

# **The Major Concepts of Stylistics. Style as a Linguistic Phenomenon.**

Lecture 2



# Conceptions of style



# Style

a specific characteristic  
of a human activity  
presupposing some  
choice within the  
system of accepted  
norms, a way, a mode,  
a manner of fulfilling  
some activity

K.A. Dolinin



# Characteristics of style



1. a set of characteristics by which we distinguish one author from another, one social group, trend, period, etc. from another

2. something belonging to the **plane of expression**



# **What is style in language?**

Language - a vehicle of human communication (some kind of activity).

Style – a manner of conducting this activity.

# **Style in linguistics**

- aesthetic function and emotional colouring of language
- EMs and SDs of language
- synonymous ways of expressing the same idea
- individual manner of using language

# **Style as a decoration of language**

Style and language – 2 separate bodies.

Style – like a trimming to a dress.

# **Style as a technique of expression**

Style – an ability to write clearly, correctly and in an interesting manner.

Style in the utilitarian sense, can be taught.

# **Style as a literary genre**

Classical style, realistic style, the style of Romanticism, etc.

Is applied to different types of literary works – fable, novel, ballad, etc.

# **Style depending on the aim of communication**

Functional style

A system of interrelated language means which serves a **definite aim** of communication

# **The problem of the norm. Deviations from the norm**

Style is a product of individual choices and patterns of choices among linguistic possibilities.

S. Chatman

# What is the norm?

1. the invariant of the norm (an abstraction: phonetic, lexical, grammar and spelling rules of a language)
2. its variants (realized in concrete texts)

# Norm

a set of stable language means which are recognized by the language community as a model or standard

# Two opposite points of view

Style reveals  
itself through  
variations  
within the limits  
of the norm.

Anything that can be  
labelled as “stylistic”  
is already a deviation  
from the established  
norm.

Style is deviations.

(Enkvist)

# Deviations

## non-expressive

anomalies which  
are found in the  
speech of  
children,  
foreigners and  
people with  
mental disorders

e.g. *a books, me speaks*

## expressive

deliberate,  
motivated  
violations,  
producing a  
specific effect,  
often creating  
an image

e.g. *two wives ago,  
it was an I who*

# Rule – restriction – violation

1. every countable noun can take -s in plural and be used with an article
1. mass and abstract nouns are used with the  $\emptyset$  article and have no plural form
1. violation

1. a book – books

2. sand, water

sands (a vast amount, the sands of Sahara)

the waters of the Pacific

3. footsteps on the sand of war

# The Foregrounding Theory

**Foregrounding** – an ability of a verbal element to obtain extra significance in a given context.

Prague School of Structural Linguistics

Russian formalists – Y. Tynyanov, R. Jacobson, B. Tomashevsky, V. Shklovsky

# Theory of text structuring

- Underlining main ideas
- Dividing text into paragraphs (slow perception of an unbroken text )
- Headlines help to focus on main ideas

# Types of Foregrounding

1. Coupling
2. Convergence
3. Defeated Expectancy (Low Predictability)
4. Salient Feature (Strong Position)

# Coupling

a deliberate repetition of similar elements  
in similar positions

**R. Jacobson:** parallel constructions.

**S. Levin:** universal character of coupling.

# **Coupling on every level of language**

- phonetic – rhyme, alliteration, assonance
- lexical – synonyms, antonyms, derivatives, words belonging to one semantic field
- syntactical – anaphora, epiphora, polysyndeton

So long as men can breathe and eyes can  
see,

So long lives this and this gives life to me.

*W. Shakespeare*

Lend your money and lose your friend.

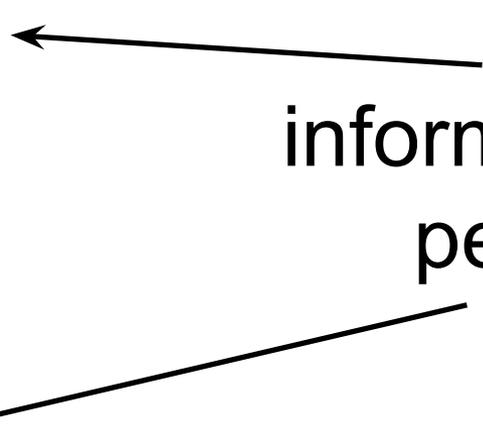
# Convergence

accumulation of SDs promoting the same  
idea, motive

# **Defeated Expectancy**

Some element of the text receives prominence due to the interruption in the pattern of predictability.

Колумб ← 2  
открыл informational  
окно peaks



Information peaks and recessions agree with organization of human attention

Talk all you like about automatic ovens and electric dishwashers, there's nothing you can have around the house as useful as a ***husband***.

Чем ***меньше*** женщину мы любим, тем ***лучше*** нравимся мы ей.

А.С. Пушкин «Евгений Онегин» Глава IV.

# **Semi-marked structures**

a variety of defeated expectancy  
associated with deviation from the  
grammatical and lexical norms

# N. Chomsky: gradation of grammatical norm



are generated according to grammar rules of a given language

grammatically incorrect sentences. Don't exist in a language, can't be generated according to its rules

# **Semi-marked structures**

structures that deviate from the established rules of grammar and require special interpretation

- are a linguistic basis for tropes and SDs

- low predictivness

- a source of expressing limitless number of vivid images (structures are vague and allow different interpretations)

- compression

Colourless green ideas sleep  
furiously.

N. Chomsky

# **Strong position**

- headline
- beginning of the text
- final episode

Thank you!

