A Phono-stylistic Analysis of Forgiveness in New Testament Texts

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Abstract:

The present study is a stylistic investigation that aims to examine and discuss the stylistic devices—primarily at the phonological level—employed in texts of forgiveness found in the New Testament. The research also seeks to identify the most and least prominent phonological features used within these selected passages.

To achieve this, both qualitative and quantitative research designs were adopted. The study draws upon Leech and Short's stylistic framework (2007), focusing specifically on the phonological level and its associated devices. The analysis is conducted through the description of selected data and the identification of key stylistic tools based on frequency and functional prominence in the texts.

Additionally, statistical results are used to reinforce the findings and support the conclusions derived from the analysis. These findings aim to provide deeper insights into the stylistic patterns that underscore the expression of forgiveness in the New Testament.

Keywords: stylistics , phonological stylistic devices , New Testament texts , forgiveness.

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تحليل صوتي أسلوبي للتسامح في نصوص العهد الجديد(*)

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الملخص :

البحث الحالي هو دراسة اسلوبية تهدف الى دراسة ومناقشة الأدوات الاسلوبية التي استخدمت في الغالب على مستوى علم الصوت في نصوص التسامح في العهد الجديد .كما تهدف الى الوقوف عند اقصى وادنى الأدوات الصوتية في النصوص المذكورة . تم اعتماد تصميم البحث النوعي والكمي لهذا الغرض. وقد استفادت الدراسة من الاطار الاسلوبي لـ Leech and Short's stylistic framework (2007) ، وخاصة المستوى الصوتي وادواتة المرتبطة به. ويتم التحليل من خلال وصف البيانات المختارة وتحديد الأدوات البارزة المستخدمة في تلك النصوص من خلال النوع الأكثر استخداما. فضلا عن ذلك ، يتم استخدام النتائج الإحصائية لدعم النتائج والخروج بالاستنتاجات ذات الصلة.

الكلمات المفتاحية : الاسلوبية ، الأدوات الاسلوبية الصوتية ، نصوص العهد الجديد ، التسامح .

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1. Introduction

The New Testament languages include any of the languages used in the New Testament's original or translated. The New Testament languages are researched more widely than many other extinct languages, in part because of the Bible's rich style. Most contemporary academics agree that the New Testament is composed in Greek, with some of its books, particularly the gospels, derived from an Aramaic source language (Metzger, 1989:75).

Tolerance is a core-tenet in monotheistic religions. Thus, it is one of the themes presented in the New Testament. It reflects empathy and forgiveness among people. Its language is of high style. It is distinctive and dynamic with special stylistic devices, features, and effects. Its creativity catches the attention of the listeners and/or readers to come in contact with the image that its texts depict. It involves a rigorous analysis and synthesis that examines how a special configuration of language is used in the presentation of tolerance. Such study is necessary for comprehending and interpreting the New Testament texts of tolerance (Sweat, 2022:3-5).

In these sacred texts, tolerance is presented in such a logical way that can be described as expressive, influential, and true at all times. These tolerance texts are replete with various phonological stylistic devices. Such devices include alliteration, consonance, assonance, and rhyme. These devices coalesce to create pleasant and creative effects. They provide rich imagination and plentiful associations for the receivers to persuade, stimulate, and arouse their desires and awareness.

2. The Concept of Tolerance

Tolerance means "to endure". It can generally be seen as the acceptance of something that one does not like or agree with, such as an action, a concept, an item, or a person. According to the political scientist Andrew R. Murphy, "People may enhance their understanding by defining "toleration" as a set of social or political practices and "tolerance" as a set of attitudes" (Murphy, 1997: 593). Tolerance is also described as a fair, objective, and permissive attitude towards those whose opinions, beliefs, practices, racial or ethnic origins, differ from one's own (Dalgish, 1997:782).

According to van Doorn (2014: 2) the idea of alterity, or the condition of being different, is essential to tolerance, in addition to the various options on how to deal with the "other". Tolerance is, therefore, sometimes "a flawed virtue", since it involves accepting things that are better avoided. That is why, tolerance cannot be seen as a universal good, and many of its purposes and applications are still debatable.

Barowski (2021:4) shows that tolerance is a fair and impartial attitude towards other people, and it typically requires intentional effort on the part of the person. It is the capacity to experience and put up with something which is different or divisive without expressing disapproval.

3. The Reasons behind Tolerance

According to Atif (2010:1), tolerance is not just a mindset; rather, it is a crucial component of a community or nation's ability to maintain peace, unity, and economic prosperity. It is, he adds, an attitude of acceptance and comprehension. Different communities may now communicate, meet, and interact with one other more easily because of globalisation. Thanks to the heroic efforts of the forefathers and the invention of the internet, the world now enjoys higher levels of tolerance and variety. However, there are still instances of intolerance and discrimination, some of which are out of hand. A nation may gain much from showing tolerance and do so in many different ways.

Hatred grows from intolerance, and intolerance creates distrust, which results in division. Unity is fostered by tolerance, which makes it possible for individuals of all races, faiths, and origins to coexist and work together. Every person in a tolerant nation maintains their loyalty to their nation and is prepared to give up things for it. The passion for the nation is replaced with animosity in nations when particular populations are denied rights and persecuted, which can undermine the state. A nation is sustained by its people, and if there are cracks or other problems with the foundation, the nation is more susceptible to collapsing. The saying "A divided house cannot stand" applies here (Usmani, 2016:2).

Usmani (2016:3) explains that discrimination makes it impossible for there to be peace. As a result of various groups using force and aggressiveness against one another or the state, intolerance breeds internal strife, violence, and instability. Recent events in several nations can show people how destructive intolerance may threaten peace: individuals committing acts of ethnic cleansing, destroying one another's places of worship, or causing civil wars to envelop entire countries. Only when individuals are prepared to put aside their prejudices and accept one another's differences can there be true peace. Generally, because it is essential to establishing peace and love at all levels of society, from the most basic to the most advanced, tolerance is required in all areas of life.

4. Tolerance in the New Testament Texts

Sweat (2022:2) points out that the term " *patience* " used in the New Testament for " *tolerance*" means " *enduring suffering without retaliation*", not merely " *passively waiting* ". Sweat adds that although " tolerance " is typically referred to by other names, it is, frequently, discussed in the New Testament and is unquestionably depicted as a virtue. Instead of using the term "*tolerance*" the

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King James Version of the New Testament uses words like "patience," "forgiveness," "forbearance," "longsuffering," and "compassion." The teaching of the New Testament on tolerance includes the meaning given in the conventional dictionary but extends it beyond then only "putting up" with annoyances. The New Testament tolerance also entails letting go of anger and animosity towards others, being devoted to relationships, and showing real compassion for individuals even when they make ones uncomfortable.

The New Testament encourages tolerance, it says: " *Let your reasonableness become known to all men* " (Philippians 4:15). The New Testament exhorts people to conduct themselves with consideration, courtesy, and fairness towards others. Even if they do not share or embrace another person's ideals, those who follow this guidance allow them to act following their preferences. The New Testament makes clear that The Lord has expectations of how people should behave.

As mentioned by Jehovah's Witnesses (2015:3) the New Testament has several examples of individuals who practiced tolerance. As the ultimate example of this, Jesus Christ patiently dealt with everyone he comes into contact with during his earthly career, earning the nickname "*the friend of sinners*" (Luke 7:31–34 and Matthew 11:19). Jesus Christ lives in a world filled with bigotry throughout his ministry. Particularly, Samaritans and Jews are hostile to one another (see: John 4:9). Jewish clerics also despised the common people (see: John 7:49). Jesus Christ stands out as being remarkably distinct " *This man welcomes sinners and eats with them* ", said his opponents (Luke 15:2). As for he does not come to judge people but to cure them spiritually, Jesus is gentle, patient, and tolerable. His main driving force is love (see: John 3:17 and 13:34).

5. The Concept of Stylistics

Stylistics is a field of applied linguistics that focuses on the analysis of textual style, particularly, but not primarily, in literary works. Stylistics, often known as literary linguistics, is the study of the figures, tropes, and other rhetorical techniques that authors employ to provide diversity and individuality to their work. It combines literary critique with language analysis. Simpson (2004:2) defines stylistics as a method of textual analysis where the language is prioritised. Additionally, Crystal (2008:460) states that stylistics is a branch of linguistics that examines the characteristics of situationally unique uses of language (varieties) and works to develop theories that can explain the specific decisions people and social groupings make when using language

As mentioned by Richards and Schmidt (2010:566) stylistics is the study of how language (or style) varies depending on the context in which it is used and the intended impact that the writer or speaker wants to make on the listener or reader. Although studies of spoken language may occasionally be included, the

term "stylistics" often refers to the study of written language, especially literary writings. The options accessible to writers and the justifications for using particular forms and language are discussed stylistically. Stylistic variation changes in a person's or a group's speech or writing according to the occasion, the subject, the recipients, and the setting that may include different speech sounds, different words or idioms, or various sentence patterns. In summary, the current study defines stylistics as the science that explores how readers interact with the language texts to explain how people understand, and are affected by texts when they read them.

6. The Framework of Analysis

The current study relies on the framework of Leech and Short (2007); merely the phonological level. According to them, in this level, the concern is with the stylistic devices of alliteration, assonance, consonance, and rhyme. These stylistic phonological devices can be illustrated in depth as below:

6.1 Stylistic Devices on Phonological Level

At this level, the words' sound patterns and pronunciation are the main areas of concern. Therefore, the most common stylistic devices that may be seen are as follows:

1. Alliteration

Alliteration means "more letters" in Latin. The most popular definition of it is the repetition of the same initial consonant sound in two or more nearby words, usually when those consonants are a component of a stressed syllable (Cuddon, 1998: 23; Wales, 2011: 14; Abrams and Harpham, 2012: 10-1; among others).

However, Vinafari (2014: 17) expands the definition of alliteration to include the repetition of consonants in stressed syllables, both in initial and middle positions. Consider, for example:

1) *" bind them in bundles to burn ..." [Matthew.13: 43]*

2. Assonance

Consensually, assonance refers to the repetition of the same vowel sound in two or more nearby words or within a line, especially when that vowel is a stressed syllable (Cuddon, 1998: 23 and Abrams and Harpham, 2012: 11).

However, in a somewhat different way, Wales (2011: 35) supports with the same idea. According to him, assonance refers to the repetition of a stressed vowel in a word with a different final consonant. It is, also, known as partial or half rhyme. Through the latter condition, he also suggests that the medial position of the repeated vowel occurs. Vinafari (2014: 20) confirms that

assonance can occur in different word positions, i.e., initially, medially, and finally. Examples of assonance can be seen with short / I / and long / i: /:

2)   *" ...s<u>ee</u>d <u>i</u>n h<u>i</u>s f<u>ie</u>ld..." [Matthew. 13: 24]*

3. Consonance

Consonance can be described as an inverted alliteration or a reverse of assonance. Hence, according to Wales (2011: 82), it is also known as "half rhyme", "end-alliteration", or "consonantal assonance". Being so, he describes it as the repetition of the same last consonant in several nearby syllables. It can be found in such words as:

 3) *again<u>st</u>, al<u>so</u>, tre<u>s</u>pa<u>sses</u>.*

Nonetheless, Cuddon (1998: 176) and Abrams and Harpham (2012: 11) suggest taking a rather different way on consonance. Consonance is defined by Cuddon (1998: 176) as the near repeating of the same consonants both before and after a varied vowel.

4. Rhyme

Rhyme is a sort of phonetic echo usually in verse, more specifically, a phonemic matching (Wales, 2011: 371). According to Abrams and Harpham (2012: 348), rhyme is the repetition of the last stressed vowel and all spoken sounds that follow it.

Harris (2017:127-134) defines rhyme as a repeating sound in the last stressed syllables and any subsequent syllables of two or more words. The definitions above are summarised by Vinafari (2014: 22), who states that two or more words rhyme if they have at least one similar syllable in a similar situation. Words such as these contain it:

3)   *loa<u>d</u>, li<u>d</u>, la<u>d</u>.*

Consequently, the framework of analysis can be represented by the analytical construct figure as follows:
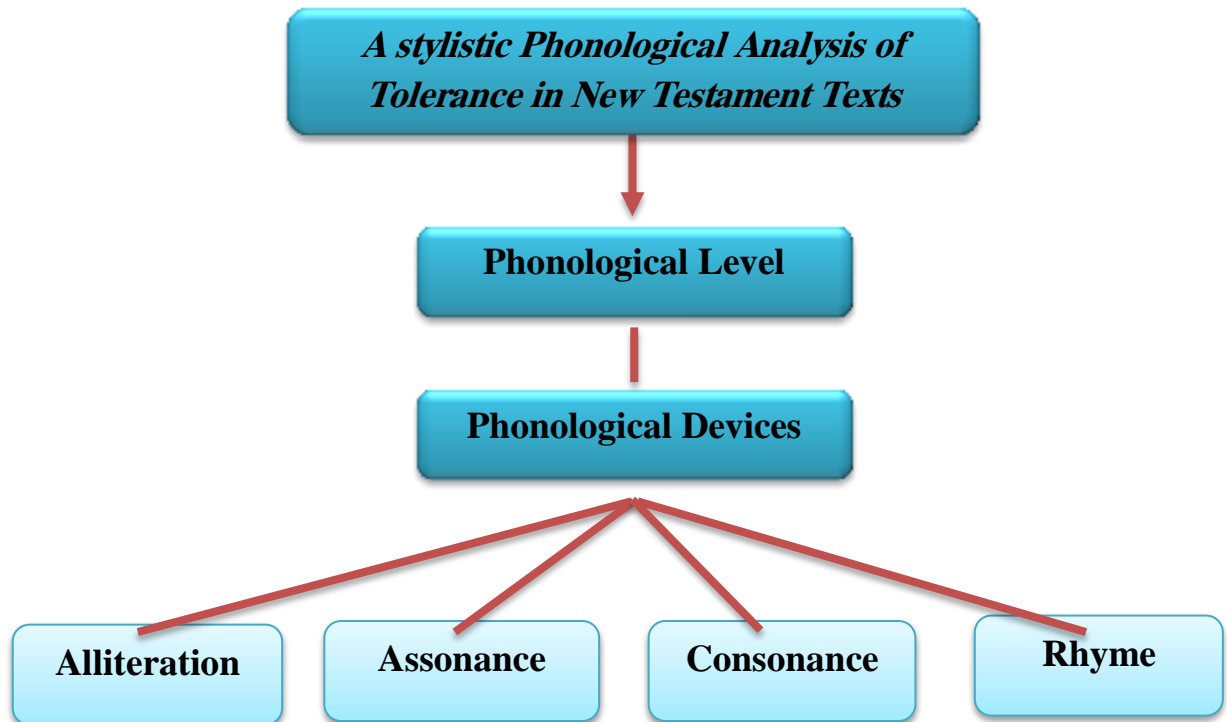
Figure (1) The Framework of Analysis (After Leech & Short: 2007)

7. Data Description

The data to be analysed are four texts from the New Testament. All the four carry a clear meaning of tolerance.

The Analysis :

Text 1.

> *{11:25} And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. {11:26} But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses.*

> *Mark*

This text contains different stylistic devices to persuade people that tolerance and forgiving others is so important. It tells people that it is important, especially in praying to have a tolerant heart which forgive the transgressions of those people who may trouble them to get The Lord forgiveness on their trespasses. By

contrast, be free from tolerance, prevent them from The Lord forgiveness (Houdmann, 2024:1).

Obviously, this text is rich with various stylistic phonological devices. They are used for the purpose of making the text effective in persuading people. For instance, alliteration is chosen in this text with words that start with the sound /f /: _forgive_ (used three times) and _father_ (used two times), three times with the sound / h /: _have_ and _heaven_ (used twice), three times with the sound / w / in: _when_, _will_ and _which_, and finally three times with the sound /j / in: _ye, your,_ and _you_.

Assonance is included, also, in this text. It can be noticed in the repetition of the short /ɪ / vowel sounds in: _forgive_ (used three times)_, if , which_ (used twice) _, is, in_ ,and _will_ , with the / æ / vowel sound in: _stand , have ,_ and _that_ , and with / e / sound in: _when , heaven ,_ and _trespasses_ , as well as with / eɪ / sound in: _praying_ and _may._ Not only this but also consonance can be seen with the repetition of the following consonants, it comes two times with words that have the sound /n / in: _against_ and _any_, also, four times with words that have the / s / sound: _against, also,_ and _trespasses_.

The repetition of the final sounds is an example of rhyme, as a stylistic phonological device in this text. People can easily remember the sentence with similar sounds, and then the writer can convince them of tolerance importance to each other and convince them to follow it in their lives. Rhyme can be found five times with words that end with / t / sound in: _ought, against, that, but,_ and _not_. Also, with words that end with / n / sound in: _heaven, when,_ and _in._ The following table can show the above mentioned devices with their percentages:

Table (1): The Stylistic Phonological Devices, Text 1				
Type	Alliteration	Assonance	Consonance	Rhyme	To.
Freq.	14	17	6	8	45
Per.	31.1%	37.7%	13.3%	17.7%	100%

Text 2.

{6:35} But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and [to] the evil. {6:36} Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful. {6:37} Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven:

Luke

This text counsels people, i.e. Jesus' followers to love their enemies, treat them well, and give to them without asking anything in return. Following this instruction, a great heavenly reward they will get. It shows that the Lord is kind and merciful even to those who are evil and unthankful, and they have to be as well merciful with each other even to those who may be against them as their enemies. Further, it shows that their deeds will be reflected on them. So, in order not to be judged or condemned by the Lord they have not to judge and condemn others, and they have to forgive each other even those who may against them i.e. their enemies. (Houdmann, 2024:2).

Various Phonological devices are employed in this text to engage people in the message of the text and grab their attention Alliteration is used in this text as a stylistic phonological device and represented in the repetition of the / l / sound in two words: *love* and *lend,* the repetition of the sound /g / at the beginning of the two words: *good* and *great*, and finally in the repetition of / h / sound in three words: *hope, highest* and *he*.

Assonance appears also in this text. The repetition of a vowel sound is known as assonance. So, here, assonance is represented in the repetition of the sound / Λ/ in three words: *love, nothing,* and *judge*, the vowel sound / aI / in two words: *kind* and *highest*, and the vowel sound / u / in three words: *good, merciful*, and *thankful*. Also, the repetition of the vowel sound /e / in five words like: *evil, lend, enemies, merciful* and *condemn* are considered as assonance.

The writer uses consonance two times in this text. Consonance comes with the consonant sound / f / in: *merciful* and *unthankful*. Additionally, the writer utilises rhyme as a stylistic phonological device which is represented by the repetition of the final / d / sound in seven words, they are: *good , and , lend , reward, kind , judged ,* and *condemned* . Besides, the final / l / sound is also

repeated in four words which are: *sha**ll**, unthankfu**l**, evi**l**,* and *mercifu**l**.* Using these stylistic devices by the writer implies that such devices can improve communication and convince people effectively. In addition, the repetition of sound is considered a phonological parallelism device. The following table can reflect the above- mentioned devices with their percentages clearly:

Table (2): The Stylistic Phonological Devices, Text 2					
Type	Alliteration	Assonance	Consonance	Rhyme	To.
Freq.	7	13	2	11	33
Pre.	21.2%	39.3 %	6 %	33.3	100%

Text 3.

{4:29} Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers. {4:30} And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. {4:31} Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: {4:32} And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

Ephesians

These verses urge people to leave a side sour words and evil speaking that may come out of people when be in a bitterness, wrath or angry. In such states, they have to control themselves to be accepted by the Lord in the redemption day. Moreover, these verses also recommend people to be tolerant, tender hearted, and kind to each other in away similar to that granted to them by the Lord for the sake of the Christ (Houdmann, 2024:1). Worth to mention, the writer employs different phonological stylistic devices to impact, influence and invoke people's attention.

Alliteration is a stylistic phonological device employed in this text, where a group of words begins with the same sound. So, the repetition of / k / sound in these five words: *corrupt, communication , clamour , kind* and *Christ*, the / g /

sound in these four words: *good , grace , God ,* and *grieve*, and so the repetition of / s / sound in these four words: *spirit, sealed, speaking* and *sake* , as well as the repetition of / m / sound in these four words as *mouth , may, minister* and *malice*, are all examples of alliteration in this text.

Further, this text contains assonance to attract people's attention and create an engaging message that they will remember for a long time. It is typically noticed with / eI / sound in six words, they are: *may, grace, communication , day , away* and *sake* , the repetition of / i: / sound in five words: *proceed , grieve , sealed , evil ,* and *speaking ,* and with the / aU / sound in two words: *out* and *mouth* . Also, the writer uses assonance with the repetition of / I / sound in fifteen words: *communication, which, is, it, edifying, minister, spirit, holy, redemption, bitterness, with, malice, forgiving, be* and *Christ* .

Additionally, the writer chooses consonance as another stylistic phonological device to be presented in this text. So, consonance can be seen in the repetition of / r / sound with eight word: *corrupt, proceed, grace, hearers, grieve, spirit, whereby,* and *Christ,* and the repetition of / t / sound in three words: *minister, unto,* and *bitterness.*

In these New Testament verses, the writer also uses rhyme. The repetition of the final /d / sound in five words: *proceed , good , and , sealed ,* and *kind ,* the repetition of the final / t / sound in seven words: *let , corrupt , but , that , it , spirit ,* and *put ,* and the repetition of / ɵ / sound in three words: *mouth , wrath* and *hath .* All of these devices are used to convey a message to people to live one whole life in an answer to Lord's call while preserving unity in the Spirit; this is a common calling to all believers, regardless of their status or ability. The following table explains the included phonological devices with their percentages:

Table (3): The Stylistic Phonological Devices, Text 3				
Type	Alliteration	Assonance	Consonance	Rhyme	To.
Freq.	17	28	11	15	71
Pre.	23.9 %	39.4 %	15.4 %	21.1%	100%

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Text 4.

{3:12} Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind , meekness, longsuffering; {3:13} Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also [do] ye. {3:14} And above all these things [put on] charity, which is the bond of perfectness. {3:15} And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.

Colossian

Several phonological stylistic devices appear in this text to attract and persuade people to pay attention to the text, take action, and be tolerant. Paul, who is one of the leaders of the first generation of Christians and the writer of these verses, advises his readers in this text to dress in humility, gentleness, compassion, kindness, and patience since they are preferred and beloved by the Lord. Besides, they should be patient with one another and forgive whatever faults they may have against one another. They have to be like in this regard as the Lord pardoned them. Charity is placed above all these values that only through it and tolerance peace can perfectly unites them all as members of one body. They need to allow the Lord peace and instructions to prevail in their hearts, and be gratitude at all time for that (Houdmann, 2024:2-3).

As mentioned before, alliteration is the practice of using the same sound repeatedly to support a point and emphasize a certain theme in writing. So, the repetition of / b / sound at the beginning of five words: _beloved, bowels, bond, body,_ and _be_, the repetition of / f / sound in three words: _forbearing, forgiving,_ and _forgave_, and the repetition of / m / sound in four words: _mercies, mind, meekness_, and _man_ are all good examples of alliteration. Similarly, other alliteration examples can be seen in the repetition of / k / sound in four words: _kindness, quarrel, Christ_, and _called_, and the / p / sound in three words: _put on, perfectness,_ and _peace_, as well as the / h / sound in four words: _holy, humbleness, have,_ and _hearts_.

Assonance comes with the repetition of the vowel sound / e / in these three words: _elect, quarrel_, and _perfectness,_ and the vowel sound / Λ / in five words: _beloved, humbleness, another, one,_ and _above_. Also, the repetition of vowel

sound / I / in these eleven words: *holy, mercies, if , any , which , is , things , Christ , charity, in ,* and *body* , and with the repetition of the vowel sound / ɒ / in these five words: *put on , God , longsuffering , body ,* and *bond* are examples of assonance , this is on one hand.

On the other hand, consonance comes with the repetition of three different sounds in this text. It comes, first, with the repetition of / t / sound in three words: *charity, perfectness,* and *hearts.* Secondly, with / l / sound in seven words: *elect, holy, beloved, bowels, humbleness, also* and *called.* Thirdly, consonance in this text, also comes with the repetition of / n / sound in eleven words: *and, kindness, humbleness , mind, meekness , longsuffering , one , another , only , against , bond,* and *thankful.*

Additionally, the writer uses rhyme in this text. It can be noticed with the repetition of / s / sound in six words: *kindness, humbleness, meekness, perfectness, peace* and *hearts* , the repetition of / t / sound in five words: *put , elect , let , against,* and *Christ* , and with the repetition of / d / sound in six words: *God , and , beloved, mind , bond ,* and *called.* The devices listed above can be seen in the following table:

Table (4): The Stylistic Phonological Devices, Text 4				
Type	Alliteration	Assonance	Consonance	Rhyme	To.
Freq.	23	24	22	17	86
Pre.	26.7 %	27.9%	25.5 %	19.7 %	100%

8. Statistical Analysis

The statistical analysis shows that the stylistic phonological devices are used for (235) in the New Testament texts of tolerance. Assonance occupies (34.2 %) of stylistic phonological devices in tolerance texts. It comes with such a high percentage to ensure the importance of unobstructed breath, represented by the repeated vowels, in expanding people's imagination while thinking of tolerance for good consequences. Further, the stylistic phonological device of alliteration form is (26.9 %). It stresses the importance of tolerance with the repetition of its initial sound. Those of rhyme (21.6 %) create such smooth music to attract people's attention to follow tolerance in their lives. Meanwhile, consonance scores (17.1 %) as the lowest device to increase the smoothness of the texts. Table (7) shows the stylistic phonological devices in the New Testament texts of tolerance.

Table 5. The Overall Statistical Analysis

Stylistic Devices	Uses	Frequency
Alliteration	61	25.9 %
Assonance	82	34.8 %
Consonance	41	17.4 %
Rhyme	51	21.7 %

9.Conclusions

The findings of the stylistic and statistical analyses verify the aims set by this paper. Precisely, tolerance in the New Testament texts utilises different stylistic phonological devices to achieve their functions. These include such devices as alliteration, assonance, consonance, and rhyme. Tolerance texts are rich with not only one form of stylistic phonological devices but rather different forms of them. The statistical analysis have shown that the highest percentage (34.8 %) is that of assonance, whereas the next heights percentage is that of alliteration to be followed by rhyme and consonance respectively. This indicates that people can easily remember the sentence with similar sounds, and then the writer can convince them of tolerance importance to each other and convince them to follow it in their lives. Moreover, the writer uses such phonological devices to grab people's attention and urge them to be tolerant and merciful.

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