

## МОВОЗНАВСТВО. ЛІТЕРАТУРОЗНАВСТВО

UDC 81-13:81'42

DOI <https://doi.org/10.24919/2308-4863/93-1-39>

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### UNPACKING POE'S IDIOLECT: A STUDY OF AUTHORIAL LEXICAL CHOICES

Edgar Allan Poe has often been viewed exclusively as either a poet or a prose writer, although his system of linguistic and conceptual authorial preferences in both his poetry and prose, namely his poetics, remains unexplored. The research of the unique linguistic and stylistic features of Poe's texts is an important part of studying his poetics, which involves unpacking the key characteristics of its components, namely his idiolect, idiostyle, and idionarration. The paper examines Poe's idiolect, focusing on detecting tendencies in the authorial lexical choices. The material for the study includes not only Poe's famous works, such as his poem «The Raven» or his short story «The Fall of the House of Usher», but also less popular texts, namely his poems «Tamerlane», «The Conqueror Worm», «Oh, Manners! Oh, Manners!», «Dream-Land», as well as his short stories «The Man of the Crowd», «Bon-Bon», «The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar» – to name just a few. The results show that the lexical level of Poe's idiolect is characterised by stylistic neologisms, code-mixing, and archaisms. Poe's neologisms are often coined through affixation or compounding (e.g., *bediamonded*, *bewinged*, *demon-light*). The fact that Poe spoke at least five languages results in frequent code-mixing in his texts, with the embedding of foreign words (primarily Latin and French) within a single utterance or a sentence. Additionally, Poe blends the common vocabulary of his period with a range of archaic words in his poetry and prose. Thus, the lexical authorial preferences, combined with graphological foregrounding (e.g., italics for code-mixing), create a multilayered space that balances mythology, philosophy, and linguistic innovations. The lexical features in both Poe's poetry and prose lend support to our claim that his idiolect is a complex mechanism for constructing meaning and aesthetic effect in his texts, offering new insights into the uniqueness of his poetics.

**Key words:** E. A. Poe, poetry, prose, idiolect, stylistic neologisms, code-mixing, archaisms.

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### ІДІОЛЕКТ Е. А. ПО: СПЕЦИФІКА АВТОРСЬКИХ ЛЕКСИЧНИХ ПРЕФЕРЕНЦІЙ

Творчість Е. А. По переважно досліджується виключно як поета або прозаїка, проте система його лінгвістичних і концептуальних авторських преференцій, іншими словами його поетика як міжджанрового автора, залишається недослідженою. Аналіз унікальних мовних і стилістичних особливостей текстів Е. А. По (як поетичних, так і прозових) є важливою частиною вивчення його поетики, що включає дослідження ключових характеристик її складових, а саме ідіолекту, ідіостилу та ідіонаративу автора. У статті досліджується ідіолект Е. А. По, акцентуючи на авторських преференціях у виборі лексичних одиниць. Матеріалом для дослідження слугують не тільки відомі твори Е. А. По, такі як його вірш «The Raven» або оповідання «The Fall of the House of Usher», але й менш популярні, серед яких зокрема його вірші «Tamerlane», «The Conqueror Worm», «Oh, Manners! Oh, Manners!», «Dream-Land» та оповідання «The Man of the Crowd», «Bon-Bon», «The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar». За результатами стилістичного аналізу, лексичний рівень ідіолекту Е. А. По характеризується стилістичними неологізмами, ініомовними вкрапленнями та архаїзмами. Неологізми Е. А. По часто утворюються шляхом афіксації або поєднанням основ (наприклад, *bediamonded*, *bewinged*, *demon-light*). Оскільки Е. А. По володів щонайменше п'ятьма мовами, у його текстах також часто зустрічається змішування кодів із вкрапленням іноземних слів (переважно латинських і французьких) в межах одного висловлювання або речення. Крім того, Е. А. По поєднує у своїй поезії та прозі сучасну для його періоду мову з низкою архаїчних слів. Лексичні уподобання автора в поєднанні з графологічним висуненням (наприклад, подання курсивом ініомовних вкраплень) створюють багатошаровий простір, що зрівноважує міфологію, філософію та лінгвістичні інновації. Лексичні особливості як поезії, так і прози Е. А. По підтверджують наше припущення, що його ідіолект є складним механізмом у створенні естетичного ефекту в його текстах, а також пропонують новий погляд на його поетику як міжджанрового автора.

**Ключові слова:** Е. А. По, поезія, проза, ідіолект, стилістичні неологізми, ініомовні вкраплення, архаїзми.

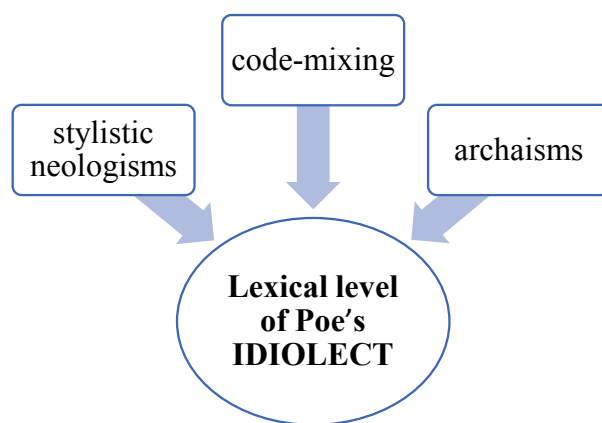
**Introduction.** One of the leading representatives of American Romanticism in the second half of the 19th century is the American poet and prose writer Edgar Allan Poe. He is considered to be the founder of the detective fiction genre and one of the first American writers to contribute to the development of science fiction (Dawidziak, 2023; Grimstad, 2019; Quinn, 1998; Tresch, 2021). The author's texts (both poetry and prose) are filled with gloom, fear, motifs of death, madness, the supernatural, isolation, and inner anxiety (Kennedy, 2019; Mills, 2019; Moreland, 2019), demonstrating a combination of Gothic motifs with deep psychological insight, which is characteristic of his work.

**Theoretical framework.** Poe has always been studied exclusively as either a poet or a prose writer (Chesnokova et al., 2017; Chesnokova & Zyngier, 2022; Halchuk, 2022; Shurma, 2008). This makes it impossible to comprehensively understand his individual authorial style, underscoring the relevance of our approach, which is, following N. Bezrebra (2008), based on examining Poe's poetics as a system of linguistic and conceptual authorial preferences, the systematic nature of which is revealed through the analysis of the linguistic and stylistic design of the author's texts, as well as the ways of expressing the plot of the texts and their correlations (Bezrebra, 2008: 15). An important part of studying Poe's poetics involves determining the specificity of its components, namely his idiolect, idiostyle, and idionarration (Marushchak, 2025a), which is achieved through the linguistic and stylistic analysis of his poetry and prose.

In linguistic theory, there is a view that an author's idiolect is a component of their idiostyle. Investigating the differences in the interpretations of the two terms, S. Hirniak et al. consider idiostyle to be a written expression of the idiolectal characteristics of an individual's language, the primary function of which is to realise the author's intention and target a specific audience. The authors note that idiolect is almost identical to an individual author's style and involves the use of linguistic means of expression that serve an aesthetic function in particular. On the other hand, idiostyle is distinguished by the use of stylistic means to distinguish a work of art from others (Hirniak et al., 2022: 94). In her turn, V. Voloshuk, researching the issue of terminology in defining an author's individual style, notes that idiolect is a unique individual language system, which includes organic, acquired, individual and group characteristics (Voloshuk, 2008: 31). Thus, formation of idiolect is determined by the peculiarities of the inner individual world, personal consciousness and life experience, as well as external social and/or individual factors.

**The purpose of the article.** When considering Poe's poetics, it is essential to mention that the leading feature, manifested in both his poetry and prose, is elaborate foregrounding on different levels (Marushchak, 2025b). Therefore, this paper looks at individual authorial preferences in the choice of lexical units, allowing us to identify and generalise the specific features of his idiolect.

**Analysis.** In our study of Poe's idiolect, we examine his poetry and prose, considering individual authorial preferences in the selection and use of specific lexical and grammatical units at various levels of deviation, specifically graphological, lexical, and grammatical. This paper offers a detailed analysis of the lexical level of Poe's idiolect, as demonstrated in Graph 1 below.



**Graph 1. Characteristic features of Poe's idiolect: lexical level**

The lexical content of Poe's poetry and prose is unique in itself. It primarily involves the creation of stylistic neologisms, and it is important that Poe himself repeatedly pointed out the need to use new words. For example, in the story «The Man of the Crowd», the author cannot find a suitable word and seems to warn the reader about this by adding the phrase «for want of a better word» immediately after the neologism «deskism»: «*Setting aside a certain dapperness of carriage, which may be termed deskism for want of a better word*» (TS<sub>1</sub>: 508). In his review of the work of American feminist, journalist and writer S. M. Fuller, Poe uses the lexeme «graphicality», wondering why such a word does not exist yet: «*Many of the descriptions in this volume are unrivalled for graphicality, (why is there not such a word?) for the force with which they convey the true by the novel or unexpected, by the introduction of touches which other artists would be sure to omit as irrelevant to the subject*» (CW<sub>2</sub>: 75). Similarly, in a review of the book *The Canons of Good Breeding*, whose author is

not specified, Poe «justifies» the use of the stylistic neologism «literatureism», emphasising the need to create «a special word for a special occasion»: «*If he proceeds so far, however, as to skim over the Preface, his eye will be arrested by a certain air of literatureism (we must be permitted to coin an odd word for an odd occasion) which pervades and invigorates the pages*» (CW<sub>1</sub>: 46).

While looking at the lexical level of Poe's idiolect, we pay attention to the distribution of the author's neologisms according to the nature of their formation, namely: compound words, proper and common nouns formed by derivation (Pollin, 1974). As illustrated above, neologisms are used not only in the author's poetry and prose but also in his reviews and critical articles, which makes it possible to assert the individuality and uniqueness of this feature of his idiolect. In what follows, we will look at examples of stylistic neologisms in Poe's works.

Thus, by adding the prefix «be-» to the adjective «diamanded» in the poem «Ulalume», Poe creates the neologism «bediamanded», which we interpret as «studded with diamonds»: «*Astarte's bediamanded crescent, / Distinct with its duplicate horn*» (CP: 417). In the same way, the author coins the word «bewinged» (from «winged») in the poem «The Conqueror Worm»: «*An angel throng, bewinged, bedight*» (CP: 325). To confirm the uniqueness of the lexemes «bediamanded» and «bewinged», we refer to the Oxford English Dictionary (henceforth – OED) («bediamanded», «bewinged», OED), where the only evidence of their usage refers to Poe's texts.

Similarly, in his short story «William Wilson», Poe describes furniture as being «beseamed» with letters: «*innumerable benches and desks, black, ancient, and time-worn, piled desperately with much-bethumbed books, and so beseamed with initial letters*» (TS<sub>1</sub>: 430). There is no such adjective in the OED, but there is a verb «to beseam» («beseam», OED), first used in 1839 in Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine. It is worth noting that Poe followed this journal, which in turn inspired the author to write the story «How to Write a Blackwood Article» in 1838 (TS<sub>1</sub>: 336–357). Based on these facts, we assume that it was here that Poe noticed and borrowed the lexeme «beseam», changing its form.

In addition, in Poe's poem «Eleonora», the author uses the word «compassless»: «*They penetrate, however rudderless or compassless, into the vast ocean of the 'light ineffable'*» (TS<sub>1</sub>: 638). The earliest use of this adjective, according to the OED, dates to 1846 («compassless», OED), that is, five years after the publication of «Eleonora», which is a solid argument in favour of its uniqueness and novelty in Poe's text.

Similarly, in the short story «Berenice», using the suffix «-less», the author creates the lexeme «pupilles»: «*The eyes were lifeless, and lustreless, and seemingly pupilles, and I shrank*» (TS<sub>1</sub>: 215). According to the OED, the first evidence of «pupilles» dates to 1850, referring to the work of Poe («pupilles», OED). Finally, in the poem «Al Aaraaf», Poe breaks the rule of forming the comparative degree of adjectives by adding the suffix «-er» to the noun «fairy», thus creating the unique adjective «fairier»: «*Never his fairy wing o'er fairier world!*» (CP: 114), which is not mentioned in the OED.

Let us now consider complex stylistic neologisms, which are formed by combining two roots and coined by Poe. In his poem «Tamerlane» (versions of 1827 (henceforth – A) and 1845 (henceforth – N)), there are the following coinages: «demon-light» (A) («*The worldly glory, which has shown / A demon-light around my throne*» (CP: 27)), «long-abandon'd» (A) («*I sought my long-abandon'd land*» (CP: 38)), «half-closing» (H) («*From clouds that hung, like banners, o'er, / Appeared to my half-closing eye*» (CP: 55)), «trumpet-thunder» (H) («*And the deep trumpet-thunder's roar*» (CP: 55)), «rabble-men» (H) («*But that, among the rabble-men, / Lion ambition is chain'd down →*» (CP: 58)), «Siroc-wither'd» (H) («*Upon the Siroc-wither'd plain*» (CP: 59)). Similarly, in Poe's prose, for example, in the short story «The Gold-Bug», there are such complex stylistic neologisms as: «gold-seeker» («*The gold-seeker, whom I sincerely pitied, at length clambered from the pit*» (TS<sub>2</sub>: 823)), «money-seekers» and «money-finders» («*You will observe that the stories told are all about money-seekers, not about money-finders*» (TS<sub>2</sub>: 834)), «over-acute» («*Now, a not over-acute man, in pursuing such an object, would be nearly certain to overdo the matter*» (TS<sub>2</sub>: 840)), «bee-line» («*main branch seventh limb east side-shoot from the left eye of the death's-head – a bee-line from the tree through the shot fifty feet out*» (TS<sub>2</sub>: 840); «*a bee-line, or, in other words, a straight line, drawn from the nearest point of the trunk through 'the shot'*» (TS<sub>2</sub>: 842)). In the short story «The Man of the Crowd», Poe coins the following complex words: «fellow-wayfarer» («*when pushed against by fellow-wayfarers they evinced no symptom of impatience, but adjusted their clothes and hurried on*» (TS<sub>1</sub>: 508)), «solid-looking» («*with white cravats and waistcoats, broad solid-looking shoes*» (ibid.)), «pen-holding» («*the right ears, long used to pen-holding, had an odd habit of standing off on end*» (TS<sub>1</sub>: 508–509)), «paint-begrimed» («*the wrinkled, bejewelled and paint-begrimed beldame*» (TS<sub>1</sub>: 510)), «hearty-looking» («*some in whole although filthy garments, with a slightly unsteady swagger, thick sen-*



*sual lips, and hearty-looking rubicund faces*» (ibid.)), «monkey-exhibitors» («organ-grinders, monkey-exhibitors and ballad mongers, those who vended with those who sang» (ibid.)), «closely-buttoned» («and my vision deceived me, or, through a rent in a closely-buttoned and evidently second-handed roquelaire» (TS<sub>1</sub>: 512)), «loud-toned» («A loud-toned clock struck eleven» (TS<sub>1</sub>: 513)).

The novelty and uniqueness of the author's individual choice of the above-mentioned lexemes in the works «Tamerlane», «The Gold-Bug», and «The Man of the Crowd» is supported by the fact that the OED contains evidence of the origin of only two lexemes, «solid-looking» and «pen-holding», the first mentions of which are recorded in Poe's texts («solid-looking», «pen-holding», OED). No information about other neologisms coined by the author in these three texts is recorded in the OED.

In addition to being rich with newly coined words, Poe's texts are characterised by lexical deviation, which manifests itself through the use of foreign vocabulary (or code-mixing) and archaisms. At this stage, it is essential to consider the contextual factor of the author's poetics. There is historical evidence that, in addition to English, Poe spoke at least five languages (Latin, Greek, French, Spanish, and Italian) (Quinn, 1998: 98–100). In the author's texts (both poetry and prose), we predominantly encounter words, phrases, or entire sentences in Latin or French. It is interesting to note that during his university studies, Poe was recognised as an excellent student in these two disciplines (ibid.: 100–101). Yet, the question of whether the author deliberately embedded foreign vocabulary into his texts or not remains unresolved. It is quite possible that they were inserted for the same reason as stylistic neologisms mentioned above, when Poe could not find a suitable English word. However, whether appearing in the texts by accident or intentionally, they distinguish the author's poetry and prose from others and are a characteristic feature of his idiolect.

Thus, in his short story «The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar», Poe uses expressions in both Latin and French. For example, describing his interest in hypnosis, the narrator notes that no person had yet been hypnotised «in articulo mortis», which is Latin for «on the verge of death»: «no person had as yet been mesmerised in articulo mortis» (TS<sub>2</sub>: 1233). Later, describing his interaction with M. Valdemar, the narrator recalls that he was unable to achieve success, even resorting to «clairvoyance», which in French stands for «clear vision»: «in regard to clairvoyance, I could accomplish with him nothing to be relied upon» (TS<sub>2</sub>: 1234). Among other examples of code-mixing in the text, we

find the following: «and author (under the *nom de plume* [French for «pseudonym»] of Issachar Marx) of...» (TS<sub>2</sub>: 1234), «either condensed or copied *verbatim* [Latin for «literally»]» (TS<sub>2</sub>: 1236) and «in mesmeric rapport [French for «connection»] with him» (TS<sub>2</sub>: 1241).

Similarly, in the short story «Bon-Bon», starting with the epigraph, Poe incorporates a significant amount of foreign vocabulary, primarily in French. Thus, from the very first paragraph, we notice an overload of lexemes associated with cooking and philosophy, which create a satirical tone and at the same time emphasise the character of the protagonist, restaurateur and philosopher Pierre Bon-Bon: «restaurateur» (French for «a restaurant owner»), «pâtés» (French for «spreadable paste made from meat, fish or vegetables»), «à la fois» (French for «simultaneously»), «sur la Nature» (French for «about Nature»), «sur l'Âme» (French for «about the Soul»), «sur l'Esprit» (French for «about the Spirit»), «omelettes» (French for «omelettes»), «fricandeaux» (French for «veal dishes»), «litterateur» (French for «writer»), «Idée de Bon-Bon» (French for «Bon-Bon's idea»), «Idées» (French for «ideas»), «savants» (French for «scholars»), «fricassée» (French for «meat stew»), «facili gradú» (Latin for «with ease»), «à priori» (Latin for «knowledge gained without experience») and «à posteriori» (Latin for «knowledge based on experience») (TS<sub>1</sub>: 96–97; Rey, 2013).

In general, Poe's short stories often open with a motto in a language other than English. Thus, by employing lexical deviation, the author draws the reader's attention to the unusual nature of the text they have in their hands from the very beginning of the story. In Poe's stories such as «Metzengerstein», «Berenice», «Eleonora», «The Purloined Letter», «The Pit and the Pendulum», «A Tale of Jerusalem», and «The Island of the Fay» the epigraphs are written in Latin, while in his short stories «The Fall of the House of Usher», «The Man of the Crowd», «Ms. Found in a Bottle», «Bon-Bon», «Epimanes (Four Beasts in One)», and «The Man that Was Used Up» they are in French. Several stories, namely «Silence – A Fable», «The Conversation of Eiros and Charmion», and «The Colloquy of Monos and Una», open with an epigraph in ancient Greek. Mottos in Italian and German appear just once, in the stories «The Oval Portrait» and «The Mystery of Marie Roget» respectively.

An interesting and defining feature of Poe's poetics is that the author presents foreign vocabulary in his works (except for epigraphs) in italics, thus additionally foregrounding them on a graphological level. In this way, Poe achieves an effect of estrangement,

inevitably attracting the reader's attention to what is italicised.

Let us now consider the code-mixing in Poe's poetry. Thus, the following French lexemes appear in his early satirical poem «Oh, Manners! Oh, Manners!»: «beau» (French for «beautiful»), «beau ideal» (French for «ideal beauty») and «par excellence» (French for «exemplary, exceptional») (CP: 11) (Rey, 2013). Compared to the use of foreign proper names in prose, Poe uses them more frequently in poetry. For example, in «Tamerlane» the author retains the original spelling for such words, as «Cæsar» (Italian for «Roman commander G. Y. Caesar»), «Samar-cand» (Uzbek for «Samarkand, a city in Uzbekistan») (CP: 54; 59), in the poem «The Lake» – «Eden» (Latin for «paradise») (CP: 85), in «Al Aaraaf» – «Nesace» (Greek for «small island»), «Capo Deucato» (Greek for «name of a Greek island»), «Fior di Levante» (Italian for «flower of the East»), «Zanthe» (ancient Greek female name, and Greek for «golden flower that shines brightly»), «Saadi» (Persian poet), «Ilanthe» (Greek for «nymph»), etc. (CP: 100–114). When creating the poem «Dream-Land», Poe may be referring to Greek and Arabic folklore, where he borrows the names of mythical creatures «Eidolon» (Greek for «ghost, spirit of a living or dead person») (Taylor, 2000: 95) and «Ghouls» (in Arabic mythology – «hideous human-like monsters that lived in deserts or other remote places to lure travellers») (Al-Rawi, 2009). The lexeme «Thule», which has Latin origin and means «any remote place located beyond the known world», was also borrowed from Greek mythology (Jacobsen, 2015: 122).

An equally important lexical feature of Poe's idiolect is his use of archaisms in both poetry and prose. It is essential to note that, according to the standards of the English language of his time, the vocabulary we will discuss below is archaic, as confirmed by the reference to the OED. Thus, in his poem «The Raven», Poe uses the archaisms «quoth» («said»),

«dready» («gloomy»), «lore» («that which is learned; loss and destruction»), «yore» («old, in long time past»), «thou» («you»), while in the poem «Annabel Lee», the author inserts such lexemes as «maiden» («a young unmarried woman»), «night-tide» («a tide of the sea occurring at night»), and «sepulchre» («a tomb or burial place») – to name just a few. The poem «Lenore» is marked by the insertions of Old English words «thou» («you»), «hast» («have»), «yon» («a demonstrative word used to modify a noun, e.g., that, that one»), «bier» («the movable stand on which a corpse, whether in a coffin or not, is placed before burial; that on which it is carried to the grave»), «thy» («your»), «avaunt» («go on; move on»).

Similarly, in his short story «The Fall of the House of Usher», Poe combines standard for his time vocabulary with such archaic lexemes as «whence» («from which place»), «pervaded» («passes into every part of»), and «munificent» («characterised by abundance»), «appellation» («a designation, a title or name given»), while in «Berenice» the author uses Old English lexemes «herein» («in here; in this place»), «gazed» («looked vacantly»), «amid» («in the midst of smth») and many more.

**Conclusions.** The linguistic analysis of Poe's poetry and prose, as reported above, demonstrates that stylistic neologisms, the insertion of foreign words, and the use of archaisms in his texts play a crucial role in shaping the author's poetics in general and his idiolect in particular. To this end, the epigraphs in languages such as Latin and French, to name just a few, not only make his texts unique but also attest to their atypicality. The effect of estrangement in prose is additionally enhanced by the presentation of foreign vocabulary in italics. Proper names and references to Greek, Latin, Arabic and Italian traditions in Poe's poetry create a multi-layered artistic space that combines mythology, history and philosophy. Thus, the lexical level of Poe's idiolect contributes to a deeper understanding of his poetics.

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Дата першого надходження рукопису до видання: 26.11.2025

Дата прийнятого до друку рукопису після рецензування: 10.12.2025

Дата публікації: 30.12.2025