

STYLISTIC DEVICES IN SPEECH AND THEIR ROLE IN PSYCHOLINGUISTIC
PROCESSING

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Abstract. The current research investigates the function of stylistic elements in verbal communication and their effect on psycholinguistic processing during the understanding of language. Stylistic elements, including metaphors, repetitions, and idiomatic expressions, are commonly employed in spoken language to augment expressiveness and meaning. Nevertheless, their influence on the cognitive processing of listeners continues to be a significant concern within psycholinguistic studies. This investigation aims to assess how these stylistic devices impact comprehension, focus, and interpretation during speech perception. A pilot experimental study was carried out with university students to analyze the processing differences between stylistically marked and neutral statements. The findings indicate that the use of stylistic elements enhances both attention and emotional involvement, though it may necessitate greater cognitive resources for interpretation. These results advance our comprehension of the interplay between linguistic creativity and cognitive processes in language processing. Furthermore, the research underscores the significance of stylistic proficiency in facilitating effective communication.

Keywords: stylistic devices, psycholinguistics, speech perception, figurative language, cognitive processing

Introduction. Language serves as more than just a framework of grammatical rules; it acts as a medium for conveying feelings, opinions, and intentions. In routine interactions, speakers frequently employ various rhetorical techniques such as metaphors, repetition, irony, and idioms, to enhance the expressiveness and persuasive power of their speech. These stylistic facets augment communication and significantly affect how audiences understand and interpret the conveyed messages. From the viewpoint of psycholinguistics, the process of language comprehension is intricate, encompassing cognitive activities such as perception, decoding, interpretation, and the retrieval of memory. When audiences encounter expressions that are stylistically distinctive, their cognitive mechanisms must engage in processing not only the denotative aspects of the words but also the connotative or pragmatic implications inherent in the spoken expression.

Previous studies in psycholinguistics suggest that figurative language activates additional cognitive mechanisms compared to literal expressions. Stylistic devices may therefore influence the speed, accuracy, and depth of comprehension. However, the extent to which these devices facilitate or complicate speech processing remains a subject of ongoing research.

The current investigation seeks to explore the influence of stylistic devices in verbal communication and their effects on psycholinguistic processing during understanding. It concentrates on the manner in which listeners perceive and interpret utterances that are rich in stylistic elements. This research encompasses the following inquiries:

1. In what ways do stylistic devices affect the comprehension of speech?
2. Do expressions with stylistic features necessitate more cognitive resources compared to neutral expressions?
3. How do listeners evaluate the communicative effectiveness of these stylistic devices?



Methodology. The research utilized a mixed-methods approach that integrated experimental tasks with a questionnaire analysis. The study involved thirty undergraduate students enrolled in an English linguistics program at a university, all of whom possessed an upper-intermediate or advanced level of proficiency in English.

Materials. Two sets of sentences were prepared for the experiment:

Neutral sentences without stylistic devices

Sentences containing stylistic devices such as metaphors, idioms, and repetition

Neutral: The problem is very difficult.

Stylistic: The problem is a hard nut to crack.

Participants were asked to read and listen to the sentences and perform comprehension tasks.

They were required to:

- I. interpret the meaning of each sentence
- II. indicate how quickly they understood the sentence
- III. evaluate the expressiveness of the sentence

Additionally, participants completed a short questionnaire about their perception of stylistic expressions in speech.

The collected data were analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively. Response accuracy, interpretation time, and participants' subjective evaluations were compared across the two types of sentences.

Results. The findings indicated several significant trends regarding the psycholinguistic processing of stylistic devices. Initially, sentences that included stylistic elements garnered more attention from the subjects. A considerable number of participants noted that these expressions were not only more memorable but also evoked stronger emotional responses compared to neutral statements. Furthermore, the interpretation of stylistically marked expressions generally required slightly longer processing times. Participants frequently had to decipher the figurative meanings before grasping the overarching message. Despite this increased cognitive load, participants regarded stylistic sentences as more expressive and effective communicatively. In summary, the findings suggest that stylistic devices amplify the communicative effectiveness of discourse, albeit at the cost of additional cognitive processing.

Discussion. The results of the research substantiate the notion that stylistic devices significantly contribute to speech comprehension from a psycholinguistic standpoint. Figurative and stylistically unique expressions necessitate enhanced cognitive engagement, leading listeners to move beyond mere literal meaning. This additional cognitive processing may account for the slightly prolonged comprehension times noted during the experiment. Nonetheless, the heightened cognitive effort does not impede communication; on the contrary, stylistic devices can foster greater engagement, emotional resonance, and enhanced retention. These findings align with prior psycholinguistic investigations into the processing of figurative language, indicating that metaphorical and idiomatic constructions activate associative networks within the mental lexicon. Furthermore, the research underscores the value of stylistic competence in effective communication; speakers adept at employing stylistic devices can render their discourse more persuasive, vivid, and impactful. However, the study is not without its limitations; it utilized a relatively small sample size and concentrated solely on a select number of stylistic devices. Future investigations could broaden the scope by examining a wider array of linguistic features and incorporating participants from diverse linguistic backgrounds.

Conclusion. Stylistic devices are a crucial element of expressive language and play a significant role in the psycholinguistic processes involved in understanding speech. Although expressions with distinctive styles may necessitate greater cognitive resources, they simultaneously improve the effectiveness of communication and captivate listeners.



Investigating the relationship between stylistic language and cognitive processing enriches psycholinguistic theory and informs practical communication research. Additional experimental studies are essential to examine how various stylistic approaches affect language comprehension across a range of linguistic and cultural environments.

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