Functional styles in English

Nowadays there is a number of functional styles in each language. Functional style is a device of communication. Each of them has its own vocabulary means, syntactical constructions or phonetics. Each functional style depends upon the purpose of the text or the specific conditions of communication in different situations. Every written or spoken discourse has a style. The word itself refers to some kind of a function. A style depends upon the purpose of the text or the specific conditions of communication in different situations. However, there is no single and concrete definition of a word style.

According to I. V. Arnold, (Soviet and Russian linguist, specialist in lexicology, stylistics and rhetoric), styles can be divided into two groups:
Colloquial Styles: (literary colloquial; familiar colloquial; common colloquial).
Literary Bookish Styles: (scientific; official documents; publicistic newspaper; oratorical; poetic)

According to I. R. Galperin (linguist, lexicographer: doctor of Philology, Professor) the set of style classes include:
a) official business style;
b) scientific professional style;
c) publicistic style;
d) literary colloquial style;
e) familiar colloquial style

Functional styles are subsystems of language and each of them has its own features concerning vocabulary means, syntactical constructions or phonetics. The use of a certain functional style is connected to the particular situations of communication in different spheres of life.

The publicistic style

The publicistic style is used in public speeches and printed public works which are addressed to a broad audience and devoted to important social or political events, public problems of cultural or moral character.

It falls into three varieties, each having its own distinctive features. Unlike other formal styles, the publicist style has spoken varieties, in particular, the oratorical sub-style. The development of radio and television has brought into being a new spoken variety – the radio and television commentary. The other two are the essay and articles in newspapers, journals and magazines.

The general aim of the publicist style is to exert influence on public opinion, to convince the reader or the listener that the interpretation given by the writer or the speaker is the only correct one and to cause him to accept the point of view expressed in the speech, essay or article not merely by logical argumentation, but by emotional appeal as well.

This brain-washing function is most effective in oratory, for here the most powerful instrument of persuasion is brought into play: the human voice. Due to its characteristic combination of logical argumentation and emotional appeal, the publicistic style has features in common with the style of scientific prose or official documents, on the one hand, and that of emotive prose, on the other. Its coherent and logical syntactic structure, with an expanded system of connectives and its careful paragraphing, makes it similar to scientific prose. Its emotional appeal is
generally achieved by the use of words with emotive meaning, the use of imagery and other stylistic devices as in emotive prose. The publicistic style also has some elements of emotionally coloured colloquial style as the author has no need to make their speech impersonal (as in scientific or official style), but, on the contrary, he or she tries to approximate the text to lively communication, as though they were talking to people in direct contact.

The oratorical style

The oratorical style is the oral subdivision of the publicistic style. The most obvious purpose of oratory is persuasion, and it requires eloquence. This style is evident in speeches on political and social problems of the day, in orations and addresses on solemn occasions as public weddings, funerals and jubilees, in sermons and debates and also in the speeches of counsel and judges in courts of law.

The sphere of application of oratory is confined to appeal to an audience and therefore crucial issues in such spheres as science, art, or business relations are not touched upon.

Direct contact with the listeners permits the combination of the syntactical, lexical and phonetic peculiarities of both the written and spoken varieties of language. In its leading feature, however, the oratorical style belongs to the written variety of language, though it is modified by the oral form of the utterance and the use of gestures.

Certain typical features of the spoken variety of speech present in this style are:

a) direct address to the audience by special formulas (*Ladies and Gentlemen!*; *My Lords! – in the House of Lords*; *Mr. Chairman!*; *Honourable Members!*; *Highly esteemed members of the conference!*; or, *in less formal situation, Dear Friends!*; or, *with a more passionate colouring, My Friends!*). Expressions of direct address can be repeated in the course of the speech and may be expressed differently (*Mark you! Mind!*).
b) special formulas at the end of the speech to thank the audience for their attention (Thank you very much; Thank you for your time).

c) the use of the 1st person pronoun we; 2nd person pronoun you: *We hold these Truths to be self-evident, that all Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness...* (Th. Jefferson, The Declaration of Independence).

d) the use of contractions I’ll; won’t; haven’t; isn’t and others: *We’re talking about healing our nation. We’re not talking about politics. We’re all here to do everything in our power to save lives... I’m here to thank you for hearing that call. Actually, I shouldn’t be thanking you, I should be thanking a Higher Power for giving you the call* (George W. Bush).

e) features of colloquial style such as asking the audience questions as the speaker attempts to reach closer contact: *Sometimes it is said that man cannot be trusted with the government of himself. Can he, then, be trusted with the government of others? Or have we found angels in the forms of kings to govern him?* (Th. Jefferson), or calling upon the audience: *Let us then, with courage and confidence, pursue our own federal and republican principles* (ibid).

Like the colloquial style, oratory is usually characterized by emotional colouring and connotations, but there is a difference between them. The emotional colouring of the publicist style is lofty – it may be solemn, or ironic, but it cannot have the “lowered” connotations (jocular, rude, vulgar, or slangy) found in colloquial speech. The vocabulary of speeches is usually elaborately chosen and remains mainly in the sphere of high-flown style.

The Essay

This genre in English literature dates from the 16th century, and its name is taken from the short “Essays” (=experiments, attempts) by the French writer Montaigne, which contained his thoughts on various subjects. An essay is a literary composition of moderate length on philosophical, social or literary subjects, which
preserves a clearly personal character and has no pretence to deep or strictly scientific treatment of the subject. It is rather a number of comments, without any definite conclusions. Consider an extract from Ben Johnson (16th century):

Language most shows a man; speak, that I may see thee. It springs of the most retired and in most parts of us, and is the image of the parent of it, the mind. No glass renders a man’s form or likeness so true, as his speech, and, as we consider features and composition in a man, so words in language. Some men are tall and big, so some language is high and great. Then the words are chosen, the sound ample, the composition full, all grace, sinewy and strong. Some are little and dwarfs; so of speech, it is humble and low; the words are poor and flat; the members are periods thin and weak, without knitting or number.

Nowadays an essay is usually a kind of feature article in a magazine or newspaper. Essays are written commonly by one and the same writer or journalist, who has cultivated his own individual style. Some essays, depending on the writer’s individuality, are written in a highly emotional manner resembling the style of emotive prose (Hail, Nickel. Mother of Murder! Blessed destroyer of human flesh! Balm of twenty-six million corpses in six years! D. Cusack), others resemble scientific prose and the terms review, memoir, or treatise are more applicable to certain more exhaustive studies: Taking English Poetry in the common sense of the word, as a peculiar form of the language, we find that it differs from prose mainly in having a regular succession of accented syllables. In short it possesses metre as its characteristic feature…(S. Maugham).

The essay on moral and philosophical topics in modern times has not been so popular, probably because a deeper scientific analysis and interpretation of facts is required. The essay in our days is often biographical; people, facts and events are taken from life. These essays differ from those of previous centuries – their vocabulary is simpler and so is their logical structure and argumentation. But they still retain all the leading features of the publicist style.

The most characteristic language features of the essay, however, remain
1. brevity of expression;
2. the use of the first person singular, which justifies a personal approach to the problems treated;
3. a rather expended use of connectives, which facilitates the process of grasping the correlation of ideas;
4. the abundant use of emotive words;
5. the use of similes and metaphors as one of the media for the cognitive process.

In comparison with the oratorical style, the essay aims at a more lasting, hence at a slower effect. Epigrams, paradoxes and aphorisms are comparatively rare in oratory, as they require the concentrated attention of the listener. In the essay they are commoner, for the reader has an opportunity to make a careful and detailed study both of the content of the utterance and its form.

Articles

Irrespective of the character of the magazine and the divergence of subject matter – whether it is political, literary, popular-scientific or satirical, all the features of publistic style are to be found in any article. The character of the magazine as well as the subject chosen affects the choice and use of stylistic devices. There are popular scientific articles, satirical articles, political magazine articles or newspaper articles.

Literary reviews stand closer to essay both by their content and by their linguistic form. More abstract words of logical meaning are used in them, they more often resort to emotional language and less frequently to traditional set expressions.
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