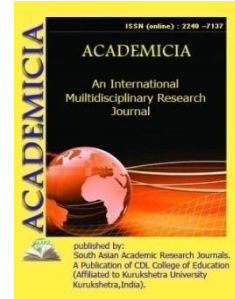




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## LINGUISTIC INTERPRETATION OF THE EPITHET IN FRENCH

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### ABSTRACT

*This article examined the opinions of linguistic scientists about the history of the formation of an epithet as a stylistic means of expressing reality. Conclusions are drawn from a comparative study of scientific works of several linguists on the definition of the meaning of the word "epithet". Later, the epithet becomes a favorite means of characterization. The frequent use of the epithet in speech, especially in artistic speech, is explained by the need to make up for the worn out elements of expressiveness in words. "Behind another epithet lies the accumulation of metaphors, comparisons and distractions, a whole history of taste and style in its evolution from the ideas of the useful and the desirable to the isolation of the notion of the beautiful."*

**KEYWORDS:** *Epithet, Stylistic Means, Means Of Characterization, Expressiveness, Tautological Epithets, Explanatory Epithets, Poetic Definition*

### INTRODUCTION

The epithet as a stylistic means of characterization has been known for a long time. The history of the development of this category can be presented in the form of three directions: rhetorical, psychological and logical.

This category was noticed in Ancient Greece and Ancient Rome, where rhetoric flourished. Although rhetoric did not deal with questions of theory, but only sought to teach people to write and speak correctly, some of the theoretical positions formulated by Aristotle in Rhetoric and Poetics were the basis of stylistic science and largely determine the modern understanding of some tropes. [1.5]

Aristotle and Quintilian spoke of the epithet as a word with a certain concrete meaning and having a function in poetry - decoration, and in prose - an expression of an additional characteristic. Quintilian said: "This is how the epithet adorns speech. Poets use it more often

and more freely. They are satisfied that the epithet fits the word to which it is attached, and we do not blame them for "white Zuls" or "wet wines." For orators, if the epithet does not add to the meaning, it turns out to be superfluous, but there are such epithets, without which speech is weaker".

Quintilian considered the main thing the figurative meaning of the epithet. Aristotle and Quintilian warned against misusing the epithet, which can make speech "confusing" and style "cold." As you can see, even then the epithet was perceived as a stylistic means, equally related to poetry and prose.

Later, the epithet becomes a favorite means of characterization. The frequent use of the epithet in speech, especially in artistic speech, is explained by the need to make up for the worn out elements of expressiveness in words. As Vandries notes, "expressiveness in expressive words wears out especially quickly. The word becomes dull, worn out. "And would like to resurrect such a word, revive it, draw attention to it. [2.136]

In folk poetry, an epithet is assigned to a certain word and creates a so-called permanent epithet, the latter merges with the word so that it becomes its property: the field is clear, the sea is blue, the maiden is red. In the 19th century, there is a "psychological" approach to the epithet. Potebnya, for example, believed that this or that stylistic phenomenon did not arise as such, but is a product of a certain stage in the development of thinking; he considers the entire development of language as a process of changes in the "internal form of the word." The epithet, Potebnya and his followers, were considered as a definition capable of returning the word to its forgotten inner form. Perhaps the most interesting statement about the epithet we find in the book by A.A. Potebnya "From notes on the theory of literature. Paths and figures": "Any definitive, decreasing the volume and increasing the content of a concept, brings this concept closer to concreteness; already ancient philosophers, like Quintilian, distinguish the epithet poetic from rhetorical, poetic definition from prosaic. The prosaic epithet makes a distinction, completely excludes a certain meaning from thought. For example, if there are two Dons, the great and the small (Donets), and of course only the first, then the great epithet, necessary for clarity, will be prosaic".

We should dwell on the study of A.N. Veselovsky, who came close to studying the epithet in its development. "Behind another epithet lies the accumulation of metaphors, comparisons and distractions, a whole history of taste and style in its evolution from the ideas of the useful and the desirable to the isolation of the notion of the beautiful." A change in style traditions affects a change in the nature of the epithet. Veselovsky wrote about the gradual loss of the main objective meaning in the epithet and called it "oblivion of the real meaning of the epithet, and its adhesion to the defined - the process of "petrification".

His classification of epithets is not much different from the traditional one. The division of epithets into 2 groups: explanatory and tautological, is based on the historical development of the epithet and on its logical analysis.

Tautological epithets are epithets that repeat the signs inherent in the word itself - defined: *white light, the sun is red, the sea is blue.*

Explanatory - based on some feature that can be considered "essential in the subject or characterize it in relation to the practical goal and ideal perfect

This division looks somewhat contradictory if we turn to the very definition of the term of the epithet in Veselovsky. "An epithet is a one-sided definition of a word that emphasizes some characteristic, outstanding quality of an object." The main flaw in Veselovsky's research, as Mikhail Lopatto notes in "An Experience of Introduction to Prose Theory," is an incomplete definition of the term itself.

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Many Russian linguists have studied the theory of the epithet without giving it a definition. Views close to those of Veselovsky regarding the development of the epithet are expressed by P.D. Pervov.

The scheme of development of the epithet can be imagined in parallel with the process of cognition of reality. Cognition occurs by generalizing the essential features and properties of objects. The epithet in this case repeats the root meaning of the word, which has become unclear over time.

In the case when the cognitive process highlights some essential feature of the object, the epithet contributes to the expression of the selected feature, and then it is the result of the semasiological process.

The "logical" point of view on the epithet is expressed in the works of Gornfeld and Tomashevsky. Gornfeld, transferring logical categories to the grammatical definition, identifies the epithet with analytical definitions. He writes: "The epithet - the beginning of the decomposition of the merged complex of representation - highlights the feature already given in the word being defined."

From this definition it is clear that the epithet is considered as a "sign" revealed analytically from the quality of the object. This narrows the concept of an epithet as a stylistic phenomenon. Gornfeld's merit is that he historically considers this category: "The history of the epithet is the history of not only the poetic style, but also the entire poetic consciousness from its physiological and anthropological principles, to their enslavement in the ranks of formulas."

Based on the theory of A.A. Potebnya, Tomashevsky builds his own concept of the epithet and includes it in the "Trope" section. "An epithet, he writes, is a so-called feature that accompanies a word ... This is the most common type of grammatical definition." [3.34]

Further, he interprets it as a definition that leaves the scope of the concept unchanged and does not expand its content – “The epithet does not add anything to the content, it seems to regroup the features, pushing into the clear field of consciousness that feature that might not have been present.”

B.V. Tomashevsky expresses a concept close to that of I.P. Lyskov, who also wrote that “the scope of concepts with and without an epithet remains the same.”

According to Lyskov, an epithet serves to create a vivid idea of an object on the basis of one characteristic feature that stands out among many others. The positive, in our opinion, is that Lyskov does not equate the epithet with the grammatical definition. We fully share his idea that epithets and definitions are in different planes: an epithet is a stylistic, complex and multifaceted term, often depending on extralinguistic factors, the definition is grammatical. Any epithet is at the same time a definition from a grammatical point of view, therefore, the very formulation of the question of whether an epithet can or cannot be identified with a definition seems to us unreasonable.

As already noted, the French term "epithet" is used by different authors with different meanings, then in the meaning of "adjective" then "attribut", then "determinatif". Therefore, it is important to emphasize that an epithet cannot be equated with a "definition." From our point of view, an objection is raised by the following statement by Lyskov "... for every significant part of speech there may be an epithet." In grammatical terms, the definition always refers to a word with an objective meaning, therefore we consider an epithet as a word referring to a noun.

It should be noted that great attention was paid to the epithet in linguistic literature, but each researcher interpreted it in his own way and put his own content into this word. V.N. Zhirmunsky, in his article “On the question of an epithet, proposed to distinguish between an epithet in the “ broad sense of the word ”and an epithet in the “ narrow sense of words ”. By the first, the author understands any definition highlighting “an occasional feature that captures one of the particular aspects of the phenomenon”, and by the second, a definition that repeats the feature that is contained in the word itself. Some linguists were interested in particular issues related to the evolution of the epithet “an epithet is the result of a semasiological process.”

Considers an epithet in connection with its function in a sentence and does not clearly define it. “An epithet is an apt word” or “A poetic definition is what an epithet is.” Of the various types of epithets, MD Rybnikova mentions a permanent epithet, a favorite epithet and a complex epithet. "Emotionally colored" epithets. [4.105]

Many works and articles are devoted to the functions of the epithet in the works of writers, including the aesthetic function. In these works, the epithets are differently classified into: general linguistic and individual. By means of a general linguistic epithet, a transition is made from the general to the particular, from the abstract to the concrete, since the epithet limits the meaning of the noun being defined, thus the lost figurativeness of the word is replenished. Individual epithets are considered the property of the writer's style. Professor Mandelstam in his book "On the nature of Gogol's style" put forward the division into objective and subjective as a classification principle, understanding by an objective epithet the expression of a feature objectively inherent in an object, while a subjective epithet is created under the influence of the

writer's mood and is a kind of metaphor. Such a classification, it seems to us, does not accurately express the nature of the epithet.

Recognition of functional stylistics as "a linguistic science that studies the features and patterns of the functioning of language in various types of speech ... makes it possible to study the functional tasks performed by this visual means, and also to clarify the scope of its use. In this work, an attempt will be made to summarize the already known data and analyze this stylistic tool, based on its informative and aesthetic significance. The choice of an epithet as an object for analysis is due to its pictorial and expressive function in communication. For a very long time, the epithet was seen as an artistic definition of a noun in poetry and fiction.

The use of an epithet to achieve aesthetic goals is not a monopoly of the functional style of artistic speech. The opera of the use of the epithet is very diverse and there is no reason to attribute it only to fiction, but it should be emphasized that its use is ambiguous in different functional styles.

Recently, a number of theoretical works devoted to the epithet have appeared; research was carried out on the material of the German and English languages. In novelism, the structural and stylistic features of the epithet have not yet been fully disclosed. Until now, there is no consensus on the essence of the epithet, its grammatical forms have not been determined, nor its role in the system of pictorial means of the French language.

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