

HYPERBOLE AS A DEVICE OF SPEECH

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ABSTRACT

Hyperbole has been studied in rhetoric and in literary contexts and associated with both metaphor and irony. It is often related with irony. Hyperbolic expressions usually pass without challenge by listeners, who accept them as creative intensifications for evaluative or affective purposes such as humor and irony, and who often make their own supportive contributions to the figure of speech. In this paper, examples of hyperbole are included that occur in ironic contexts and illustrated the importance to theory-building.

Keywords: hyperbole, exaggeration, irony, trope, rhetoric, speech, literature, humor.

INTRODUCTION

Hyperbole is a kind of figurative language where the speaker says something while meaning another thing. In other words, the literal meaning of what is said does not match the intended meaning. Hyperbole has been used for thousand of years and was mentioned in classical Greece handbooks.

METHODOLOGY

Hyperbole is the use of exaggeration as device or figure of speech. It has a long history of study as a rhetorical figure of speech in written texts, and has been, since the time of ancient Greeks. Rhetoric, in the ancient world, was associated with persuasive speech and the exercise of power, and centuries of treatises on eloquence and techniques of expressions testify to this. Only Fontanier (1968) shifted the study of figurative rhetoric into the domain banal, common language. However, not a great amount of researches exists into everyday spoken hyperbole, and much of the literature on hyperbole in spoken language is subsumed within studies of verbal irony and humour (e.g. Gibbs, 2000). In Smith's (1657) *Mysterie of Rhetorique Unvaild*, for example, hyperbole is defined as: "when the trope is exceedingly enlarged, or when the change of signification is very high and lofty, or when in advancing or repressing one speaks much more than is precisely true, yea above all belief" (p. 54). Smith identified two kinds of hyperbole: *auxesis* and *meiosis* (ibid: p. 55), the exaggerated

intensification, expanding or enlarging of an entity and the exaggerated reduction or attenuation of it, respectively.

Useful conception to hyperbole may be found in the literature on irony and sarcasm. Irony is a literary device in which contradictory statements or situations reveal a reality that is different from what appears to be true. There are many forms of irony featured in literature. The effectiveness of irony as a literary device depends on the reader's expectations and understanding of the disparity between what "should" happen and what "actually" happens in a literary work. Gibbs (1994) notes that both hyperbole and understatement are closely related to irony in traditional rhetoric "in that each misrepresents the truth" (p. 391). Roberts and Kreuz (1994) found that irony and hyperbole co-occurred in discursual contexts where the goals were humor, emphasis and clarification. One linking characteristics between hyperbole and irony is what Kreuz and Robers (1995) call 'nonveridicality', a difference between utterance and reality, what we refer to as contradiction. A important distinction in the study of irony has been made between 'use' and 'mention', where use is defined as reference directly to what an expression refers to, while mention involves reflexive reference to the expression itself.

A great contribution to the linguistics of hyperbole is offered by Spitzbardt (1963), who supports the need to look at hyperbole in everyday speech (as opposed to its occurrence in literature) and who focuses on the lexico-grammatical repertoire for hyperbole. In general, hyperbole is often used for emphasis or effect. In casual speech, it functions as an intensifier: saying "the bag weighed a ton" simply means that the bag was extremely heavy. The rhetorical device may be used for serious or ironic or comic effects. Understanding hyperbole and its use in context can help understand the speaker's point. Hyperbole generally conveys feelings or emotions from the speaker, or from those who speaker may talk about. It can be used in a form of humor, excitement, distress, and many other emotions, all depending on the context in which the speaker uses it.

In popular culture hyperbole is one of the most widely recognized and used forms of figurative language in everyday life. It is used heavily in advertising and entertainment. Advertisers use hyperbole to exaggerate the benefits of products to boast sales. Repetitive hyperbole is used in public relations to increase the popularity of a person or product.

Hyperbole is a literary device and we use this device in our daily conversation to include a certain effect. However, the translation of the example of a hyperbole is not actually true, rather it is an embellishment and it highlights an emotion. It is applied to

accentuate the thoughts, ideas and images presented in the literature and it dramatizes the overall text. The objective of using hyperbole is to add an amusing effect in the text. In literature, it carries a great significance as it allows the writers to present something common in an intense manner. In short, by applying hyperbole, one can turn a common feeling into a remarkable one. Most importantly, the use of hyperbole provides a contrast as with this technique, something is explained by giving an extra stress and on the other hand, the other descriptions remain normal. For this reason, it attracts the reader's attention and makes the literary work memorable for a long time.

In conclusion, we can say that by definition, a hyperbole is nothing but trope composed of exaggerated words or ideas used for emphasis. In every area of our lives we encounter exaggeration to make the speeches more effective. Hyperbole is commonly used not only in prose and poetry but also in every day communication among people. However, although valued in creative writing, hyperboles are avoided in formal writing or business writing.

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