

Chiasmus in William Shakespeare's Plays'

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Abstract

This article analysis syntactic device, chiasmus gives examples of them and shows that syntactic device can be studied as a general syntactic type of language. This article includes discussions about chiasmus.

Keywords: syntactic device, chiasmus, parallelism, cross-linguistic, synonym, syntactic pattern, concept, chiasmic structures, antimetabole.

The word chiasmus is the Latin term from Greek χίασμα (crossing), from the Greek χιάζω, chiázō, (to shape like the letter X). A chiasmus is an inversion of parallelism that tends towards a central idea or moves away from it, and that highlights the interpretation of a text, either by comparisons which are reinforced by exact repetitions or synonyms, or by contrasts indicated by antitheses. Indeed, chiasmus is generally defined as the reuse of a pair of elements in reverse order. Chiasmus is a syntactic pattern, most frequently an A-B-B-A pattern, though the patterns may be more elaborate and include more elements. Chiasmus is a cross-linguistic, perceptual and social phenomenon worthy of greater notice. Chiasmus coincides in many ways with truth functional logic, but the chiasmic form also extends beyond it — by defining two opposite conditions, and in other respects revealing how to transcend the dichotomization it features. As it pertains to Merleau-Ponty, the chiasm is a much richer concept than presently recognized. The chiasm describes the crossing optic nerve fibers of the brain, and the way that the right side of the body most often corresponds to the left hemisphere of the brain, and in turn the left side of the body corresponds to the right hemisphere of the brain. Chiasmic structures are deeply ingrained both in the human body and in the constructs that human beings use to make sense of the world. As such, it would be remiss to ignore its features when it comes to designing every aspect of an artificially intelligent system intended to have humanlike capabilities

There are many forms of chiasmus. They can consist of cross-like arrangements of phonemes, letters, or syntactic elements. We will focus on the chiasmus of words, also called antimetabole. According to Miesner (1974, 36), chiasmus has four functions: (1) to clarify the meaning of the whole (macro), (2) to understand the use of words (micro), (3) to help remember and memorize, and (4) literary aesthetics.

There are five chief scholars who have contributed much to the literature, recognizing chiasmus as both an important device in language and much more. Each of these researchers has directed their studies of chiasmus towards a different primary topic, here listed in the order in which they are mentioned:

1. Strecker – Ethnography and Anthropology
2. Lissner – Embodied Cognition
3. Paul – Poetics and Literature
4. Pelkey – Semiotics and Embodied Cognition

5. Harris – Rhetoric and Logic

The chiasmus creates a highly symmetrical structure, and gives the impression of completeness. We seem to have “come full circle,” so to speak, and the sentence (or paragraph, etc.) seems to tie up all the loose ends. This is, of course, largely an illusion! A chiasmus can easily leave out extremely important details or considerations that make a big difference to the author’s point. But in rhetoric, what matters is the audience’s perception, and chiasmus is a great way to make readers *perceive* your writing as more complete.

Here are some chiasmuses from William Shakespeare's play "Hamlet":

- In the play Macbeth written by William Shakespeare we see an example of chiasmus in the line which reads; “*fair is foul and foul is fair.*”
- Once again, in a play written by William Shakespeare, we see another example of chiasmus. This is from the play Hamlet. “*fit the action to the word and the word to the action.*”
- Another example of chiasmus from the Shakespeare play, Hamlet is “*It is a question which is yet to be proven, whether love leads to fortune or if fortune leads to love.*”
- "To be or not to be, that is the question."
- "To die, to sleep; To sleep, perchance to dream."
- "That we would do, we should do when we would,
- For this 'would' changes, and hath abatements."
- **I** wasted **time**,
and now **time** doth waste **me**.

These chiasmuses highlight Shakespeare's skill in using rhetorical devices to create memorable and poetic language in "Hamlet." Chiasmus adds depth and artistry to the play's dialogue and soliloquies.

"Romeo and Juliet" also contains examples of chiasmus, a rhetorical device that Shakespeare often used to create balance and artistry in his writing. These chiasmuses help convey the intense emotions and themes present in the play.

Here are some chiasmuses from William Shakespeare's "Romeo and Juliet":

- "Good night, good night! Parting is such sweet sorrow."
- "These violent delights have violent ends."
- "My only love sprung from my only hate."
- "These times of woe afford no time to woo."
- "Not stepping o'er the bounds of modesty."
- "When he shall die,

Take him and cut him out in little stars,
And he will make the face of heaven so fine
That all the world will be in love with night."

- "For never was a story of more woe
Than this of Juliet and her Romeo."
- "My lips, two blushing pilgrims, ready stand
To smooth that rough touch with a tender kiss."
- "Then move not, while my prayer's effect I take."
- "Beautiful tyrant! Fiend angelical!"

- "She's not well married that lives married long,
But she's best married that dies married young."
- "So we grow together,
Like to a double cherry, seeming parted,
But yet a union in partition."
- "Why, then, O brawling love! O loving hate!
any thing, of nothing first create!"
- "These happy masks that kiss fair ladies' brows,
Being black, puts us in mind they hide the fair."
- "In delay there lies no plenty,
Then come kiss me, sweet and twenty."
- "But, soft! What light through yonder window breaks?"
- "A plague o' both your houses!"
- "It is the East, and Juliet is the sun."
- "So smile the heavens upon this holy act
That after-hours with sorrow chide us not!"
- "My love is thine to teach. Teach it but how,
And thou shalt see how apt it is to learn
Any hard lesson that may do thee good."
- "Death, that hath sucked the honey of thy breath,
Hath had no power yet upon thy beauty."
"But O, what damned minutes tells he o'er
Who dotes, yet doubts; suspects, yet strongly loves."

These examples demonstrate how Shakespeare skillfully used chiasmus in his writing to create a poetic and balanced effect in "Romeo and Juliet." Chiasmus is a rhetorical device that involves the reversal of grammatical structures in successive clauses or phrases.

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