

STYLISTIC PECULIARITIES OF ENGLISH PROVERBS AND SAYINGS

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ABSTRACT

The figurative meaning of proverbs is not always obvious and it requires certain level of contemplation. In the article we'll try to analyze stylistic means used in the combination of proverbs and sayings. Stylistic devices such as simile, metaphor, hyperbole, alliterations are often used in proverbs and sayings.

Keywords: proverbs, sayings, stylistic devices, simile, hyperbole.

INTRODUCTION

English proverbs and sayings are a significant part of the language, offering insights into the cultural and historical contexts from which they arose. These short, pithy statements have been passed down through generations, encapsulating wisdom, life lessons, and universal truths. Their origins often reflect the values, beliefs, and experiences of the people who coined them, and they continue to be relevant in modern communication. In the article we'll try to analyze stylistic means used in the combination of proverbs and sayings.

Proverbs are concise expressions that convey conventional wisdom or advice. They often offer a moral lesson or general truth based on common sense or experience. For example, "A stitch in time saves nine" advises timely intervention to prevent bigger problems.

Sayings, on the other hand, are more general expressions that might not carry a moral lesson but still offer insight or observation. For example, "Actions speak louder than words" emphasizes the importance of deeds over promises.

Many English proverbs have roots in classical literature, the Bible, or medieval life. For instance, "The early bird catches the worm" reflects agricultural life when waking up early was necessary for a successful harvest. Proverbs have evolved with the language, but their core messages remain intact, proving their timeless nature.

Proverbs are often borrowed from similar languages and cultures, and sometimes come down to the present through more than one language. Both the Bible (including, but not limited to the Book of Proverbs) and medieval Latin (aided by the work of Erasmus) have played a considerable role in distributing proverbs across Europe. Proverbs constitute a cultural heritage, which is bequeathed to us by the past generations. They are considered to be the items of traditional knowledge, occurring for centuries over the world. In her work Profantová [1, 306] states that "the national proverbs were from the very beginning considered as a manifestation of folk philosophy, expressing the idea in a brief, terse form in a witty and poetically apt way". Accordingly, Galperin I.R. [2;198] believes that proverbs transmit cultural idiosyncrasy, national world outlook, wisdom, experience and mentality of people and, as such,

they contain didactic and certain behavioral patterns. Therefore, these expressions of human mind can be considered as not only a written monument of a nation, but they also carry practical value, which will be analyzed from different standpoints.

The figurative meaning of proverbs is not always obvious and it requires certain level of contemplation. It manifests through the employment of stylistic devices which make the expressions more vivid and encourage an individual to use his/her imagination. Very prolific tropes are metaphor, personification, irony, which people often use naturally, without giving second thought. Often metaphorical proverbs include more than one stylistic device. The following examples have been proposed as the means to illustrate the presence of figures of speech in proverbial wisdom: the proverb "Better to live one day as a tiger than a thousand years as a sheep" is a powerful and evocative statement that encourages boldness, courage, and authenticity over a life of conformity, submission, or fear. From a stylistic perspective, this proverb employs several rhetorical and linguistic devices that enhance its impact and memorability. As a matter of fact, in some cases, markers of comparison convey an estimation ("approximation"), highlight a function ("identification"), introduce a hyponym ("exemplification") or coordinate terms ("coordination") [3,446].

The proverb uses simile to convey deeper meanings. The *tiger* represents strength, bravery, and an assertive, perhaps even dangerous, approach to life. The *sheep*, on the other hand, symbolizes meekness, docility, and a passive existence. By contrasting these two animals, the proverb emphasizes the value of a courageous and authentic life over a long but unremarkable. The structure of the proverb is built on a clear contrast between two ways of living, which is a common stylistic device to highlight the differences between choices. The parallelism in "one day as a tiger" and "a thousand years as a sheep" sets up a stark comparison that enhances the proverb's message. The brevity of living "one day" as a tiger is juxtaposed against the longevity of living "a thousand years" as a sheep, implying that the quality of life is more important than its duration.

Hyperbole is used to intensify the message. The idea of living a thousand years is an exaggeration that underscores the point that even a very long life of fear or submission is not as valuable as a single day of living boldly. This exaggeration serves to dramatize the comparison, making the proverb more impactful and thought-provoking.

The imagery in this proverb is vivid and dynamic. The *tiger* conjures up a mental image of a fierce, majestic animal that commands respect and fear, while the *sheep* evokes an image of a timid, harmless creature that follows the flock. This visual contrast not only makes the proverb more memorable but also reinforces its message through the mental pictures it creates.

Stylistically, this proverb carries a moral weight. It prompts reflection on the kind of life one leads—whether it is bold and meaningful or safe and insignificant. The stylistic devices used serve to amplify this philosophical implication, making the proverb resonate on a deeper emotional and intellectual level.

The proverb is concise, making it easy to remember and repeat. The rhythm created by the parallel structure and the balanced length of the two clauses adds to its memorability. This rhythmic quality is a common feature in proverbs, contributing to their effectiveness as tools for communication and reflection. The proverb "Better to live one day as a tiger than a thousand years as a sheep" is a compelling example of how stylistic elements can be used to

convey a profound message. Through metaphor, contrast, hyperbole, vivid imagery, moral implication, and rhythmic conciseness, this proverb encapsulates the idea that a life lived with courage and authenticity, even if short, is preferable to a long life of fear and conformity. Its stylistic elements work together to create a statement that is not only memorable but also deeply resonant.

"A good name is better than riches"

The proverb "A good name is better than riches" encapsulates the idea that one's reputation and character hold greater value than material wealth. This statement is succinct yet profound, employing several stylistic devices to convey its message effectively.

The proverb is structured around a parallel construction, where "a good name" is set against "riches." This parallelism enhances the contrast between the two concepts. The antithesis, or direct contrast, between "a good name" (symbolizing honor, integrity, and reputation) and "riches" (representing material wealth) emphasizes the moral choice being advocated. It suggests that while both may be desirable, one is inherently superior.

The phrase "a good name" is a metonym, where the "name" represents a person's reputation or standing in society. The use of this metonym simplifies and universalizes the concept, making it relatable and easy to understand. It underscores the importance of how one is perceived by others, which is linked to their actions and moral conduct.

Stylistically, the proverb carries a strong moral emphasis. It implicitly advises that ethical conduct, integrity, and the way one is perceived by others are more valuable and enduring than fleeting material wealth. The moral weight of the proverb is heightened by its straightforward and unambiguous language, which makes the message clear and impactful.

Although this proverb is rooted in English, its message resonates across cultures and time periods. The value placed on reputation over wealth is a universal theme, making the proverb relevant in various cultural contexts. This universality is a key feature of many proverbs, enabling them to convey wisdom that transcends specific cultural or temporal boundaries. The proverb "A good name is better than riches" is a classic example of how simple language can convey deep moral truths. Through parallelism, antithesis, metonymy, ellipsis, and moral emphasis, the proverb effectively communicates the idea that reputation and integrity are more valuable than material wealth. Its conciseness and universal resonance further contribute to its power and longevity as a piece of wisdom passed down through generations. Despite the modern world's fast-paced nature, proverbs and sayings still hold a significant place in communication. They are often used to reinforce arguments, illustrate points in speeches or writing, and provide a quick way to convey complex ideas. Their use is also a testament to the speaker's cultural literacy and wisdom.

Proverbs have also found a new life in digital communication. In the age of social media, where brevity is key, proverbs are perfectly suited to convey messages quickly and effectively. They are frequently used in tweets, memes, and posts to encapsulate complex thoughts in a single line.

"Hope is a good breakfast but a bad supper"

The proverb "Hope is a good breakfast but a bad supper" offers a nuanced reflection on the role of hope in one's life, particularly in terms of timing and expectations. The proverb employs

metaphor by comparing *hope* to *breakfast* and *supper*, which are meals representing the beginning and end of the day, respectively. *Breakfast* symbolizes the start of something—whether it be a day, a project, or a phase in life—where hope provides motivation and optimism. *Supper*, on the other hand, symbolizes the conclusion or outcome, suggesting that by this time, hope should have been replaced by action and results. The metaphor highlights the transient usefulness of hope, depending on the context.

The proverb is structured around a contrast between two times of the day: morning and evening, represented by breakfast and supper. This contrast, or antithesis, serves to underline the changing nature of hope's value. While hope is portrayed as something positive and necessary at the beginning (breakfast), it is shown as potentially disappointing or inadequate at the end (supper). The antithesis effectively underscores the message that hope must be paired with effort and realism as time progresses.

By attributing qualities of a meal to hope, the proverb personifies an abstract concept, making it more relatable and tangible. Hope is depicted as something that can be consumed or relied upon, which brings an everyday familiarity to the abstract idea. This personification aids in making the proverb more vivid and understandable.

The proverb's rhythmic structure is facilitated by its parallel construction: "a good breakfast" and "a bad supper." This rhythm, combined with the parallelism, makes the proverb memorable and easy to recite. The parallel structure also emphasizes the contrast between the two scenarios, reinforcing the proverb's core message. Stylistically, the proverb carries a subtle moral or philosophical implication. It suggests that hope should be accompanied by action and that it is valuable at the start of an endeavor but insufficient on its own as a final recourse. The proverb encourages a balanced approach to life, where hope is tempered with pragmatism and effort.

The proverb's conciseness contributes to its effectiveness. It conveys a complex idea in a simple, witty manner, making it easy to remember and apply to various life situations. The wit lies in the juxtaposition of meals, a familiar daily routine, with the abstract concept of hope, offering a clever and relatable way to express a profound truth.

The proverb "Hope is a good breakfast but a bad supper" skillfully uses metaphor, contrast, personification, rhythm, and wit to convey the idea that hope is valuable at the beginning of any journey or endeavor but should not be relied upon alone as the journey progresses. Its concise and memorable structure makes it a powerful statement about the balance between optimism and realism, encouraging a practical approach to life where hope is a starting point rather than an end in itself.

CONCLUSION

English proverbs and sayings are a vital part of the language's heritage, encapsulating wisdom, cultural values, and life lessons. Whether they are used to give advice, convey a moral, or simply to make a point, they remain an integral part of both spoken and written English. As language continues to evolve, proverbs will undoubtedly continue to play a role, adapting to new contexts while preserving their timeless truths.

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