

LEXICAL-SYNTACTIC STYLISTIC DEVICES: SIMILE, PERIPHRAISIS, LITOTES, GRADATION

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Annotation

This article discusses four important lexical-syntactic stylistic devices: simile, periphrasis, litotes, and gradation. It explains their definitions, examples, and functions, highlighting how they enrich speech and writing. The article emphasizes the role of these devices in creating vividness, emotional coloring, and stylistic variety.

Keywords: stylistic devices, lexical-syntactic devices, simile, periphrasis, litotes, gradation, figurative language, expressiveness, rhetoric, literary tools

Stylistic devices are important tools used in both spoken and written language to create vividness, expressiveness, and emotional coloring. Among these, lexical-syntactic stylistic devices play a crucial role, as they operate at the level of words and sentence structures, helping to shape meaning, highlight important points, and make speech or writing more artistic and persuasive. This article focuses on four significant lexical-syntactic stylistic devices: simile, periphrasis, litotes, and gradation.

Simile

A simile is a figure of speech that directly compares two different things, usually with the words like or as. Similes help to make descriptions more vivid and to clarify the qualities of something unfamiliar by comparing it to something familiar.

Examples:

“Her eyes shone like stars.”

“He is as brave as a lion.”

Functions:

Create imagery and vivid mental pictures;

Express emotions and attitudes;

Make abstract concepts more concrete;

Add beauty and expressiveness to speech or writing.

Similes are common in poetry, literature, advertising, and everyday language. They make speech more colorful and help the audience connect emotionally to what is being said.

Periphrasis

Periphrasis is the use of a descriptive or indirect phrase instead of a simple, direct name. Instead of naming a thing directly, the speaker uses more words to describe it, often adding stylistic or emotional coloring.

Examples:

Instead of “the sun,” say “the golden ball in the sky.”

Instead of “death,” say “the eternal rest” or “the final journey.”

Functions:

Avoid repetition;

Add elegance, sophistication, or humor;

Express politeness or soften the impact of unpleasant facts;

Focus attention on a particular feature of the subject.

Periphrasis is often used in literature, formal writing, political speech, and sometimes in everyday language to sound more polite or poetic.

Litotes

Litotes is a figure of speech that expresses an affirmative idea by using a negative statement. It often involves denying the opposite of what one means and can be used to create understatement or softening.

Examples:

“Not bad” (meaning “very good”).

“She’s no fool” (meaning “She’s smart”).

“It’s not impossible” (meaning “It’s possible”).

Functions:

Create understatement or modesty;

Express irony or politeness;

Soften strong emotions or opinions;

Add subtle emphasis.

Litotes are frequently used in English conversation to avoid sounding too direct or to be modest. They also appear in literature to create irony or understatement.

Gradation

Gradation (also called climax or anticlimax depending on the direction) is a stylistic device where ideas or words are arranged in order of increasing (or decreasing) importance or intensity.

Examples of ascending gradation (climax):

“He came, he saw, he conquered.”

“I was upset, then angry, then furious.”

Examples of descending gradation (anticlimax):

“He lost his family, his home, and his pen.”

“They fought bravely, they struggled hard, they eventually gave up.”

Functions:

Build suspense or emphasis;

Highlight progress or development;

Create humor or irony (especially with anticlimax);

Strengthen the emotional effect of a passage.

Gradation is often used in political speeches, literature, advertisements, and persuasive writing to increase impact or draw attention.

Conclusion

Lexical-syntactic stylistic devices such as simile, periphrasis, litotes, and gradation are powerful tools that help speakers and writers enrich their language. They add variety, emotion, precision, and beauty to communication. Understanding how to use these devices can improve both the comprehension and production of expressive language, making communication more memorable and impactful.

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