

Reinforcement by Repetition in English and Arabic

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1. Introduction

Reinforcement is defined as a linguistic feature whereby some item is reitrated for purposes of emphasis, thematic arrangement, or focus. The simplest form of this feature is the repetition of a word or a phrase for emphasis or clarity (Quirk et al., 1972: 970). In fact, repetition is an outstanding structural feature which is common to all languages of the world (Anees, 1970: 14-15). Although it is disapproved in essays and elsewhere and looked upon by some linguists as tiresome or irritable, it is a standard and indeed a valuable part of informal conversation. Furthermore, it can be very effective in giving emphasis when it is properly used. Repeated items or repeated syntactic units are packed with colour and they contain significant ideas (cf. Berry: 1961: 130; Crystal et al., 1969: 113-202).

Repetition is extremely common in poetic language and in prose writing. As regards poetry, every repeated word is a tissue of the poet's human impulses. It conceals a feeling which has a fascination for him; that is, the condition the poet has in mind is

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conveyed through the use of repetition. Put differently, the use of this phenomenon reflects specific mental or spiritual processes or experiences. When a poet repeats certain words, phrases, or lines, he addresses people frankly or directly with certain thoughts, joys, griefs, complexities, or disappointments. People may not merely share the poet's feelings, but may relate these feelings to themselves. Real poetry is not merely a moral test for someone who composes verse; it is also a test for the one who reads it (cf. Ford, 1955: II, 185).

The phenomenon of repetition is very influential in poetry. The repetition of poetic symbols and the general handling of language mould the imaginative structure as much as character and action (Ford, 1955: II, 103). Also, the repetition of certain terms may be an excellent touch in a poem; that is, when it combines with features such as internal riming, antithesis, and the like, it makes the poem delightful reading (Richards, 1929: 56). It can be added that some poets have found conventional rhyme schemes and conventional poetic meter too restricting; therefore, they used devices such as repetition and parallel phrasing in their free verse to replace meter and rhyme. The effects are none the less musical (Allen et al., 1975, VI, 178).

The repetition of a sound in initial position of different words is quite effective in poetry. Such a phenomenon is known as

“alliteration”; it can echo and reinforce certain emotions and impart great intensity to lines. There is another poetical phenomenon known as “assonance”. It implies the repetition of vowel sounds. It is also more subtle in its effects and it is an additional means of distributing emphasis or reinforcement (Altenbernd et al., 1966: 33-34).

As regards prose writing, when a prose writer uses repetition, he gives clear and ample notice of his intention. He portrays a picture which reveals some of the main aspects of his personality or he gives dignity or passion to the objects or characters that he presents. He wants to convince us that the atmosphere which he has created is real and hence repetition adds prettiness and vividness to reality.

Repetition is also looked upon as a device of rhetoric. Rhetoricians use carefully chosen patterns of repetition to adorn their discourses, to produce a distinctive mark of literary art, and to draw attention to specific important concepts. They also intend to enhance meaning and to maintain aesthetic principles (Brewer, 1984: 118-151).

Orators repeat words, phrases or sentences to direct their bearers’ attention upon some state of affairs, to present to them some items for consideration and to excite in them some thoughts about those items. Also, a speech is a part of the orator’s life and its

interest lies in its revelation of his character. When he uses repetition, he intends to persuade his listeners of the merits of his case, to ensure that his material is readily understood, to make his speech comprehensible to introduce his personal attitude or to emphasize the justice of his cause. In short, repetition in the oratorical field is helpful in touching the audience and moving them (Roe, 1949: 7-17).

Repetition can be described as constant and inescapable in legal language which is a form of language that must behave in conformity with the body of rules-the law. It is used in this field of language to reinforce the clarity of meaning; Lawyers who are always cautious, ingenious, conservative, and self-aware have recourse to repetition in order to avoid ambiguity, to evade possibilities of misinterpretation and to conform to the linguistic dictates of the law. They always ask the draftsmen who compose the legal documents to take the greatest pains to ensure that the documents say exactly what they want to say and at the same time give no room for vagueness because such a characteristic is quite intolerable in legal contexts. Also, the legal draftsmen do their best to make absolutely clear who or what is being referred to by repeating the noun phrases in question rather than allowing in pronouns with their hint of vagueness; that is, they stick to repetition and avoid using referential pronouns which they use

could raise genuine confusion and ambiguity (Crystal et al., 1969: 140).

It is important to observe that repetition plays an important role in reinforcing the process of cohesion in a text; that is, cohesion can be achieved through the repetitions of the same lexical items. A word that is in some way associated with another word in the preceding parts of a text, because it is a direct repetition of it, coheres with that word and so contributes to the linguistic texture (Halliday et al., 1976: 284-319).

2. The Purpose of the Study

This study is an attempt to discuss the use of repetition as a reinforcing element in English and Arabic. It concentrates on the phenomenon from stylistic and syntactic points of view, and it aims at pointing out areas of similarity and difference between the two languages.

3. Reinforcement by Repetition in English

The users of English make use of repetition to a large extent because words or statement grow in meaning and force when they are repeated, the mere repetition is somehow impressive for it implies a degree of intensity and it reflects the activity of the mind as well as of the heart. It follows that the use of this phenomenon reinforces the existence of personal conviction or certain characteristics:

1) “I agree with every word you have said-every single word”.

“It’s far, far too expensive”. (Quirk et al., 1972: 970).

This linguistic feature is commonly used in oratorical speeches. Orators, when describing affairs of serious national concern or when rousing the audience’s passion, use too much repetition:

2) “Popular sovereignty! Everlasting popular sovereignty! Let us for a moment inquire into this vast matter of popular sovereignty. What is popular sovereignty?” (Roe, 1949: 77).

Repetition is also used in English by legal draftsmen for reinforcing the clarity and the intelligibility of legal contexts. These draftsmen are to ensure that what they say will be found to mean precisely what they intend, lawyers adopt mathematical arrangement of words in addition to repetition in order to get rid of any obscurity when using language legally. Here is a legal example which shows the excessive repetition of some words or phrases:

3) “Separate departments in the same premises are treated as separate premises for this purpose where separate branches of work which are commonly carried on as separate businesses in separate premises carried on in separate departments in the same premises”. (Gowers, 1948: 23-107).

It is to be noted that repetition in English plays an important role in corroborating the process of cohesion in a text for it is an

essential means of linking one sentence to another-a means of building up coherent sequences in which the units themselves are sentences:

- 4) "I turned to the ascent of the peak. The ascent is perfectly easy".
(Halliday et al., 1976: 279).

Repetition is also used in English to reinforce the expression of a prayer or a wish:

- 5) "O lord, O Lord, O Lord, O Lord, O Lord-that I know out books.
Give us, give us, give us, give us- that I know. "Grace that grace
that, grace that, grace that-that I know". (Hardy, 1974: 364)

- 6) "Wll, you must trot off now, old man. and the Lord help us, the
Lord help us all". (Forster, 1924: 129).

It is important to observe that repetition is widely used in English by poets and prose writers as a means to the expression of feelings, personal attitudes or situations, and the special condition of the time. These people usually strive after effects through the use of repetition for stating certain truths in repeated words, phrases or sentences so aptly chosen and so forcible that the readers or hearers feel as if these truths would have been conveyed in no other means. In the following lines the repetition of the words "despair" shows that the poet is obsessed by the idea of despair:

7) “So be beginning, be beginning to despair. O there’s none; no no no there’s none: Be beinning to despair, to despair, despair, despair, despair, despair”. (Trilling, 1967: 100).

In prose writing and in conversational situations, any sentence or statement looked upon as important can be repeated for reinforcing purposes; that is, a declarative statement or sentence is repeated when it expresses a certain opinion or when it is a statement of which contradiction is expected. Thus, for example, it is possible to repeat a declarative sentence containing subject, verb, and complement:

8) “It is different, it is different; you don’t understand”. (Forster, 1924: 32).

9) “She is better, Mr. Morrel, she is better”. (Lawrence, 1913: 484).

The subject can be emphasized in such sentences:

10) “I-I am glad of that”. (Dickens, 1971: 680).

The complement which usually occupies a final position which is a position of prominence can be repeated:

11) “ you are weak, weak, weak”. (Forster, 1924: 211).

Sometimes it is possible to emphasize both the subject and the verb:

12) “It is, it is almost unbearable”. (Lawrence, 1913:333)

Also, a declarative sentence consisting of a subject and an intransitive verb or subject, verb and object can be repeated:

13) “He comes, he comes, he comes. I cringe. I tremble”. (Forster, 1924: 239).

14) “I beat her; I beat her yesterday and many times before”. (Dickens: 1972, 108).

15) “We know you, Mr. Pickwick, we know you”. (Dickens, 1972: 585).

The subject can be reinforced by repetition in such sentences:

16) ”I, I remember it very well indeed”. (Dickens, 1978: 689).

Also, a subject and an auxiliary can be repeated:

17) “I’ll, I’ll, I’ll ruin him”. (Dickens, 1972: 206).

It is to be noted that if an ordinary verb is repeated in any declarative sentence it is the meaning of the verb that is being stressed:

18) “The car clattered and clattered down the street”. (Berry, 1961: 129-130).

19) “Two subjects I forbid-must forbid”. (Dickens, 1971: 676).

The last example contains two emphatic ways: the placement of the object in initial position and the repetition of the main verb. The repetition of the object is possible in English:

20) “Even Father Rank may for once find the word, the right word”. (Greene, 1948: 220).

English also permits the repetition of an adverb or a prepositional phrase. An intensifying effect can be achieved by repeating an adverb:

21) “It is very, very good”. (Quirk et al., 1973: 132).

22) “She is very, very fair-minded”. (Forster, 1924: 34).

23) “I am going to go away, right right away”. (Forster, 1948: 250).

A prepositional phrase can be repeated for emphatic purposes:

24) “It is for me-for me”. (Twain, 1971: 158).

It is to be noted that English permits the repetition of the prepositional object alone:

25) “I go for sleep, small, small sleep”. (Greene, 1948: 234).

26) “She scoffed at love-love-love”. (Forster, 1924: 200).

However, negation and negative elements can be reinforced by repetition:

27) “I don’t know-I don’t know”, murmured Retty Priddle (Hardy, 1978: 264).

28) “We can’t coordinate, we can’t corrdiante, it only comes to that”. (Forster, 1924: 109).

29) “Mr. C’s address is not a hundred miles from here, Sir, Mr. C’s address is not a hundred miles from here”. (Dickens, 1971:746).

30) “She won’t accept- won’t accept the letter as final” (Hardy, 1974: 360).

The repetition of negative element for emphatic purposes can be looked upon as a way of giving emotive intensification:

31) “I’ll never, never go there again”. (Quirk et al., 1973: 185).

Interrogation and interrogative particles can be stressed by repetition:

32) “Can you deny it, I ask, can you deny it?” (Hardy, 1974: 261)

“What-what do you mean?” (Forster, 1924: 308).

33) “Where, where is my uncle?” (Austen, 1924: 245).

Imperative verbs and sentences can be emphasized:

34) “Fly, fly”, (Twain, 1971: 362).

35) “Give it to me, she said, give it to me”. (Faulkner, 1931: 90).

36) “Ask her, ask her yourself, my dear boy. (Forster, 1924: 131).

Negative imperatives are widely used in English, and their repetition for purposes of reinforcement is quite possible:

37) “Don’t touch me, don’t touch me”. (Faulkner, 1931: 104).

38) “Don’t leave me, don’t leave me, old fellow”. (Dickens, 1972: 108).

Exclamatory elements can be emphasized by repetition:

39) “How little did I think of this here joyful meeting when I saw him last! Oh, how little did I think of it!” (Dickens, 1978: 679).

The vocative can be stressed by repetition:

40) “Aziz, Aziz, my dear boy, we must be going” (Forster, 1924: 104).

Formulae which are used for stereotyped communicative situations can be reinforced by the use of repetition. Most of them are either grammatically defective, or grammatically irregular. Some of these formulae indicate alarm calls, greetings, thanks, and the like (Trilling, 1967: 70):

41) "Who is it? Help, help, help!" (Dickens, 1974: 360).

42) "Well, good night, good night, it's time to go to sleep". (Forster: 1924: 252).

4. Reinforcement by Repetition in Arabic

The users of Arabic recognize two types of repetition: useless and useful (Ibn al-Atheer, 1962: III, 4). The former is a type of verbosity which is a defect or a malady, whereas the latter is commonly noticeable as a poetical, rhetorical or syntactic phenomenon. It is used to give force to meaning and it implies high expressivity (Ali, 195: 1014). However, in poetry repetition is psychologically valuable because it is considered to be a key to the understanding of the poem and the poet's personality; it throws light on specific points and it achieves moral and psychological connection within the parts of the poem. It reinforces movement and continuity, and it gives a feeling of surprise to the reader or hearer. Also, the repeated words or phrases are chosen on the basis of creating particular music and this choice is helpful in building up

the poetical image and balance within the lines of the poem (al-Mal-a'ika, 1962:228-257).

Repetition is also used in oratorical speeches for persuading others to agree to the orators' purposes or objectives, or for securing their attention (al-Hashimi, 1960: 40).

This linguistic feature is used in Arabic to emphasize purposes such as praising, threatening, exaggeration, and the like:

"The brave, the brave are those who defend their homelands"⁽¹⁾ "الشجعان الشجعان، اولئك المدافعون عن أوطانهم"⁽¹⁾

"Nay, they will soon know; nay they will soon know"⁽²⁾ "كلا سيعلمون، ثم كلا سيعلمون"⁽²⁾ (Sharaf, 1973: 284).

Also, a word or a phrase whose mentioning causes pleasant feelings is usually repeated by the users of Arabic:

"Health, health! It is the genuine, the genuine happiness"⁽³⁾ "الصحة الصحة!، هي السعادة الحقّة الحقّة"⁽³⁾ (Hasan, 1966, III, 509).

It is to be noted that repetition plays an important part in reinforcing the process of cohesion in a text; that is, the repetition of several words makes the text cohesive, forceful, expressive, and meaningful:

إقرأ باسم ربك الذي خلق. خلق الإنسان من علق. إقرأ وربك الأكرم الذي علم بالقلم. علم الإنسان ما لم يعلم"⁽⁴⁾

“Read in the name of thy Lord who creates-Creates man from a clot. Read and thy Lord is the most Generous. Who taught by the pen. Taught man what he knew not”. (The Holy Qoran, 96: 1-5, translated by Ali, 1951: 1191-1192).

Oaths and imprecation can be reinforced by repetition:

“By Allah I shall support the wronged person, by Allah I shall support the wronged person”⁽⁵⁾. (cf. al-Ashmuni, 1946: IV, 384).

“Allah’s curse is on the slanderer, Allah’s curse is on the slanderer, Allah’s curse is on the slanderer”⁽⁶⁾.

“But may he be destroyed how he determined. Again may he be destroyed how he determined”⁽⁷⁾. (cf. Ali, 1951: 1117; Ibn al-Atheer, 1962: III,9).

In fact, declarative sentences or statements can be reinforced by repetition. However, Arabic has two types of sentence: verbal and nominal. A sentence containing a verb, subject, and object can be repeated:

(8) "عاقب الحاكم اللصوص، عاقب الحاكم اللصوص" "The magistrate punished the thieves, the magistrate punished the thieves".

(9) "ضربت زيداً، ضربت زيداً" "I hit Zeid, I hit Zeid". (al-Ashmuni, 1946: IV, 384). Only the verb should be repeated when it is to be emphasized; that is, the repetition of the subject is not permissible in such a case:

(10) "يفعل يفعل صديقي الخير" "My friend does, does good" (cf. Hasan, 1966: III, 514).

It is important to observe that Arabic has specific ways of emphasizing words or phrases which are syntactically regarded as objects. An object can be repeated for reinforcement, especially when a person is urged to be tenacious of something:

(11) "الاجتهاد الاجتهاد" "Diligence, diligence". The first word "الاجتهاد diligence" is considered to be an object, while the second one is mentioned for reinforcing the first one; hence the verb and the subject are obligatorily omitted. (cf. al-Ghalayeen, 1956: III, 15; Hasan, 1966: IV, 124).

Also, an object can be repeated when it implies warning or when it is repeated to attract a person's attention and to give notice of possible danger or unpleasant consequences:

(12) "الضيغم، الضيغم" "The Lion! The Lion!". (Ibn Aqeel, 1965: II, 299-300).

(13) "الكذب، الكذب" "(Avoid) telling lies, (avoid) telling lies". (al-Ghalayeeni, 1965: III, 13-14).

Sentences containing a subject and an intransitive verb can be repeated for emphatic purposes:

(14) "جاء علي، جاء علي" "Ali came, Ali came". (al-Ghalayeeni, 1956: III, 232).

The verb can be repeated in such sentences:

(15) "جاء جاء علي" "Ali came, came". (al-Ghalayeeni, 1956: III, 232).

(16) "تتحرك تتحرك الاجرام السماوية" "The heavenly bodies move, move" (Hasan, III, 558).

It is possible to repeat only the subject in such sentences:

(17) "جاء زيد زيد" "Zeid, Zeid came". (al-Ashmuni, 1946: IV, 372).

A declarative nominal sentence or statement can be emphasized by repetition. By a nominal sentence is here meant a sentence which consists of a subject and a predicate-a sentence which has no verb:

(18) "علي مجتهد، علي مجتهد" "Ali is diligent, Ali is diligent". (al-Ghalayeeni, 1956: III, 232).

(19) " الحساب عسير، الحساب عسير" "The reckoning is difficult, the reckoning is difficult". (Hasan, 1966: III, 519).

The subject can be stressed by repetition:

(20) " الارض الارض كالحصاة الصغيرة" "The earth, the earth is like a small pebble". (Hasan, 1966: III, 509).

Also, the predicate can be stressed:

(21) " نكاحها باطل باطل باطل" "Her marriage is void, void, void". (al-Ashmuni, 1946: IV, 372).

The repetition of a prepositional phrase is permissible in Arabic:

(22) " مررت بك بك" "I passed by you, by you".

(23) " في الدار في الدار زيد" "Zeid is in the house, in the house". (Wright, 1971: II, 282).

Imperative verbs can be reinforced by repetition:

(24) " اسرع اسرع" "Hurry up, hurry up". (Ibn al-Atheer, 1962: III,

3). Negative imperatives can be reinforced:

(25) " لا تقتله، لا تقتله" "Don't kill him, don't kill him".

(26) " لا تسافر، ثم لا تسافر" "Don't travel; again, don't travel". (cf. Sharaf, 1973: 284).

Negation and negative elements can be emphasized:

"I shall not give permission; again, I shall not give permission; permission; again, I shall not give". (Ibn al-Atheer, 1962: III, 10).⁽²⁷⁾

"No, no; the hypocrite is not a friend". (Hasan, 1966: III, 514-515).⁽²⁸⁾

It is possible to reinforce interrogation by repetition:

"وما ادراك ما يوم الدين؟ ثم ما ادراك ما يوم الدين؟"⁽²⁹⁾ "And what will make you realize what the day of Judgement is? Again, what will make you realize what the Day of Judgement is?" (Ali, 1951: 1153).

The vocative may be repeated for emphatic purposes:

"يا سعد سعد الاوس"⁽³⁰⁾ "O sa'd, Sa'd of al-Aws". (Ibn Aqeel, 1965: II, 270-273).

Arabic permits the repetition of different types of particle for stressing meaning. For example, emphatic particles such as "ان verily" can be repeated. When a word is governed by an emphatic particle, both must be repeated:

"ان زيداً ان زيداً فاضل"⁽³¹⁾ "verily Zeid, verily Zeid is virtuous". (al-Ashmuni, 1946: IV, 384).

The coordinate particle "ثم" is frequently used in repetition to achieve an emphatic effect:

" كثور الطاحون على عينيه غطاء يدور ثم يدور ثم يدور وهو يحسب ان"⁽³²⁾
 "As a miller's ox; blind-folded, turns and turns thinking that"
 (Cantarino, 1974: III, 37).

Exceptive particles such as "الا" can be emphasized:

" جاء القوم إلا هارون إلا الرشيد"⁽³³⁾ "People came except Harun, except al-Rashid". (Hassan, 1966: II, 312).

" ما جاء إلا صديقك إلا خالد"⁽³⁴⁾ "None came except your friend, except Khalid".

Hence the second "الا" is redundant; it is used only for strengthening the first one (al-Ghalayeeni, 1956: III, 131-132).

5. Conclusions

The study examines the use of repetition as a reinforcing element in English and Arabic. In both languages, repetition fulfils a strongly emphatic function. Through the use of this phenomenon one often comes across an idea which doubtless serves as a guideline in creative work and a rule of life for the author or the artist; that is, words, phrases, or sentences lose none of their force from much repetition, mainly because behind them there is always the author or the artist.

Repetition is regarded as a means of achieving greater elegance of expression in both languages; it is an element which contributes to an effective style and it has a cohesive effect in a text

in English and Arabic. It also reinforces clarity in legal contexts and it reflects passion, persuasion, and determination in oratorical speeches.

Repetition as a reinforcing element is widely made use of in English from the syntactic point of view, while in Arabic it mostly occurs at sentence level. Hence it is to be noted that a simple declarative sentence in Arabic is often repeated by using the conjunctive particle "ثم".

In a simple declarative sentence in English it is possible to repeat the subject, both the subject and the verb, or the object, while the repetition of the verb only in such a sentence is rarely found; the verb can be normally repeated by using the coordinate particle "and". In Arabic it is quite normal to repeat the verb without using a coordinate particle. If a word is governed by a preposition in English, both can be repeated, or only the prepositional object can be repeated. If a word is governed by a preposition in Arabic, both must be repeated.

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ملخص

التكرار كوسيلة توكيدية في الإنكليزية والعربية

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تسعى هذه الدراسة إلى معالجة ظاهرة التكرار كوسيلة من وسائل التوكيد أو تعزيز الكلام في اللغتين الإنكليزية والعربية، حيث يكثر استخدام هذه الظاهرة في مختلف ميادين الحياة فكثيراً ما يلجأ الكتاب والشعراء والخطباء ورجال العلم والقانون والسياسة والدين وغيرهم إلى هذه الظاهرة لإثارة العامل النفسي أو إثارة اهتمام القارئ أو السامع على حد سواء. كما تتطرق الدراسة إلى إمكانية وجود هذه الظاهرة في مختلف التراكيب النحوية في اللغتين الإنكليزية والعربية، حيث يتبين من خلال عرض هذه التراكيب أوجه الشبه والاختلاف بين اللغتين.

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