

Things to Do with Words

Rhetorical Analysis: Tropes and Figures

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An excellent source of definitions of rhetorical terms and their relation is the website *Silva Rhetoricae* by Dr. Gideon Burton of Brigham Young University at <http://rhetoric.byu.edu>

Tropes and figures provide the building blocks of communication. They involve artful deviation from the ordinary or principal use of words. Often discredited as sheer linguistic embellishments and ornaments, in reality, there can be no language-based communication without tropes and figures.

Tropes

Tropes involve an artful deviation from the typical meaning of a word.

Figures

Figures (also known as schemes or schemates or the Latin *figura*) change the order of letters in a word, or words in a sentence, leaving meaning unaltered. An unusual *arrangement* does not alter meaning.

Roman rhetoricians divided the figures into *figures of speech* (*verborum exornationes* or *figurae verborum*) related to verbal expression, and *figures of thought* (*sententiarum exornationes* or *figurae sententiarum*), related to ideas and arguments (e.g., *Rhetorica ad Herennium* IV.13 and IV.46; Quintilian *Inst. Or.* 9.1.17).

In modern rhetoric, tropes and schemes are typically all subsumed under the general *term figures*.

Figures of words (first order)

Repetition

Antimetabole (Chiasmus)
Epanaphora
Paroemion
Ploce
Polyptoton

Omission

Asyndeton
Zeugma

Conjunction

Homeoteleuton
Polysindeton

Separation

Articulus
Membrum
Paranomasia
Taxis

Figures of words are not just embellishments and ornaments. They can serve specific persuasive functions by appealing, for instance, to **pathos**: such can be some figures of repetition (e.g., symploce, epizeuxis, diacope) and of separation (e.g., articulus).

Figures of sentences (second order)

Pathos

Aporia
Asyndeton
Climax
Conjeries
Dissimulatio
Dubitatio
Exclamatio
Excuscatio
Hyperbole

Parrhesia
Pathopeia
Prosopopeia
Question
Sygnome
Synonimia
Threnos

Figures of refutation

Rhetorical questions

(anthypophora, aporia, epiplexis, erotema, interrogatio, pysma)

Logos.

Ethos

Parrhesia
Eucharistia
Sygnome
Threnos

Figures of Amplification (third order) (Greek *auxesis*)

Pathos

Auxesis (can serve the function of pathos by arousing the readers' emotions)

climax
congeries
exuscitatio
synonymia

Logos

Aitiology
Antithesis
Climax
Distribution
Peristasis (Invention subject and adjunct)
Synonyms

Figures of reasoning (logos)

Enthymeme
Paromologia

Figures of amplification by *common topic of invention*

definition
division
cause
contraries (Anthiteton
comparison and relationship
genus
circumstances and signs

Peacham groups the figures of amplification into four broad *common topics*: *distributio*/division, *descriptio*/description, *comparatio*/comparison, *collectio*/collectives). Each group contains subgroups (e.g., *collectio* includes “proofes and conclusions”, “Antecedent... [and] Consequent”; the figure of syllogismus contains references to circumstances)

References

Franzosi, Roberto (ed.). 2015. *Landmark Essays on Tropes and Figures*. London: Routledge.