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LEXICO-SYNTACTICAL STYLISTIC DEVICES: STRUCTURE, TYPES AND FUNCTIONS

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Abstract

The present article is devoted to the study of lexico-syntactical stylistic devices in the English language. These devices represent a combination of lexical meaning and syntactic organization, which together create expressive and stylistic effects in speech. The paper analyzes the main types of such devices, including simile, periphrasis, litotes, gradation, antithesis, and represented speech. Special attention is paid to their structural features, semantic properties, and communicative functions. The research also highlights the role of these devices in literary texts, where they serve as tools for imagery, emotional impact, and evaluation. It is argued that lexico-syntactical stylistic devices are essential for understanding the deeper layers of meaning in discourse and for developing advanced language competence.

Key words: stylistic devices, lexico-syntactical means, simile, periphrasis, litotes, gradation, antithesis, represented speech, expressiveness, discourse.

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Introduction

Language is not only a средство передачи информации, but also a powerful instrument of influence and artistic expression. One of the key aspects of stylistics is the study of stylistic devices, which help speakers and writers achieve specific communicative goals.

Lexico-syntactical stylistic devices occupy a significant position in stylistics because they combine two levels of language — vocabulary and syntax. This interaction allows the speaker to manipulate meaning more effectively and to produce stronger emotional and aesthetic effects.

The aim of this article is to analyze the main types of lexico-syntactical stylistic devices, their structural characteristics, and their functions in different types of discourse.

1. Simile

Simile is a stylistic device based on the explicit comparison of two different objects, phenomena, or concepts. It is typically introduced by connectors such as like, as, as if, or as though.

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Examples:

- “Her voice was like music.”
- “He fought as a lion.”

The function of simile is to create vivid imagery and make the description more expressive and understandable. However, weak similes (overused clichés like “as busy as a bee”) reduce stylistic value, so their effectiveness depends on originality.

2. Periphrasis

Periphrasis is a stylistic device in which a descriptive phrase is used instead of a direct name. It often reflects the speaker’s attitude or evaluation.

Examples:

- “The city that never sleeps” (New York)
- “The fair sex” (women)

Periphrasis serves several functions: it avoids repetition, adds stylistic coloring, and may introduce irony or formality. But excessive use makes speech artificial and overloaded.

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3. Litotes

Litotes is based on understatement achieved through negation. It often expresses a positive idea by denying the opposite.

Examples:

- “Not uncommon” (meaning “common”)
- “He is not a fool” (meaning “he is clever”)

Litotes is frequently used to soften statements, express politeness, or create ironic effect. However, it may also weaken clarity if overused.

4. Gradation

Gradation is a stylistic device involving the arrangement of words or phrases in a sequence of increasing or decreasing intensity.

Types:

- Climax (ascending): emotional or logical strengthening
- Anticlimax (descending): deliberate weakening

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Examples:

- “He whispered, spoke, shouted.”
- “She lost her ring, her phone, and her patience.”

Gradation enhances emotional tension and focuses the reader’s attention on the key idea.

5. Antithesis

Antithesis is the juxtaposition of contrasting ideas in parallel structures. It emphasizes opposition and creates balance in expression.

Examples:

- “Many are called, but few are chosen.”
- “Speech is silver, but silence is gold.”

The power of antithesis lies in contrast. Without real semantic opposition, it becomes empty decoration.

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6. Represented Speech

Represented speech is a hybrid form between direct and indirect speech. It conveys the character's thoughts or words through the narrator's voice but preserves emotional and expressive features.

Types:

- Uttered represented speech (reproducing spoken words)
- Inner represented speech (reproducing thoughts)

Example:

He looked at the door. Why didn't she come? Was she late again?

This device allows deeper psychological insight and creates a closer connection between the reader and the character.

7. Functional Role of Lexico-Syntactical Devices

These stylistic devices are not decorative elements; they perform specific communicative functions:

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- intensifying emotional expression
- creating imagery and vivid descriptions
- conveying evaluation and attitude
- structuring the text logically and stylistically
- influencing the reader's perception

If used mechanically, they lose effect. Their value depends on context, precision, and moderation.

Conclusion

Lexico-syntactical stylistic devices play a crucial role in the English language by enhancing its expressive and communicative potential. The analysis of simile, periphrasis, litotes, gradation, antithesis, and represented speech demonstrates that these devices are powerful tools for shaping meaning and influencing the audience.

A deep understanding of these devices allows not only better interpretation of texts but also more effective use of language in both academic and creative contexts. Therefore, mastering stylistic devices is an essential part of linguistic competence.

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