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Definition

A simile is a rhetoric device where: [1][2][3][4]

- Something – termed the "likened-to" (*al-mushabbah*)...
- ...is described as being compared with Something Else – termed the "likened" (*al-musabbab bihi*)...
- ...with which it shares a common attribute – termed the "simile feature" (*wajah al-tashbih*).

The likened is more intense in the simile feature than the likened-to.

The two ends of the simile (*al-tarafan*) – the likened-to and the likened – are connected by the simile element ('*adat al-tashbih*) which may be:

- The particles *ka-* ("as") and *ka anna* ("as if")
- Verbs like *shâhaba*, *mâthala*, *dâhâ*, *hâkâ*, *qâra'* connotating resemblance and similarity
- Nouns such as *mathala*, *mathîl*, *shibh*, *shâbih*, *mushâbih*, *mudâri'* connotating resemblance and similarity.

Types of simile

Various components of the simile can be omitted to create a heightened rhetorical effect:

1) Detailed simile (*al-tashbih al-mufassal*)

All four elements of the simile are present in the detailed simile.

سليم كأسد في الشجاعة.

Salim is like a lion in courage.

Explanation

All four elements of the simile are present in this example:

- Likened-to: Salim
- Likened: a lion
- Simile feature: courage
- Simile element: like

2) Single simile (*al-tashbih al-mufrad*)

The simile feature is omitted in the single simile.

سليم كأسد.

Salim is like a lion.

Explanation

The simile feature ("in courage") has been omitted.

3) Multiple simile (*al-tashbih al-muta'addil*)

The multiple simile contains more than one simile feature.

سليم كأسد في الشجاعة والجمال.

Salim is like a lion in courage and beauty.

4) Compound simile (*al-tashbih al-murakkab*)

In the compound simile, the simile feature is omitted and the likened is replaced with an image.

سليم كملك الحيوانات.

Salim is like the king of the animals.

Explanation

Rather than describing a specific quality of the lion such as courage, the communicator paints a picture of the lion, to which Salim may be compared with.

5) Effective simile (*al-tashbih al-baligh*)

The effective simile consists of only the likened and the likened-to.

سليم أسد.

Salim is a lion.

Explanation

The simile feature and the simile element have both been omitted.

6) Reverse simile (*al-tashbih al-maqlub*)

In the reverse simile, the likened resembles the likened-to, rather than the other way round.^[5]

الأسد سليم.

The lion is like Salim.

Explanation

The lion is described as being like Salim, even though Salim is the subject of the description.

7) Implicit simile (*al-tashbih al-dimniyy*)

In the implicit simile, when referring to the likened-to, only an attribute of the likened is mentioned.

لا يخشي الأسد أحداً.

A lion fears no-one.

Explanation

Salim is described by mentioning the quality of the lion. The implicit meaning is that Salim shares that quality with the lion.

8) Imaginary simile (*al-tashbih al-wahamiyy*)

In the imaginary simile, imaginary attributes are assigned to the likened.

سليم كأسد ذو رأسين.

Salim is like a lion with two heads.

Explanation

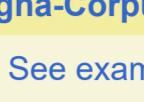
The lion which Salim resembles is described as having an imaginary feature: two heads. This exaggerates the lion's and Salim's features.

See also

- Metaphor

References

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التشبيه

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