



# Stylistics of the English Language 5

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# Outline

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- Lexical Analysis: Tropes
- Lexical Analysis: Epithets
- Lexical Analysis in the Process of Decoding Emotive Prose

# Tropes and Figures of Speech

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- based on **comparison** (affinity):
  - metaphor
  - simile
  - personification
  - allusion
  - antonomasia
  - allegory
- based on **contiguity** (proximity):
  - metonymy
  - synecdoche
- based on **opposition**:
  - irony
  - antithesis
- based on **understatement**:
  - understatement
  - litotes
- based on **overstatement**:
  - hyperbole
  - periphrasis

# Tropes: Allegory

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- a figure of speech in which abstract ideas and principles are described in terms of concrete characters, figures and events. Unlike symbols, it tells a story.
- the objective is to teach some kind of moral lesson:
  - “Not all that glitters is gold” (a proverb)
  - “Animal Farm” by George Orwell: “All animals are equal but a few are more equal than others.”

# Tropes based on Proximity: Metonymy

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a transfer of the meaning on the basis of contiguity:

“The violin in the orchestra is very good.”

# Metonymy – Types (6)

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the material of which an object is made - the name of the object: **a glass, boards**;

- the name of the place - the name of the people or of an object placed there: **the House** – members of Parliament, **the White House** – the Administration of the USA;
- names of musical instruments - names of musicians when they are united in an orchestra: **the violin, the saxophone**;
- the name of some person may become a common noun: **boycott** was originally the name of an Irish family who were so much disliked by their neighbours that they did not mix with them
- names of inventors - terms to denote things they invented: **watt, ohm, roentgen**;
- some geographical names can also become common nouns through metonymy: **holland** (linen fabrics), **Brussels** (a special kind of carpets), **china** (porcelain).

# Tropes: Synecdoche

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- a figure of speech in which a term for a part of something refers to the whole of something, or vice versa:

“Give every man thy ear and few thy voice.”

[W.Shakespeare]

# Tropes based on Opposition: Irony

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- the effect achieved when expectations are violated in a striking or humorous way; when someone says the opposite to what s/he means:

“Excellent! This day couldn't start off any better!”



# Sarcasm as a Type of Irony

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- sarcasm is another popular form of irony where the user intends to wittily attack or make a derogatory statement about something or someone:

“I’m trying to imagine you with a personality.”

# Antithesis

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Antithesis is a rhetorical device in which two opposite ideas are put together in a sentence to achieve a contrasting effect.

- Antithesis emphasizes the idea of contrast by parallel structures of the opposed phrases or clauses:
  - Man proposes, God disposes.
  - Love is an ideal thing, marriage a real thing.
  - Speech is silver, but silence is gold.
  - You are easy on the eyes, but hard on the heart.

# Tropes based on Understatement

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- Understatement is a way of speaking which minimizes the significance of something. When using understatement, a speaker or writer often employs restraint in describing the situation at hand and uses an expression with less emphasis or strength than would be expected:

“I’ve got a nice place here,” he said, his eyes flashing about restlessly. Turning me around by one arm, he moved a broad flat hand along the front vista, including in its sweep a sunken Italian garden, a half acre of deep, pungent roses, and a snub-nosed motor-boat that bumped the tide offshore.” [The Great Gatsby by F. Scott Fitzgerald]

“I’ll go with you and I’ll stay with you all the time. They just let the air in and then it’s all perfectly natural.” [“Hills like White Elephants” by Ernest Hemingway]

# Tropes based on Understatement: Litotes

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a form of understatement which uses a negative to assert the opposite, positive quality; can also use double negatives:

“He’s not unintelligent” (= quite clever)

“The portions were not very generous at the restaurant.” (=they were meagre)

“...I think we can safely say that our skills in the arts of irony, understatement and self-mockery are, on the whole, not bad.” (=very good) [Kate Fox, *Watching the English*, p.72]

# Litotes

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- “I want to claim that the rhetorical figure litotes is one of those methods which are used to talk about an object in a discreet way. It clearly locates an object for the recipient, but it avoids naming it directly.”

[J.R. Bergmann “*Talk at Work: Interaction in Institutional Settings*”]

# Task 1

## Metonymy, Irony, Antithesis, Understatement, Litotes

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- “At midnight I went on deck, and to my mate’s great surprise put the ship round on the other tack. His terrible whiskers flitted round me in silent criticism.” [The Secret Sharer by Joseph Conrad]
- “It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife.” [Pride and Prejudice by Jane Austen]
- “To err is human; to forgive divine.” [An Essay on Criticism by Alexander Pope]
- “And you, who have told me a hundred times how deeply you pitied me for the sorceries by which I was bound, will doubtless hear with joy that they are now ended forever. There was, it seems, some small error in your Ladyship’s way of treating them.” [The Silver Chain by Primula Bond]

# Tropes based on Overstatement: Hyperbole

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- This type of trope uses exaggerated statement for effect or emphasis. It is overstated and often ridiculous and not to be taken literally:

“You are a vampire, that’s all.”

[F.S.Fitzgerald, This Side of Paradise, p.172]

# Tropes: Periphrasis

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the use of excessive and longer words to convey a meaning which could have been conveyed with a shorter expression or in a few words:

“When absorbed in the task of defining a ‘national character’, it is easy to become obsessed with the distinctive features of a particular culture, and to forget that we are all members of the same species.” (=come from apes) [Kate Fox, *Watching the English*, p.11]

“All English people, whether they admit it or not, are fitted with a sort of social Global Positioning Satellite computer that tells us a person’s position on the class map as soon as he or she begins to speak.” (=can see to which class a person belongs) [Kate Fox, *Watching the English*, p.73]



# Periphrasis

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'Finn, you've been quiet. You started this ball rolling. You are, as it were, our Serbian gunman.' Hunt paused to let the allusion take effect.  
'Would you care to give us the benefit of your thoughts?'  
(=tell us what you think)

[Julian Barnes, *The Sense of an Ending* (2011)]

# Periphrasis and Euphemism

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- Some examples of periphrasis are purposeful in order to evade a taboo subject, such as in the case of euphemism.
- Euphemism is a mild way of saying something unpleasant or embarrassing (bodily functions, illegal behaviour, curse words). Euphemism often minimizes the discomfort the speaker feels with the subject at hand, and makes it more palatable by lessening the extremity of the situation:

To meet your Maker/to pass away = to die

In a family way/a bun in the oven = to be pregnant

# Euphemism

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- “You know the truth, and the truth is this: some Negroes lie, some Negroes are immoral, some Negro men are not to be trusted around women—black or white. But this is a truth that applies to the human race and to no particular race of men. There is not a person in this courtroom who has never told a lie, who has never done an immoral thing, and there is no man living who has never looked upon a woman without desire.”

[To Kill a Mockingbird (1960) by Harper Lee]

- Up to the 1960s ‘Negroes’ was a euphemism to refer to the race of people.
- In contemporary times it is offensive, ‘Afro-Americans’ is used instead.

# Dysphemism

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- The opposite of euphemism is dysphemism (*Gr.eu-* means “good”, *dys-* means “bad, abnormal”): **retard**, **moron**, **idiot** (speaking about mentally normal people); **How are you, Tom?** (nephew talking to his much older uncle, ‘uncle Tom’ is neutral in this case)
- “Speakers resort to **dysphemism** to talk about people and things that frustrate and annoy them, that they disapprove of and wish to disparage, humiliate and degrade. Curses, name-calling and any sort of derogatory comment directed towards others in order to insult or to wound them are all examples of **dysphemism.**” [Keith Allan and Kate Burridge, *Forbidden Words: Taboo and the Censoring of Language*, 2006]

# Task 2

## Hyperbole, Periphrasis, Euphemism, Dysphemism

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- “Thief!” Pilon shouted. “Dirty pig of an untrue friend!” [Steinbeck]
- “Dobby remembers how it was before Harry Potter triumphed... over He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named.” [J.Rowling]
- “He clutched at Lin's *unmentionables* as he hung head downward.” [Watch Yourself Go By by Al. G. Field]

# Epithets

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- a lexico-syntactic trope:
  - adjectival modifier – a silvery laugh
  - adverbial modifier – to smile cuttingly/sarcastically
  - address to the speaker – My sweet!
- have emotive or expressive connotations which help us see the attitude of the author to the object depicted

# Types of Epithets

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- conventional/standing: green wood, fair lady, fair England, salt seas, salt tears, true love
- tautological: fair sun, the sable night, wide sea
- explanatory: a grand style, unvalued jewels
- metaphorical: angry sky, laughing valleys

[Veselovsky 1989]

# Epithets

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## Prepositive:

- conventional: in the azure sky
- phrasal/holophrastic: “The conductor looked at him (...) with the usual Here’s-the-swot-in-glasses-as-wants-to-get-off-at-the-bloody-Prince-dale-Avenue-Request-Stop look, which always made Ted feel guilty...” [Adam Thorpe, *The Glow*]

## ○ Postpositive:

“There is no interrogation in his eyes  
Or in the hands, quiet over the horses neck,  
And the eyes, watchful, waiting, perceiving, indifferent.” [T.S.Eliot,  
from *Arnold* 2010]

## ○ Inverted:

an angel of a girl, a jewel of a film, a two-legged ski-rocket of a kid



# Task 3 Types of Epithets

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- It was opened by a small barrel of a woman, her fat arms shiny with suds. [The French Lieutenant's Woman by John Fowles]
- He acknowledged an early-afternoon customer with a be-with-you-in-a-minute nod. [D.Uhnak]
- As I said, Adrian was not a worldly person, for all his academic success. Hence the priggish (pedantic) tone of his letter, which for a while I used to reread with self-pitying frequency. When, at last, I replied to it properly, I didn't use any of that silly 'epistle' language.

[Julian Barnes, The Sense of an Ending (2011)]

# Lexical Analysis - the Process of Decoding Emotive Prose - Guidelines

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- focus on the **meanings repeated** throughout the text, on the one hand:
  - Repetition (coupling on the lexical level)
  - Synonymy
  - Semantic fields
- and on the **rare words** and **unconventional word combinations**, on the other:
  - Foreign words
  - Tropes and Stylistic devices
  - Expressive means:
    - Words belonging to different stylistic registers
    - Homonymy

# Lexical Analysis: Foreign Words

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the use of foreign words can mark the speech of erudite or arrogant characters:

'Shall we start with you, Finn? Put simply, what would you say this poem is *about*?'

Adrian looked up from his desk. 'Eros and Thanatos, sir.'

'Hmm. Go on.'

'Sex and death,' Finn continued, as if it might not just be the thickies in the back row who didn't understand Greek. 'Or love and death, if you prefer. The erotic principle, in any case, coming into conflict with the death principle. And what ensues from that conflict. Sir.'

[Julian Barnes, *The Sense of an Ending* (2011), p. 2]

# Lexical Analysis: Tautology

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- reinforces the idea, or sheds light on the speech portrait of the character:

(voice)

Never mind: I will announce myself. (*A beautiful, dark, tragic looking woman, in mantle and bonnet, appears at the door, raging furiously.*) Oh, this is charming. I have interrupted a pretty tete-a-tete. Oh, you villain! (*She comes straight at Grace. Charteris runs across behind the sofa and stops her. She struggles furiously with him. Grace preserves her self possession, but retreats quietly to the piano. Julia, finding Charteris too strong for her, gives up her attempt to get at Grace, but strikes him in the face as she frees herself.*)

[The Philanderer by George Bernard Shaw]

## Task 4 Lexical Analysis

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“Really, I don’t see why anthropologists feel they have to travel to remote corners of the world and get dysentery and malaria in order to study strange tribal cultures with bizzare beliefs and mysterious customs, when the weirdest, most puzzling tribe of all is right here on our doorstep.”

[Kate Fox, *Watching the English*, p.266]

# Task 4 Lexical Analysis Key

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## REPETITION:

- repetition of the meaning related to something inexplicable (semantic field: strange – bizarre – mysterious – weirdest – puzzling)

## OPPOSITION:

- metonymy – “remote corners” for “faraway places” versus “on our doorstep” for “in our own country/house”

## SEMANTIC LINK BETWEEN OPPOSED ENTITIES:

- both remote corners (strange, bizarre, mysterious) and own country (the weirdest, most puzzling) are inexplicable; though, the superlative marks own country as the most incomprehensible

## LEXICAL DEVIATION:

- unusual lexical distribution – the use of TRIBE related to her own nation, - elevates the meaning of the word *tribe* and lowers the meaning of the whole utterance – hence, humorous and ironic tone of the passage
- cognitive mechanisms of metonymy (tribe as a group of people) and metaphor (tribe as something wild and incomprehensible) are triggered

**MESSAGE:** “First anthropologists should study their own culture.”



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Thank you for your attention

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