

Functional Styles

Introduction:

Functional Style is a system of interrelated language means, which serves a definite aim in communication. Each style is recognized as an independent whole. The peculiar choice of language means is primarily dependent on the aim of the communication, on the function the style performs.

As a matter of fact there exist a number of classifications of functional styles, but the most common one was introduced by I. R. Galperin. It includes the belles-lettres style, the publicistic style, the newspaper style, the scientific prose style, and the style of official documents.

1-SCIENTIFIC PROSE STYLE

Features:

- objective, precise, and mostly unemotional language means; words used in primary logical meaning
- use of terms and learned words
- impersonality and generalized form of expression reflected in the choice of grammar and syntactic constructions
- logical sequence of utterances
- most developed system of connectives
- accepted sentence-patterns: *postulatory, argumentative, and formulative*
- use of quotations and references
- use of footnotes both of the reference kind and digressive in character

Example:

A snowfall consists of myriads of minute ice crystals that fall to the ground in the form of frozen precipitation. The formation of snow begins with these ice crystals in the subfreezing strata of the middle and upper atmosphere when there is an adequate supply of moisture present. At the core of every ice crystal is a minuscule nucleus, a solid particle of matter around which moisture condenses and freezes. Liquid water droplets floating in the supercooled atmosphere and free ice crystals cannot coexist within the same cloud, since the vapor pressure of ice is less than that of water. This enables the ice crystals to rob the liquid droplets of their moisture and grow continuously. The process can be very rapid, quickly creating sizable ice crystals, some of which adhere to each other to create a cluster of ice crystals or a snowflake.

Simple flakes possess a variety of beautiful forms, usually hexagonal, though the symmetrical shapes reproduced in most microscope photography of snowflakes are not usually found in actual snowfalls. Typically, snowflakes in actual snowfalls consist of broken fragments and clusters of adhering ice crystals.

2-THE STYLE OF OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS

This style is not homogeneous and is represented by four major substyles. The scheme below (illustrated by sample texts) graphically shows what variants it consists of:

1-Legal Documents

2-Business Documents

3-Documents of Diplomacy

4-Military Documents

Features:

- use of words in logical dictionary meaning special system of cliches, terms, set expressions
- use of terminological nomenclature
- no emotive words retaining their original meaning
- special obligatory forms of address, opening and concluding
- encoded character of language: use of abbreviations (*M.P.*) and conventional symbols (*\$*)
- non-flexible compositional design
- fixed paragraphing
- restricted choice of syntactical patterns
- grammar and punctuation depending on the pattern (*combining several pronouncements into one sentence*)

Example:

From Laws of War: General Orders No. 100

***INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE GOVERNMENT OF ARMIES OF THE UNITED STATES IN THE
FIELD***

Prepared by Francis Lieber, promulgated by

President Lincoln, 24 April 1863.

SECTION III

Deserters - Prisoners of war - Hostages - Booty on the battle-field.

Art. 48. Deserters from the American Army, having entered the service of the enemy, suffer death if they fall again into the hands of the United States, whether by capture, or being delivered up to the American Army; and if a deserter from the enemy, having taken service in the Army of the United States, is captured by the enemy, and punished by them with death.

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3-PUBLICISTIC STYLE

The publicistic style has spoken (oratory and speeches) and written (essays) varieties. Oratory and Speeches are often referred to as the *Oratorical Style*.

Publicistic Style:

1-Essays

2-Oratory and Speeches

Features :

- direct contact with the audience
(use of *you, your, we, our*)
- the use of the 1st person singular
to justify a personal approach
to the problem treated
- combination of logical argumentation
and emotional appeal
due to *logical argumentation*:
 - coherent and logical syntactic
structure
 - expanded system of connectives
(*hence, inasmuch, thenceforward,*

therefore)

- careful paragraphing
- brevity of expression
due to *emotional appeal*:
 - use of emotionally coloured
words
 - imagery and stylistic devices
are used but usually are not fresh
and genuine for the audience to
comprehend the message implied
with less effort

Features of substyle:

- use of similes and sustained metaphors to emphasize ideas
- direct address to the audience (*Your Worship, Mr. Chairman; you, with your permission, Mind!*)
- special obligatory forms to open and end an oration (*Ladies and Gentlemen; In the name of God do your duty*)
- words expressing speaker's

personal opinion (*I'm no idealist to believe firmly in, I'm confident that*)

- wide use of repetition (lexical, synonymic, syntactical) to focus on the main points
- frequent rhetoric questions
- use of similes and sustained metaphors to emphasize ideas
- contractions are acceptable

Example:

Content for "I Have a Dream"

"I Have a Dream" has been misconstrued and sentimentalized by some who focus only on the dream. The first half of the speech does not portray an American dream but rather catalogues an American nightmare. In the manner of Old Testament prophets, Frederick Douglass's "What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July?" oration and Vernon Johns, King excoriated a nation that espoused equality while forcing blacks onto "a lonely island of poverty in the midst of a vast ocean of material prosperity."

Example (Essay):

Women's Liberation

1. Since the middle of the century, women around the world have been seeking greater independence and recognition. No longer content with their traditional roles as housewives and mothers, women have joined together to create the women's liberation movement. While the forces behind the international movement vary from culture to culture and from individual to individual, the basic causes in the United States can be traced to three events: the development of effective birth control methods, the invention of labor-saving devices for the home, and the advent of World War II.

4-NEWSPAPER STYLE

English **newspaper style** may be defined as a system of interrelated lexical, phraseological and grammatical means as a separate unity that basically serves the purpose of informing and instructing the reader. It goes without saying that the bulk of the vocabulary used in newspaper style is neutral and commonly literary. But apart from this, newspaper style has its specific vocabulary features, which are presented in the chart below.

Its basic genres, which can be classed as follows:

Newspaper Style

Headlines Articles

Brief News, Items, Advertisements and Announcements

Features:

a) **Special political and economic terms** (*e.g. apartheid, by-election, per capita production*).

b) **Non-term political vocabulary** (*e.g. public, people, progressive, nation-wide unity*).

c) **Newspaper clichés, i.e., stereotyped expressions, commonplace phrases familiar to the reader** (*e.g. vital issue, well-informed sources, overwhelming majority, amid stormy applause*).

d) **Clichés** more than anything else reflect the traditional manner of expression in newspaper writing. They are commonly looked upon as a defect of style (*e.g. captains of industry, pillars of society*). *But nevertheless, clichés are indispensable in newspaper style: they prompt the necessary associations and prevent ambiguity and misunderstanding.*

e) **Abbreviations. News items, press reports and headlines** abound in abbreviations of various kinds as it helps to save space and time.

Features:

- Some abbreviations are read as individual letters:

WHO (read as *W-H-O*) *World Health Organization*

BBC (**B**ritish **B**roadcasting **C**orporation)

UN (**U**nited **N**ations)

PM (**P**rime **M**inister)

MP (**M**ember of **P**arliament)

- Some abbreviations are read as words; they are called **acronyms**.

NATO /'neitou/ **N**orth **A**tlantic **T**reaty **O**rganization

OPEC /'oupek/ **O**rganization of **P**etroleum **E**xploring **C**ountries

AIDS /eidz/ **A**cquired **I**mmune **D**eficiency **S**yndrome

- Abbreviations are used in titles (Mr, Ms, Mrs, Dr, etc.)

f) Neologisms. The newspaper is very quick to react to any new development in the life of society and technology. Hence, neologisms make their way into the language of the newspaper very easily. So, not long ago such words as *glasnost* and *Gorbymania* used to cover almost each and every inch of printed matter materials. But many neologisms, the same as slang words, tend to become dated very fast.

• **5-BELLES-LETTRES STYLE**

1-Language of Poetry

2-Language of Drama

3-Language of Fiction (prose)

Typical characteristics for the style are

- no unique features as this style is not homogeneous: it contains vocabulary and syntax of different registers and styles
- the choice of the form and means depends on the author's preferences solely
- wide variety of stylistic devices and expressive means of different kinds
- use of words in contextual and often in more than one dictionary meaning

Typical features for the sub-style are

- rhythm and rhyme phonetic means (alliteration, assonance)
- fresh, unexpected imagery (wide use of expressive means)
- wide use of syntactic means: detached constructions, asyndeton, polysyndeton, inversion, elliptical and fragmentary sentences
- a great number of emotionally coloured words
- combination of the spoken and written varieties of language
- two forms of communication (monologue and dialogue)

Typical features for the sub-style are

- language is stylized: colloquial speech approximates real conversation but still strives to retain the modus of literary English (unless the author aims to characterize the personage through his language)
- redundancy of information caused by the necessity to amplify the utterance for the sake of the audience (wide use of repetition)
- simplified syntax, curtailment of utterances although not so extensive as in natural dialogue
- the utterances are much longer than in natural conversation
- monological character of dialogue

Example:

From *The Hitch Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy*

By Douglas Adams

Far out in the uncharted backwaters of the unfashionable end of the western spiral arm of the Galaxy lies a small unregarded yellow sun. Orbiting this at a distance of roughly ninety-two million miles is an utterly insignificant little blue green planet whose ape-descended life forms are so amazingly primitive that they still think digital watches are a pretty neat idea.

This planet has – or rather had – a problem, which was this: most of the people on it were unhappy for pretty much of the time. Many solutions were suggested for this problem, but most of these were largely concerned with the movements of small green pieces of paper, which is odd because on the whole it wasn't the small green pieces of paper that were unhappy.