

## ENGLISH ANTI-PROVERBS AS STYLISTIC DEVICES

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### ABSTRACT

*This paper aims at exploring the types of English proverb transformation from a stylistic perspective. The data of the study consisted of 103 English anti-proverbs from various sources addressing certain topics in life. The analysis of English anti-proverbs in the data put emphasis on the frequency of the proverb transformations. Also, the analysis focused on the language users' choice of these types of transformations to introduce ideas or express feelings by changing original proverbs structurally. This choice may reflect a stylistic tendency based on patterning in each type of transformations. A future study can focus on a larger sample of anti-proverbs in English as well as in other languages to find out how these transformations can show certain stylistic choices of speakers.*

### KEYWORDS

*Anti-proverbs, proverbs, transformations, stylistics, foregrounding.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Generally, we resort to language as the medium to communicate our feelings, thoughts, and beliefs. Part of the daily language we employ is proverbs. Usually, we use proverbs for various purposes such as persuading others, reinforcing our own arguments, giving advice...etc. A proverb can be defined as “a short, generally known sentence of the folk which contains wisdom, truth, morals, and traditional views in a metaphorical, fixed and memorable form and which is handed down from generation to generation”<sup>2</sup>. This definition suggests that proverbs are sentences that are generally recognised by a group of people. Thus, there should be a consensus about the elements of each proverb which can transmit these sentences of the folk to next generations. Hence, the form and the function of the proverb per se will be consequently transferred as well. However, nothing is constant in this universe including languages which are heavily dynamic.

Users of language sometimes alter the original proverb to come up with a new form of the same proverb for various purposes. This new form of the original proverb is called anti-proverb. Wolfgang Mieder invented the term “*Antispruchwort*” (anti-proverb) for proverb transformations. These transformations are also known as alterations, parodies, variations, and fractured proverbs<sup>3</sup>. According to the definition of the proverb herein, an anti-proverb can be also a short sentence by an individual or individuals which contains “wisdom, truth, morals, and traditional views” but mostly in a satiric or humorous way. Thus, proverbs are more wide-spread than their anti-proverbs. Moreover, anti-proverbs typically deviate from the norm i.e., the “fixed and memorable form and which is handed down from generation to generation”.

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<sup>2</sup> See Mieder [19: 3].

<sup>3</sup> See Mieder [17: VII-X].

The history of anti-proverbs research commenced in 1980's with the collection of German anti-proverbs which was compiled by Wolfgang Mieder in his publication *Antisprichwörter*. In 1999, the first collection of English anti-proverbs was also conducted by Wolfgang Mieder with Anna Tóthné Litovkina in a book titled *Twisted 'Wisdom: Modern Anti-Proverbs*. Later, the research of anti-proverbs has been attempted in other languages such as Hungarian (e.g., T. Litovkina and Vargha<sup>4</sup>), French (e.g., Mignaval<sup>5</sup>), and Russian (e.g., Walter and Mokienko<sup>6</sup>). Moreover, there were more attempts to examine anti-proverbs in English (e.g., T. Litovkina and Mieder<sup>7</sup>) and German (e.g., Mieder<sup>8</sup> and Gossler<sup>9</sup>).

The term anti-proverb was accepted by proverb scholars all over the world (e.g., T. Litovkina<sup>10</sup>; Mieder<sup>11</sup>; T. Litovkina, and Vargha<sup>12</sup>; Barta<sup>13</sup>; among others). Proverbs can be altered in many ways such as adding or inserting further elements, omitting, or deleting other parts of the proverb, or substituting some components of the proverb<sup>14</sup>. Notwithstanding, the previous research mainly focused on the types of transformations of proverbs in different themes in various languages. There is a demand to study the anti-proverbs beyond the scope of merely listing types of transformations as in previous work. Thus, anti-proverbs can be investigated systematically under the umbrella of cognitive linguistics to find out the metaphorical aspect in these anti-proverbs. Also, anti-proverbs can be discussed within the area of stylistics forasmuch as anti-proverbs reflect speakers' linguistic choices. The current paper will be an attempt to cover this arena, i.e., the stylistics of anti-proverbs.

Stylistically speaking, these transformations of the original proverbs reflect tendencies as they will constitute patterns i.e., types of proverb transformation. Proverbs in general can well be a pattern for forming novel utterances<sup>15</sup>. According to Van Peer et. al.<sup>16</sup>, to reach generalisations there is a need to find patterns which can lead us to spot tendencies through empirical research. The current paper will be an endeavour to detect tendencies in the transforming proverbs into anti-proverbs or new proverbs as they were called by Valdaeva<sup>17</sup>. Usually, users of language alter the original proverbs to make their own ideas for their audience -whether they are listeners or readers- more prominent through textual patterning, i.e., foregrounding. This stylistic technique is defined as "the ways in which certain aspects of a text can be made to stand out or appear prominent through forms of textual patterning"<sup>18</sup>. For example, the anti-proverb *Money cannot buy happiness – but it can corrupt it!* has been created out of the original proverb {*Money cannot buy happiness*} to highlight the negative aspect of money by deviance through adding further element to the original proverb.

According to Stockwell<sup>19</sup>, foregrounding in discourse can be realised through various devices, such as repetition, innovative additions, novel syntactic structures, rhyme,

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<sup>4</sup> See T.Litovkina and Vargha [30-32].

<sup>5</sup> See Mignaval [25].

<sup>6</sup> See Walter and Mokienko [39-40].

<sup>7</sup> See T.Litovkina and Mieder [15].

<sup>8</sup> See Mieder [20, 21].

<sup>9</sup> See Gossler [8].

<sup>10</sup> See T.Litovkina [12-14; 35].

<sup>11</sup> See Mieder [17, 19].

<sup>12</sup> See T. Litovkina, and Vargha [30-33].

<sup>13</sup> See Barta [3].

<sup>14</sup> See T.Litovkina [35: 332].

<sup>15</sup> See Valdaeva [37: 379].

<sup>16</sup> See Van Peer et. al. [38].

<sup>17</sup> See Valdaeva [37: 379].

<sup>18</sup> See Gibbons & Whiteley [7: 16].

<sup>19</sup> See Stockwell [27: 14].

alliteration...etc. These devices which mark foregrounding in the text are also detectible in types of anti-proverb transformation. Thus, foregrounding can work across various linguistic levels as the case with transformations. Hence, anti-proverbs are an output of certain phonological, semantic, grammatical, morphological, and/or lexical modifications in the original proverbs to make certain ideas stand out or to be more prominent. These transformations, in addition, can be regarded as instances of deviation from the expected or conventional proverb to grab the attention of the reader or the listener to a certain idea. This sort of deviance in speech by using anti-proverbs instead of the original proverbs can help the speakers or writers to make their ideas more conspicuous. This can happen when the user of language puts the anti-proverb which is an unexpected, novel, or deviant utterance in the foreground, while the original proverb which is repetitive, expected, or conventional in the background. This can happen for the same rationale for using proverbs in general i.e., to persuade, express feelings, advocate an argument...etc. Nevertheless, what makes the anti-proverbs more prominent is that this kind of deviation from the norm is in an ironic or satiric manner. This might allure other scholars to investigate the functions of anti-proverbs in discourse which is beyond the scope of the current paper.

Busse<sup>20</sup> stated that deviation is the transfer in terms of language from the conventions. Thus, for people proverbs are more conventional whereas anti-proverbs are more innovative. Hence, the main principle in foregrounding as a stylistic device is making certain units of language “perceived as uncommon, as deprived of automatization, as deautomized” and so on<sup>21</sup>. As far as anti-proverbs concerned, this kind of automatization in proverb can be violated according to Valdaeva<sup>22</sup> by inserting unpredictable words or phrases or changing its constituents which reflects the basis of forming the anti-proverbs i.e., “defeated expectancy”. The change in the original proverbs is triggered off by language users who opt for an unpredictable presentation of conventional proverbs. This kind of unconventionality in reiterating already known proverbs in a novel way seeks for the attention of the listeners and/or a better or stronger delivering of a message. In the current paper, the analysis will try to show these novel ways of saying wide-spread proverbs.

Hence, the current study aims at exploring English anti-proverbs from stylistic perspective. Therefore, the analysis will show the structural aspects of anti-proverbs, and how these structural aspects can contribute to the persuasive power of the anti-proverbs. Also, the frequency of anti-proverb types will be taken into consideration to find out the most common types of these transformations. This paper is an attempt to show that speakers’ choices can reflect tendencies in the discourse through using certain textual patterns i.e., structural transformations.

## 2. DATA COLLECTION AND METHODOLOGY

Currently, there are various methods of altering proverbs that were analysed and discussed by famous paremiologists who have conducted in-depth research of anti-proverbs. Still, the most popular types of proverbs are alterations, i.e., addition (or insertion); omission (or deletion); substitution (replacing one of the components of the proverb); blending of proverbs; punning...etc. (see Mieder & Tóthné Litovkina<sup>23</sup>; Litovkina & Mieder<sup>24</sup>; Hrisztova-Gotthardt,

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<sup>20</sup> See Busse [4: 112].

<sup>21</sup> See Havranek [9: 10].

<sup>22</sup> See Valdaeva [37: 383].

<sup>23</sup> See Mieder & Tóthné Litovkina [24].

T. Litovkina, Barta & Vargha<sup>25</sup>; T. Litovkina et al.,<sup>26</sup> etc.). The most conventional types of transformations will be shown in the following section with descriptive examples.

The data for this study were collected from the book *Old Proverbs Never Die, They Just Diversify: A Collection of Anti-Proverbs*<sup>27</sup> by Anna Litovkina and Wolfgang Mieder. The data consists of 103 English anti-proverbs which address common life active themes i.e., marriage, money, work, religion, and love. Thus, the researcher limited her sample to these themes when she selected the anti-proverbs. Moreover, the anti-proverbs were categorised according to their structural transformation. Hence, the categorisation was limited to those anti-proverbs which exhibit only one type of change in the structure of the original proverb. There are many anti-proverbs have more than one type of transformation. The anti-proverbs which have more than one type of transformation are beyond the scope of the current sample. Furthermore, other rhetorical devices such as metaphor, allegory, pun...etc are not going to be discussed in the analysis as the focus in the current paper is on the structural aspect of anti-proverbs, and how this formal change can contribute to the communication as the meaning does.

### 3. DISCUSSION AND DATA ANALYSIS

Proverb alterations have various forms (for detailed analysis of techniques of variation in Anglo-American anti-proverbs, see T. Litovkina<sup>28</sup>; T. Litovkina and Mieder<sup>29</sup>; T. Litovkina et al.,<sup>30</sup>). The most common types of proverb transformations will be demonstrated separately in the current section with some representative examples. Also, these examples will show how the anti-proverbs are being employed as stylistic devices by speakers of English. In addition, the frequency of transformation types will be discussed below to show how certain patterns reflect tendencies by speakers of English when they change a conventional proverb into new saying with a new structure and meaning. The author will attempt to justify these tendencies below.

The selection criteria of the anti-proverbs which are presented in the previous chapter tempted the researcher to analyse the anti-proverbs quantitatively as well as qualitatively. The variation in frequency for these types of transformation is crucial to understand how the speakers use these anti-proverbs as stylistic devices. Table 1 shows that the most frequent types of proverb transformations in the data are blending of proverbs, changing the second part of the original proverb, and replacing of one word with 21%, 20% and 18% respectively. This can be attributed to the flexibility in the proverb structure which allows to integrate other elements in the original proverb with maintaining the integrity of the new proverb or anti-proverb syntactically and semantically. However, the least frequent types of proverb transformation are the addition and omission with 9 and 8 instances respectively.

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<sup>24</sup> See Litovkina & Mieder [15].

<sup>25</sup> See Hrisztova-Gotthardt et al. [11].

<sup>26</sup> See T.Litovkina et al. [36].

<sup>27</sup> See T. Litovkina & Mieder [15].

<sup>28</sup> See T. Litovkina [12-14].

<sup>29</sup> See T. Litovkina & Mieder [15: 17-26].

<sup>30</sup> See T. Litovkina et al. [36: 55-134].

Table 1 Frequency of transformation types in data

Type of Transformation	Frequency	Percentage
Addition in proverbs	9	8.7
Omission in proverbs	8	7.8
Replacing of one word	12	11.7
Replacing of two or more words	19	18.4
Changing the second part of the original proverb	21	20.4
Blending of proverbs	22	21.4
Repetition of identical words	12	11.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>100.0</b>

### 3.1 Addition in proverbs

Many proverb transformations have the original version of proverbs, but with certain changes. consequently, it can have an additional word or phrase inside of the anti-proverb. Usually, these additions can add ironical or sarcastic meaning to the original proverb. Typically, there are additions of one sound, two or three sounds, a new word, a phrase, a sentence, or a few sentences inside of proverbs as in the following examples

- (1) *Money talks, and it also stops talk {Money talks}<sup>31</sup>;*
- (2) *Money cannot buy happiness – but it can corrupt it! {Money cannot buy happiness};*

In the examples (1) and (2), it can be noticed that the original proverbs have additional parts at the end to elaborate the original meaning of the proverbs which resulted into anti-proverbs. This stylistic elaboration is done to foreground the power of money in the anti-proverbs. Moreover, the elaboration of the original proverb i.e., the anti-proverb, can present additional information that the proverb could not enunciate.

Also, the addition in certain anti-proverbs can be achieved by inserting new words, phrases, or sentences at the beginning of the original proverb. The incorporation of the proverb at the end a relevant idea introduces an anti-proverb as in examples (3) and (4). This addition to the original proverb makes the anti-proverb more situational as in the two examples below.

- (3) *It's not easy for a beautiful girl to believe that love is blind {Love is blind};*
- (4) *Many a widow finds it easy to marry again because dead men tell no tales {Dead men tell no tales}.*

Moreover, proverbs can be transformed into extended phrases by enlarging a proverb at the beginning and in the end as in the following examples.

- (5) *Every father knows that money talks mostly in the mother tongue {Money talks};*
- (6) *Both management and unions agree that time is money. They just can't agree on how much! {Time is money}.*

<sup>31</sup> All original forms of anti-proverbs in the current paper will be presented within {} brackets.

Additionally, it is possible to combine a permanent phrase which can be more extended than a word but briefer than a clause, for example:

(7) *Half the world doesn't know how the other half lives on the husband's salary {Half the world doesn't know how the other half lives}.*

These various stylistic techniques of addition to the original proverbs reflect the flexibility of modifying the structure of these proverbs by incorporating new elements into various parts of the original proverbs. Language users make use of such structural flexibility to communicate their own ideas, opinions, and feelings more apparently. The addition at the beginning, end or middle of the original proverbs also reflects tendencies which can form patterns that yield novel proverbs or anti-proverbs.

### 3.2 Omission in proverbs

Typically, omission as one of proverb transformation types intersects with other types of transformations in the data. Namely, in other types of the transformations, omission is frequently present. Nevertheless, various examples of omission in proverbs, i.e., omission of one sound, omission of two or three sounds, omission of one word, omission of two or three words...etc will be presented to show stylistic techniques to express thought. For example, in (8), the omission of the sound /l/ in 'play' presents an innovative meaning to the original proverb. Also, this anti-proverb contains a change in the last part of the original proverb. This change in the original proverb aims at changing the topic of the original proverb i.e., *a housewife* in order to stress the importance of providing children with time for play or joy.

(8) *All work and no pay makes a housewife {All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy};*

In example (9), there is an omission of the sounds /s/ and /p/ in 'spoil' to add a specific meaning to the original proverb which is related to the quality of food. Also, the omission of a word is noticeable in example (10) which does not affect the grammaticality of the new proverb or anti-proverb since the verb can be both transitive and intransitive. This omission of the object in the original proverb introduces a new meaning in the anti-proverb to highlight the idea that familiarity can increase with time. In example (11), there is an omission of a phrase at the end of the of the proverb to present an anti-proverb which gives a negative meaning contrary to the original proverb.

(9) *Too many cooks oil the broth {Too many cooks spoil the broth};*

(10) *Familiarity breeds {Familiarity breeds contempt};*

(11) *He who fights and runs away, lives {He who fights and runs away, lives to fight another day}.*

Occasionally, creators of proverb alterations can amend a proverb so radically that simply some words are used from the original text. However, the form of the original proverb can be fully reordered as well as in example (12) where part of the original proverb i.e., *an apple a day* is used.

(12) *"I'm worried. My girl is running around with that new doctor in town." "Feed her an apple a day." {An apple a day keeps the doctor away};*

Also, in example (13) it can be noticed that the anti-proverb results from the structural rearrangement of words in the original proverb to introduce a sarcastic idea about food.

(13) *The noblest of all animals is the dog, and the noblest of all dogs is the hotdog. It feeds the hand that bites it {Don't bite the hand that feeds you}.*

Sometimes, there can be a truncation of the original proverb when only one part of the proverb is used (mostly the beginning). Hence, the shortened (or clipped) proverb can be applied as a note to the whole version. Usually, the speakers rely on the common knowledge that they share with listeners. This sort of shared knowledge provides a common ground which makes communication smoother. Besides, this reduced form of the proverb is a technique by interlocutors to grab attention to an expressed idea relying on the listeners' knowledge. Here are some examples of reduced forms of the original proverbs:

(14) *He who digs a pit...{Who digs a pit for another, falls into it himself};*

(15) *An apple a day...{An apple a day keeps the doctor away}.*

### 3.3 Replacing of one word

Another common way of altering proverbs is the replacement of one word. Generally, replacement occurs with first or last word of the proverb as in the following examples:

(16) *Home is where the mortgage is {Home is where the heart is};*

(17) *Avarice is the root of all evil {Money is the root of all evil};*

There are several examples of anti-proverbs with replacing of one word that have sexual connotations as in the example (18) where the word 'perfect' is replaced by the word 'pervert' to give a stronger message to the listener vis-à-vis the importance of sexual practice. Also, in example (19), the replacement of the word 'will' aims at foregrounding the idea of taking the medication for sexual dysfunction. Both substituted words in these examples almost rhyme with the new added words. This can reflect the phonological flexibility of the anti-proverbs building out of original proverbs.

(18) *Practice makes pervert {Practice makes perfect};*

(19) *Where there's a pill, there's a way {Where there's a will, there's a way}.*

Also, there are some examples of anti-proverbs where one word is switched with an antonym. This lexical substitution of the words with their antonym presents an anti-proverb which is the opposite of the original proverb as it is exemplified in (20) and (21):

*It takes all kinds of people to unmake the world {It takes all kinds of people to make the world};*

(20) *When riches come in at the door, love flies around and bars all the exits {When poverty comes in at the door, love flies out of the window};*

Thus, this type of proverb transformation by changing a key word in the original proverb shows a technique by speakers to make a shift in the topic by changing that word. This change in the proverb which results in a new proverb, or an anti-proverb, can also exhibit linguistic competence of the speakers by substituting words to make that kind of topic shift. Doubtlessly, this competence can motivate such stylistic variations in speech or writing.

### 3.4 Replacing of two or more words

Another way of proverb transformations is the substitution of two or more words in the original proverbs. Sometimes, the number of words in the anti-proverb can be different from the original saying. For instance, the Anglo-American proverb "Old soldiers never die, they

*just fade away*” is introduced as a prevalent example of this kind of transformation. In the examples (22-23), the anti-proverbs have the replacements of the words ‘*soldiers*’ and ‘*fade away*’ to present new meanings which are different from the original proverbs.

(21) *Old accountants never die; they just lose their balance;*

(22) *Old farmers never die, they just go to seed;*

Another example of this kind of proverb transformation can be found in the anti-proverbs in examples (24) and (25). The popular Anglo-American proverb “*A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush*” is transformed by the substitution of words “a bird”, “the hand”, or “the bush”:

(23) *A hair in the hand is worth two in the soup;*

(24) *A bird on a bonnet is worth five on a plate;*

In other cases, two words in the proverb are substituted with other phonologically related words. In the examples (26) and (27), we can notice this kind of word change.

(25) *A brain is no stronger than its weakest think {A chain is no stronger than its weakest link};*

(26) *Too many looks spoil the troth {Too many cooks spoil the broth};*

Finally, there is a case where an original proverb has a word repetition as in “*Laugh and the world laughs with you; cry and you cry alone*”. This proverb has two anti-proverbs, examples (28) and (29) with parallel structures with the original proverb.

(27) *Plant and the world plants with you. Weed and you weed alone.*

(28) *Eat and the world eats with you; wash dishes and you wash alone;*

### 3.5 Changing the second part of the original proverb

Another very common type of proverb transformation is changing of the second part of the original proverb. At times, there are some anti-proverbs where the part of the proverb is completely replaced. The most common proverb in the framework of this alteration is “*If at first you don’t succeed, try, try again*”. This particular proverb has the biggest number of transformations (i.e., 65 anti-proverbs) according to the T.Litovkina and Mieder<sup>32</sup> collection of Anglo-American anti-proverbs. There are examples of some of them:

(29) *If at first you don’t succeed, blame it on your wife;*

(30) *If at first you don’t succeed, do it the way your wife told you;*

This change in the second part of the proverb presents a kind of ‘plot twist’ for listeners as the ending of the well-known proverb is modified by the speaker using a totally different ending. This unexpected linguistic behaviour can constitute a stylistic technique by speakers for several reasons one of them is satire.

### 3.6 Blending of proverbs

This concerns mixing of two or more proverbs. This process also called *blending* or *contamination*. It can be also defined as “a twisted proverb that uses more than one phraseological unit; at least one of them is necessarily a proverb or a proverb pattern.”<sup>33</sup>. In other words, some components of the proverb are substituted by a part of different proverb or

<sup>32</sup> See T. Litovkina & Mieder [15].

<sup>33</sup> See Barta [1,2: 122].



proverbs. In other cases, another proverb can be included in the entire original proverb. This category of anti-proverbs is the most common in the current study data with 22 anti-proverbs. Below, there are two examples of blending of parts of two proverbs:

- (31) *A penny saved gathers no moss* {*A penny saved is a penny earned*; *A rolling stone gathers no moss*};  
(32) *A stitch in time gathers no moss* {*A stitch in time saves nine*; *A rolling stone gathers no moss*};

There are some examples of blending the same two proverbs which can be called *twins* (the term was offered by Péter Barta<sup>34</sup>). In this case the two proverbs exchange their parts to present two novel proverbs or anti-proverbs as in examples (34) and (35).

- (33) *Beauty is the best policy* {*Beauty is only skin deep*; *Honesty is the best policy*};  
(34) *Honesty is only skin deep* {*Honesty is the best policy*; *Beauty is only skin deep*}.

Interestingly, in few cases, the second parts of two different proverbs are mixed to form an anti-proverb. Here is one example from the data:

- (35) *Two in a bush is the root of all evil* {*A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush*; *Money is the root of all evil*}.

Less frequently, some anti-proverbs include a common element or get quite the same structure of the original proverbs as in example (37) and (38).

- (36) *A sleeping dog never bites* {*Let sleeping dogs lie*; *A barking dog never bites*};  
(37) *Better late than sorry* {*Better late than never*; *Better safe than sorry*}.

Moreover, there are anti-proverbs which are result of mixing two complete proverbs.

- (38) *An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth – a fair exchange is no robbery* {*An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth*; *A fair exchange is no robbery*};  
(39) *Look before you leap out of the frying pan into the fire* {*Look before you leap*; *Out of the frying pan into the fire*}.

In addition, anti-proverbs can be made by blending a proverb with well-known sayings, idioms, or famous expressions as in the following examples:

- (40) *Buggery: For sexists, the right peg in the wrong hole. Different pokes for different folks* {*A square peg in a round hole*; *Different strokes for different folks*};  
(41) *Like father, like son: the infant who tries to get his toes into his mouth, probably has a father who is also trying to make ends meet* {*Like father, like son*; *to make ends meet*}.

The book of T. Litovkina et al.<sup>35</sup> contains unique examples of blending three or more proverbs together. These transformations have modifications of one or two words which were replaced by phonologically related phrases:

- (42) *Meat wrappers. Different cloaks for different folks. They cover a multitude of skins. To wear is human. Man does not live by thread alone. "As ye sew so shall ye rip."* {*Different strokes for different folks*; *Charity covers a multitude of sins*; *To err is human*; *Man does not live by bread alone*; *As you sow, so shall you reap*};

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<sup>34</sup> See Barta [3].

<sup>35</sup> See T. Litovkina et al. [36].

### 3.7 Repetition of identical words

This type of transformations shows several varieties of repetition in anti-proverbs. According to Neal Norrick<sup>36</sup>, repetition generates parallelism which is a distinctive feature of proverbs. This repetition can be in terms of pronunciation, lexical items and meaning which can proverbs more memorable and help speakers to persuade listeners. This repetition can constitute one type of proverb transformations. For example, the repetition in anti-proverbs can be of one word which can be used twice in the anti-proverb. It occurs when the original proverb does not have any changes, but the word repetition happens in the additional form, which generally comes after the original proverb as in the examples below:

(43) *Love laughs at locksmiths... What's so funny about locksmiths?* {Love laughs at locksmiths}.

However, sometimes the word repetition can replace an original word with another word in the original proverb as in the examples:

(44) *Feed a cold, feed a fever* {Feed a cold, starve a fever};

(45) *Fools rush in where fools have been before* {Fools rush in where angels fear to tread}.

Intermittently, two or more words can be repeated in anti-proverbs:

(46) *You can't have your cake and eat it too ... but you can't eat cake unless you have it* {You can't have your cake and eat it too};

(47) *Better to be an old man's darling than a young man's slave ... and even better to be a young man's darling than an old man's slave* {Better to be an old man's darling than a young man's slave}.

Nevertheless, creators of transformations can repeat one word or a saying three or four times:

(48) *In the spring a young man's fancy lightly turns – and turns – and turns* {In the spring a young man's fancy lightly turns to thoughts of love};

Furthermore, the repetition in anti-proverbs can duplicate sounds or numbers of sounds. Or it can repeat words which sound very similar to each other:

(49) *Humourists should be seen and not obscene* {Children should be seen and not heard};

Finally, some words or expressions in the original proverb can be repeated three or four times in anti-proverbs as in the following:

(50) *If at first you don't succeed, just keep suckin' till you do suck seed* {If at first you don't succeed, try, try again};

(51) *Love laughs at locksmiths, but not at locks – at least, not at wedlock* {Love laughs at locksmiths}.

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<sup>36</sup> See Norrick [26: 121].

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The current study focused on Anglo-American anti-proverbs (deliberate proverb innovations, alterations, parodies, transformations, and variations). The analysis in this paper tried to highlight the foregrounding aspect of English anti-proverbs. This kind of foregrounding in English anti-proverbs is realised through transformations of English proverbs into anti-proverbs. The most common types of proverb transformations (e.g., addition in proverbs, omission, replacing of one word, substituting of two or more words, changing the second part of the original proverb, blending, repetition of identical word) were discussed and demonstrated in the third part of the paper.

The analysis showed that the most common types of proverb transformations were blending and changing two or more words. This can be attributed to speakers' choice to express more than one idea by using different proverbs and mixing them or changing several key words in the original proverb to express these ideas. On the whole, speakers maintained the grammaticality of the original proverbs as well as semantic structure. Nevertheless, the conceptual structure and conventional denotation in the anti-proverb deviate to grab the attention of the listeners.

These transformations in English proverbs may exhibit deviations that can make the ideas more prominent to attract the listeners or readers' attention. These transformations can work as stylistic devices in the discourse that can augment the quality of message delivery by linguistically deviating from the norm. Future research with a larger corpus and different genre may show more evidence on the role of anti-proverbs as stylistic devices.

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