



Exaggeration In English: A Morphological Perspective

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Abstract

As a term, exaggeration refers to "a statement or description that makes something seem larger, better, worse or more important than it really is" (Oxford Advanced Lerner's Dictionary, 2006: 503). Exaggeration is very common in various languages; in addition to that, it is regularly and widely used in different genres including the genre of proverbs and sayings where it is a genre that represents the culture and the heritage of nations in brevity and with wisdom. For instance, when saying the English proverb, "**Harm** seek **harm** find", this proverb involves the using of repetition of the noun (harm) as a morphological technique expressing exaggeration. However, such exaggerated proverbs reveal a deep wisdom in words that are decorated with various morphological techniques that characterize them, including word repetition, reduplication and comparative and superlative forms.

Accordingly, proverbs in English, are regarded as appropriate data to explore the exaggeration expressions in them morphologically. Hence, the present study aims at exploring, analyzing and classifying exaggeration characterizations in proverbs and sayings through analyzing the use of exaggeration expressions in English proverbs and sayings from a morphological perspective where the data analyzed are: (50) proverbs and sayings from the English language. Moreover, the current study is based on hypotheses revolve around the use of many exaggeration expressions in English and that are characterized by various and extensive morphological features. The study concludes that exaggeration expressions are highly and variously manifested in English proverbs and sayings through using various morphological techniques. Finally, the researcher has put forward a numbers of suggestions for further studies.

keywords: exaggeration, repetition, hyperbole, exaggeration function

INTRODUCTION

Human languages are rich and prosperous with devices and techniques in order to satisfy their users' needs and fulfill their functions. The current study which is entitled (Exaggeration in English: A Morphological Perspective) comes to introduce an idea revolves around how the users of a language employ exaggeration expressions carefully to convey their ideas in a way that increases the attention of the recipient and emphasizes the idea through morphological techniques like word repetition, reduplication and comparative and superlative forms, in their exaggeration expressions in order to add extra impact or have diverse functions, such as emphasis, persuasion, evaluation, influencing, memorization, etc. Thus, this study is concerned with the morphological analysis of exaggeration or exaggeration expressions which are expressions that exaggerate something by overstatement or downstatement the reality in order to gain some intentions and objectives among interlocutors in a given situation or context. So far, various studies on exaggeration dealt with the semantic, pragmatic, lexical and sociolinguistic techniques of exaggeration by using various types of data. In contrary, the current research intends to highlights an ignored area of investigation, the morphological aspect of exaggeration in general and the exaggeration found in proverb in English in particular.

The Concept of Exaggeration

The word 'exaggerate' in English is of Latin origin and it was entered English in 1533; it came to mean 'intensive', 'to heap' and 'to accumulate' and in 1613 came to denote 'magnification beyond the reality'. In 1734, the semantic content of this word came to mean 'emphasize'; while in 1850, it came to mean 'enlarge abnormally' (Onions, 1933:645).

Exaggeration is defined by prominent dictionaries as "a statement that represents something as better or worse than it really is, or that makes something larger, more important, or more significant than it actually is." (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 2023).

2.7 Areas of Exaggeration

In fact to create the desired impact, exaggeration can be found in every aspect of our daily life in addition to various forms of literature and daily life conversations in nearly most languages in our world including the English and Arabic languages. However, there are areas or fields that are characterized by using exaggeration excessively, including:-

-Poetry

Many poems use exaggeration, more specifically, hyperbole to create a more powerful image or to emphasize the emotion behind the words. For example:-

"O my Luve's like a red, red rose....."

O my Luve's like the melodie

In this poem, Burns employed repetition to create a sense of exaggeration. By iterating the comparison of his love to a rose and a melody, he reinforces the intensity of his feelings and the depth of his devotion (Robert Burns, "A Red, Red Rose").

-Drama

Exaggeration or hyperbole is often used in plays to create a more dramatic effect or to emphasize the importance of a particular scene or character. For example, in Shakespeare's "Macbeth," Lady Macbeth says, "Out, damned spot! out, I say!" to emphasize her guilt over the murder of King Duncan.

-Proverbs and sayings

Proverbs are a type of idiomatic expressions that are commonly used in everyday spoken language. They concisely and figuratively summarize everyday experiences and common observations (Borowska, 2014: 22).

"As quiet as a mouse." This proverb that uses simile suggests that someone is extremely quiet and not making any noise. The phrase dates back to the 1500s and has been used in many works of literature, including Shakespeare's "A Midsummer Night's Dream."

2.9 Functions of Exaggeration

Exaggeration is a common literary and rhetorical device used to emphasize a point or create a humorous effect. It uses hyperbole besides other tools of amplification to intentionally express a specific information or fact in exaggerated manner (Al-Attar, 2017: 163). Here are some functions of exaggeration in everyday life, literature and rhetoric:

Emphasis: Exaggeration is often used to emphasize a point or make it stand out. As described by Kreuz, Johnson and Bertus (1996: 86) a hyperbolic expression is any "segments that indicate emphasis through exaggeration". For example, in Shakespeare's play "Macbeth," the character Macbeth says, "I have supped full with horrors; / Direness, familiar to my slaughterous thoughts / Cannot once start me" (Shakespeare, 2003: Act V, Scene V). By exaggerating his experiences with horror and violence, Macbeth emphasizes the extent of his guilt and despair.

Memory Aid: Exaggeration can be used as a memory aid to help people remember something.

Evaluation and generalization: In this regard, Cano-Mora (2006: 205) asserts the function of evaluation by stating that "exaggeration has traditionally been regarded as a general evaluative resource".

Persuasion: Exaggeration can be used to persuade someone to take a particular action or accept a particular viewpoint. This can be done by using hyperbolic language to emphasize the benefits of a particular action or the dangers of not taking that action.

Contrast: Exaggeration can be used to create a striking contrast between two things. This can be done by exaggerating the differences between the two things, or by using hyperbole to describe one thing in relation to the other.

Humor: Exaggeration can also be used to create a humorous effect, often by making something seem absurd or ridiculous.

Realizations of the Phenomenon of Exaggeration

1- Numerical hyperbole

2- Words of hyperbolic nature including nouns, adjectives, adverbs, and verbs

3- Simile and metaphor

4- Comparative and superlative degrees

5- Emphatic genitive

6- Emphatic plural

7- Whole sentences

In her turn, Claridge (2011) believes that Spitzbard categories do not depend on specific corpus, i. e, they are theoretically-based and she provides another classification for exaggeration realizations. It is worth noting that Claridge's classification is obviously based on formal, i.e., syntactic and /or morphological but not phonological, pragmatic or semantic considerations.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Mora (2004) investigates the "ways in which hyperbole is used in interaction" within a conversational and discourse analysis perspective concentrating on listeners' responses. The researcher' results propose a need for investigating hyperbole in interactive contexts instead of exploring it as "single creative acts by the speaker alone". Mora concludes that the data reveals that this trope "might be classified as a low-risk figure, since the chances of misunderstanding is low".

Claridge (2011) provides the first investigation of hyperbole in English, drawing on data from genres such as spoken conversation, TV, newspapers, and literary works from Chaucer to Monty Python. Combining quantitative and qualitative analyses, it uses approaches from semantics, pragmatics, discourse analysis and classical rhetoric, to investigate in detail both speaker-centered and emotive aspects of hyperbole, and also addressee-related aspects, such as interpretation and interactional uptake. The book concludes with an exploration of the role of hyperbole in political speaking, humor, and literature.

Morphological Characteristics Found in Proverbs

-Morphological Repetition

Sometimes morphological features also appear through the repetition of words to express different ranges of types of exaggeration. In this regard and in relation to proverbs, Deskis (2016: 166) concentrates on the concept of "alliterative proverbs", i. e, a proverb containing "at least two fixed words that alliterate" where she has a proposal about this concept related to exploring the question of continuity and change. Repetition involves repeating words, phrases, or sounds for emphasis or exaggeration. It can create a sense of intensity or magnitude.

For example:

"I told you a thousand, thousand times!" (Exaggerating the number of times)

"The party was so loud, loud, LOUD!" (Exaggerating the volume).

It may involve the repetition of a word, a phrase or a whole sentence as in "Out of debt, out of danger". However, repeated words could be an adverb, an adjective, a noun or a preposition. For example:

"I'm really, really, really tired!" (Repeating the adverb "really")

"I've been waiting for hours and hours!" (Repeating the noun "hours")

"It was a long, long day". (Repeating the adjective "long")

- Superlative and Comparative Forms

Due to their universal tendency to exaggerate, absolute superlatives such as 'most kind' and 'most ingenious' constitute an antithesis of understatement (Wierzbicka, 2003: 277). Claridge (2011: 63) stresses the fact that "it is not the superlative on its own that leads to maximization or overstatement, but its occurrence together with modifying elements that are all-encompassing rather than restricting".

Explicit comparative particles such as "like, as, than" are indicative of non-metaphorical comparisons included in this category. As Claridge (2011: 64) points out, it is either the

entity within the comparative phrase that is completely impossible or the juxtaposition of the two entities being compared that produces a highly incongruous result. By comparing it in such a way, the entity in question is being maximized. Very often, it is only within the comparative phrase that the hyperbolic potential is contained.

Reduplication

Reduplication or sometimes called duplication is a pervasive phenomenon across human languages where it is often regarded as a morphological process of complete or partial repetition of a stem (Jin and Fang, 2019: 420).

On the other hand, Katamba (1993) classified it from the perspective of morphological structure into two types: perfect reduplication and partial reduplication. Perfect reduplication refers to the repetition of the whole meaningful constituent, such as, "quack-quack" in English. Partial reduplication deals with the repetition of part of a constituent, for example, "nitwit , chichat" (Katamba, 1993: 45).

Reduplication has long been an area of significant linguistic interest, and much attention has been paid to it in terms of various theories and perspectives (Jin and Fang, 2019: 420).

One of the various functions accomplished by reduplication in English is exaggeration. For instance, Gil (2005: 33, 37) claims that it is employed to express exaggeration, reinforcement rectification, recurrence or repetition, but it is distinguished from other types of repetition in certain characteristics. Morphologically speaking, reduplication can be distinguished from others in the following points:-

1. Reduplication is a morphological word-formation process.
2. Broadly speaking, it is concerned with the repetition of roots, stems and affixes or individual words.
3. Elements of reduplicates are often put together (ibid.).

- Derivation or Affixation

In English, derivation is the form of affixation that yields new words as Katamba (1993: 45) says that derivation is altering the meaning or grammatical category of the base. Derivation, as "the most common word formation process", forms new words from existing ones by adding derivational affixes (morphemes) to roots and stems. These morphemes are added by affixation, as "kind + ness = kindness". In this vein, exaggeration can be achieved through intensifying prefixes, such as "super," "ultra," "mega," or "hyper," which are added to a base word to amplify its meaning. These prefixes indicate an extreme or exaggerated quality, intensifying the impact of the word. For example: "It's ultra-amazing!"; they are added to a base to heighten its impact and create an amplified or exaggerated version.

The Morphological Analysis of Proverbs

1. "One man's trash is another man's treasure."

Proverb or saying	"One <u>man's</u> trash is another <u>man's</u> treasure."
Exaggeration realization	Using repetition is one indicator of exaggeration in English
Repetition	Repetition of the noun (man) with its possessive (s) twice in this proverb to create emphasis and cohesion in addition to exaggeration
Reduplication/ Affixation	---
Comparative/ superlative	---

2. "Cleanliness is next to godliness."

Proverb or saying	"Clean <u>liness</u> is next to god <u>liness</u> ."
Exaggeration realization	Exaggeration by nature of the words found in this proverb
Repetition	---
Reduplication/ Affixation	(ly+ness) are repeated in cleanliness and godliness where these affixes are iterated to form new words from the base (clean/ god)
Comparative/ superlative	---

3. "You reap what you sow"

Proverb or saying	" <u>You</u> reap what <u>you</u> sow"
Exaggeration realization	Exaggeration is realized in this proverb by means of repeating the pronoun (you)
Repetition	The repetition here is different where the pronoun (you) is iterated before (reap and sow) to creates emphasis and exaggeration at the same time in a sense of warning, that is to say, be careful, you reap what you

	SOW
Reduplication/ Affixation	---
Comparative/ superlative	---

4. "**Out of** sight, **out of** mind."

Proverb or saying	" Out of sight, out of mind."
Exaggeration realization	The equational structure of this proverb comes with the pattern (A=B) here for the purpose of exaggeration and cohesion through the repetition of the phrase (out of)
Repetition	The adverb (out of) is repeated here in this proverb to make equational structure and add cohesion to the proverb
Reduplication/ Affixation	---
Comparative/ superlative	---

5. "If you can't beat **them**, join **them**"

Proverb or saying	"If you can't beat them , join them "
Exaggeration realization	Exaggeration is attained through the meaning of words in general in this proverb where the contrast is clear between the idea of beating and joining in addition to repeating the object pronoun (them)
Repetition	Repetition of the object pronoun (them) twice
Reduplication/ Affixation	---
Comparative/ superlative	---

6. "No **news** is good **news**."

Proverb or saying	"No news is good news ."
Exaggeration realization	Repetition of the emphatic plural noun (news) suggests exaggeration through using emphatic plural besides the presence of contrastive idea between (no and good)
Repetition	Noun repetition of the word (news)
Reduplication/ Affixation	---

Comparative/ superlative	---
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7. "**A friend** in need is **a friend** indeed."

Proverb or saying	" A friend in need is a friend indeed."
Exaggeration realization	Repetition is an important realization of exaggeration
Repetition	Article repetition + noun repetition (a+friend) occurs two times
Reduplication/ affixation	---
Comparative/ superlative	---

8. "**A good** husband makes **a good** wife"

Proverb or saying	" A good husband makes a good wife"
Exaggeration realization	Repetition of the adjective (good) preceded by the definite article (a) two times to add a sense of exaggeration and generalization through a contrastive idea between (husband/ wife)
Repetition	Repetition of the article (a) + adjective (good) twice
Reduplication/ affixation	---
Comparative/ superlative	---

9. "Let **bygones** be **bygones**"

Proverb or saying	"Let bygones be bygones "
Exaggeration realization	The nature of words in this proverb proposes exaggeration besides the repetition of the word (bygones)
Repetition	Repetition of the adjective (bygones) twice
Reduplication/ affixation	---
Comparative/ superlative	---

10. "**Fool me** once, **shame** on you; **fool me** twice, **shame** on me"

Proverb or saying	" <u>Fool me</u> once, <u>shame</u> on you; <u>fool me</u> twice, <u>shame</u> on me"
Exaggeration realization	This proverb is extensively repetitive as it is clear in underlined bold words
Repetition	Repetition of the phrase: verb (fool) +the object pronoun (me)+the noun (shame)
Reduplication/ affixation	---
Comparative/ superlative	---

Results and Conclusion

The current research, more specifically previous analyses come out with a number of quantitative results where the following that demonstrate the frequency of occurrences of the morphological techniques used to express exaggeration within the analyzed data in English.

However, it can be concluded the aforementioned results, that exaggeration expressions in proverbs and sayings are variously and heavily used in the English language and they are characterized by employing different morphological features and techniques, the most prominent of them are:-

A.The inflection of comparative and superlative adjective can be considered as a morphological technique that distinguishes exaggeration in proverbs in the English language. Thus, the process of formation, especially the inflection of the comparative adjective, as well as the inflection of the superlative adjective of all kinds, whether from one syllable, or those derived from more than one syllable, and those whose derivation is irregular, take the first place in use in proverbs and sayings that are characterized by having exaggeration.

B. Repetition involving parts of speech is primarily employed, which indicates that it is an inherent morphological technique for expressing exaggeration in proverbs in the English language. Perhaps the repetition of nouns and the repetition of adjectives, as well as repetition of the adverbs in the same proverb, is the most common. So, it can be considered as a morphological technique that distinguishes exaggeration expressions.

C. As for the use of word formation processes in the English language, such as reduplication or affixation, it is the least common in proverbs that are characterized by exaggeration in the English language. Thus, they can be considered as rarely used methods of expressing exaggeration.

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