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STYLISTIC FEATURES OF TONGUE TWISTERS RELATED TO THE FLORA AND FAUNA

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Abstract
This article examines the stylistic features of English tongue twisters related to the conceptual spheres of flora and fauna. Tongue twisters represent a specific type of folklore and verbal art in which phonetic repetition, lexical selection, imagery, rhythm, and expressive devices are closely interconnected. The study focuses on such stylistic devices as alliteration, assonance, consonance, repetition, rhyme, parallelism, metaphor, personification, hyperbole, sound symbolism, and humorous imagery. Particular attention is given to the stylistic function of names of animals, birds, insects, trees, flowers, fruits, and other natural phenomena. The analysis demonstrates that flora- and fauna-related lexical units do not merely identify objects of nature but also contribute to expressiveness, memorability, imagery, emotional colouring, and comic effect. It is concluded that tongue twisters belonging to the flora-fauna conceptual sphere constitute an important linguistic and stylistic resource reflecting the interaction between sound, meaning, imagery, and cultural experience.

Keywords: Tongue twister, stylistics, flora, fauna, stylistic device, alliteration, repetition, imagery, personification, sound symbolism, expressiveness.

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Introduction

Tongue twisters occupy a distinctive position in language because they combine phonetic complexity with stylistic expressiveness. Traditionally, tongue twisters are regarded as short verbal constructions designed to be difficult to pronounce rapidly and correctly. However, their linguistic significance is not limited to pronunciation practice. From the stylistic point of view, tongue twisters represent carefully organized verbal structures in which sounds, words, rhythm, imagery, and meaning function together.

A considerable number of English tongue twisters contain lexical units associated with the natural world. Names of animals, birds, insects, plants, flowers, trees, fruits, and other elements of nature frequently serve as central components of these expressions. Such vocabulary belongs to the conceptual fields of **flora** and **fauna**.

The concept of flora comprises lexical units referring to the plant world, including such words as flower, rose, tree, grass, berry, bush, blossom, branch, and wood. The concept of fauna includes names of animals, birds, fish, reptiles, and insects such as cat, dog, fox, frog, fish, snake, snail, bee, beetle, bird, and butterfly.

In tongue twisters, these lexical units perform not only nominative but also important stylistic functions. They participate in the formation of alliteration, rhyme, repetition, humorous situations, personification, metaphorical imagery, and sound symbolism. From a stylistic perspective, tongue twisters can be regarded as expressive language units characterized by

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deliberate sound organization and lexical repetition. Their structure differs considerably from ordinary speech because the choice of words is often determined not only by semantic necessity but also by phonetic similarity. For example: **Six slippery snails slid slowly seaward[1].**

The sentence conveys a relatively simple image, yet it attracts attention because of the unusual concentration of words beginning with /s/ and /sl/. Its stylistic value is therefore based on the interaction between lexical meaning and sound patterning. Another example is: **Busy buzzing bees buzz by bluebells[2].**

The lexical units bees and bluebells represent fauna and flora respectively. At the same time, their combination produces a vivid natural image. The repeated /b/ and /z/ sounds make the expression more memorable, dynamic, and expressive.

Thus, the stylistic character of flora- and fauna-related tongue twisters emerges from the combination of sound organization, figurative imagery, and lexical-semantic associations.

One of the most frequent stylistic devices used in tongue twisters is **alliteration**, which refers to the repetition of identical or similar consonant sounds at the beginning of neighbouring words. **Five frightened frogs fled from the forest.**

The repeated /f/ sound occurs in:

five – frightened – frogs – fled – from – forest.

The use of alliteration fulfils several stylistic functions. First, it creates phonetic unity within the expression. Second, it contributes to rhythm and memorability. Third, it intensifies the image of rapid movement represented by the verb fled. **Red rabbits rapidly ran round the roses.**

The repeated /r/ connects words referring to both fauna (rabbits) and flora (roses). The resulting structure is highly expressive because almost every significant lexical unit participates in the same sound pattern. Assonance refers to the repetition of similar vowel sounds, while consonance involves the recurrence of consonant sounds, particularly within or at the end of words. **Green trees dream beside the stream.** The recurrence of the vowel /i:/ in green, trees, and stream produces a melodious and harmonious stylistic effect. **A black cat caught a fat rat.** The repeated consonants /k/ and /t/ form a strong consonantal pattern. The words cat and rat are especially significant because their semantic relationship also creates a miniature narrative situation involving predator and prey. Assonance and consonance therefore increase the aesthetic organization of tongue twisters and contribute to their rhythmic and expressive character.

Repetition represents another fundamental stylistic characteristic of tongue twisters. Words, word combinations, sounds, and grammatical structures may be repeated several times. For example: **A big black bug bit a big black bear.** The expression big black is repeated and applied to two different animals: bug and bear. Such repetition performs several functions. It creates rhythm, strengthens the connection between lexical units, increases memorability, and intensifies comic effect. Another possible structure is: **The little bird saw the little berry beside the little bush[3].** The repetition of little creates syntactic parallelism and highlights the diminutive imagery of the situation. Repetition is particularly characteristic of folklore genres because repeated elements facilitate oral memorization and transmission.

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Rhyme may also contribute to the stylistic structure of tongue twisters. For instance: **A fox in a box saw an ox by the rocks.** The lexical units: fox – box – ox – rocks create a sequence based on approximate rhyme.

The fauna component fox and ox becomes connected with non-faunal words primarily through their phonetic similarity. As a result, the semantic content becomes secondary to the stylistic sound pattern. Rhyme contributes to the playful nature of tongue twisters and makes them particularly attractive to children and language learners.

Syntactic parallelism is another stylistic feature commonly observed in tongue twisters. Parallel constructions involve the repetition of identical or similar grammatical patterns. Consider: **The cat chased the mouse, the dog chased the cat, the fox chased the dog[4].** The repeated grammatical structure: **subject + verb + object** creates syntactic balance. When parallelism is combined with fauna vocabulary, the expression develops a chain-like semantic structure. It becomes easier to remember while also creating an entertaining progression. Parallel constructions frequently strengthen rhythm and make the text resemble poetry or folklore. **Six slippery snakes slept beside seven silver stones.** Students can identify the alliteration of /s/, the epithet slippery, the semantic field of fauna, the visual imagery and the repeated syntactic structure. Thus, tongue twisters can combine phonetic, lexical, semantic, and stylistic language learning. The stylistic analysis of tongue twisters related to the flora and fauna concept demonstrates that these linguistic units possess a complex expressive structure. Their stylistic value is created through the interaction of sound, lexical meaning, imagery, rhythm, and grammatical organization. The most characteristic stylistic devices include **alliteration, assonance, consonance, rhyme, lexical repetition, syntactic parallelism, epithets, personification, hyperbole, contrast, onomatopoeia, sound symbolism, humour, and visual imagery**. Among these devices, alliteration and repetition occupy a particularly important position because the basic structure of tongue twisters depends on the recurrence of similar phonetic elements. However, their stylistic function extends beyond pronunciation difficulty. Repetition provides rhythm, cohesion, emphasis, and memorability. Flora and fauna lexical units contribute significantly to the figurative organization of tongue twisters. Animal names frequently function as active participants in humorous miniature situations, while plant vocabulary often establishes the natural background or interacts semantically with animals. The combination of both conceptual fields produces vivid and memorable images. Personification and hyperbole make animals and plants behave in unexpected or exaggerated ways, while epithets add emotional and descriptive qualities. Onomatopoeia and sound symbolism establish a particularly close relationship between phonetic form and lexical meaning. For example, repeated /z/ sounds may imitate the buzzing of bees, while /s/ may evoke the hissing or movement of snakes.

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