Lecture **3**

# EPITHET. PARADIGMATIC SEMASIOLOGY: FIGURES OF QUANTITY

SEMINAR OUTLINE

* Stylistic semasiology: paradigmatic and syntagmatic branches
* Epithet
* Figures of replacement: figures of quantity

# Stylistic semasiology: paradigmatic and syntagmatic branches

Stylistic semasiology is part of stylistics which investigates stylistic phenomena in the sphere of semantics. The object of research in stylistic semasiology is not the meaning itself but the rules and laws of the shifts of meaning, and the stylistic effect of such shifts of meaning. These semantic changes are observed in various expressive means and stylistic devices.

Expressive means of a language are linguistic forms and properties which have the potential to make the utterance emphatic or expressive. A stylistic device is a literary model in which semantic and structural features are blended so that it represents a generalized pattern. A language fact can be transformed into a stylistic device through frequent use.

According to Y.M. Skrebnev stylistic semasiology is subdivided into two branches – paradigmatic semasiology and syntagmatic semasiology. *Paradigmatic semasiology* studies figures of replacement (tropes) which deal with renaming. *Syntagmatic semasiology* studies semantic figures of co- occurrence, it studies types of names used for linear arrangement of meanings and deals with semantic relationships expressed at the length of a whole text.

# Epithet

**Epithet** is a stylistic device based on the interplay of emotive and logical meaning in an attributive word, phrase or sentence,

used to characterize the object, to point out its features and give an individual evaluation of these features (*wild wind, loud ocean, angry sky, laughing valleys*). Epithets are opposed to logical attributes which indicate to generally recognized qualities of the phenomena (*green meadows, round table*).

Structural types of epithets are the following: a word-epithet (*to hate violently, destructive charms*), a compound epithet (*weather-beaten face*), a two-step epithet (*an unnaturally mild day*), a syntactical (reversed) epithet (*a jewel of a film, a pearl of a city*), a phrase-epithet (*the sunshine-in-the-breakfast-room smell*), a sentence-epithet (*Fool!*).

Distributional patterns include: single epithets (*a dry look*), a pair of epithets (*a tired old town*), a chain of epithets (*the wonderful, cruel, enchanting, bewildering, fatal, great city*).

Semantic classification subdivides epithets into affective (emotive proper) epithets (*gorgeous, nasty, magnificent*) and transferred (figurative) epithets in which quality of one object is transferred upon its nearest neighbor (*a tobacco-stained smile, restless and unwise dollars*).

# Figures of replacement: figures of quantity

Figures of replacement studied by paradigmatic semasiology deal with renaming: in figures of replacement one notion is replaced by another (one denomination is used instead of another). Two classes of figures of replacement are figures of quantity and figures of quality.

**Figures of quantity** demonstrate the most primitive type of renaming based on the disproportion of the object and its verbal evaluation. It is either overestimating or underestimating the properties, size, importance, etc of the object or phenomenon.

**Hyperbole** is a deliberate overstatement of a feature essential to the object or phenomenon. It is not meant to be taken literally: the speaker doesn’t expect to be believed, he is merely adding emphasis to what he really means (*a thousand pardons*; *immensely obliged*; *Haven’t seen you for ages*).

**Meiosis (understatement)** implies saying less than one means. In understatement the size, shape, dimensions, characteristic

features of an object are intentionally underestimated (*This looks like a good bite*; *He knows a thing or two*; *It will cost you a pretty penny*).

The specific structural type of meiosis is **litotes**. In litotes the understatement is achieved by substituting the affirmative with a negation of the contrary. Litotes is a two-component structure in which two negatives give a positive evaluation (*not hopeless*, *not unlikely; not without his help*; *not bad*).