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Original Citation

Bellard-Thomson, Carol (2009) Joining The Stylistics Discourse Community: an empirical study of student development in learning stylistic analysis. In: University of Huddersfield Research Festival, 23rd March - 2nd April 2009, University of Huddersfield. (Unpublished)

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Joining the Stylistics Discourse Community: an empirical study of student development in learning stylistic analysis

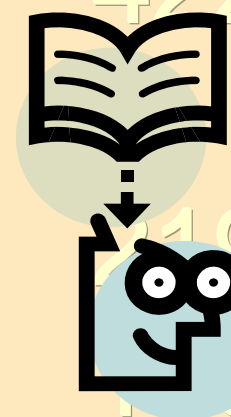
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The stylistics 'discourse community' is a group of academics and researchers who may be said to use a shared disciplinary register and a demonstrate a shared mindset which prioritises a rigorous and explicit analytical approach to language.

This PhD project seeks corpus-based empirical evidence of when and how learners begin to approximate the academic discursal techniques of professional practitioners of stylistics

Methodology

- Build a mini-corpus of learner discourse from undergraduate coursework assignments produced in stylistics modules during the 2008-9 academic year
- Build a mini-corpus of professional discourse from published stylistics analyses produced by professional practitioners
- Use Wmatrix2 to analyse and compare usage in the learner corpus with the practitioners' corpus
- Make a cross-comparison of both mini-corpora against the British National Corpus, to identify deviation from non-stylistics usage
- Extract statistically significant data to characterise learner and professional discourse
- Extrapolate results to inform pedagogical practice



What professional stylistics practitioners do

- Produce coherent interpretations from their first impressions of a text or extract
- Analyse the text in detail, selecting those aspects of theory that are likely to provide interesting linguistic information
- Relate their interpretations to the data provided by analysis
- Re-evaluate or refine their interpretations as necessary ('Literary Stylistics'), or suggest new theory based on their findings ('Linguistic Stylistics').

