

Stylistic devices

Repetition and Variation

stylistic device	definition	translation	example	effect
alliteration	recurrence of initial sound	Alliteration	"The fair breeze blew, the white foam flew."	to convey auditory images
accumulation	series of expressions (adjectives, cliches, examples, images) that contribute increasingly to meaning	Anhäufung	"He came, saw, fought and won"	to make the language livelier
anaphora	repetition of first word(s) of line/clause	Anapher	In every town, in every house in every man, in every woman and in every child	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to stress the main point often used in speeches
leitmotiv	a dominant recurrent theme (word, phrase, emotion, idea) associated with a certain idea, person or situation and accompanying its/his/her reappearance throughout the text	Leitmotiv		gives the text a structure and stresses the theme by repeating it
climax	the point of highest dramatic tension or a major turning point in the action of the text or the point of greatest dramatic interest in a play	Höhepunkt		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> climatic text structuring means arranging material in order of importance, with the most important arguments coming last

Contrast

stylistic device	definition	translation	example	effect
euphemism	figure of speech intended to hide the real nature of s.th. unpleasant or taboo by using a mild or indirect expression	Euphemismus (Beschönigung)	"He passed away" for "he died" "... the underprivileged" for "... the poor"	it may be necessary to spare a person's feelings but it often originates in prudery or a false sense of refinement
oxymoron	combination of two terms which are contradictory in meaning	Oxymoron (Scheinwiderspruch)	"eloquent silence"	to express complex things or to unite contrasting things

paradox	seemingly self-contradictory or absurd statement which in fact establishes a more complex level of meaning by way of association	Paradoxon	"I see it feelingly" "So fair and foul a day I have not seen" (Shakespeare, Macbeth)	it may be found to contain some truth on closer examination
antithesis	a rhetorical figure which denotes the opposing of ideas by means of grammatical parallel arrangements of words, clauses or sentences	Antithese	" God made the country and man made the towns"	produce an effective contrast
anti-climax	a sudden transition from the idea of significance or dignity to an idea trivial or ludicrous by comparison		"The love of God, justice and sports cars"	produce a humorous effect
rhetorical question	an assertion in the form of a question which strongly suggests a particular response	Rhetorische Frage	"Who does not love this country?" (= of course everybody loves his country)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • give the listener the false impression of taking part in a debate • used to bring liveliness into a speech

Imagery and Analogy

stylistic device	definition	translation	example	effect
onomatopoeia	sound(s) imitative of thing(s) they refer to	Wortmalerei	"engines roar"	imagination
metaphor	a reduced or implied comparison between phenomena not normally associated with each other Not a simile (with <i>like</i>)	Metapher	"... the sand of time..." "All the world's a stage And all the men and woman merely players..." (Shakespeare)	enriches the language (good style)
symbol	denotes a concrete thing that stands for s.th. immaterial, invisible or abstract	Symbol	<i>rose</i> as a symbol of <i>love</i> <i>white</i> as a symbol of <i>innocence</i>	
connotation implication	implies additional meaning(s) of a word or phrase along with or apart from what it explicitly names or describes	Konnotation Andeutung	the word "hearth" which literally means "the floor of a fireplace" suggests in addition "the fireside, warmth, safety)	gives the reader an association
metonymy [-' - -]	the object meant is not explicitly named but rather substituted by a <u>closely associated feature</u> , a characteristic part or a proper name	Metonymie (Namensvertauschung, Umbenennung)	"He could feel the steel going right through him" <i>steel</i> instead of <i>dagger</i> or <i>knife</i> <i>aristocracy</i> instead of the <i>aristocrats</i>	

personification	figure of speech in which inanimate object, abstract concepts or living things (plants, animals) are referred to as if they were human beings	Personifikation	"Justice is blind" "Necessity is the mother of invention" "The sun stepped out of the clouds and smiled momentarily"	gives things life or some similarity with human beings
pun	a humorous play of words which are either identical or similar in sound but are very different in meaning	Wortspiel	"Is life worth living? It depends on the liver! " (1) liver as the organ (2) liver as one who lives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • humorous • to make the reader laugh
simile	an explicit comparison (using <i>as</i> or <i>like</i>) between two distinctly different things which have at least one feature in common	Vergleich	... as dead as a mutton as fit as a fiddle like a bull in a china shop ... "I wandered lonely as a cloud..." (Wordsworth)	the reader's imagination must be stirred by a simile
example	serves to illustrate an abstract rule or acts as an exercise in the application of this rule	Beispiel		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • often used in speeches • a special case is given to serve for a general statement

Other stylistic devices

stylistic device	definition	translation	example	effect
hyperbole	a figure of speech using exaggeration	Hyperbel Übertreibung	'I loved Ophelia: forty thousand brothers could not, with all their quantity of love make up my sum.' (Shakespeare)	not to persuade or to deceive, but to emphasize a feeling or to produce a humorous effect. It is not to be taken literally.
understatement litotes	<u>understatement</u> is the reverse of exaggeration. It is a statement below the truth <u>Litotes</u> is a type of understatement which expresses an affirmative idea by negation of its opposites	Untertreibung Litotes	"That's rather nice" =great It is pouring with rain and the streets are flooded: "Bit wet today, isn't it?" It was not a bad party at all = it was a excellent party	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to give special emphasis to a situation or idea • humorous
irony	figure of speech by which the writer says the opposite of what he means	Ironie		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is often used to blame • will draw attention to its actual meaning

tone	Denotes the accent or inflection of the voice as adapted to the emotion or passion expressed, also used for the style or manner of approach in speaking or writing in general	Ton	The tone can be: colloquial, ironical, serious, earnest, humorous etc.	it reflects the mood of the author and his attitude towards his subject
ambiguity	In deceptive rhetoric it is the deliberate wording of a phrase or passage in such a way that it can be taken in two ways	Doppeldeutigkeit, Zweideutigkeit		to hide the truth or to leave the reader uncertain about the author's real attitude
flashback	a literary or theatrical technique that involves the interruption of the chronological sequence of events. At this point earlier scenes or events are interjected.	Rückblende		to give a vivid picture of the (hero's) past
anticipation	the reverse of the flashback. The author interrupts the chronological sequence of events to present or allude to events which will happen in the relative future.	Vorwegnahme		The author's aim is to make developments transparent, quite often with emotional overtones.
ellipsis	shortening of a sentence by the omission of one or more words that may be easily understood from the context.	Ellipse (Auslassung)		used to avoid repetition but also used for artistic effect
allusion	allusion is an implied indication. It denotes an indirect reference to people or things outside the text without mentioning them in a straightforward way.	Anspielung		the reader is expected to think about the situation himself and to have a certain knowledge.
satire	Satire is a piece or form of writing based on the use of humour, irony or sarcasm	Satire		used to expose and discourage vice and to ridicule foolish ideas or habits. Satirical writing is always didactic.