**Figurative language and its main functions**

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Before to commence to analyze the literary works and start to explain how they work it obviously should be explained what the figurative language is. There is variety of definitions which was defined by several scientist but we have found some of them which explain the general idea and important features in one.

Language may be said to work in two broad dimensions namely *literal and figurative dimensions.* The literal dimension of language use deploys words in their usual and obvious sense without any additional suggestions. On the other hand, the figurative dimension deals with the suggestive or connotative use of language. Literal and figurative language is a distinction within some fields of [language](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Language) analysis, in particular stylistics, rhetoric, and semantics.

*Literal language* uses words directly according to their proper [meanings](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Meaning) . Figurative language uses words in figures of speech: for example, through metaphor or analogy, metonymy,[overstatement](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hyperbole" \o "Hyperbole), understatement, comparison, multiple meanings, or referring to some common linguistic or cultural reference.

Literal usage gives words their proper meanings, in the sense of the meaning they have by themselves, outside any figure of speech. It maintains a consistent meaning regardless of the context, with the intended meaning corresponding exactly to the meaning of the individual words. Figurative use of language is the use of words or phrases that implies a non-literal meaning which does make sense or that could also be true.

Figuration*,* therefore, implies extended or associative meanings i.e. the use of language in an imaginative manner, to elaborate a thesis or proposition and also to appeal to the emotions of the reader or listener.

Literature as an aspect of communication expresses meaning. Incidentally, the language of literature is coded in a creative way, using figures of speech. The meaning deriving from figures of speech is not the meaning of the different components of the expressions. Thus, figures of speech require special attention and explication.

Figuration is a critical consideration or element to the composition of poetry texts, in the sense that, it helps the poet to economize words and, at the same time, make his works picturesque, concrete and adequate. Figures of speech help writers to extend the meaning of concepts or phenomena, resulting in polysemy or transfer of senses. Thus, figurative language is often perceived to be metaphoric. The scholars add that, figurative language covers different devices which are semantically or grammatically marked or unusual.

Therefore*figurative language* is language that uses words or expressions with a meaning that is different from the literal interpretation. When a writer uses literal language, he or she is simply stating the facts as they are. Figurative language, in comparison, uses exaggerations or alterations to make a particular linguistic point. Figurative language is very common in poetry, but is also used in prose and nonfiction writing as well.[1]

Different author define figurative language differently. Another resources define*figurative language* as language using figures of speech (a way of saying one thing and meaning another); in other words, language that cannot be taken literally (or should not be taken literally only). Simile, metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, personification, apostrophe, are all forms of figurative language.

Stylistic function is also an aspect of language function. Language function can be explained in two ways. Firstly, it refers to the specific use to which a writer or speaker puts the language. It can be description, explanation, argument, persuasion, humor etc. Secondly, in stylistic description it refers to the communicative value or role of specific language categories (i.e. sentence, clause, word group, collocations, word and morpheme), in given social situations. Language function, therefore, implies varieties of language that are defined according to use. [1]

The function is as an art form which expresses ideas through language, which we can recognize, identify, interpret and/or analyze. Literary devices collectively comprise the art form’s components; the means by which authors create meaning through language, and by which readers gain understanding of and appreciation for their works. They also provide a conceptual framework for comparing individual literary works to others, both within and across genres. Both literary elements and literary techniques can rightly be called literary devices.[2]

Figurative language plays a major role in compelling literary works. Figurative language is a contrast to literal language. Its primary purpose is to force readers to imagine or intuit what an author means with an expression or statement. [ Multiple literary devices and elements are commonly used in the category of figurative language. Regardless of the tool, figurative language strengthens or makes a point more compelling and effective.

Metaphors, similes and analogies are often used in similar ways. Rather than simply making a statement about a person, place or thing, these tools allow you to make the point by comparing one thing to another. In the metaphor "Jill is the rock of her family," the character Jill is compared to a rock to emphasize her strength and fortitude. The author takes this approach as opposed to simply stating "Jill is a stable and supportive influence in her family," which is more literal, but also less impactful. Some figurative language is used to expand beyond the literal narrative in the story. Hyperbole is a grossly exaggerated or excessive claim. Symbolism is used to present a moral lesson or broader point by having a noun in the story represent something beyond the story. Personification is used to give human qualities to an object or animal. For example, "the clouds cried with empathy toward her loss" is a human-like way to describe rainfall. Allusion is simply referring to something outside the narrative, such as a reference to a historical event.

Figurative language is the use of language to describe something by comparing it to something else. It serves many linguistic purposes. It allows people to express abstract thoughts. [pic.8] It creates tone and communicates emotional content. Humor often depends on it. [pic.9]

The ability to understand figurative language enables people to talk about and play with complicated abstract ideas. Simple words are often insufficient to communicate the subtle connotations of ideas, and figurative language makes that possible. For example, "I've got you covered" means either that the subject is about to be arrested, is protected and safe, or doesn't need to complete something. Similarly, humorous comparisons are only funny if figurative language is understood. Therefore, the joke: “What did the rug say to the floor?” “Don't move, I've got you covered” is only funny if you understand the abstract meanings of “I've got you covered.” Figurative language is culturally specific. The choice of words used for comparison in similes and metaphors is constrained by established cultural constructs. For example, the word "fried" connotes extreme anger in Spanish and extreme fatigue in American English. Idioms also strengthen cultural bonds. Common acceptance of idioms means that Americans understand "you're a chicken" to mean "cowardly," and "playing chicken" to mean taking unnecessary risks, whereas second language learners may wonder why they are being called a bird. This unknowingly excludes the second language learner, while strengthening bonds between people who understand the idiom. Figurative language links ideas with emotional responses quickly and effectively. [3]

There are variety of functions which figurative language carries out but in the same time each literary device also performs its own function.

**Climax**

As a stylistic device, the term climax refers to a literary device in which words, phrases and clauses are *arranged in an order to increase their importance within the sentence.* The following are examples of climax as a stylistic device.

Climax: The turning point in a story, at which the end result becomes inevitable, usually where something suddenly goes terribly wrong; *the “dramatic high point”* of a story. (Although it is technically a literary element, the term is only useful for identification, as part of a discussion or analysis of structure; it cannot generally be analyzed by itself.)

Example #1

William Shakespeare achieves climax in his [Sonnet](http://literarydevices.net/sonnet/) “The Passionate Pilgrim”:

“Beauty is but a vain and doubtful good;

A shining gloss that vadeth suddenly;

A flower that dies when first it gins to bud;

A brittle glass that’s broken presently:

A doubtful good, a gloss, a glass, a flower,

Lost, vaded, broken, dead within an hour.”

The phrase “dead within an hour” is placed at the very end as it marks the climax of the fate of beauty which he introduces as “a vain and doubtful good”.

Example #2

“I Have a Dream”, a memorable address of Martin Luther King:

“This note was a promise that all men, yes, black men as well as white men, would be guaranteed the unalienable Rights of Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.”

The aforementioned line qualifies as the climax of Martin Luther’s speech which criticizes and rejects racial discrimination suffered by black Americans at the hands of white Americans.

**Function of Climax**

A climax, when used as a plot device, helps readers understand the significance of the [rising action](http://literarydevices.net/rising-action/) earlier to the point in the plot where the conflict reaches its peak. The Climax of the story makes readers mentally prepared for the resolution of the conflict. Hence, climax is important to the plot structure of a story. Moreover, climax is used as a stylistic device or a figure of speech to render balance and brevity to speech or writing. Being properly employed, it qualifies itself as a powerful tool that can instantly capture the undivided attention of listeners and readers alike. Hence, its importance cannot be underestimated.[4]

**Hyperbole**

Hyperbole, derived from a Greek word meaning “over-casting” is a figure of speech, which involves an *exaggeration of ideas* for the sake of emphasis. It is a device that we employ in our day-to-day speech. For instance, when you meet a friend after a long time, you say, “Ages have passed since I last saw you”. You may not have met him for three or four hours or a day, but the use of the word “ages” exaggerates this statement to add emphasis to your wait. Therefore, a hyperbole is an unreal exaggeration to emphasize the real situation. Some other common Hyperbole examples are given below.

Example #1

“Well now, one winter it was so cold that all the geese flew backward and all the fish moved south and even the snow turned blue. Late at night, it got so frigid that all spoken words froze solid afore they could be heard. People had to wait until sunup to find out what folks were talking about the night before.”

Example #2

From W.H Auden’s poem “As I Walked One Evening”,

“I’ll love you, dear, I’ll love you

Till China and Africa meet,

And the river jumps over the mountain

And the salmon sing in the street,

I’ll love you till the ocean

Is folded and hung up to dry”

Example #4

From “The Adventures of Pinocchio” written by C. Colloid,

“He cried all night, and dawn found him still there, though his tears had dried and only hard, dry sobs shook his wooden frame. But these were so loud that they could be heard by the faraway hills…”

**Function of Hyperbole**

The above arguments make clear the use of hyperbole. In our daily conversation, we use hyperbole *to emphasize* for an amusing effect. However, in literature it has very serious implications. By using hyperbole, a writer or a *poet makes common human feelings remarkable and intense to such an extent that they do not remain ordinary.* In literature, usage of hyperbole develops contrasts. When one thing is described with an over-statement and the other thing is presented normally, a striking [contrast](http://literarydevices.net/contrast/) is developed. This technique is employed to catch the reader’s attention.[5]

**Irony**

Irony is a figure of speech in which words are used in such a way that their intended meaning is different from the actual meaning of the words. It may also be a situation that may end up in quite a different way than what is generally anticipated. In simple words, it is a difference between the appearance and the reality.

Onomatopoeia is defined as a word, which imitates the natural sounds of a thing. It creates a sound effect that mimics the thing described, making the description more expressive and interesting. For instance, saying, “The gushing stream flows in the forest” is a more meaningful description than just saying, “The stream flows in the forest.” The reader is drawn to hear the sound of a “gushing stream” which makes the expression more effective.

In addition to the sound they represent, many onomatopoeic words have developed meanings of their own. For example, “whisper” not only represents the sound of people talking quietly, but also describes the action of people talking quietly.

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