THE REPETITION OF ENGLISH PROVERBS

Asst. Lect. Raniah Shakir Sahib

University of Kufa/ College of Languages/ Department of English.

ABSTRACT

Repetition is one of the main linguistic tools that could be used in so many different ways to communicate ideas without stating that the repeated word is the importance. The repeated is significant to the addressee since they hear it and process twice or more. This paper has conveyed that proverbs in English can carry out different level of meanings. Repetition appears in so many forms. The researcher has showed the semantic and the phonological levels of repletion since they are the most noticeable ones in language. The researcher then took example of English proverbs and explain the various repetition forms and function. Therefore, the researcher has concluded that repetition is used in different forms that could semantic, formal or full.

KEYWORDS: repetition, proverb, semantic repetition, phonological repetition, synonyms

INTRODUCTION

Repetition is a linguistic phenomenon that could of phonemes, morphemes or any other syntactic notion. There are few studies that are intended to cover all those levels and this study is meant to bridge that gap by providing more examples of repetition in English proverbs.

The two instances below are of the phonological level:

In folly ripe, in reason rotten

[Sir Walter Ralegh‟s „The Lady‟s Prudent Answer to her Love‟] The following two examples represent the morphological level:

Not as a call to battle, though embattled we are. Of the syntactic level, below are two instances:

Who is here so base that would be a bondman?

If any, speak; for him have I offended.

Who is here so rude that would not be a Roman?

If any, speak; for him have I offended.

Who is here so vile that will not love his country?

If any, speak; for him have I offended.

1.2. The Aims

The study aims at:

1. Explaining the different types and the linguistic functions.
2. Revealing of repetition in proverbs.

1.3. The Hypotheses

It is hypothesized that:

1. Repetition is a linguistic phenomenon that occurs is phonology, morphology, and syntax.
2. Functions of repetition in English are, to some extent, used in proverbs.

1.4. The Procedures

The following procedure will be followed:

1. Repetition is presented as a linguistic phenomenon.
2. English proverbs are investigated base on the nature of repetition.
3. Deciding on which linguistic level the repetition as occurred.

1.5. The Limits

The study is limited to a selection of proverbs in English.

1.6. The Value

The study is meant to be beneficial to students of English language and linguistics. It can also be a good source for translators, interpreters, authors, and critics.

Chapter Two Theoretical Background

2.1 Introductory Remarks

Many scholars and authors have defined repetition. For example Cudden (1982:564) defines it as "an essential unifying element in nearly all poetry and much prose". Gray (1984:172) also mentions that repetition is "a vital part of the language of literature both in verse and prose". Hawthorn (2000:301) proposes that repetition is: "a key means whereby the technical rate of redundancy is increased in a work".

The use of repletion is very deep-rooted in holy books like the Glorious Quran and the Holy Bible, it is used to achieve different purposes and fulfill various functions. Greek philosophers have used repetition widely to communicate critical matters and describe certain situations (Kane (1983:305)

Repetition can be used to communicate significant informations that is either new or has a rhetorical value (Hawthorn, 2000:297). It can be defines as "one of the fundamental devices of art" (Beckson and Gans, 1961:172).

2.2. Repetition

Repetition usually exists in language to convey message or present information. That message could be positive or negative depending on the speaker's viewpoint. However, it is usually understood as of a negative impact since it is not new, therefore it could be either wrong or misused. But repetition could present vital addition to language (spoken or written) in which it exists.

Thus, repetition for Connor is not the mere copying of reality in the sense that a copy is dependent on – hence inferior to – the original, for the original is also, in a sense, dependent upon repetition without which the original is never such.

2.3 Types of Repetition

There are three types of repetition: semantic, formal and full repetition.

2.3.1. Semantic Repetition

Semantic repetition is repeating the exact same or similar meaning. This repetition has to be direct and stated, otherwise it is pragmatic repetition. It can be conveys through three different ways in language, the first one is synonyms. The second way is the use of paraphrasing and the third one id reflexive pronouns.

2.3.1.1. Synonymy

If two word carry the same meaning, we could say those words are synonymous which is that they have the same meaning (Palmer, 1981:88)

There is also a group of words or phrases that carry synonymous meanings found especially in the legal register, e.g.: „each and every";

„give and bequeath"; „ways and means"; „last will and testament"; „quiet and tranquility" …etc. These frozen or semi-frozen expressions are cited by Beeston (1970) who calls them „hendiadis" i.e. words with synonymous meaning.

When we talk about synonyms, we mean sameness on meaning but we do not mean total sameness, that is one hundred percent the same. There is sameness to same level that would make two or more word synonyms in some contexts (Palmer, 1981:88-93).

2.3.1.2. Paraphrasing

Paraphrasing is another form of semantic repetition which could be defined as "the recurrence of content with a change of expression" (Beaugrande and Dressler, 1981:58), that is, "a restatement of an idea in such a way as to retain the meaning while changing the form" (Thrall and Hibbard,

1960:340). In a sense, thus, it resembles synonymy except that a paraphrase, as it seems, may be slightly less strict in the 'sameness" of meaning, and that one of the two sides in a paraphrase – usually the paraphrasing side – is often longer than the other one – i.e. the paraphrased side:

Ex 2. I had never seen a murderer …the decent symbol which indemnifies the taker of life. (Beaugrande and Dressler, 1981:58) Paraphrase could transcend the limits of a phrase or a sentence to involve a whole text or more, especially for literary critical purposes. However, we are concerned with paraphrasing insofar as it is a natural use of language: although „bull" and „male adult bovine animal" are almost exactly synonymous, we do not normally hear one saying "there is a male adult bovine animal in the field", for this is created by the linguist or lexicographer for the purpose of definition (Palmer, 1981:93).

2.3.1.3.Reflexive Pronouns

Another common form of semantic repetition is the reflexive pronoun. Such pronouns are nine in number: myself, yourself, himself, herself, itself, oneself, ourselves, yourselves, and themselves. The reflexive pronoun is coreferential with some preceding noun. Yet, this would not suffice for these pronouns to formulate a semantic repetition: as well, they should be omissible from their sentences without doing almost any syntactic damage for them. Therefore, only the emphatic use of the reflexive pronouns is a proper occurrence of semantic repetition, since, in addition to its coreference with a preceding noun, the emphatic

reflexive pronoun is inessential to its sentence (i.e. omissible from it) for the emphatic reflexive pronouns are added to sentences "for the sake of emphasis; generally, to point out a contrast (Eckersley and Eckersley, 1960:122-6), meaning "that person /thing and nobody /nothing else" (Swan, 1995:485):

Ex 3. It"s quicker if you do it yourself.

Ex 4. The house itself is nice, but the garden is small. Ex 5. I"ll go and see the president himself if I have to. Ex 6. The manageress spoke to me herself. (ibid)

2.3.2. Full Repetition

The third type of repetition occurs when words or larger linguistic units are repeated both in form and meaning: this is the commonest type of repetition. In fact, most – if not all – the patterns and instances that will be explicated later in the chapter are particularly of this type:

Ex 7. O, now, for ever

Farewell the tranquil mind, farewell content! Farewell the plumed troop and the big wars That make ambition virtue! O, farewell!

Farewell the neighing steed and the shrill trump, The spirit-stirring drum, the ear-piercing fife, The royal banner, and all quality,

Pride, pomp, and circumstances of glorious war! [Shakespeare‟s „Othello‟]

2.4. Levels of Repetition

Repetition will progressively be tackled in this study: the patterns of repetition will be dealt with in three main levels, starting from the smallest units of language (i.e. phonemes) then up to the larger ones (i.e. morphemes, words, phrases, and clauses). This division into levels would create a sort of organization. A certain main level could have two or more sublevels (e.g. the morphological has two: „bound‟ and „free‟) each could have more than one pattern of repetition; all this will be evident throughout the chapter.

2.4.1. The Phonological Level

This forms the first level of repetition wherein it will be dealt with repetition of sounds (or phonemes). There are several schemes of sounds repetition, the commonest of which are: alliteration, assonance, and rhyme.

2.4.1.1.Alliteration

It is a figure of speech in which consonants at the beginning of words, or stressed syllables, are repeated (Cudden, 1982:27). Alliteration is a very old device in English verse – older than rhyme – and is common in verse generally (ibid).

Ex 8. Time drives the flocks from field to fold

When rivers rage and rocks grow cold And Philomel becometh dumb –

The rest complains of care to come

[Sir Walter Raleph‟s „The Lady‟s Prudent Answer to her Love‟]

2.4.1.2.Assonance

This is known as the "similarity in sound between vowels followed by different consonants in two or more stressed syllables" (Thrall and Hibbard, 1960:37). Therefore, it is the vowel equivalent of

alliteration. Assonance is a common feature of the English verse, and is used as well in the verse of several other languages such as French, Spanish, Celtic…etc (Gray, 1984:26):

Ex 9. The Lotos blooms below the barren peak:

The Lotos blows by every winding Creek:

All day the wind breathes low with mellower tone

Thro˝ every hollow cave and alley lone,

Round and Round the spicy downs the yellow Lotos-dust in below [Tennyson˝s Lotos-Eaters]

Here, the /əu/ vowel sound is repeated throughout the above lines, adding a kind of drowsy sonority to them.

Chapter Three
3.1 Repetition in Proverbs
Repetition has been classified into phonological, lexical, phrasal and clausal repetition in the text of proverbs. Phonological repetition is the only one among all of these levels of repetition that will be subjected to analysis to see whether each figure has any significance in the text of any proverb after specifying and selecting appropriate figures of repetition. The data and examples have been selected and adopted from traditional and contemporary English proverbs. These proverbs cover a number of concepts, such as theme, religion, weather, men and women, animal, agriculture, food, popularity and others. Proverbs, as we know, embody advice, wisdom, criticism and education, etc. The aim is to show people the right way to follow and what to do in critical situations and how to act. When people read and listen to proverbs, especially when something is repeated for one reason or another, they will certainly get experience and lessons.

This shows that proverbs remain the eye of the world through which the man can gain experience and education. In this respect, many eminent authors, such as, Mieder, Norrick and many others have largely explored the area of proverbs, while others have extensively clarified the levels and figures of repetition.

3.2 Repetition Levels Used in Proverbs
Generally, repetition will progressively be tackled in this research paper; the patterns of repetition will be dealt with in one main level, beginning from the commonest figures then up to the less common ones.

3.2.1 Phonological Repetition Used in Proverbs

Phonological repetition is one of the major features of repetition levels. It is a term which is used to indicate sounds (or phonemes) that are repeated in one form or another to provide reinforcement and emotional emphasis.

It is based on repetition of similar consonant or vowel sounds. This section focuses on some of the significant sound patterns such as alliteration and assonance, etc. that are used for aesthetic and communicative purposes in English proverbs.

3.2.1.1 Alliteration in Proverbs

Alliteration according to Harvey & Higgins (1992:76) is the "recurrence of the same sound/letter, or sound/letter cluster at the beginning of words, for example,' many mighty midgets'."

3.2.1.1.1 Alliteration of the Voiced Bilabial Plosive /b/. As in:-

Context: Better bend than break
Purpose:
Speake & Simpson (2004) state that this is an old English proverb that goes back to the early13th century, and deals with discretion and prudence. Reasonably, this is a piece of discouraging advice, if not, it is supposed that by such an event one lives to come into conflict in another day and fight again. Context: A bad excuse is better than none

Purpose:
It is an old English proverb that goes back to the early 15th century, and deals with an excuse. Bertram (1993) expresses this in many words "if you offer a bad excuse, there is a slight chance that it will be accepted and you will therefore not be in trouble, but if you have no excuse at all, you do not ever have that slight chance". The repetition of /b/ at the beginning, middle, and end of the proverb: "Better bend than break " emphasizes an idea of discretion through reiteration. The voiced bilabial plosive in this proverb and its repetition at word initial position suggests prudence and is associated with the mental power of men, especially political leaders

Another most significant use of the consonant /b/ is in the proverb "A bad excuse is better than none". The idea of orderly drawing back is continued in the repetition of the voiced counterpart of /b/. For instance in bad and better, in spite of the contrariety and antithesis in their meanings, there is relevance and closeness. The two proverbs above tell us that one should act cleverly according to situations and one's behavior or action should conform to the accepted rules of society.

3.2.1.1.2 Alliteration of the Voiced Alveolar Plosive /d/
Context: Dog does not eat dog
Purpose:

This old proverb goes back to the mid-15th century, and deals with the reciprocity and loyalty between companions. One disreputable person will not harm other disreputable people (Fergusson, 1983).

What distinguishes this traditional proverb is the abundance and presence of the consonant letter/sound /d/. It is a voiced alveolar plosive sound and it can be found at the beginning, middle and end of words. In this proverb, the letter/sound /d/ occurs more than one time at the initial of some basic words. Here the repetition of the letter/sound /d/ makes the text of the proverb much balanced and more coherent.

3.2.1.1.3 Alliteration of Voiceless Labio-dental Fricative /f/
Context: Fight fire with fire
Purpose:
It is a traditional proverb that goes back to the early 14th century and deals with similarity and dissimilarity, ways and means that refer to the rules and tactics of war. Bertram (1993: 84) supposes that you must "use against your opponent the same methods he or she is using against you". It is an injunction to encounter "like" with "like".

The key word in this proverb is "fight" and the other sub-key words are "fire/fire". All of these words start with the letter/sound /f/, which is a

voiceless labio-dental fricative and is found at the beginning, middle and end of words. In this proverb the letter/sound /f/, comes at the initial of several words and occurs more than once in order to emphasize the idea of opposition.

3.2.1.1.4 Alliteration of the Voiced Velar Plosive /g/
Context: A great city a great solitude.
Purpose:
This proverb is a traditional one that goes back to the early-16th-century and assures the idea of greatness and loneliness. Ridout and Witting (1967: 77) expound that "a saying comes to us from the Greek. It means that in a large centre of civilization, where millions of people are going about their own affairs and are not interested in any one else, we can feel as lonely as if we were on a desert island". Crowded cities make man nervous. So, man longs to return to solitude to relieve his nerves.
The key-words 'great/great' start with the consonant letter/sound /g/ as an initial letter. The sound /g/ is a voiced velar plosive that can be found at the beginning, middle and end of words. The letter/sound /g/ has occurred two times at the initials of the words 'great/great', so, this repetition helps the context of the proverb to be more coherent.

3.2.1.1.5 Alliteration of the Glottal Fricative /h/
In the articulation of the glottal fricative, Gimson (1970: 191) describes the processes involved by stating that "the air is expressed from the lungs with a considerable PRESSURE causing some FRICTION throughout the vocal tract". The articulation of the sound /h/ is associated with pressure

and friction. The sound embodies a sense of harshness or friction. This feeling seems to be conveyed in the lines of the proverbs where there is a repetition of the sound. Examples are found in the following proverbs: Context: A honey tongue, a heart of gall.

Purpose:

It is an old English proverb which is traced back to the beginning of the thirteenth-century, and deals with hypocrisy (Fergusson, 1983).

The sound /h/ occurs two times in this proverb. So, the alliteration of sound /h/ is one of the basic principles of this proverb and is considered to be its main characteristic. The repetition or alliteration of the sound /h/ creates what is called a tune between the two sounds in order to emphasize the idea of wickedness or deceit.

Context: He who hesitates is lost.

Purpose:

It is an old English proverb related back to the early-seventeenth-century, and deals with resolution, decision, and indecision. Distinctly, the early use of this proverb refers specifically to women. Bertram (1993) states that "people should act decisively". Anybody who hesitates is not only lost, but is in fact miles from the next exit.

Mightily, the alliteration of the sound /h/ in the proverb "He who hesitates is lost", occurs three times in three words. The repetition of the sound /h/ in this specific proverb emphasizes the idea of hesitation and indecision.

Context: He who excuses himself accuses himself.

Purpose:

It is an old English proverb dated to the early-16th century and deals with conscience and excuses. Ridout and Witting (1967) state that "if we suspect the person who makes too many excuses, because he is probably covering up his ill actions, it is better to admit a thing openly than to make excuses, for excuses are such obvious evasions that they irritate instead of convincing". If anyone feels he has to produce excuses and justifications for something he has done, this shows that he really knows he is in the wrong. By apologizing for something, a natural person admits that he did it.

It is clear that the alliteration or repetition of the sound /h/ in the proverb "He who excuses himself accuses himself" occurs four times at the initials of the successive words that appear in the proverb above.

3.2.1.1.6 Alliteration of the Voiced Palatal Semi-Vowel /j/ Context: You never know what you can do till you try. Purpose:

This proverb goes back to the early 18th century and refers to boldness, self-confidence and diligence. Man knows not what he can do till he tries to do his best (Speak and Simpson, 2004: 169).

The most obvious word in this proverb is the subject pronoun 'you'. It is used more than once which starts with the initial sound /j/. This consonant is a quick glide from the position of the vowel /i: / or /i/ to any other vowel (O'Conner, 1967: 57). The consonant sound /j/ is a voiced palatal semi-vowel that occurs at the initials of the pronouns (you/ you/you) in separated positions. The consonant or semi-vowel sound /j/has been repeated three times in the same text of the proverb and this repetition refers to insistence of man, which is an act of demanding or saying something firmly and refusing to accept any opposition or excuses.

3.2.1.1.7 Alliteration of the Voiceless Alveolar Plosive /k/

Alliteration of the letter /k/ like the other plosive sounds discussed recently, suggests different kinds of ideas and warnings. Such alliteration is shown in the following examples:

Context: Cut your coat according to your cloth
Purpose:

It is an old English proverb goes back to the mid-15th-century and deals with circumstances, poverty and thrift. Ridout and Witting (1967) give a word of advice by saying that "you should adjust your expenditure according to your resources." They give an example on this by narrating the following event:

" I asked a dealer the price of a tennis racket I had set my heart on, but it was too expensive, so I had to cut my coat according to my cloth and buy a cheaper one".

Conclusions

From the previous discussion and analysis of various resources and citations, the researcher has concluded the following:

1. Repetition is widely used in Proverbs.
2. Repetition has three main types: semantic, formal, and full.
3. Repetition, in English, is of three main levels: phonological, morphological, and syntactic.
4. Repetition at the phonological level is almost common in English, each with the same number of common and unique patterns.
5. Repetition may, in English, perform many functions, some of which are in common use; these are of two types: those are; emphasis, effectiveness, continuity, clarification, coherence, suggestive effects, musicality, expressing emotions, assertion, rhythm, and memorization.

REFERENCE

- AL-Hamash,Khalil I.(1976). A Practical Course in English Phonetics. Baghdad: IDELTI Publication.
- Beaugrande, Robert-Alain and Wolfgang Urich Dressher (1981).
Introduction to Text Linguistics. London: Longman Group Ltd.

- Beckson, Karl and Arthur Ganz (1961). A Reader's Guide to Literary Terms. New York: The Noonday Press.
- Beeston, A.F.L. (1970). The Arabic Language Today. London: Huchinson and Co. Ltd.

- Bertram, Ann (1993). NTC'S Dictionary of Proverbs and Cliché's.
Chicagoans Publishing Group.
- Crystal, David (1984) A Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics (4th ed). Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd.
- Cuddon, J. A.(1982). A Dictionary of Literary Terms. Harmondsw orth: Penguin Books.
- Eckersley, L. E. and J. M. Eckersley (1960). A Comprehensive English Grammar. London: Longman Group Ltd.
- Fergusson, R. (1983). The Penguin of Proverbs. Great Chaucer Press
- Gimson, A.C. (1970). An Introduction to the Pronunciation of English. Bristol: J.W. Arrowsmith Ltd
- Gray, Martin (1984). A Dictionary of Literary Terms. London: Longman Group Ltd.
- Halliday, M.A.K. and R. Hasan (1976). Cohesion in English.
London: Longman Group Ltd.
- Harvey's & Higgins, I.(1992). Thinking Translation. London: Routlege.
- Hawthorn, Jeremy (2000). A Glossary of Contemporary Literary Theory. London: Arnold, Hodder Headline Group.
- Kane, Thomas S. (1983). The Oxford Guide to Writing. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Leech, Geoffrey N. (1969). A Linguistic Guide to English Poetry.
London: Longman Group Ltd.
- O'Conner. D. (1967). Better English Pronunciation. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Palmer, F.R. (1981). Semantics. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Quirk, Randolph, Sidney Greenbaum, Geoffrey Leech and Jan Svartvik (1985). A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language. London: Longman Group Ltd.
- Ridout, Ronald &Clifford, Witting (1967). English Proverbs Explained. London: Cox and Wyman.
- Roach, Peter (1983). English Phonetics and Phonology.
Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Speak, Jennifer& Simpson, John (2004). The Oxford Dictionary of Proverbs. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Swan, Michael (1995). Practical English Usage. Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Thrall, W.F. and A. Hibbard (1960). A Handbook to Literature.
New York: The Odyssey Press.
- Watt, William W. (1957). An American Rhetoric. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.