

# STYLISTIC SEMASIOLOGY OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

(figures of combination/  
co-occurrence)

Lecture 6

# **figures of combination/co-occurrence**

are formed by the combination in speech of at least two independent meanings.

# These meanings can be:

1. similar (synonymous), thus **figures of identity** are formed:
  - simile
  - synonyms-specifiers
  - synonyms-substitutes

# These meanings can be:

2. Opposite (antonymous), thus **figures of opposition/contrast** are formed:

- antithesis
- oxymoron
- paradox
- grotesque

# These meanings can be:

3. different but close meanings, thus **figures of inequality** are formed:

- Climax (gradation)
- Anticlimax (bathos)
- Pun
- zeugma

# Simile

statement concerning the similarity, the affinity of two different notions, belonging to different spheres. The purpose of this confrontation of the names of two different objects is to characterize vividly one of the two.

*That fellow (first object) is LIKE an old fox (second object)*

# Simile

is a structure consisting of two components: the subject of comparison, and the object of comparison which are united by formal markers: ***as, as...as, like, as though, as if, such as*** etc, e.g.

*Unhappiness was like a hungry animal waiting beside the track for any victim (G. Greene).*

*My heart is like a singing bird.*

# Implied simile

If formal markers are missing but the relations between the two objects are those of similarity and identity, we have **implied simile**. In such similes words like *to resemble*, *to remind*, *to seem*, *resemblance* etc. substitute formal markers: e.g.

*H.G. Wells reminded her of the nice paddies in her native California (A.Huxley).*



# Logical comparison

A simile presupposes confrontation of two objects belonging to radically different semantic spheres; a comparison deals with two objects of the same semantic sphere:

*«She can sing like a professional actress»*  
(logical comparison);

*«She sings like a nightingale»* (simile).

# Synonyms-substitutes (synonymic variations)

- used to denote object or action, supplementing new additional details, which helps to avoid monotonous repetitions.

*But he had no words to express his feelings and to relieve them would utter an obscene jest.*

*He brought home numberless prizes. He told his mother countless stories every night about his school companions.*

# Synonyms-specifiers

(synonyms of precision)

a chain of words which express similar meanings.

- used for a better and more detailed description of an object or person, when every other synonym adds new information about it.

*Joe was a mild, good-natured, sweet-tempered, easy-going, foolish fellow.*

# Antithesis

confrontation of two notions which underlines the radical difference between them.

Two words or expressions of the opposite meanings may be used to characterize the same object or may be used to depict two objects with opposite characteristics.

*His fees were high; his lessons were light.*

# Antithesis

It often goes along with anaphoric repetition, parallelism and chiasmus.

## Functions:

- to stress the contrast
- to organize the utterance rhythmically.

# Oxymoron

ascribing a property to an object incompatible, with that property. It is a logical collision of words syntactically connected but incongruent in their meaning.

Oxymoron reveals the contradictory sides of one and the same phenomenon. One of its elements discloses some objectively existing feature while the other serves to convey the author's personal attitude towards this quality.

*pretty bad, awfully nice, terribly good, pleasantly ugly, crowded loneliness, unanswerable reply, sweet pain...*

# PARADOX

a statement that appears at first to be contradictory to what is accepted as a self-evident or proverbial truth, but upon reflection then makes sense. It allows readers to understand concepts in a different and even non-traditional way.

*The only difference between caprice and a life-long passion is that the caprice lasts a little longer (Oscar Wilde)*

# Climax or gradation

a structure in which every successive word, phrase, or sentence is emotionally stronger or logically more important than the preceding one, e.g.

*Like a well, like a vault, like a tomb, the prison had no knowledge of the brightness outside (Ch.Dickens).*



# Climax or gradation

There are three types of climax:

- 1) the arrangement of some lexical units characterizing the object in the same emotional direction;
- 2) the arrangement of lexical units with logical widening of notions;
- 3) emphatic repetition and enumeration.

*I am sorry. I am so very sorry. I am so extremely sorry*

# Anticlimax (bathos)

a structure in which every successive word, phrase, or sentence is emotionally or logically less strong than the preceding one:

We can distinguish two types of anticlimax:

- 1) gradual drop in intensity;
- 2) sudden break in emotive power. In this case, emotive and logical importance is accumulated only to be unexpectedly brought up to a sudden break, e.g. *He was inconsolable – for an afternoon.*

# Pun

a device based on polysemy, homonymy, or phonetic similarity to achieve a humorous effect.

*They had the appearance of men to whom life had appeared as a reversible coat – **seamy** on both sides.*

*Diner: Is it customary to tip a **waiter** in this restaurant?*

*Waiter: Why-ah-yes, sir.*

*Diner: Then hand me a tip. I've **waited** three quarters of an hour.*

*- I've spent last summer in a very pretty city of Switzerland.*

*- **Berne?***

*- No, I almost froze.*

# Zeugma

are parallel constructions with unparallel meanings. It is such a structural arrangement of an utterance in which the basic component is both a part of a phraseological unit and of a free word-combination. Zeugma is mainly a means of creating a humorous effect.

*She dropped a tear and her handkerchief.*

# Topics for reports

- Paradox as a rhetorical device
- Stylistic effect of grotesque
- Pun

**Спасибо за внимание!**

**Будьте здоровы!**