

Expressive means and stylistic devices

Lexical expressive means

- ▶ Expressive means, stylistic devices, tropes, figures of speech are used to foreground utterances.
- ▶ According to the classification expressive means are split into **tropes** and **figures of speech**.

Tropes

Tropes are expressive means, based on the shift of meaning and their appearance of a figurative meaning of a word.

The transference of the name of one object to another object is based on different types of associations between these objects.

The most important are those of similarity (metaphorical group of tropes): **metaphor, personification, periphrasis, euphemism, irony, antonomasia, metonymy, synecdoche.**

Metaphor

A metaphor is a trope in which a word denoting an object (quality, action) is transferred to another object in order to show the resemblance between them.

A metaphor is looked upon as a hidden comparison (unlike the simile where the comparison is rendered explicitly).

- ▶ "pancake", or "ball", or "volcano" for the "sun";
- ▶ "silver dust", "sequins" for "stars";
- ▶ "vault", "blanket", "veil" for the "sky".

Metaphor

- ▶ **Metaphors** can be expressed by any notional part of speech:
- ▶ *The trees were powdered by April snow (verb);*
- ▶ *Blue dreams, sleepless moon (adj);*
- ▶ *to go majestically (adv).*

Classification of metaphors

Metaphors can be classified according to the degree of unexpectedness.

1. **Genuine or poetic metaphors** are those that are absolutely unexpected:

*I saw him coming out of the **anesthetic** of her charm.*

*His 2 million dollars were a little **nest egg** for him.*

*He **enveloped** her in a great embrace. (I. Murdoch).*

2. **Trite or lexical metaphors** are commonly used in speech and therefore sometimes fixed in dictionaries as expressive means:

a storm of indignation, a ray of hope, floods of tears, a flight of fantasy, a shadow of a smile, roots of evil, etc.

Personification

Personification is a kind of metaphor which endows a thing or a phenomenon with features peculiar of a human being:

- ▶ *The stars danced playfully in the moonlit sky.*
- ▶ *She did not realize the opportunity was knocking at her door.*
- ▶ *The bees played hide and seek with the flowers as they buzzed from one to another.*

Hyperbole

Hyperbole is a deliberate overstatement or exaggeration of a feature essential to the object:

He'll go to sleep, my God he should, eight Martinis before dinner and enough wine to wash an elephant.

Hyperbole may lose its quality as a stylistic device through frequent repetition and become traditional and it is reproduced in speech in its fixed form:

scared to death, immensely obliged, a thousand pardons. I haven't seen you for ages.

Irony

Irony is a trope in which a word acquires a meaning quite opposite to its primary dictionary meaning:

It must be delightful to find oneself in a foreign country without a penny in one's pocket.

Irony is generally used to convey a negative meaning. Therefore only words denoting positive concepts may be used ironically. The word containing irony is strongly marked by intonation. It has an emphatic stress.

Irony mustn't be confused with humour. The function of irony is not confined to producing just a humorous effect. It rather expresses a feeling of displeasure, regret, dislike, mockery.

Periphrasis

Periphrasis - the use of a longer phrase instead of a shorter and plainer form of expression. We speak of a periphrasis when we have the name of a person substituted by a descriptive phrase.

Periphrasis may be **traditional**, i.e. very often reproduced in speech:

- ▶ "the gentle / soft / weak sex" (women);
- ▶ "my better half " (my spouse);
- ▶ "minions of Law" (police), etc.

Periphrasis may be **stylistic**: ... *my son who has been so prematurely deprived of what can never be replaced (his mother died) (Dickens).*

Stylistic periphrasis can be divided into: **logical** and **figurative**.

Logical periphrasis is based on one of the inherent properties of the object described: *Instrument of destruction = pistols, the most pardonable of human weaknesses = love, the object of his admiration.*

Figurative periphrasis is based either on metaphor or metonymy: *to tie the knot = to marry, in disgrace of fortune = bad luck.*

The main function of periphrases is to convey a purely individual perception of the described object.

Euphemism

Euphemism is a word or phrase used to replace an unpleasant word or expression by a conventionally more acceptable one:

- ▶ *to die = to pass away, to expire, to be no more, to join the majority, to be gone, to kick the bucket, to go west.*

Euphemisms are synonyms which aim at producing a deliberately milder effect.

Euphemisms may be divided into several groups according to the sphere of application: religious, moral, medical or parliamentary.

- ▶ *Dan Foreman: Guys, I feel very terrible about what I'm about to say. But I'm afraid you're both being let go.*

Lou: Let go? What does that mean?

Dan Foreman: It means you're being fired, Louie.

Metonymy

In metonymy contrary to the metaphor there is an objectively existing relationship between two objects.

Metonymic relations may be varied in character:

- ▶ The name of an instrument may be used instead of the name of the action this instrument produces or associated with: *He earns his living by his pen.*
- ▶ A concrete thing may be used instead of an abstract notion:
 *“The camp, the pulpit and the law
 For rich men’s sons are free”. (Shelley)*
- ▶ The container - instead of the thing contained: *The hall applauded.*
- ▶ What the man possesses is used instead of the man himself: *He has married money.*
- ▶ The material - instead of the thing made of it: *The marble spoke.*

Metonymy

Metonymy may be traditional and genuine.

Genuine metonymy reveals an unexpected substitution of one word for another, or one concept for another on the ground of some strong impression produced by a chance feature of the thing:

“Then they came in. Two of them, a man with long fair moustaches and a silent dark man... Definitely, the moustache and I had nothing in common” (D.Lessing).

Traditional metonymy:

“crown” = king or queen”,

“cup or glass” = “the drink it contains”.

Synecdoche

Synecdoche is based on a specific kind of metonymic relationship which may be considered quantitative, i.e. using the name of a part to denote a whole or vice versa :

- ▶ *hired hands = workmen;*
- ▶ *society = high society;*
- ▶ *bread = food;*
- ▶ *For there can live no hatred in thine eye (W. Shakespeare. Sonnet XCIII).*

Antonomazia

Antonomazia (a particular form of metonymy) is a figure of speech in which some defining word or phrase is substituted for a person's proper name (for example, "the Bard of Avon" for William Shakespeare).

In fiction, there is a practice of giving to a character a proper name that defines or suggests a leading quality of that character (such as Squire Allworthy, Doctor Sawbones) is also called antonomasia.

- ▶ Tarzan - wild,
- ▶ Solomon - a wise man,
- ▶ The Dark Knight - Batman,
- ▶ The Führer - Adolf Hitler,
- ▶ Judas - Betrayer,
- ▶ Don Juan - a seducer of women,
- ▶ Schwarzenegger - strong,
- ▶ The Iron Lady - Margaret Thatcher,
- ▶ The King of Pop - Michael Jackson,
- ▶ An Einstein - an intelligent person, etc.

Define the type of the following tropes

1. The houses were black specks on a white sheet.
2. Geneva, mother of the Red Cross, hostess of humanitarian congresses for the civilizing of warfare!
3. When the war broke out she took down the signed photograph of the Kaiser and, with some solemnity, hung it in the men-servants' lavatory; it was her one combative action.
4. "The hospital was crowded with the surgically interesting products of the fighting in Africa".
5. "Will you have another cup?"
6. His parents bought him a new set of wheels.
7. "When I eventually met Mr. Right I had no idea that his first name was Always."