in his corpus, consisting otherwise entirely of literary and scientific prose, one sample of newspaper texts.

A similar approach is taken by Krámsky in various publications (e.g. 1967, 1969, 1972b, 1985), in which he typically correlates the frequency of particular word classes with different styles of written English such as fiction (by Dickens, Wells, Lawrence and Warner), "colloquial" style (plays by Shaw, Wilde, Seymour and Osborne), and scientific style (textbooks ranging from linguistics to biology) (1972b: 36).

To date the most sophisticated attempt to differentiate styles on the basis of the frequency of syntactic constructions is the work carried out by Biber in collaboration with Finegan (e.g. Biber 1985, 1986a, 1986b, 1988 and Biber and Finegan 1986, 1988). Biber's (1988) primary aim is to establish the relevant differences between speech and writing, but the implications of his work are far more pervasive than that. With the help of a tagging algorithm he analyses large sections of both the London-Lund corpus of spoken English and the LOB corpus of written English and counts the frequency of 67 syntactic features. Most of these features are attributed specific discourse functions. They include tense and aspect markers, place and time adverbials, various categories of pronouns, nominalisations, subordinations, various relative clause constructions, downtoners, hedges and discourse particles, type/token ratio, word length, and many others.

The guiding principle in the selection of these constructions is firstly whether any discourse function has been claimed for a particular item in the relevant linguistic literature and secondly whether it could be identified with the computer program. The place adverbials (1988: 224), as a case in point, are searched for on the basis of a finite list of common adverbs based on the list given by Quirk *et al.* (1985: 516). Biber's list, however, does not include adverbial phrases introduced by *about, between, in, opposite* or *on* because these prepositions "often mark logical relations in a text". This is of course true, and the omission is systematic across all texts analysed so that it should not distort the results but it intuitively seems to leave out a rather large proportion of all place adverbials. In other cases, as for instance the distinction between past tense forms and past participle forms, Biber is forced to post-edit the computer count manually.

The actual analysis then clusters the linguistic features into groups of features that co-occur with a high frequency in texts. He establishes seven such groups or factors. These factors are interpreted as textual dimensions on the basis of the shared discourse functions of their individual features as they have been established by other researchers in the relevant literature.

In the next stage of the analysis, Biber computes for each factor a factor score for each text, and for each genre an average score for all its texts. The term genre is taken to refer to text characterisation on the basis of external criteria, that is to say it includes such categories as telephone conversation, press reportage, business letters and so on, whereas the term text type refers to categorisations on the basis of linguistic criteria such as the proposed factors or dimensions.

It turns out that each dimension structures the entire set of texts in a different way. On dimension 1, personal telephone conversations are highly involved, whereas financial press reportage and natural science academic prose are highly informational. On dimension 2, sports news reportage and political press reportage are highly narrative, whereas technology and engineering academic prose are highly non-narrative. On dimension 3, the technology and engineering academic prose have highly explicit and situation-independent reference, whereas personal telephone conversations and sports broadcasts have situation-dependent reference (for a slightly more detailed summary and a review cf. Jucker 1989).

This approach then is traditional stylistics on a higher level. Styles are established on the basis of the frequency of occurrence of syntactic features, but with the help of powerful computer programs. This allows the analysis of an enormous data base; it allows the inclusion of a great number of syntactic features, and makes it possible to group the syntactic features into factors according to well-defined mathematical procedures. The weakest point is presumably the limitation of the tagging program, which in several cases restricts the range of syntactic features that can be used.

2.2.2. Ethnography of speaking

As in traditional stylistics, the sociolinguist tries to relate language usage to its social context and situation. But there are two quite distinct approaches within the broad domains of sociolinguistics, which approach this central question in ways that seem to be radically different. There are differences not only in the methodology but also in the aims. The research tools must be seen in relation to the aims of those using them in order to allow a fair assessment of their value. What to some researchers may seem to be un-illuminating research tools may in fact turn out to be highly successful if they are seen in the proper light of the aims they are designed for.

One of these approaches is the ethnography of speaking. It was initiated by and is best known through the work of Dell Hymes (cf. Hymes 1974 Gumperz and Hymes 1986). Saville-Troike (1987) and Duranti (1988) give useful surveys of work done within this framework. Duranti gives the following definition:

> The ethnography of speaking (...) studies language use as displayed in the daily life of particular speech communities. Its method is ethnography, supplemented by techniques developed in other areas of study such as developmental pragmatics, conversation analysis, poetics, and history. (Duranti 1988: 210)

In this approach, style is not taken to be a collection of arbitrary features, but rather as a strategy to use certain features with specific intentions, and thus the motivation for the stylistically relevant features becomes paramount. What is at issue here is the "cultural relativity of linguistic functions" (Levinson 1988: 167).

Hymes introduced the term "speaking" in the label "ethnography of speaking" because he is interested in the active, process-oriented aspect of language, and its strategic use in specific situations, in contrast to corpus studies which analyse language as a static end-product. Saville-Troike points out that there is a relative dearth of theoretical pronouncements in this approach because of the danger of premature theorising, which is particularly acute in this approach. Researchers in the ethnography of speaking must adopt cross-cultural perspective and seek to formulate generalisations that are valid across cultures, such that hypotheses can be tested in new and as yet uninvestigated settings.

> Descriptive tasks include enumerating the kinds of speech events which are recognized or can be inferred in a community, the nature of boundary markers which signal their beginning and end, and the features which distinguish one type from another. (Saville-Troike 1987: 664)

The collection of articles in Gumperz and Hymes (1972), for instance, contains many examples of detailed accounts of speech actions in specific and unique social and geographical settings.

Dundes *et al.* (1972), for instance, investigate the strategies employed by Turkish boys in their verbal duelling rhymes. They analyse the rigid constraints that hold for the message form and for the participants. The message always consists of two parts, a challenge and a reply, and only teenage boys are allowed to participate. Characteristically there is a contrast between the overt topics of these verbal duellings – they centre around sexuality and virility – and the communicative goals or functions that are pursued by the participants. The overt topics serve a symbolic function for the actual goal which appears to be to outplay the opponent in wit and presence of mind. These duels require very specific linguistic skills and intimate familiarity both with this particular genre and with its wider cultural context.

In this approach, then, style is not seen as a conglomerate of linguistic features, but as a strategy which is employed by participants to achieve specific goals in specific – and highly culture-dependent – settings. It is in this light that Traugott and Romaine (1985: 29) postulate that style should be viewed "primarily as a relationship between participants in speech events who, as individuals, negotiate speech acts and thereby *create 'styles' strategically*, but who also are exemplars of social roles and have relationships in larger social institutions beyond the frame of dyadic interaction, e.g. networks" (my emphasis).

They present an overview of some of the pertinent approaches to "style" within sociolinguistics. They, too, stress the difference between Hymes' and Labov's work, but they point out another area of difference between the two. For Hymes the locus of style can be in the form of the message, the topic, the setting, the channel, the audience, etc, whereas Labov reduces style to variation on the level of setting. They object to Labov's view mainly on the basis that it casts the speaker in a passive role in that he merely reacts to changes in the perceived formality of the situation.

Instead, Traugott and Romaine advocate an approach to style that assigns an active role to speakers who use and create styles in order to achieve communicative goals.

Similarly, Levinson (1988: 183) argues that "on the strategic view, styles should be seen as systematically motivated, as essentially rational adaptations to certain contextual circumstances."

2.2.3. Correlational sociolinguistics

Correlational sociolinguistics has been developed and popularised in the linguistic community first and foremost by William Labov (in particular 1972a and 1972b), but also by Trudgill (1974) and Milroy and Milroy (1978) and others.

This view of sociolinguistics depends on what Levinson (1988: 165) calls sociolinguistic alternates. These are two or more linguistic forms that are said to have the same meaning, with the all-important proviso that they vary in their use. They are used by different speakers or in different situations or both. Thus an attempt is made to correlate the use of the synonymous variants of a variable with such non-linguistic contextual features as the social class of the speakers, their regional origin, or the formality of the current situation they are in.

Sameness of meaning between variables under investigation has been regarded as crucial for most of the studies in the field of sociolinguistics and dialectology. The early dialectologists went out to record words for particular concepts, for instance farm tools, and plotted the results on maps. In this approach it is essential that for exactly the same concept two different words are used, or, if pronunciation was to be investigated, that the same word with the same meaning was pronounced in a distinctly different way in order to show up a difference of variety. In the same way sociolinguists investigating different pronunciations and trying to correlate them with social backgrounds depend on sameness of meaning.

> The variant realizations of a linguistic variable do not encode different referential meanings. They co-vary with other units in the system and/or with a range of *speaker* variables such as social class, ethnicity, age and sex. (L. Milroy 1987: 94, her emphasis)

Labov's (1972a) well-known investigation into the pronunciation of [r] in NewYork department stores is a case in point. The phrase *fourth floor* "means" exactly the same, whether it is pronounced with or without an [r]. As far as phonological variables go, this seems to be plausible.

Recently, however, more and more attempts have been made to take variability studies beyond the confines of phonology (cf. Lavandera 1978, Sankoff 1988). Jacobson (1989) discusses a number of different approaches to syntactic variation, illustrating mainly research efforts from Scandinavia. As soon as the comparatively safe realm of phonological variation is left behind, the question of sameness of meaning becomes an issue that divides researchers into two camps; those that try to choose non-phonological variables which stand in some sort of paradigmatic relationship even if it is recognised that they are not strictly speaking synonymous, and those that reject the alternates approach outside the confines of phonology. Cheshire (1982 and 1987) and Romaine (1982) illustrate the former approach albeit fairly critically by showing many of its inherent weaknesses, whereas Aarts (1971), Varantola (1984), de Haan (1987), and Raumolin-Brunberg (1991) exemplify the latter.

> [It is not] always illuminating (or even possible) in syntactic work to adopt the assumption which in quantitative phonological work is taken for granted: that the object of study is a set of surface variants expressing the same underlying *semantic* structure. (L. Milroy 1987: 143)

I have used the term "sameness of meaning" rather loosely to refer to the similarity that is required for two or more variants in a correlational study, but as pointed out above, it is only part of the meaning that is left constant, while the focus is on the remaining aspects of meaning, that is the contextual features such as social class. In view of the problems associated with defining the notion of synonymy, different terms have been suggested for that part of the meaning of variables that has to stay constant. The actual choice will obviously be influenced by the problem on hand, but the one with the best claim to universality is presumably referential sameness. This term makes explicit that the variants are required to have the same referential meaning while allowing for differences in connotative meaning and, more importantly, in social and geographical meaning.

2.2.4. *The sociolinguistic triangle*

The three approaches mentioned above, traditional stylistics, correlational sociolinguistics and ethnography of speaking have many things in common. All of them try to relate features of linguistic production to the wider, non-linguistic context in which they occur. In terms of their respective aims and methods, as I have briefly outlined above, there exist considerable differences. Nevertheless these differences are not irreconcilable. The three approaches should rather be seen as the three angles in a triangle, allowing for numerous intermediate positions, as shown in figure 2.1.

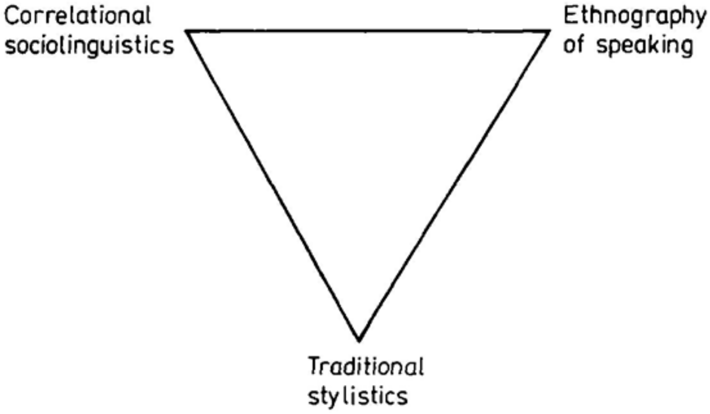

Figure 2.1. Sociolinguistic triangle

Both correlational sociolinguistics and traditional stylistics are firmly based on the comparison of linguistic features in different contexts. The former presupposes, in its epitomic form, the free variation hypothesis, that is the belief that the same can be said in different ways. In its less epitomic form, if lexical or even syntactic variables are investigated and the notion of sameness of meaning becomes more and more problematic, this approach moves in the direction of traditional stylistics, where the density of linguistic features is the *terminus comparationis*.

The ethnography of speaking is equally distant from both correlational sociolinguistics and from traditional stylistics in that it investigates unique functions in unique contexts. It asks for the motivation of linguistic features without comparing alternative contexts. But again many examples of studies lying between the extremes can be found. The traditional stylistician may not be content to have found style markers that occur with distinct densities in different contexts, without going on to ask about the motivation of these markers and about how they are used strategically within a given context.

In a similar fashion the correlational sociolinguist may not be satisfied with having established the synonymy of the variants, but may ask questions about the use to which they are put.

Levinson (1988) excludes traditional stylistics from the above picture on the grounds that it cannot distinguish between style and other types of varieties. As mentioned above, I do not think that this is a problem that is inherent in the methodology of traditional stylistics, even if it has more often than not been disregarded in this framework. The problem is exactly the same as in correlational sociolinguistics: correlational, where it indeed always has been a primary issue. I shall turn to the problem of categorising different contexts into different types of varieties in the following section.

Levinson also warns against carelessly eclectic approaches, urging investigators to make up their minds in which way they want to approach the study of language in its social context.

> In the study of style, I think we must be open to both approaches, but given the divergent methodological consequences of each approach, we cannot afford to be carelessly eclectic. It is *essential* to be clear about whether, in a particular case, one is handling phenomena that are best treated as different realizations of the same function, or are best treated as distinct and incommensurable functions. (Levinson 1988: 173, his emphasis)

While it certainly would be rash not to heed this warning, it might be equally rash to disregard one angle of the sociolinguistic triangle presented above at the expense of another.

It is indeed one of the aims of the present study to show that a *carefully* eclectic approach to the language of newspapers can provide insights which a more dogmatic approach employing one single point of view could not do.

2.3. The notions "variety" and "style"

The term "variety" is not as vague as it may seem. I take it to refer to a subset of language – either actually produced and possibly recorded or just potential – that is characterised by a cluster of linguistic features which can be associated with non-linguistic features delineating in some way the context of production of this corpus. Thus a variety is a theoretical concept that has no independent existence beyond its perception by the analyst.

Hudson (1980: 24) defines "variety" very similarly as "a set of linguistic items with similar social distribution". This allows for entire languages such as English, Swahili or Polish to be considered as varieties or very specialised uses of language such as the language used by lower-class adolescents frequenting one particular play-ground in Reading (Cheshire 1982) or the language used by D-Js between playing records on BBC Radio One (Montgomery 1988).

Ferguson (1971: 30) gives a much narrower definition:

> Any body of human speech patterns which is sufficiently homogeneous to be analyzed by available techniques of synchronic description and which has a sufficiently large repertory of elements and their arrangements or processes with broad enough semantic scope to function in all normal contexts of communication.

This definition is also broad enough to allow for entire languages to be called varieties, but it excludes more specialised uses of language that are restricted to particular situations such as the Reading adolescents' play-ground speech or the BBC Radio One D-J speech, which presumably does not have "enough semantic scope to function in all normal contexts of communication". On the assumption that describable regularities exist for such specialised uses of language, the definition of the notion "variety" has to be broad enough to include them as well.

The non-linguistic features that are used in delineating varieties are categorised, and they tend to serve as labels for the resultant varieties. If geographical features are used, the varieties are called dialects. They may again be large, such as American or British English or they may be very small, such as Reading English (Cheshire 1982) or Norwich English (Trudgill 1974), but it is always the analyst, whether a professional linguist or a non-specialist, that perceives linguistic differences and correlates them with geographic differences.

What may by some be perceived as huge linguistic differences between the language of a Liverpudlian and a Cockney, may for others be all but indistinguishable (cf. Quirk *et al.* 1985: 17). Likewise the linguist may wish to point out the differences between varieties that are themselves large and heterogeneous as the above-mentioned examples of American and British English with tens of millions of speakers (see for instance Trudgill and Hannah 1982), or they may engage in investigations of very small speech communities, for example representative samples of all the sales assistants of three department stores in NewYork City with several hundred speakers at the most (Labov 1972a).

In a similar fashion, varieties that are established on the basis of non-linguistic features that relate to the social background of the speakers (or writers) of the language subsample under investigation, are called sociolects. Layperson and linguist alike regularly correlate linguistic features with the social class of the person using these features. Here, too, the varieties that are thus established do not have an existence of their own. They only exist insofar as an observer is aware of linguistic differences in two or more language samples and correlates these differences, rightly or wrongly, with the social background of the respective speakers. For the sake of clarity, I use dialect exclusively to refer to regional varieties and reserve sociolect for social varieties, thus avoiding the hybrid "social dialect" that is still sometimes used (e.g. Wardhaugh 1986: 40, 46). A dialect is thus defined as a regional variety without any consideration of its social prestige, whereas the Continental approach to dialectology still reserves the term dialect for non-standard varieties (cf. Ammon 1987).

Varieties can also be established on the basis of historical features by comparing subsets of language as produced at different points in time. Thus large varieties such as Old English and Middle English are distinguished, or smaller ones such as Early Modern English or Elizabethan English. Again there is no established size of the subsamples and no established distance between samples that are to be compared.

Bell (1985: 109; 1988: 338; 1991: 132), for instance, compares the language produced by four different radio stations in New Zealand in 1974 and again in 1984. Quite clearly, the two samples of language can only be regarded as two different varieties because Bell was able to isolate a linguistic feature that differs from one sample to the other and because he correlates this feature with the time difference between the two. Unfortunately there does not seem to be an equivalent hyponym of the term variety for this type of feature correlation. Historiolect might be a suitable and rather obvious candidate. Such a term would indicate the methodological similarity between historiolects and other types of varieties. In many instances, even the same features will serve to distinguish different types of varieties.

> To the historian of English, *thou lovest* is an older form than *you love*; to the student of contemporary styles, it is a feature of a style that one might label as "Biblical" or "archaic". To those who find *you ain't* characteristic of a social class it is a class marker, but to those in whose studies it correlates with a certain range of situations it becomes a style marker. (Enkvist 1973: 19)

All the varieties dealt with above are instances of interspeaker variation or variation according to the users. In all the examples, speech samples produced by different speakers or writers are under investigation with the possible exception of Bell (1985, 1988, 1991), where the same speakers may be represented in both the 1974 and in the 1984 sample.

However, there is also considerable variation in the speech produced by individual speakers in different situations, that is to say variation according to the uses rather than to the users. It is the sum of all these intraspeaker variations that I want to call stylistic variation. A style, therefore, is a variety that is established on the basis of non-linguistic features that distinguish the speech as produced by the same speaker on different occasions. To set the notion "style" on a par with "dialect" or "sociolect" is, of course, not new. As witness the following quotation by Winter (1961: 194):

> Es hat den Anschein, als ob die linguistische Abgrenzung von Stilarten gegeneinander viel mit einer Abgrenzung von Dialekten gemein hat. Ebenso wie das Gesamtgebiet einer Sprache auf Grund von Isoglossenbündeln in einzelne Dialektgebiete geschieden wird, kann man die Gesamtheit einer

> Sprache – auf anderer Ebene – als aus verschiedenen Stilbereichen zusammengesetzt ansehen, die ebenfalls durch Isoglossenbündel begrenzt sind.
>
> [It seems that the distinction between types of styles has much in common with the distinction between dialects. The totality of a language can be split up into individual dialect areas on the basis of bundles of isoglosses, and in the same way it can be split up into discrete areas of style that are also delimited by bundles of isoglosses].

Defined in such a way, the notion of "style" does not make any predictions about what causes these differences, that is it does not explain them. Again there are similarities with other types of varieties. It has long been and still is a matter of controversy whether differences in historiolects, or rather language changes, can be explained (cf. Romaine's (1983) review article of Lass (1980), who is entirely pessimistic and denies the possibility of explanations for language change, and Lightfoot (1979), who is rather more optimistic and sets up a transparency principle in order to explain syntactic change). In the same way, the analyst may perceive a clear difference between intraspeaker varieties, that is to say styles, but to establish the cause for the variation may be a matter of guess-work.

In historical linguistics, it has long been recognised that a time difference that correlates with linguistic differences does not in itself explain the linguistic difference. Unfortunately the same is not true of sociolinguistics, where it is still all too often assumed that social differences correlating with linguistic differences *explain* the linguistic differences.

As pointed out in the previous section, traditional stylisticians very often do not distinguish between different types of varieties, calling everything "style". Neither are correlational sociolinguists always consistent in their usage of the terms. Some researchers see styles entirely in terms of class groups, irrespective of the context in which the speech samples are produced. For methodological reasons it is important that a clear distinction is made between interspeaker variation (geographical, historical, social) and intraspeaker variation (stylistic). Otherwise the terms would cease to be useful.

Many researchers make a distinction between style and register. They use the former to refer to different levels of formality and the latter to refer to varieties that are characteristic of occupational and professional groups or of certain topics. According to this view style and register are, in principle, independent. Styles range from informal to formal whereas registers are varieties that are used, for example, by professional football players or the employees of a bus-company (cf. Trudgill 1983b: 101, but also Spillner 1987; Varantola 1984: 3; and Zwicky and Zwicky 1982: 214–216).

Halliday (1988: 162) calls a register a functional variety and defines it as "a cluster of associated features having a greater-than-random (or rather, greater than predicted by their unconditioned probabilities) tendency to co-occur and, like a dialect, it can be identified at any delicacy of focus." The fact that the features can have "unconditioned probabilities" suggests that there must be some sort of neutral, unmarked form or rather a norm from which particular registers can be seen as deviations.

In sections 2.4 and 2.5 below, I will argue that intraspeaker variation is better seen as a correlate of the speaker's audience. The language of a physician, for instance, will vary, not so much according to his or her profession as according to his or her addressees, bystanders and overhearers, whether they are fellow physicians, medical students, patients or members of their own families. It would therefore be an oversimplification to posit a register of medical talk.

The same criteria relating to the speaker's audience are used to distinguish different levels of formality. In contrast to Labov and others, who suggest that formality is a concomitant of the amount of attention paid to speech production, I will argue that the speaker's audience is a better guide to the different levels of formality.

Hence, there is no need to distinguish the two types of variety, style and register. The former term will suffice to encompass all the varieties that have been envisaged under both of them.

Newspaper language is a variety to the extent that it has linguistic features that distinguish it from other varieties. It is obviously part of the larger variety of media language as a whole, and – on a different level – it is part of the variety of written language. However, I will not be concerned to set it off against these larger varieties. My concern will be its internal variability. This means that individual articles or even a collection of articles by the same author cannot be the starting-point for my analysis. Instead the articles have to be combined into intuitively plausible sets according to non-linguistic criteria. The analysis will then reveal whether the chosen division is also linguistically relevant, that is to say whether it correlates with differences in the use of linguistic features.

If the relevant information about the journalists were available, one could of course attempt to correlate the linguistic features with a writer variable such as social class in order to distinguish different sociolects within the domain of newspaper language. However, the differences of social class will not be very marked. Social class rankings usually depend on the person's employment, which differs for journalists only in as far as the importance of the paper differs. Thus a journalist working on a national paper will inevitably enjoy a higher social status than one working on a small local newspaper.

What differs a great deal, however, as I will show in chapter 3 below, is the socio-economic readership of the audiences of the various papers. I am therefore, within the definition given above, dealing with intraspeaker variation rather than interspeaker variation, that is to say with stylistic variation.

2.4. Stylistic variation

According to Labov (1972a: 208), the decisive factor for the stylistic variation is the amount of attention paid to the speech production: "Styles can be arranged on a single dimension, measured by the amount of attention paid to speech." The more attention speakers pay to their speech production, the more formal their styles will be. Informants in sociolinguistic interviews are likely to monitor their speech fairly closely because of the unfamiliarity both with the interviewer and the situation. Incidental speech that occurs during the course of the interview and is not addressed to the interviewer but to members of the family is less closely monitored and therefore more casual. A similar type of casual speech was elicited by Labov in the course of his interviews by asking his famous danger-of-death question. When informants had to describe a situation in which their life was in danger, they became emotionally more involved in the content of what they said, and therefore the self-monitoring of their speech was momentarily reduced.

The more formal styles were elicited by three reading tasks in which the informants had to read a prose passage, a word list and a list of minimal pairs of words that in the vernacular are homophonous but are distinguished in the standard language.

For a long time this conception of style was widely accepted without much argument and justification. In recent years, however, a number of substantial objections have been raised. It has been questioned whether it is really the amount of attention paid to the speech production which causes the variation in the linguistic forms and whether the two styles of unscripted speech and the three reading tasks really form a continuum.

L. Milroy (1987: 173), for instance, has shown that the level of literacy of the informants can seriously impair any comparisons between reading styles. In Belfast, where she carried out extensive research together with J. Milroy and research associates, they found many working class informants who were illiterate or semi-literate only and who were reluctant to tackle the reading tasks at all. Some read through the word list at great speed without showing any signs of paying more attention to their speech but the same speakers sometimes did not manage to read out the prose passage.

> [M]any of these same fluent word-list readers tackled the task of reading aloud a passage of continuous prose rather unhappily, in a halting, dysfluent manner. Certainly in these communities, where levels of literacy were relatively low and speakers were unfamiliar with the task of reading aloud, it was not possible to assume without further investigation that reading passage and word-list style simulated the attention factor in the rank-order proposed. (L. Milroy 1987: 173)

Labov's conception of style was designed to mirror closely the variation that occurs in natural language production from the most formal to the most casual variety, ordered according to the amount of attention paid to the speech. However, if there is so much doubt about the attention factor, it is in fact unclear what kind of natural language production the three reading tasks are supposed to mirror. It may well be the case that the fairly formal interview style and the more casual style used in incidental talk during the interview and in the danger-of-death stories have got very similar real-life counterparts, but this is more than doubtful for the reading styles. Very few people, one would assume, regularly read out written texts to an audience, and even fewer regularly read out word lists.

> [W]hile "casual speech" in the linguistic interview may well be an analogue of spontaneous everyday conversation, it is hard to imagine a naturally occurring situation analogous to reading minimal pairs. The only time a speaker is likely to use minimal-pair style is when reading minimal pairs – a rather uncommon speech event. (Bell 1984: 150)

The stylistic variation has always been of vital importance in sociolinguistic studies because it is only the interplay of the social variation with the stylistic variation that can reveal patterns of language change in progress. Usually a distinction is made between the variables that vary along the social axis only (indicators) and those that vary both on the social and on the stylistic axis (markers). The two differ in that speakers are aware of the significance of the markers, but not of the indicators. In more careful styles, they aim consciously to approximate their speech to the speech of the higher status social class, and thus increase the percentage of markers. The indicators, however, escape the conscious attention of the speakers, and therefore they do not show any significant differences in the different styles.

Thus, according to the Labovian view of style, speakers are aware of the social differences in a class system, and they normally aspire to the prestige of the higher status class. Therefore they will use those language features that are commonly associated with the higher social prestige whenever they pay enough attention to their speech, or rather they will use increasingly more of these markers in line with the increasing amount of attention.

Bell in a number of places (e.g. 1977, 1982, and in particular in his important 1984 paper) has suggested a rather different interpretation of intraspeaker variation, which offers a particularly plausible explanation for the variation in his corpus of media language which otherwise would be very difficult to explain. For this reason, I shall review his work in some detail.

2.5. Audience design

Bell (1977) found that there are considerable style differences among news broadcast on different New Zealand radio stations. Sometimes the same speakers read the news on different stations, and they always show a systematic variation across these stations. In traditional methodology this variation cannot be accounted for, because in all instances they are using "reading style", and it cannot plausibly be claimed that the amount of attention paid to their speech differs according to the station on which they happen to broadcast. What is different though is the targeted audience of the different stations, and according to Bell this is the decisive factor.

The intraspeaker variation is explained in terms of the social status, sex and age not of the speaker but of the hearers. The hearers are not just the addressees but include also auditors, overhearers and, to some extent, eavesdroppers, as shown in figure 2.2.

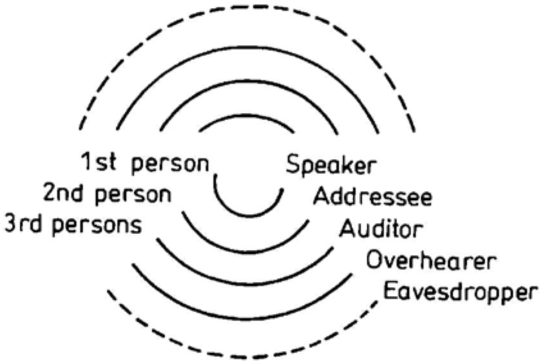

Figure 2.2. Persons and roles in the speech situation (Bell 1984: 159; 1991: 91)

The speaker stands at the centre of the diagram because it is always the speaker's characteristics that account for most of the variation. On this level, we are talking about the interspeaker variation. Bell claims that the interspeaker variation is always paramount whereas the intraspeaker variation is derivative of the interspeaker variation because of the existence of indicators, which vary on the interspeaker level only.

Bell (1984: 152–158) shows that in practically all the data on sociolinguistic variation published so far the overall interspeaker variation exceeds the overall intraspeaker variation. To take a hypothetical example, if for a particular variable there is a 75 per cent difference between the speech of the top and the bottom classes in casual speech, there will be at most and presumably rather less than a 75 per cent style shift for any of the classes. This leads him to formulate the following "style axiom":

> Variation on the style dimension within the speech of a single speaker derives from and echoes the variation which exists between speakers on the "social" dimension (Bell 1984: 151)

Bell does not seem to consider the possibility that this may also be a reflection of the type of variability studies carried out so far rather than a reflection of universally valid regularities in speech communities.

He does, however, cite two cases violating his style axiom. These are the hyper-correction by the second highest status group to a level over and above the level achieved by the highest status group in the most formal style (e.g. Labov 1972a: 114) and hyper-style variables in Tehran Persian reported by Jahangiri and Hudson (1982). In spite of the cross-over patterns reported by Labov and elsewhere, the overall intraspeaker variation is still smaller than the overall interspeaker variation in all the published data investigated by Bell.

The variation in Tehran Persian shows a very considerable intraspeaker variation with very little interspeaker variation and thus is a true exception, even though there is only a really marked shift between the two reading styles and the two styles of unscripted speech. Within the individual modes there is very little variation. Therefore he concludes that this extensive intraspeaker variation is a reflection of the discontinuity of the two activities of talking and reading. All the other data investigated by Bell support his style axiom.

However, there is no reason to exclude the possibility that the situation as described for Tehran Persian exists in other speech communities as well, even if such cases have as yet not been investigated or published widely. There does not seem to be anything unusual about speech communities in which there is very little sociolinguistic or interspeaker variation while its members control a repertory of widely disparate styles. Cases of diglossia would, of course, be the extreme cases, as for instance in German speaking Switzerland, where there appears to be little social differentiation while the two situationally bound varieties, Standard German and Swiss German, are markedly different.

Nevertheless, even in such cases, it is plausible to attribute the intraspeaker variation to the influence of the audience. Bell distinguishes between addressees, auditors, overhearers and eavesdroppers. The addressee, as the one who is addressed, ratified and known is the main character among the speaker's audience (as indicated by figure 2.2). Next in importance is the auditor, who is known and ratified but not directly addressed. The overhearer is known but neither ratified nor addressed, and the eavesdropper is not even known by the speaker to be among the audience and consequently can be neither ratified nor addressed (cf. Bell 1991: 90–94).

As outlined above, Bell claims that the variation induced by all the hearers (the intraspeaker variation) is smaller than the interspeaker variation. And he goes on to assert that within the intraspeaker variation the influence of the addressee is the most significant. However, in spite of the various studies quoted by Bell (1984: 163–169, e.g. Giles and Smith 1979; Coupland 1984; Thakerar *et al.* 1982), which support the ordering of the hearers as suggested in figure 2.2, it is again doubtful whether this should be a universal regularity of all speech communities.

No matter how many studies confirm the suggested – and eminently plausible – ordering of the hearers, there can be no proof that in some other, as yet uninvestigated, speech community a different ordering may not obtain.

The variations considered so far are all responsive because they represent in some way a reaction to the speech of the audience. There are, however, cases in which speakers do not have direct feedback from their audience and, in the absence of such cues, reinterpret the situation by choosing a particular style. In such cases Bell (1984: 161) talks about initiative speaker variation, which occur as "as a response not to the immediate audience but to certain third persons not physically present. These are reference groups, who are absent but influential on the speaker's attitude." These are cases of referee design (Bell 1991: 126–146).

One obvious set of data which can be reinterpreted within this framework is Labov's (1972a) classic investigation of the social stratification of /r/ in New York City department stores. Labov does not make any claims as to the social stratification of the sales assistants whose language he surveyed. On the contrary, he quite explicitly assumes that the employees of all three stores would probably fall into the same socio-economic group (1972a: 48). They are stratified according to the location of the shops, the papers in which they advertise, their price policies, and the physical appearance of the stores, that is to say the ratio, in impressionistic terms, between the available floor space and the merchandise on display. Thus the employees apparently adapt their language to the clientele of their shops. (cf. Coupland's research (1984) of how a travel assistant converges to the language of her customers.) The encounters in Labov's rapid and anonymous elicitations were so short that the employees can hardly be said to converge to the language of the actual customer. In that case rather less variation might have been expected as the researcher in all instances was Labov himself. Thus we must assume that the stratifying factor was some sort of model customer corresponding to the targeted clientele of the individual store.

Bell investigated the stylistic variation of New Zealand news readers on different radio stations. Some newsreaders may read the same news on two or more stations that use the same suite of studios. The amount of intervocalic /t/ voicing, for instance, varied according to the station on which the news was read (cf. Bell 1977: 347–359; 1982: 162 and 1984: 171). Figure 2.3 shows the amount of intervocalic /t/ voicing of four newsreaders on two different stations. Station YA carries the national programme network from Wellington, which appeals mainly to an older audience with above average education, whereas ZB is the local community network station, which appeals to a middle status and mainly family audience in the thirties and forties age group (Bell 1982: 152 and 157).

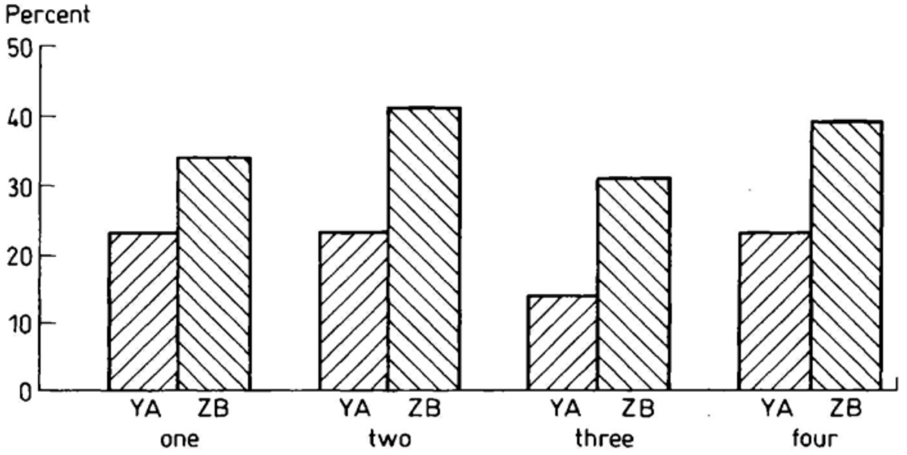

Figure 2.3. Percentage of intervocalic /t/ voicing by four newscasters on two New Zealand radio stations (Bell 1982: 162)

These variations are initiative because the newsreaders do not have any direct feedback from their audiences.

> All media language is initiative style design. It creates the relationship between communicator and audience, rather than responding to an existing relationship. This holds supremely for radio, where announcers rely solely on their speech to project whatever relationship they have with the audience. Their style draws its effect from the norms of who such a style is addressed to in face-to-face interaction. (Bell 1984: 192)

As mentioned above, Bell developed the audience design model with the explicit aim to account for variation in media language. Journalists, whether on television, radio or in the print media, adapt their language to their targeted audiences, without changing the amount of attention paid to the production of speech. What is perhaps surprising is how easily many studies carried out in a Labovian framework can be reinterpreted in an audience design format.

2.6. Some recent studies in media language

In the last section of this chapter, I want to review some pertinent studies on media language by showing how they fit into the sociolinguistic triangle presented in section 2.2 above, and how they can be interpreted in an audience design framework.

2.6.1. Crystal and Davy – "Journalese" versus "normal" English

Crystal and Davy (1969) point out that the term " journalese", useful as it is, is also deceptive in that it suggests far more coherence than there actually is among the entire body of language that comes under its scope. To make their point they compare two newspaper articles, written in 1965 about the introduction of computers into weather forecasting and published in the *Daily Express* and *The Times* respectively.

They note that the sentences in the *Times* article are longer and that there are more sentences per paragraph. Within the statement-type sentences, they note three important features. Verbs of speaking, such as *say, declare* or *explain* are often inverted with the subject as in *Said Dr Mason* .... The second feature is the great number of adverbials that appear in emphatic clause-initial position rather than in the unmarked post-verbal position even in contexts which do not suggest a particular emphasis for the adverbial. Thirdly they observe that there are hardly any instances of coordination at clause level in the *Daily Express* article but that such instances are common in the *Times* article, which also has more subordinating constructions at the clause level. There is the same amount of subordination within noun phrases but the *Daily Express* uses more non-finite *-ing* clauses and relative clauses, whereas *The Times* uses more non-finite *-ed* clauses.

This approach to style must be placed in the middle between traditional stylistics and ethnography of speaking. Crystal and Davy relate the linguistic features to their non-linguistic contexts. But they also assume, in the larger context of their investigation of English style, that the linguistic form of an utterance will carry direct information on – among other things – the regional, social and historical provenance of the speaker or writer (1969: 81). They want to know why a particular form was chosen rather than another. In this approach the comparative element recedes somewhat, even though it is implicitly still present in that particular features derive their significance from the fact that they appear in one variety but not in another. The aspect of unique functions in unique contexts comes more into focus. In Crystal and Davy's words:

> The aim of stylistics is to analyse language habits with the main purpose of identifying, from the general mass of linguistic features common to English as used on every conceivable occasion, those features which are restricted to certain kinds of social context to explain, where possible, why such features have been used, as opposed to other alternatives and to classify these features into categories based upon a view of their function in the social context. (Crystal and Davy 1969: 10)

The usage as it is attested in their two samples of newspaper language is always contrasted to what they call "normal usage". Thus they note "the presence of much more complex pre- and postmodification than we *normally* hear or write", or that "commas are absent from many places where they would *normally* be expected" (1969: 186 and 178, my emphasis). Elsewhere they suggest that inexperienced analysts start out by comparing their texts to one particular variety set up as a norm for this purpose, maintaining that the more experienced analyst does not need to resort to this. "The norm should not be taken as an obligatory category of stylistic theory, only as an optional procedural device" (1969: 91, fn 8).

Thus Crystal and Davy compare two different texts, and they relate both to an implicit norm, but they also analyse the features of newspaper language as unique features in a unique context, trying to assess their impact on this particular type of English. The difference is that an ethnography of speaking approach would not content itself with a list of register features, but it would try to establish the intentions behind these features, on the assumption that they are strategically used in order to achieve specific aims.

The variation that exists is clearly seen as a result of the journalists adapting their language to the targeted audience: "the disparity can largely be explained by reference to the very different audiences envisaged by the two papers" and "not only is different language necessary to suit the different temperaments of their respective audiences, but a different type of information is also given" (Crystal and Davy 1969: 174 and 189). In spite of the lack of explicit information on the respective audiences of *The Times* and the *Daily Express*, Crystal and Davy clearly anticipate an audience design framework.

O'Donnell and Todd (1980: 85–100) give a very similar comparison between *The Guardian* and the *Daily Mirror*, noting some outstanding features in a non-quantitative, impressionistic way. Among other things they mention that the headlines in *The Guardian* have a tendency to avoid finite verbs, whereas the *Daily Mirror* tends to avoid verbs altogether in its headlines. They observe the differences in referring to the then British prime minister. *The Guardian* uses either *Mrs Thatcher* or *the Prime Minster*, whereas the *Daily Mirror* prefers *Premier Margaret Thatcher* or just *Maggie*. And they list several lexical items which they claim are more likely in papers like the *Daily Mirror* than in *The Guardian* such as *horror*, which is used for every more serious crime or accident or *probe*, which applies to all types of investigations. Further similar items are *rap*, *pact*, *closure*, *claims*, *call*, *cuts*, and *freeze*.

2.6.2. Carter and Ghadessy – Newspaper vocabulary

Carter (1988) and Ghadessy (1988) concentrate on features of the vocabulary in British newspaper language. Carter analyses a home news article of the *Daily Mail*, whereas Ghadessy uses a larger corpus of articles from the sports section of *The Times*. Carter first defines the notion of core vocabulary (1980: 9f). Core words tend to have antonyms, they are less collocationally restricted, they are more basic in that they are regularly used to define non-core words, they carry less emotive meaning, are less discourse- or register-specific and they are often superordinates rather than hyponyms. Carter takes it for granted that "newspaper reports should ideally report the facts in as *core* a vocabulary as possible" (1988: 10, his emphasis). On this basis he discusses in detail a front page article of the *Daily Mail* on the Labour Leader, Neil Kinnock. This article is seen as a gross deviation of objective press reporting, and the notion of core vocabulary is used to show where these deviations occur. He shows that there are a fair number of non-core words which are either markedly formal or markedly informal, or which are recognisably and usually negatively evaluative. As examples he lists among others *snub*, *ducking*, *row*, *buttonholing*, *posing*, and *trendy*.

It may be questioned, however, whether journalists really should stick to a core vocabulary as defined by him. A non-core word like *corpulent*, which has not as clearly an antonym as *fat* and which is collocationally more restricted, may nevertheless be more appropriate in a specific context. The same is true for words like *snigger*, *grin*, *smirk* or *beam*, which are all more specific – and therefore less core – than *smile*. Carter also criticises the use of metaphors as for instance in the opening sentence of the article:

(1) NEIL KINNOCK, just elected Labour's youngest leader at 41, saw an old party tide threaten to swamp his new beginning last night (*Daily Mail,* 8 October 1983, quoted by Carter 1988: 11)

Carter (1988: 12) comments that "this statement is rhetorically marked by numerous metaphoric devices and figures which contrast with and contravene expectations of a plain style". While it is true that these devices are used to produce a highly tendentious article in this particular instance, it should not be overlooked that it is not the use of non-core vocabulary and of metaphors itself that makes it tendentious but the way in which these devices are employed.

Carter does not use a second corpus in order to compare the language used in this article but he seems to have a very clear notion of a norm from which this article is seen as a deviation.

Ghadessy (1988) points out the importance of written sports commentaries as a discourse genre. There are many specific words which do not exist or are used differently outside this genre, such as *box*, *free kick* or *hat trick.* It is a characteristic feature of written sports commentary that it narrates events which have already taken place, and that "although it is reporting a new event, there is a large body of knowledge and values assumed to be shared by the writer and the reader. The specialist terminology used need not be explained throughout the report unless a new term is coined" (Ghadessy 1988: 21). In direct contrast to the article by Carter (1988), which immediately precedes this article, Ghadessy suggests the term core vocabulary to apply to this specialist terminology in as far as these words have a currency even outside the English speaking countries.

Ghadessy also distinguishes between neutral, factual language and emotive, subjective language. Carter tries to capture this distinction with the terms core versus non-core vocabulary, whereas Ghadessy talks of uninvolved and involved language. Ghadessy lists in detail many of the syntactic patterns that sports terminology enters into in his corpus of soccer commentaries of *The Times.* He does not compare these uses to any other type of newspaper language or to any kind of norm, but stresses that this would be the next and essential step. "A variety in the sense of 'register' can only be established when the findings are compared with the findings based on the analyses of other registers" (Ghadessy 1988: 34).

2.6.3. Ferguson – Sports announcer talk

Ferguson (1983) investigates the peculiarities of a contextually very restricted type of speech, the speech of radio broadcasters reporting on a game of baseball in progress. He identifies selected syntactic characteristics for which he claims the status of register markers.

Sentences often lack a sentence-initial noun phrase (e.g. *[It] hit on the foul line*), a copula (e.g. *McCatty [is] in difficulty*) or both (e.g. *[It's] a breaking ball outside*) (1983: 159). This feature is also prominent in other registers that rely on terse and concise formulations such as event-reporting headlines or advertising language.

The most characteristic feature of sports announcer talk, according to Ferguson, is the inversion of subject and predicate under certain conditions. The subject is typically a player's name, while the verb is the copula or a verb of motion as in the following two examples *Holding up at third is Murphy* and *Pete goes to right field and back for it goes Jackson* (1983: 160, 161).

There are two ways of expressing a result that "are very frequent in SAT [i.e. sports announcer talk] and rare in other kinds of talk" (1983: 161). They are the pattern *for* + noun and *to* + verb as in *Joe Ross's caught it for a touchdown* and *And it gives us a double to Mumphries to lead things off* (1983: 61).

Sports announcer talk is further characterised by heavy noun modifications, which are, according to Ferguson, "more typical of written English" (1983: 163), such as *David Winfield, the 25-million-dollar man, who is hitting zero, five, six in this World Series,* or *The quiet Texan Tommy John delivers.* This feature contrasts with the conversational character induced by the frequent deletions mentioned above. Ferguson (1983: 163) asserts that "the referential function of adding incidental background information about persons mentioned in the discourse" could be realised by more typically conversational devices such as adding the information in a separate sentence.

Ferguson further mentions tense usage and notes that the simple present is preferred to refer to short actions that are taking place at the time of speaking, especially in sports characterised by successions of rapid events, whereas the progressive is used to refer to actions of extended duration especially in sports characterised by continuous events such as boat racing or horse racing. But he concedes that this usage can hardly be taken to be characteristic of sports announcer talk because it "seems to be in full accord with the general analyses of the semantic values of English verb categories" (1983: 164).

The last feature analysed by Ferguson is the use of routines, and in particular the routine of "giving the 'count'". The format is used invariably to give the number of balls followed by the number of strikes, both in cardinal numbers, conjoined by *and*. Zero is given as *oh*, or, if it refers to the number of balls, *nothing*. Optionally this may be followed by the preposition *to* and the name of a player as in the following examples: *Count of one and one to M*; *Two and oh*; and *Nothing and one count.*

Ferguson has to be placed somewhere in the middle of the sociolinguistic triangle. He, implicitly or explicitly, adopts all three points of view. He frequently refers to "other kinds of talk" (161) or "the registers of casual conversation" (158). Thus he invokes a kind of norm with which he contrasts sports announcer talk by pointing out constructions that exist in one but not the other or are far more frequent (in impressionistic terms) in one than in the other. In this respect his approach owes a lot to traditional stylistics. But he also compares different realisations of the "same function" as in the cases of the result expressions and the heavy modifiers. In this respect, then, his approach has strong similarities with correlational sociolinguistics. However, it is only the realisations that are attested in sports announcer talk that are of interest to Ferguson. He is fairly vague and non-committal about their realisation in other varieties of language. The function "giving the 'count'", for instance, is of interest mainly because of its uniqueness in this particular type of talk. Hence there are also strong affinities to the ethnography of speaking.

2.6.4. Wallace – Sports versus news section

Wallace (1977) compares the language of the news section with the language of the sports section in the two papers *Chicago Tribune* and *Champaign-Urbana Courier*. On the basis of style manuals for journalists, he selected five features for his comparison, two non-quantitative ones and three quantitative ones.

The first nonquantitative feature is the use of expressions that add "colour" to the stories. These can be isolated lexical items that provide additional descriptive detail while not being essential to the facts of the story, as in *Ford leads Carter by a shaky single point* or *the campaign and debates have failed to produce any exceptional enthusiasm* (1977: 54). In this respect there is little difference between the news section, in which these examples appeared, and the sports section with examples like *Michigan had to scrap for victory* or *this yawner of a World Series* (1977: 55). He further notes the use of technical vocabulary, which may entirely elude the uninitiated, such as *hat trick* or *sacrifice fly* in the sports section and *detente* or *filibuster* in the news section. He also notes that the more unified subject matter of the sports section and the fact that many of its readers will be regular observers or fans lead to the greater freedom for journalists to use technical expressions without glosses.

As a second non-quantitative feature he compares what he calls "descriptive quote words", by which he means speech act tags which are not as neutral as *say*, *tell* or *state*, but add some contextual or attitudinal dimension such as *testify*, *accuse* or *argue*. He finds that there are more descriptive quote words, and they are found in greater variety, in the *Chicago Tribune* than in the *Champaign-Urbana Courier*. In the former, but not in the latter, this feature could be used to differentiate the two registers: news section and sports section.

To summarise his findings for the non-quantitative features, he maintains, somewhat unilluminatingly, that "news and sports registers do vary in vocabulary, but that the strategies of selection of the lexical items for adding color are the same in both" (1977: 59).

As a first quantitative feature, Wallace compares the ratio of sentences per line as a measure for sentence length, and he used a z-test to test for statistical significance. In both papers the sentences are shorter in the sports section, but the difference between the news section and the sports section proves to be statistically significant at the one per cent level only for the *Chicago Tribune* while it is not significant at this level for the *Champaign-Urbana Courier*.

The second test compares the number of passive verbs in proportion to all finite verbs. In both papers there is, at a level of statistic significance, a higher proportion of passive verbs in the news section. For this parameter, Wallace sets up an additional corpus for "(approximately) all American English" (63) or – as he calls it elsewhere – "a random sample of texts" (62). This corpus contains, among other texts, White House transcripts, some pages from a book on linguistics and from another one on biochemistry, and a *Playboy* article. The news sections of both the *Chicago Tribune* and the *Champaign-Urbana Courier* turn out to have more passives than this " norm", whereas the sports sections of both papers have fewer.

The third quantitative feature, finally, are what Wallace calls mummy passives. The recommended structure of news stories gives the main points at the very beginning of the article and relegates background material to subsequent parts, on the assumption that this structure facilitates the quick browsing of an article by readers with not enough time for a thorough reading. The hypothesis was that there is a significant difference in the proportion of passives in the first four paragraphs (i.e. mummy passives) and the background passives in the rest of the article. But it can only be supported for the news section of the *Chicago Tribune* its sports section and both sections of the *Champaign-Urbana Courier* do not show any significant difference in this respect.

On the basis of these five features, Wallace (1977: 67) concludes: "There is then support for positing that news and sports stories represent different registers by their use of language, but that this variation occurs within the restricted language of newspapers."

Wallace thus carries out a meticulous comparison, partly quantitative and partly non-quantitative, of two different texts. For some features moreover he uses an explicit norm as a basis for comparison. He compares the relative frequency of syntactic features, but he does not investigate alternate realisations of elements sharing the same meaning. In this respect, he works very much in the framework of the traditional stylisticians. His comparisons are subjected to rigourous statistical testing, which is not always the case in traditional stylistics.

In further contrast to some exponents of traditional stylistics, Wallace uses a carefully delimited corpus. It is restricted to a "Midwestern dialect of American journalese" (1977: 71, fn 13), and thus should have considerable internal coherence, while the internal variation that actually exists is focused on in the investigation. The comparative norm of "(approximately) all American English", however, seems to be rather dubious in its mixture of contextually almost entirely unrelated texts.

2.6.5. Floreano – British newspapers and radio news

Floreano (1986) sets out from the premise that there is a well-known difference in the British newspapers between the "quality" papers and the "popular" papers (I will say more on this dichotomy in chapter 3 below). This difference manifests itself not just in the outward appearance and in the number of articles that appear in one issue but also, among other things, in the language of the respective papers. Floreano tries to ascertain whether there is a similar difference across the language of different radio channels. In his newspaper sample he uses data from *The Guardian* and *The Daily Telegraph* to represent to "quality" papers and *The Sun* and the *Daily Mirror* to represent the "popular" newspapers. In the radio sample, he uses data from the BBC Radio One news bulletin Newsbeat and the BBC Radio Four news bulletin Six o'clock news. He gives the readership profiles of the newspapers in terms of social class, sex and age. For the radio channels he unfortunately can only provide exact data for the variables sex and age but not for social class. However, on the basis of the available information about the respective audiences, he hypothesises that Radio One, which broadcasts mainly new pop music, will linguistically be similar to the "popular" papers, whereas Radio Four, which is mainly a word channel, devoted to current affairs, news, radio plays and educational programmes, will be similar to the "quality" papers.

He correlates the audience profiles with several linguistic variables such as sentence length, sentence complexity, noun phrase modifications, and the use of different tenses. As expected he finds that sentences are longer in the "quality" newspapers than in the "popular" newspapers. But the difference between Radio One and Radio Four seems to be less marked. The noun phrase modifications are more complex and there are fewer pronouns in the "quality" newspapers. In terms of noun phrase complexity, both the Radio One and the Radio Four news bulletins are more similar to "popular" newspapers than to "quality" newspapers. There is, however, one difference that is clearly paralleled in both media in that Radio One uses more pronouns than Radio Four.

Floreano uses a great range of linguistic and non-linguistic variables, which is both the strength and the weakness of his study in that he can explore many potentially fruitful paths but has to face the inherent danger of getting lost in the wilderness. None of his linguistic variables relies on a paradigmatic relationship, and thus, within the sociolinguistic triangle, his approach must be classified as traditional stylistics but he at least tries to provide a coherent characterisation of his samples in non-linguistic terms, which is a feature of correlational sociolinguistics.

2.6.6. Rydén and Bell – Determiner deletion

Rydén (1975) and Bell (1985) both investigate the use of noun phrase name appositions in newspaper language and in particular the spread of phrases like *Opposition Leader Neil Kinnock* with a descriptive noun phrase appositive without a determiner preceding the name. This format is relatively recent and is in Britain largely but not entirely restricted to the two categories of tabloid papers.

Chapter 9 will deal with noun phrase name appositions, and therefore I will have to review Rydén's and Bell's research in more detail in that context. Here it will suffice to point out how they fit into the sociolinguistic triangle.

In spite of considerable methodological differences, they are both examples of correlational studies. The noun phrase name apposition is the variable and the four patterns with preposed or postposed descriptive appositive either with or without a determiner are the variants, which are identical in referential meaning. The distribution of the patterns is then correlated with different types of newspapers, or with different historical stages.

Rydén uses a descriptive framework and is mainly interested in pointing out the marked differences in the frequency of the patterns in the different papers and according to a semantic classification of the descriptive appositive as "political noun", "sports noun" or "other noun" (Rydén 1975: 16f). Even though he points out that the pattern with preposed descriptive appositive without a determiner is most common in the "popular press" (1975: 37), he does not correlate the linguistic variable in any systematic way with the non-linguistic characteristics of the newspapers.

Bell, on the other hand, uses the concept of a variable rule. This rule deletes a determiner in the preposed descriptive appositive of a noun phrase name apposition. The frequency of rule application is then correlated with various extra-linguistic factors. Geographically, the rule applies at different frequencies in different countries. While it applies almost invariably in American English newspaper language, there is considerable variation in its British English counterpart. Socially, the rule application depends – within a British English context – on the readership profile of the newspapers. And historically, the frequency of rule application has increased steadily in certain segments of the British media.

As I will point out in detail in chapter 9, Bell's approach has some undesirable consequences because he fails to take proper account of the different preferences for either preposing or postposing the descriptive appositive. In my sample corpus of home news section articles of the *Financial Times*, for instance, there are 126 instances of noun phrase name appositions, two of which are preposed without a determiner. As there are only five instances of a preposed descriptive appositive that do have a determiner, the frequency of rule application, which only takes into account preposed descriptive appositives, turns out to be 29 per cent. By comparison in the home news section of *The Guardian*, there is one instance of a deleted determiner in 147 noun phrase name appositions. But *The Guardian* prefers preposing and therefore has 74 instances of preposed descriptive appositives with undeleted determiners, which gives a rule application of 1.3 per cent. Hence, the differences in rule applications must be considered to be highly deceptive.

Nonetheless, Bell's approach must also be commended because he correlates the linguistic variation in a more systematic way with different dimensions of non-linguistic factors, and because this led him to the formulation of the audience design framework, which offers a more plausible account of stylistic variation than alternative attempts so far have succeeded in doing, and not just in the area of media language.

2.6.7. Verschueren – Metapragmatic metaphors

Verschueren (1985) investigates media language by presenting a case study rather than by compiling a random sample. For this purpose he chose an incident with clear international significance set far enough in the past "so that a proper perspective is readily available on what really happened" (1985: 33). He found this requirement best fulfilled in the U-2 incident, in which an

American spy plane was shot down over Soviet territory in May 1960, with serious effects on East-West relations. As a corpus he used all the reports on this incident and its aftermath published by *The New York Times*.

The entire incident, he argues, derives its significance for the media not just from what actually happened but to a large extent from the verbal reactions and counter-reactions to the events in the form of statements issued by the two governments in Washington and Moscow. Thus he investigates the use of meta pragmatic terms or linguistic action verbials which he defines as "verbs and verb-like expressions used to describe (aspects of) *linguistic action*" (1985: 34, his emphasis). Verschueren intends his study

> to reveal how members of one culture (Americans), as members of that culture and as professionals whose work is governed by a range of restrictions imposed on them by an established institution (journalism in a free-press tradition), interpret and present the communicative behavior (constituting the core of the reported event) displayed by other members of their own culture (American politicians and spokesmen) as opposed to members of a different – even antipodal – culture (Soviet political leaders and their representatives). (1985: 38)

In order to do this, he opposes "neutral" linguistic action verbials such as *said*, *declared*, or *commented*, which might be expected to be particularly common in a free press tradition priding itself on being "objective" and "impartial", to metapragmatic metaphors such as *admitted*, *pointed out*, or *seized this opportunity also to repeat*. In this way, he investigates whether the framing of the communicative events was biased. The use of a certain linguistic action verbial depends both on the reported communicative event itself and on the journalist's interpretation of this event.

The investigation reveals a marked difference in the reporting of the verbal behaviour of the two leaders, Nikita Khrushchev and Dwight Eisenhower, which apparently corresponded to a large extent to the facts, however, "it completely disregards the fact, usually not so much neglected where other types of human conduct are concerned, that the same surface activities (in this case utterances) may carry different weights in different societies" (1985: 98). Therefore it may be accurate to report Khrushchev as having "exploded" in public, but this should be seen in the context of the culture-specific norms of speaking styles. Eisenhower, on the other hand, is shown in a more statesmanlike way because of his more restrained verbal behaviour.

Verschueren does not compare the language used in his corpus with a norm of any kind. He is interested in the use of metapragmatic metaphors in this particular and carefully selected context, which is not necessarily representative of newspaper language at large. His approach, therefore, is an example of the ethnography of speaking because it investigates unique functions in unique contexts. The motivation for the individual functions is one of the central issues.

2.6.8. Lüger – Newspaper text types

Lüger (1983) presents a textbook introduction to German newspaper language. He reviews a considerable number of studies of newspaper language, predominantly but not exclusively German newspapers. He distinguishes normative or prescriptive treatments, studies of newspaper ideologies, studies of language comprehension, studies of the function of newspapers in a social context, and finally linguistically motivated studies.

What is noteworthy about his review of the linguistically motivated studies, is the way in which he splits up the field. He distinguishes three types of approaches on the basis of the status assigned to the concept newspaper language (1983: 22f). Some researchers apparently take it to be a good approximation to everyday language in general, providing, for example, an easily available corpus for diachronic investigations. None of the approaches reviewed above would fall into this category.

The second type of studies recognises newspaper language as one particular variety of language that can be compared with other varieties such as radio or television language. And the third type of studies is devoted not to newspaper language as a whole, but to one single newspaper or magazine, and does not make generalisation about newspaper language in general. Verschueren (1985), dealing with the language of *The New York Times*, falls into the third category while all the other studies reviewed above would fall into the second category.

Lüger's main concern, however, is to show newspaper language as it is used in different sections of newspapers. He deplores the restricted view of other scholars studying newspaper language, because most of them restrict themselves to the lexical choices and/or to sentence grammatical considerations without appreciating the textuality of newspaper language.

On the basis of the underlying intentions, he distinguishes five basic classes of texts with several subtypes. Informative texts contain mainly facts without any evaluation. Its subtypes are hard news, soft news, news in brief, report (*Bericht*), personal report (*Reportage*), critical review of a state of affairs (*Problemdarstellung)*, and weather report.

Persuasive texts, on the other hand, evaluate, give opinions and argue explicitly for these opinions. Here the subtypes are leader, commentary (*Glosse*) and review.

Instructive texts give practical information and guidance, for instance on gardening, (*Handlungsanleitung*) or counselling and advice (*Ratgebung*), for instance on food or on cars. The latter differs from the former in that it leaves more freedom to the readers by taking into account varying needs. Hence a recipe in which a number of steps must be taken in order to achieve the desired result would be an example of the former, whereas an article on a number of ski resorts in the alps which points out the respective advantages and disadvantages would be an example of the latter.

Dyadic texts have two dominant and distinct text intentions. These are either interviews with a succession of questions and answers or agony columns in which a question concerning matters of the daily life is posed by a reader followed by an answer supplied by an "agony aunt".

Contact creating texts, finally, are designed to arouse the readers' or the potential readers' interest with the aid of photographs, catchy headlines and the like. Such texts appear mainly on the front page of newspapers and have an advertising function, particularly so for the down-market papers, which in Germany depend almost exclusively on street sales whereas the up-market papers are mainly subscription papers.

Lüger recognises that many newspaper articles are not unambiguous instances of any one of these text types. They may have a mixture of more than one intention underlying them. But Lüger's point is that usually one intention is predominant to such an extent that a classification is possible.

What Lüger offers in effect is not so much an analysis of unique functions in unique contexts, but a classification of possible contexts in which the descriptive details as regards the lexical and grammatical choices serve the sole purpose of classifying the contexts. The distinction between a report (*Bericht*) and a personal report (*Reportage*), for instance, is mainly based on the fact that the latter employs a more personal point of view, which is indicated by deictic elements suggesting that the reporter is an eyewitness of the reported events at the time of writing the article. Hence it is not an empirical result that writer-centred deictics occur in a personal report (*Reportage*), but a matter of definition.

For this reason, Lüger's classification can only serve descriptive purposes by drawing attention to the multitude of varying intentions lying behind different newspaper articles. Any other classification of newspaper texts may produce categories that are just as plausible.

2.6.9. Conclusion

This brief review of some pertinent studies of the language of the media is not designed to do full justice to the depth and breadth of these studies. What I have tried to argue is, on the one hand, how all the different approaches necessarily influence – and in some sense also restrict – the range of their possible findings. On the other hand, I hope to have also demonstrated that important insights can be gained within quite disparate methodological frameworks.

I began my review with Crystal and Davy (1969), who are the best representatives of traditional stylistics. Carter (1988) and Ghadessy (1988) also fall into this category even though they fail to provide a cogent comparison of their chosen text or texts with similar texts or with some kind of norm. Floreano (1986) also works within a traditional stylistics framework, but he tries to correlate the linguistic variables systematically with non-linguistic ones such as social class, sex and age of the actual or targeted audiences. Rydén (1975) and Bell (1985), in spite of their methodological differences, both illustrate a correlational approach. Ferguson (1983) and Wallace (1977) are more difficult to classify because they combine different points of view. Verschueren (1985) and Lüger (1983) are more clearly examples of the ethnography of speaking, because they analyse their corpus in functional terms, showing how language is used strategically in a particular social and communicative situation in order to achieve certain goals.

All these approaches – within their restricted perspectives – yield important insights into a particular variety of language. And to this extent it would be unwise to choose one approach at the expense of another.

Thus I advocate a carefully eclectic approach. Such a view is most likely to safeguard the analyst from partial sightedness, and it certainly safeguards against taking any analytic framework at face-value. What is needed are not purist approaches but approaches that are as clear and explicit about their methodological repercussions as possible. This will not do away with the truism that the methodology to some extent always influences the results but it will at least go some way towards making clear the extent to which it does so.