

B-4: Allegory

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From The Encyclopedia of Arabic Rhetoric

Definition

Allegory is taking a word which has one meaning, and using it in a different but closely related way.^{[1][2][3][4]}

Types of allegory

There are two types of allegory:

1) Cognitive allegory (*al-majāz al-ʿaqlī*)

The subject of a verb is not the literal subject of that verb and the addressee is required to think about who the literal subject is. The allegorical subject and the real subject share a relationship which may take one of several forms:

(a) Causality (*al-ʿalāqa al-sababiyya*) relationship

أعلنت الحكومة قواعد جديدة.

The government has announced new laws.

The government is not an entity that can literally announce new laws. Rather, the **communicator** is using the word "government" in a figurative way to refer to government officials who have **caused** the announcement to come about.

مشى الأمريكيون على سطح القمر عام 1969.

The Americans walked on the moon in 1969.

The communicator mentions "Americans" in general, but in reality, only two astronauts actually walked on the moon in 1969. The communicator is referring to the American science, technology, culture, economy and industry - the American nation as a whole - which was behind the moon landings of 1969, when saying that "the Americans" have walked on the moon.

(b) Time (*al-ʿalāqa al-zamāniyya*) relationship

يمر الوقت بسرعة في العطلة.

Time passes fast in the holidays.

Time is not able to literally pass by. The communicator is using "time" in a figurative way to indicate that the **time duration** of the holidays feels short.

(c) Place relationship (*al-ʿalāqa al-mahaliyya*)

تلهم المدينة الإبداع.

The city inspires creativity.

The city itself is not able to inspire creativity. The communicator is alluding to factors **located** with the city that inspire creativity.

2) Linguistic allegory (hypallage, *al-majāz al-mursal*)

There are contextual clues to the relationship between the allegorical and the real meanings. This relationship can take one of several forms:

(a) Synecdoche

The whole is allegorically mentioned but only the part is intended literally, or vice-versa. There can be a whole-to-part relationship (*al-ʿalāqa al-kullīyya*) or a part-to-whole relationship (*al-ʿalāqa al-juzʿiyya*) between the allegorical and the literal:

رأيت لندن في عطلي.

I saw **London** in my holiday.

The communicator does not mean to say that the whole of London was seen in the holiday. However, by mentioning "London", it is understood that only certain specific areas of London were actually seen. Although the whole is mentioned, only a part is intended. This may convey the sense that the major parts of London, or the most significant parts of London were seen, although not literally every part.

تعال إلى بيتي لتناول الشاي الساعة 4 مساءً.

Come to my house for **tea** at 4pm.

Explanation

The communicator invites the **addressee** for tea. However, it is understood that this is an invitation for a visit which incorporates tea, chat, discussion or socialising, and not literally just the tea. By referring to the part, the communicator is referring to the whole. The ultimate objective of the visit is not specified, which leads to a sense of ambiguity, which is the rhetorical aim.

(b) Place relationship (*al-ʿalāqa al-mahaliyya*)

The communicator mentions a place, but something related to the place is intended, or vice-versa.

يمكن أن تكون المحاكم في الهند فاسدة.

The courts in India can be corrupt.

The communicator refers to "the courts in India." However, the intention is not to talk about Indian courts in particular. The communicator is referring to the entire legal system in India, or the justice system of the country in general.

زرتُ عائلة صديقي.

I visited my **friend's family**

The communicator mentions the friend's family, but the intention is to refer to the city, town, village or neighbourhood where the friend's family lives. This is achieved without mentioning details such as the name of the locality visited.

(c) Causality relationship (*al-ʿalāqa al-sababiyya*)

The communicator mentions the cause, but the effect is intended.

صديقي فتح عيني على الفساد في المجتمع.

My friend **opened my eyes** to the corruption in society.

The communicator mentions the eyes that were opened. This caused the communicator to become aware of corruption in society.

(d) Effect relationship (*al-ʿalāqa al-musababiyya*)

The communicator mentions the result, but the cause is intended.

العمل الجيد يضع الطعام على الطاولة.

A good job puts **food on the table**.

The communicator intends to say that a good job leads to a good and stable income. The effect of that is that food can be put on the table.

(e) Past relationship (*iʿtibār mā kāna*)

The communicator mentions something from the past, but in the present.

ترك طفلي المنزل للانتحاق بالجامعة.

My child left home to attend university.

The one who left home is an adult, but the communicator refers to the child that the adult **was**.

(f) Future relationship (*iʿtibār mā sayakūnu*)

The communicator mentions something from the future, but in the present

أزُرُ شجرة تفاح.

I am planting an **apple tree**.

The communicator is planting an apple seed or sapling, but refers to what it **will be** in the future: an apple tree.

(g) Opposite relationship (*al-ʿalāqa dīdiyya*)

The communicator intends the opposite of what is said.

أتمنى أن تستمتع بحرياتك الجديدة بعد استقالتك.

I hope you enjoy your new freedoms, now that you have resigned.

(h) Generalisation relationship (*al-ʿalāqa al-ʿumūm*)

The communicator make a generalisation.

الهنود فقراء.

Indians are poor.

(i) Specific relationship (*al-ʿalāqa al-khuṣūṣiyya*)

The communicator mentions a general thing, but a specific thing is intended.

تساعد الحمية الصحية في وقاية المرض

A healthy diet can help prevent illness.

The communicator mentions a healthy diet in general, but the intention the specific components of a diet such as vitamins and minerals which can prevent disease.

References

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