15   Stylistic profiling

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15.1   Background

Fruitful analytic concepts have unpredictable futures. This paper
reports on the possibilities and problems encountered in extending
one such concept from its original domain, clinical linguistics, into
an area of inquiry for which it was never intended, stylistics.

The early 1970s saw the development at Reading University of an
approach to the study of language disability which came to be called
grammatical *profiling*. This was simply an extension of the everyday
use of the term. In the same way that one can identify people by
singling out their distinguishing features, and presenting them in a
coherent manner, so it was thought possible to identify the most
salient features of emerging grammatical structure in a language-
handicapped person, and to present these also in a systematic and
clinically illuminating way. The LARSP profile (Language Assess-
ment, Remediation and Screening Procedure; Crystal, Fletcher and
Garman 1976), as it eventually transpired, was a single A4 chart on
which were located four main kinds of information.

(1) Developmental information was given about the order of
emergence of grammatical structures, presented vertically as a series
of seven 'stages'.

(2) Structural information was given about the range of connectivity,
clause, phrase and word constructions thought to be relevant to
diagnosis as well as to the other clinical tasks of screening, assess-
ment and remediation; this was presented horizontally, using the
notational conventions and analytical approach – with slight modifi-
cations – of Quirk *et al.* (1972).

(3) Discourse information was given about the nature of the gram-
matical interaction between T (the teacher or therapist) and P (the

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patient or pupil), such as the types of response to a question stimulus; this was presented in a separate section towards the top of the chart.

(4) Various kinds of procedural and clerical information were given, relating to the patient and the sample, presented at the top and bottom of the chart.

The approach proved to be fruitful in that it was successfully applied to a wide range of patients in speech therapy clinics and in a variety of educational settings (e.g. language units, schools for the deaf), and was quickly extended to other domains of clinical linguistic inquiry. Profiles were devised for segmental phonology, prosody, grammatical semantics and lexical semantics (Crystal 1982). At the same time, other scholars were making use of the profile concept in independent ways, such as in phonology (e.g. Grunwell 1985) and pragmatics (e.g. Dewart and Summers 1988). It also continued to be widely used in the field of psychological and clinical testing, where an analogous concept has a long history as a way of presenting sets of test results. In the 1980s the term *profile* came to be encountered in a prodigious number of linguistic contexts, especially in foreign language teaching and the first language curriculum. For example, in the new approach to English studies advocated as part of the British National Curriculum (Department of Education and Science 1989), the three main areas of language teaching (speaking/listening, reading, writing) are dubbed *profile components*, and the concept of profile emerges as central to the whole teaching and assessment task.

Why do linguistic profiles help? They are, firstly, conveniences: their design enables the user to bring together into a single place a great deal of relevant data which would otherwise be fragmented on cards, notes or the like. Secondly, the data are organized in such a way that significant patterns emerge quickly. Thirdly, when information from a sample is plotted on a profile chart, it is immediately apparent (in terms of the categories represented on the chart) not only what *is* in the sample but also what is not – in clinical terms, often a more significant factor. Fourthly, the fact that an attempt has been made to choose and grade only the most important features makes the task of learning to use a profile relatively easy – some training schools, in fact, eventually used the procedure as a way of introducing students to English grammar.[1] And fifthly, profiles have a clear numerical dimension, which makes them good

sources of input to statistical or computational procedures. In a subject where numerical precision is rated highly, profiles have a natural place.

When a concept becomes so fruitful, it makes sense for any field which has not hitherto made use of it to probe its potential also. Stylistics is one such field. I have come across the term *profile* used in an ad hoc way from time to time in stylistic discussion, and the concept seems to inform, implicitly, a great deal of analysis; but I have not found its use as part of an explicit, principled approach to the study of style. Yet there is an immediate, intuitive plausibility about the idea of a 'stylistic profile', and the possibility of devising a single procedure for explicating the notion of stylistic identity ought to be explored.

But, it might be argued, is such an exploration necessary? If the primary focus of stylistics is linguistic distinctiveness, is not the whole subject, almost by definition, an exercise in profiling – whether it be the style of an individual or of a social group? To answer this objection, a distinction needs to be drawn between means and ends. It is indeed the case that the goal of stylistics is the explication of linguistic distinctiveness, but this leaves open the question of how this goal might be achieved. To arrive at statements of linguistic identity (profiles), a profiling procedure must be adopted, and it is this which has so far been lacking.

I should rephrase this: it is rather that we have too many procedures. Each stylistics article develops its own approach, which is often as idiosyncratic as the characteristics of the style it investigates. As a result, it proves extremely difficult to make comparisons between different analyses. Article A might provide a fascinating insight into the use of noun phrases in Dylan Thomas's poetry; Article B also provides a fascinating insight into the use of noun phrases in T. S. Eliot's poetry. It *ought* to be possible to carry out a comparative analysis – how similar, how different, are the two authors in this respect? But it has *never* been possible to do this. The only meaningful comparative studies I know are those where an individual scholar has set up a specific framework of comparison for a single study. Inter-study comparisons, even of studies by the same author, are conspicuous by their absence. Stylistics is a world of single-subject (author, variety) case studies, with as yet little progress made towards the goal of increasing the descriptive generality of the subject. There is no stylistic typology of authors, or of

varieties (though the use of multivariate analysis to provide a description of the variation between speech and writing is an extremely promising development – see, for example, Biber 1988, Biber and Finegan, this volume).

But again, it might be argued, is not your own stylistic work, notably Crystal and Davy (1969), such a typology? Not a bit. The aim of that work was to devise a single procedure which could be used for the investigation of all varieties. It took samples and identified the linguistic features of these samples, enabling us to develop our awareness of how a particular text 'worked'. But it was no typology. It was too selective (in terms of the varieties chosen) and too comprehensive (in terms of the linguistic features described) to be a typology. And even though a single linguistic procedure was used for all the varieties examined, the distance between the individual descriptive accounts and the demands of an illuminating typology remained very great. For example, there are chapters on journalese, legal language and religious language, and in each chapter information is given about the types of noun phrase and verb phrase which are used. But what if you were to ask such questions as: What are the differences in noun phrase use between legal and religious English? Are legal and religious English closer together, in terms of verb phrase complexity, than either of these to journalese? Or (to broaden the point), are the spoken varieties analysed in this book distinguishable from the written varieties in terms of noun or verb phrase complexity? Does variation in formality correlate at all with verb phrase type? Many such questions can be formulated, and none of them can be answered, using Crystal and Davy (1969) as it stands.

There is a second kind of limitation in this work. Very few judgements are in fact made about the relative significance of the linguistic features described. For instance, of all the features that one might identify as 'belonging' to a particular variety, which are the most important? Which have the greatest variety identifying capability? Native speakers can and do make judgements of this kind, such as rating -*eth* verb endings as a major characteristic of religious English. Crystal and Davy (1969) made few such judgements, and those they did make were ad hoc and impressionistic. These matters need to be made more precise, and the judgements extended to incorporate a comparative dimension. In the legal English samples, for example, it is pointed out that the style is

graphologically distinctive (e.g. the reduced use of punctuation), has a distinctive use of noun phrase cross-reference instead of pronouns (e.g. repeating *the Life insured* instead of using *he* or *she* for second mention), and has distinctive legal vocabulary (e.g. *hereinbefore, whereof*). But no attempt is made to evaluate these features. Looking at legal English from the viewpoint of English *as a whole*, which of these features is more and which less distinctive? Is legal English unique in its avoidance of punctuation (thus giving this feature a high rating, in any typology)? How distinctive *is* legal vocabulary, in fact? Is it more distinctive than, say, the specialized vocabulary of religion or science? What does this question mean, anyway? How does one evaluate 'distinctiveness'? Is it an important goal of stylistic inquiry?

I do not know the answer to any of these questions except the last, where my response is an emphatic 'yes'. A major aim of any theory of style *must* be to explicate the notion of distinctiveness – and not only within a single language, but across languages. Is legal French more or less distinctive than legal English? Does it make use of the same devices and principles? Several illuminating studies in comparative stylistics have shown the kind of personal insight which can be obtained (notably Ullman 1964). Can we move, from such foundations, towards a general stylistic theory? How can we begin to make really powerful comparative descriptions? This is where a profiling procedure may be of value – in bridging the gap between detailed description and typology. To see this, it is necessary to spell out the essential features of any such procedure and discuss how they would be adapted for stylistic inquiry.

15.2   Principles of profiling

Profiling procedures are in principle *comprehensive* – that is, on the chart (or other display, such as a spreadsheet) there needs to be a place for *any* feature claimed to be stylistically significant in a given variety (i.e. in the first instance, in a sample of that variety).[2] This principle does not mean that all linguistic features need separate labelling. To require this would make any procedure too large to be assimilated by anyone/thing other than a computer, and to begin with one would like to be able to demonstrate intuitive immediacy. Rather, the principle means that there must be a place to assign any feature, even if this place is a catch-all category such as 'Other' or

'Miscellaneous'. (This was the procedure adopted in LARSP: about 120 grammatical features were 'named' and located on the chart, the remainder being assigned to the category of 'Other', at different stages of development.)

How does one decide, then, which features are to be given separate identity and which are not? There is obviously an important evaluative judgement being made here. It should be stressed that the question cannot be answered *a priori*. Rather, one uses a mixture of criteria to develop a working model of a profile, and then refines this model as a result of its systematic use. Let us look at how the decision was made for LARSP. We used three criteria. A feature was named separately if: (1) we knew from our clinical experience that it was likely to be an important diagnostic or assessment feature; (2) it was frequently used as a remedial target in the teaching situation; and (3) it was cited as an important developmental feature in the literature on child language (here, grammar) acquisition. On this basis, for example, PrN (= Preposition + Noun, as in *on house, in there*) was given a separate label; it is widely encountered in the abnormal language of language-delayed children, aphasic adults and others; simple prepositional phrases are a widely accepted teaching goal (as evidenced by many teaching packs); and PrN is given separate listing in several studies of emerging syntax as an important developmental step.

It was not possible to be sure that we had identified the right features, in all cases. Child language studies have not been carried out on all structures, and there is sometimes disagreement about the developmental significance of a structure. Also, our clinical experience was inevitably limited and there were several instances where we were unsure just how important a particular feature was. Only by making decisions (hypotheses, really), compiling a profile chart and trying it out on a wide range of patients was it possible to see whether our first judgements had been correct. The *second* edition of any profile chart is, in a sense, the interesting one. In the event, when it came to the second edition of LARSP (1981) we in fact found only a few cases where our initial published judgement had been wrong.[3] An example was AdjAdjN (i.e. a sequence of two adjectives, as in *big red car*). We originally felt that this construction was likely to be an important clinical problem; but it turned out not to be so. Hence in the second edition, this feature lost its named status on the chart and became part of the anonymous 'Other'.

This is the paradox of profiling: one needs to devise a profiling procedure in order to discover whether a profiling procedure is possible. Profiling procedures grow as they are used. They thrive on experience and application.

It is also essential, in any procedure, to impose some order on the many descriptive features considered to be potentially significant: the features need to be *graded*. In the clinical field, this order usually comes from a developmental paradigm. On the grammatical chart the features are organized in terms of their order of emergence in speech, as observed in normal child development. Alternative ordering principles could have been tried – such as grouping features in terms of their memory load, perceptual ease or psycholinguistic complexity – but these alternatives could not provide as precise and discriminating an approach as that derived from child language acquisition research. Even so, because some periods of child grammar have received very little study (notably, from age 4½), the profile classification in places (e.g. Stage VII on the chart) lacks detail. In segmental phonology the ordering principle used was essentially the standard classification of vowels and consonants as developed by the IPA (in terms of place and manner of articulation, voicing, etc.). We felt it premature, given the limited research in phonology acquisition and the demonstration there that individual differences loom large, to impose a developmental ordering on the data.[4]

Other kinds of information and principles of organization can be incorporated into the design of a profile chart. For example, it seemed important to recognize a sociolinguistic principle in the clinical profiles; because language disability is essentially an interactive phenomenon – a disorder does not manifest itself unless T attempts to communicate with P – it is desirable to include information about the properties of T's language (both stimulus and reaction) into any analysis. This kind of information, of course, would not be immediately relevant to a stylistics profile (unless one wished to capture the interaction between author and reader in some way).

15.3   Towards a stylistic profile?

What problems arise when we try to extend this clinical experience into the field of stylistics? Is a stylistics profile possible?

An immediate problem is the increased number of variables likely

to be relevant to stylistic analysis. This point was early encountered even in the clinical context; when normal children or adults were profiled, to provide a normative perspective, the totals under the different descriptive headings became very large, and in particular the totals under the various 'Other' headings inflated dramatically. No clear grammatical profile of an author would emerge if we were to use LARSP, for example, precisely because many of the named structures on that chart, being 'core' structures, are those likely to be least illuminating stylistically, and many of the stylistically relevant structures would remain indistinguishable, grouped under 'Other'. Obviously, careful consideration needs to be given to the selection of headings, and to the cut-off point between named headings and 'Other'.

What grading principle might be implemented? How might we rank features which an analyst would claim to be stylistically distinctive? Three evaluative criteria come to mind. First, we can rate the feature for its frequency of occurrence in the variety (or sample). To begin with, impressionistic judgements would suffice, but these could be replaced by precise statistics in due course. Having experimented with various types of frequency information, I would propose six stylistically significant categories, three referring to 'positive' features and three to 'negative' ones:
- the feature is used *only* in variety X
- the feature is used with *very high* frequency in variety X, compared with other varieties
- the feature is used with *above average* frequency in variety X, compared with other varieties
- the feature is used with *below average* frequency in variety X, compared with other varieties
- the feature is used with *very low* frequency in variety X, compared with other varieties
- the feature is *never* used in variety X

Secondly, we need to rate the feature for its overall distinctiveness, in its own right, regardless of frequency. Some distinctive features of a variety are used only once in a text but are criterial (a good example is the headline in a newspaper article). Here, too, a positive and a negative classification can be made:
- the feature is *very* distinctive
- the feature has *some* distinctiveness
- the absence of the feature has *some* distinctiveness

- the absence of the feature is *very* distinctive

Thirdly, we need to rate the feature in terms of the level of precision with which it can be defined and identified. Some features are highly determinate (e.g. 'use of post-modifying noun phrase'), others are less determinate (e.g. 'complex noun phrase') and some are extremely vague (e.g. 'long clauses'). At least these three levels of precision need to be recognized in grading the discriminating power of putative stylistic features.

Table 15.1 summarizes these feature-grading possibilities, assigning numerical values to each decision: the higher the value, the greater the stylistic distinctiveness of the feature. In this way, a score of 7 represents a maximal level of distinctiveness. Anything below 4 would hardly seem to be a serious contender for stylistic status. The interesting discriminations will be between 4 and 7. Any stylistic profile would need to be able to handle features rated 7, in the first instance, and it may be that these would be enough to capture the identity of the variety. If not, we would proceed to those rated 6, and so on. In this way, some degree of control might be exercised on the potentially vast numbers of features which manifest themselves in any sample.

Table 15.1 Evaluative criteria and arbitrary values for calculating the stylistic distinctiveness of a variety or sample

Frequency of occurrence					
	Feature present		Feature absent		
Only	Very frequent	Above average	Below average	Very low	Never used
3	2	1	1	2	3
Overall distinctiveness					
	Feature present		Feature absent		
High	Medium	Unclear	Medium	High	
2	1	0	1	2	
Precision					
Very precise	Some indefiniteness	Vague			
2	1	0			

Where do the lists of features come from? As with the clinical domain, they derive from a mixture of published descriptions and relevant analytical experience. There has to be an inductive approach in which previous stylistic descriptions are trawled for data, and the

profile is based on the features considered to be relevant in those descriptions. For the present chapter, I shall illustrate the next step from the data provided by Crystal and Davy (1969).

Immediately, two broad approaches to stylistic profile construction suggest themselves, corresponding to the widely recognized distinction between language *structure* and language *use*. In the former approach, the main dimensions of the profile correspond to the structural 'levels' of the linguistic model used, namely phonetics, phonology, graphetics, graphology, grammar and semantics. Within each of these levels, formal features would be classified and their stylistic role interpreted in relation to the functional categories recognized in the 'use' component of the theory (e.g. formal, occupational, regional). In the latter approach, the profile's main dimensions correspond to these functional categories, and the structural features are classified with reference to each category. In the

Table 15.2 Structural stylistic profile chart: schematic

Variety:	Sample:
Phonetics	*Phonology*
Graphetics	*Graphology*
Grammar Sentence connectivity Sentence structure Clause structure Nominal group Verbal group	
Semantics	
General	*Problems*

Table 15.3 Stylistic features in a sample of legal writing (after Crystal and Davy 1969): evaluation

	F	D	P	Total
Graphetics				
Unbroken format, 197–8	3	2	2	7
Gothic type, 198	2	2	2	6
Graphology				
Words in capitals, 199–200	1	2	2	5
Initial capitals, 199–200	1	1	2	4
Little punctuation, 200–1	3	2	2	7

(Table 15.3 continued)

	F	D	P	Total
Grammar				
Sentence connectivity				
Very long sentences, 201	3	2	1	6
No sentence linkage, 201–2	2	2	2	6
Sentence structure				
Only complete major type, 203	3	1	2	6
Mainly statements, 203	2	1	·2	5
Adverbial clauses (especially conditional/concessive), 203	2	1	2	5
Sentence-initial clauses, 204	2	2	2	6
Clause structure				
Long clauses, 204	2	2	0	4
Adverbials, 204	2	1	2	5
Adverbial place varied, 204	2	2	2	6
Unusual adverbial place, 204	1	2	2	5
Adverb + participle, 204	2	2	2	6
Adverbs coordinated, 204	2	2	2	6
Frequent coordination, 204–5	2	2	2	6
Nominal group structure				
Complex NPs, 205	2	2	1	5
Complex postmodification, 205	2	2	2	6
Non-finite clauses in NP, 205	1	1	2	4
Unusual place for postmodification, 205–6	1	2	2	5
Limited premodification, 206	2	1	1	4
Determiner present, 206	2	0	2	4
such as determiner, 206	1	2	2	5
said as premodifier, 206	1	2	2	5
Mainly abstract nouns, 206	2	1	2	5
Verbal group structure				
Few types of verbal group, 205	2	2	1	5
Non-finite groups, 206	2	1	2	5
Modal + *be*, 206–7	2	1	2	5
Separation of aux + verb, 207	1	2	1	4
Semantics				
Lexical repetition, 201–2	2	2	2	6
Few lexical verbs, 207	2	2	0	4
Wide range of vocabulary, 207	1	1	0	2
Archaisms, 207	2	2	2	6
witnesseth formula, 207	2	2	2	6
Adverb + preposition words (*hereon*, etc.), 207–8	2	2	2	6
Formal vocabulary, 208	2	1	1	4
Synonym coordination, 208	2	2	2	6
Original French words, 208–9	2	2	2	6
Other French vocabulary, 209	1	1	1	3
Latinate vocabulary, 209	2	2	1	5
Original Latin words, 209	2	2	2	6
Technical vocabulary, 209	2	2	2	6
Terms of art, 210–11	2	2	2	6

Key: F = frequency; D = distinctiveness; P = precision

Table 15.4 Stylistic features in a sample of newspaper writing (after Crystal and Davy 1969): evaluation

	F	D	P	Total
Graphetics				
Range of type sizes, 174	2	2	2	6
Headline type, 178	3	2	2	7
Short paragraphs, 178	3	2	0	5
Subheadings, 178	2	2	2	6
Large initial letter, 178	2	2	2	6
Graphology				
Comma omission, 178	1	1	1	3
Inverted commas, 179	2	1	2	5
Dashes, 179–80	2	1	2	5
Phonology				
Alliteration, 180	1	2	1	4
Grammar				
Sentence connectivity				
Short paragraphs, 180–1	3	2	1	6
Complex sentence position, 184	2	1	1	4
Strong sentence linkage, 184	2	2	2	6
Initial conjunctions, 184	2	2	2	6
Anaphora, 185	2	1	2	5
No antecedents, 185	2	2	2	6
Sentence structure				
Telegrammatic headline, 180	3	2	2	7
Restricted sentence types in headline, 180	2	1	1	4
Mainly statements, 181	2	1	2	5
Rhetorical questions, 181	2	1	2	5
Imperatives, 181	2	1	2	5
Minor sentences, 181	1	1	2	4
Clause structure				
Verb–subject order, 181	1	2	2	5
Adverbials frequent, 182	2	1	2	5
Initial adverbials, 183	2	2	1	5
Coordination rare, 183	2	1	2	5
Lists rare, 183	2	1	1	4
Subordination rare, 183	2	2	2	6
Parenthesis rare, 183	2	1	2	5
Nominal group structure				
Complex NPs, 186	2	1	0	3
Adjectives, 186	2	2	2	6
Adjective sequence, 186	1	2	2	5
Concrete nouns, 186–7	2	1	1	4

(Table 15.4 continued)

	F	D	P	Total
(Grammar continued)				
Premodifying genitive, 187	1	2	2	5
Whole titles, 187	1	2	2	5
Verbal group structure				
Mainly simple past tense, 187	2	1	2	5
Frequent modals, 187	2	1	2	5
Active voice, 187	2	1	2	5
Contracted forms, 187	1	2	2	5
Semantics				
Unusual word formation, 187	2	2	2	6
Simple vocabulary, 187	2	1	0	3
No technical vocabulary, 187	3	2	1	6
Emphatic vocabulary, 187	2	2	1	5
Informal vocabulary, 188	2	2	1	5
Jocular vocabulary, 188	2	2	2	6
Colloquial speech, 188	2	2	1	5
Word-play, 188	2	2	2	6

Key: F = frequency; D = distinctiveness; P = precision

structural approach we are asking such questions as 'What range of stylistic effects does formal structure X convey?' or 'In what range of stylistic contexts (varieties, authors) is formal structure X used?' In the use approach such questions include 'What are the formal ways of conveying stylistic effect X?' or 'What range of formal linguistic features characterize author or variety X?' Both approaches have their value, but in the present state of the art the former is altogether more promising. Theories of language use are more inchoate, less well defined and far less coherent in the classifications they generate than are theories of linguistic structure.[5] The primary organization of a structural stylistic profile is represented schematically in Table 15.2. No principle underlies the horizontal/vertical ordering, which is simply one of many possible layouts. Within each of these levels there is, in principle, a complete model of linguistic description, which for the present chapter is the one outlined in Crystal and Davy (1969: Ch. 2).

Tables 15.3 and 15.4 list the stylistic features identified in the chapters of Crystal and Davy on legal English (Table 15.3) and

newspaper English (Table 15.4). Only the features related to one of the newspaper samples (taken from the *Daily Express*) are considered in the tables. No attempt is made to explain the terminology or status of the features in these lists; for further information, reference must be made to the original book, using the page references given in the tables. Each feature is assigned a numerical value, using the evaluative criteria listed above. These are impressionistic values using the intuition of the author, but also taken into account are the relevant observations made in the book concerning the degree of importance of particular features. In any development of the approach, this stage would have to be investigated more objectively.

Of course, as soon as we commence an exercise of this kind, various problems arise. There is, to begin with, an element of redundancy between certain features, which ought to be eliminated – for example, if long sentences are identified in a text, there will inevitably be less sentence linkage. While this overlap might not be noticed in a discursive stylistic account, it cannot be hidden in a profile approach. There is also some terminological redundancy which could be eliminated – such as referring to abstract nouns in Table 15.3 and concrete nouns in Table 15.4. But generally this exercise is helpful in that it makes possible a point-for-point comparison which previously could not have been carried out using the discursive approach, and suggests further questions which might be asked of either variety. It also immediately highlights the distance we have to travel before we arrive at a stylistic model capable of making comprehensive descriptions. While most of the differences between Tables 15.3 and 15.4 are trivial (e.g. the absence of jocular vocabulary in the legal sample), some are intriguing and need to be followed up (e.g. are imperatives never used in legal writing?).

Assuming that there is at least some reliability in these numerical values, Table 15.5 summarizes the number of features at each value level for the two samples (it is purely a coincidence that a total of forty-five was found in each sample).

Several hypotheses can be generated from the data in this table (using N for newspaper style and L for legal style), such as:
– L uses more distinctive features than N – nearly half the features of L are rated 7 or 6, whereas only a third of N's are so rated;
– N is graphetically more distinctive than L, but less so graphologically;

Table 15.5 Rated stylistic features of legal and newspaper style: summary

	7	6	5	4–	Total
Legal style					
Phonetics					
Phonology					
Graphetics	1	1			2
Graphology	1		1	1	3
Grammar					
Sentence connectivity		2			2
Sentence structure		2	2		4
Clause structure		4	2	1	7
Nominal group structure		1	5	3	9
Verbal group structure			3	1	4
Semantics		9	1	4	14
Total	2	19	14	10	45
	7	6	5	4–	Total
Newspaper style					
Phonetics					
Phonology				1	1
Graphetics	1	3	1		5
Graphology			2	1	3
Grammar					
Sentence connectivity		4	1	1	6
Sentence structure	1		3	2	6
Clause structure		1	5	1	7
Nominal group structure		1	3	2	6
Verbal group structure			4		4
Semantics		4	3	1	7
Total	2	13	22	9	45

– L is semantically more distinctive than N;
– L's grammatical distinctiveness is primarily at the levels of nominal group and clause structure, while N's is at the levels of sentence structure and connectivity;
– neither style makes much use of verbal group features.

Several other comparative observations could be extracted from the tables, and these observations would become progressively more interesting as sample size and range of varieties increased. The application of a statistical analysis to developed tables of this kind would be particularly insightful.

At this point it would be possible to begin experimenting with various kinds of visual display, on which the main distinguishing features could be located. One such display is shown in Figure 15.1.
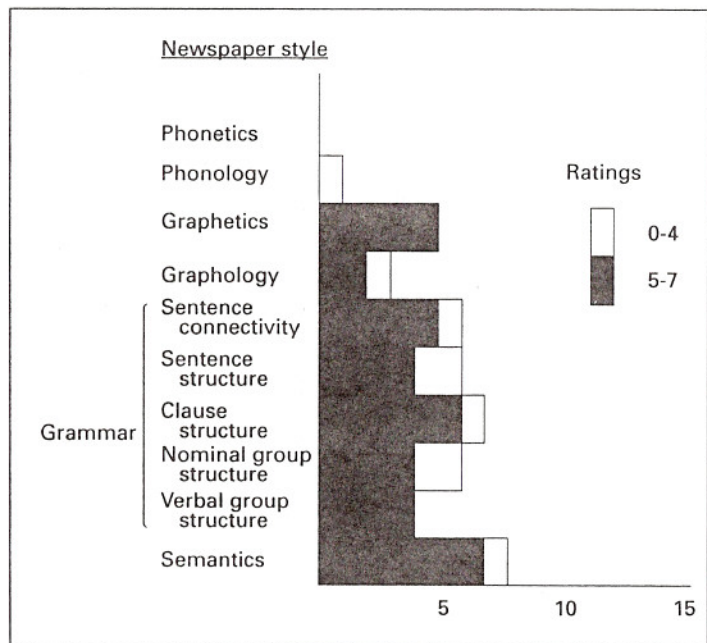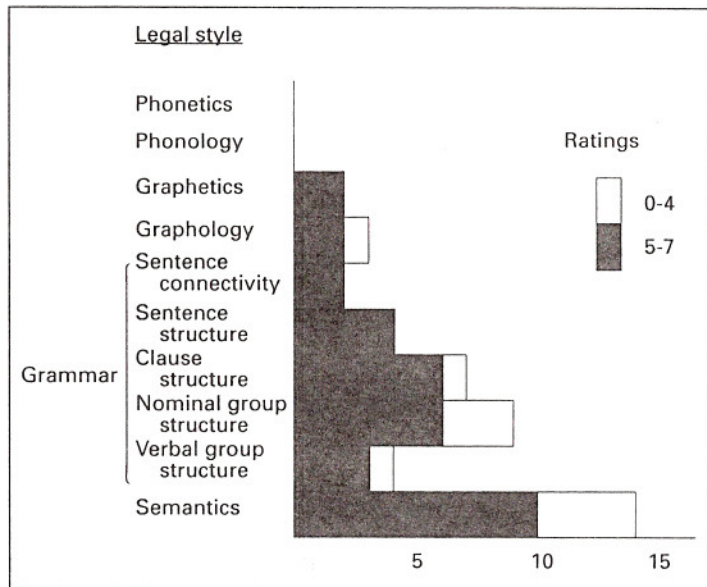
Figure 15.1 Histographic profile of stylistic features: legal and newspaper style

Even at this level of generality, it is possible to make out main areas of similarity and contrast between legal and newspaper style. An extension of this approach would be to take any one level and 'blow it up' so that the substructure of the level could be seen. Such *micro-profiles* could be at varying levels of detail. For example, for an area of grammar, successive statements might be made at the following levels:

Nominal group structure
1st order approximation: premodification – head – postmodification
Example of 2nd order approximation: *premodification structure* predeterminer – determiner – postdeterminer
Example of 3rd order approximation: *postdeterminer structure* ordinal – cardinal – adjective – etc.

In phonology, successive statements might be as follows:

Phonological structure
1st order approximation: segmental – non-segmental
Example of 2nd order approximation: *segmental structure* place – manner – voicing
Example of 3rd order approximation: *place of articulation* use of labials – fronting – etc.

In a full profile, various other kinds of information would have to be added (see Table 15.2). There is a need, as ever, for 'clerical' data, which would provide details of the sample (date, size, type, etc.) and the theoretical approaches used at the different descriptive levels. There would be a 'Problems' section, in which points of analytical difficulty would be listed. And there would be a 'General Observations' section, in which general statements could be made about the style of the sample as a whole. Examples here would include the conservatism and concern for precision found in legal language, and the focus on clarity, interest and compression of information found in newspaper language.

Will such approaches prove to be fruitful? Stylistic profiling is largely uncharted territory. Or, to steal a metaphor from an earlier exercise in profiling, it is a 'relatively uncultivated field' (Svartvik 1968). The present paper has done little more than find a tractor to help plough over some old ground. My feeling now is that it will be worth driving it around some other fields, to see what might grow.

Certainly, when Jan Svartvik was driving such a tractor a generation ago, the ground yielded a valuable crop in the form of the analysis of the Timothy Evans papers – now a classic study in forensic linguistics. That paper provided a fertile furrow for stylistic ploughmen to follow. My metaphor is almost dead from nervous exhaustion, but I none the less plant the present offering firmly in this furrow; and if it grows even half as well as its illustrious predecessor did, I shall be well satisfied.

Notes

[1] Not a path I would recommend. The LARSP chart is a distillation of a great deal of grammatical reasoning, much of which can come only from a proper course on English grammar. For example, the question of whether certain constructions should be analysed as SVOO or as SVOA would be debated in such a course. On LARSP, this distinction is arbitrarily made. An aware LARSP user would recognize this arbitrariness and make allowances for it. But this awareness could come only from a theoretically grounded course in English grammar.

[2] This is not the place to investigate the role of discovery procedures in arriving at stylistic judgements. There are important problems here also (cf. Crystal 1972). For the present, I assume that the selection of features to be represented in any typology can be justified, whether with reference to intuition, statistical survey or experimental procedure.

[3] I say 'published' because the LARSP chart had previously gone through many unpublished draft stages in the course of development, and been quite widely trialled. Doubtless this is what gave the published result its permanence.

[4] Not everyone agrees on this point. Grunwell (1985), for example, has a developmental phonology chart (keyed into the LARSP grammatical stages).

[5] For an amplification of this view, see Crystal (1985: Ch. 3).