



# Stylistics of the English Language 6

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# Outline

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- Phonological Expressive Means and Stylistic Devices
- Graphical Expressive Means and Stylistic Devices

# Phonological expressive means and stylistic devices

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- onomatopoeia
- paronomasia
- stylistically marked errors in speech:
  - malapropism
  - spoonerism
  - eggcorn
  - Freudian slip
- consonance: alliteration
- assonance
- rhyme
- rhythm

# Onomatopoeia

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the formation of a word by imitating the natural sound; the use of words whose sounds reinforce their meaning or tone:

- On the word level: *giggle, grumble, murmur; mew, roar; bubble, splash;*
- On the sentence level: “And the silken, sad, uncertain rustling of each purple curtain” (E.A.Poe)

# Onomatopoeia: Types

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**Direct onomatopoeia** is a combination of speech-sounds which aims at imitating sounds produced in nature (wind, sea, thunder, etc.), by things (machines or tools, etc.) by people and by animals:

- **Machine noises**—honk, beep, clang, zap,
- **Animal names and sounds**—twitter, croak, howl, cuckoo, whip-poor-will, whooping crane, chickadee
- **Impact sounds**—boom, crash, whack, thump, bang
- **Sounds of the voice**—shush, giggle, growl, whine, blurt, whisper, hiss
- **Nature sounds**—splash, drip, whoosh, buzz, rustle

# Direct Onomatopoeia: Names

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# Onomatopoeia: Types

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**Indirect** onomatopoeia is a combination of sounds the aim of which is to make the sound of the utterance an **echo** of its sense. It is sometimes called “echo writing”: e.g. the imitation of the sounds produced by the soldiers marching over Africa:

“We’re foot—slog—slog—slog—sloggin’ over Africa —  
Foot—foot—foot—foot—sloggin’ over Africa —  
(Boots—boots—boots—boots—movin’ up an’ down  
again!)

There's no discharge in the war!”

[Boots (Infantry Columns) by R.Kipling (1903)]

# Onomatopoeia

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- I heard a Fly buzz – when I died –  
The Stillness in the Room  
Was like the Stillness in the Air –  
Between the Heaves of Storm –

["I heard a Fly buzz – when I died –" by Emily  
Dickinson]



# Paronomasia

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- the simultaneous use of different in meaning but similar in sound words for euphonic (melodious) effect or for the reinforcement of meaning or tone:

'Let us say then it is a story about appetite: appetite in its many aspects and dimensions, its perversions and falling off, its strange reversals and refusals.'

[H.Mantel, Experiment in Love, 69]

'It (the love affair) maybe insane but it's not inane (senseless).'

[This Side of Paradise by F.S.Fitzgerald]

\*\*\*sometimes paronyms are considered as words which are a derivative of another and have a related meaning: '*wisdom*' is a paronym of '*wise*'

# Paronomasia

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○ **Claudius:**...But now, my cousin Hamlet, and my son.....

**Hamlet:** [aside] A little more than kin, and less than kind... Not so, my lord, I am too much in the sun.....

[*Hamlet* by William Shakespeare]

# Errors in Speech: Malapropism

(L. “inappropriate”)

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- the use of an incorrect word in place of a word with a similar sound (which is often a paronym), resulting in a nonsensical, often humorous utterance
- comes from a character named "Mrs. Malaprop" in R. Sheridan's 1775 play *The Rivals*. Mrs. Malaprop frequently misspeaks (to great comic effect) by using words which don't have the meaning she intends, but which sound similar to words that do
- **Characterture** instead of **charicature**  
[*To Kill a Mockingbird* by H. Lee]

# Malapropism

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- “I’m fading into Bolivian.” (substituted “Bolivian” for “oblivion”)
- “I think he’s suffering from a nervous shakedown.” (substituted “shakedown” for “breakdown”)
- “This is unparalyzed in the state’s history.” (substituted “unparalyzed” for “unparalleled”)

# Spoonerism

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- switching the vowels or consonants in two words in close proximity, either unintentionally as an error or intentionally for humorous purposes:

“I’d rather have a bottle in front of me than a frontal lobotomy (surgical incision into a lobe of any organ).”

# Spoonerism

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- “Three cheers for our queer old dean!” (dear old queen)
- “A blushing crow.” (crushing blow)
- “Is the bean dizzy?” - ?
- “You have hissed all my mystery lectures!” - ?

## Eggcorn (from acorn)



- a substitution of a word or phrase for a word or words that sound similar or identical. The new phrase introduces a meaning that is different from the original but plausible in the same context :
  - “old-timer’s disease” for “Alzheimer’s disease”
  - “mating name” for “maiden name”

# Freudian Slip

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- an unintentional utterance that may reveal something in the speaker's unconscious:

if someone wanted to say, "I really love chocolate," but instead said "I really love Charlie," this might hint at an unconscious desire



# Task 1 Malapropism, Spoonerism, Eggcorn, Paronyms, Freudian Slip

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- Let's focus on day-today operations.
- Unfortunately, my affluence over my niece is very small.
- You have tasted a whole worm.
- **Mercutio**: "Nay, gentle Romeo, we must have you dance." **Romeo**: "Not I, believe me. You have dancing shoes with nimble soles; I have a soul of lead ... So stakes me to the ground I cannot move..."  
[Shakespeare]

# Consonance and Alliteration

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- consonance - a poetic device characterized by the repetition of the same consonant two or more times in a short succession, as in “all **mammals named Sam** are **clammy**”
- alliteration - a stylistic literary device identified by the repeated sound of the **first** consonant in a series of words: “**f**riends and **f**amily”
- creates aural harmony and rhythm

# Consonance and Alliteration

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- **All's well** that ends **well**.
- **Peter Piper** **p**icked a **p**eck of **p**ickled **p**eppers.
- **C**uriosity **k**illed the **c**at.
- A **b**lessing in **d**is**g**uise.
- "My fellow Americans, **a**sk not what your **c**ountry **c**an do for you, **a**sk what you **c**an do for your **c**ountry."—John F. Kennedy

# Assonance

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a literary device characterized by the repetition of the same vowel sounds to create an internal rhyming, to increase the stress on a subject or to add flair/expressivity:

“I bring fresh showers for the thirsting flowers” (Shelley)

# Assonance

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- “But some punks want to jump up  
With a sharp tongue and their fronts up  
Like we got here by dumb luck  
But they just want to become us.”

[“Bangarang” by Doomtree]

# Rhyme

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repetition of identical terminal sound combinations or words in verse in order to produce euphonic effect, to serve as a mnemonic device or to mark off the end of the lines:

- In 1492, Columbus sailed the ocean blue.
- You have brains in your head; you have feet in your shoes. You can steer yourself any direction you choose.  
[Dr.Seuss]

# Rhyme: Types

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- perfect - mind and kind; toasting and roasting;
- imperfect (near) - wing and caring; thing and missing
- identical rhyme - way, weigh and whey
- eye rhyme - good and flood

# Rhyme

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- “Fate hired me once to play a villain’s part.  
I did it badly, wasting valued blood;  
Now when the call is given to the good  
It is that knave who answers in my heart.”

[“Between the Acts” by Stanley Kunitz]



# Rhythm

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a regular repeated pattern of sounds in speech, words, phrases, sentences; it is created by doubling of words and sounds; polysyndeton, asyndeton; parallelism (anaphora, epiphora):

- No tree, no shrub, no blade of grass, not a bird or beast, not even a fish that was not owned!

# Task 2 Onomatopoeia, Consonance, Alliteration, Assonance, Rhyme, Rhythm, Paronomasia

- “Veni, vidi, vici.” [Julius Caesar]
- “Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness.” [Keats  
“To Autumn”]
- “And the raven, never flitting, still is sitting, still is  
sitting.” [Poe, “The Raven”]
- *ba-ba* in Chinese, *tut-tut* in French,  
*pu-pu* in Japanese, *fom-fom* in Portuguese  
and *bim-bim* in Vietnamese
- “Oxford is a richly diverse community. At Oxford  
Today, we endeavour to reflect that diversity,  
reporting objectively and independently on  
developments, discoveries and debates (sometimes  
heated) within one of the most celebrated centers  
of learning.” [Oxford Today, 2009, 3]

# Graphical Expressive Means

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- graphon
- italicisation (italics )/ the use of boldface type
- capitalisation
- repetition of letters
- violation of type and spelling
- the use of punctuation

# Graphon

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the intentional violation of the generally accepted spelling used to reflect peculiarities of pronunciation or emotional state of the speaker; it is identified with the help of deliberate misspelling, hyphenation, capitalisation, apostrophe:

- “Aw – I b’lieve, the Umuricun revolution was lawgely an affair of the muddul clawses.” [S.Fitzgerald, *This Side of Paradise*, 8]
- “Nemmine,” he managed to articulate drowsily. “Sleep in `em.” [S.Fitzgerald, *This Side of Paradise*, 192]

# Graphon – Unconventional Graphology

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- running words together in unbroken compounds: **coffinlid,**  
**pettycoatbodice** [Joyce]
- graphically broken words: “**How, is,**  
**my, lit, tle, friend? how, is, my, lit,**  
**tle, friend?”** [Dickens’s talking clock in *Dombey and Son*]

# Italicisation

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the use of italics to highlight either the meaning or the form of the word in question, or to mark the way the word is pronounced:

- “Pale moons like that one” – Amory made a vague gesture - “make people *mysterieuse*. You look like a young witch...” [S.Fitzgerald, This Side of Paradise, 13]

# Capitalisation

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the use of capital letters to emphasise the meaning of the word, to mark headings or the way the word or a sentence is pronounced:

- Mr.Podsnap addressing foreigners: “How Do You Like London?” [Our Mutual Friend by Ch.Dickens]
- ‘In other words you do an old familiar thing, like bottling dandelion wine, and you put that under RITES AND CEREMONIES. And then you think about it, and what you think, crazy or not, you put under DISCOVERIES AND REVELATIONS.’

[Dandelion Wine by Ray Bradbury, 1974, p. 15 ]

# Repetition of letters

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conveys hesitancy or emotionality in the speech representation:

- 'It was very like riding into town and slipping off his horse before it had stopped – *yeehaa* in a cloud of dust - and all the townsfolk scratching their foreheads and wondering who this goddamn good-lookin' stranger was.' [A.Thorpe, The Glow]



# Functions of phonetic and graphical means

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- To emphasise the meaning of the word/phrase in question
- To draw the speech portrait
- To connote a certain atmosphere or mood
- To add euphony and flair to the utterance
- To assist in memorising particular information

# Task 3 Phonetic and Graphical Means

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(listen)

this a dog barks and  
how crazily houses  
eyes people smiles  
faces streets  
steeples  
are eagerly

tumbl

ing through wonder  
ful sunlight

[E.E.Cummings, 73 poems]

# Task 3 Analysis

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**Message:** the poem describes a moment of a happy revelation of a person, probably in springtime

**Graphical level:**

- the name of the poem is in brackets and not capitalised, which looks like a remark and creates the atmosphere of intimacy with the reader
- there are no commas and no full stops in the poem, all the words are put together resembling the stream-of-consciousness technique - suggesting the lack of order, everything being in a whirl
- the meaning of the word "tumbling" is reinforced on the graphical level (the word being set apart from the rest of the poem and graphically broken) - message - being dizzy with the sun and a lot of life (and love?) around
- the word "wonderful" is graphically broken to convey the idea of sunlight being full of wonder

## Task 3 Analysis (2)

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### Phonological level:

- the example of direct onomatopoeia 'barks' comes right after the name of the poem 'listen' which immediately involves the reader;
- two incongruent feelings are brought up in the poem: at the beginning unexpectedness and dizziness by Z-consonance (crazily, houses, eyes, smiles, faces) and in the second part harmony and love by L-consonance (steeple, eagerly, tumbling, wonderful, sunlight)



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Thank you for your attention

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