

Synesis

Definition of Synesis

Synesis is a conventional grammatical term derived from a Greek word that means unification, sense, meeting, or realization. It is a rhetorical device in which the traditional grammatical agreement of [syntax](#) is replaced by an agreement in its sense. In other words, synesis is a grammatical construction that is in agreement with the sense instead of the strict syntax. It is used to highlight the words' construction according to the sense not its morphosyntactic form. Such as:

“Fat, drunk, and stupid **is** no way to go through life, son.”

(*Animal House* by Harold Ramis, Douglas Kenney, and Chris Miller)

Types of Synesis

Kinesthetic [imagery](#) is further divided into two [categories](#):

Notional concord or **notional agreement** is one type of grammatical agreement in which the agreement is made with the meaning of a noun instead of complying with a strict syntactic requirement.

Situational agreement involves the singular and the plural forms of a word being the same. Its singularity or plurality depends upon the interpretation or intentional emphasis of the writer or [speaker](#).

Difference Between Synesis and Anacoluthon

Synesis is a kind of [anacoluthon](#), which is a syntactic interruption. Though both are anti-grammatical constructions but are different. It is because synesis is used to highlight the word construction according to their sense rather than grammatical form. For example:

“Among the growing numbers of men seeking his services, **a significant proportion are** spurred to do so by female voices...”

(*Europe’s Extraordinary Makeover*, by Catherine Mayer)

On the other hand, anacoluthon is the disruption in the grammatical flow of the words, by beginning another sentence immediately. Such as:

“A plank that was dry was not disturbing the smell of burning and altogether there was the best kind of sitting there could never be all the edging that the largest chair was having....”

(*A Portrait of Mabel Dodge*, by Gertrude Stein)

Examples of Synesis in Literature

Example #1: *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (By Mark Twain)

“What’s the use you learning to do right, when it’s troublesome to do right and it ain’t no trouble to do wrong, and the **wages is** just the same?”

In these lines, the writer uses the plural form of “wage,” with the auxiliary verb “is,” which is syntactically wrong. However, the agreement of the words is made in accordance with the sense, which is to say it is singular in a sense, but plural in form.

Example #2: *1984* (By George Orwell)

“For, after all, how do we know that **two and two make** four? Or that the force of gravity works? Or that the past is unchangeable? If both the past and the external world exist only in the mind, and if the mind itself is controllable – what then?”

In this excerpt, the grammatical construction of the words “two and two

is not made in morphosyntactic form. Instead, the words are arranged according to their logic.

Example #3: *Wagner's Parsifal* (By Charles D. Warner)

“Most of the [audience](#) **were** standing, and the house was in a buzz of conversation and expectation.”

Here, the word “audience” takes the number with the word “was” because with this auxiliary verb, it regularly agrees grammatically. However, it is in harmony with “were,” which is correct logically and not grammatically.

Example #4: *King Lear* (By William Shakespeare)

“I will have such **revenges** on you both,
That all the world shall—I will do such things,
What they are, yet I know not...”

In this passage, Shakespeare uses “revenges” in the sentence, which is plural in sense. It is logically true, but syntactically wrong.

Function of Synesis

Synesis is commonly used in writing as a deliberate effect. Often it is employed in dramatic monologues, [prose](#), and poetry. Synesis is frequently used in the [stream of consciousness style](#) of writing, since it is a basic feature of informal thoughts. Apart from that, the most important function of synesis is to draw the attention of readers by allowing them to stop and consider the underlying meaning. Usually, it causes confusion in the minds of readers, and makes them comprehend the purpose of construction of words according to their logic, rather than grammatical form. Synesis is widely used in media and political public speeches.