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MEDIA STYLES**



Dobrivoje Stanojević and Lidija Mirkov. 2024. Media Styles. Belgrade: Mali Nemo, 313 pp.

The book “Media Styles”, from 2024, by professors of the Faculty of Political Sciences in Belgrade, Dr. Dobrivoje Stanojević and Dr. Lidija Mirkov, was published by Mali Nemo and presents a detailed overview of theoretical concepts and types of styles, including a practical analysis of styles that are present in the media. In this way, they point out the most common mistakes that journalists make, but also teach future journalists, educated by the authors of this book, that it is necessary to take care of the words and expressions they use, in order to build their own style. For this reason, this book may be considered a textbook necessary for all who want to work in journalism, regardless of whether they are studying journalism at the Faculty of Political Sciences. The book was reviewed by three professors – doyens of stylistic and rhetorical disciplines: Prof. Dr. Radomir Životić, Prof. Dr.

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** This book review was written within the research activities of the Institute for Political Studies, funded by the Ministry of Science, Technological Development, and Innovation of the Republic of Serbia.

Radomir Knežević, and Prof. Dr. Zoran Jevtović. The book itself contains seven chapters and is written on 313 pages. At the beginning of each chapter and subchapter, there is a suitable quote, introducing readers to what they may expect in the mentioned part of the book. Also, Prof. Dr. Dobrivoje Stanojević enriched the book with his short poem about the importance of using words correctly, which is located before the first chapter. Each theoretical point is accompanied by an appropriate example, whether it is the expression of journalists or their interlocutors, which creates a valuable treasure of examples, making learning and understanding the whole stylistic procedures of media expression easier.

In Chapter One, which consists of three subchapters, the authors present introductory remarks and give advice to journalists that they should not view the style as some “binding norms”, but rather to “think about the style they use”, striving to improve it. They explain that style is best shaped by reading and reflecting on what has been read, always respecting the style of others. Within this part, they conclude that “having a style, most often means having a clear view of the world” (Stanojević and Mirkov 2024, 13).

Chapter Two is titled “Stylistics”. The authors theoretically present the development of stylistics, explaining that there are two periods in its development: the period of traditional and the period of modern stylistics. They remind us that, although stylistics is a relatively new scientific field, its roots date back to Ancient Greece, primarily to Aristotle. At the same time, in this chapter, the authors also point out the development of stylistics in Serbia. Stanojević and Mirkov explain that the concepts of stylistics are: style, stylema (stylistic marker), and expressive and stylistic means. They also recognize other theoretical concepts of stylistics, so that they connect the subject of stylistics with the methods used for its research, with tasks that are in its focus, as well as with the norms of the literary language (grammatical, phonetic, morphological, lexical, syntactic, orthographic, orthoepic, and stylistic, together with the standards that language has). Furthermore, this chapter presents the basic branches of stylistics, the relationship of stylistics with other sciences, recalling the founders of modern stylistics, emphasizing the role of Pierre Giraud, who offered the first definition of stylistics, as well as Jules Marouzeau, who has expanded stylistics to “phonetic,

morphological, semantic, and syntactic linguistic means” (Stanojević and Mirkov 2024, 61). Within this chapter, Stanojević and Mirkov also pay attention to the types of styles, because “the typology of styles is considered one of the most important tasks of stylistics” (Stanojević and Mirkov 2024, 62). They point out that almost every style has its own substyles; for example, the literary style has its own substyles such as literary-artistic, biblical, or lyrical. The authors also distinguish the following styles: journalistic, scientific, administrative, and conversational. Separate subchapters discuss phono-stylemas and morpho-stylemas. In the section dedicated to phono-stylemas, Stanojević and Mirkov explain how the words are formed, but they also talk about “the most common phono-stylema in literature” (Stanojević and Mirkov 2024, 91) – the onomatopoeia. Additionally, they suggest that phono-stylemas also include: alliteration and assonance, the use of the letter “F”, allonge, imitative harmony, consonance, homoeoarcton, anaclasia, polyptoton, rhyme, paranomasia, homeoteleuton, anagram, and antimetabole. On the other hand, they define morpho-stylemas as “forms of individual expressiveness of stylistic units in

morphostylistics” (Stanojević and Mirkov 2024, 99). Thus, morpho-stylemas include: diminutives, augmentatives, hypocoristics, and oronyms. A separate subchapter focuses on lexico-stylemas and clarity of style, and refers to the words of Schopenhauer, who said that “nothing is more difficult than expressing deep thoughts in a way that everyone can understand” (Stanojević and Mirkov 2024, 107). Therefore, Stanojević and Mirkov argue that clarity of style is influenced by provincialisms and regionalisms, dialectisms, archaisms, and foreign words. The eleventh subchapter discusses lexical innovations that mostly arise from neologisms, but also from blended words, jargon, and vulgarisms. Vulgarisms occupy the main position in this subchapter, where the authors point to the increasing use of profanities in media space, which came as a result of reality programs that have become an increasingly common media product. This chapter ends by addressing the topic of semantic stylema elements that represent the meaning of a word. The authors highlight the following as the most important words that affect the meaning: synonyms, homonyms, antonyms, banalities, and idioms (phraseological units).

Chapter Three discusses the properties of style. The first

subchapter explains what can affect the clarity of style. First of all, amphiboly is highlighted, which denotes ambiguity through the use of prepositions, adverbs, and/or pronouns, as well as commas, relative and long sentences, homonymy, grammatical order, and/or intentional amphibolicity. Another cause of ambiguity can be syntactic stylema elements, which include cumulation, asident, polysident, anaphora, and epiphora. The third subchapter presents conciseness as a characteristic of good style. Conciseness is negatively affected by: pleonasm, tautology, perisology, periphrase, laconicism, phrasing, empty rhetoric, words of consolation, euphemisms, clichés, and bureaucratic/administrative jargon. Stanojević and Mirkov believe that conciseness of style is achieved “by using shorter expressions and dependent clauses” (Stanojević and Mirkov 2024, 198). They also talk about how the use of stylistic figures can affect style in different ways. In the second part of this chapter, the authors show how the use of stylistic figures – such as comparison, hyperbole, personification, etc. – may have implications for style. They make a clear distinction between irony, sarcasm, cynicism, and presiflage,

which is important to emphasize because these expressions are often equated in everyday conversation. They define irony as “the emphasis of a non-literal meaning through the contrast of the stated and implied meaning, often the opposite of what is intended,” and they consider sarcasm to be “the pejorative use of irony in an extremely sharp, caustic, even malevolent and maliciously humorous manner” (Stanojević and Mirkov 2024, 206). On the other hand, they see cynicism as belittling and disqualifying a person, and persiflage as “mocking in an ironic and witty manner” (Stanojević and Mirkov 2024, 206). Another element that, in their opinion, affects style is the violence against the language, coming from speech and narrative of hate, but also from the excessive use of gender-sensitive language that leads to “clumsy and difficult-to-pronounce combinations” (Stanojević and Mirkov 2024, 238). A separate subchapter deals with the topic of the liveliness of style. They point out that the liveliness of style may be limited by the use of: the same sentence endings, excessive genitive, and excessive use of “THAT,”¹ accumulation of infinitives and verbal nouns, replacement of the active verbal

¹ Excessive repetition of the Serbian word “DA.”

adjective with a passive verbal adjective, accumulation of verbal nouns. Stanojević and Mirkov give recommendations for improving the liveliness of style by: 1) interchanging figures and actions, 2) interchanging sentence types and using dialogue, digressions and witts, and 3) contrasts and rhetorical questions. These tips introduce the observation of the final, fifth property of style – harmony.

Chapter Four refers to the style of written text, including specific advice given to future journalists: “The purpose of a journalistic text is not to convey a message, but to inform and motivate the reader to think” (Stanojević and Mirkov 2024, 264). The next chapter, the fifth, is dedicated to the topic of headlines and announcements as the most important elements in attracting the audience to a particular journalistic form. Therefore, the authors talk about the need for “bait” in these contents, which is achieved through the cunning of journalistic expression. In their opinion, the headline should be informative, but intriguing at the same time. They remind us that a correct title block should consist of a supertitle – that answers the question “what is the text about,” a title – that should answer the question “what,” and a subtitle – that explains how and

why something happened. They further specify that the length of a journalistic text is measured by “author’s sheets,” implying a length of between 25 and 28 lines of text for each. The continuation of this chapter presents a stylistic analysis of headlines from daily newspapers in Serbia. In Chapter Six, entitled “Style in All Directions,” Stanojević and Mirkov outline 133 tips for journalists and those who intend to work within that profession. The most common mistakes that journalists should avoid are explained in the final chapter, Seven, “The Most Common Mistakes Journalists Make – How to Avoid Misusing a Dictionary.” That is why, at the end of this chapter and the book itself, there is a “dictionary of words and expressions (phrases)” that journalists should avoid.

Based on everything that Stanojević and Mirkov have covered in the book “Media Styles,” it can be considered one of the most significant publications when it comes to media research and journalism theory in the past few years. The achievements of this book have also been recognized at the regional level, given that it was shortlisted for the Dialogos Premium, which is awarded in Montenegro for the best book in the field of media theory and culture published in one of the languages

of the former Yugoslavia. Although the authors refer to the quote by François René de Chateaubriand that “style, and there are thousands of them, cannot be learned, it is a gift from heaven, it’s a talent,” the key takeaway of this work is that through education and other forms of self-improvement, an individual can build a harmonic personal style, and that for a complete stylistic authenticity is necessary to have a gift that will be carefully nurtured. The work before us provides a clear map to that hidden treasure within each of us.

REFERENCES

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* This manuscript was submitted on January 12, 2026, and accepted by the Editorial Board for publishing on April 1, 2026.