

Figurative Language and Sonic Devices

Brief: In writing and public speaking, use can use figurative language and sonic devices to add meaning, interest, or emphasis to the idea being shared.

Learning Objective: Demonstrate when and how to use stylistic devices.

Key Terms:

- Alliteration: The repetition of consonant sounds at the beginning of two or more words immediately succeeding each other, or at short intervals.
- Apostrophe: A figure of speech in which the speaker directly addresses someone absent or dead, or addresses an inanimate or abstract object as if it were human.
- Figurative language: Language that uses words or phrases that depart from straightforward, literal language.
- Hyperbole: Deliberate or unintentional overstatement, particularly extreme overstatement.
- Metaphor: A figure of speech in which a word or phrase is used to refer to something that it is not, invoking a direct similarity between the word or phrase used and the thing described (but without using the words like or as).
- Onomatopoeia: The use of words that attempt to emulate a sound.
- Personification: A figure of speech in which an inanimate object or an idea is given human qualities.
- Simile: A figure of speech in which one thing is compared to another using “like” or “as.”
- Stylistic devices: A variety of language techniques that add meaning, interest, or emphasis to the idea being shared.

What is a Stylistic Device?

In writing and public speaking, stylistic devices are language techniques that add meaning, interest, or emphasis to the idea being shared.

Figurative Language

A “figure of speech” is any way of saying something other than the ordinary way. Figurative language uses words or phrases that depart from straightforward, literal language.

Simile

A simile is a figure of speech in which one thing is compared to another using the “like” or “as.”

Example: *She put her hand to the boy's head, which was steaming like a hot iron.*

Metaphor

A metaphor is a figure of speech in which a word or phrase is used to refer to something that it is not, invoking a direct similarity between the word or phrase used and the thing described. Unlike a simile, it does not use the words "like" or "as." Metaphors can span over multiple sentences.

Example: *"That boy is a machine!"*



Simile = Life is like a box of chocolates.
Metaphor = Life is a box of chocolates.

Personification

Personification is a figure of speech in which an inanimate object or an idea is given human qualities.

Example: *The wind whistled through the trees.*

Apostrophe

Apostrophe is a figure of speech in which the speaker directly addresses someone absent or dead, or addresses an inanimate or abstract object as if it were human.

Example: (speaking to a broken coffee mug) *"I will miss you. You have been a good friend."*

Hyperbole

Hyperbole, which comes from the Greek word meaning exaggeration, is deliberate or unintentional overstatement, particularly extreme overstatement.

Example: *"They have the weight of the world on their shoulders!"*

Sonic Devices

Sonic devices are language techniques that depend on sound to achieve added meaning, interest, or emphasis to the idea being shared.

Alliteration

The repetition of consonant sounds at the beginning of two or more words immediately succeeding each other, or at short intervals.

Example: *I hate that heartless heathen.*

Onomatopoeia

Onomatopoeia is the use of words that attempt to emulate a sound.

Example: *I heard the faint gurgle of a fountain.*

From Concept to Action

Focusing on where you might use stylistic devices to strengthen your delivery, conduct a review of a speech outline you're currently developing. Refer to the list of figurative language and sonic devices and choose one device. Identify a sub-point that you think might be a good match. Then, write a few sentences that include one of your selected sub-points and that particular device. Once you're done, speak your sentences out loud. Does the device add interest? Stylistic devices are most effective when they're used sparingly. Choose thoughtfully and don't overdo it.

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"Chocolates Pralines Box Sweet Candy Gift Treat." Pixabay. <https://pixabay.com/photos/chocolates-pralines-box-sweet-569969/>. Accessed 17 May 2019. [CC0]

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