# TEACHING STYLISTIC ANALYSIS THROUGH FOREGROUNDING: AN ENGLISH–UZBEK COMPARATIVE APPROACH FOR PHILOLOGY STUDENTS

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**Abstract.** Stylistics courses for English philology students in Uzbekistan often consist of memorising lists of expressive means and stylistic devices with definitions and examples. Students can name a metaphor or an anaphora, but they rarely explain what a device does in a particular text or why a reader notices it. This thesis argues that the theory of foregrounding, through deviation and parallelism, gives the course a single organising idea. It proposes a four-step analysis routine (notice, describe, compare, interpret) and a lesson sequence that sets English literary texts beside Uzbek proverbs and poetry, so that students test the same concepts on two languages.
**Keywords:** stylistics, foregrounding, deviation, parallelism, literary analysis, English philology.

**Introduction.**

In many Uzbek universities, stylistics is taught as a catalogue. Students learn the names of expressive means and stylistic devices, such as metaphor, metonymy, epithet, zeugma, anaphora and chiasmus, write down a definition and an example for each, and reproduce them in the examination. Asked to analyse an unfamiliar text, the same students often produce a list of devices with line numbers and stop there. The question that matters, what these choices do to the reader and to the meaning of the text, is left unanswered.

Modern stylistics offers a way out. Leech and Short (2007) describe style as a matter of choice and of its effects, and Simpson (2004) presents stylistic analysis as a method that should be rigorous, retrievable and replicable, so that another reader can follow and check each step. At the centre of this tradition is the concept of foregrounding, which goes back to the Prague School: Mukařovský (1964) argued that poetic language draws attention to itself by departing from the automatised norms of everyday language.

**Aim and methods.**

The aim of the thesis is to reorganise the practical part of a stylistics course around foregrounding. Theoretical work on foregrounding and empirical studies of its effects on readers were reviewed. The concepts were then turned into a four-step routine for students and tried out on a small set of English and Uzbek texts chosen for a philology class at B2–C1 level. The proposal has not yet been evaluated with students and is offered for classroom trial.

**Main part.**

Foregrounding is produced in two main ways (Leech & Short, 2007; Short, 1996). Deviation breaks a norm of the language or of the text, as when a writer uses an unexpected word combination, an unusual word order or a sudden change of register. Parallelism creates unexpected regularity, as when lines repeat the same structure. Blake's line *Tyger Tyger, burning bright, / In the forests of the night* combines both: the archaic spelling deviates from the norm, while the repetition and the strong rhythm set up a pattern. Empirical research supports the idea that such features matter to real readers. Van Peer (1986) found that readers rated foregrounded passages of poems as more striking and important, and Miall and Kuiken



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(1994) showed that readers of short stories read foregrounded passages more slowly and rated them as more affecting.

For students, these findings translate into a four-step routine. In the first step, notice, students read the text and mark anything that seems unusual or patterned before they use any technical term. In the second, describe, they say precisely what the feature is at the level of sound, vocabulary, grammar or text structure. In the third, compare, they ask what the ordinary, non-foregrounded version would look like and rewrite the line in plain language. In the fourth, interpret, they explain what the difference changes for the reader: what is emphasised, slowed down, linked or made strange. Names of devices are introduced only when they help to describe what students have already noticed, and not as a list to be learned in advance.

Uzbek material makes the routine richer and gives students a second point of reference. Proverbs are an easy start because parallelism is built into them: *Bilagi zo‘r birni yiqar, bilimi zo‘r mingni* contrasts *bilagi* and *bilimi*, *bir* and *ming*, within one repeated frame, and students can see at once that the pattern carries the meaning. Classical and modern Uzbek poetry offers sound patterning, refrains and deviation of its own. A typical lesson moves from a proverb to a short English poem or prose extract and then back to an Uzbek text, and ends with a short written analysis in which students apply the four steps to a passage they have not seen before. Assessment rewards the quality of the explanation, not the number of devices found.

**Conclusion.**

Foregrounding gives a stylistics course one idea that connects all the devices students are asked to learn and shifts the focus from naming to explaining. Placing English and Uzbek texts side by side shows students that deviation and parallelism work across languages, and lets them use their knowledge of Uzbek literature as a resource. A comparison of students’ written analyses before and after a semester taught with this routine would show whether it improves their ability to interpret texts rather than simply label them.

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