



FIGURES OF SPEECH

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WHAT ARE THE FIGURES OF SPEECH?

A figure of speech is a deviation from the ordinary use of words in order to increase their effectiveness. Basically, it is a figurative language that may consist of a single word or phrase. It may be a simile, a metaphor or personification to convey the meaning other than the literal meaning.

TYPES OF FIGURES OF SPEECH

The figures of speech list is over a hundred but some commonly used types are given along with examples.

1. SIMILE

In simile two unlike things are explicitly compared. For example, “She is like a fairy”. A simile is introduced by words such as *like, so, as etc.*

2. METAPHOR

It is an informal or implied simile in which words *like, as, so* are omitted. For example, “He is like a lion (Simile) “and “He is a lion (metaphor)”. In the following examples, metaphors are underlined.

- She is a star of our family.
- The childhood of the world; the anger of the tempest; the deceitfulness of the riches: wine is a mocker.
- She is now in the sunset of her days.

3. PERSONIFICATION

Personification is an attribution of personal nature, intelligence or character to inanimate objects or abstract notions. For example, in some phrases we use, the furious storm, the thirsty ground, and the pitiless cold. Some other examples are:

- Little sorrows sit and weep. (Boccaccio)

The dish ran away with the spoon. (Blake)

4. METONYMY

Metonymy is meant for a change of name. It is a substitute of the thing names for the thing meant. Following examples will clarify the concept.

- The *pen* is mightier than the *sword*.
- From the *cradle* to the *grave*. = from childhood to death.
- I have never read *Milton*. = the works of Milton.

5. APOSTROPHE

It is a direct address to some inanimate thing or some abstract idea as if it were living person or some absent person as if it were present. Example, "Boy's mother loved him very much."

6. HYPERBOLE

Hyperbole is a statement made emphatic by overstatement. For example, “Virtues as the sands of the shore.”

7. SYNECDOCHE

Synecdoche is the understanding of one thing by means of another. Here, a part is used to designate the whole or the whole to designate a part. For example, “I have *the Viceroy*, love *the man*.”, and “*All hands* (crew) at work.”

8. TRANSFERRED EPITHETS

In transferred epithets, the qualifying objective is transferred from a person to a thing as in phrases. For example, “sleepless night”, “sunburn mirth”, and “melodious plain”.

9. EUPHEMISM

By using the euphemism, we speak in agreeable and favorable terms of some person, object or event which is ordinarily considered unpleasant and disagreeable. For example,

- He is telling us a fairy tale. (a lie)
- He has fallen asleep. (he is dead)

10. IRONY OR SARCASM

In this mode of speech, the real meanings of the words used are different from the intended meanings. For example, the child of cobbler has no shoe.

11. PUN

This consists of a play on the various meanings of a word. Its effect is often ludicrous.

For example,

- Is life worth living? It depends upon the *liver*.
- Obviously, the constitution is against prostitution and congress is against progress. (*con* means *against* and *pro* means *for*)

12. EPIGRAM

It is a brief pointed saying. It couples words which apparently contradict each other. The language of the epigram is remarkable for its brevity. Examples are as under:

- The child is the father of the man. (Wordsworth)
- Fools rush in where angels fear to tread.
- The art lies in concealing art.
- *Silence* is sometimes more *eloquent* than words.
- *Conspicuous* by its absence.

13. ANTITHESIS

In antithesis, a striking opposition or contrast of words is made in the same sentence in order to secure emphasis. For example,

- To err is human, to forgive divine.
- Give every man thy ear, but few thy voice.

14. OXYMORON

It is a figure of speech which combines two seemingly contradictory or incongruous words for sharp emphasis or effect. For example,

- “darkness visible” (Milton);
- “make haste slowly” (Suetonius)
- “loving hate” (Romeo and Juliet)

15. LITOTES

It is the opposite of hyperbole. Here an affirmative is conveyed by negation of the opposite. For example,

- He is *no dullard*.
- I am *not a little*
- He is *not a bad sort*.

16. INTERROGATION

This is a rhetorical mode of affirming or denying something more strongly than could be done in ordinary language. Examples,

- Who is here so base that would be a bondman?
- Who is here so rude that would not be a Roman?
- Who is here so vile that will not love his country? (Shakespeare)

17. EXCLAMATION

It is used for strong expression of feelings. For examples, O lift me as a wave, a leaf, a cloud I fall upon the thorns of life; I bleed!

18. CLIMAX

It is an arrangement of a series of ideas in the order of increasing importance. For example, “What a piece of work man! How noble in reason, how infinite in faculties! In action, how like an angel!”

19. ANTICLIMAX OR BATHOS

This is the opposite to climax and signifies a ludicrous descent from the higher to the lower.

- A man so various, that he seemed to be. Not one, but all mankind’s epitome; who in the course of one revolving moon; was lawyer, statesman, fiddler, and buffoon.

20. ALLITERATION

The repetition of the same letter or syllable at the beginning of two or more words is called alliteration. For example,

- By apt **A**lliteration’s artful **a**
- **G**littering through the **g**loomy **g**
- The **f**urrow follows **f**

21. ONOMATOPOEIA

The formation of a word whose sound is made to suggest or echo the sense as in cuckoo, bang, growl, hiss.

- The moan of doves in immemorial elms and murmur of innumerable bees.
- Rend with the tremendous sound your ears asunder with guns, drum, trumpet, blunderbuss, and thunder.

22. CIRCUMLOCUTION

This consists of expressing some fact or idea in a roundabout way, instead of stating it at once. For example,

- The viewless couriers of the air. =(the wind)
- That statement of his was *purely an effort of imagination*. = (a fiction)

23. TAUTOLOGY OR PLEONASM

Tautology is meant for repeating the same fact or idea in different words. For example,

“It is the *privilege* and *birthright* of every man to express his ideas without any fear.”