A DICTIONARY OF STYLISTICS

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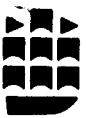

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INTRODUCTION

This dictionary of terms relating primarily to stylistics was written as much for my own benefit as for anyone else's. Quite frankly, I was becoming increasingly overwhelmed by the proliferation of terms that has inevitably accompanied the development of stylistics and other disciplines of relevance to textual analysis since the 1960s; and I was becoming increasingly frustrated by the semantic problems in the terminology that have resulted. And while there are dictionaries of critical terms and linguistic terms on the market, there is no handy comprehensive reference work that students can turn to for guidance in the close analysis of texts that incorporates terms from discourse analysis, text linguistics, contemporary literary theory, communication theory etc. as well as linguistics and traditional literary criticism. Stylistics by its very nature overlaps with these other subjects.

This book is therefore designed both as a dictionary and as a guide-book: not only to explain the meaning of terms, but also overall to give a general picture of the nature and aims of stylistics, its approaches, methodologies and insights, its historical origins and potential developments, in the hopes of facilitating and stimulating further study. The numerous quotations are intended to show stylistics at work; and the inclusion and illustration of many basic terms from grammatical theory are similarly intended to be of practical use in analysis. The dictionary is therefore particularly designed for undergraduate students on introductory courses in stylistics or 'language of literature'; for sixth-form students involved in the new A-level studies in English language/literature; and for foreign students and teachers of English actively engaged in the analysis of written and spoken discourse. It is also designed for those students and teachers of literature (still) who have tended to regard anything 'linguistic' with suspicion, but who are nevertheless engaged in the

critical analysis of texts and must therefore avoid vagueness or waffle.

Yet if an adequate metalinguistic framework is indispensable for stylistic analysis, there is equally no doubt that linguistic and critical terminology is forbidding in its apparent technicality. The classical languages may have declined in popularity in British secondary education, yet they continue to be the most fruitful source of technical vocabulary, as they were once the source of the terms of rhetoric. (Actually, quite a number of terms in traditional rhetoric are still commonly used in linguistics and literary criticism, e.g. ANAPHORA; METAPHOR; or have been revived, e.g. PROLEPSIS.) Stylistics, like other subjects, has evolved its own jargon or borrowed eclectically in typical fashion useful terms from closely related studies as 'tools' considered necessary for theorizing, analysis and explication. But there is also, unfortunately, a tendency for terms to be created that are superfluous (an adequate term exists already); or verbose or pretentious: jargon in the pejorative sense of the word. The cult of the arcane to suggest an elite circle of theorists is, alas, a regretful tendency in some areas of linguistics and criticism. Superfluity, at least, to some extent is understandable, although the simple desire for novelty may make LECT currently more fashionable than VARIETY, for example. Scholars anxious to stress the originality of their ideas will wish to coin new terms; or extend the senses of existing terms to fit what they see as a change in conceptualization (e.g. TRANSITIVITY). But they may coin a term for a concept that has already been used for something else (e.g. Todorov's REGISTER); or simply rename a concept that has already been named (e.g. FOCALIZATION). And inevitably, with the proliferation of competing approaches to stylistic studies in Europe and the United States, problems of synonymy and polysemy are multiplied. (See HISTOIRE; DISCOURS(E); FABULA; SJUZET; STORY, for example.) Does X's term mean exactly the same as Y's? Does it belong to a similar network of terms, or a different one?

This handbook aims to de-mystify, and to resolve confusion by revealing the apparent overlaps between alternative terminologies, and to discriminate carefully between the senses of the different terms, so that students can judge for themselves the terms that best suit their needs. Inevitably the eclectic nature of stylistics means that there will be some conflict between terms or terminologies because of the conflicting ideologies they reflect: linguistics v. literary criticism, for example, in the value placed on INTENTIONALITY (q.v.). But

here, as always, it is the concept which is of prime importance, and which the student must assess: in the end, a term is only a term.

The heterogeneous nature of stylistic terminology and of the subject itself has inevitably helped to shape the format of the individual entries for terms. For the general layout I confess unashamedly to have been greatly influenced by David Crystal's *Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics* (Blackwell/Deutsch). Like him I have worked according to the principles of entry coherence and self-sufficiency: the student should be able to understand a term quite adequately from reading the entry as it stands. Inevitably, this will lead to some repetition of material between related items, but in such cases I have generally tried to provide a slightly different perspective. However, I have gone further than Crystal in cross-referencing, both explicit ('see also . . .' at the end of an entry) and implicit (the use of SMALL CAPITALS within an entry for words defined elsewhere). So many terms valuable for stylistics are related to others in opposition (LANGUE V. PAROLE; COMPETENCE V. PERFORMANCE); or form part of a network of related terms (SPEECH ACT; ILLOCUTIONARY ACT; PERLOCUTIONARY EFFECT); or overlap with terms of similar meaning (READERLY; CLOSED; COOL), that a fuller understanding of their meaning and implications is only really made possible by cross-referencing. However, the convention 'see . . .' does **not** substitute for a definition. The abbreviation *q.v.* (*quod vide* = 'which see') that follows certain SMALL CAPITAL terms means that I feel the reader should definitely look at that related entry; 'see also' simply directs attention to entries of relevance; 'see further' recommends books or articles where the subject can be explored in greater detail or depth.

In this last respect too I have differed from Crystal, and as a result appended a comprehensive Bibliography. This is because, overall, I see the book not simply as a dictionary, but as a handbook. While it is not anticipated that it will be read from cover to cover, nonetheless it is meant to be a kind of pedagogical textbook. The Bibliography, based on the entries themselves, not only provides a skeletal history of stylistics, but more importantly lists works which students will need to consult for further elucidation of the terms defined.

One or two further points about layout can be mentioned here. Terms defined within an entry and their related forms are printed in **bold-face**; also terms which are of relevance (often synonymous), but which are not defined elsewhere. *ITALIC SMALL CAPITALS* are used for subject areas of direct influence on stylistics (e.g. *SEMANTICS*;

SOCIOLINGUISTICS) but which are not defined in a separate entry. A list of abbreviations and of phonemic symbols used follows this Introduction.

In a work of this kind which tries to incorporate as many relevant terms as possible, and from subjects of which its author has only superficial knowledge, there will inevitably be oversights and no doubt significant omissions, as well as gross generalizations. I would gladly welcome any comments for any future revision. In its compilation I have been greatly helped by numerous people: chiefly colleagues in the University of London; and fellow-members of the Poetics and Linguistics Association (notably Trevor Eaton, Roger Fowler and Roger Sell). But my most significant debt is to the General Editors Geoffrey Leech and Mick Short, whose painstaking reading of the whole manuscript helped to remedy a considerable number of errors. I can't thank them enough. I should also like to thank Brian Wales for the permanent loan of his word-processor, and for his invaluable instruction in the technicalities thereof. Without this miracle of modern technology I doubt I would have finished the book until the year 2000 . . .

September 1987

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND SYMBOLS

adj.	adjective
cf.	compare
ch.	chapter
COD	*The Concise Oxford Dictionary* (7th edn) 1984
d.	died
et al.	and others
f.	following; onwards
Fr.	French
Ger.	German
Gk	Greek
It.	Italian
Lat.	Latin
ME	Middle English
NE	Modern (New) English
OE	Old English
OED	*The Oxford English Dictionary*
op. cit.	in the work already quoted
OF	Old French
ON	Old Norse
pub.	published
q.v.	which see
sg.	singular
TLS	*Times Literary Supplement*
*	ungrammatical or unacceptable form
[ ]	enclose semantic components (e.g. [– (human)])
< >	enclose graphic symbols (letters of the alphabet)
/ /	enclose phonemic symbols

LIST OF PHONEMIC SYMBOLS

/ɪ/ as in *hit* (Received Pronunciation, RP)
/i:/ as in *heat*
/e/ as in *hen*
/ə/ as in *vanilla*
/ɜ:/ as in *bird*
/æ/ as in *cat*
/ɑ:/ as in *card*
/ɒ/ as in *dog*
/ɔ:/ as in *paw*
/u:/ as in *food*
/ʊ/ as in *sugar*
/ʌ/ as in *bud*
/aɪ/ as in *night*
/eɪ/ as in *day*
/ɒɪ/ as in *boy*
/ɑʊ/ as in *house*
/əʊ/ as in *road*
/ɪə/ as in *ear*
/ɛə/ as in *care*
/ʊə/ as in *tour*
/p/ as in *pin*
/b/ as in *bin*
/t/ as in *tin*
/d/ as in *din*
/k/ as in *kin*
/g/ as in *gun*
/s/as in *sin*
/z/ as in *zoo*
/θ/ as in *thin*
/ð/ as in *this*
/f/ as in *fin*
/v/ as in *vine*
/ʃ/ as in *shin*
/ʒ/ as in *genre*
/tʃ/ as in *chin*
/dʒ/ as in *judge*
/h/ as in *house*
/m/ as in *mouse*
/n/ as in *nice*
/ŋ/ as in *singing*
/l/ as in *lull*
/r/ as in *roll*
/j/ as in *yawn*
/w/ as in *win*

OLD ENGLISH GRAPHIC SYMBOLS USED

<Ð>/<ð> as in *th*is
<þ>/<þ> as in *th*orn
<Æ>/<æ> as in *c*at

A

a-verse

The first **half-line** or **hemistich** of a line of Old English verse (see also B-VERSE: the second half-line). The half-lines are separated by a CAESURA or pause, and typically contain two strong STRESSES each. But the rhythmic balance is offset by the linear pattern of ALLITERATION, which in OE poetry is FORMAL rather than STYLISTIC. In the **a-verse** both stressed words are normally alliterative; in the b-verse only the first, e.g.:

Đær wæs gidd ond gleo. Gomela Scilding,
felafricgende, feorran rehte (*Beowulf*)
('There was song and mirth. The old Dane, much-knowing,
told of far times')

(See also ALLITERATIVE VERSE.)

aberrant decoding

In SEMIOTIC terms (see, e.g. Eco, 1965) a message ENCODED or formulated in one way which is DECODED or understood in another. A simple example would be misinterpretations of unknown ancient scripts. AMBIGUITY in the framing of the MESSAGE itself can lead to misleading interpretations: e.g. in newspaper headlines like *Picasso Draws Large Crowds*.

'Aberrant' implies DEVIATION from a NORM, even 'error'; hence the term is sometimes applied to the interpretations of a message in the MASS MEDIA (e.g. a news item) by groups of people who do not share the same cultural or political assumptions of those who produce the message.

For the analysis of LITERARY DISCOURSE, however, the term is of limited usefulness, for it raises the question of INTENTIONALITY (q.v.), as well as suggesting that there can be a 'right' meaning.

absence

In DECONSTRUCTION THEORY, and in recent novel theory, the concept that what is meaningful is as much what is not said as what is physically present (see also DIFFÉRANCE).

Our expectations of what is 'usual' in novel techniques may lead us to note, for example, the **absence** of expressive speech markers in Woolf's *The Waves* (only *said* is used); and of speech phrases of any kind in Joyce's *Ulysses* (see also FREE DIRECT STYLE). Both novels are also marked by the significant absence of a narratorial voice for much of the text. Significant absence of a character's voice is illustrated in Faulkner's *The Sound and The Fury*: Caddy is presented totally from the viewpoint of her brothers.

Absence can be seen to highlight the process of CHOICE that is involved in the creation of a fictional world however seemingly 'complete' or 'natural'. It should be considered, therefore, with the related (textual and interpretative) concepts of GAP and INDETERMINACY, and the notion of INFERENCE.

absolute clause

From Lat. *ab-solutum* 'loosened', an ADVERBIAL, NON-FINITE CLAUSE which is not linked to the MAIN CLAUSE syntactically or semantically by any shared element, e.g.:

> The match will be played Saturday, weather permitting (cf. . . . if the weather permits)
> No matters arising, the meeting finished promptly at 5.00 p.m. (cf. Since there were no matters arising . . .)

Such clauses are commoner in writing than speech, and are more concise than FINITE CLAUSE paraphrases.

They are sometimes called **ablative absolute** constructions in traditional GRAMMARS, following Latin, but this label is misleading, since English does not have the 'ablative case', or the same CASE system for NOUNS.

These clauses are sometimes confused with the so-called dangling or unattached PARTICIPLES (q.v.).

abstract nouns

Abstract nouns are a subclass of NOUNS which refer to qualities or states, i.e. they have non-material REFERENCE, unlike **concrete nouns**.

Characteristically, they lack the number and ARTICLE contrast of concrete nouns (**eagernesses*; **a bravery*) but some can be 'individualized' (*difficulty/-ies*; *experience(s)*; *a temptation*, etc). Many are derived from ADJECTIVES, VERBS and other nouns by the addition of specific SUFFIXES of Germanic and Latin origin: e.g. *child-hood; scholar-ship; free-dom; dull-ness; classic-ism; pedestrian-ization*, etc.

Abstract DICTION is characteristic of many FORMAL types of (written) language technical or intellectual in nature (see also NOMINALIZATION; JARGON).

In LITERATURE, especially poetry and ALLEGORY, abstract nouns are highlighted in the RHETORICAL FIGURE of PERSONIFICATION (q.v.), where the semantic COMPONENTS of 'ANIMATE' and 'human' become contextually associated with them: as in Gray's

> Disdainful Anger, pallid Fear,
> And Shame that sculks behind
>
> (*Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College*).

absurd, theatre of the

Theatre of the Absurd is a blanket term introduced by Esslin (1962), to refer to plays of the 1940s and 50s by writers such as Beckett, Ionesco and Adamov, which in themes, techniques and language presented a marked reaction against traditional realistic drama. The futility of life, man's impotence and incompetence even in communication, are underlined by illogicalities in dramatic structure and PLOT (Winnie buried in sand up to her neck in Beckett's *Happy Days*); and violations of linguistic and conversational rules:

> Mrs Smith: 'And Bobby Watson's aunt, old Bobby Watson, might very well, in her turn, pay for the education of Bobby Watson, Bobby Watson's daughter . . .'
>
> (Ionesco: *The Bald Prima Donna*)

accent; accentuation

Accent is widely used in various branches of *LINGUISTICS*, LITERARY CRITICISM and ordinary speech, in different senses; but broadly referring to aspects of 'pronunciation', or 'prominence', or both.

(1) Most commonly, those features of pronunciation (e.g. choice of vowel, INTONATION) which identify a speaker's place of origin regionally (as in 'She has a Birmingham/Norfolk accent'). Accents can also be national ('American'), and social ('She has a BBC accent').

The term is popularly confused with DIALECT, but linguists stress that accent is but one aspect of dialect, the PHONETIC or PHONOLOGICAL, as above. In present-day English it is an important aspect, for many regional speakers otherwise use STANDARD syntax and vocabulary. **Accent-switching**, like **dialect-switching**, can be exploited for humorous purposes: i.e. the shift of one mode of pronunciation to another. But it also occurs quite naturally in certain social SITUATIONS where **degrees of** FORMALITY vary (e.g. switching between standard and regional forms).

(2) In PHONETICS, **accent** (singular) is usually applied to syllables or words which are prominent, whether by loudness and intensity (STRESS); pitch change (INTONATION); length; or all such factors (e.g. the first syllable of *prominent*; the third syllable of *intonation*). Hence:

(3) The term is used for the GRAPHEMIC or written symbol or diacritic above letters in certain languages (e.g. French, Greek to indicate quality of vowel sound, pitch, or length, etc (e.g. *écriture*).

(4) What makes the RHYTHM of English speech is the pattern of **accented** and **unaccented** syllables in polysyllabic words; and of accented and unaccented words in SENTENCES (usually LEXICAL ITEMS v. FUNCTION WORDS).

The rhythm of English poetry is characteristically based on natural speech rhythms. The mainstream of English verse from the OE period is **accentual**, more properly **accentual syllabic**: highly regular in the number of accents per line (reasonably so in the number of syllables), e.g.:

× / × / × /× /
A slumber did my spirit seal

(Wordsworth: *Lucy Poems*)

/ × × /× / ××× / ×
Little Miss Muffet sat on a tuffet

(5) **Accent** and its related forms, **accented** and **accentuation**, are used figuratively in literary criticism to mean 'intensity', 'emphasis' or 'highlighting'. So fog is accented in the opening of Dickens's *Bleak House*, where it is repeated 13 times in the second paragraph. (See also FOREGROUNDING.)

acceptability

(1) In its narrowest sense, the term refers to the extent to which a native speaker would regard an UTTERANCE as conforming to the rules of the language: hence GRAMMATICAL.

(2) However, **acceptability** is not to be identified too closely with GRAMMATICALITY (q.v.). A well-formed utterance may be 'unacceptable' CONTEXTUALLY or SITUATIONALLY: e.g. if it is too formal, or too technical, or spoken in a STANDARD ACCENT. (See also APPROPRIATENESS.) Conversely, an ungrammatical utterance may be acceptable if, for example, the speaker or writer is a foreigner, a toddler, highly excited, or inebriated.

And generally, there is a high tolerance of DEVIANT or unusual forms and meanings in LITERARY, especially POETIC, LANGUAGE.

(3) In TEXT LINGUISTICS the term refers to the judgment of a TEXT in respect of COHERENCE and functional relevance. De Beaugrande & Dressler (1981) make it one of their (stringent) standards of TEXTUALITY (q.v.). Thus, presumably, an instruction leaflet for DIY double-glazing 'fails' as a text if the reader cannot make enough sense of it to fulfil the task.

(See also CORRECTNESS.)

acronym

From Gk 'beginning-name'; **acronyms** are a very popular twentieth-century method of word formation, by which words and especially names are formed from the initial letters of a group of words. A less common term is **protogram** (= 'first-letter').

Acronyms are commonly used to label scientific inventions (*laser* = 'Light Amplification by Stimulated Emission of Radiation'; *BASIC* = 'Beginners All-purpose Symbolic Instruction Code'). They also identify succinctly the names of organizations, etc. (*SALT* = 'Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty'; *WASP* = 'White Anglo-Saxon Protestant'). It is fashionable to suggest a word already in the language, and one which is humorous or punningly appropriate (e.g. *CISSY*: 'Campaign to Impede Sexual Stereotyping in the Young').

They are sometimes confused with simple abbreviations or alphabetisms, which maintain the sequence of initials as letters e.g. *MIT* (/em aɪti:/) (Massachussetts Institute of Technology), *EEC* (/i:i:si:/) (European Economic Community).

act

(1) Most often **act** refers to the major division of a play or opera. Traditionally tragedies have had five acts, following classical precedence, which generally reflect a pattern of action rising to a climax and ending with a catastrophe and final resolution (see also DÉNOUEMENT).

(2) In DISCOURSE ANALYSIS, **act** as developed by Sinclair & Coulthard (1975) refers to the smallest identifiable unit of conversational behaviour (see also the larger units of MOVE and EXCHANGE). Emphasis is placed on the FUNCTION of acts in the structure of discourse, on the way they take up what has gone before or solicit further activity: so TAG QUESTIONS like *don't you?, isn't it?* operate as 'appeals' for TURN-TAKING. Hence an alternative name is **interactional act**. But as labels like 'elicitation', 'directive', 'accept', etc. suggest for different types of act, interest is also taken in their PRAGMATIC function or communicative intent, arising out of the study of exchanges in classroom, surgery, dramatic text, etc., e.g. (spoken by a doctor): *Let's have a look at you. What seems to be the trouble?* ('starter' + 'elicitation').

They are therefore similar to ILLOCUTIONARY ACTS (q.v.); and both have been seen as subtypes of COMMUNICATIVE **acts**.

(3) The term **act** is also found in NARRATOLOGY in the analysis of CHARACTER. 'Acts of commision' refer to deeds done; 'of omission' to deeds not done; 'contemplated acts' to mere plans or intentions. (See Rimmon-Keenan 1983.)

(4) The DISCOURSE(E) phrases 'act of telling', 'act of writing', 'act of narration', refer to the actual activity of producing utterances (or ÉNONCIATION) within the whole context of teller, tale and reader. (See also NARRATION.)

actant

Actant was introduced by the French linguist Tesnière (1959), but is particularly associated in NARRATOLOGY with the work of Greimas (1966f). As in the writings of the **Russian** FORMALISTS, Greimas views characters FUNCTIONALLY as actants or participants in a series of ACTIONS. The theory has also been applied to dramatic texts, and has its origins, in fact, in Aristotle's analysis of dramatic action in his *Poetics* (see also DRAMATIS PERSONA).

Actantial theory uses a framework or model analogous to a functional GRAMMAR of the SENTENCE: so the actant 'Sender' would

correspond to grammatical SUBJECT; 'Receiver' to OBJECT, etc., and the PLOT itself would correspond to the standard sentence. Indeed, terms like 'actor', 'action' and 'goal' have been traditionally used by grammarians (not without criticism) to refer to subject, VERB, object, respectively.

The theory is designed to have universal significance, implying that different STORIES have the same DEEP or 'underlying' structural configurations. (See Propp's work, 1928, on the MORPHOLOGY of folk-tales, and the ROLES of 'hero', 'dispatcher', 'helper', 'villain', etc.) Yet the study has also been criticized for its schematization and reductiveness, its failure to account for other aspects of CHARACTER and its underestimation of the possible manipulation of roles and functions. Still, even if, for example, Magwitch, in Dickens's *Great Expectations* is both 'villain', 'donor' and 'helper', it is precisely our awareness of conventional and basic NARRATIVE structures which enables us to appreciate the variation.

The term *acteur* (from Greimas *op. cit.*) can be used for a character in any individual work with more than one role: an aspect of the SURFACE STRUCTURE. (See further Fowler 1977.)

action; actional code

(1) **Action** (singular) is traditionally used as a synonym for PLOT to describe the series of significant events in a play, film, novel, etc. (See also SJUZET).

(2) In Barthes (1970) the **actional** (*actantiel*) CODE or **level** of a story refers to the successive stages of the action, and also the **actions** (plural) of the characters. This is also termed the **proairetic code**. Using this code we can also take account of type, manner, purpose and setting of actions; of sequences (connected actions); and series (unconnected actions).

(3) **Actions** in this sense can refer to physical acts or activities, speeches and thoughts. Dramatic 'action' therefore does not necessarily imply dynamic movement. SPEECH ACTS in DIALOGUE serve economically to verbalize actions (e.g. love-making, quarrelling, etc.); and actions important in the plot may be indirectly reported in description or discourse (e.g. the reconciliation of Leontes and Perdita in Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale).*

active

Widely used in the GRAMMARS of many languages to describe a

category concerned with the relations of SUBJECT and OBJECT, and the 'action' expressed by the VERB, i.e. VOICE (q.v.). An **active** CLAUSE or SENTENCE typically has a grammatical subject in the ROLE of AGENT of the action, which is expressed by a TRANSITIVE verb; and an object in the role of 'affected' participant, e.g. *The Prime Minister claims a Brussels victory*.

Since agentive and affected roles are most characteristic of subjects and objects, it is natural for the active to be regarded as the **un**MARKED or neutral voice, as opposed to the PASSIVE (q.v.).

actualization

(1) **Actualization** or **realization** is used by linguists to refer to the physical manifestation of any underlying or ABSTRACT form. So, for example, the 'plural' MORPHEME <s> may be actualized by /s/ (*cat-s*), /z/ (*dog-s*), /ɪz/ (*horse-s*), etc. And a TEXT is an actualization of the potential CHOICES from the linguistic system.

(2) By analogy, the term has come to be used in the work of Riffaterre (1978) as part of his TRANSFORMATIONAL theory of poetic composition, reinforced by its more dynamic connotations of action or process. In a poem the underlying THEME or idea is **actualized** in a complex text by the LEXICAL forms and references. Many of Shakespeare's sonnets present actualizations of the same ideas: e.g. the mutability of beauty; the inexorability of time.

(3) The sense of giving 'physical substance' or 'reality' is underlined by the use of **actualization** in READER-RESPONSE CRITICISM, where it is argued that works of art only exist as such, are only actualized, in the process of reading. In dramatic criticism, a performance of a play is an actualization of the reading of the text.

(4) More specifically, **actualization** appears in the NARRATIVE theory of Brémond (e.g. 1973). Here he describes the three logical stages in a sequence of actions: the aim or objective (first stage); putting the objective into action (second stage); success or failure (third stage). So Hamlet's delay in the actualization of revenge provides the central tension of the play.

(5) **Actualization** has also come to be used by some translator-critics as the direct equivalent of the PRAGUE SCHOOL term *aktualisace*, traditionally and more popularly known as FOREGROUNDING (q.v.). The characteristic function of POETIC LANGUAGE is seen to be the 'throwing into relief' of the linguistic SIGN or UTTERANCE, which ordinarily is prone to AUTOMATIZATION (q.v.), or unconscious familiarity.