# SYNTACTICAL LEVEL

*Main Characteristics of the Sentence. Syntactical SDs. Sentence Length. One-Word Sentences. Sentence Structure. Punctuation. Arrangement of Sentence Members. Rhetorical Question. Types of Repetition. Parallel Constructions. Chiasmus. Inversion. Suspense. Detachment. Completeness of Sentence Structure. Ellipsis. One-Member Sentences. Break. Types of Connection. Polysyndeton. Asyndeton. Attachment*

- <u>Stylistic study of the syntax begins with the study of the length and the structure of a sentence.</u> It appears, the length of any language unit is a very important factor in information exchange, for the human brain can receive and transmit information only if the latter is punctuated by pauses.

- Indeed, psychologically, no reader is prepared to perceive as a syntactical whole those sentences in which the punctuation mark of a full stop comes after the 124th word (Joyce Carol Oates. *Expensive People),* or 128th word (E. Hemingway. *The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber),* or 256th word (T. Pynchon. *The Crying of Lot 49),* or 631 st word (N. Mailer. *Why Are We in Vietnam ?),* or even after 45 whole pages of the text (J. Joyce. *Ulysses).*

# One-word sentences

- *One-word sentences* possess a very strong emphatic impact, for their only word obtains both the word-and the sentence-stress. The word constituting a sentence also obtains its own sentence-intonation which, too, helps to foreground the content.

- "They could keep the Minden Street Shop going until they got the notice to quit; which mightn't be for two years. Or they could wait and see what kind of alternative premises were offered. If the site was good. - *If. Or.* And, quite inevitably, borrowing money." (J.Braine)

- There is no direct or immediate correlation between the length and the structure of a sentence: short sentences may be structurally complicated, while the long ones, on the contrary, may have only one subject-predicate pair.

- "Through the windows of the drag-store Eighth street looked extremely animated with families trooping toward the center of the town, flags aslant in children's hands, mother and pa in holiday attire and sweating freely, with patriarchal automobiles of neighboring farmers full of starched youngsters and draped with bunting." (J.Reed)

- Almost 50 words of this sentence cluster around one subject-predicate centre "Eighth street looked animated".

- At the same time very short sentences may boast of two and more clauses, i.e. may be complex, as we observe in the following cases: "He promised he'd come if the cops leave." (J.Baldwin.)

- The possibilities of intonation are much richer than those of punctuation. Indeed, intonation alone may create, add, change, reverse both the logical and the emotional information of an utterance.

- Punctuation is much poorer, and it is used not alone, but emphasizing and substantiating the lexical and syntactical meanings of sentence-components. *Points of exclamation* and *of interrogation, dots, dashes* help to specify the meaning of the written sentence which in oral speech would be conveyed by the intonation.

- It is not only the *emphatic types of punctuation* listed above that may serve as an additional source of information, but also more conventional *commas, semicolons and full stops.* E.g.: "What's your name?" "John Lewis." "Mine's Liza. Watkin." (K.Kesey)

- The full stop between the name and the surname shows there was a pause between them and the surname came as a response to the reaction (surprise, amusement, roused interest) of John Lewis at such an informal self-introduction.

# *Rhetorical question*

- There are cases though when a statement is crowned with a question mark. Often this punctuation-change is combined with the change of word-order, the latter following the pattern of question. This peculiar interrogative construction which semantically remains a statement is called a *rhetorical question.* Unlike an ordinary question, the rhetorical question does not demand any information but serves to express the emotions of the speaker and also to call the attention of listeners.

- Rhetorical questions make an indispensable part of oratoric speech for they very successfully emphasize the orator's ideas. In fact the speaker knows the answer himself and gives it immediately after the question is asked.

- The interrogative intonation and / or punctuation draw the attention of listeners (readers) to the focus of the utterance. Rhetorical questions are also often asked in "unanswerable" cases, as when in distress or anger we resort to phrases like "What have I done to deserve..." or "What shall I do when...". The artificiality of question-form of such constructions is further stressed by exclamation marks which, alongside points of interrogation, end rhetorical questions.

# Joe Biden inauguration speech (2021)

…What are the common objects we love that define us as Americans?

I think I know.

Opportunity.

Security.

Liberty….

- The effect of the majority of syntactical stylistic devices depends on either the _completeness of the structure_ or on the _arrangement of its members._ The order in which words (clauses) follow each other is of extreme importance not only for the logical coherence of the sentence but also for its connotational meanings.

- One of the most prominent places among the SDs dealing with the arrangement of members of the sentence decidedly belongs *to repetition.*

- As a syntactical SD repetition is recurrence of the same word, word combination, phrase for two and more times. According to the place which the repeated unit occupies in a sentence (utterance), repetition is classified into several types:

- 1. *anaphora:* the beginning of two or more successive sentences (clauses) is repeated - *a..., a..., a... .*

- The main stylistic function of anaphora is not so much to emphasize the repeated unit as to create the background textile nonrepeated unit, which, through its novelty, becomes foregrounded. The background-forming function of anaphora is also evident from the kind of words which are repeated anaphorically.

- 2. *epiphora:* the end of successive sentences (clauses) is repeated -*…a, …a, …a.* The main function of epiphora is to add stress to the final words of the sentence.

- 3 *framing:* the beginning of the sentence is repeated in the end, thus forming the "frame" for the non-repeated part of the sentence (utterance) - *a... a.* The function of framing is to elucidate the notion mentioned in the beginning of the sentence. Between two appearances of the repeated unit there comes the developing middle part of the sentence which explains and clarifies what was introduced in the beginning, so that by the time it is used for the second time its semantics is concretized and specified.

- 4. *catch repetition (anadiplosis).* the end of one clause (sentence) is repeated in the beginning of the following one -...*a, a....* Specification of the semantics occurs here too, but on a 'more modest level.

- 5. *chain repetition* presents several successive anadiploses -*...a, a...b, b...c, c.* The effect is that of the smoothly developing logical reasoning.

- 6. *ordinary repetition* has no definite place in the sentence and the repeated unit occurs in various positions - *...a, ...a..., a.. .* Ordinary repetition emphasizes both the logical and the emotional meanings of the reiterated word (phrase).

- 7. *successive repetition* is a string of closely following each other reiterated units - *...a, a, a...* This is the most emphatic type of repetition which signifies the peak of emotions of the speaker.

# *Parallel constructions*

- *Parallel constructions* may be viewed as a purely syntactical type of repetition for here we deal with the reiteration of the structure of several successive sentences (clauses), and not of their lexical meaning.

- Reversed parallelism is called *chiasmus.* The second part of a chiasmus is, in fact, inversion of the first construction. Thus, if the first sentence (clause) has a direct word order - SPO, the second one will have it inverted - OPS.

# **Chiasmus** /kɪˈazməs/

- A rhetorical or literary figure in which words, grammatical constructions, or concepts are repeated in reverse order.

- "We shape our buildings, and afterward our buildings shape us."

- ***Inversion*** is very often used as an independent SD in which the direct word order is changed either completely so that the predicate precedes the subject; or partially so that the object precedes the subject-predicate pair. Correspondingly, we differentiate between *partial* and a *complete inversion.*

- The stylistic device of inversion should not be confused with grammatical inversion which is a norm in interrogative constructions. Stylistic inversion deals with the rearrangement of the normative word order.

- Questions may also be rearranged: "Your mother is at home?" asks one of the characters of J. Baldwin's novel. The inverted question presupposes the answer with more certainty than the normative one.

- SD dealing with the arrangement of members of the sentence is *suspense* - a deliberate postponement of the completion of the sentence.

- The term "suspense" is also used in literary criticism to denote an expectant uncertainty about the outcome of the plot. To hold the reader in suspense means to keep the final solution just out of sight.

- Detective and adventure stories are examples of suspense fiction. The -theme, that which is known, and the rheme, that which is new, of the sentence are distanced from each other and the new information is withheld, creating the tension of expectation.

- A specific arrangement of sentence members is observed in **detachment,** a stylistic device based on singling out a secondary member of the sentence with the help of punctuation (intonation). The word-order here is not violated, but secondary members obtain their own stress and intonation because they are detached from the rest of the sentence by commas, dashes or even a full stop as in the following cases:

- "He had been nearly killed, ingloriously, in a jeep accident." (I.Shaw) "I have to beg you for money. Daily." (I.Shaw)

- Both "ingloriously" and "daily" remain adverbial modifiers, occupy their proper normative places, following the modified verbs, but - due to detachment and the ensuing additional pause and stress - are foregrounded into the focus of the reader's attention.

- The second, somewhat smaller, group of syntactical SDs deals not so much with specificities of the arrangement as with <u>the **completeness of sentence-structure**</u>. The most prominent place here belongs to *ellipsis,* or deliberate omission of at least one member of the sentence.

- In contemporary prose ellipsis is mainly used in dialogue where it is consciously employed by the author to reflect the natural omissions characterizing oral colloquial speech. Often ellipsis is met close to dialogue, in author's introductory remarks commenting the speech of the characters. Elliptical remarks in prose resemble stage directions in drama.

- Ellipsis is the basis of the so-called ***telegraphic style,*** in which connectives and redundant words are left out. In the early twenties British railways had an inscription over luggage racks in the carriages: "The use of this rack for heavy and bulky packages involves risk of injury to passengers and is prohibited." Forty years later it was reduced to the elliptical: "For light articles only." The same progress from full completed messages to clipped phrases was made in drivers' directions: "Please drive slowly" "Drive slowly" "Slow".

- The biggest contributors to the telegraphic style are *one-member* *sentences,* i.e. <u>sentences consisting only of a nominal group, which is semantically and communicatively self-sufficient</u>. <u>Isolated verbs</u>, proceeding from the ontological features of a verb as a part of speech, cannot be considered one-member sentences as they always rely on the context for their semantic fulfillment and are thus heavily <u>ellipticized sentences.</u> In creative prose one-member sentences are mostly used in descriptions (of nature, interior, appearance, etc.), where they produce the effect of a detailed but laconic picture foregrounding its main components; and as the background of dialogue, mentioning the emotions, attitudes, moods of the speakers.

- The last SD which promotes the incompleteness of sentence structure is *break (aposiopesis).* Break is also used mainly in the, dialogue or in other forms of narrative imitating spontaneous oral speech. It reflects the emotional or/and the psychological state of the speaker: a sentence may be broken because the speaker's emotions prevent him from finishing it.

- Another cause of the break is the desire to cut short the information with which the sentence began. In such cases there are usually special remarks by the author, indicating the intentional abruptness of the end. In many cases break is the result of the speaker's uncertainty as to what exactly he is to promise (to threaten, to beg).

- To mark the break, dashes and dots are used. It is only in set phrases that full stops may also appear, as in the well-known phrases "Good intentions, but", or "It depends".

- The arrangement of sentence members, the completeness of sentence structure necessarily involve various _types of connection_ used within the sentence or between sentences. Repeated use of conjunctions is called _polysyndeton;_ deliberate omission of them is, correspondingly, named _asyndeton._ Both polysyndeton and asyndeton, have a strong rhythmic impact. Besides, the function of polysyndeton is to strengthen the idea of equal logical (emotive) importance of connected sentences, while asyndeton, cutting off connecting words, helps to create the effect of terse, energetic, active prose.

# Lexico-Syntactical Stylistic Devices Antithesis.

## *Climax. Anticlimax. Simile. Litotes. Periphrasis*

- Syntactical stylistic devices add logical, emotive, expressive information to the utterance regardless of lexical meanings of sentence components. There are certain structures though, whose emphasis depends not only on the arrangement of sentence members but also on the lexico-semantic aspect of the utterance. They are known as **_lexico-syntactical SDs._**

- ***Antithesis*** is a good example of them: syntactically, antithesis is just another case of parallel constructions. But unlike parallelism, which is indifferent to the semantics of its components, the two parts of an antithesis must be semantically opposite to each other, as in the sad maxim of O. Wilde: "Some people have much to live on, and little to live for", where "much" and "little" present a pair of antonyms, supported by the ' contextual opposition of postpositions "on" and "for".

- Another type of semantically complicated parallelism is presented by *climax,* in which each next word combination (clause, sentence) is logically more important or emotionally stronger and more explicit: "Better to borrow, better to beg, better to die!" (Ch. Dickens.)

- Climax suddenly interrupted by an unexpected turn of the thought which defeats expectations of the reader (listener) and ends in complete semantic reversal of the emphasized idea, is called *anticlimax.*

- Simile is an imaginative comparison of two unlike objects belonging to two different classes. The one which is compared is called *the tenor,* the one with which it is compared, is called *the vehicle.* The tenor and the vehicle form the two semantic poles of the simile, which are connected by one of the following *link words* "like", "as", "as though", "as like", "such as", "as...as", etc.

- Simile should not be confused with simple (logical, ordinary) *comparison.* Structurally identical, consisting of the tenor, the vehicle and the uniting formal element, they are semantically different: objects belonging to the same class are likened in a simple comparison, while in a simile we deal with the likening of objects belonging to two different classes. So, "She is like her mother" is a simple comparison, used to state an evident fact. "She is like a rose" is a simile used for purposes of expressive evaluation, emotive explanation, highly individual description.

- ***Litotes*** is a two-component structure in which two negations are joined to give a positive evaluation. Thus "not unkindly" actually means "kindly", though the positive effect is weakened and some lack of the speaker's confidence in his statement is implied. The first component of a litotes is always the negative particle "not", while the second, always negative in semantics, varies in form from a negatively affixed word (as above) to a negative phrase.

- The function of litotes has much in common with that of understatement - both weaken the effect of the utterance. The uniqueness of litotes lies in its specific "double negative" structure and in its weakening only the positive evaluation.

- **_Periphrasis_** is a very peculiar stylistic device which basically consists of using a roundabout form of expression instead of a simpler one, i.e. of using a more or less complicated syntactical structure instead of a word. 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" where the extended metonymy stands for "the wounded".

- The main function of periphrases is to convey a purely individual perception of the described object. To achieve it the generally accepted nomination of the object is replaced by the description of one of its features or qualities, which seems to the author most important for the characteristic of the object, and which thus becomes foregrounded.