

Analogies

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KEY POINTS

- Analogies compare something new and different (the main topic of a speech) to people, places, objects, and ideas familiar to audience members.
- Public speakers often use analogies to strengthen political and philosophical arguments, even when the semantic similarity is weak or non-existent.
- Analogies that begin with phrases including "like", "so on," and "as if" rely on an analogical understanding by the receiver of a message that includes such phrases.
- Considering audience demographics, and constructing similar rather than extreme analogies, are tactics public speakers use to create effective analogies.

TERMS

- iconicity
The state of being iconic (in all meanings).
- isomorphism
A one-to-one correspondence.
- homomorphism
A similar appearance of two unrelated organisms or structures.

EXAMPLES

- Some examples of analogies: the human eye is like a camera, love is a kind of game, sound waves are like the circular ripples that spread from a stone dropped in water.

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Analogies

Analogies draw comparisons between ideas or objects that share certain aspects or characteristics, but are dissimilar in other areas. This cognitive process transfers information or meaning from one particular subject (the analogue or source) to another particular subject (the target) to infer meaning or prove an argument. In public speaking, analogy can be a powerful linguistic tool to help speakers guide and influence the perception and emotions of the audience.

Analogies in Public Speaking

Linguistically, an analogy can be a spoken or textual comparison between two words (or sets of words) to highlight some form of semantic similarity between them. Thus, public speakers often use analogies to strengthen political and philosophical arguments, even when the semantic similarity is weak or non-existent (if crafted carefully for the audience).

Often presenters speak about topics, concepts, or places that may seem alien or abstract for audiences. To build trust and credibility on stage, speakers repeatedly link their main topic or argument to the values, beliefs, and knowledge of their audience. Demonstrating how the relationship between one set of ideas is comparable or similar to a different set of ideas helps bridge this gap in understanding for listeners unable to formulate the relationship on their own. Likewise, analogies are sometimes used to persuade those that cannot detect the flawed or non-existent arguments within the speech.

The Construction and Role of Analogies in Language

Analogies that begin with phrases including "like," "so on," and "as if" rely on an analogical understanding by the receiver of a message that includes such phrases. Analogy is important not only in ordinary language and common sense (where proverbs and idioms give many examples of its application), but also in science, philosophy, and the humanities. Presenters and writers also use analogies to enhance and enliven descriptions, and to express thoughts and ideas more clearly and precisely.

The concepts of association, comparison, correspondence, mathematical and morphological homology, homomorphism, iconicity, isomorphism, metaphor, resemblance, and similarity are closely related to analogy. In cognitive linguistics, the notion of conceptual metaphor may be equivalent to that of analogy.

Tips for Using Analogies

- Think about audience demographics. What are their interests, beliefs, and values? Choose a suitable analogy that the audience will be able to connect with and relate to.
- Keep analogies short and simple. Extreme analogies can weaken rather than strengthen an argument.
- Use analogies as a springboard rather than as the main focus of the presentation.
- Use analogies from personal experiences to create authenticity and credibility with the audience.



[The Human Eye is Like a Camera](#)

Analogies often use the structure A is like B.