

THEORY OF THE CONCEPT «HYPERBOLE» IN MODERN LINGUISTICS

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Abstract.

The article examines the theoretical foundations of the concept *hyperbole* in modern linguistics, focusing on its semantic, pragmatic, cognitive and stylistic dimensions. The study analyzes the evolution of the term in classical rhetoric, structural linguistics, cognitive linguistics, and discourse studies. Special attention is given to the mechanisms of exaggeration, communicative intentions, cultural conditioning, and the role of hyperbole in contemporary media and conversational discourse. Results show that hyperbole, as a universal linguistic phenomenon, serves not only as a stylistic device but also as a cognitive strategy for categorization, intensification, and emotional expression.

Key words: hyperbole; exaggeration; cognitive linguistics; pragmatics; rhetoric; semantics; stylistics; figurative language; discourse analysis; intensification.

Introduction. Figurative language remains central to the study of linguistic expressiveness, creativity, and communicative strategy. Among the most widespread tropes, hyperbole—traditionally understood as deliberate exaggeration—has undergone significant re-interpretation within contemporary linguistic paradigms. While classical rhetoric viewed hyperbole mainly as a stylistic ornament, modern linguistics approaches it as a complex semantic-pragmatic and cognitive phenomenon embedded in human conceptualization and interaction [7].

In recent decades, interest in hyperbole has grown due to its active use in everyday discourse, media language, advertising, political communication, and digital communication. Researchers emphasize that hyperbolic expressions not only intensify meaning but also encode cultural values, emotional states, and interpersonal intentions. Thus, investigating the theoretical nature of hyperbole in modern linguistics is essential for understanding how language users construct, exaggerate, and interpret meaning [3].

The purpose of this article is to analyze the theoretical foundations of the concept “hyperbole” from the standpoint of modern linguistic theories, outlining its definitional features, mechanisms, and communicative functions.

Literature review. Early studies of hyperbole originate from classical rhetoric, where Aristotle and Quintilian described it as a stylistic device intended to produce emotional impact. In structural linguistics, scholars such as L. V. Shcherba and V. V. Vinogradov recognized hyperbole as part of lexical semantics and stylistics, identifying it as intentional semantic deformation [2].

In the second half of the 20th century, hyperbole attracted the attention of pragmatic linguists. Leech (1983) and Grice (1975) viewed exaggeration as a conversational implicature, where speakers intentionally violate the maxim of quality to achieve humorous, emphatic, or persuasive effects. Pragmatic studies highlighted context, speaker intention, and listener inference as key components in hyperbolic meaning-making [6].

Within cognitive linguistics, Lakoff and Johnson’s (1980) conceptual metaphor theory laid a foundation for interpreting hyperbole as a cognitive operation: an extension of a conceptual scale beyond normal limits. Hyperbole participates in processes such as foregrounding, intensification,

and mental imagery. Researchers like McCarthy & Carter (2004) also emphasize that exaggeration often emerges from schema-based mental models[1].

In discourse analysis, hyperbole is examined as a communicative strategy. Media discourse studies (Partington, 2007) demonstrate how exaggeration strengthens evaluative meaning, expresses ideological stance, and increases emotional appeal. In digital discourse, hyperbole is especially frequent, functioning as a marker of expressivity, identity, and humor.

Collectively, contemporary research recognizes hyperbole as a multidimensional phenomenon that intersects stylistics, semantics, pragmatics, and cognitive science.

Method and methodology. This study employs a **descriptive-analytical method**, synthesizing theoretical findings from rhetoric, structural linguistics, pragmatics, and cognitive linguistics. This methodological approach provides a comprehensive understanding of hyperbole as both a linguistic and cognitive phenomenon.

Results and discussion. Hyperbole is a lexical stylistic device in which emphasis is achieved through deliberate exaggeration.

Hyperbole is one of the common expressive means of our everyday speech (e.g. "I have told it to you a thousand times"). Due to long and repeated use hyperboles have lost their originality. Hyperbole can be expressed by all notional parts of speech. It is important that both communicants should clearly perceive that the exaggeration serves not to denote actual quality or quantity but signals the emotional background of the utterance. If this reciprocal understanding is absent, hyperbole turns into a mere lie.

Hyperbole is aimed at exaggerating quantity or quality. When it is directed the opposite way, when the size, shape, dimensions, characteristic features of the object are not overrated, but intentionally underrated, we deal with understatement. English is well known for its preference for understatement in everyday speech. "I am rather annoyed" instead of "I'm infuriated", "The wind is rather strong" instead of "There's a gale blowing outside" are typical of British polite speech, but are less characteristic of American English.

The analysis of hyperbole within modern linguistic frameworks shows that exaggeration is not merely a stylistic figure but a complex cognitive-pragmatic tool used to intensify meaning, express emotions, and shape discourse interaction. Hyperbole appears across various types of communication—from everyday speech to literature, advertising, and digital media—demonstrating its universal and multifunctional nature.

Hyperbole inherently violates literal semantic truth for pragmatic effect. Speakers intentionally amplify or extend the meaning of expressions to produce emotional resonance.

Cognitive linguistics interprets hyperbole as a stretching of conceptual scales. People mentally enlarge quantity, size, time, or intensity to express evaluations. Hyperbolic thinking is rooted in fundamental cognitive patterns such as *MORE IS IMPORTANT*, *LARGER IS STRONGER*, or *EXTREME IS MEMORABLE*.

Examples:

He ran faster than the wind. (Speed scale)

I'm dying of hunger. – intensity scale

Such examples show that exaggeration is a mental extension of a basic conceptual dimension. In literary texts, hyperbole strengthens imagery, emotional depth, and narrative expressivity. Shakespeare: *“When he smiles, the whole world stops to look at him.”*

Dickens: *“He was so poor he could not afford to keep a dog.”* exaggerated poverty

Twain: “*I am dying of a billion torments.*”

In ordinary speech, hyperbole appears unconsciously as a common communicative strategy to show involvement, humor, or exaggeration of personal experience.

Conclusion. In modern linguistics, the concept of *hyperbole* has evolved from a mere rhetorical embellishment to a sophisticated linguistic construct with semantic, pragmatic, cognitive, and cultural dimensions. Contemporary research demonstrates that hyperbole plays a vital role in intensifying meaning, expressing evaluation, constructing identity, and shaping discourse dynamics.

Thus, hyperbole should be viewed as a universal and multifunctional phenomenon central to human communication. Its theoretical examination in modern linguistics contributes to a deeper understanding of how exaggeration operates as a mechanism for meaning construction and expressive communication.

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