

Fadl, S. (1998). *Stylistics: Its Principles and Procedures*. Cairo: Dar al-Shuruq.

Rania Abdelhamid Mohamed Aly ZIDAN^a

Article Information

Article Types: Book Review

Received: 02.03.2026

Accepted: 12.04.2026

Published: 30.07.2026

Citation

Zidan, R. A. M. A. (2026). Fadl, S. (1998). *Stylistics: Its Principles and Procedures*. Cairo: Dar al-Shuruq. *IUA Journal of Theology*, 2, 61-65.

Ethical Statement: Ethical principles were followed during the preparation of this study.

Review: Double-blind.

Plagiarism: Yes.

Conflicts of Interest: The author has no conflict of interest to declare.

Grant Support: The author acknowledge that they received no external funding to support this research.

License: CC BY-NC 4.0

Abstract

Selah Fadl's *Stylistics: Its Principles and Procedures* (*'Ilm al-Uslub: Mabadi'uhu wa Ijra'atuhu*) is a foundational Arabic reference that presents a scientific methodology for analyzing literary texts by harmonizing modern linguistics with traditional Arabic rhetoric (*Balagha*). The book comprises three main sections. The first explores the early 20th-century historical development of stylistics, examining the French School's focus on the emotional value of everyday language, German Idealism's view of language as individual creativity tied to the national spirit, and the Spanish Critical Movement's synthesis of literary criticism and linguistics. The second section establishes the theoretical framework, offering multi-dimensional definitions of "style." It highlights how stylistics borrows analytical tools from linguistics while distinguishing itself from traditional prescriptive rhetoric by remaining entirely descriptive and interpretive. The final section focuses on practical applications, particularly the theory of "Deviation and Structural Contrast," analyzing how diverging from standard linguistic norms creates an artistic impact on the reader. While Fadl advocates for objective, statistical analyses that transcend personal taste, he acknowledges intuition as the crucial starting point of this process. The work concludes by defining stylistics as the "new rhetoric" bridging language and literature.

Keywords: Selah Fadl, Stylistics, Rhetoric, Literary Criticism.

^a Lecturer, KTO Karatay University, Konya/Türkiye. **ORCID:** <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3181-3333> **e-mail:** zidanrania430@gmail.com

1. Introduction

Dr. Salah Fadl's book, *Stylistics: Its Principles and Procedures* (*ʿIlm al-Uslub: Mabadi'uhu wa Ijra'atuhu*), published by Dar al-Shuruk in 1998 (1419 AH), is a major milestone in the contemporary Arabic critical and linguistic library. The book emerged within a serious Arabic scholarly movement that sought to keep pace with modern critical methodologies -specifically Stylistics-, which originated in the early twentieth century and developed significantly within Western academic circles.

The fundamental challenge that faced, and continues to face, the Arab researcher lies in how to assimilate these emerging methodologies and adapt them to the unique nature of the Arabic language and its rich rhetorical and critical heritage, avoiding both blind imitation and passive transmission.

In this book, Dr. Salah Fadl seeks to establish a solid ground for stylistics in terms of its theoretical principles and practical procedures, drawing upon a vision that seamlessly bridges authenticity (*Asalah*) with modernity (*Mu'asarah*). Rather than merely surveying various Western stylistic trends and schools, he constantly explores how these sciences can enrich our linguistic and literary studies. At the same time, he invokes the latent value embedded in the classical Arabic rhetorical and critical heritage, which he views as a treasure trove that needs to be re-examined and deployed within a modern scientific framework. In this sense, the book can be considered an indigenizing and applied project aimed at bridging the gap between traditional Arabic language sciences and modern Western critical approaches.

The book is structured into four main sections, shifting systematically from historical contextualization to theoretical framing, and finally to levels of analysis and empirical procedures.

2. Structural Analysis of the Book

Section I: Genesis and Historical Background

The author opens his book with a precise historical review of the genesis of stylistics, linking it to the evolution of linguistic thought in the nineteenth century, which was dominated by positivism. He explains how historical linguistics, with its rigid focus on material facts and phonetics, left no room for the individual and psychological phenomenon of "style." He then addresses the two major movements that paved the way for the emergence of stylistics:

- **German Idealism (led by Vossler and Spitzer):** Which viewed language as an individual, creative act and linked it to the human spirit (*Geist*).

- **The Swiss-French School (led by De Saussure and Bally):** Which emphasized the social and functional dimensions of language, distinguishing between *Langue* (the system) and *Parole* (the individual execution).

Fadl dedicates independent chapters to the French School (represented by Charles Bally, the founder of the *stylistics of expression*), German Idealism, and the critical trend among Italian and Spanish scholars (such as Amado Alonso and Dámaso Alonso), who merged literary criticism with linguistic analysis. This taxonomy provides the reader with a comprehensive roadmap of stylistic trends.

Section II: Theoretical Framework

Moving from historical exposition to theoretical analysis, the book addresses the concept of “style” itself—an inherently problematic entry point. Dr. Fadl brilliantly reviews various definitions of style, tracing its etymological roots in Arabic and Latin, passing through Buffon’s famous aphorism, “*Style is the man himself*,” up to modern conceptualizations.

He concludes that style is neither a mere “ornament” added to thought nor a direct reflection of personality; rather, it is a conscious “choice” made from among the latent possibilities of the linguistic system, and a “deviation” from a normative rule (whether a grammatical norm or a general stylistic standard). Furthermore, he distinguishes between three primary orientations:

1. **Style as an Affective Phenomenon:** Focused on the reader/receiver.
2. **Style as an Expressive Phenomenon:** Focused on the author/creator.
3. **Style as an Aesthetic Phenomenon:** Embedded inherently within the text itself.

This systematic classification is essential for any researcher wishing to stand on solid ground before commencing textual analysis.

Section III: Relationship with Allied Sciences

Within the second section, the author also discusses the dialectical relationship of stylistics with two closely related disciplines:

- **Linguistics:** He illustrates how stylistics draws upon linguistics to analyze phonological, morphological, syntactic, and semantic levels.
- **Rhetoric:** He clarifies the fundamental differences between the traditional, normative (*prescriptive*) view of rhetoric—which aims at persuasion and ornamentation—and the *descriptive*, interpretive view of stylistics, which aims to understand the expressive power of language.

Section IV: Levels of Research and Practical Procedures

This is the most functional and applied part of the book. Dr. Fadl outlines the goals of stylistic research, stressing the necessity of moving away from subjective, impressionistic appreciation toward an organized, scientific methodology, while preserving the role of “intuition” as an indispensable starting point.

He then dedicates a detailed chapter to the concepts of “deviation” (*Al-Inziyah*) and “structural contrast” (*Al-Tadadd al-Binyawi*) as the two essential keys to understanding stylistics. He explains that style manifests only when a text deviates from the expected normative level (whether that norm is the language system, public usage, or the established style of the text itself). He outlines various types of deviations (phonological, morphological, syntactic, semantic, structural, and paradigmatic) and explains how these deviations generate the “contrasts” that capture the reader’s attention.

The book concludes by showcasing models of empirical procedures, indicating the viability of utilizing statistical and functional approaches in stylistic analysis, while simultaneously warning against treating statistics as an end in itself.

3. Key Intellectual and Methodological Merits

- **Comprehensiveness and Rigor:** The book masterfully combines accurate historiography, deep theoretical analysis, and conscious applied insights. The author transitions smoothly between different schools and movements, giving each its due weight in explanation and critique, making the work an indispensable introductory encyclopedia of stylistics for the Arab researcher.
- **Balancing Heritage and Modernity:** Dr. Fadl constantly invokes the classical Arabic critical and rhetorical heritage as a necessary backdrop, striving to find its place within modern stylistic discourse. His vision of the relationship between stylistics and Arabic rhetoric is not one of exclusion or cancellation, but rather one of “transcendence and integration.” He does not call for discarding our heritage, but rather for re-reading, organizing, and deepening it in light of modern methodologies, while recognizing the historical gap between classical sciences and contemporary humanities.
- **Clarity of Presentation:** Despite the complexity of the scientific material and certain intricate concepts (particularly those related to the German school, such as “internal form,” “intuition,” and “the spirit of the language”), the author’s style is characterized by lucidity. He avoids drowning the reader in Western terminology without translation or explanation, making a concerted effort to indigenize these concepts for the Arabic reader.

- **Reflecting the Dialectical Nature of Stylistics:** The book mirrors the historical hesitation of the stylistic method itself: Is it a branch of linguistics or a method of literary criticism? Dr. Fadl recognizes and presents this dilemma; while the early sections (focusing on Bally and Saussure) lean closer to linguistics, the final sections veer closer to literary criticism, capturing the true hybrid nature of stylistics.

Conclusion

In conclusion, *Stylistics: Its Principles and Procedures* by Dr. Salah Fadl stands out as one of the most profound Arabic volumes tackling this modern science. Rather than a text to be merely read, it represents an integrated “scholarly project” that merits deep study and contemplation. Its crowning achievement is laying down the proper theoretical foundations from which Arab scholars can safely launch their own stylistic investigations into literary and sacred texts.

References

Fadl, S. (1998). *‘Ilm al-Uslub: Mabadi’uhu wa Ijra’atuhu (Stylistics: Its Principles and Procedures)*. Cairo: Dar al-Shuruq.