



Faculty of letters and languages

French department

Module: English

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FIGURES OF SPEECH

Figure of speech is a word or phrase used in a different way from its usual meaning in order to create a particular mental picture or effect to make the language more beautiful and effective. It adds extra dimensions to language and reveals one thing by relating it to something else” , for the purpose of making the meaning clearer, more forceful, more vivacious, and more vigorous.

The principal figures of speech and examples are listed below:

- 1. Simile:** a direct comparison of two unlike things or ideas in which the comparing element is joined to the explicit or implicit notion being compared by *'like'* or *'as.'* Ex:
 - He is like a lion.
 - The old woman is fit as a fiddle.
 - The children fight like cats and dogs.
- 2. Metaphor:** an expression, often found in literature, that describes a person or object by referring to something that is considered to have similar characteristics to that person or object. The words *like* or *as* are omitted.
 - His heart was broken.
 - The teacher was an encyclopedia of information.
 - She was the rock of our family, strong and unbreakable, even in the worst storms.
- 3. Personification:** is the attribution of human traits and qualities to an inanimate object or abstract ideas. Ex:
 - The sun smiles at me every morning
 - The flowers danced to the wind.
 - Love picked him up and threw him to the wolves.
- 4. Hyperbole:** An exaggerated or extravagant statement, used to express a strong feeling or produce a strong impression, and not intended to be understood literally. Ex:
 - I will be there in two seconds.
 - I'm in so much trouble, my Dad is going to kill me.
 - i'm on cloud nine

5. Irony or Sarcasm Expressing in the form of a joke, intended seriously or not, the opposite of what you expect to happen.

- You have been working hard for this mark. (Sarcasm)
- It doesn't take million days to write a one page essay (Sarcasm)
- The Titanic was said to be unsinkable but sank on its first voyage.(Irony)
- A Fireman afraid of fire. (Irony)

6. Alliteration: it is the repetition of one or more similar consonants in successive words. In other words, alliteration happens when words that start with the same sound are used repeatedly in a phrase or a sentence.

- **S**heep **s**hould sleep in a **s**hed.
- The **W**ild **W**inds **W**hisk to the **W**est

7. Oxymoron The combination of two words whose meanings seem to be mutually contradictory. ▪ My sister and I had a **friendly fight**.

- The process of giving birth is **painfully beautiful**.
- My mom asked my brother to stop behaving like a **big baby**.

8. Imagery: the use of language to create mental images and help the reader visualize the scene.

- Her perfume smelled like a garden of fresh roses in bloom.
- The autumn leaves are a blanket on the ground.

9. Euphemism: is a polite word or expression that is used to refer to things that people may find inconvenient to talk about.

- He is telling us a fairy tale. (a lie)
- She is no longer with us. (she died)

10. Allusion: a reference to some historical or literary event, place, or person that has striking resemblance to the subject under discussion.

- To me her smile is like kryptonite.
- He is a real romeo with the ladies.
- The rise of the baseball team from last place to first was a real **Cinderella story**.

11. Proverbs: A proverb is a short, well-known saying, stating a general truth or piece of advice.

- Better late than never.
- Don't judge a book by its cover.

12. Idioms: a phrase whose meaning cannot be understood literally, but that has a separate meaning of its own.

- **Break a leg:** good luck.
- **Piece of cake:** easy and simple.
- **Speak of the devil:** when someone you were talking about just appeared.

Activity: identify the figures of speech used in the following sentences

1. The clock struck midnight and the sky was as black as ink.
2. Time was a thief to me this year.
3. I will die if I have to read one more page, I am so tired.
4. The stars danced in the night sky.
5. Betsy baked better bread with bananas, blueberries, and butter.
6. The moon was a bright ball of smoke in the night sky.
7. Spill the beans.
8. We are alone together.
9. I really need a bit of peace and quiet
10. Walls are covered with white paint, books are neatly arranged in the bookshelves, everything inside the room is organised, except the abstract painting left unfinished on the side.

Answer Key:

1. **Simile**
2. **Personification**
3. **Hyperbole**
4. **Personification**
5. **Alliteration**
6. **Metaphor**
7. **Idiom**
8. **Oxymoron**
9. **Euphemism**
10. **Imagery**