

# Segmental And Suprasegmental Phonostylistics: Similarities And Differences

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**Abstract:** The article is devoted to the analysis of segmental and suprasegmental levels of sound organization in speech within the framework of phonostylistics. It explores the stylistic function of phonemes, alliteration, assonance, intonation, tempo, rhythm, and pausing as expressive devices across various discourse types. Particular attention is given to the role of sound repetition and prosodic features in poetic, literary, and public speech. The study demonstrates that the interaction of segmental and suprasegmental elements creates the expressive unity of a speech act. The necessity of an integrated approach to the analysis of sound structure, considering both phonetic and prosodic factors, is emphasized.

**Keywords:** Phonostylistics, segmental level, suprasegmental level, intonation, rhythm, alliteration, assonance, prosody, expressiveness.

**Introduction:** Phonostylistics, as a branch of linguistics, studies the sound aspects of speech expressiveness, being situated at the intersection of phonetics and stylistics. It considers sounds not as neutral elements of the language system, but as active participants in the creation of stylistic and communicative effect [1, 37]. The phonostylistic approach to sound analysis implies consideration of different levels of speech organization, among which the segmental and suprasegmental levels occupy a central place. This division is due both to the structural features of sound units and to the differences in their functions in conveying meaning and emotion [2, 96].

The segmental level in phonostylistics represents the foundation upon which the phonetic realization of speech is built. Its elements — vowels and consonants — carry potential stylistic value, especially when used in repetition or with deliberate emphasis. In poetic speech, techniques such as alliteration and assonance are widely used; the repetition of consonant or vowel sounds enhances expressiveness, creates a rhythmic effect, and serves as a means of semantic emphasis. For example, hissing sounds may evoke tension or anxiety, whereas sonorant sounds can lend speech smoothness

and melodiousness.

Notably, in different languages certain segments may possess culturally conditioned stylistic connotations. In English, for instance, the sound /θ/ may be perceived as literary or archaic, whereas in Russian, certain affricates are associated with colloquial or dialectal speech. These features must be taken into account in cross-linguistic studies, particularly when analyzing stylistic background variants.

## **Segmental Level: The Expressive Potential of Sound Units**

Segmental phonostylistics studies the elements of the linear sequence of speech sounds — that is, phonemes as realized in actual speech. These sounds can function as independent stylistic markers, especially in artistic and journalistic discourse. One of the key techniques at this level is sound repetition, achieved through assonance and alliteration. Authors may intentionally employ these devices to enhance rhythm, create an acoustic image of the situation, or imitate certain sounds [3, 254].

For example, the repetition of soft sonorant consonants may evoke feelings of tenderness or dreaminess, while the dominance of plosive or noisy

sounds can convey tension or agitation. The sound palette of a text forms an additional layer of meaning, interacting with the lexico-syntactic level and reinforcing its expressiveness. This is particularly effective in poetry, where sound structure often correlates with metric patterns [4, 15].

Segmental phonostylistics also examines phonetic alternations and pronunciation variants as tools for shaping speech style. The use of reduced versus full vowels may vary depending on stylistic register: in formal speech, normative pronunciation prevails, while in colloquial speech, simplifications are acceptable. These distinctions are not merely phonetic but carry clear stylistic significance [5, 69].

### **Suprasegmental Level: Prosody as an Expressive Resource**

Suprasegmental phonostylistics focuses on the analysis of prosodic characteristics, encompassing the intonational and rhythmic structure of speech. Intonation, tempo, rhythm, pausing, melody, and stress not only ensure phonetic coherence but also play a crucial stylistic role, shaping the communicative tone, emotional coloring, and modal nuances of utterances [6, 108].

The intonation contour of an utterance may vary depending on the communicative context: in formal speech, neutral intonation patterns dominate, whereas expressive speech features more dynamic contours with sharp pitch rises and falls. Changes in melodic patterns allow a phrase to shift in interpretation — from a question to a statement, from irony to sincerity [7, 69].

Speech tempo is directly related to genre and communicative purpose. An increased tempo can indicate excitement, nervousness, or an effort to convey a large amount of information quickly, while a slowed tempo is often used to emphasize importance or build dramatic tension [8, 21].

Rhythmic organization is especially important in the analysis of poetic and oratorical speech. Repetition of intonational units, alternation of long and short phrases, and strategically placed pauses can produce effects of musicality, logical clarity, or emotional richness. In such cases, the perception of a text depends not only on its content but also on its sound design [9, 52].

Stress, as a suprasegmental element, also contributes to stylistic coloring. Shifts in accentual patterns can signal affiliation with a particular sociolect, region, or functional style. In poetry, stress becomes a rhythmic element that enhances the expressiveness of speech.

The suprasegmental level provides an overlay to the

linear structure of speech, shaping its rhythmical and intonational contour. It plays a key role in conveying communicative intent, modality, and emotion. In phonostylistics, suprasegmental features are studied not only as markers of syntactic structure but also as independent expressive devices. For example, a rising intonation may express surprise or doubt, while strategic pausing can create dramatic effect. Such features are actively employed in fiction, theatrical speech, and public speaking.

A significant distinction between the segmental and suprasegmental levels lies in their functional orientation. The former is primarily responsible for formal articulatory clarity and phonemic recognizability, while the latter governs rhythm, tempo, intonational dynamics, and stylistic design of the utterance. However, these levels are closely interconnected, and it is their interaction that creates the effect of speech cohesion and expressive depth.

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