



PNU University

Tropes and Rhetorical Figures

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پیشگفتار ناشر

کتاب‌های دانشگاه پیام نور حسب مورد و با توجه به شرایط مختلف یک درس در یک یا چند رشته دانشگاهی، به صورت کتاب درسی، متن آزمایشگاهی، فرادرسی، و کمک درسی چاپ می‌شوند.

کتاب درسی ثمره کوشش‌های علمی صاحب اثر است که براساس نیازهای درسی دانشجویان و سرفصل‌های مصوب تهیه و پس از داوری علمی، طراحی آموزشی، و ویرایش علمی در گروه‌های علمی و آموزشی، به چاپ می‌رسد. پس از چاپ ویرایش اول اثر، با نظرخواهی‌ها و داوری علمی مجدد و با دریافت نظرهای اصلاحی و متناسب با پیشرفت علوم و فناوری، صاحب اثر در کتاب تجدیدنظر می‌کند و ویرایش جدید کتاب با اعمال ویرایش زبانی و صوری جدید چاپ می‌شود.

متن آزمایشگاهی (م) راهنمایی است که دانشجویان با استفاده از آن و کمک استاد، کارهای عملی و آزمایشگاهی را انجام می‌دهند.

کتاب‌های فرادرسی (ف) و **کمک درسی** (ک) به منظور غنی‌تر کردن منابع درسی دانشگاهی تهیه و بر روی لوح فشرده تکثیر می‌شوند و یا در وبگاه دانشگاه قرار می‌گیرند.

مدیریت تولید محتوا و تجهیزات آموزشی

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PREFACE

This self-study text-book is an introduction to figurative language for EFL/ESL students who are reading for an undergraduate degree in English Literature. The approach used here is intellectually demanding and might not be suitable for less motivated EFL/ESL students or students below mid-intermediate level who might not be equipped with the necessary meta-language for discussion. Therefore, it is recommended that this text-book be used for students who are in their third year or above. The book is devoted to learning figurative devices and to reading representative poetic and prose texts. It enables students to recognize and use figurative language in context. As Paul de Man observes, figures of speech are not a “derived, marginal, or aberrant form of language but the linguistic paradigm par excellence.” One of the fallacies about figurative texts is that their language is artificially decorative, something to make the texts more literary and dramatic. Language is a colourful tapestry, not a plain weave. Nietzsche was right when he commented that language is inherently figurative and that its meaning cannot be separated from its figures. Based on this assumption, firstly, this book explores the function of figures in everyday speech. We will begin by considering how figures are being used by the people in the street. We will examine texts that you might read or speech you might hear in everyday life which have poetic qualities and could be considered “poetic”. Students will learn that figurative language is not necessarily a specialized language and that it is not confined to poetry and literature.

Then we will focus on a selection of literary texts to see how writers of literary texts employ figurative devices. We will try to grasp the fact that, unlike the old-fashioned definition, figurative language cannot be considered as "any deviation, either in thought or expression, from the ordinary and simple method of speaking," (Corbett) but a kind of fresh and artistic usage which makes it different from common usage.

A knowledge of the figures presented in this book will help students to recognize figures in context and eventually to invent their own figures or use them efficaciously in their writing and talks. The figures have been divided into different sections, starting with metaphors and similes and ending with figures of sound which, all in all, cover some of the most important rhetorical figures students might encounter in their future studies.

This course will be conducted primarily by the students except for some introductory lectures in each session which might need further clarifications. Both students and instructors may use the sources in the bibliography for further readings. Students will be expected to submit one major paper by the end of the term; I suggest that instructors ask students to find examples from Persian Literature for each figure discussed in this book. Regular attendance and informed participation in class discussions should be made essential. Apart from this text-book, some additional readings may also be introduced and announced depending on the students' needs and levels of proficiency. In addition to keeping up with the readings and writing assignments, students may be asked to contribute their own insights to the collective knowledge of the class. I hope this little effort of mine would prove beneficial to all our teachers and students and I would greatly appreciate receiving your comments and suggestions for amending and improving this text-book. Please send your comments to my university of Kashan email address: rezafatsu@kashanu.ac.ir.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION: LITERAL VERSUS FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE

This chapter is about the difference between literal and figurative language. By the end of this chapter you will be expected to be able to recognize literal and figurative language and also to be able to transfer figurative language into literal language and vice versa. Remember that sometimes definitions of key terms appear after some preliminary warming-up exercises or questions.

Exercise 1: Examine the following sentences. What is the difference between their modes of expression? Which ones are more ornamental and embellished than the others? Which ones are plain and ordinary?

My love is like a red, red rose.
My love is very beautiful.

Thinking of you is music.
I have a very good feeling when I think of you.

The journalists were firing questions at me for two whole hours.
The journalists were asking questions rapidly for two whole hours.

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Feedback 1: in the above examples, the first sentences are more imaginative and ornamental than the second ones because they are based on comparisons or analogies between two dissimilar things that is, between the beloved and a rose, thought and music, and questions and firing missiles. We call these “figurative” sentences. Figurative language is a form of expression that contains images in which one thing is represented in the image of another. Figurative language makes the meaning more pointed and clear and it appears to be more graphic and vivid. The second sentences, however, are all plain and ordinary and are used in their original and real meanings. We call these “literal” sentences. Literal language is another form of expression which takes the meaning of words in their non-figurative and primary sense.

Exercise 2: Let us now transfer the mode of expression in the following figurative sentences by explaining them in plain or literal English:

She had dark eyes and cherry-red lips.

He has a neatly trimmed pepper-and-salt beard.

These people are the salt of the earth.

His dreams went up in smoke.

She was my anchor when things were difficult for me.

Feedback 2: She had dark eyes and cherry-red lips = She has dark eyes and bright red lips.

He has a neatly trimmed pepper-and-salt beard = He has a neatly trimmed black and white beard.

These people are the salt of the earth = These people are very good.

His dreams went up in smoke = His dreams were gone.

She was my anchor when things were difficult for me = She helped me to keep things under control when things were difficult for me.

Exercise 3: Identify the words in the following sentences which are related to plants. What do the plant words mean in these

sentences? Use a dictionary to check your answers. Compare the literal or denotative meanings of these words with the meanings the words have in the following sentences. Can you use any other words for these plant words with the same meanings?

Example: One more aspect of China's financial success is the **flowering** of architecture, art and culture. "Flowering" is a word that has been used here in its figurative sense, meaning "development". The literal meaning of the word is "blossoming" but this literal meaning is not applicable in this context.

Many of the students worked hard and, finally, their labor bore fruit, and most of them achieved good results.

Massage should not be regarded as a long-term cure for stress because it does not get to the root of the problem.

As his artistic career blossomed, he kept his personal and professional lives separated.

I planted the seeds of suspicion in their minds.

Feedback 3: In the first sentence, "fruit" is used in its figurative sense, meaning "results"; In the second sentence, "root" is used figuratively, meaning "the main cause"; "Blossomed" and "planted the seeds" in the last two sentences are also used figuratively, meaning, respectively, "developed" and "placed firmly".

Exercise 4: Consider the following water words that can be used to describe moving water:

Flood, flow, torrent, wave, stream, trickle, ripple, deluge

Can you use the above water words to describe the following words in a figurative way? Can you use the above words to suggest that you have a positive or negative view of the following words?

Cars, refugees, memories, abuse, laughter, criticism, traffic, customers

Feedback 4: a flood of refugees / memories; the flow of traffic; a torrent of abuse (negative); a wave of criticism; a stream of cars; a trickle of traffic; a trickle or stream of customers / refugees; a ripple of laughter (ripple has mildly pleasant connotations); a deluge of

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criticism (negative).

We understand from the above exercises that figurative language, or language that is not used in its primary and ordinary sense, is not necessarily different from everyday language and is an inseparable part of it. The difference between figurative language used in literary works and figurative language in everyday usage, however, is that the former usually departs from the clichés of common language and creates fresh and authentic images. For example, if the man in the street uses the clichéd simile, “they fight like cocks”, a good writer might use a fresher image to express the same thing, such as: “they fight like fire-breathing dragons”.

Exercise 5: Can you bring up more examples from everyday language to prove the point that figurative language is an integral part of everyday language? You may want to give examples in which common expressions, proverbs, sayings and idioms employ some sort of comparison.

Feedback 5: Here are some commonly-used similes in the English language:

He is as faithful as a dog. I am busy as a bee. It is as dead as a dodo. I am as happy as a lark. It is easy as apple pie / a piece of cake. You are blind as a bat. It is as flat as a pancake. It is as hard as nails / bricks. I am as free as a bird. We are as hungry as a bear. It is as light as a feather. It moved as high as a kite. It is as dark as coal. It is as bright as a new pin. You are obstinate as a mule. It is as keen as mustard. She is fresh as a daisy. It is as hot as hell. This handbag is as heavy as lead. He was crawling like a snail. He is as tough as leather. He is strong like a horse. You are as sweet as sugar. He drinks like a fish. He is as drunk as a lord. Buildings are springing up like mushroom. He is drowned like a rat. It is soft like butter. He walked slowly like a snail. It is as silent as the grave. He is as bold as a lion. He roared like a bull / lion. It is as white as snow / sheet. He is as quiet as a mouse. It is as red as roses. It was so quick like a flash / wink. It is as pure as the driven snow. He is as wise as owls. She is smart as a

fox. It is as sharp as a razor. She is mad like a wet hen. It is as regular as clockwork. You can never find this. It is as scarce as hen's teeth. He is as poor as a church mouse. She is as proud as a peacock. He is as sick as a dog. He is weak like a kitten. It is as slippery as an eel.

Comments: The above similes have now been used so often that they have become stale and common place. The task of a good writer is to create fresh images in the form of new metaphors and similes, not to use trite expressions like the above.

Chapter 2

METAPHORIC LANGUAGE

In this chapter you will learn about the different component parts of metaphoric language. You will also learn why we tend to use metaphors and similes in everyday language and how politicians, particularly, use figurative devices to make us believe in what they say. This chapter will also introduce different types of metaphoric expressions and uses.

2.1 The Anatomy of Metaphoric Language

Warming-up: What is the difference between the following comparisons? Which one is based on analogy? Which one is based on equation?

She is a lamb.

She is as innocent as a lamb.

Feedback: In the first sentence we are equating two essentially different things. This is called “metaphor”. In a sense, we are saying something is equal to something else in some aspects. This is a stronger and more impressive expression than saying, “she is as innocent as a lamb”. Metaphor is a comparison between two things of unlike nature that have something in common. Metaphor states an equivalence between two dissimilar things. In the second example we are likening something to something else. This is an analogy or “simile”, (based on resemblances and similitude). A simile is weaker in expression than a metaphor but is more logical than a metaphor.

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Simile is an explicit comparison between two things of unlike nature that have something in common.

Exercise 1: Can you identify the literal legs (tenors) and the figurative legs (vehicles) of comparison in the above examples? What is the ground (the common notion between the two legs) of the comparison? What role does the word, “as”, play in the second sentence?

Feedback 1: “She” is the literal leg (tenor), “lamb” is the figurative leg (vehicle), the ground is what quality the two legs share or what resemblances they bear with one another. In this example, “innocence” is the ground of the comparison (in order to discover the ground, you may ask this question, “in what respect do the tenor and the vehicle resemble each other?”); “as” is the word of comparison which helps soften bold comparisons. Here are some other commonly used words of comparisons: “seem”, “resemble”, “look like”, “similar to”, ... These words of comparisons create “similes”.

Exercise 2: Can we consider the following sentences as similes?

London is like Paris in many respects.

New Haven A city sacred as Mecca, shining as Paris.

F. Scott Fitzgerald

Feedback 2: No, because in a metaphor or simile the two legs of the comparison must be essentially different from each other. Only dissimilar things make up a proper literary comparison. London and Paris are both cities. So are New Haven and Mecca.

Exercise 3: Consider the following examples:

1. My heart is a singing bird.
2. Sheath thy impatience.
3. Take her under your wings.
4. Every pine wore ermine.
5. Riddle: A gentleman with a neck,/ And no head, / Two arms, /
But no legs.
6. And I will wink / so that the day seem night.

7. X is like a windmill.

Can you identify the tenors and the vehicles in the above excerpts? Which of the above are explicit comparisons, which ones are implicit? Are similes implicit or explicit comparisons?

Feedback 3: Example no.1 is an explicit metaphor or metaphor type 1 in which “my heart” has been compared to “a singing bird,” the ground of this comparison is “cheerfulness”.

No. 7 is a simile (explicit comparison) in which “X” has been likened to a “windmill”. The ground is their similarity in shape.

In No. 2 the tenor is named but the vehicle is implied. This is metaphor type 2, which is an implicit type of metaphor. Here “impatience” has been compared to a sword. “Sheath thy impatience” means “put your impatience in its cover like a sword or dagger”. The ground is the sense of danger associated with both sword and impatience.

In No. 4 the tenor is implied but the vehicle is named. This is another kind of implicit metaphor which is also known as “metaphor type 3”. Here “snow” has been compared to the white skin of polar animals (“ermine”). The ground is their “whiteness”.

No. 5 is also metaphor type 3. The answer to this riddle is “coat” which has been compared to a gentleman with no head and two arms, and the ground is their shape.

In No. 3 both legs of the comparison are implied. This is known as metaphor type 4 (another type of implicit metaphor). Here the person (probably a child) has been compared to a chick that needs to be protected. No. 6 also implies metaphor type 4 in which “eyes” are compared to the “stars” in terms of glittering and sparkling.

2.2 GENERAL EXERCISES

Identify the similes and metaphors in the following poems or excerpts and explain them in your own words:

- METAPHORS

By Sylvia Plath

1. I'm a riddle in nine syllables
2. An elephant, a ponderous house,
3. A melon strolling on two tendrils.
4. O red fruit, ivory, fine timbers!
5. This loaf's big with its yeasty rising.
6. Money's new-minted in this fat purse.
7. I'm a means, a stage, a cow in calf.
8. I've eaten a bag of green apples,
9. Boarded the train, there's no getting off.

Vocabulary (numbers refer to line numbers in the poem):

2. **Ponderous**: huge
3. **Strolling**: moving slowly
3. **Tendrils**: pipes
4. **Ivory**: tusk of elephants
4. **Timbers**: pieces of wood
5. **Loaf**: loaf of bread
5. **Yeasty rising**: growing larger like puffing yeast
7. **Means**: something useful to a desired end

Questions and comments: In this poem, Plath, skilfully, conveys the emotional complexities related to nine months of pregnancy. She expresses the sense of mystery and excitement associated with pregnancy through the creation of a riddle; amusement and irony through the metaphors of “elephant, house, melon, cow in calf;” the sense of pleasure through the metaphors of “red fruit, ivory and fine timbers;” pride through the metaphors of “yeasty rising, new-minted and fat purse;” apprehension through the metaphors of “bag of green apples” and “boarded the train there’s no getting off.”

In this poem almost everything counts. How many letters are there in the title of the poem? Scan the first line. How many syllables

are there in the first line of the poem? How many lines are there in the poem itself? How many letters are there in the word, “syllables”, in line 1? (The answer to all the above questions is 9) Could these be in any way related to what the poem is all about? (Answer: yes, number 9 around which the whole poem has been constructed points to the subject of the poem which is nine months of pregnancy).

- Man that is born of a woman
Is of few days, and full of trouble.
He comes forth like a flower, and
Withers.

Feedback: “Man” has been compared to “a flower” because both have short lives and “wither”, which means “die” or “dry out”.

- With wine beside a brook (a small stream) we must live
Withdraw from sorrow we must live
Our life is like a flower's that lives for ten days,
With laughing lips and fresh-faced look we must live

Hafez

Feedback: “Our life” has been compared to the life of a flower and the ground is the brevity of their lives.

- SPRING

By Edna St. Vincent Millay

1. To what purpose, April, do you return again?
2. Beauty is not enough.
3. You can no longer quiet me with the redness
4. Of little leaves opening stickily.
5. I know what I know.
6. The sun is hot on my neck as I observe
7. The spikes of the crocus.
8. The smell of the earth is good.
9. It is apparent that there is no death.
10. But what does that signify?
11. Not only under ground are the brains of men

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12. Eaten by maggots.
13. Life in itself
14. Is nothing,
15. An empty cup, a flight of uncarpeted stairs.
16. It is not enough that yearly, down this hill,
17. April
18. Comes like an idiot, babbling and strewing flowers.

Vocabulary

7. **Spikes:** sharp points
7. **Crocus:** a small spring flower
12. **Maggots:** creatures like very small worms
18. **Babbling:** talking in a quick and foolish way
18. **Strewing:** scatter untidily

Feedback: Lines 13-15, “life” has been compared to an “empty cup” and “a flight of uncarpeted stairs” and the ground is “emptiness”; There is a simile in lines 17-18 in which April has been compared to an “idiot” because both behave madly.

- Life is as tedious as a twice-told tale

Vexing the dull ear of a drowsie man.

Shakespeare

Feedback: “Life” has been compared to a story that has been told twice and is “tedious”, which means “boring”. It vexes or annoys the dull ear of a sleepy/ “drowsie” man. The ground of the simile is “boredom”.

- Hound

By Robert Francis

1. Life the hound
2. Equivocal
3. Comes at a bound
4. Either to rend me

5. Or to befriend me.
6. I cannot tell
7. The hound's intent
8. Till he has sprung
9. At my bare hand
10. With teeth or tongue.
11. Meanwhile I stand
12. And wait the event.

Vocabulary:

1. **Hound:** a dog used in hunting
2. **Equivocal:** displaying two meanings or attitudes
3. **Comes** at a bound: jumps to your feet
4. **Rend:** tear apart
7. **Intent:** intention
12. **Wait the event:** wait and see what will happen

Questions: What do you think about life? Is it cruel or is it kind? How has life treated you so far? Are you satisfied with life? What would you compare life to if you were asked to create a metaphor for it?

Can you identify the central metaphor in this poem? What is the ground of the metaphor?

Feedback: “Life” has been compared to a “hound” because both are “equivocal”, i.e., they can be either cruel or kind.

Do you agree with the poet’s view point about life? What role does chance play in our lives? Do you consider yourself as being befriended by life or torn apart by it? Have you seen people who have been either befriended by life or destroyed by it?

- Life is but a walking shadow

A poor player that struts and frets his hour upon the stage and
then is heard no more

It is a tale told by an idiot

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Full of sound and fury
Signifying nothing.

Shakespeare

Feedback: “Life” (tenor) has been compared to a “walking shadow” (vehicle) because both are insubstantial things and disappear very easily. “Life” has also been compared to a “poor player” that walks in a proud way (“struts”) and spends his time in an anxious manner (“frets”) because both life and a poor player play their roles anxiously but vanish when the game is done. In a third metaphor, Shakespeare compares “life” to a tale told by a stupid person or “idiot” because both, despite their “sound and fury” (that is, their expression of anger), are absurd and signify nothing.

- SONNET II

By William Shakespea`re

1. When forty winters shall besiege thy brow,
2. And dig deep trenches in thy beauty's field,
3. Thy youth's proud livery so gazed on now,
4. Will be a totter'd weed of small worth held:
5. Then being asked, where all thy beauty lies,
6. Where all the treasure of thy lusty days;
7. To say, within thine own deep sunken eyes,
8. Were an all-eating shame, and thriftless praise.
9. How much more praise deserv'd thy beauty's use,
10. If thou couldst answer 'This fair child of mine
11. Shall sum my count, and make my old excuse,'
12. Proving his beauty by succession thine!
13. This were to be new made when thou art old,
14. And see thy blood warm when thou feel'st it cold.

Synopsis of sonnet II by Shakespeare: The poet looks ahead to the time when the youth will have aged, and uses this as an argument to urge him to waste no time, and to have a child who will replicate his father and preserve his beauty. The imagery of ageing used is that

of siege warfare, forty winters being the besieging army, which digs trenches in the fields before the threatened city. The trenches correspond to the furrows and lines which will mark the young man's forehead as he ages. He is urged not to throw away all his beauty by devoting himself to self-pleasure, but to have children, thus satisfying the world, and Nature, which will keep an account of what he does with his life.

Vocabulary and explanation: 1. When forty winters shall besiege thy brow: Forty winters (forty years) has been compared to soldiers that lay siege to (besiege) the beloved (when added to the young man's present age, would make him about 60). At such an age he would have many wrinkles, although it is generally reckoned that in Elizabethan times, owing to dietary inadequacies and disease, people aged much more rapidly, and even a forty year old could be deemed to have reached old age. So the poet could be referring to the youth as he might be when he reaches forty.

2. And dig deep trenches in thy beauty's field: The besieging army (=age) would dig trenches in your beautiful face (as the army digs trenches to undermine the city's walls. But the reference may also be to furrows dug in a field when ploughing. The metaphor, either military or agricultural, is applied to the youth's face, which will be lined and wrinkled with age as the years pass).

3. Thy youth's proud livery so gazed on now: Your youth's livery (= uniform worn by servants in a nobleman's house) wishes to make a show of wealth.

4. Will be a totter'd weed of small worth held: will be a tattered garment. Tottered is an old spelling of tattered weeds - often refers to clothing in Shakespeare.

5. Then being asked, where all thy beauty lies: If you were to be asked in the future where your beauty is buried (= hidden).

6. Where all the treasure of thy lusty days: If you were to be asked where your days of youthful exuberance and lustful behaviour are.