PROSODY AS ICONICITY

ISOCOLON'S SEMANTIC AND RHETORICAL HOMOGENEITY EFFECTS

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Iconicity in Language and Literature

UNIVERSITY OF WATERLOO | FACULTY OF ARTS

EXAMPLE

“Two thousand years ago the proudest boast was 'Civis Romanus sum.' Today in the world of freedom, the proudest boast is 'Ich bin ein Berliner.'”

Kennedy 1963

ISOCOLON

- other names:
  rhythmic parallelism, equality, cadence, compar, syzygia, tricolon, parison
- definition:
  two or more multiword sequences with identical prosodic contours
- contrast with parison, whose definition is:
  two or more multiword sequences with identical syntactic structure

ICONICITY IN ISOCOLON

- syntagmatic iconicity:
  "iconicity within the linearity of text or discourse" (Nöth 2000)
- exophoric iconicity (for later):
  resemblance between signans and signatum
- endophoric (or intralinguistic or second-order) iconicity:
  resemblance of two or more signantia

EXAMPLE

“Perrexi, circumspexi, superavi.”
“Veni, vidi, vici.”

Johansen 1996

EXAMPLE

“Those who don't do anything are encouraging disgrace and violence. On the other hand, we recognize right as well as truth when we act boldly.”

REPETITION

REPETITION

- every sign "presupposes a prior acquaintance with [an] object" (Nöth 2000)
- isocolon provides a setting for the ideas in each phrase to be conceptually joined or compared (Fahnestock)
- there is an analogue between neural processes and higher cognitive processes (Gregg 1984)
- psycholinguists have "recorded quicker recognition time for highly constrained, predictable sentences" (Fahnestock 2005)

EXAMPLE

“Readers don't need to write but writers do need to read.”

REPETITION

- see "Birds of a feather flock conjointly (?): rhyme as reason in aphorisms" (McGlone & Tofighbakhsh 2000)
- "language has a general iconic tendency whereby semantic sameness is reflected also by formal sameness" (Antilla 1972)

EXAMPLE

as well as

“Those who don't do anything are encouraging disgrace ~~and~~ violence. On the other hand, we recognize right as well as truth when we act boldly.”

Example with medial repetition

PARALLELISM & SYMMETRY

PARALLELISM

- parallelism emphasises correspondences between two phrases (Dupriez)
- repetition (in parison) "produce[s] an impression of coordination, leveling, or similarity", "epitomize[s] a comparison" (Fahnestock 2014)
- similarity in structure of one colon highlights the features of the other colon (Lotman qtd. in Christiansen)

EXAMPLE

"A pessimist sees difficulty in every opportunity.
An optimist sees opportunity in every difficulty."

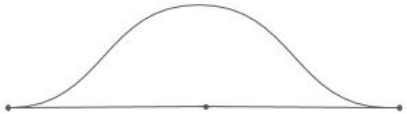
Doxa; often attributed to Winston Churchill

TYPES OF SYMMETRY

A pessimist sees difficulty in every opportunity. An optimist sees opportunity in every difficulty.

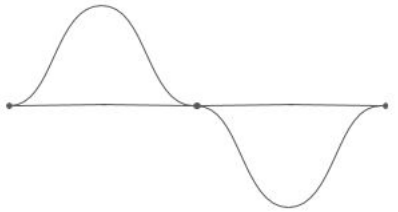
A curve with *translative* or mirror *symmetry* about the median.

e.g.
opportunity,
difficulty,
sees,
in every



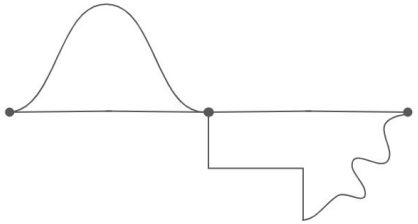
A curve with *mirror symmetry* about the median.

e.g.
opportunity/difficulty



A curve *antisymmetric* about the median.

e.g.
opportunity/difficulty?
optimist/pessimist



A curve *asymmetric* about the median.

e.g.
pessimist/every

REPETITION AND TRANSLATIVE SYMMETRY

Who is here so base, that he would be a bondman?

If any, speak; for him I have offended.

Who is here so rude, that would not be a Roman?

If any, speak; for him I have offended.

Who is here so vile, that will not love his country?

If any, speak; for him I have offended.

Shakespeare, Julius Caesar 3.2

EXAMPLE

"Those who don't do anything are encouraging disgrace as well as violence. On the other hand, we recognize right as well as truth when we act boldly."

Those who act boldly are recognizing

Example with medial and structural repetition

EXAMPLE

“Those who don't do anything are encouraging disgrace as well as violence. Those who act boldly are recognizing right as well as truth.”

Example with medial and structural repetition

RHYTHM

RHYTHM AND EXOPHORIC ICONICITY

- rhythmic patterns provoke an "aural image of bombardment" (Bernhart 1999)
- the rocking of a lullaby could be an "intrinsically coded act" (ibid.)
- speech itself is a "movement system" involving "energy expenditure" (ibid.)
- conversations/speech acts consist of "dialogical rhythms of turn-taking" (Brandt qtd. in Waller 2007)
- "[i]n all known languages, regular intonation patterns connect lexical items and syntactic constructions" (ibid.)

RHYTHM AND EXOPHORIC ICONICITY (CONT'D)

- prosody is "constrained by a multitude of factors, including the syntax and phonology of the utterance, as well as paralinguistic factors like the speaker's attention, emotion, and attitude" (Perlman et al. 2015)
- "taken together, [this shows] that people have a tendency to modulate their prosody in iconic correspondence with certain meanings" (ibid.)
- musical metre "establishes predictive patterns that are similar to those of language" (Vuust & Roepstorff 2008)

RHYTHM AND COGNITION (GREGG)

- rhythm is fundamental to human/vertebrate development
- children do not develop speech until auditory rhythm has reached a certain speed (around age of 2)
- auditory rhythm affects stability of nervous system
- "rhythm appears to be central to levels of arousal, to emotional states, to pattern recognition, and indeed to conception and comprehension"
- "concrete events and acts are vivified by means of stylized verbal forms"
- speakers "use prosody to process word meaning" (Nygaard et al. 2009)

EXAMPLE

"Those who don't do anything are encouraging ~~disgrace~~ shame as well as violence. Those who act boldly are recognizing right as well as ~~truth~~ reality."

Kennedy & Windt 1983

EXAMPLE

“Those who don't do anything are encouraging disgrace and violence. On the other hand, we recognize right as well as truth when we act boldly.”
“Those who do nothing are inviting shame as well as violence. Those who act boldly are recognizing right as well as reality.”

Kennedy & Windt 1983

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