

Review Article

Study of Novel Style Based on Transformational-Generative Grammar

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Abstract: Noam Chomsky' Transformational-Generative Grammar, having always been seen as a profound revolution in the linguistics circle, offered a more scientific and rational perspective for the study of linguistics. As a branch of linguistics, stylistics is also severely affected by TG grammar. Within the framework of TG grammar, this paper is to extract corpus from the novels of Henry James and those of Mark Twain respectively, and then makes a contrastive analysis of style of them throughly and objectively based on deep structure, surface structure and transformational rules in ways that improve the explaining power of TG grammar in the analysis of novel style.

Keywords: TG grammar, novel style, deep structure, surface structure.

INTRODUCTION

With the modern linguistics continuously developing and new linguistic theories constantly emerging, the study of stylistics is not only confined to a relatively subjective research level, but turns to a research perspective which is broader and more objective. Functional stylistics generated by Halliday' systemic-functional grammar, generative stylistics (also called formal stylistics) by Noam Chomsky' TG grammar and structural stylistics by structuralism can be cases in point. Generative stylistics was established on the binary opposition model of form and content to analyze and discuss the style of works based on relevant contents of TG grammar (Liu Yan, Zhang Yuliang, 2012). In analyzing the novel style, some factors should be concerned including writing background, writers' emotion. In addition, writers' expressions, namely, the complexity of sentence structure, length and cohesion, also affect the style of novels. Writers' style, however, is not invariably fixed in that they always adjust their expressions according to social changes and their own experiences in the actual writing process. In other words, some writers' style should be dynamic, especially those who have spanned the two centuries. But few scholars took it into the consideration in the study of stylistics over the years. With reference to the previous studies of novel style within the framework of TG grammar, this paper is to extract paragraphs of *Daisy Miller*, early masterpiece, and *The wings of Dove*,

late masterpiece, by Henry James and those of *The Little Bad Boy* by Mark Twain, who was at the same period with James, for a further study of application of TG grammar in the analysis of novel style more scientifically.

LITERATURE REVIEW

As early as in the year of 1964, Ohman studied the style of Faulkner and Hemingway based on TG grammar. He extracted core sentences of paragraphs by back-transformation and then compared them with the original paragraphs and found that Faulkner is extremely adept at improving the complexity of his novels by using compound sentences, subordinate clauses and comparative structures which is typically Faulkerian, that is, lengthy and complicated. To make it convincing, he also analyzed the style of *Soldier's Home* by Hemingway in the same way and found that Hemingway rarely used other transformational rules except adding "and" to his novel (Ohman, 1964). Hence, the style of Hemingway: concise and plain. Curtis W. Hayes in 1968 analyzed detailedly a sentence extracted from the novel of Edward Gibbon to elaborate how the obscure style of Gibbon was formed by illustrating the application of TG grammar in the sentence gradually (Hayes, 1968). Inger Rosengren in 1972 discussed the significance of TG grammar in the study of stylistics. Fowler in 1977 maintained that the differences between deep structure and surface structure were the key to

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analyze different style (Rosengren, 1972) Furthermore, E.C.Trangott held that surface structure contained numerous implications and sometimes even created literary meaning (Penzl, 1981). since 1980s, scholars in China like WangLin(1988), Yao Naiqiang and Tong Shurong started to study the novel style within the framework of TG grammar (Wang Lin, 1988; Yao Naiqiang, 1985; Tong Shurong, 1992). Definitely, these studies greatly promote the development of generative stylistics, especially *Generative Grammars and the Concepts of Literary Style* by Ohman in 1964, which is a landmark for the study of generative stylistics. Be as it may that, only one novel by one writer was analyzed in these studies. The author holds that three works at least were discussed in a contrastive analysis. In light of this, an early masterpiece and a later masterpiece by one writer and one novel by another writer in the same period should be considered in a study on the ground that comparisons mean cross-sectional comparison and longitudinal comparison. Li Jin in 2007 compared the early masterpieces like *The American* and *Daisy Miller*, with later masterpieces like *The Ambassadors* and *The Wings of Dove*, by James from the perspective of semiology. He found that the early style of James was strikingly different from late style, typically represented by periodic sentences (Li Jin, 2007). Xu Zhaoxing in 2011 proved the anxiety of modern experience existing in the late works of James based on the periodic style (Xu Zhaoxing, 2011). Fang Dingjian in 2005 also found

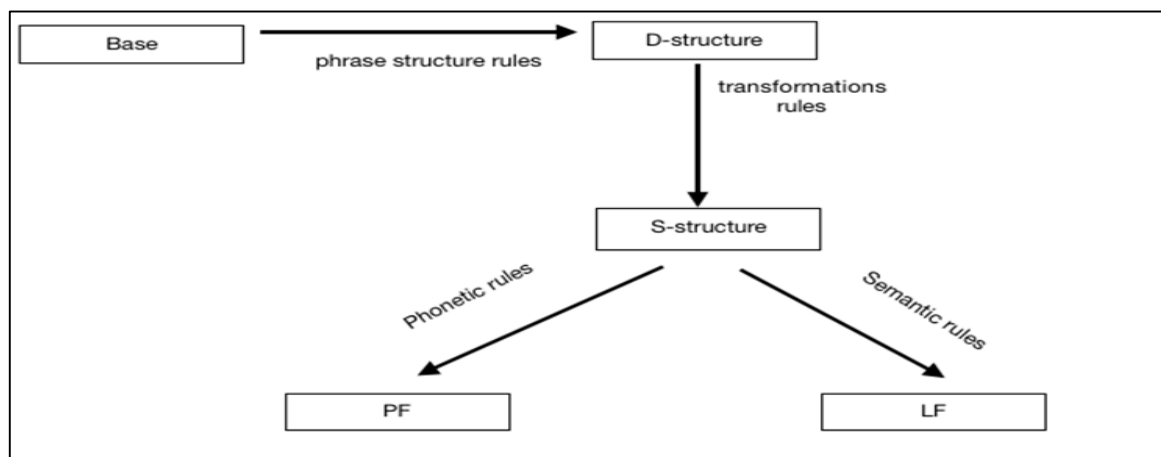
that the hedges were more frequently used in the late works of James from semantic level (Fang Dingjian, 2005). To fill the gaps in the existing studies, this paper is to extract paragraphs of *Daisy Miller*, early masterpiece, and *The wings of Dove*, late masterpiece, by Henry James and those of *The Little Bad Boy* by Mark Twain, who was at the same period with James, for a further study of application of TG grammar in the analysis of novel style more scientifically from a dynamic perspective.

THE RELATIONS BETWEEN TG GRAMMAR AND NOVEL STYLE

1. TG Grammar

The publication of *Syntactic Structures* in 1957 marked the birth of TG grammar, indicating a profound revolution in the history of linguistics, contributing greatly to the development of linguistics and also signifying a dominant position of Chomsky in modern linguistics. Chomsky brings a new vision for linguistics as he changed the nature, subject, purpose, and method of the study of linguistics and his theories focus on what constitutes the language knowledge and how people acquired these knowledge (Zhao Meijuan, 2013). The development of his theories mainly went through the following five stages: Classical Theory(1957-1965), Standard Theory (1965-1970), Revised Extended Theory, Government and Binding (1979-1993) and Minimalist Program (1993-now).

Mainly based on the revised extended theory in the third stage, this paper is to analyze the novel style. Here we use the following chart to illustrate the theory more intuitively.



(Comment: PF: Phonetic form, LF: Logic form)

The relation between deep structure and surface structure is clearly presented in the above chart where deep structure focuses on the innate language competence while the surface structure focuses on the concrete performance of language competence. At the same vein, the transformation between deep structure and surface structure is realized by rules including deletion, permutation, addition and embedment. In other words, the same deep structure can be presented by different surface structures, which makes it possible for us to analyze the novel style based on syntactic level.

Therefore, starting from the surface structure of sentences, we could analyze how the deep structures were transformed into surface structures, hence, the style of language forms.

2. The Relations between TG Grammar and Novel Style

The above introductions have enabled us to have a general understanding about the main contents and thoughts of TG grammar which includes transformational grammar and generative grammar.

Furthermore, generative grammar mainly focuses on the language competence, subconscious language knowledge existing in our own mind while transformational grammar focuses on the use of rules and the differences between deep structure and surface structure generated by it. As a result, we could analyze the relation between TG grammar and novel style from the following aspects: language competence and transformational rules.

2.1 The Relation between Language Competence and Novel Style

Human language is a highly complicated system. We could find the universal principles behind the syntactic structures and language in use by studying human language. These principles are the results of genetic inheritance and the products of human intelligence (Chomsky, 2002). At the same time, we could know more about the nature of human cognition, its origin and structure, and even the nature of human by studying language competence. As Chomsky thought that every language has a set of internalized grammar, those who have mastered grammar can easily distinguish grammatical sentences from ungrammatical ones, acceptable sentences from unacceptable ones by “intuition” (Hayes, 1968; Fowler, 1997). The examples given in *Syntactic Structure* by Chomsky can make it clear:

- a. Colorless green ideas sleep furiously.
- b. Furiously sleep ideas green colorless.

Evidently, for all of those who have mastered the English grammar, a is grammatical while b is ungrammatical. After a further analysis, we may find that a is unacceptable though grammatical in that native speakers do not utter such a meaningless sentence. Thus, grammatical sentence does not mean acceptable sentence.

Similarly, in traditional analysis of novel style, we also tend, to a large extent, to analyze the style by “intuition” and have different psychological responses when two sentences with different complexities appear, hence, different style. In other words, we have competence to judge style like language competence as well. The competence to judge style can be defined as stylistic competence, like language competence, is generative (Rosengren, 1972).

The above parts aim to clarify language competence is closely related with novel style because they are all based on psychology and start from “intuition”. The differences lie in that language competence could provide a more scientific and objective explanation for the analysis of novel style beyond the surface of “intuition”. Thereby, we argue that only by using grammatical rules based on psychology can we analyze throughly the novel style.

2.2 The Relation Between Transformational Rules And Novel Style

Although the relations between deep structure and surface structure can be various, they all are established on rules. The same deep structure could be presented by different surface structures and the differences between surface structures formed the differences of style which means that the choices among optional rules will generate different stylistic effects, hence unique style of a writer. Furthermore, Inger Rosengren claimed that “style as choice” means that writers’ preferences among the optional features (the passive instead of the active, conjoined instead of paratactic clauses, one word instead of another) constitutes his style (Rosengren, 1972). According to Ohman, “TG grammar is the theoretical foundation for a definition of style, and deep structure is the origin of meaning which is not affected by transformation. Moreover, style just means a method of writing and rules enable writers to convey the same meaning in different way. And different style is the result of different surface structures generated by the same deep structure.” (Ohman, 1964) Apparently, it is rules, significant to the analysis of style, that make it possible to analyze style within the framework of TG grammar. Here we use the following examples to state the rules like permutation, deletion, addition and embedment.

a. John opens the book.

The book is opened by the John. (permutation)

The book is opened. (deletion)

The girl opens the book and reads it. (addition)

b. embedment including the following three types:

The pretty girl is reading the book. (Adjective)

The girl, who is very pretty, is reading the book. (Relative clause)

After opening the book, the girl reads it. (Adverbial clause)

From these examples, we may conclude that transformation means the change of forms and style is presented by the surface structure. Deep structure always equals to an active declarative sentence (S = NP + VP), and choices among optional rules enable writers to create more flexibly. His preference for some certain rules is important for us to analyze novels. So we could compare core sentences with surface structure to analyze which rules are used in the novels, then the style of novel. In general, the more rules we used, the greater the difference between core sentences and surface structures, hence, the more complicated and obscurer the style is, or vice versa.

THE APPLICATION OF TG GRAMMAR IN NOVEL STYLE

To fill the gaps mentioned in the introduction, this part extracts two masterpiece of James in different period and one masterpiece of Mar Twain respectively to make a comparative analysis detailedly.

Henry James:

The shore of the lake presents an unbroken array of establishments of this order, of every category, from the “grand hotel” of the newest fashion, with a chalk-white front, a hundred balconies, and a dozen flags flying from its roof, to the little Swiss pension of an elder day, with its name inscribed in German-looking lettering upon a pink or yellow wall and an awkward summerhouse in the angle of the garden (James, 2002). (*Daisy Miller* by Henry James in 1878)

Extract The Core Sentences Based On TG Grammar:

- a. The shore of the lake presents an unbroken array of establishments of this order.
- b. The shore of the lake presents an unbroken array of establishments of every category.
- c. Establishments are from the “grand hotel” of the newest fashion to the little Swiss pension of an elderly day.
- d. The grand hotel is with a chalk-white front.
- e. The grand hotel is with a hundred balconies.
- f. The grand hotel is with a dozen flags from its roof.
- g. The little Swiss pension is with its name.
- h. Its name is inscribed in German-looking lettering upon a pink or yellow wall.
- i. The little Swiss pension is with an awkward summerhouse in the angle of the garden.

This is a liner sentence extended by core sentence c. Here we use the following table to analyze how deep structures are transformed into surface structure by rules.

Table 1 Rules and its use (Daisy Miller in 1978)

rules	process	times
deletion	b' c' f' g'	4
addition	a & b — a' c' & e — d' d' & f — e' g' & i — h'	4
permutation	null	0
embedment	a' & c — b' b' & d — c' e' & g — f' f' & h — g' Adj & Adv (unbroken, grand...)	16

2) Not yet so much as this morning has she felt herself sink into possession, gratefully glad that the warmth of Southern summer was still in the high florid rooms, palatial chambers where hard cool pavements took reflections in their lifelong polish, and where the sun on the stirred seawater, flickering up through open windows, played over the painted “subjects” in the splendid ceilings—medallions of purple and brown, of brave old melancholy color, medals as of old reddened gold, embossed and beribboned, all toned with time and all flourished and scalloped and gilded about, set in their great moulded and figured concavity (a nest of white cherubs, friendly creatures of the air) and appreciated by the aid of that second tier of smaller lights, straight openings to the front, which did everything, even with the Baedekers and photographs of Milly’s party dreadfully meeting the eye, to make of the place an apartment of state (James, 2003) . (*The Wings of Dove* by Henry James in 1902)

Again, Extract Core Sentences Based on TG grammar:

- a. She has not yet felt herself sink into so much possession as this morning.
 - b. She was gratefully glad.
 - c. The warmth of Southern summer was still in the high florid rooms, palatial rooms.
 - d. Hard cool pavements took reflections in their lifelong polish.
 - e. The sun on the stirred seawater played over the painted “subjects” in the splendid ceilings.
 - f. The sun flickered up through open windows.
 - g. Ceilings are medallions of purple and brown.
 - h. Ceilings are medallions of brave old melancholy color.
 - i. Ceilings are medals of old reddened gold, embossed and beribboned.
 - j. Ceilings were all toned with time.
 - k. Ceilings were all flourished, scalloped and glided about.
 - l. The sun set in their great moulded and figured concavity.
 - m. The aid of that second tier of smaller lights appreciated the sun.
 - n. Lights are straight openings to the front.
 - o. Smaller lights did everything to make of the place an apartment of state.
 - p. Baedekers and photographs of Milly’s party dreadfully met the eye.
- This is an embedding sentence extended by core sentences a.

Table 2 Rules and its use (*The Wings of Dove* in 1902)

rules	process	times
deletion	a' e' f' g' i' m' o'	7
addition Continued table	c' & e — d' f' & h — g' i' & k — j' j' & l — k' k' & m — l'	5
permutation	a l'	2
embedment	a & b — a' a' & c — b' b' & d — c' d' & f — e' e' & g — f' g' & i — h' h' & j — i' l' & n — m' m' & o — n' n' & p — o' Adj & Adv (gratefully, florid, palatial...)	28

Continue to analyze the novel of Mark Twain, the Bad little Boy, based on TG grammar:

3) He even gave the elephant in the menagerie a plug of tobacco, and the elephant didn't knock the top of his head off with his trunk. He browsed around the cupboard after essence of peppermint, and didn't make a mistake and drink aqua fortis. He stole his father's gun and went hunting on the Sabbath, and didn't shoot three or four of his fingers off. He struck his little sister on the temple with his fist when he was angry, and she didn't linger in pain through long summer days, and die with sweet words of forgiveness upon her lips (Twain, 2013). (*The story of bad little boy* in 1987)

Again, Extract the Core Sentences:

- a. He even gave the elephant in the menagerie a plug of tobacco.
- b. The elephant didn't knock the top of his head off with his trunk.
- c. He browsed around the cupboard after essence of peppermint.
- d. He didn't make a mistake.
- e. He didn't drink aqua fortis.
- f. He stole his father's gun.
- g. He went hunting on the Sabbath.
- h. He didn't shoot three or four of his fingers off.
- i. He struck his little sister on the temple with his fist sometimes.
- j. He was angry.
- k. She didn't linger in pain through long summer days.
- l. She die with sweet words of forgiveness upon her lips.

Table 3 Rules and its use (*The Bad Little Boy* in 1987)

rules	process	times
deletion	null	0
addition	a & b c & d & e f & g & h i & k & l	7
permutation	null	0
embedment	i & j Adj (little, sweet)	3

We May Draw The Following Conclusions Based On The Above Three Tables:

- 1) Cross-sectional comparison: The rules are used much more frequently by James than those by Mark Twain: 24 each sentence and 42 each sentence respectively in novels of James, and 10 each sentence in the novel of Mark Twain; James tends to use embedding transformation while Mark Twain prefers additive transformation.
- 2) Longitudinal comparison: The early masterpiece and later masterpiece of Henry James are all about scenery description, but we find that the former is a natural liner sentence, which is easy to understand for readers, while the later is a complicated self-embedding sentence, which is extremely difficult to understand. From the perspective of TG grammar, rules are used much more frequently in the later novel than those in the early novel, which makes a great contribution to the huge difference of style between early masterpieces and later masterpieces.

- 3) The more rules are used, the more complicated the style is, and embedding transformation is the best way to increase the complexity of sentence.

Based on TG grammar, traditional stylistics defines the style of Mark Twain as simple and plain since Mark Twain always prefers adding “ and ” to transform deep structures into surface structures, which are almost identical with deep structures. The style of masterpieces of James, especially later trilogy, however, are defined as complex and obscure. From the perspective of TG grammar, a large number of rules are used in his later trilogy to extend sentences when he transformed deep structures into surface structures in ways that create a circuitous and tortuous style.

CONCLUSION

As a highly precise grammatical model, TG grammar has the following benefits in the analysis of novel style. First, the differences between deep structure and surface structure make it possible for us to analyze the novel style; Second, writers’ preferences for different rules are conducive to figure out the reasons of their different style more intuitively by quantitative method. Third, diversity of rules can interpret the diversity of novel styles. Nevertheless, TG grammar still leaves much to be desired in the analysis of novel style. For instance, the premise of TG grammar is that only grammatical and acceptable sentences are available, but novelists may create some ungrammatical or unacceptable sentences for molding the image of characters in the actual writing process. Furthermore, this deviation is quite difficult to be explained by TG grammar.

In a word, for all the disadvantages, TG grammar is still irreplaceable in the analysis of novel style. Both systemic-functional grammar and TG grammar have its own limitations and advantages, so we should dialectically judge them. There is no denying that with the advances of modern linguistics, the analysis of novel style is progressing towards a more scientific, objective and systemic orientation.

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