

Les Voyelles Comme Moyen D'expression Dans La Tradition Poétique Française

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Abstract: *This article on modern linguistics pays great attention to the interaction between the sound aspect of language and its aesthetic function, especially in poetic texts. Poetry, as a vocal activity, has special expressive means, among which vowel phonemes play an important role, forming the rhythmic and melodic structure of the text. The sound of a poem is not just a background decoration of the content, but an active element of artistic expression, influencing the reader's perception.*

Key words: *rhythmic, vocale, musicality, verse, euphony, emotional, duration, timbre, states, physical objects, reproduce, animals, mechanisms, birds, personality*

INTRODUCTION

Phonetics is the study of the sounds of language. It is therefore a branch of linguistics, but a branch which, unlike the others, is only concerned with articulated language, and not with other forms of organized communication (written language, signs for the deaf and dumb, sailors' signals, etc.). Phonetics is therefore only concerned with linguistic expression and not with content, the analysis of which falls under grammar and vocabulary (grammatical and semantic aspects of language).

Modern linguistics pays great attention to the interaction between the sound aspect of language and its aesthetic function, especially in poetic texts. Poetry, as a vocal activity, has special expressive means, among which vowel phonemes play an important role, shaping the rhythmic and melodic structure of the text. The sound of a poem is not just a background decoration of the content, but an active element of artistic expression, influencing the reader's perception.

In French, a language characterized by a rich vowel system, including nasal and rounded phonemes, sound characteristics acquire special significance in poetic discourse. French poetry of the 20th and 21st centuries presents a variety of approaches to the sound organization of text, where vowels play a key role in creating rhythm, euphony, emotional background, and sound image.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The immense value of medieval French literature is due precisely to the close connection between this written literature and folklore. Medieval popular poetry had performers who sometimes reworked entire passages as they saw fit. These were professionals: bards, musicians, a kind of buffoonish acrobats called jongleurs. They sang epic poems or sacred songs in castles or public squares, accompanying themselves on the viol. These jongleurs, bards, and musicians were mostly illiterate.

They learned the songs they sang from others. They considered their works collective, written in a traditional style and devoid of any characteristic traits of the author's personality.

The phonological characteristics of the vowel phonemes of French poetry play an essential role in its musicality, rhythm, and sound effects.

These characteristics can be analyzed according to several criteria. Here are some important things to pay attention to:

1. Oral and Nasal Vowels

In French, vowels can be oral (e.g., [a], [e], [o]) or nasal (e.g., [ã], [ẽ], [õ]).

Nasal vowels are very specific to French and are often used to create specific sound effects in poetry. Poets can play on nasality to accentuate phonetic effects and create a particular atmosphere.

2. Vowel Length

In Standard French, vowel length does not play a particular phonemic role (unlike in languages like Italian or Finnish), but poetry can use vowel length to influence the rhythm and musicality of the verse. For example, a longer vowel can give an impression of slowness or lengthen a moment.

3. Vowel Harmony

In poetry, there is also a phenomenon of vowel harmony, where the vowels in a line or stanza work together to create a certain sound or flow. For example, the repetition of open vowels such as [a] or [ɔ] can create a sense of sonic coherence.

Vowel harmony can also manifest itself through the repetition of the same phonemes within a line, forming assonance (repetition of vowels) or alliteration (repetition of consonants).

4. Open and Closed Vowels

Vowels can be classified as open (e.g., [a], [ɔ]) or closed (e.g., [i], [u]). The choice between open and closed vowels in a line can affect the tone of the poetry. Open vowels are often perceived as richer, while closed vowels are more abrupt and can express more.

5. Effects on Rhythm and Cadence

The rhythm of poetry depends largely on the alternation of vowels and consonants, and the placement of these vowels can create effects such as elision, caesura, or cadence. For example, a poem with many open vowels may have a slower, more solemn rhythm, while more closed, dynamic vowels may accelerate the verse's pace.

In French poetry, vowels have not only a phonological but also an expressive function. Their acoustic qualities—openness, duration, timbre—are actively used by poets to create emotional coloring, musicality, rhythm, and intonational expressiveness of poetic discourse.

RESULTS

1. The Symbolic Meaning of Vowels

In the French poetic tradition, beginning with the Symbolists, vowels began to acquire a symbolic sound. This is particularly strikingly evident in Arthur Rimbaud's sonnet "Voyelles," where each vowel is assigned a color, an association, an image:

A black, E white, I red, U green, O blue: vowels, I will someday tell your latent births... (Arthur Rimbaud, *Voyelles*)

Here, vowels symbolize emotions, states, and even physical objects, thus becoming autonomous vehicles for imagery.

2. Sound as a Mood Carrier

Different vowels are associated with certain moods or atmospheres: the vowels [i], [e], [ɛ] are often associated with lightness, joy, and light. The back vowels [u], [o], [ɔ], and the nasals [ã], [ɑ̃] are associated with heaviness, sadness, and reflection.

It Weeps in My Heart

As it rains on the city (Paul Verlaine, *It Weeps in My Heart*)

The repetitions of the nasal vowels [ã], [œ̃] and the soft [l] create the effect of monotonous rain, emotional depression, and nostalgia.

3. Euphony through vowel alternation

Poets seek harmony of sound by alternating open and closed vowels to create euphony. For example: The long sobs of autumn violins (Paul Verlaine, *Chanson d'automne*)

The repetitions of [ɔ̃], [o], [l] form a symphony of sound reflecting the sadness of autumn.

4. The Role of Rhythmic Vowel Structures

The repetition of vowels in a certain rhythm can create a hypnotic effect, reinforcing expressiveness: I am the Dark One, - the Widower, - the Inconsolable, The Prince of Aquitaine at the Abolished Tower... (Gérard de Nerval, *El Desdichado*) Here, the repetition of [u], [i], [o] and their variation give the verse a sad but majestic tone.

In French poems for children, we find different forms of sound play, ranging from the most common, such as alliteration, assonance, and onomatopoeia, to the rarer, close to so-called "applied" poetry. By saturating the text with various vowels and consonants with a specific sound prototype, poets convey the sound of nature. For example, the sound of the wind in J.-L. Moreau's poem

"The Mad Wind": The mad wind in the wild grass

Frisk,

Frisk,

The mad wind in the wild grass

Frisk, and every nest.

Feels vibrating in the branches

Which whispers,

Which whispers,

Feels vibrating in the branches

The great wind of infinity.

*In this poem, one is immediately struck by the increased use of the vowels u, o, i, which, as key elements of the work's rhythmic and semantic structure, are distributed unevenly throughout the text, fulfilling different functions in forming meaning. Assonance, that is, the repetition of a vowel in a stressed position, serves as a rhythmic accent and, in combination with repeated consonants, enhances expressiveness—the effect of emphasis. At the same time, the repeated segments in alliteration are not represented by individual consonants, but are formed by consonant-vowel combinations that retain certain rhythmic and phonetic characteristics: *fou, fol, mur*. These vowel-consonant combinations imitate the sounds of nature, such as the sound of the wind and rustling leaves. Thus, the poet masterfully uses the interplay of sounds, the choice of which is determined by the content, creating a synthesis of form and meaning, a precise description of a fleeting natural mood—thus, there is a kind of "vowel landscape."*

In the phonological interplay, poets rely on the ability to evaluate sounds according to the scale: pleasant - unpleasant, beautiful - ugly, light - heavy, dark - light, etc., as well as on the presence of sound imitations in the language, that is, on the phenomenon of onomatopoeia.

DISCUSSION

Onomatopoeia is particularly common in children's poetry. Poets reproduce sounds made by people, animals, or mechanisms, and the most common are sounds imitating the ticking and beating of clocks (tic-tac, bim, bam, bom), the voices of animals and birds (quack-quack, what-what, cuckoo, what-what, cuckoo, woo-woo), human exclamations (oh, ah, ha-ha, hoo-hoo, oh là là), the operation of various mechanisms and devices (jiki-jiki, zim, zoum, teuf-teuf, toc-toc, tap-tape), and falling raindrops (plic-ploc, floc). Guy Chati's poem "À sa façon" is an example of the use of onomatopoeia:

A finch told me, chee-chee

there, what are you doing, you're reading? La la la you read you read

Yes yes, I replied

You, you're doing well, you-you, you-you

Everyone is busy in their own way

His sound, says the finch

Using onomatopoeia representing birdsongs—both traditional (cui-cui, tu-tu) and occasional, authorial (la-la, son-son)—the poet depicts the song of the finch. The sound play is intensified with the help of denominative words consonant with these sound imitations: what are you doing, you read, there, you do, way, finch. These elements are organically woven into the phonetic fabric of the text through their repetition and their echo with the onomatopoeia. The effect of erasing the boundary between the semantic and the sonic emerges, where the musicality of the word is foregrounded. Thus, the poetic text is perceived not only as a bearer of meaning, but also as a work of sound.

CONCLUSION

The phonetic characteristics of poetic discourse, such as alliteration, assonance, euphony, elision, and liaison, contribute to the creation of the rhythmic and melodic structure of the text, reinforcing its imagery and emotional intensity. In the poetic tradition, particular attention is paid to vowels, which, depending on their acoustic nature, are capable of conveying subtle nuances of mood, intonation, and symbolic associations. Furthermore, the analysis of poetic techniques has shown that the use of onomatopoeia, particularly authorial and occasional, expands the boundaries of phonetic expressiveness, allowing poets to blur the line between the meaning and sound of words. Thus, vowels in poetry become not only sound units but also active participants in the creation of an artistic image, emphasizing the musicality and aesthetics of the poetic text.

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