LECTURE 2

PHONO-GRAPHICAL LEVEL

- Dealing with various cases of phonemic and graphemic foregrounding we should not forget the unilateral nature of a phoneme: this language unit helps to differentiate meaningful lexemes but has no meaning of its own.
- Still, devoid of denotational or connotational meaning, a phoneme, according to recent studies, has a strong associative and sound-instrumenting power.

- Well-known are numerous cases ***of onomatopoeia*** - the use of words whose sounds imitate those of the signified object or action, such as "hiss", "bowwow", "murmur", "bump", "grumble", "sizzle" and many more.

- ***Onomatopoeia*** /ˌɒnə(ʊ)matəˈpiːə/

- Imitating the sounds of nature, man, inanimate objects, the acoustic form of the word foregrounds the latter, inevitably emphasizing its meaning too. Thus the phonemic structure of the word proves to be important for the creation of expressive and emotive connotations. A message, containing an onomatopoeic word is not limited to transmitting the logical information only, but also supplies the vivid portrayal of the situation described.

- Onomatopoeia is a feature of sound patterning which is often thought to form a bridge between ‘style’ and ‘content’. It can occur either in a lexical or a nonlexical form, although both forms share the common property of being able to match up a sound with a nonlinguistic correlate in the ‘real’ world.

- Lexical onomatopoeia draws upon recognised words in the language system, words like crack, slurp and buzz, whose pronunciation enacts symbolically their referents outside language.

- Nonlexical onomatopoeia, by contrast, refers to clusters of sounds which echo the world in a more unmediated way, without the intercession of linguistic structure. For example, the mimicking of the sound of a car revving up might involve a series of nonlexical approximations, such as vroom vroom, or brrrrm brrrrm, and so on.
- Coke brrr commercial...LONG VERSOIN! :) - YouTube

- Metre

When we hear someone reading a poem aloud, we tend to recognise very quickly that it is poem that is being read and not another type of text.

- One reason why this rather unusual communicative situation should arise is because poetry has metre. A pivotal criterion for the definition of verse, metre is, most simply put, an organised pattern of strong and weak syllables.

- Metrical patterning should be organised, and in such a way that the alternation between accentuated syllables and weak syllables is repeated. That repetition, into a regular phrasing across a line of verse, is what makes <u>rhythm.</u>
- <u>Rhythm </u>/ˈrɪð(ə)m/

- Rhythm is therefore a patterned movement of pulses in time which is defined both by periodicity (it occurs at regular time intervals) and repetition (the same pulses occur again and again).

- An iambic foot, for example, has two syllables, of which the first is less heavily stressed than the second (a ‘de-dum’ pattern). The trochaic foot, by contrast, reverses the pattern, offering a ‘dum-de’ style of metre.

iambic /ʌɪˈambɪk/

Trochaic /trə(ʊ)ˈkeɪɪk/

- A line from Thomas Gray’s ‘Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard’ (1751):

The ploughman homeward plods his weary way

- In the following annotated version of, the metrical feet are segmented off from one another by vertical lines. Positioned below the text are two methods for capturing the alternation between strong (s) and weak (w) syllables:

The plough | man home | ward plods | his wea | ry way

w s w s w s w s w s

de dum de dum de dum de dum de dum

- As there are five iambs in the line, this metrical scheme is iambic pentameter. Had there been six feet, it would have been iambic hexameter, four feet, iambic tetrameter…
- hexameter /hɛkˈsamɪtə/
- tetrameter /tɪˈtramɪtə/

- The other sound imagery at work in the line from Gray. Alliteration is a type of rhyme scheme which is based on similarities between consonants. Although rhyme is normally thought of as a feature of line endings, the internal alliterative rhyme in picks out and enhances the balancing halves of the line through the repetition of, first, the /pl/ in ‘ploughman’ and ‘plods’ and, later, the /w/ in ‘weary’ and ‘way’.

- While verse is (obviously) characterised by its use of metre, it does not follow that all metre is verse; and it is important not to lose sight of the fact that metre has an existence outside literature.

- We need therefore to treat this stylistic feature, as we do with many aspects of style, as a common resource which is shared across many types of textual practice.

- By way of illustration, consider the following short example of ‘nonliterary’ discourse, an advertisement for a bathroom shower appliance:

NEVER UNDRESS

FOR ANYTHING LESS

- Example is a jingle; that is, a phonologically contoured text designed by advertisers as an aide memoire. A ‘simple’ text but nonetheless makes use of an interesting metrical scheme:

Nev	er	|	un	dress
s	w		w	s
dum	de		de	dum

for	|	an	y	|	thing	less
w		s	w		w	s
de		dum	de		de	dum

- Poetry abounds in some specific types of sound-instrumenting, the leading role belonging to ***alliteration*** - the repetition of consonants, usually in the beginning of words, and ***assonance*** - the repetition of similar vowels, usually in stressed syllables.

- They both may produce the effect of *euphony* (a sense of ease and comfort in pronouncing or hearing) *or cacophony (a* sense of strain and discomfort in pronouncing or hearing).

As an example of the first may serve the famous lines of E.A. Poe:

...*silken sad uncertain*

rustling of each purple curtain...

An example of the second is provided by the combination of sounds found in R. Browning:

Nor soul helps flesh now more than flesh helps soul.

- Graphology

Level of graphology accommodates the systematic meanings encoded in the written medium of language.

- In contemporary advertising, mass media and, above all, imaginative prose sound can be foregrounded through the change of its accepted graphical representation. This intentional violation of the graphical shape of a word (or word combination) used to reflect its authentic pronunciation is called ***graphon.***

Craphons, indicating irregularities or carelessness of pronunciation were occasionally introduced into English novels and journalism as early as the beginning of the eighteenth century and since then have acquired an ever growing frequency of usage, popularity among writers, journalists, advertizers, and a continuously widening scope of functions.

- <u>Graphon proved to be an extremely concise but effective means of supplying information about the speaker's origin, social and educational background, physical or emotional condition, etc.</u> So, when the famous Thackeray's character - butler Yellowplush - impresses his listeners with the learned words pronouncing them as "sellybrated" (celebrated), "bennyviolent" (benevolent), "illygitmit" (illegitimate), "jewinile" (juvenile), or when the no less famous Mr. Babbitt uses "peerading" (parading), "Eytalians" (Italians), "peepul" (people) - the reader obtains not only the vivid image and the social, cultural, educational characteristics of the personages, but also both Thackeray's and S. Lewis' sarcastic attitude to them.

- On the other hand, "The b-b-b-b-bas-tud - he seen me c--c-c-c-coming" in R. P. Warren's Sugar Boy's speech or "You don't mean to thay that thith ith your firth time" (B.C.) show <u>the physical defects of the speakers</u> - the stuttering of one and the lisping of the other.

- Graphon, thus individualizing the character's speech, adds to his plausibility, vividness, memorability. At the same time, graphon is very good at conveying the atmosphere of authentic live communication, of the informality of the speech act. Some amalgamated forms, which are the result of strong assimilation, became cliches in contemporary prose dialogue: "gimme" (give me), "lemme" (let me), "gonna" (going to), "gotta" (got to), "coupla" (couple of), "mighta" (might have), "willya" (will you), etc.

- This flavour of informality and authenticity brought graphon popularity with advertizers. Big and small eating places invite customers to attend their "Pik-kwik store", or "The Donut (doughnut) Place", or the "Rite Bread Shop", or the "Wok-in Fast Food Restaurant", etc.

- The same is true about newspaper, poster and TV advertizing: "Sooper Class Model" cars, "Knee-hi" socks, "Rite Aid" medicines. A recently published book on Cockney was entitled by the authors "The Muwer Tongue"; on the back flaps of big freight-cars one can read "Folio me", etc.

- Graphical changes may reflect not only the peculiarities of, pronunciation, but are also used to convey the intensity of the stress, emphasizing and thus foregrounding the stressed words. To such purely ***graphical means,*** not involving the violations, we should refer all changes of the type (italics, capitalization), spacing of graphemes (hyphenation, multiplication) and of lines.

- According to the frequency of usage, variability of functions, the first place among graphical means of foregrounding is occupied by *italics.*

- Besides italicizing words, to add to their logical or emotive significance, separate syllables and morphemes may also be emphasized by italics (which is highly characteristic of D. Salinger or T. Capote). Intensity of speech (often in commands) is transmitted through the *multiplication* of a grapheme or *capitalization* of the word, as in Babbitt's shriek "Alllll aboarrrrrd", or in the desperate appeal in A. Huxley's *Brave New World* - "Help. Help. HELP."

- Hyphenation of a word suggests the rhymed or clipped manner in which it is uttered as in the humiliating comment from Fl. O'Connor's story - "grinning like a chim-pan-zee".

- Line organization:

The following poem is by the Liverpudlian poet Roger McGough:

40	–	LOVE
middle		aged
couple		playing
ten		nis
when		the
game		ends
and		they
go		home
the		net
will		still
be		be
tween		them

(McGough 1971)