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Лексические стилистические приемы

Учебно-методическое пособие

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Учебно-методическое пособие содержит теоретические сведения об основных лексических стилистических приемах, вопросы по каждому разделу, а также практические задания для закрепления изученного материала.

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I. MEANING FROM A STYLISTIC POINT OF VIEW

Stylistics is a domain where meaning assumes paramount importance. This is so because the term “meaning” is applied not only to words, word-combinations, sentences, but also to the manner of expression into which the matter is cast.

The problem of meaning in general linguistics deals mainly with such aspects of the term as the interrelation between meaning and concept, meaning and sign, meaning and referent. Lexical meanings are closely related to concepts. In modern linguistics concept is treated as an abstract idea or a mental symbol typically associated with a corresponding representation in a language or symbology. The most essential feature of a word is that it expresses the concept of a thing, process, phenomenon, naming (denoting) them. Concept is a logical category, its linguistic counterpart is meaning. Concept is characterized by a number of properties, meaning takes one of these properties and makes it represent the concept as a whole. One and the same concept can be represented in a number of linguistic manifestations (meanings) but, although it may sound paradoxal, each manifestation causes a slight (and sometimes considerable) modification of the concept, in other words discloses latent or unknown properties of the concept.

Lexical meaning should be discriminated from grammatical meaning. Lexical meaning refers the mind to some concrete concept, phenomenon, or thing of objective reality. Grammatical meaning refers our mind to relations between words or some forms of words or constructions bearing upon their structural functions in the language-as-a-system. There are no words that are deprived of grammatical meaning as all words have their place in the system and their functional properties.

The meaning of a word is liable to historical changes, which are responsible for the formation of an expanded semantic structure of a word. However, the general tendency is to regard meaning as something stable at a given period of time. Otherwise, no dictionary would be able to cope with the problem of defining the meaning of words. Moreover, no communication would be possible.

In stylistics it is important to discriminate shades of meaning, to atomise the meaning, the components of which are called *semes*, i.e. the smallest parts of which meaning of a word consists.

The ability of a word to be polysemantic, i.e. comprise several lexical meanings, becomes a crucial issue for stylistic studies. It must be clearly understood that the multitude of meanings that a word may have is not limited by dictionaries where this multitude has already been recognized and fixed. A stylistic approach to the issue takes into consideration the fact that every word leaves the door open for new shades of meaning and even for independent meanings.

Professor I.R. Galperin distinguishes 3 types of lexical meaning, which are called logical, emotive and nominal respectively.

Logical meaning is the precise naming of a feature of the idea, phenomenon or object. This meaning is also synonymously called referential or direct meaning. Referential meanings are liable to change, as a result the referential meaning of one word may denote different concepts. Therefore it is necessary to distinguish between primary and secondary referential, or logical, meaning. All the meanings (primary and secondary) fixed by authoritative English and American dictionaries comprise the semantic structure of the word. The meanings that are to be found in speech or writing and which are accidental are contextual meanings and should not be regarded as components of the semantic structure of the word. A dictionary meaning is materialized in the context; a contextual meaning is born in the context.

Emotive meaning also materializes a concept in the word, but unlike logical meaning, emotive meaning has reference not directly to things and phenomena of objective reality, but to the feelings and emotions of the speaker towards these things or to his emotions as such. Therefore the emotive meaning bears reference to things, phenomena or ideas through a kind of evaluation of them. Some scholars (Stephen Ullmann among them) believe that only the context can inject emotive meaning into words. Professor Galperin, however, claims that this statement contradicts the facts, as in the vocabulary of almost any European language there are words which are bearers of emotive meaning (interjections, oaths or swear words, exclamatory

words, intensifying adjectives). The emotive meaning of some of these classes of words is so strong that it suppresses the logical meaning. Thus Professor Galperin thinks that emotive meaning is inherent in a definite group of words.

The 3rd component – nominal meaning – is present only in words which, while expressing concepts, indicate a particular object out of a class. These words are classified in grammar as proper nouns. To distinguish nominal meaning from logical meaning the former is designated by a capital letter.

Another view on the semantic structure of a word is presented by Professor T.A. Znamenskaya. She speaks of the denotative (denotational) and connotative (connotational) constituents of lexical meaning. Denotative meaning is linked to the logical and nominative meanings. Connotative meaning is only connected with extralinguistic circumstances such as the situation of communication and the participants of communication. A word is always characterized by its denotative meaning but not necessarily by connotation. Professor Znamenskaya distinguishes 4 components of connotative meaning: emotive, evaluative, expressive and stylistic. The 4 components may be all present at once, or in different combinations or they may not be found in the word at all.

Emotive connotations express various feelings and emotions. It should be noted that the notions “feelings” and “emotions” are not synonymous. Emotions like *joy*, *disappointment*, *pleasure*, *anger*, *worry*, *surprise* are more short-lived. Feelings imply a more stable state, or attitude, such as *love*, *hatred*, *respect*, *pride*, *dignity*, *etc.* The emotive component of meaning may be occasional or usual (i.e. inherent or adherent). It is important to distinguish words with emotive connotations from words describing or naming emotions and feelings like *anger* or *fear*, because the latter are a special vocabulary subgroup whose denotative meanings are emotions. They do not connote the speaker’s state of mind or his emotional attitude to the subject of speech.

The evaluative component charges the word with negative, positive, ironic or other types of connotation conveying the speaker’s attitude in relation to the object of speech. Very often this component is

a part of the denotative meaning, which comes to the fore in a specific context.

Expressive connotation either increases or decreases the expressiveness of the message. Many scholars hold that emotive and expressive components cannot be distinguished but Professor I.V. Arnold maintains that emotive connotation always entails expressiveness but not vice versa.

Finally there is stylistic connotation. A word possesses stylistic connotation if it belongs to a certain functional style or a specific layer of vocabulary (such as archaisms, barbarisms, slang, jargon, etc.). Stylistic connotation is usually immediately recognizable. With respect to the functional styles, vocabulary can be subdivided into bookish (literary) which is typical of formal styles, and colloquial vocabulary, which is typical of the lower style (colloquial). In addition there is always present in the language a stylistically neutral vocabulary, which can be used in all kinds of style.

This detailed and systematic description of a connotative meaning of a word is suggested by the Leningrad school in the works of Prof. I. V. Arnold, Prof. Z. Y. Turaeva, and others.

However, not all scholars share this point of view. For instance, Professor Yu.M. Skrebnev maintains that connotations only show to what part of the national language a word belongs – one of the sublanguages (functional styles) or the neutral bulk. He only speaks about the stylistic component of the connotational meaning.

Assignments for Self-Control

1. What is meaning?
 2. What is the interrelation between meaning and concept?
 3. Is meaning stable at a given period of time?
 4. What components of a word's meaning are called "semes"?
- What is polysemy?
5. What is lexical meaning?
 6. What is grammatical meaning? Are there words that are deprived of grammatical meaning?
 7. What is contextual meaning?
 8. What types of lexical meaning does Prof. Galperin distinguish?

9. What is logical meaning? Why is it important to differentiate between primary and secondary logical meanings?
10. What is emotive meaning?
11. What is nominal meaning?
12. What types of lexical meaning does Prof. Znamenskaya distinguish?
13. What is denotative meaning?
14. What is connotative meaning?
15. What components of connotative meaning are distinguished by the Leningrad linguistic school?
16. What do emotive connotations express? What is the difference between feelings and emotions?
17. What are evaluative connotations?
18. What do expressive connotations imply?
19. What are stylistic connotations?
20. What 3 layers of vocabulary are distinguished for stylistic purposes?

Exercises

1. Can you distinguish neutral, formal and informal among the following groups of words:

- 1) Currency – money – dough
- 2) To talk – to converse – to chat
- 3) To chow down – to eat – to dine
- 4) To start – to commence – to kick off
- 5) Insane – nuts – mentally ill
- 6) Spouse – hubby – husband
- 7) To leave – to withdraw – to shoot off
- 8) Geezer – senior citizen – old man
- 9) Veracious – open – sincere
- 10) Mushy – emotional – sentimental

2. To what stratum of vocabulary do the words in bold type in the following sentences belong stylistically?

- 1) The little boy, too, we observed, had a famous appetite, and consumed **schinken**, and **braten**, and **kartoffeln**, and cranberry pie with a gallantry that did honour to his nation. (W.M. Thackeray)

2) Some say, **thy** fault is youth, some wantonness;
Some say, **thy** grace is youth and gentle sport;
Both grace and faults are loved of more and less:

Thou makest faults graces that to **thee** resorts

(W. Shakespeare, Sonnet 96)

3) “Let me say in the beginning that even if I wanted to avoid Texas I could not, for I am **wived** in Texas, and **mother-in-lawed**, and **uncled**, and **aunted**, and **cousined** within an inch of my life.”
(J. Steinbeck)

4) “When the old boy **popped off** he left Philbrick everything, except a few books to Gracie” (E. Waugh)

5) **Whilome** (at some past time) in **Albion’s isle** (the oldest name of the island of Britain) there **dwelt** (lived) a youth,

Who ne (**not**) in virtue’s ways did take delight:

But spent his days in **riot** (wasteful living) most **uncouth**
(unusual, strange)

And **vex’d** (disturbed) with **mirth** (fun) the drowsy ear of Night

(G. Byron “Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage)

II. LEXICAL STYLISTIC DEVICES BASED ON THE INTERACTION OF DIFFERENT TYPES OF LEXICAL MEANING

Words in context may acquire additional lexical meanings not fixed in dictionaries. These contextual meanings may sometimes deviate from the dictionary meaning to such a degree that the new meaning even becomes the opposite of the primary meaning. What is known in linguistics as transferred meaning is practically the interrelation between two types of lexical meaning: dictionary and contextual. The contextual meaning will always depend on the dictionary (logical) meaning to a greater or lesser extent. When the deviation from the acknowledged meaning is carried to a degree that it causes an unexpected turn in the recognized logical meanings, we register a stylistic device.

The transferred meaning of a word may be fixed in dictionaries as a result of long and frequent use of the word other than in its primary meaning. In this case we register a derivative meaning of the word. When, however, two meanings of a word are perceived simultaneously, we are confronted with a stylistic device in which the two meanings interact.

1. Interaction of primary dictionary and contextually imposed meanings

The interaction between the primary dictionary meaning and the contextually imposed meaning may be maintained along the following three lines:

1. When the author identifies two objects, in which he subjectively sees a feature that may make the reader perceive these two objects as identical.

2. When the author finds it possible to substitute one object for another on the grounds that there is some kind of interrelation between the two corresponding objects.

3. When a certain quality or property of an object is used in an opposite or contradictory sense.

The stylistic device based on the principle of identification of two objects is a metaphor, the stylistic device based on the principle on the substitution of one object for another is metonymy and the stylistic device based on contrary concepts is irony. In other words, metaphor is based on the principle of affinity (likeness by nature), metonymy – on the principle of proximity (nearness in place, time, order, occurrence, relation) and irony – on the principle of contrast (opposition).

Metaphor

Metaphor – the application of a word or phrase to an object or concept it does not literally denote, in order to suggest comparison with another object or concept.

The term has been known from the times of ancient Greek and Roman rhetoric. A metaphor becomes a stylistic device when two different phenomena (things, events, ideas, actions) are simultaneously

brought to mind by the imposition of some properties of one object on the other which by nature is deprived of these qualities. One of the most commonly cited examples of a metaphor in English literature is the “All the world’s a stage” monologue from “As you like it”:

All the world’s a stage,
And all the men and women merely players;
They have their exits and their entrances (William Shakespeare
“As you like it”)

This quotation expresses a metaphor because the world is not literally a stage. By asserting that the world is a stage, Shakespeare uses points of comparison between the world and a stage to show the mechanics of the world and the behavior of the people within it.

But soft, what light through yonder window breaks?

It is the east, and Juliet is the sun! (William Shakespeare “Romeo & Juliet”)

The second example, taken from W. Shakespeare’s tragedy “Romeo and Juliet”, is also one of the most famous metaphors in English literature. Obviously, Juliet is not *literally* the sun, or Romeo would burn to death. The effect of using metaphor here is similar to the effect of simile, but stronger. Because Romeo doesn’t insert “comparing” words into his line, we get the sense that he is really stunned by Juliet’s beauty. She is, for him, just as radiant as the sun.

Metaphors, like all stylistic devices, can be classified according to their degree of unexpectedness. Thus metaphors which are absolutely unexpected, i.e. are quite unpredictable, are called genuine or authentic metaphors. The more unexpected, the less predictable is the ground for comparison the more expressive is the metaphor. Associations suggested by the genuine metaphor are varied, not limited to any definite number and stimulated by the individual experience or imagination.

Those metaphors which are commonly used in speech and therefore are sometimes even fixed in dictionaries as expressive means of language are trite metaphors. Genuine metaphors are regarded as belonging to language-in-action, i. e. speech metaphors; trite metaphors belong to the language-as-a-system, i.e. language proper,

and are usually fixed in dictionaries as units of the language. There is constant interaction between genuine and trite metaphors. Genuine metaphors, if they are good and can stand the test of time, may, through frequent repetition, become trite and consequently easily predictable. Trite metaphors, on the contrary, may regain their freshness.

Metaphors may be prolonged or sustained, i.e. the initial metaphor may be developed through a number of contributory images so that the whole of the utterance becomes one sustained metaphor.

The constant use of a metaphor gradually leads to the breaking up of the primary meaning. The metaphoric use of the word begins to affect the dictionary meaning, adding to it fresh connotations or shades of meaning. But this influence, however strong it may be, will never reach the degree where the dictionary meaning entirely disappears. If it did, we should have no stylistic device. It is a law of stylistics that in a stylistic device the stability of the dictionary meaning is always retained, no matter how great the influence of the contextual meaning may be.

The metaphor is often defined as a disguised (hidden) simile. Professor I.R. Galperin, however, doesn't agree with this definition as metaphor and simile belong to different groups of stylistic devices. The metaphor is based on the interplay of dictionary and contextual meanings, the simile is based on the interaction between 2 lexical meanings simultaneously materialized in the context.

Metonymy

Metonymy – transfer of name of one object onto another to which it is related or of which it is a part.

Metonymy, like metaphor, is based on a relation between the dictionary and contextual meanings, but this relation is of a different nature – it is based not on identification, but on some kind of association connecting the two concepts which these meanings represent.

Thus, the word 'crown' may stand for 'king' or 'queen' or 'glass' for 'the drink it contains', 'Homer' for 'Homer's poems'. These examples of metonymy are traditional, the new meaning has become so common that it is easily predictable and therefore does not bear any additional information. Here are some more widely used metonymical

meanings, some of which are already fixed in dictionaries: ‘the press’ – for ‘the personnel connected with a printing or publishing establishment’, or for ‘the newspaper and periodical literature which is printed by the printing press’, ‘the bench’ is used as a generic term for ‘magistrates and justices’, ‘a hand’ is used for a worker and ‘the cradle’ stands for infancy, earliest stages, place of origin.

Genuine metonymy reveals a quite unexpected substitution of one word for another or one concept for another, on the ground of some strong impression produced by a chance feature of the thing, for example:

“Then they came in. Two of them, a man with long fair moustaches and a silent dark man... Definitely, the moustache and I had nothing in common.” (Doris Lessing, “Retreat to Innocence”)

Again we have a feature of a man which catches the eye, in this case his facial appearance: the moustache stands for the man himself. The function of the metonymy here is to indicate that the speaker knows nothing of the man in question, moreover, there is a definite implication that this is the first time the speaker has seen him.

Among the most common types of relation which metonymy is based on we should name the following:

1. A concrete thing used instead of an abstract notion. In this case the thing becomes a symbol of the notion, as in

“The camp, the pulpit and the law
For rich men’s sons are free.” (Shelley)

Here concrete things are used in more abstract meanings: the camp stands for army service, the pulpit – for religion and the law – for justice.

2. The container instead of the thing contained: The hall applauded.

3. The relation of proximity, as in: “The round game table was boisterous and happy.” (Dickens)

4. The material instead of the thing made of it, as in: “The marble spoke.”

5. The instrument which the doer uses in performing the action instead of the action or the doer himself, as in:

“Well, Mr. Weller, says the gentleman, you’re a very good whip, and can do what you like with your horses, we know.” (Dickens)

“As the sword is the worst argument that can be used, so should it be the last.” (Byron)

The list is in no way complete. There are many other types of relations which may serve as a basis for metonymy.

Synecdoche is based on a specific type of metonymic relationship which may be considered as quantitative and shows the relations between the part and the whole. For example:

“She saw around her, clustered about the white tables, multitudes of violently red lips, powered cheeks, cold, hard eyes, self-possessed, arrogant faces, and insolent bosoms.” (A. Bennet)

Irony

Irony – a stylistic device in which the words express the meaning that is often the direct opposite of the intended meaning.

Irony (meaning ‘concealed mockery’ from Greek ‘eironeia’) is also based on the simultaneous realization of two logical meanings – dictionary and contextual, but the two meanings stand in opposition to each other. Here we observe the greatest semantic shift between the notion named and the notion meant. For example:

“It must be **delightful** to find oneself in a foreign country without a penny in one’s pocket.”

The italicized word acquires a meaning quite the opposite to its primary dictionary meaning, that is, ‘unpleasant’, ‘not delightful’. The word containing the irony is strongly marked by intonation – it has an emphatic stress.

No other device, where we can observe the interplay of the dictionary and contextual meanings, is so dependent on the context as is irony. That is why there are practically no cases of irony in language-as-a-system. The context is arranged so that the qualifying word in irony reverses the direction of the evaluation, and the word positively charged is understood as a negative qualification and (much-much rarer) vice versa.

Irony thus is a stylistic device in which the contextual evaluative meaning of a word is directly opposite to its dictionary meaning. So, like all other SDs irony does not exist outside the context, which varies

from the minimal – a word combination, as in J. Steinbeck's "She turned with the sweet smile of an alli-gator," – to the context of a whole book, as in Ch. Dickens, where one of the remarks of Mr. Micawber, known for his complex, highly bookish and elaborate style of speaking about the most trivial things, is introduced by the author's words "... Mr. Micawber said in his usual plain manner". In both examples the words "sweet" and "plain" reverse their positive meaning into the negative one due to the context, micro- in the first, macro- in the second case.

Irony must not be confused with humour, although they have very much in common. Humour always causes laughter. What is funny must come as a sudden clash of the positive and the negative. In this respect irony can be likened to humour. But the function of irony is not confined to producing a humorous effect. In a sentence like "How clever of you!" where, due to the intonation pattern, the word 'clever' conveys a sense opposite to its literal signification, the irony does not cause a ludicrous effect. It rather expresses a feeling of irritation, displeasure, pity or regret.

Another important observation must be borne in mind when analyzing the linguistic nature of irony. Irony is generally used to convey a negative meaning. Therefore only positive concepts may be used in their logical dictionary meanings. In the examples quoted above, irony is embodied in such words as 'delightful', 'clever', 'coherent', 'like'. The contextual meaning always conveys the negation of the positive concepts embodied in the dictionary meaning. It means that on the whole irony is used with the aim of critical evaluation and the general scheme is praise stands for blame and extremely rarely in the reverse order. However when it does happen the term in the latter case is astheism (deprecation meant as approval).

e.g. Clever bastard! Lucky devil!

In the stylistic device of irony it is usually possible to indicate the exact word whose contextual meaning diametrically opposes its dictionary meaning. This is why this type of irony is called verbal irony. There are very many cases, though, which we regard as irony, intuitively feeling the reversal of the evaluation, but unable to put our finger on the exact word in whose meaning we can trace the contradiction between

the said and the implied. The effect of irony in such cases is created by a number of statements, by the whole of the text. This type of irony is called sustained, and it is formed by the contradiction of the speaker's (writer's) considerations and the generally accepted moral and ethical codes. Many examples of sustained irony are supplied by D. Defoe, J. Swift, S. Lewis, K. Vonnegut, E. Waugh and others.

Prof. Y.M. Skrebnev distinguishes 2 kinds of ironic utterances:

1. Explicit ironical, which no one would take at their face value due to the situation, tune and structure.

A fine friend you are!

2. Implicit, when an ironic message is communicated against a wider context like in Oscar Wilde's tale "The Devoted Friend" where the real meaning of the title only becomes obvious after you read the story.

One of the powerful techniques of achieving ironic effect is the mixture of registers of speech (social styles appropriate for the occasion): high-flown style on socially low topics or vice versa.

Assignments for Self-Control

1. What is the difference between a contextual meaning and a transferred meaning?

2. What is the essential condition for a stylistic device?

3. What are the three forms of the interaction between the primary dictionary and contextually imposed meanings? What stylistic devices are based on these three types of interaction?

4. What is metaphor?

5. How can metaphors be classified according to the degree of unexpectedness?

6. What is a sustained metaphor?

7. Does the metaphoric use of the word affect its dictionary meaning? Can the dictionary meaning entirely disappear?

8. What is metonymy?

9. How can we differentiate between traditional and genuine metonymy?

10. What types of relation between the elements is metonymy based on?

11. What is synecdoche?
12. What is irony?
13. To what extent is irony dependent on the context?
14. How is irony different from humour?
15. How is the direction of the evaluation changed in irony?
16. What is verbal irony? What is sustained irony?
17. What two types of irony does Prof. Skrebnev distinguish?
18. How is irony connected with the special usage of registers of speech?

2. Interaction of Primary and Derivative Logical Meanings

As is known, the word is, of all language units, the most sensitive to change; its meaning gradually develops and as a result of this development new meanings appear alongside the primary one. Some meanings are characterized by their permanence, others, like nonce-words and contextual meanings, are generally ephemeral. Primary and the derivative meanings are characterized by their relative stability and therefore are fixed in dictionaries, thus constituting the semantic structure of the word.

The problem of polysemy is one of the vexed questions of lexicology. It is sometimes impossible to draw a line of demarcation between a derivative meaning of a polysemantic word and a homonym.

Polysemy is a category of lexicology and as such belongs to language-as-a-system. In actual everyday speech polysemy vanishes unless it is deliberately retained for certain stylistic purposes. A context that does not seek to produce any particular stylistic effect generally materializes but one definite meaning.

However, when a word begins to manifest an interplay between the primary and one of the derivative meanings we are again confronted with a stylistic device. Professor I.R. Galperin distinguishes 2 stylistic devices based on this type of interaction – they are zeugma and pun.

Zeugma

Zeugma is the use of a word in the same grammatical but different semantic relations to two adjacent words in the context, the semantic relations being, on the one hand, literal, and, on the other, transferred.

For example: “Dora, plunging at once into privileged intimacy and into the middle of the room”. (B. Shaw)

‘To plunge’ (into the middle of a room) materializes the meaning ‘to rush into’ or ‘enter impetuously’. Here it is used in its concrete, primary, literal meaning; in ‘to plunge into privileged intimacy’ the word ‘plunge’ is used in its derivative meaning.

This stylistic device is particularly favoured in English emotive prose and in poetry. The revival of the original meanings of words must be regarded as an essential quality of any work in the belles-lettres style. A good writer always keeps the chief meanings of words from fading away, provided the meanings are worth being kept fresh and vigorous.

Zeugma is a strong and effective device to maintain the purity of the primary meaning when the two meanings clash. By making the two meanings conspicuous in this particular way, each of them stands out clearly.

The structure of zeugma may present variations from the patterns given above. For example:

“...And May’s mother always stood on her gentility; and Dot’s mother never stood on anything but her active little feet” (Dickens)

In this complex sentence the word ‘stood’ is used twice. This structural variant of zeugma, though producing some slight difference in meaning, does not violate the principle of the stylistic device. It still makes the reader realize that the two meanings of the word ‘stand’ are simultaneously expressed, one primary and the other derivative.

When the number of homogeneous members, semantically disconnected, but attached to the same verb, increases, we deal with **semantically false chains**, which are thus a variation of zeugma. As a rule, it is the last member of the chain that falls out of the

thematic group, defeating our expectancy and producing humorous effect. The following case from St. Leacock may serve an example: "A Governess wanted. Must possess knowledge of Rumanian, Russian, Italian, Spanish, German, Music and Mining Engineering."

Pun

The pun is another stylistic device based on the interaction of two well-known meanings of a word or phrase. It is difficult to draw a hard and fast distinction between zeugma and the pun. The only reliable distinguishing feature is a structural one: zeugma is the realization of two meanings with the help of a verb which is made to refer to different subjects or objects (direct or indirect). The pun is more independent. There need not necessarily be a word in the sentence to which the pun-word refers.

This does not mean, however, that the pun is entirely free. Like any other stylistic device, it must depend on a context. Contextual conditions leading to the simultaneous realization of two meanings and to the formation of pun may vary.

It can be misinterpretation of one speaker's utterance by the other, which results in his remark dealing with a different meaning of the misinterpreted word or its homonym, as in the famous case from the *Pickwick Papers*. When the fat boy, Mr. Wardle's servant, emerged from the corridor, very pale, he was asked by his master: "Have you been seeing any spirits?" "Or taking any?" – added Bob Allen. The first "spirits" refers to supernatural forces, the second one – to strong drinks.

Punning may be the result of the speaker's intended violation of the listener's expectation, as in the jocular quotation from B. Evans: "There comes a period in every man's life, but she is just a semicolon in his." Here we expect the second half of the sentence to unfold the content, proceeding from "period" understood as "an interval of time", while the author has used the word in the meaning of "punctuation mark" which becomes clear from the "semicolon", following it.

But the context may be of a more expanded character, sometimes even as large as a whole work of emotive prose. Thus the title of one

of Oscar Wilde's plays, "The Importance of Being Earnest" has a pun in it, inasmuch as the name of the hero and the adjective meaning 'seriously-minded' are both present in our mind.

Here is another example of a pun where a larger context for its realization is used:

"Bow to the board," said Bumble. Oliver brushed away two or three tears that were lingering in his eyes; and seeing no board but the table, fortunately bowed to that'. (Dickens)

In fact, the humorous effect is caused by the interplay not of two meanings of one word, but of two words. 'Board' as a group of officials with functions of administration and management and 'board' as a piece of furniture (a table) have become two distinct words.

In various functional styles of language the capacity of a word to signify several meanings simultaneously manifests itself in different degrees. In scientific prose it almost equals zero. In poetic style this an essential property. To observe the fluctuations of meanings in the belles-lettres style is not only important for a better understanding of the purpose or intention of the writer, but also profitable to a linguistic scholar engaged in the study of semantic changes in words.

Assignments for Self-Control

1. What stylistic devices are based on the interaction of primary and derivative meanings?
2. Are primary and derivative meanings stable or changeable?
3. How can we draw a line between a polysemantic word and a homonym? Is it always possible?
4. Does polysemy as a category belong to language-as-a-system or language-in-action? Why?
5. What happens when polysemy is retained in speech?
6. What is zeugma?
7. What does zeugma help to preserve?
8. What variations may the structure of zeugma present?
9. What is pun? What is the difference between zeugma and pun?
10. What contextual conditions may lead to the formation of pun?
11. What variation of zeugma is called a semantically false chain?

3. Interaction of Logical and Emotive Meanings

The logical and the emotive are built into our minds and they are present there in different degrees when we think of various phenomena of objective reality. Different emotional elements may appear in the utterance depending on its character and pragmatic aspect. The emotional elements of the language have a tendency to wear out and are constantly replaced by new ones. Almost any word may acquire a greater or a lesser degree of emotiveness.

Oxymoron

Oxymoron is a combination of two words (mostly an adjective and a noun or an adverb with an adjective) in which the meanings of the two clash, being opposite in sense.

For example, in Shakespearian definitions of love, much quoted from his *Romeo and Juliet*, perfectly correct syntactically, attributive combinations present a strong semantic discrepancy between their members. Cf.: “O brawling love! O loving hate! O heavy lightness! Serious vanity! Feather of lead, bright smoke, cold fire, sick health!”

As is clearly seen from this string of oxymorons, each one of them is a combination of two semantically contradictory notions, that help to emphasize contradictory qualities as a dialectal unity simultaneously existing in the described phenomenon. As a rule, one of the two members of oxymoron illuminates the feature which is universally observed and acknowledged while the other one offers a purely subjective individual perception of the object. Thus in an oxymoron we also deal with the foregrounding of emotive meaning.

It should be borne in mind that the stylistic effect of oxymoron is lost if the primary meaning of the qualifying word changes or weakens. This is the case with what were once oxymoronic combinations, for example, ‘awfully nice’, ‘awfully glad’, ‘terribly sorry’ and the like, where the words awfully and terribly have lost their primary logical meaning and are now used with emotive meaning only, as intensifiers.

The most widely known structure of oxymoron is attributive, so it is easy to believe that the subjective part of the oxymoron is embodied in the attribute-epithet, especially because the latter also proceeds

from the foregrounding of the emotive meaning. For example, ‘sweet sorrow’, ‘nice rascal’, ‘a deafening silence’. It is in this structural model that the resistance of the two component parts to fusion into one unit manifests itself most strongly.

The second structural model is adverb + adjective. For example, ‘pleasantly ugly face’, ‘horribly beautiful’. In this structural model the change of meaning in the first element, the adverb, is more rapid, resistance to the unifying process not being so strong.

There are also other structural patterns, in which verbs are employed. Such verbal structures as “to shout mutely” (I. Shaw) or “to cry silently” (M. Wilson) seem to strengthen the idea, which leads to the conclusion that oxymoron is a specific type of epithet. But the peculiarity of an oxymoron lies in the fact that the speaker’s (writer’s) subjective view can be expressed through either of the members of the word combination. Originality and specificity of oxymoron becomes especially evident in non-attributive structures which also, not infrequently, are used to express semantic contradiction, as in “the street damaged by improvements” (O. Henry) or “silence was louder than thunder” (J. Updike).

Epithet

Epithet—an adjective or descriptive phrase used to characterize a person or object with the aim to give them subjective evaluation.

Epithet is probably as well known as metaphor, because it is widely mentioned by the critics, scholars, teachers, and students discussing a literary work. Epithet expresses a characteristic of an object, both existing and imaginary. According to Professor Galperin, it is based on the interplay of emotive and logical meaning.

However, not all attributes could be qualified as epithets. The epithet is markedly subjective and evaluative. The logical attribute is purely objective, non-evaluating. It is descriptive and indicates an inherent or prominent feature of the thing or phenomenon in question. For example, in ‘green meadows’, ‘white snow’, ‘round table’, ‘blue skies’, ‘pale complexion’, and the like, the adjectives are more logical attributes than epithets. They indicate those qualities of the objects which may be regarded as generally recognized.

But in ‘wild wind’, ‘loud ocean’, ‘remorseless dash of billows’, ‘formidable waves’, ‘heart-burning smile’, the adjectives do not point to inherent qualities of the objects described. They are subjectively evaluative.

In fact, it is sometimes difficult to draw a clear line of demarcation between epithet and logical attribute. In some passages the logical attribute becomes so strongly enveloped in the emotional aspect of the utterance that it begins to radiate emotiveness, though by nature it is logically descriptive. It is possible to say that in epithet the emotive meaning of the word is foregrounded to suppress the denotational meaning.

The structure and semantics of epithets are extremely variable which is explained by their long and wide use. Semantically there should be differentiated two main groups, the biggest of them being **affective** (or **emotive proper**). These epithets serve to convey the emotional evaluation of the object by the speaker. Most of the qualifying words found in the dictionary can be and are used as affective epithets (gorgeous, nasty, magnificent, atrocious).

The 2nd group – figurative or transferred epithets is formed of metaphors, metonymies and similies expressed by adjectives. Such epithets are based on similarity, proximity or comparison of 2 objects (the smiling sun, the frowning cloud, the sleepless pillow, a ghost-like face, a dreamlike experience).

In the overwhelming majority of examples epithet is expressed by adjectives or qualitative adverbs (his triumphant look, he looked triumphantly). Nouns come next. They are used either as exclamatory sentences or as postpositive attributes.

Structurally, epithets can be viewed from the angle of **a) composition** and **b) distribution**.

From the point of view of their **compositional structure** epithets may be divided into **simple**, **compound**, **phrase** and **sentence** epithets. Simple epithets are ordinary adjectives. Examples have been given above. V.A. Kuharenko calls such epithets **single** epithets.

Compound epithets are built like compound adjectives. Examples are: ‘heart-burning sigh’, ‘sylph-like figures’, ‘cloud-shapen giant’.

Epithets can be used in pairs. Pairs are represented by 2 epithets joined by a conjunction or asyndetically. For example: ‘wonderful and incomparable beauty’.

Chains (also called strings) of epithets present a group of homogeneous attributes varying in number from up to sometimes 20 and even more. E.g. ‘You’re a scolding, unjust, abusive, aggravating, bad old creature.’ From the last example it is evident that if a logical attribute (old) is included into the chain of epithets it begins to shine with their expressive light, i.e. the subjectivity of epithets irradiates onto the logical attribute and adapts it for expressive purposes, along with epithets proper.

Two-step epithets are so called because the process of qualifying seemingly passes two stages: the qualification of the object and the qualification of the qualification itself. For example: ‘an unnaturally mild day’, ‘a pompously majestic female’. As you can see from the examples, two-step epithets have a fixed structure of Adv + Adj model.

The tendency to cram into one language unit as much information as possible has led to new compositional models for epithets which are called **phrase epithets**. A phrase and even a whole sentence may become an epithet if the main formal requirement of the epithet is maintained, viz. its attributive use. But unlike simple and compound epithets, which may have pre- or post-position, phrase epithets are always placed before the nouns they refer to. Their originality proceeds from rare repetitions of the once coined phrase-epithet which, in its turn, is explained by the fact that into a phrase epithet is turned a semantically self-sufficient word combination or even a whole sentence, which loses some of its independence and self-sufficiency, becoming a member of another sentence, and strives to return to normality. The forcible manner of this syntactical transformation is the main obstacle for repeated use of such phrasally-structured epithets.

Here are some examples of phrase epithets:

‘It is this do-it-yourself, go-it-alone attitude’

‘There is a sort of ‘Oh-what-a-wicked-world-this-is-and-how-I-wish-I-could-do-something-to-make-it-better-and-nobler’ expression about Montmorency that has been known to bring the tears into the eyes of pious old ladies and gentlemen.’ (Jerome K. Jerome, “Three Men in a Boat”)

“Freddie was standing in front of the fireplace with a ‘well-that’s-the-story-what-are-we-going-to-do-about-it’ air that made him a focal point.” (Leslie Ford, “Siren in the Night”)

An interesting structural detail of phrase and sentence epithets is that they are generally followed by the words ‘expression’, ‘air’, ‘attitude’ and others which describe behaviour or facial expression. In other words, such epithets seem to transcribe into language symbols a communication usually conveyed by non-linguistic means.

Another structural feature of such phrase epithets is that after the nouns they refer to, there often comes a subordinate attributive clause beginning with ‘that’. This attributive clause, as it were, serves the purpose of decoding the effect of the communication. It must be noted that phrase epithets are always hyphenated, thus pointing to the temporary structure of the compound word.

These two structural features have predetermined the functioning of phrase epithets. Practically any phrase or sentence which deals with the psychological state of a person may serve as an epithet. The phrases and sentences transformed into epithets lose their independence and assume a new quality which is revealed both in the intonation pattern (that of an attribute) and graphically (by being hyphenated).

Another structural variety of the epithet is the one which we shall term **reversed**. The reversed epithet is composed of two nouns linked in an of-phrase. The subjective, evaluating, emotional element is embodied not in the noun attribute but in the noun structurally described, for example: “the shadow of a smile”; “a devil of a job” (Maugham); “...he smiled brightly, neatly, efficiently, a military abbreviation of a smile” (Graham Green); “A devil of a sea rolls in that bay” (Byron); “A little Flying Dutchman of a cab” (Galsworthy); “a dog of a fellow” (Dickens); “her brute of a brother” (Galsworthy); “...a long nightshirt of a mackintosh...” (Cronin)

They are based on the contradiction between the logical and the syntactical: logically defining becomes syntactically defined and vice versa. E.g. instead of ‘this devilish woman’, where ‘devilish’ is both logically and syntactically defining, and ‘woman’, also both logically and syntactically defined, W.Thackeray says ‘this devil of a woman’. Here ‘of a woman’ is syntactically an attribute, i.e.

the defining, and ‘devil’ – the defined, while the logical relations between the two remain the same.

All inverted epithets are easily transformed into epithets of a more habitual structure where there is no logico-syntactical contradiction. Cf. the giant of a man – a gigantic man, the prude of a woman – a prudish woman.

It will be observed that such epithets are metaphorical. The noun to be assessed is contained in the of-phrase and the noun it qualifies is a metaphor (shadow, devil). The grammatical aspect, viz. attributive relation between the members of the combination shows that the SD here is an epithet.

Language epithets as part of the emotional word-stock of the language have a tendency to become obsolescent. That is the fate of many emotional elements in the language. They gradually lose their emotive charge and are replaced by new ones which, in their turn, will be replaced by neologisms. Such was the fate of the language epithet good-natured. In the works of Henry Fielding this epithet appears very often, as, for example, ‘good-natured hole’, ‘good-natured side’. The words vast and vastly were also used as epithets in the works of men-of-letters of the 18th century, as in ‘vast rains’, ‘vastly amused’.

Assignments for Self-Control

1. What is oxymoron?
2. What are the structural patterns of oxymoron?
3. What interplay of meanings is the epithet based on?
4. What is the difference between the epithet and the logical attribute?
5. What happens to the emotive meaning of the word when it becomes an epithet?
6. What epithets are called language epithets? Give examples.
7. What semantic groups of epithets can be distinguished?
8. What is the most common way of expressing an epithet?
9. How may epithets be divided from the point of view of their structure?
10. What is a two-step epithet?

11. What is a phrase epithet? What nouns and clauses are phrase epithets usually followed by?

12. What is a reversed epithet? What contradiction is this type of epithet based on?

13. What is the difference between a reversed epithet and an ordinary of-phrase?

4. Interaction of logical and nominal meanings

Antonomasia

Antonomasia – the use of a proper name in a place of a common one or vice versa to emphasize some feature or quality.

We have already pointed out the peculiarities of nominal meaning. The interplay between the logical and nominal meanings of a word is called antonomasia. The two kinds of meanings must be realized in the word simultaneously.

Antonomasia may be likened to the epithet in essence if not in form. It categorizes the person and thus simultaneously indicates both the general and the particular.

In antonomasia the nominal meaning of a proper name is suppressed by its logical meaning or the logical meaning acquires the new nominal component. Logical meaning, as you know, serves to denote concepts and thus to classify individual objects into groups (classes). Nominal meaning has no classifying power for it applies to one single individual object with the aim not of classifying it as just another of a number of objects constituting a definite group, but, on the contrary, with the aim of singling it out of the group of similar objects, of individualizing one particular object. Indeed, the word “Mary” does not indicate whether the denoted object refers to the class of women, girls, boats, cats, etc., for it singles out without denotational classification. But in Th. Dreiser we read: “He took little satisfaction in telling each Mary, shortly after she arrived, something...” The attribute “each”, used with the name, turns it into a common noun denoting any woman. Here we deal with a case of antonomasia of the first type.

Another type of antonomasia we meet when a common noun serves as an individualizing name, as in D. Cusack: “There are three doctors in an illness like yours. I don’t mean only myself, my partner and the radiologist who does your X-rays, the three I’m referring to are Dr. Rest, Dr. Diet and Dr. Fresh Air.”

Still another type of antonomasia is presented by the so-called “speaking names” – names whose origin from common nouns is still clearly perceived. So, in such popular English surnames as Mr. Smith or Mr. Brown the etymology can be restored but no speaker of English today has it in his mind that the first one used to mean occupation and the second one – colour. While such names from Sheridan’s *School for Scandal* as Lady Teazle or Mr. Surface immediately raise associations with certain human qualities due to the denotational meaning of the words “to tease” and “surface”. The double role of the speaking names, both to name and to qualify, is sometimes preserved in translation.

Antonomasia is created mainly by nouns, more seldom by attributive combinations (as in “Dr. Fresh Air”) or phrases (as in “Mr. What’s-his name”). Common nouns used in the second type of antonomasia are in most cases abstract, though there are instances of concrete ones being used too.

Assignments for Self-Control

1. What is antonomasia?
2. Why is antonomasia likened to the epithet?
3. What types of meaning interact in this stylistic device?
4. Describe antonomasia of the first type.
5. Describe antonomasia of the second type.
6. What is the double role of speaking names?
7. What parts of speech are usually used to create antonomasia?

Exercise 1

Analyse the given cases of metaphor and metonymy. Pay attention to the semantics, originality, syntactic function and elaboration of the created image.

1. Or I guess the grass is itself a child, the produced babe of the vegetation. (W. Whitman)

2. Sometimes too hot the eye of heaven shines,
And often is his gold complexion dimm'd. (W. Shakespeare)

3. Through one of the broken panes I heard the rain impinge upon the earth, the fine incessant needles of water playing in the sodden beds. (J. Joyce)

4. Most of the dandelions had changed from suns to moons. (V. Nabokov)

5. My school-days! The silent gliding of my existence – the unseen, unfelt progress of my life – from childhood up to youth! Let me think, as I look back upon that flowing water, now a dry channel overgrown with leaves.... (Ch. Dickens)

6. Love is a universal migraine,
A bright stain on the vision
Blotting out reason. (R. Graves)

7. The women say that not one stranger told
A reason for his coming. The intrusion
Was not for devastation:

Peace is apparent still on hearth and field. (E. Jennings)

8. He will eat my bread and he will observe my religion. (W. Faulkner)

9 Blue suit grinned... but big nose in the grey suit still stared. (J. Priestley)

10. Marriage is long journey at close quarters. (I. Murdoch)

11. "What have you a been and given Pitt's wife?" said the individual in ribbons, when Pitt and Lady Jane had taken leave of the old gentleman... The rise and progress of those Ribbons had been marked with dismay by the country and family. The Ribbons opened an account at the Mudbury Branch Savings Bank; the Ribbons drove to church, monopolizing the pony-chaise, which was for the use of the servants at the Hall. (W.M. Thackeray)

12. The fireplace was choked with rubbish. (K. Mansfield)

Exercise 2

Analyse the given cases of lexical stylistic devices based on the interaction of different types of lexical meaning. What kind of interaction do we find in each case?

1. But young Walter Franklin was a modern agriculturalist. He had a telephone in his cow-house, and he could figure up exactly what effect next year's Canada wheat crop would have on potatoes planted in the dark of the moon. (O Henry)

2. The greatest treat an actor can have is to witness the pitiful performance with which all other actors desecrate the stage. (O Henry)

3. And then she pointed out to him clearly how it could be improved by introducing a messenger instead of a telephone call, and cutting the dialogue just before the climax while they were struggling for the pistol, and by completely changing the lines and business of Helen Grimes at the point where her jealousy overcomes her. (O Henry)

4. Indeed, so devoted was the rich Miller to little Hans, that he would never go by his garden without leaning over the wall and plucking a large nosegay, or a handful of sweet herbs, or filling his pockets with plums and cherries if it was the fruit season. (O. Wilde)

5. Biggs is our greengrocer, and his chief talent lies in securing the services of the most abandoned and unprincipled errand-boys that civilization has as yet produced. (J.K. Jerome)

6. Black hair, dark blue eyes, red lips, a slow sleepy smile, a fine tennis player, a perfect dancer, and with it all a mystery. (K. Mansfield)

7. Joe was to become capable very soon of turning out pictures that gentlemen with thin side-whiskers and thick pocket-books would sandbag one another in his studio for the privilege of buying. (O Henry)

8. His fees are high; his lessons are light – his high-lights have brought him renown. (O Henry)

9. But the best, in my opinion, was the home life in the little flat – the ardent, voluble chats after the day's study; the cosy dinners and fresh, light breakfasts; the interchange of ambitions and – overlook my artlessness – stuffed olives and cheese sandwiches at 11 p.m. (O Henry)

10. He halted in the district where by night are found the lightest streets, hearts, vows and librettos. (O Henry)

Exercise 3

Analyse the given examples of lexical stylistic devices based on the interaction of different types of lexical meaning. Pay attention to their semantics, structure and stylistic function.

1. Each is the other's bitter angel,
Yet for love they wrestle, heart to heart. (J. Kirkup)
2. Unfriendly friendly universe,
I pack your stars into my purse,
And bid you, bid you farewell. (E. Muir)
3. The wrinkled sea beneath him crawls... (A. Tennyson)
4. The lamps were still burning redly in the murky air and, across the river, the palace of the Four Courts stood out menacingly against the heavy sky. (J. Joyce)
5. It is that little serpent of a governess who rules him.
(W. Thackeray)
6. On the pleasant shore of the French Riviera, about halfway between Marseilles and the Italian border, stands a large, proud hotel. Deferential palms cool its flushed façade, and before it stretches a short dazzling beach. (F. Scott Fitzgerald)
7. The hotel and its bright tan prayer rug of a beach were one.
(F. Scott Fitzgerald)
8. As a one-book-a-year man Arnold Baffin, the prolific popular novelist, is never long out of the public eye. (I. Murdoch)
9. He would begin magnificently with a wild, full, come-to-the-battle sort of note that quite roused you. (J.K. Jerome)
10. Carefully over the high brass-bound step on to the rubber mat and then down such a terribly steep flight of stairs that grandma had to put both feet on each step, and Fenella clutched the clammy brass rail and forgot all about the swan-necked umbrella. (K. Mansfield)
11. Long pencil rays of sunlight shone through and the wavy shadow of a bush outside danced on the gold lines. (K. Mansfield)
12. Soapy walked eastwards through a street damaged by improvements. (O Henry)
13. For a few moments Tildy stood petrified. Then she was aware of Aileen shaking at her an arch forefinger, and saying: "Why, Til, you naughty girl! Ain't you getting to be awful, Miss Slyboots! First

thing I know you'll be stealing some of my fellows. I must keep an eye on you, my lady."

14. In November a cold, unseen stranger, whom the doctors called Pneumonia, stalked about the colony, touching one here and there with his icy finger. (O Henry)

15. Mr. Pneumonia was not what you would call a chivalric old gentleman. A mite of a little woman with blood thinned by Californian zephyrs was hardly fair game for the red-fisted, short-breathed old duffer. (O Henry)

16. Into this place Soapy took his accusive shoes and tell-tale trousers without challenge. (O Henry)

17. "That's what I get for marrying a brute of a man, a great, big, hulking physical specimen of a – " (F.S. Fitzgerald)

18. Evidently some wild wag of an oculist set them there to fatten his practice in the borough of Queens, and then sank down himself into eternal blindness, or forgot them and moved away. (F.S. Fitzgerald)

19. The interior was unprosperous and bare; the only car visible was the dust-covered wreck of a Ford which crouched in a dim corner. (F.S. Fitzgerald)

20. and since he's been home, they say he's a regular Don Giovanni..... (W. M. Thackeray)

21. He was only good enough to be a fairy prince; and oh, what magnanimity to stoop to such a humble Cinderella! (W.M. Thackeray)

22. It was I who laughed good-humouredly at the reeling old Silenus of a baronet...(W.M. Thackeray)

23. Such people there are living and flourishing in the world – Faithless, Hopeless, Charityless... (W.M. Thackeray)

24. Every married man is a Jekyll and Hyde, they've got to be. (I. Murdoch)

III. LEXICAL STYLISTIC DEVICES BASED ON THE INTENSIFICATION OF A CERTAIN FEATURE OF A THING OR PHENOMENON

In order to understand the linguistic nature of the stylistic devices of this group it is necessary to clear up some problems of *definition* as a philosophical category. Any definition can point out only one or two properties of a phenomenon. Therefore in building up a definition the definer tries to single out the most essential qualities of the object. However, no definition can comprise all the inner qualities of the object.

In this group of stylistic devices one of the qualities of the object in question is made to sound essential. The quality picked out may be seemingly unimportant, and it is frequently transitory, but for a special reason it is elevated to the greatest importance. This is an entirely different principle from that on which the previous group is based.

Simile

The intensification of a feature of the concept in question is realized in a device called **simile**.

Simile is a figure of speech in which two unlike things are explicitly compared by the use of *like, as, resemble, etc.*

Simile mustn't be confused with ordinary comparison. They represent two diverse processes. Comparison means weighing two objects belonging to one class of things with the purpose of establishing the degree of their sameness or difference. To use a simile is to characterize one object by bringing it into contact with another object belonging to an entirely different class of things. Comparison takes into consideration all the properties of the two objects, stressing the one that is compared. Simile excludes all the properties of the two objects except one which is made common to them. For example, "The boy seems to be as clever as his mother" is ordinary comparison. Boy and mother belong to the same class of objects—human beings—so this is not a simile but ordinary comparison.

But in the sentence: "Maidens, like moths, are ever caught by glare" (Byron), we have a simile. 'Maidens' and 'moths' belong to

heterogeneous classes of objects and Byron has found the concept moth to indicate one of the secondary features of the concept maiden, i.e. being easily lured. The object characterized is seen in quite a new and unexpected light, because the writer imposes this feature on it.

Similes have formal elements in their structure: connective words such as like, as, such as, as if, seem. Here are some examples of similes taken from various sources and illustrating the variety of structural designs of this stylistic device.

“It was that moment of the year when the countryside seems to faint from its own loveliness, from the intoxication of its scents and sounds.” (J. Galsworthy)

This is an example of a simile which is half a metaphor. If not for the structural word ‘seems’, we would call it a metaphor. Indeed, if we drop the word ‘seems’ and say, “the countryside faints from...,” the clue-word ‘faint’ becomes a metaphor. But the word ‘seems’ keeps apart the notions of stillness and fainting. It is a simile where the second member—the human being—is only suggested by means of the concept faint.

The semantic nature of the simile-forming elements ‘seem’ and ‘as if’ is such that they only remotely suggest resemblance. Quite different are the connectives like and as. These are more categorical and establish quite straightforwardly the analogy between the two objects in question.

Sometimes the simile-forming element ‘like’ is placed at the end of the phrase almost merging with it and becoming half-suffix, for example:

“Emily Barton was very pink, very Dresden-china-shepherdess like.”

In simple non-figurative language, it will assume the following form: “Emily Barton was very pink, and looked like a Dresden-china-shepherdess”

In the English language there is a long list of hackneyed similes pointing out the analogy between the various qualities, states or actions of a human being and the animals supposed to be the bearers of the given quality, for example: treacherous as a snake, sly as a fox, busy as a bee, industrious as an ant.

These combinations, however, have ceased to be genuine similes and have become clichés in which the second component has become merely an adverbial intensifier. Its logical meaning is only vaguely perceived.

Periphrasis

Periphrasis is a device which denotes the use of a longer phrasing in place of a possible shorter and plainer form of expression.

It is also called **circumlocution** due to the round-about or indirect way used to name a familiar object or phenomenon. Periphrasis represents the renaming of an object and belongs to a more general group of words replacing the direct names of things. As a stylistic device, periphrasis aims at pointing to one of the seemingly insignificant or barely noticeable features or properties of the given object, and intensifies this property by naming the object by the property.

This device has a long history. It was widely used in the Bible and in Homer's Iliad. As a poetic device it was very popular in Latin poetry. Due to this influence it became an important feature of epic and descriptive poetry throughout the Middle Ages and into the Renaissance. It is due to this practice of re-naming things that periphrasis became one of the most favoured devices in the 17th and 18th centuries giving birth even to a special trend in literature in France and other countries called periphrastic. There exists in English a whole battery of phrases which are still used as periphrastic synonyms for ordinary denominations of things and phenomena. For example, "cap and gown" stands for "the student". The essence of the device is that it is decipherable only in context. If a periphrastic locution is understandable outside the context, it is not a stylistic device but merely a synonymous expression.

Depending on the mechanism of this substitution, periphrases are classified into *figurative* (metonymic and metaphoric), and *logical*. The first group is made, in fact, of phrase-metonymies and phrase-metaphors, as you may well see from the following example: "The hospital was crowded with the surgically interesting products of the fighting in Africa" (I. Sh.) where the extended metonymy stands for "the wounded".

Logical periphrases are phrases synonymic with the words which were substituted by periphrases. For example:

“Mr. Du Pont was dressed in the conventional disguise with which Brooks Brothers cover the shame of American millionaires.” (M. St) “The conventional disguise” stands here for “the suit” and “the shame of American millionaires” – for “the paunch (the belly)”. Because the direct nomination of the not too elegant feature of appearance was substituted by a roundabout description this periphrasis may be also considered *euphemistic*, as it offers a more polite qualification instead of a coarser one..

In some cases periphrasis is regarded as a demerit and should have no place in good, precise writing. This kind of periphrasis is generally called circumlocution.

There is little difference between metaphor or metonymy, on the one hand, and figurative periphrasis, on the other. It is the structural aspect of the periphrasis, which always presupposes a word-combination, that is the reason for the division.

Hyperbole

Another SD which also has the function of **intensifying** one certain property of the object described is **hyperbole**.

Hyperbole is a deliberate overstatement or exaggeration of a feature essential (unlike periphrasis) to the object or phenomenon.

In its extreme form this exaggeration is carried to an illogical degree, sometimes ad absurdum. For example:

“He was so tall that I was not sure he had a face.” (O. Henry) or, “Those three words (Dombey and Son) conveyed the one idea of Mr. Dombey’s life. The earth was made for Dombey and Son to trade in and the sun and moon were made to give them light. Rivers and seas were formed to float their ships; rainbows gave them promise of fair weather; winds blew for or against their enterprises; stars and planets circled in their orbits to preserve inviolate a system of which they were the centre.” (Dickens)

Like many stylistic devices, hyperbole may lose its quality as a stylistic device through frequent repetition and become a unit

of the language-as-a-system, reproduced in speech in its unaltered form. Here are some examples of language hyperbole: a thousand pardons, scared to death, immensely obliged.

Hyperbole differs from mere exaggeration in that it is intended to be understood as an exaggeration. If the reader (listener) is not carried away by the emotion of the writer (speaker), hyperbole becomes a mere lie.

Hyperbole is a device which sharpens the reader's ability to make a logical assessment of the utterance. This is achieved, as is the case with other devices, by awakening the dichotomy of thought and feeling where thought takes the upper hand though not to the detriment of feeling.

Hyperbole is aimed at exaggerating quantity or quality. When it is directed the opposite way, when the size, shape, dimensions, characteristic features of the object are not overrated, but intentionally underrated, we deal with **understatement**.

Understatement – a figure of speech employed by a speaker or writer to intentionally make the situation seem less important than it really is.

The mechanism of its creation and functioning is identical with that of hyperbole, and it does not signify the actual state of affairs in reality, but presents the latter through the emotionally coloured perception and rendering of the speaker. It is not the actual diminishing or growing of the object that is conveyed by a hyperbole or understatement. It is a transient subjective impression that finds its realization in these SDs. They differ only in the direction of the flow of roused emotions. English is well-known for its preference for understatement in everyday speech - "I am rather annoyed" instead of "I'm infuriated", "The wind is rather strong" instead of "There's a gale blowing outside" are typical of British polite speech, but are less characteristic of American English.

Trite hyperboles and understatements, reflecting their use in everyday speech, in creative writing are observed mainly in dialogue, while the author's speech provides us with examples of original SDs, often rather extended or demanding a considerable fragment of the text to be fully understood.

Understatement shouldn't be mixed with litotes.

Litotes

Litotes is a stylistic device consisting of a peculiar use of negative constructions. The negation plus noun or adjective serves to establish a positive feature in a person or thing. This positive feature, however, is somewhat diminished in quality as compared with a synonymous expression making a straightforward assertion of the positive feature. Let us compare the following two pairs of sentences:

1. It's not a bad thing.—It's a good thing.
2. He is no coward.—He is a brave man.

Not bad is not equal to good although the two constructions are synonymous. The same can be said about the second pair, no coward and a brave man. In both cases the negative construction is weaker than the affirmative one. Still we cannot say that the two negative constructions produce a lesser effect than the corresponding affirmative ones. Moreover, it should be noted that the negative constructions here have a stronger impact on the reader than the affirmative ones. The latter have no additional connotation; the former have. That is why such constructions are regarded as stylistic devices. Litotes is a deliberate understatement used to produce a stylistic effect. It is not a pure negation, but a negation that includes affirmation. Therefore here, as in the case of rhetorical questions, we may speak of transference of meaning, i. e. a device with the help of which two meanings are materialized simultaneously: the direct (negative) and transferred (affirmative).

So the negation in litotes must not be regarded as a mere denial of the quality mentioned. The structural aspect of the negative combination backs up the semantic aspect: the negatives no and not are more emphatically pronounced than in ordinary negative sentences, thus bringing to mind the corresponding antonym.

The stylistic effect of litotes depends mainly on intonation. If we compare two intonation patterns, one which suggests a mere denial (It is not bad as a contrary to It is-bad) with the other which suggests the assertion of a positive quality of the object (It is not bad=it is good), the difference will become apparent. The degree to which litotes carries the positive quality in itself can be estimated by analysing the semantic structure of the word which is negated.

Let us examine the following sentences in which litotes is used:

1. "Whatever defects the tale possessed—and they were not a few—it had, as delivered by her, the one merit of seeming like truth."

2. "He was not without taste..."

3. "It troubled him not a little..."

4. "He found that this was no easy task."

5. "He was no gentle lamb, and the part of second fiddle would never do for the high-pitched dominance of his nature." (Jack London)

6. "She was wearing a fur coat... Carr, the enthusiastic appreciator of smart women and as good a judge of dress as any man to be met in a Pall Mall club, saw that she was no country cousin. She had style, or 'devil', as he preferred to call it."

Even a superfluous analysis of the litotes in the above sentences clearly shows that the negation does not merely indicate the absence of the quality mentioned but suggests the presence of the opposite quality. Charles Bally, a well-known Swiss linguist, states that negative sentences are used with the purpose of "refusing to affirm".

In sentences 5 and 6 where it is explained by the context, litotes reveals its true function. The idea of 'no gentle lamb' is further strengthened by the 'high-pitched dominance of his nature'; the function and meaning of 'no country cousin' is made clear by 'as good a fudge of dress...', 'she had style...'. Thus, like other stylistic devices, litotes displays a simultaneous materialization of two meanings: one negative, the other affirmative.

A variant of litotes is a construction with two negations, as in not unlike, not unpromising, not displeased and the like. Here, according to general logical and mathematical principles, two negatives make a positive. Thus in the sentence—"Soames, with his lips and his squared chin was not unlike a bull dog" (Galsworthy), the litotes may be interpreted as somewhat resembling. In spite of the fact that such constructions make the assertion more logically apparent, they lack precision. They may truly be regarded as deliberate understatements, whereas the pattern structures of litotes, i. e. those that have only one negative are much more categorical in stating the positive quality of a person or thing.

Assignments for Self-Control

1. What is a simile and what is a simple comparison?
2. What semantic poles of a simile do you know?
3. What is the foundation of the simile?
4. What is the key of the simile?
5. What is a disguised simile?
6. What is a periphrasis?
7. What is the difference between genuine periphrases and dictionary periphrases?
8. What is circumlocution? Can it be regarded as a demerit of the author's style?
9. What is the aim of euphemistic periphrases?
10. What is the origin of the term "euphemism"?
11. In what spheres are euphemisms most commonly used?
12. What meaning is foregrounded in a hyperbole?
13. In what way is hyperbole different from mere exaggeration?
14. What types of hyperbole can you name?
15. What makes a hyperbole trite and where are trite hyperboles predominantly used?
16. What is litotes?
17. What variations of litotes do you know?
18. What stylistic function does litotes perform?

Exercise 1

Analyse the following cases of simile. Pay attention to the semantics of the tenor and the vehicle. Indicate the foundation of the simile, both explicit and implicit.

1. Above us, the red perilous rocks like our pride
Rose higher and higher.... (D. Abuse)
2. Swearing about the weather he walked in
Like an old tree and sat down;
His beard charred with tobacco, his voice
Rough as the bark of his cracked hands. (E. Storey)

3. That husband of yours, I hope, will always treat you well, because otherwise my spectre shall come at him, like black smoke, like a demented giant, and pull him apart nerve by nerve. (V. Nabokov)

4. Night crouches beyond the harbor,

Powerful, black as a panther

That suddenly

Open a yellow eye. (N. MacCaig)

5. Autumn like a pheasant's tail

Lifts over the hedge.... (R. Duncun)

6. There was nothing for it but to sit in my usual place beside Mrs Van Hopper while she, like a large, complacent spider, spun her wide net of tedium about the stranger's person. (D. du Maurier)

7. This is a season when a few

Dry leaves hang on dry wood,

When snow like peanut butter lies

In streaks along the road.... (L. Lerner)

8. He was like the philanthropist who with altruistic motives builds model dwellings for the poor and finds that he has made a lucrative investment. (W.S. Maugham)

9. I believe that people are like portmanteaux – packed with certain things, started going, thrown about, tossed away, dumped down, lost and found, half emptied suddenly, or squeezed fatter than ever, until finally the Ultimate Porter swings them on to the Ultimate Train and away they rattle...(K. Mansfield)

10. The only completely stationary object in the room was an enormous couch on which two young women were buoyed up as though upon an anchored balloon. (F.S. Fitzgerald)

11. The little paths here were wet and clayey with tree roots spanned across them like the marks of big fowl's feet. (K. Mansfield)

Exercise 2

In the following sentences pay attention to the lexical stylistic devices based on the intensification of a certain feature of a thing or phenomenon. Analyse them from the viewpoint of their semantics, structure, function and originality.

1. In his blue gardens men and girls came and went like moths among the whispering and the champagne and the stars. (F.S. Fitzgerald)

2. On weekends his Rolls-Royce became an omnibus, bearing parties to and from the city between nine in the morning and long past midnight, while his station-wagon scampered like a brisk yellow bug to meet all trains. (F.S. Fitzgerald)

3. Up Broadway he turned, and halted at a glittering café, where are gathered together nightly the choicest products of the grape, the silkworm and the protoplasm. (O Henry)

4. And then to the waiter he betrayed the fact that the minutest coin and himself were strangers. (O Henry)

5. The store is on a corner about which coveys of ragged-plumed, hilarious children play and become candidates for the cough-drops and soothing syrups that wait for them inside. (O Henry)

6. I graduated from New Haven in 1915, just a quarter of a century after my farther, and a little later I participated in that delayed Teutonic migration known as the Great War. (F. Scott Fitzgerald)

7. Once during a lifetime of a minstrel joke one comes to scoff and remain to go through with that most difficult exercise of Thespian muscles – the audible contact of the palm of one hand against the palm of the other. (O Henry)

8. He was a man of such rigid refinement that he would have starved rather than have dined without a white neckcloth. (W. M. Thackeray)

9. He lived in a fairly large, but not immodest, suburban villa.... (I. Murdoch)

10. He was the last in that long line and he trod in their steps not unworthily. (W.S. Maugham)

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