

## THE ROLE OF MEANING CHANGES IN MODERN ENGLISH FIGURATIVE SPEECH

Our article deals with various types of semantic changes. First of all let's define the difference between literal and figurative language. The Columbia Guide to Standard American English provides us with the following explanation: *literal* means "exactly according to letter" and hence "factual", while *figurative* means "suggesting or using a figure or figures of speech" and also "representing in a figurative or emblematic way".[1]

Meanings change when people attach a new significance to a word, i.e. earlier meaning (whether extinct or still in use) is supplemented by or changed into a new one. There are many causes for this process; some internal to do with nature of language itself; some external caused by changes in the culture and society of the speakers, and environment in which that culture is set. The rate of changes varies from language to language, and from time to time within the same language.

Change of meaning will be best described if we distinguish the following tendencies in the development of the vocabulary:

Extension of meaning (or generalization);

Narrowing of meaning (or specialization);

Degradation of meaning (or pejoration);

Elevation of meaning (or amelioration); [2]

Other figures of speech such as metaphor, metonymy, hyperbole, zoozemy, euphemism etc.[4]

Let's examine all these tendencies separately.

Extension of meaning: (some writers call it widening of meaning [3]) means extension of word-range. Most of words begin as specific names for things. Gradually they implement more and more new meanings, the range of the notions they denote grows wider. *Fly* originally meant "to move through the air with wings"; now it denotes any kind of movement in the air or outer space and also quick movement in any medium. *Manuscript* – this word now refers to any author's copy written by hand or typed, but originally meant only something handwritten.

Many of words were derived from proper names by the process known as *antonomasia* ("1) using common name instead of proper or vice versa; 2)figurative definition of a person"). *Judas* – a personage from Bible (now means traitor; *Judas kiss* -a kiss of the traitor; *Judas hair* – red hair); *Pygmalion* (from Ancient Greek myths) – a person who fell in love with his own creation; *Romeo* (from Shakespeare's play) – 1)young fellow in love; 2)a kind of shoes; *utopian* – from Sir Thomas More's book "Utopia"; *vandal* – from the Vandals, a Germanic tribe.

The development of contextual meanings determined by certain syntactical word relations is worth noticing. Compare the different meanings of the word "to stop" in the following sentences: *The horse stopped to drink. The horse stopped drinking.*

Narrowing of meaning. Sometimes a word of wide meaning acquires a narrower, specialized sense in which it is applicable only to some objects it had previously denoted, or a word of wide usage is restricted in its application and comes to be used only in a special sense. This phenomenon is termed "narrowing of meaning" or "specialization". Many authors emphasize the fact that this type of semantic change is particularly frequent in vocabulary of professional and trade groups. [3]

The examples of narrowing are: *meat* – originally meant food and drink in general (old meaning sometimes remains in the language, e.g. *at meat*; *after meat*; or *meat for thought* – used figuratively etc.); *girl* – once meant "a young person of either sex, a child, boy or girl"; *voyage* – meant "a trip or journey", as it still does in French. In English, *voyage* means "a journey by sea or water".

Degradation of meaning involves a lowering in social scale connected with the appearance of a derogatory or scornful emotive tone reflecting the disdain of the upper classes towards the lower ones. The process of pejoration means actually that the word, for one reason or another, falls into disrepute. Here are some common English words originally neutral but now used with an unfavourable implication: *boor* -originally meant "farmer", *vulgar* – "common", "ordinary"; *silly* – "not well"; *idiot* – "a private person" etc.

Elevation of meaning. The process known as elevation or amelioration is the opposite to degradation. Words happen to rise from humble beginnings to positions of greater importance. Such changes are not always easy to account for in detail. Still we may say that social changes are of the very first importance with words that acquire better meanings.

Some highly complimentary words were applied to things of comparatively slight importance, e.g. *fame* – originally meant only "report", "common talk", "rumour"; *splendid* goes back to the simple meaning "bright"; *minister* – now means an important public official, but in earlier times meant merely "servant"; *nice* – in earlier times meant "foolish", being derived through French from Latin *nescius*; *marshal* – a Germanic word meaning "horse-servant" derived through French from Old High German.

Metaphor is the comparison of things that are not alike. As the example we would like to suggest the poem "Metaphors" by Sylvia Plath:

I'm a riddle in nine syllables,  
An elephant, a ponderous house,  
A melon strolling on two tendrils.  
O red fruit, ivory, fine timbers!  
This loaf's big with its yeasty rising.  
Money's new-minted in this fat purse.  
I'm a means, a stage, a cow in calf.  
I've eaten a bag of green apples,  
Boarded the train there's no getting off.

Metonymy and Synecdoche: two common types of metaphor:

Metonymy: the use of something closely related for the thing actually meant. In the poem "Out, Out" by Robert Frost we find the example of metonymy when the author describes an injured boy holding up his cut hand "as if to keep / The life from spilling..." Literally he means to keep the blood from spilling.

Synecdoche: the whole is replaced by the part. Shakespeare uses synecdoche when he says that the cuckoo's song is unpleasing to a "married ear", for he really means a *married man*.

Overstatement (or hyperbole): statement containing exaggeration. The poem "Speed Adjustments" by John Ciardi uses hyperbole in a description of a young boy:

Why does a boy who's fast as a jet  
Take all day – and sometimes two -  
To get to school?

Other examples: "He's as big as a house!" or "I'm so hungry I could eat a horse!"

Simile: a figure of speech in which an explicit comparison is made between two things essentially unlike. We'd like to pay attention to the fact that while we're using simile the comparison is made explicit by the use of some such word or phrase as *like*, *as*, *than*, *similar to*, *resembles*, *appears*, or *seems* as in the following example: "The sun is *like* a yellow ball of fire in the sky." The example of such phenomenon we may also find in the poem "Simile" by Scott Momaday:

What did we say to each other  
That we are *as* a deer  
Who walk single file  
With heads high  
With ears forward  
With eyes watchful  
With hooves always placed on firm ground  
In whose limbs there is latent flight.

Another good example is the poem by Frances Cornford:

"The Guitarist Tunes Up"  
With what attentive courtesy he bent  
Over his instrument;  
Not *as* a lordly conqueror who could  
Command both wire and a wood,  
But *as* a man with a loved woman might,  
Inquiring with delight  
What slight essential things she had to say  
Before they started, he and she, to play.

Personification: a figure of speech in which human attributes are given to an animal, an object, or a concept.

"The Wind"  
The wind stood up and gave a shout.  
He whistled on his fingers and

Kicked the withered leaves about  
And thumped the branches with his hand  
And said he'd kill and kill and kill  
And so he will and so he will.

Another example: "The stuffed bear smiled as the little boy hugged him close".

Zoosemy. Names of animals are often used metaphorically to denote human qualities.

A few typical illustrations are the following: a cruel fellow may be called *a tiger*; a crafty person may be called *a fox*, or *a sly dog*; a lively child may be called *a chicken*, etc.

Euphemism: the act or an example of substituting a mild, indirect, or vague term for one considered harsh, blunt, or offensive. E.g.: *to lie – to distort the facts, mispresent the facts, to distort the truth; deaf – hard of hearing*. Sometimes euphemism is connected with the substitution of unpleasant words, e.g. *to die – to pass away, mellow or elevated for drunk* and so on.

To sum up we must say that the role of meaning changes in Modern English figurative speech is very important. Lack of the speaker's knowledge in this field causes misunderstanding in conversation and in reading literature, especially poetry.

#### References

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## F. SCOTT FITZGERALD'S STYLE IN THE NOVEL "TENDER IS THE NIGHT"

F.S.Fitzgerald is one of the most recognized figures in American literary and cultural history, not only as one of the major writers of twentieth century, but also as a man whose life story excites the fascination of a public that knows him primarily as the author of "Tender is the Night" and "The Great Gatsby". F.S.Fitzgerald is a marvelous creator who has been praised as a "writer of staggering talent"[3,136]. Any study of his career must trace its familiar trajectory: early success, then public oblivion, and finally posthumous resurrection. The literary works of the author have gained a great success in the world literature and modern linguostylistics and the central question about Fitzgerald's work is probably a question about its maturity of perception. The writer's life had a great influence on his literary activity. His philosophical outlook and ideas are reflected in his novels and that is why Fitzgerald's life and opinions cannot be wholly separated from his works; the connections are too intimate.[3,25]

Fitzgerald is an extremely language conscious writer. His novel "Tender is the Night" is a rich field to investigate from the linguo- stylistic point of view. Critics of F. Scott Fitzgerald have condemned his works for their unconventional aspects of style. However, on a closer look, one will discover that his use of diction, structure, and characterization are each carefully calculated. These aspects of Fitzgerald's style are brilliantly woven to provide meaning to his novel "Tender is the Night."

Of all of his aspects of style, most noticeable and important is Fitzgerald's use of diction. It is through it that he develops the distinctive tone or atmosphere through which he can best present themes that reveal truths about society. Fitzgerald uses descriptive phrases with words that evoke responses from the other senses. In reading the first paragraph of the novel, one can almost feel the hot sun and cool breeze of the French Riviera through Fitzgerald's masterful writing:

*On the pleasant shores of the French Riviera, about half way between Marseilles and the Italian border, stands a large, proud, rose-colored hotel. Deferential palms cool its flushed facade and before it stretches a short dazzling beach. . . . a dozen old villas rot like water lilies among the massed pines. . . .*"[4,3]

Through his diction, Fitzgerald is actually able to capture realistic images of his age and convey it to the reader, creating the tone that sets the stage for themes of moral messages of that age.

Another interesting thing is the structure of the work. There are few versions of the novel "Tender is the Night". One of the main differences here is its interesting composition. In one variant