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Hyperbole In English And Arabic Selected Poems :  
A Contrastive Study

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## ABSTRACT

Hyperbole is one of the most important figurative devices that are used in most languages, it can be found in literary works whether they are spoken or written. its main purpose is to exaggerate point of views, emotion, feelings, attitudes and thoughts by the author or even the speakers, since it can be found in everyday language of various speech communities. This study investigates hyperbole in order to figure out the way in which it is involved in poetry, also the study aims to show the definitions, uses, ways in which hyperbole is used as well as to search what are the purposes behind using this device. The study shows different views and strategies concerning hyperbole in English and Arabic, then it analyses the occurrences of hyperbole within the selected data which is four poems in two different languages, English and Arabic.

**Keywords:** *Hyperbole, Metaphor, Simile, Personification, Exaggeration, Attributing, Contrastive.*

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## INTRODUCTION

One of the main types of figurate language is Hyperbole, when the speaker conveys something while its meaning is completely different. It has been associated with irony and metaphor. It is a prominent feature of the everyday language in nearly all speech communities. Hyperbole is used as a kind of over evaluate or exaggerate, hence exaggeration is the main tool by which we can define hyperbole, things and messages are to be conveyed through hyperbole, whether these messages are written or spoken in formal context. Hyperbole can be used to support the persuasive speech through certain tools and techniques, also it can be found in political speech, mass media, poetic language, advertisements and different slogans like environmental one. It is used in love poems in order to convey the lover's intense and admiration for his beloved, and in sagas to recount the heroic deeds of legendary kings and warriors.

It is used for decades, its origin backs to Aristotle, it was mentioned in classical Greece handbooks (Claridge, 2010). In fact, the Roman Rhetorician Quintilian addresses hyperbole and states that people, including peasants and ignorant people, use it daily.

## DEFINITIONS

Claridge, (2010) states that hyperbole is when speaker doesn't say X, but he says something rather than X. It is an exaggerated

statement or claim not meant to be taken literally, another definition of hyperbole can be: language that describes something as better or worse than it really is, or it is a kind of figurative language where the speaker says something while meaning another thing (Stern, 2000) i.e., the literal meaning of what is said does not correspond the intended meaning.

Roman Rhetorician Quintilian states that people both ignorant and educated ones tend to use hyperbole in everyday speech, so it easy to produce and comprehend hyperbole. Although speakers understand it well, but it is still understudied (Cartson & Wearing, 2015).

(Burgers et al. 2016) define it as: 'An expression that is more extreme than justified given its ontological referent, in other words, they refer that in defining hyperbole, there are three main elements which are so helpful, the first one is shifting from the prepositional meaning to what the speakers want to produce, while the second one is exaggeration, finally there is a definite referent involved within the speaking.

Hyperbole is defined as a form of extremity, an exaggeration that either magnifies or minimizes some real state of affairs. (Cano Morn, 2004).

## HYPOTHESES

a. Hyperbole is often used for specific different purposes one of them is expressing feelings which is so clear within poetry.

b. The strategies of Hyperbole share oath objects that can be analysed into different types of hyperbole.

c. Hyperbole is usually attached with lying, deceiving and lying as well as unreal misinterpretations. Hyperboles are not taken in literal way.

### **HYPERBOLE BETWEEN ENGLISH AND ARABIC LANGUAGES**

It is well known that the main core of hyperbole in English and Arabic languages is exaggeration, each exaggerated utterance is a hyperbole in a way or another, in both languages English and Arabic, hyperbole is expressed through irony, metaphor and other rhetorical devices (Burgers et al, 2016).

Within speaking, speakers tend to exaggerate features or elements, for the purpose of emphasizing something important (Norasetkosol, Timyam & Sriussadaporn, 2012).

In order to be capable of exaggerating points that help the addressee to comprehend this is not real or exaggerated one, this is the difference between the real and the intended meaning that can be noticed, otherwise the hearer will not be able to catch that it is a hyperbolic utterance or sentence, for example:

- 1- It is extremely hot.
2. It is boiling.

If (1) is produced when the degree of temperature is only 26, so the utterance would not be an exaggeration at all, in a way that works as a hint to the addressee in order to notice this difference, it is hot, but the addresser might be a kind of person who is not able to bear the hotness. Thus, the hearer can understand it as a literal meaning. While sentence number (2) shows that the difference between the intended meaning 'It is very hot' and the literal meaning is great.

According to (Ferré, 2014). The feature of exaggeration can have a scale, there are two types of scales which are the quality and quantity, the latter refers to the value of the object that is being discussed, hence the object can be positive or negative, while the former indicates for the object evaluation (McCarthy & Carter, 2004).

(Aristotle,1976) defined exaggeration as an excessive manner that makes things more prominent, so to exaggerate is to make something beyond the reality or truth. Users of language usually use exaggeration to express things that must not be taken literally.

Also (Leech, 1983) refers that exaggeration is a characteristic of everyday use of language, it is very effective in understanding, describing as well as it is very important in evaluating experience. It is widely used in literary works and poetic language in general, for example poetry which is one of the main destinations in this study is filled with hyperbole, specifically

exaggerations, and this is not a restrictive feature of English poetic language, but it is also used and employed effectively in Arabic poetry and literary works in order to achieve certain purposes, one of these purposes is to entertain the reader or the hearer of this poetic language. Free poetic verses contain a lot of these exaggerations since they are not bounded to certain rhyme and rhythm, so the writer or the poet feels free to employ these devices in certain ways to affect the readers of his poems.

For example:

*Shall I compare thee to a summer day*  
(William Shakespeare)

The poet (Shakespeare) exaggerates his love to his beloved through comparing her to a summer day.

The second component that will help us define hyperbole is that when using hyperbole there is a shift between the intended meaning and the propositional one (Burgers et al., 2016). The propositional meaning is more extreme than the intended one. (Claridge ,2010) and (Colston & O'Brien, 2000) describe this as "difference in magnitude". The following sentences will be used to illustrate:

- It took him a whole day to type three words on the computer.
- It took him a second to type one word on the computer.

In his *Metaphor in Context* 2000, Stern just like other theorists, states that hyperbole can be expressed effectively though the use of irony, metaphor and repetition, they are

considered figurative speech acts and they are so interrelated to each other, by using these acts or rhetorical devices, speakers say something and intend to mean something else.

Theorists such as (Colston & Gibbs ,2002) refer to the interrelation of these three rhetorical devices. They inquired if the speakers would employ the process of the same interpretation in understanding them or not. If not, then irony, metaphor and repetition would be distinct not only in their use but also in how the mind decodes them. Colston & Gibbs's (2002).

All in all, and what is so important in investigating Hyperbole there is what called an exaggeration, hyperbole is one of the main literary devices that can be found in speech for example:

*He is starving, he is able to eat a horse.*

In fact, he wouldn't be able to eat a horse. But this expression is used for purpose of showing others that he is extremely hungry. Also, Hyperbole is found in literature and everyday speech, it is one the main creative tools that are used in writing and communication. It is used for adding colour to the characters or joy to the stories. Such an expression can be used in both languages Arabic and English.

In fact, No one can deny that Arabic language is a very rhetorical language and rhetoric plays a very important role within it. Rhetoric can be found in the formal language whether it is poetic or Quranic one, hence Holy Quran is full of rhetorical devices like repetition and

metaphor. Among these rhetorical devices are metonymy and other types of similes. What is so important to mention here that is Arabic language is often described as a language characterized by exaggeration and over-assertion, exaggeration is found in different genres of Arabic language, it is found in both formal and in formal Arabic, also it can be found in different types of spoken or written forms, literary works contain a big amount of exaggeration in different forms.

A large set of hyperbolic expressions are quantifiers which are expressions that cite a number, measurement terms of weight, length, area ...etc, containers of time units. According to Colstone and Keller (1998), exaggerating about an event or fact that was of greater quantity than expected can stretch to infinity, while an event of lesser quantity or magnitude than expected can stretch only to zero.

(Al-Hashimi 1964) states that one of the techniques used in exaggerating the words or even the sentence is **Attributing the thing not to its origin** الانساب الشيء الى غير اصله **for example :**

- "خلق الانسان من عجل..."

- "Man is a creature of haste"

Also, Hyperbole can be expressed through using **exception:**

- لا كاتب الا شكسبير

- No writer except Shakespeare.

Here as if the others are not writers. Shakespeare is the only writer, surely this is a clear exaggeration.

Making a comparisons or similarity is one of the techniques that used to express hyperbole in both languages.

Other important techniques can be used to express hyperbole are using personification and metaphor المجاز والكنائيات as in God's saying "when anger was silent in Moses" ولما سكت عن موسى الغضب, hence "Anger was insisting on him, inciting him, and beautifying recklessness to him."

## MODELS OF THE STUDY

The model of the study will be an eclectic one. Many writers have different point of view concerning the way we can express hyperbole in both languages by different techniques of these are Metaphor, simile, attributing, personification and exaggeration. According to what have been introduced in the theoretical part of the research the following model will be adopted for analysis as follows:

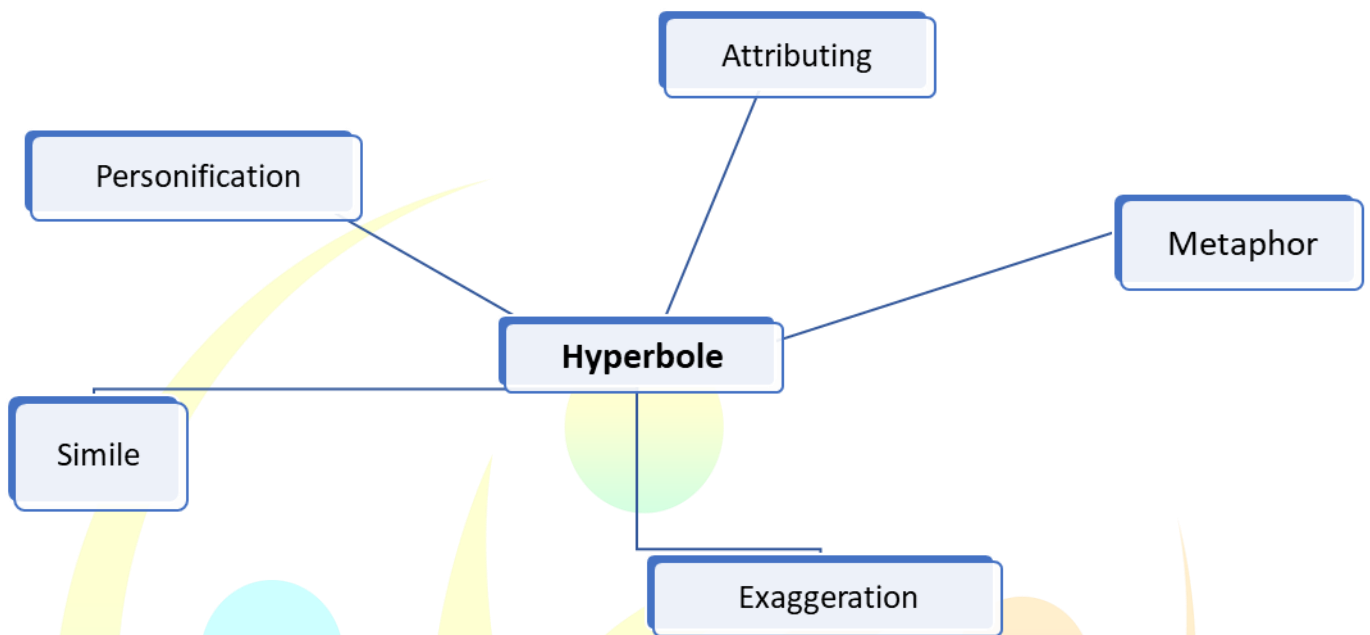


Fig. Model of Analysis

### DATA FOR ANALYSIS

The data for analysis will be four different poems, two of them are in English written by John Keats , the first one is (Ode to a Nightingale) and the other is ( The Bright Star ), while the two others are Arabic poems written by B.S.Al-Sayyab, the first one is ( The rain song انشودة المطر ) while the second is ( The River and Death), the translations of the Arabic poems are done by the researchers.

### THE ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

#### A. Analyzing English Poems :

The poems that will be analyzed here are two poems written by John Keats which are (Ode to a Nightingale) and ( The Bright Star ).

#### 1. Metaphor :

The poet inserts within the two poems different rhetorical devices one of them is metaphor in order to hyperbolize his feeling and emotions within the used poetic language.

samples of metaphor used in two poems :

- thine happiness.
- Fade far away

- her lustrous eyes
- the Queen-Moon is on her throne
- Bright star
- sweet unrest

The metaphoric elements are used about 26 times within the two poems. All of them are involved to show hyperbole.

### 2. Simile :

Another important rhetoric tool is simile, the poet shows the similarity by using the tools of similarity 7 times within the two poems :

- ... , as though of hemlock
- the very word is like a bell..
- Like nature's
- priestlike task

### 3. Attributing :

- Of pure ablution round earth's
- a beaker full of the warm South
- Where but to think is to be full of sorrow

In both poems, Keats attributes things not to their origin, kind of compliment and exaggerating in describing things and people in order to achieve the purpose of hyperbole. It is a very used technique in the holy texts as well as within the poetic language of poetry and novels.

### 4. Personification

The attribution of human nature or character to animals, inanimate objects, or abstract notions, especially as a rhetorical figure. It is a main tool in the English poetry as well as in other types of literary work. To the best knowledge the researchers, personification is used in both poems written by John Keats as main tool of hyperbolic devices to show reflect of the spiritual state as well as the psychological one of the writer himself, it is also a good way of expressing emotions, feeling and love.

The followings samples of personification used in both poems :

- light-winged
- And leaden-eyed despairs
- And mid-May's eldest child,

All the example above reflect personification, as if things as personified, just the May month personified to a mother that has a child.

### 5. Exaggeration :

To exaggerate is to make things more important, more beautiful , bigger, larger , better, or worse than it really is, this is widely used in poetic languages and different types of literary works.

Keats and all poets in general might exaggerate their love, feeling, emotion and their depicting for things or people. This can be done through the language itself, depicting things in a highly



exaggerating way for the purpose of entertaining, effecting the reader and for achieving certain aims and conveying certain ideas that are implicit within the poem.

In Both analyzed poems ( Ode to a nightingale ) & (bright star), John Keats hindered the theme of the poems by using exaggeration in different ways. Here are the some samples that are used within both:

- a drowsy numbness pains
- To feel for ever its soft fall and swell
- Was it a vision, or a waking dream?

Describing can handle exaggerating things and people, hence all the exaggeration can be done through describing.

### B. Analyzing Arabic Poems :

The poems that will be analyzed here are two poems by B.S. Alsayaab, the first one ( The rain songs انشودة المطر ), while the second one is (The River and The Death الموت والنهر ).

#### 1. Metaphor :

Simply we can say that metaphor is the main and the most used rhetorical device in the poetic language of English, Arabic and other different language. It is even used within the formal language or colloquial one.

In Both poems B.S. Al-Sayyab used metaphor in different occasions.

- "و الغروب في الشجر.." "and the sunset in the trees.."

" " أغابة من الدموع أنت أم نهر؟ " " Are you a wood of tears or a river ?"

"عيناك غابتا نخيل ساعة السحر"

**"Your eyes are similar of two palm dates forests."**

Within both poems, the poet reflects his sadness through using metaphor for the purpose of exaggeration and hyperbole, in "the river and death" the poet refers to Buwainb ( a small river in the poet's village), as if he complains to the river in a very metaphoric way.

#### 2. Simile :

Also the poet within both Arabic poems uses another type of rhetorical devices which is simile. Simile can be direct by using the tools of similarity or it can be indirect without using any articles of similarity, in Arabic language the tools that are used to show simile are ( ك ) ( as ) or ( مثل ) ( like). Here are samples of both poems in which the poet uses similarity.

وترقصُ الأضواء كالأقمار في نهر

And the lights will be dancing like the stars reflected in the river,

كرعشة الطفل إذا خافت من القمر

Like the child's fear if he fears the moon.

"يا نهري الحزين كالمطر"

" , Sad like rain , O my river"

The poet uses the article ك ( as) to make comparisons within his poems, once to exaggerate his feelings and emotions for his beloved ( in the rain song ).While the last line from the samples above, the poet exaggerates his feelings and sadness towards the river ( Buwaib) by using similarity and comparing the river to the rain, as if the river is crying here.

### 3. Attributing :

Just like John Keats, Al-Sayyab uses another rhetorical device which is attributing , it is a well-known rhetorical tool in Arabic, he attributes things not to their origin, here are some samples of attributing that are used in both poems:

"في عالم الغد الفتى .. واهب الحياة " -

**"In the promising young world , which donates the life."**

"وتتضح الجرار أجراسا من المطر " -

The pots ooze bells of rain"" ,

Attributing used here to show hyperbole of poet's emotions towards his beloved and the river.

### 4- Personification

To the best knowledge of researchers, the poems of Al-Sayyab contain a lot of personification rhetorical device. In both poems, we can clearly notice the use of personification.

القمر

يخوض بين ضفتيك يزرع الظلال

To glance the moon,

Wading between your banks,

في كل قطرة من المطر -  
هي ابتسام في إنتظار مبسم جديد

" in each drop of rain, **Yellowish or reddish of flower embryo.**

The poet here depicts the moon as if it is a man who plants something to serve the purpose of hyperbolizing his emotions towards the river.

### 5. Exaggeration :

In different occasion within the two poems, the poet uses exaggeration in order to express his feeling or to depict his love for both his beloved and the river Buwaib.

بالخليج

يا واهب اللؤلؤ والمحار والردي

" Shouting **O gulf ,The donor of pearls, oysters, and Death."**

"أود لو غرقت في دمي إلى القرار  
لأحمل العبء مع البشر"

I wish I could drown in my blood to the bottom  
",

To bear the burden with human beings" ,

In the previous lines of the two poems, the poet clearly exaggerates his pains and suffering, since this poem ( the river and death) is written shortly

before his death while he was suffering with sickness alone in London, it is also a smart way of hyperbole.

## RESULTS

The following the tables show the occurrences of the techniques within the analyzed data :

### 1. hyperbole in English

Tool	English Data	Ratio	Arabic Data	Ratio
Metaphor	26	38%	31	32%
Simile	7	100%	16	16.6 %
Attributing	5	7%	10	10%
Personification	13	19%	18	18 %
Exaggeration	17	25%	21	21.8%
Totals	68	100%	96	100%

## CONCLUSIONS

The research shows that hyperbole can be achieved by different techniques and it can be expressed through the use of different rhetorical devices. Hyperbole to some extent is the same between English and Arabic, both languages can show hyperbole by using certain techniques whether within the poetic language or daily speech. The research tackled with four different poems, two of them are in English written by

John Keats, while the others are two Arabic poems written by B.S.Al-Sayyab, in all mentioned poems whether the English poems or the Arabic ones, different and various tools are used to show hyperbole. The most used one in both languages is metaphor, also there is a good number of simile using, while both languages tend to use less attributing device to show hyperbole. All in all Arabic language especially the poetic one uses hyperbole more than English.

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