# Stylistics of the English Language 2

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# Outline

- The types of stylistics

- Decoding Stylistics and its Techniques

# Types of stylistics

- Literary and linguistic stylistics
- Functional stylistics
- Comparative stylistics
- Decoding stylistics

# Literary and Linguistic Stylistics

## Common ground:

The literary language

The idiolect of a writer

### Different points of analysis:

-The composition of a work of art

-Various literary genres

-The writer's outlook

-The linguistic nature of the expressive means of the language

-Functional styles in their development and current state

# Literary and Linguistic Stylistics: Example

**Jack.**  [Nervously.]  Miss Fairfax, ever since I met you I have admired you more than any girl . . . I have ever met since . . . I met you.

**Gwendolen.**  Yes, I am quite well aware of the fact.  And I often wish that in public, at any rate, you had been more demonstrative.  For me you have always had an irresistible fascination.  Even before I met you I was far from indifferent to you.  [**Jack** looks at her in amazement.]  We live, as I hope you know, Mr. Worthing, in an age of ideals.  The fact is constantly mentioned in the more expensive monthly magazines, and has reached the provincial pulpits, I am told; and my ideal has always been to love someone of the name of Ernest.  There is something in that name that inspires absolute confidence.  The moment Algernon first mentioned to me that he had a friend called Ernest, I knew I was destined to love you.

# The Importance of Being Earnest
## by Oscar Wilde
Literary Criticism Approach:

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- Genre: drama, conversational style
- Author's attitude: witty and ironic style of writing
- Message: love confession of a nervous man to a light-headed girl
- Composition*: development*

# The Importance of Being Earnest
# by Oscar Wilde
## Linguistic Stylistics Approach:

Phono-graphical: many dots - groping for words; brackets

Morphological: the variety of tenses in Gwendolen's speech indicates her composure and ability to narrate as well as analyze her life, particularly her own thoughts, at the moment;

- Lexical: J's scarcity of vocabulary is contrasted with G's abundance of it; G's choice of lexis brings out her romantic nature and superficial interest in Jack;

- Syntactical: the sentences in G's speech are mostly simple revealing the control of thoughts. The compound sentence used suggests that the character lives according to the rules mentioned in "the more expensive monthly magazines". The final complex sentence with the subordinate clause of time represents the indirect love confession of the girl. The syntactical complexity grows towards the end;

- Stylistic: the antimetabole used in J's utterance points at his state of mind. The clash between the perfectly rounded phrase and empty content creates a humorous effect. In G's speech we can see indirect expression of affection conveyed by the litotes (far from indifferent);

# Functional Stylistics

- investigates functional styles or sublanguages of the national language, such as
  - belles-lettres/emotive prose
  - colloquial
  - business
  - publicist/media (discourse)
  - scientific
  - style of legal documents

# Functional Stylistics: Example

When The New Yorker was founded, *Tolstoy* and *Dostoyevsky* had already been well-known among the erudite readers, because no introduction of them has been traced in the magazine. *Tolstoy* is the only writer mentioned on a level with *Shakespeare*, four times at that, and is compared to God twice. It is a reflection of the fact that among the authors of Russian origin *Tolstoy* is the most revered. *Dostoyevsky*, in turn, is the most precedent writer in the group under scrutiny, since his name is the most resorted to during the period 1925-2015.

[Mikhaylov 2015: 89]

# Functional Stylistics: Example

○ The extract above is a fragment of science prose:

- the use of formal vocabulary (resorted to, under scrutiny)
- the use of quantitative/statistics method (four times at that; his name is the most resorted to during the period 1925-2015)
- the use of a reference with pages ([Mikhaylov 2015: 89])

# Comparative Stylistics

○ connected with the contrastive study of more than one language

○ studies the stylistic characteristics of one language in comparison with those of another one

○ linked to the theory of translation

Example 1

**English**: Today is Thursday.

**French**: Nous sommes jeudi aujourd'hui ("We are Thursday today"). - Subjectivism

**Ка-а-ма, чики неλня мэтаλ тэλ пы'т, пы'т тохоλамэλ, кана тохоλамэλ ниλха ηа''. Ниλин тянямтамэй ηэλха.** [from a conversation between two Nenets men]

Oh, this leading deer seems to have been taught by somebody other than you. Your Grandddad seems to have tamed him.

# Decoding Stylistics

developed by

- R.Jacobson (1896-1982), Closing Statement: Linguistics and Poetics (1960)
- M. Riffaterre (1924-2006), The Stylistic Function (1964)
- Y.M. Lotman (1922-1993), Структура художественного текста (1970)
- I. V. Arnold (1908-2010), Стилистика. Современный английский язык. Стилистика декодирования (2007)

# Decoding Stylistics

draws upon:

- Information Theory
- Psychology
- Statistical Studies
- Linguistics
- Literary Theory
- Literary Criticism

# Decoding Stylistics
# and the Theory of Communication

○ Claude Shannon, "The Mathematic Theory of Communication" (1949), the chain of communication:

*objective reality  > transmitter/encoder > message/text > receiver/ decoder > objective reality (surrounding the adressee)*

○ **The chain of communication in literature**:

*social reality (surrounding the writer) > writer (encoder) > literary work > reader (decoder) > social reality (surrounding the reader)*

# Encoding

- text analysis from the author's point of view: epoch, the historical situation, the political, social and aesthetic views of the author (processing and delivering)

- the process of internalizing of the outside information and translating it into the imagery

# Decoding

- text analysis from the reader's point of view: the composition of the text, the vocabulary used, sentence arrangement, projecting the ideas from the text onto the reality of the reader, etc.
- the process of interpreting the text in question

# Decoding Stylistics

- is in fact the reader's stylistics that is engaged in recreating the author's vision of the world with the help of concrete text elements and their interaction throughout the text

# Decoding Stylistics

- does not consider the stylistic function of any stylistically important feature separately but only as a part of **the whole** text

# Decoding Stylistics – Reader Response Criticism

○ From the reader's point of view the important thing is **not what the author wanted to say but what he managed to convey** in the text of his work.

# Decoder=Reader="Artist"

What is reading but divining (perceive by intuition or insight), interpreting, unraveling the mystery, wrapped in between the lines, beyond the words. So if the reader has no imagination, no book stands a chance.

[M. Tsvetaeva, «Poets on Critics»]

# Decoding Stylistics: Foregrounding Techniques

There are 5 major foregrounding techniques:

**1) coupling -** deals with the arrangement of textual elements that provide the unity and cohesion of the whole structure

**2) semantic field -** identifies lexical elements in text segments and the whole work that provide its thematic and compositional cohesion

# Foregrounding Techniques : Example

We think sometimes there's not a dragon left. Not one brave knight, not a single princess gliding through secret forests, enchanting deer and butterflies with her smile.

What a pleasure to be wrong. Princesses, knights, enchantments and dragons, mystery and adventure… not only are they here-and-now, they are all that ever lived on earth.

Our century they've changed clothes, of course. Dragons wear government-costumes, today, and failure-suits and disaster-outfits. Society's demons screech (to utter a shrill), whirl down on us should we lift our eyes from the ground, dare  we turn right at corners we've been told to turn left. So crafty (skilled in deception) have appearances become that princesses and knights can be hidden from each other, can be hidden from themselves.

[Richard Bach, The Bridge Across Forever, p.13]

# Foregrounding Techniques: Example Analysis

- Coupling – the text is viewed as one whole due to the repetition on the lexical level:
  - 1st paragraph – dragon, a brave knight, a single princess, enchanting
  - 2nd paragraph - princesses, knights, enchantments and dragons
  - 3d paragraph – dragons, princesses and knights
- Semantic Field of "Fairytale":
  - lexis denoting fairytale entities – dragon, a brave knight, princess, secret forest, enchanting deer and butterflies, enchantment, mystery, demons, crafty appearances
  - metaphorical references to the same lexis (ex. they've changed clothes)

# Decoding Stylistics: Foregrounding Techniques

## 3)**convergence** of expressive means

- accumulation of stylistic devices promoting the same idea, emotion, or motive: "But today she passed the baker's by, climbed the stairs, went into the little dark room – her room like a cupboard – and sat down on the red eiderdown. She sat there for a long time. The box that the fur came out of was on the bed. She unclasped the necklet quickly; quickly, without looking, laid it inside. But when she put the lid on she thought she heard something crying." [Mansfield, Miss Brill]

# Decoding Stylistics: Foregrounding Techniques

**4)defeated expectancy -** an appearance of an unpredictable element in the linear and logical organization of the text: "The child is father of the man." [Wordsworth]

**5)semi-marked structure -** a variety of defeated expectancy associated with the deviation from the grammatical and lexical norm: "And what they played was warm, sunny, yet there was just a faint chill -  a something, what was it? – not sadness – no, not sadness – a something that made you want to sing." [Mansfield, Miss Brill]