# Lecture 2 PHONETIC, GRAPHICAL,

# AND MORPHOLOGICAL EXPRESSIVITY

SEMINAR OUTLINE

* Phonetic expressive means and stylistic devices
* Graphical expressivity: emphatic use of punctuation, graphon
* Stylistic morphology: stylistic potential of grammatical forms and of different parts of speech

# Phonetic expressive means and stylistic devices

Stylistic phonetics is associated with the notion *“sound- instrumenting”*. A phoneme has a strong associative and sound-instrumenting power, although it is devoid of denotative or connotative meanings. Due to articulatory and acoustic properties sounds may evoke different ideas, perceptions, feelings, images, associations. This phenomenon is called *sound-symbolism*. The correspondences between the sound and the sense are studied by *phonosemantics*. The sound of a word may contribute something to the general effect and idea of the message. All in all, sounds may be arranged so as to produce either euphony (a smooth and pleasant effect) or cacophony (a rough and harsh effect).

Phonetic stylistic devices include alliteration, assonance, onomatopoeia and paronomasia.

**Alliteration** is repetition of similar consonant sound(s) at the beginning of words or stressed syllables (*the merry month of May*). Alliteration in the English language is used extensively because it is deeply rooted in the traditions of English folklore. The most famous example of alliterative poetry is the old English epic “Beowulf”. This literary device can still be traced in English phraseology – in proverbs, sayings and set-expressions (*Now or never; As good as gold*; *No sweet without some sweat*). Alliteration is frequently used in emotive prose, in the newspaper

headlines, in the titles of books, in slogans, in commercials and advertising language.

**Assonance** consists in repeating similar stressed vowel sounds in successive words. The function of assonance is to give some aesthetic environment to the idea.

**Onomatopoeia** (sound-imitation) is a combination of speech sounds which imitates real sounds produced in nature (*burr*), by machines or tools (*ding-dong*), by people (*shuffle, whisper*), by animals (*mew-mew, baa-baa*). The function of onomatopoeia in literary works is to demonstrate the acoustic picture of reality. In advertising it can be used as a mnemonic device, in comic strips – in order to represent noises.

**Paronomasia** consists in the co-occurrence of paronyms. Two semantically different words due to the proximity of phonetic image and positional closeness become contextually interrelated (He took first *prize*! And he got the highest *praise*).

# Graphical expressive means

According to V.A. Kucharenko, graphical expressive means serve to convey in the written form those emotions which in the oral type of speech are expressed by intonation and stress. The graphic picture of speech reflects some of the peculiarities of the pronunciation of words and phrases.

**The emphatic punctuation** aims at conveying the emotional coloring of the text, reflects the intonation of the speaker, conveys emotional pauses, reveals the speaker’s attitude.

The deliberate change of the spelling of the word – **graphon** – is used to reflect its authentic pronunciation (*sellybrated, peepul*). In literary texts unusual graphical arrangement of a word can be used to emphasize individual phonetic peculiarities, to reveal the speaker’s emotional state. Graphons are frequently used in advertising to attract potential customers (*They’re grrreat!*), they also serve to create humorous effect in different linguistic jokes.

***Temporary graphon*** is used to reflect pronunciation peculiarities caused by temporary factors such as: tender age (children’s speech), intoxication, ignorance of the discussed topic, overemotional state, etc.

***Permanent graphon*** reflects peculiarities conditioned by permanent factors such as: social, territorial, educational status, and speech deficiencies. Permanent graphon individualizes the character’s speech, conveys the atmosphere of authentic live communication, of the informality of the speech act.

In the written speech the graphon may take different forms: doubling (*N-no!*), multiplication (*laaarge*), hyphenation (*g-irl*), spaced letters. The word can be written in different type of print (italics, bold type, capitalization).

# Stylistic potential of grammatical forms

Stylistic morphology primarily deals with word-building expressive means (grammatical forms), under which the linguists consider: 1) expressivity of affixes and 2) expressivity of different word-building patterns.

Every particular affix has its own connotational potential, thus enabling the speaker to communicate his positive or negative evaluation of a person or thing. Suffix **-*ish*** in different cases of use might carry different meanings: a small degree of some quality (*brownish*); a more tactful characteristic of a quality (*baldish, dullish*); negative derogatory connotation (*bookish, childish*); uncertainty (*at fourish* (around 4 o’clock)). ***Diminutive suffixes*** point to a small size of something, at the same time revealing tender, jocular or pejorative attitude (*lambkin*, *chicklet*, *weakling, duckling, daddy, lassie*).

Any morpheme has an inherent structural meaning, but as a result of foregrounding of a morpheme it becomes vehicle of additional information – logical, emotive, expressive, thus creating the stylistic effect. One important way of promoting a morpheme is its repetition (*vast tracts of time unlit, unfelt, inlived*).

Apart from morphemic repetition, another effective way of using a morpheme for the creation of additional information is extension of its normative valency, which results in the formation of new words. The existing word-building patterns can be used to create *occasional words*, which are coined for special communicative situations only (*friend-in-chief*).

Synonymy of morphemes helps to express the grammatical meaning of plurality. The idea of plurality in English is rendered by different suffixes (*books, boys, boxes, oxen*, *data, indices, formulae*). Synonymous morphological structures may be employed in order to avoid repeating the same morphemes or the same parts of speech, and thus achieve the so-called *“elegant variation”* in an utterance (*Shakespeare’s plays*, *plays of Shakespeare*, *Shakespearean plays*, *Shakespeare plays*). Synonymy of different grammatical forms may serve to differentiate between formal and informal structures (*real good*

:: *really good*; *Whom are you talking to?* :: *Who are you talking to?*; *ain’t* :: *is not*); between different functional styles (*brethren*

:: *brothers*; *he hath* :: *he has*); between national variants of the English language (*at the corner* (Br) *:: on the corner* (Am)).

# Stylistic potential of the parts of speech

Stylistic morphology is preoccupied with the unusual usage of different parts of speech, with the violation of traditional lexico- grammatical valency. ***Grammatical transposition*** is the usage of certain forms of different parts of speech in non-conventional grammatical or lexical meanings.

Stylistic potential of **the noun** can be observed in case of transposition of a noun from one word class (lexico-grammatical category) into another, which creates expressive, emotional, evaluative and stylistic connotations. The names of animals when used with regard to people in colloquial speech (*duck, monkey, teddy, shark*) gain emotionally colored expressive connotations. Abstract nouns when transposed into the class of nouns naming individuals become charged with various emotional connotations (*he is a disgrace to his family*). Another type of transposition is transposition from one part of speech into another. Thus, adjectives may be transposed into nouns as a result of substantivisation (*Listen, my sweet*; *the rich; the poor; the impossible*).

The stylistic power of the noun is closely linked to the grammatical categories of number, person, case, gender. The traditional opposition singular vs plural is neutralized, when there is a change of meaning (*Reading books instead of*

*working?* (one book); *This is what the student is supposed to know* (all students)). As a result of personification a common noun can be transposed into the class of proper nouns. The opposite phenomenon (depersonification) takes place when the animate noun is substituted by personal pronoun *it* or by the noun of general semantics “*thing*” (*She is a frail little thing*). In pairs of nouns describing men’s and women’s occupations, the male term carries more respect and prestige, expresses power and excellence, whereas the female word diminishes the dignity and importance of a woman (*master* – *mistress*; *poet* – *poetess*; *governor* – *governess*).

**The article** may be a very expressive element of narration when it is used with proper names which normally require no article (I’m not *a Dombey*; He was engaged to *a Miss Hubbard*; *a Mr Brown;* I have bought *a Rembrandt* recently; You are not *the Andrew Manson* I married).

The stylistic functions of **the pronoun** are based on the disparity between the traditional and contextual meanings. The pronoun of one type can be transposed into the action sphere of another pronoun (*How are we feeling today? By the Grace of Our Lord, We, Charles the Second*…). The archaic forms of English pronouns (*thou*, *thee*, *thy*) can create the elevated and solemn effect, impart historical or local coloring. Possessive pronouns perform stylistic function when they are devoid of any grammatical meaning of possession. In such cases they are loaded with evaluative connotations and express a wide range of feelings (*Take your precious Robert away from my house! Take this bag of yours out of here*). In low colloquial style the demonstrative pronoun *this / that* can be transposed into the class of adverbs and perform the function of an intensifier of a quality expressed by the given adjective (*Don’t be that silly!*).

**The verb** possesses more grammatical characteristics than any other part of speech. All deviant usages of tense, voice and aspect forms have strong stylistic connotations and play an important role in creating a metaphorical meaning (Historical (or Dramatic) Present; present tenses used to express future

actions (*She arrives tomorrow*); continuous forms used to convey emotional states (*They are always leaving their bags*); ungrammatical tense forms (*He don’t, He seed, I hears*); violation of rules of subject-predicate agreement (*You is*)).

The stylistic function of **the adjective** is achieved mostly through the non-standard use of the degrees of comparison (*pinker, greener; He was the most married man I’ve ever met; Curioser and curioser!; more cold*; *the bestest*).

The stylistic power of **the adverb** is connected with various transpositions (*Is it that funny? She buys her clothes cheap; real nice*).