

LEXICAL STYLISTIC DEVICES

Part 3



Figures of Quantity

Hyperbole, meiosis, litotes

Hyperbole

Hyperbole is exaggeration of some property of the described object which serves to intensify this characteristic and which is an expression of emotional evaluation of reality by the speaker.

e.g. Her family is one aunt about a thousand years old (F.Sc. Fitzgerald).

“His grey face was so long that he could wind it twice round his neck”

(Chandler)

Hyperbole

I remember a friend of mine buying a couple of cheeses at Liverpool. Splendid cheeses they were, ripe and mellow, and with a two hundred horse-power scent about them that might have been warranted to carry three miles, and knock a man over at two hundred yards

(J.K. Jerome).

Hyperbole



He heard nothing. He was more remote
than the stars (S.Chaplin).

Common Examples of Hyperbole



I haven't seen you for ages!

Your suitcase weighs a ton!

I am trying to solve a million issues these days.

Meiosis



Meiosis is the opposite of hyperbole. It is a deliberate use of understatement, the aim of which is to lessen, weaken, reduce the real characteristics of the object so that to show its insignificance.

Meiosis



In everyday speech:

It will cost you *a pretty penny*.

Compare: Это тебе в
копеечку влетит.

Meiosis



I was *half-afraid* that you have forgotten me.

Meiosis

Here follow two examples of meiosis taken from *The Buyer from Cactus City* by O. Henry. A New Yorker, owner of a big firm, talks condescendingly to the buyer mentioned in the title of the story:

"And what did you think of our little town?" asked Zizzbaum, with the fatuous smile of the Manhattanite.

His provincial visitor admits the achievements of New York, but tries hard to remain patriotic:

"You've got good water, but Cactus City is better lit up."

His host shoots at him another sarcastic meiosis:

"We've got a few lights on Broadway, don't you think, Mr. Platt?"

Litotes



Litotes is a form of understatement that is built by means of a peculiar use of negative constructions. The assertion of a positive feature is made by denying the opposite or contrary of the word or expression which otherwise would be used. As a result, the positive feature is somehow diminished by the negation.

The structural patterns of litotes:

"not" / "no" /	N. / Adi. / Adv. (the notional part should be
"never" / etc.	~ negative either in form or in meaning)

Litotes



Still two weeks of success is definitely *not nothing* and phone calls were coming in from agents for a week. (*Ph. Roth*)

Litotes



It was *not unnatural* if Gilbert felt a certain embarrassment.
(*Waugh*)


Litotes




He had all the confidence in the world, and *not without reason*.
(O'Hara)

Allusion

Allusion is a brief reference to some commonly known literary, legendary or historical event. The speaker (writer) does not explain what it means: he merely mentions some detail of what he thinks analogous in fiction or history to the topic discussed.



But just then Dan came - a serious young man with a ready-made necktie, who had escaped the city's brand of frivolity--an electrician earning 30 dollars per week who looked upon Lou with the sad eyes of Romeo, and thought her embroidered waist a web in which any fly should delight to be caught (O.Henry).



And then Joe, with the air of a Monte Cristo, drew forth a ten, a five, a two and a one – all legal tender notes – and laid them beside Delia's earnings (O'Henry).

Allegory

It is a device or literary genre where the characters and actions represent abstract ideas, f.ex. Some general truths, good and bad qualities, etc.




Good fame sleeps, bad fame creeps.




Every cloud has a silver lining.

Antithesis


Opposition or contrast of ideas, notions, qualities in the parts of one sentence or in different neighbouring sentences.



It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair: we had everything before us. we had nothing before us. we were all going direct to Heaven, we were all going direct the other way - in short the period was so far like the present period, that some of its nosiest authorities insisted on its being received for good or for evil, in the superlative degree of comparison only. (*Dickens*)



Don't use big words. They mean so
little. (*Wilde*)



His coat-sleeves being a great deal too long, and his trousers a great deal too short, he appeared ill at ease in his clothes. (*Dickens*)