

MNEMONIC FUNCTIONS OF ALLITERATION IN ENGLISH PROVERBS INGLIZ MAQOLLARIDA ALLITERATSIYANING MNEMONIK FUNKSIYALARI

Hikmatova Nilufar Hamidullo qizi

Navoiy shahar 11-maktab ingliz tili o'qituvchisi

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Annotation:

This paper analyzes the mnemonic function of alliteration in English proverbs, specifically how it aids in information retention. The study examines the role of alliteration within the structure of proverbs and its relationship to memorability. English proverbs rich in alliteration were selected for analysis, focusing on recurring initial sounds, repeated words, and syntactic structure. The study also draws upon findings by Fionnuala Carson Williams regarding 106 widely distributed European proverbs; her research identified alliteration in 32 of these proverbs. The issue of proverb retention is further linked to experimental results obtained by Boers and Lindstromberg, whose research demonstrated that multi-word units containing alliteration are remembered better than those without it. The analysis indicates that alliteration phonologically links words within English proverbs, enhances the proverb's rhythm, and facilitates the retention of its form. However, this effect cannot be attributed solely to alliteration; factors such as conciseness, rhythm, parallelism, and semantic coherence also play significant roles.

Keywords:

alliteration, mnemonic function, English proverbs, memorability, phonological structure, rhythm, parallelism, oral tradition.

Introduction

Proverbs are used to express the collective wisdom of a people in a concise form. Although many consist of only a few words, they convey profound meaning. For instance, the proverb "Practice makes perfect" implies that frequent practice leads to a successful outcome. "Look before you leap" signifies the importance of careful thought before taking action. People often remember such proverbs for a long time and reuse them in appropriate situations.

Both the content and the form of a proverb play a role in its memorability. The use of devices such as rhyme, rhythm, repetition, parallelism, and alliteration in English proverbs serves as an example of this. Among these devices, alliteration is particularly noteworthy, as it alters the proverb's phonetic structure by repeating the same initial consonant sound across multiple words.

For example, in the proverb "Practice makes perfect," the words "practice" and "perfect" begin with the /p/ sound. In "Forgive and forget," the words "forgive" and "forget" repeat the /f/ sound. In "Look before you leap," the /l/ sound appears in the words "look" and "leap". Such repetitions are noticeable when the proverb is heard and serve to link the words together.

The prevalence of alliteration in proverbs has also been demonstrated through specific studies. Williams analyzed the English versions of 106 widely used European proverbs and found that 32 of them contained alliteration [1, pp. 34–44]. This amounts to 30.2 percent. The author also compares the figure found in English proverbs with that of idioms. In idioms, the rate of alliteration was approximately 13 percent. Thus, in the selected corpus, alliteration occurred more than twice as frequently in proverbs as in idioms [1, pp. 41–42].

This result indicates the importance of sound repetition in proverbs. However, its relationship with memory requires further investigation, as the frequent occurrence of a specific sound does not automatically prove that it is the cause of the proverb being remembered.

This issue was addressed in studies by Boers and Lindstromberg. In a study published in 2005, they experimentally investigated the effect of alliteration on the retention of multi-word units. The results showed that alliterative units were recalled better than non-alliterative ones [2, pp. 225–238]. Consequently, the researchers identify alliteration as a phonological device that can support memory.

This line of research continued in 2008. Lindstromberg and Boers examined the mnemonic effect of alliteration within lexical chunks [3, pp. 200–222]. In a subsequent study, Boers, Lindstromberg, and Webb conducted an experiment with 54 EFL students. The results showed that the form and composition of alliterative units were better remembered than those of non-alliterative units [4, pp. 85–99].

These findings suggest that alliteration in English proverbs can be studied not merely as a stylistic device, but also as a phonological device linked to memory.

The aim of the study is to determine how alliteration is used in English proverbs and to highlight aspects related to its mnemonic function.

To this end, the study analyzes repeated sounds within proverbs, the placement of alliterative words, the relationship of alliteration with rhythm and parallelism, and its potential role in the memorability of the proverbs.

Research Material and Methods

English alliterative proverbs served as the material for this study. The analysis involved comparing the initial sounds of words; words beginning with the same sound were identified, and their positions within the proverbs were examined.

Quantitative data was drawn from Williams's research, in which he analyzed 106 English proverbs and found alliteration in 32 of them [1, pp. 34–44]. Additionally, the experimental study by Boers and Lindstromberg served as a basis for explaining the relationship between alliteration and memory [2, pp. 225–238].

The proverb itself was taken as the primary unit of analysis. In each instance, words sharing the same initial sound were identified, followed by an examination of how this repetition relates to the proverb's meaning and structure.

Results and Analysis

In the analyzed proverbs, alliteration primarily manifests through the repetition of the same initial sound in two or more key words. The following examples clearly illustrate this.

In the proverb “Practice makes perfect,” the words “practice” and “perfect” begin with the /p/ sound. Here, the repetition occurs in two key words: the first denotes the action, and the second, the result. Thus, the two words, linked by sound, also embody the proverb's central idea.

In the proverb “Forgive and forget,” the /f/ sound is repeated in the words “forgive” and “forget”. Both words are verbs and perform the same grammatical function within the proverb; consequently, the repetition of the sound reinforces this grammatical parallel.

In the proverb “Look before you leap,” the words “look” and “leap” begin with the /l/ sound. These two words share the same grammatical function, and alliteration links them phonetically as well.

In the example “Live and let live,” the /l/ sound is repeated three times. Unlike the other examples, this creates a stronger phonetic pattern. The threefold repetition also makes the proverb's rhythm more pronounced.

In the proverb “Where there's a will, there's a way,” the words “will” and “way” begin with the /w/ sound. This instance involves not only sound repetition but also parallelism:

there's a will

there's a way

The similar structure of the two clauses and the repetition of the /w/ sound provide multiple anchors that make the proverb's form easier to remember.

Data provided by Williams also indicates that alliteration is quite common in proverbs. The occurrence of this phenomenon in 32 out of 106 proverbs amounts to 30.2 percent.[1, pp. 34–44] This figure indicates that alliteration is one of the important phonetic features of English proverbs.

However, there is a distinction between the mere presence of alliteration and its mnemonic effect. The former refers to frequency within a corpus, whereas the latter implies an impact on memory. Experiments conducted by Boers and Lindstromberg provide significant evidence regarding the latter aspect. Their results indicate that alliterative multi-word units are recalled better than non-alliterative ones.[2, pp. 225–238]

Consequently, alliteration in proverbs can serve three primary functions. First, it links the words within the proverb through sound. Second, it reinforces the rhythmic structure. Third, it provides additional support for retaining the proverb's form in memory.

However, it would be incorrect to attribute this solely to alliteration. For instance, the proverb "Where there's a will, there's a way" also exhibits strong parallelism. In the case of "Live and let live," brevity and repetition work in tandem. Thus, the memorability of a proverb stems from the combined effect of several factors.

Discussion

The results indicate a link between alliteration and memorability. This is evidenced by two types of data: the actual phonetic material within the proverbs themselves, and experiments conducted on the retention of alliterative units in memory.

In the proverbs, sound repetition often occurs in key words. For instance, in the proverb "Practice makes perfect," the words "practice" and "perfect" serve this function, as do "forgive" and "forget" in the proverb "Forgive and forget." In these cases, the alliteration is not merely a random repetition of sounds; rather, it links the words that form the semantic core of the proverb.

The findings of Boers and Lindstromberg provide a basis for explaining this observation from the perspective of memory. They established that units with distinct phonological features are better retained in memory [2, pp. 225–238]. Consequently, phonetic similarity between words can facilitate their storage as interconnected units in memory.

The concept of a "retrieval cue" is also relevant here. For example, in the proverb "Practice makes perfect," when the word "practice" is recalled, the /p/ sound can serve as an additional signal to retrieve the word "perfect". Similarly, in the proverb "Forgive and forget," the /f/ sound can act as a cue to help recall the second verb.

However, explaining the memorability of proverbs solely through sound is insufficient. Naturally, shorter proverbs are easier to recall in their entirety. Rhythm and parallelism also reinforce the structure of a proverb; consequently, it is difficult to isolate the specific impact of alliteration from these other elements.

Williams's findings also call for caution in this regard. While the presence of 32 alliterative proverbs demonstrates the prevalence of alliteration, it does not necessarily imply that these specific proverbs are recalled better than the other 74.[1, pp. 34–44] Drawing such a conclusion would require a dedicated memory experiment using the proverbs themselves as the test material.

Therefore, the main conclusion of this study is not that alliteration automatically improves memory. A more accurate conclusion is that alliteration strengthens the phonological form of a proverb and, in conjunction with other factors, may contribute to its memorability.

Conclusion

Alliteration is one of the key phonetic devices found in English proverbs. In an analysis by Williams based on 106 English proverbs, alliteration was identified in 32 of them – representing 30.2 percent of the total [1, pp. 34–44] Thus, the repetition of initial sounds is a frequently employed feature in English proverbs.

Examples such as "Practice makes perfect," "Forgive and forget," "Look before you leap," and "Live and let live" demonstrate how alliteration links key words within a proverb through sound.

Meanwhile, the proverb “Where there’s a will, there’s a way” illustrates how alliteration can function in tandem with parallelism.

Experiments conducted by Boers and Lindstromberg revealed that alliterative multi-word units are more easily remembered [2, pp. 225–238] Subsequent studies have also observed an advantage in recalling the form and composition of alliterative units [4, pp. 85–99]

On this basis, the primary mnemonic value of alliteration in English proverbs lies in its ability to link words phonetically and assist in retaining the proverb's form in memory. However, this effect operates in conjunction with other factors, such as brevity, rhythm, parallelism, and semantic coherence.

Future experimental research – specifically comparing the recall and reproduction rates of alliterative versus non-alliterative proverbs across different groups – could provide further clarity on this matter.

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Annotatsiya

Ushbu tezisdagi ingliz maqollarida alliteratsiyaning mnemonik funksiyasi, xususan, uning ma’lumotni esda saqlashga qanday yordam berishi tahlil qilinadi. Tadqiqotda alliteratsiyaning maqol tuzilishidagi o’rni va uning esda qolish xususiyati bilan bog’liqligi o’rganiladi. Tahlil uchun alliteratsiyaga boy ingliz maqollari tanlab olindi hamda ulardagi takrorlanuvchi boshlang’ich tovushlar, takrorlanuvchi so’zlar va sintaktik tuzilish ko’rib chiqildi. Shuningdek, ishda Fionnuala Karson Uilyams (Fionnuala Carson Williams) tomonidan Yevropada keng tarqalgan 106 ta maqolning inglizcha variantlari asosida o’tkazilgan tahlil natijalaridan foydalanildi; mazkur tadqiqotda maqollarning 32 tasida alliteratsiya mavjudligi aniqlangan edi. Maqollarni esda saqlash masalasi Boers va Lindstromberg (Boers and Lindstromberg) tomonidan olingan eksperimental natijalar bilan ham bog’landi; ularning tadqiqoti shuni ko’rsatdiki, alliteratsiyaga ega ko’p so’zli birliklar alliteratsiyasiz birliklarga qaraganda yaxshiroq esda qoladi. Tahlil shuni ko’rsatdiki, alliteratsiya ingliz maqollaridagi so’zlarni fonologik jihatdan o’zaro bog’laydi, maqol ritmini kuchaytiradi va uning shaklini esda saqlashga ko’maklashadi. Biroq, bu ta’sirni faqat alliteratsiya bilan izohlab bo’lmaydi; ixchamlilik, ritm, parallellik va semantik izchillik kabi omillar ham muhim rol o’ynaydi.

Kalit so’zlar:

alliteratsiya, mnemonik funksiya, ingliz maqollari, esda qolish xususiyati, fonologik tuzilish, ritm, parallellik, og’zaki an’ana.