

THE USE OF HYPERBOLE AS A STYLISTIC DEVICE IN THE NOVEL “NIGHT AND DAY”

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Abstract

This article analyzes the theoretical foundations of hyperbole as a stylistic device and its usage in the novel Night and Day. The study highlights the role of hyperbole as a figurative means based on semantic transfer and explains its importance in enhancing expressiveness through quantitative and qualitative exaggeration. Furthermore, the aesthetic functions of hyperbole and its emotional impact on readers are illustrated through textual examples.

Keywords: Hyperbole, stylistic device, figurative meaning, stylistics, Night and Day, literary text, trope, linguistics, expressive language.

Introduction

The expression of an idea not in its literal meaning but in a figurative sense, through exaggeration and overstatement, is called hyperbole in linguistics. According to the definition provided in Azim Hojiev’s explanatory dictionary, hyperbole is the excessive exaggeration of the characteristics, conditions, and features of objects, events, and phenomena. The word “hyperbole” originates from Arabic and means exaggeration or amplification. Hyperbole is also one of the types of semantic transfer and is widely used in literary works.

The main difference between hyperbole and other types of figurative transfer is that, unlike metonymy and metaphor, which are based on certain similarities between concepts, hyperbole relies on extreme minimization or magnification of events, objects, and phenomena. However, certain limits should still be observed. As noted in the textbook Stylistics of the Uzbek Language, inappropriate use of hyperbole may damage the artistic quality and fluency of a literary work and may create distrust in the reader. Since hyperbole occurs on the basis of semantic transfer, it is also included in the group of tropes (from the Greek tropos meaning “turn” or “change in speech,” referring to the figurative use of words to increase expressiveness in speech).

In hyperbole, the speaker imagines one meaning but expresses it through another concept. In other words, hyperbole is the phenomenon in which the lexical meaning of words differs from their contextual meaning within speech.

When using hyperbole, the speaker does not directly mention the exact concept but instead refers to something that intensifies its meaning even further. Through exaggeration, we can convey more meaning in speech than would normally be possible. Hyperbole has been used as



a figurative expressive device for thousands of years, and its earliest examples can even be found in ancient Greek classical literature.

According to linguist T. Leech, semantic transfer based on hyperbole frequently occurs in everyday speech as well. Similarly, the ancient Roman rhetorician Quintilian described hyperbole as a speech phenomenon commonly used by ordinary and uneducated people in daily life. By emphasizing that no special knowledge is required to use or understand hyperbole, the scholar may have intended to demonstrate that hyperbole is relatively easy to comprehend.

Although hyperbole has been used by people for centuries, it is noteworthy that research devoted specifically to this stylistic device remains relatively limited.

According to a group of linguists led by S. Burgers, “expressing more meaning than the literal meaning of words” can be considered the most accurate definition of hyperbole. They argue that three main conditions are necessary for hyperbole to occur, and identifying these conditions helps distinguish hyperbole within a text. The first feature is exaggeration, which constitutes the primary characteristic of hyperbole. The second is the figurative use of words. The third is the presence of a signal indicating that hyperbole is being used in speech.

Let us elaborate on the characteristics listed above. The primary form of expression in hyperbole is exaggeration, which helps emphasize and intensify the idea expressed by the speaker. A speaker using hyperbole highlights the importance of an object or phenomenon by greatly minimizing or intensifying one of its characteristics. The significance of the conveyed idea increases because the description given is far from reality.

For example: He realized that he could not find such a useful and interesting book even if he traveled around the whole world.

In this example, the speaker intensifies the impact of the statement by emphasizing it in an unrealistic way. By saying that the book could not be found “even by traveling around the whole world,” the speaker aims to stress the rarity and usefulness of the book through an obviously impossible description.

In order to use hyperbole correctly in speech, it is necessary to thoroughly understand both the literal and figurative meanings of the word serving as the basis for exaggeration. Otherwise, the intended hyperbolic image may become awkward, causing the speech to appear unclear and fail to attract the listener’s interest.

Moreover, hyperbole has its own standards and criteria of exaggeration, which are divided into two types: quantitative and qualitative indicators. The quantitative indicator demonstrates the degree of importance of the discussed object or phenomenon. Hyperbole may be used to describe both positive and negative situations. The second dimension of exaggeration, the qualitative indicator, evaluates the expressed object or phenomenon. For hyperbole to function effectively in speech, at least one of these two qualities should be present.

In quantitative hyperbole, exaggeration reaches an unrealistic level, and both the speaker and the listener understand that the statement is not literally true. Hyperbole related to quantity is often used in expressions of time. For example: Why are you so late? I have been waiting for ten hours! This is one of the ordinary sentences commonly used in everyday speech. Here, the excessive exaggeration of time serves to emphasize how long the speaker has been waiting.



In the second type, the focus is mainly placed on the qualitative characteristics of hyperbole, where the figurative meaning of words becomes apparent in speech. However, qualitative hyperbole usually does not involve such extreme exaggeration as quantitative hyperbole.

Hyperbolic speech stands apart from its context. Linguist Gaella Ferre states that “the speaker’s words may appear contradictory to the general context, but in fact they serve as a means of strengthening the assertion of the idea.” Another scholar, Claudia Claridge, adds that hyperbole may seem entirely opposite to “the known situation or the general worldview,” and this contradiction is often more noticeable to the listener than to the speaker, because the listener evaluates the speech according to their knowledge and assumptions about what is considered normal.

There is no strict measure for the degree of exaggeration in hyperbole. As long as the statement remains understandable to the listener, the speaker may intensify or diminish an idea as much as desired in order to emphasize it. A speaker may describe even a short period of time as a day, a week, a month, or even a year. In such cases, the interpretation of hyperbole depends on the communicative purpose of the speaker, who may increase or decrease the effect through numerical exaggeration.

An important feature of hyperbole is that the more exaggerated and unrealistic the statement is, the stronger the speaker’s emotions appear. For example: There is no tastier food in the whole world than this. In this sentence, a positive opinion is being expressed. The speaker uses hyperbolic imagery to emphasize the deliciousness of the food and to convey strong emotions. As mentioned above, both quantitative and qualitative indicators of hyperbole can express either positive or negative characteristics. It is also important to note that these indicators imply the impossibility of the expressed idea becoming reality.

The second method of identifying hyperbole is based on the fact that such exaggeration changes the relationship between the literal and figurative meanings of words. In hyperbole, the literal meaning does not completely lose its significance but remains dominant over the figurative meaning. According to scholars such as C. Claridge and J. O’Brien, this phenomenon is referred to as a “difference in scale.”

Let us analyze the following sentences:

1. I do not think I could finish reading this book even in a hundred years.
2. Autumn arrived in just a moment.

In the first sentence, a larger number (“a hundred years”) is used to emphasize the length of time. The information expressed greatly exceeds the intended meaning, and its unrealistic nature is obvious. By saying “a hundred years,” the speaker emphasizes that reading the book would require a very long time and also stresses the large size of the book.

In the second sentence, however, we observe a reduction in quantity in order to emphasize the idea. Unlike the first example, the purpose of the hyperbolic image here is to soften the meaning and reduce the intensity of the statement. By saying “in just a moment,” the author conveys the meanings “very quickly” and “within a short period of time.” It is noteworthy that, in qualitative hyperbole, the type of characteristic forming the basis of exaggeration should correspond in both literal and figurative meanings.



In conclusion, despite the semantic contradiction between the context and the hyperbolic image, the function of hyperbole is to reveal the general meaning of the statement more clearly. Therefore, the exaggeration of actions or characteristics within hyperbole is understood as belonging to the communicative act itself and is interpreted figuratively rather than literally.

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