

<https://doi.org/10.62837/2025.5.111>

NAZRIN TAHIR ISMAYILOVA

PHD Student, Baku Slavic University

n_ismayilova@internet.ru; +99470 491 31 32

UOT: 8.811.111.

HYPERBOLE IN AZERBAIJANI AND ENGLISH MYTHS AND EPICS

Abstract

This study explores the function and stylistic role of hyperbole in Azerbaijani and English myths, fairy tales, and epic narratives. Hyperbole, as a rhetorical and artistic device, serves to emphasize heroism, enhance emotional depth, and create vivid imagery in both oral and written traditions. In Azerbaijani literature, hyperbole often reflects communal values, ancestral pride, and a cosmological understanding of the world, particularly in heroic epics and nature-based myths. In contrast, English fairy tales and epic texts utilize hyperbole to construct magical worlds, dramatize personal transformation, and convey moral lessons. By analyzing examples from prominent texts—such as *Dədə Qorqud*, *Koroğlu*, *Jack and the Beanstalk*, *Cinderella*, *The Odyssey*, and *Beowulf*—the study reveals how cultural context shapes the use and purpose of hyperbole in each tradition. The findings suggest that while the device is universally employed, its narrative and symbolic functions vary significantly across cultures, reflecting different worldviews and literary priorities.

Key words: hyperbole, Azerbaijani mythology, English fairy tales, epic literature, stylistic devices, oral tradition, cultural symbolism, heroic narrative, comparative literature, *Dədə Qorqud*, *Beowulf*, Oscar Wilde.

Xülasə

Bu tədqiqat hiperbolanın Azərbaycan və İngilis mifləri, nağılları və epik nəqliyyatlarında funksiyasını və üslubi rolunu araşdırır. Hiperbola ritorik və bədii vasitə kimi həm şifahi, həm də yazılı ənənələrdə qəhrəmanlığı vurğulamaq, emosional dərinliyi artırmaq və canlı təsvirlər yaratmaq məqsədi daşıyır. Azərbaycan ədəbiyyatında hiperbola daha çox qəhrəmanlıq dastanlarında və təbiətlə bağlı miflərdə icma dəyərlərini, əcdad qürurunu və kosmoqonik dünyagörüşünü əks etdirir. İngilis nağıllarında və epik mətnlərində isə hiperbola sehrlı aləmlərin qurulması, şəxsi çevrilmələrin dramatikləşdirilməsi və əxlaqi dərslərin çatdırılması üçün istifadə olunur. *Dədə Qorqud*, *Koroğlu*, *Jack and the Beanstalk*, *Cinderella*, *Odisseyə* və *Beowulf* kimi nüfuzlu mətnlər əsasında aparılan təhlil göstərir ki, mədəni kontekst hiperbolanın istifadə forması və məqsədini formalaşdırır. Tədqiqatın nəticələri göstərir ki, bu vasitə universal şəkildə tətbiq olunsada, onun narrativ və simvolik funksiyaları mədəniyyətlər arasında əhəmiyyətli dərəcədə fərqlənir və müxtəlif dünyagörüşlərini və ədəbi prioritetləri əks etdirir.

Açar sözlər: hiperbola, Azərbaycan mifologiyası, İngilis nağılları, epik ədəbiyyat, bədii vasitələr, şifahi ənənə, mədəni simvolizm, qəhrəmanlıq narrativini, müqayisəli ədəbiyyat, Dədə Qorqud, Beovulf, Oskar Uayld.

Аннотация

В данном исследовании рассматриваются функция и стилистическая роль гиперболы в азербайджанских и английских мифах, сказках и эпических повествованиях. Гипербола как риторическое и художественное средство служит для подчеркивания героизма, усиления эмоциональной выразительности и создания ярких образов как в устной, так и в письменной традиции. В азербайджанской литературе гипербола часто отражает коллективные ценности, гордость за предков и космологическое восприятие мира, особенно в героических эпосах и мифах, связанных с природой. В отличие от этого, в английских сказках и эпических текстах гипербола используется для создания волшебных миров, драматизации личных преобразований и передачи моральных уроков. На основе анализа таких известных произведений, как *Книга Деде Горгуда*, *Короглу*, *Джек и бобовый стебель*, *Золушка*, *Одиссея* и *Беовульф*, исследование показывает, как культурный контекст формирует использование и назначение гиперболы в каждой традиции. Результаты исследования свидетельствуют о том, что, несмотря на универсальность данного приема, его повествовательные и символические функции существенно различаются в зависимости от культурных особенностей, отражая различные мировоззрения и литературные приоритеты.

Ключевые слова: гипербола, азербайджанская мифология, английские сказки, эпическая литература, стилистические средства, устная традиция, культурная символика, героическое повествование, сравнительное литературоведение, Деде Горгуд, Беовульф, Оскар Уайльд.

Introduction

Hyperbole (“mübaligə” in Azerbaijani) is a rhetorical device involving deliberate exaggeration used to emphasize a point, intensify emotion, or highlight the greatness of a character, event, or setting. In both Azerbaijani and English mythological and epic traditions, hyperbole serves as a vital stylistic and narrative tool.

Hyperbole in Myth and Epic

Myths or legends that emerged within the oral traditions of various peoples are also a source for artistic analysis as literary works. Based on the principles of such analysis, let us first briefly consider the historical aspect of myth formation. Myths represent the archaic period in the development of human civilization, dating back to the time before the primitive communal system had fully taken shape. The

most important precondition for the emergence of myths is the formation of human speech. The worldview of ancient people was tied to cosmo-centric ideas about themselves and the surrounding world. During this period, animism and anthropocentrism are clearly observable. The influence of paleo-contacts at the level of terrestrial civilizations is possible, although this has not been proven. Due to their close interaction with nature and the necessities of survival, ancient people developed a need to explain the essence of surrounding events both to themselves and to others. Considering the narrative character of this type of folk creativity, which was intended to reflect the perception of life and the adaptation to it within a unity with nature and the world as a whole, the number of metaphors used is not particularly large. Among the most frequently encountered hyperboles in Azerbaijani myths, the following examples can be noted:

"He was such a hero that you had to see him to believe it—he could uproot a hundred-year-old plane tree with a single pull. When he roared, lions and tigers would look for a hole to hide in" [1, p. 39].

In this example, we witness the exaggeration of a hero's strength—"uprooting a hundred-year-old plane tree" and "lions and tigers looking for a hole to hide in" are hyperboles.

"Then comes a time when it rains, it rains so heavily that you could grab the end of it and climb into the sky." [1, p. 43]

In this example, the expression "grabbing the end of the rain and climbing into the sky" is a hyperbole. It is, of course, impossible to hold on to rain and ascend to the sky. This phrase merely conveys the intensity of the rainfall in the form of exaggeration.

Hyperboles are most frequently reflected in specific types of myths—namely, cultic, anthropogonic, totemic, heroic myths, epics, and legends—and are often intertwined with customs and traditions.

At the same time, hyperbole is also used as an individual artistic ornament to make a more active impact on the listener's imagination:

"...My child, don't drink it, I've tasted it myself: my life has passed, my whole body has decayed and wasted away, yet I still cannot die. Death must be a beautiful thing, my child. Don't drink this water and end up like me." [1, p. 48]

In this example, the speaker's description of their entire body decaying but still being unable to die serves as a hyperbolic expression of prolonged suffering and regret.

The artistic structure of myths is closely connected to their themes and their proximity to other genres of oral folk literature. In order to determine the level of metaphorical nature in a particular myth, it is important to remember that there exist various types of myths: those describing cosmic disasters and storms, myths related to human life—such as those involving the use of living water, myths about the first

humans, the origin of animals and plants, myths involving ancestors, hunting, sacred places (including stones), and tales about how someone turned into stone, among others. There is also a category of myths associated with supernatural beings, such as jinn, ghouls, forest spirits, etc. These include mythological tales and epics, myth-based beliefs, taboos, trials, interpretations of spells, and more. In all of these narratives, hyperboles are widely used in their descriptions to intensify the emotional and imaginative impact.

The English language serves as a medium for concretizing objects and expressing human emotions through abstract concepts, making it a language rich in artistic devices. Among the various semiotic systems, the artistic device is the core linguistic unit that defines its distinct character. In the literary imagery of Oscar Wilde, who is renowned for his English fairy tales, the word functions as a unifying link that connects conceptual features. Wilde deliberately employs hyperbole in his expressions. By repeating the same word in different stylistic forms, the author directs the reader's attention to the central theme he unfolds in the tale. [4, p. 78]

In "The Nightingale and the Rose," when depicting the themes of life and death, Wilde uses the word "sweet" to describe life (as a beautiful gift from the Creator), and the word "shadow" to portray death (as the arrival of death that prepares the soul for "the realm of shadows"). This contrast between the lexical units "sweet" and "shadow" reveals an artistic juxtaposition that reflects the duality of life and death in Wilde's symbolic narrative.

"Sweet is the scent of the hawthorn, and sweet are the bluebells that hide in the valley..." [8, p. 119].

In this example, the author uses the word "sweet" to express the beauty of the hawthorn's scent and the hidden bluebells in the valley through hyperbolic language. However, in reality, neither the scent of hawthorn nor the bluebells have any literal connection to the actual taste of sweetness. The term "sweet" is employed metaphorically and exaggeratively to intensify the emotional and sensory appeal of the natural imagery.

Hyperbole is a common stylistic device found in various forms of literature, including fairy tales and epics. It is often used to exaggerate, emphasize, or create vivid imagery. In English fairy tales and epics, hyperbole serves multiple purposes, shaping both the narrative and the overall tone of the story.

"Jack and the Beanstalk"

Hyperbolic growth: *"The beanstalk grew up and up until it reached the sky."* [3]
The fantastical growth of the beanstalk highlights the magical and imaginative character of the story.

"Cinderella"

Exaggerated transformation: *"Her dress was so beautiful that it outshone the sun."* [6]

The hyperbole emphasizes the magical transformation and underscores the stunning beauty of Cinderella's gown.

"The Three Little Pigs"

Extreme fear: *"The wolf huffed and puffed, trying to blow the house down with all his might"* [2]. This hyperbole enhances the dramatic tension and highlights the threat posed by the wolf.

Homer's "The Odyssey"

Heroic strength: *"Odysseus was as strong as a thousand men."* [7] This hyperbole, a typical feature of epic tales, underscores Odysseus's extraordinary strength and heroic nature.

"Beowulf"

Exaggerated battles: *"Beowulf fought with the strength of a dozen warriors."* [5] The hyperbole magnifies Beowulf's valour and contributes to the epic's heroic atmosphere.

Table 1 presents comparative insights of hyperbole in Azerbaijani and English myths.

Table 1. Comparative Observations of Hyperbole in Azerbaijani and English Myths

Element	Azerbaijani Tradition	English Tradition
Narrative Role	Heroic valour, nature mysticism, oral expression	Fantasy, magic, moral clarity
Common Subjects	Physical power, weather, suffering, natural force	Magical growth, transformation, exaggerated conflict
Cultural Function	Linked to ancestry, customs, and cosmic understanding	Reflective of individualism, justice, and magical realism
Example Characters	Basat, Koroğlu, mythical ancestors	Jack, Cinderella, Beowulf, Odysseus

Source: Author's own.

The comparative table delineates striking contrasts in the utilization and purpose of hyperbole in Azerbaijani and English literary cultures. While in Azerbaijani literature, hyperbole is utilized for the glorification of heroic figures, portraying the elements of nature, and collective experience via oral tradition, it validates a sense of national belonging and ancestral affiliation, which is in conformity with cultural rituals and symbolic meanings inherent in folklore.

Conversely, English stories employ hyperbole to heighten fantasy, enhance dramatic impact, and underscore moral change. The focus is on personal experience, fantasy, and magical realism. Whereas Azerbaijani hyperbole is centered on heroic strength, emotional agony, and forces of nature, English hyperbole prefers to dwell

on magical occurrences, inflated beauty, or threats that provide tension and resolution within the story.

Azerbaijani myths are culturally saturated with hyperbole as part of a larger cosmology drawing on community values, tradition. Myths and fairy tales in English employ hyperbole more as a literary tool in which to build fictional worlds and convey personal or moral lessons.

The character types also differ. Azerbaijani heroes like Basat and Koroğlu are collective embodiments of national strength and courage, whereas English heroes like Jack, Cinderella, Beowulf, and Odysseus are individualized characters with exaggerated traits that emphasize personal quests or transformations.

In short, though both traditions resort frequently to hyperbole, the cultural prism in which it is used is very different—Azerbaijani literature stresses shared identity and mythic continuity, but English literature personal growth, fantasy, and moral symbolism.

Conclusion

In both English and Azerbaijani literary cultures, hyperbole is not only a rhetorical device but a semantic bridge between the real and the supernatural, the individual and the collective, the human and the mythic. When praising heroes, dramatizing victimhood, or exaggerating the extraordinary, hyperbole is a narrative fulcrum that amplifies the affective and symbolic potential of myths, epics, and fairy tales alike.

LITERATURE

1. Əsatirlər, əfsanə və rəvayətlər: tərt. ed. A.Acaloğlu, C. Bəydili. – 2005. 304 səh.
2. Coffield F. A tale of three little pigs: building the learning society with straw //Evaluation & research in education. – 1998. – T. 12. – №. 1. – pp. 44-58.
3. Goldberg C. The Composition of "Jack and the Beanstalk" //Marvels & Tales. – 2001. – T. 15. – №. 1. – C. 11-26.
4. Langlad J. Oscar Wilde, or the truth of the masks. / M .: Young Guard: Palimpsest, 1999. – 325 p.
5. Leyerle J. The interlace structure of Beowulf //University of Toronto Quarterly. – 1967. – T. 37. – №. 1. – C. 1-17.
6. MacWhinney B. et al. Automated analysis of the Cinderella story //Aphasiology. – 2010. – T. 24. – №. 6-8. – C. 856-868.
7. Rutherford R. B. The philosophy of the Odyssey //The journal of Hellenic studies. – 1986. – T. 106. – C. 145-162.
8. Sokolyansky M. G. Oscar Wilde: Essay on Creativity. / Kiev – Odessa: Lybid, 2002. – 199 p.

Rəyçi: prof. Eldar Piriye