



CONFERENCE ARTICLE

Structural And Functional Classification Of Syntactic Stylistic Devices: A Comparative Approach

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ABSTRACT

This article proposes a structural-functional framework for classifying syntactic stylistic devices and applies it comparatively to English and Russian. The structural dimension captures how a device reorganizes linear order, phrase integration, and clause combining; the functional dimension models discourse effects such as emphasis, coherence, perspectivization, and emotive coloring. The approach reconciles typological contrasts—English with its relatively fixed word order and prosodically salient phrasing, Russian with its flexible linearization and tolerance for detachment and parcellation—by treating devices as marked selections against language-specific neutral baselines. Using insights from functional stylistics, Prague School information structure, and rhetorical poetics, the paper demonstrates that formally similar devices may carry different functional loads across languages, and that functional equivalence in translation is often achieved via non-isomorphic structures. The results support a portable taxonomy useful for corpus annotation, comparative stylistics, and translator training.

KEYWORDS

Syntactic stylistics; classification; English; Russian; word order; detachment; parallelism; information structure; translation equivalence.

INTRODUCTION

Syntactic stylistic devices are conventionalized patterns of sentence organization that deviate from neutral syntax to produce aesthetic or pragmatic effects. Traditional typologies either enumerate figures by name or subsume them under broad rhetorical categories, which obscures how structure maps onto function across typologically different languages. English tends to restrict markedness to limited inversion, coordination patterns, and rhythmically motivated fronting; Russian allows greater latitude in constituent order and segment integration, which shifts the dividing line between grammatical routine and stylistic markedness. A unified account must therefore ground classification in structural operations detectable within each grammar and functional outcomes interpretable within discourse.

The study aims to articulate a two-axis classification of syntactic stylistic devices—structural and functional—and to test its comparative adequacy on English and Russian. Specifically, it seeks to show that structural operations cluster into cross-linguistically observable families and that their stylistic functions can be systematically predicted given language-specific neutral templates and genre constraints.

The analysis synthesizes classical Russian stylistics and Western stylistic linguistics with functional discourse theory. The structural axis is operationalized along three parameters: linearization relative to canonical order, integration relative to clause boundaries, and combination relative to coordination-subordination choices. The functional axis models four dominant outcomes: emphasis and focalization, coherence and rhythmization, perspectivization and stance, and emotive or evaluative intensification. Evidence comes from descriptions and examples reported in standard handbooks and comparative studies; where necessary, model sentences are constructed to

illustrate minimal contrasts. The procedure identifies each device by its primary structural operation, then assigns its typical functional profile, noting language-specific weightings due to typology and editorial convention.

On the structural axis, the first parameter—linearization—captures inversion, fronting, and chiasmus. In English, linear deviation is strongly marked because canonical SVO order encodes grammatical relations and information structure; fronted adverbials or complements therefore carry emphatic or thematic force and often signal elevated or rhetorical style. In Russian, flexible order permits movement of subjects, objects, and adverbials without ungrammaticality; linearization changes regularly encode topic-focus articulation and thus blur the boundary between neutral discourse management and stylistic figure. The framework accommodates this asymmetry by defining markedness relative to each language's neutral baseline, predicting that the same formal pattern will have heavier stylistic load in English than in Russian prose, while Russian poetry leverages linear freedom to align syntax with meter.

The second parameter—integration—concerns detachment, parenthesis, and parcellation. Russian exhibits robust detachment, whereby loosely integrated constituents are set off prosodically and orthographically to add evaluative nuance, afterthought, or focal highlighting. Parcellation distributes what could be a single syntactic whole across multiple sentences, creating staccato rhythm and heightened affect. English achieves similar functions through non-restrictive relatives, appositions, parenthetical dashes, and intonational phrasing, but tends toward tighter syntactic integration in formal registers. Within the proposed taxonomy, detachment and parcellation are classified as integration-reducing operations with recurrent functions of stance projection and tempo control; cross-

linguistic variation is handled by allowing more frequent and less marked deployment in Russian narrative styles.

The third parameter—combination—addresses coordination, asyndeton, polysyndeton, and complex subordination. English rhetoric often relies on parallel coordination reinforced by punctuation and stress patterns to produce clarity and rhythm, while polysyndeton appears as a marked device in persuasive or poetic discourse to suggest accumulation or urgency. Russian tolerates both asyndeton and polysyndeton more broadly, often coupling them with parallelism and repetition to intensify evaluation or accelerate narrative pace. In the functional mapping, combination choices primarily serve coherence and rhythmization, but they also interact with emphasis when parallel frames carry contrastive loads.

Plotted against the functional axis, the model shows that devices cluster into recurrent pairings: linearization shifts preferentially serve emphasis and focalization; integration loosening favors perspectivization and emotive coloring; combination patterns support coherence, rhythm, and argumentative organization. Because English encodes prominence heavily through prosody and fixed order, its stylistic repertoire concentrates on rhythmic packaging and controlled fronting, whereas Russian distributes stylistic meaning across flexible order and optional integration. The model predicts genre-sensitive profiles: English journalistic prose privileges parallel coordination and anaphora for rhetorical clarity; Russian literary prose features detachment and parcellation to externalize narrator stance; both languages exploit chiasmus and repetition in speeches, though Russian may do so with greater tolerance for syntactic looseness.

A key implication emerges for translation. Formal imitation across languages rarely preserves functional equivalence when devices sit at different points on the markedness scale. Russian detachment may be best rendered in English by parenthetical clauses, non-restrictive relatives, or carefully placed intonational breaks rather than by literal parcellation, which can feel fragmented in English expository style. Conversely, English anaphoric parallelism can be recast in Russian with augmented repetition and freer order to maintain emphasis. The proposed classification, by divorcing function from any single form, offers a principled basis for such substitutions.

Finally, the framework lends itself to corpus annotation. Devices can be tagged by structural operation and functional label, enabling quantitative comparisons across genres and epochs. Such annotation would detect, for instance, diachronic reductions of polysyndeton in news prose or increases in parcellation in digital narratives, and would allow controlled cross-language studies that factor in neutral baselines rather than raw frequencies alone.

A structural-functional classification yields a portable tool for comparative syntactic stylistics. By anchoring devices in three structural operations—linearization, integration, combination—and four core functional outcomes, the model captures how English and Russian deploy different formal means to achieve comparable stylistic ends. It explains why inversion bears stronger stylistic load in English than in Russian, why detachment and parcellation flourish in Russian narrative discourse, and how coordination-based parallelism organizes argument in both languages. For translators, the framework legitimizes functional substitution over formal mimicry; for corpus work and pedagogy, it provides stable tags and learning targets aligned with discourse effects. Future research should operationalize the taxonomy in parallel corpora, validate functional labels through reader studies, and examine how digital media reshape the balance between integration and rhythm in contemporary styles.

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