

WHAT IS PROVERB? THEORETICAL VIEWS OF THE NOTION OF PROVERBS

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Abstract: The current article is devoted to the particular theoretical views of the notion of proverbs as well as it focuses on the history of the proverbs and investigation of this notions in paremiology. Moreover, it deals with the specialized proverbial characteristics which might be involved in most common used proverbs, particularly, on the examples of English and Uzbek national proverbs. As it's obviously seen that proverbs and sayings contain deep sense and national wisdom, which have roots far in the past. They reflect people's way of thinking and perception of the world. They are considered to be "codes" of culture, its specific laconic and witty language. Combined with other sources, they could show us unknown side of the "story", how different aspects of life were and are reflected in people's mind. These particular peculiarities and some special characteristics of proverbs are outlined in this article as well.

Key words: proverb, cultural identity, characteristics of proverbs, paremiology,

INTRODUCTION

The 20 th century European linguistic theories proved that there are numerous analysis on phraseological units, particularly, proverbs and sayings, their certain explanations and some theories related to very effective in the

design of structural and functional models of proverb use. Virtually every important school of linguistic thought passed on its scientific legacy in the field of paremiology. Saussurean semiology made a successful career in folklore and anthropology[1]. The conceptual heritage of the Russian Formalism and the theoretical rigour of the Prague School of linguistics left undeniable traces in Permyakov's logico-semiotic classification of paremias. Bühler's Organon model and Jakobson's functional model of language were also applied to proverb use (Krikmann 1985, Gavriilidou 2003, Dominguez Barajas 2010) [2]. One of the expressive means is phraseological units. In order to achieve a competent translation of phraseological units, we should be able to identify them in the source text, have a clear understanding of their nature and be aware of special translation techniques. Thus, the purpose of this article is to reveal the essence of the concept of "phraseological units", especially proverbial expressions by discussing various views of the several scholars towards different point of views and methods of translating phraseological units. Before moving to the main discussion, it is important to define the phraseological expressions.

Nelyubin (2009) defines phraseological units as combinations of words, i.e. separately formed formations with fully or partially rethought components. Since stable combinations – at least contains two words or a sentence long at most – are always partially or completely rethought. Therefore, they always carry imagery and expressiveness in their essences.

THE MAIN PART

According to great scientist Dr. Panos Karagiorgos "Proverbs contain keen observations of everyday life, constitute popular philosophy of life, and provide an insight into human behavior and character. They survived thanks to their brevity, their rhyme and rhythm which delighted the ear and helped the memory" [3].

Indeed, we may observe that proverbs involve deep sense folk's philosophy of each culture and nation and they come in different forms and serve different functions. However, they have one thing in common; they reflect the cultural beliefs, wisdom and superstitions of a community. They are seen to be true hence no one questions their credibility. The origin or source of proverbs cannot be credited to a single individual as they go way back to the ancestors of a society. Proverbs spring out of different situations like historical events for example war, famine, and so forth. They may also arise out of circumstances that people go through in daily life such as sicknesses, love, conflict and so forth. Some proverbs are coined as a comment on an experience that someone goes through whereas others could be unconscious statements that are picked up and used frequently and within no time people embrace them as proverbs.

As proverbs are considered as a rich semantic linguacultural and rhetorical devices and it is highly vital to define and clarify them appropriately before analyzing them according to stylistic, pragmatic or linguacultural aspects. There is a number of writers have attempted to give their definition of a proverb:

First is Mieder [4] as cited in Dabaghi et al (2011) who defined the proverb 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.' Mieder adds that there are proverbs which define proverbs, such as: "Proverbs are the children of experience," "Proverbs are the wisdom of the streets," and "Proverbs are true words" [4].

According to him, proverbs contain a lot of common sense, experience, wisdom and truth, reflecting ready-made traditional strategies in oral speech acts and writings from high literature to the mass media. It is therefore deducible from the assertion above that proverbs contain an element of truth, experience and

wisdom. This is why proverbs are authoritative and attract attention. In the Kipsigis society just like most African societies, the survival of proverbs was in their usage because they were orally handed down to the next generation. This means that those who took interest in them became responsible for their existence. As a result, some proverbs may easily be forgotten and others widely used as dictated by context. Proverbs are associated with wisdom because they show the ability of the human brain to relate ideas and events that are happening in real life. Experience come with age and that is why more often than not, adults would use proverbs that summarize a given event more than the youth because they might have gone through it or may have seen someone go through it. Hence they use them with a lot of conviction.

According to Ndubisi [5], proverbs are cultural repositories that are particular to every group of people. He adds that the way words, elements and cultural expressions are made and used within the context of any culture says much about the life, the people and their environment. The definition above ties proverbs to culture and asserts that they are cultural specific. The implication is that proverbs reflect the culture of a community. Several cultural aspects can be singled out in proverbs. This is because proverbs may not make sense if foreign imagery is used. Another reason is that proverbs borrow form the environment. Cultural norms and beliefs would also be incorporated in the proverbs as a way of teaching.

According to Nwadike [5,26] as cited in Ndubisi [5,121], proverbs are a rhetorical device which enhances the ability of the speaker to make a speech in a concise, figurative and enriched manner, far more than what plain and ordinary speech can do. This shows the powerful nature of a proverb to achieve what plain words cannot do.

In some situations, words may become clichés and the target audience may brush them off. In other cases, telling someone the truth of a matter plainly may be too painful and may lead to confrontation. Proverbs therefore help in taking the sting off one's words. The figurative image of the proverb will also drive the point home in a powerful way because the image will be painted in the mind hence the message will sink deeply. In addition, the effectiveness of a message depends not so much on who says it but how it is said. When oratory skills are displayed such as the use of proverbs, the audience is captivated.

Ihueze [6, 24] states that the proverb as an item of folklore enriches a language; giving in-depth meanings to words and has immense moral and cultural value. She observes that the definition of the proverb, like folklore, is not easy to come by though many people know what a proverb is and the functions. She sums up by defining a proverb as a short, generally known sentence of the folk which contains wisdom, truth, morals and traditional view in a metaphorical, fixed and memorable form and which is handed down from generation to generation. According to her, a proverb is culturally determined and therefore what is a proverb for a group may not be a proverb for the other. This means that every group will decide for itself what is proverbial and what is not.

The above assertion generally means that there will be as many proverbs as there are different groups of people each with its own uniqueness and features as determined by the culture. It also shows that proverbs are not owned by an individual but belongs to the society and are meant to benefit all.

Odaga [6, 68] as cited that proverbs as wise sayings which must be interpreted before their meaning can be fully understood. He adds that every group of people has their own proverbs and uses them in their daily conversation. Also, he states that like oral narratives, proverbs touch on every aspect of the life of the people who create them. According to him, there are proverbs on political, social,

educational, religious and economic issues while others have been passed down from generation to generation. He further asserts that other proverbs are new, stemming from modern and current life styles and experiences of our time.

The definition above stresses the figurative nature of proverbs. There are proverbs whose literal meaning and the intended meaning are far apart. Some proverbs also are based on historical events of which they should be familiar if those proverbs are to be understood.

The imagery in proverbs too should adequately be understood so as to get the meaning of the proverb. Proverbs come in few words yet they inform a lot. They can also be studied in different angles such that one can bring out many features by just using a single proverb. Proverbs are fascinating and sometimes mind triggering. They borrow much from the surrounding of the community in question. Each community has its own set of proverbs and to understand them one has to be knowledgeable on the cultural aspects of that community. Some proverbs are unique to a community but there are others that are common across cultures. Take as an example the following proverbs:

English proverb: Do not cry over spilt milk

Uzbek alternative: O'tgan ishga salovat

Uzbek alternative: Dadam o'lishini bilganimda

To'n olib berardim

The meaning intended in the above proverbs is that some situations are irreversible hence once they have happened; the best thing is just to accept, learn the lesson and move on. The visual images that are used in examples above mentioned may be different both in the English and Uzbek proverbs because people may come from different cultures and different continents even though they may be sharing similar experiences, for example, milk is found in both societies,

however, these visual tools are used in different ways and with the help of other items in English and Uzbek proverbs. Let's look at the Uzbek alternative which has closer meaning to our selected proverb: *“Dadamning o'lishini bilganimda to'n olib berardim”*. According to our Uzbek national traditions the clothe called *“to'n”* is one of the widely and common used national outfits in our culture. And it's clearly seen that this proverb includes the valuable cultural identity which is related to our nationality. However, in English proverbs the same strong meaning is expressed with the help of the everyday used item *“milk”* that is common widespread in other cultures and nations too.

Bukenya et al (1997:48) define a proverb as a brief, clearly expressed figurative comment on a situation. They assert that imagery is the strongest point in proverbs as seen the ability to comment convincingly on a situation through the use of accurate figures of speech. They add that proverbs draw their images from various sources like flora and fauna, people's habits, customs, occupations and beliefs, social and political institutions and other forms of oral literature. According to them, the power of the proverb lies in the appropriateness with which the speaker applies a figurative statement to a factual situation. They give two factors which contribute to the strength of proverbs which are the choice of words in the proverb and the structure or shape of the proverb. In addition, they state that the words in a proverb are chosen because of their sound, their meaning and what they suggest.

According to Kipury [7,148-157], proverbs are usually stated in the form of a maxim, epigram or aphorism or that they can be in the form of a poetic statement. Kipury further notes that the basic difference between a proverb and other forms of oral literature is that while some of them, like riddles, can be posed or listed in succession at a specific time in a specific context, and songs are sung

during functions, proverbs cannot. She adds that it is a mark of admirable elegance in speech to be able to use the apt aphorism skillfully.

CONCLUSION

From all the definitions given above, key aspects of what a proverb can be deduced. **First** is that a proverb contains an element of truth in it. **Second**, is that proverb are cultural and come in short statements. **Third** is that they are figurative in meaning. **Fourth**, they reflect wisdom of the user. The working definition of this study therefore will be that proverbs are brief, concise and wise statements which are culturally based and have a figurative meaning. The linguistic definition of a proverb is that you cannot rely on words used in order to arrive at the meaning of the proverb. This is because the words in a proverb take a different meaning other than the one implied by the words used.

Several scholars in the field of paremiology have advanced their views on characteristics of proverbs. To exemplify, Norrick [7,32-34] as he cited in Dabaghi (2012), proverbs have certain characteristics. He maintains that proverbs are self-contained in that none of their essential grammatical units may be replaced. This distinguishes proverbs from proverbial phrases which do not have grammatical units. In addition, he states that proverbs are in statement form. Furthermore, he asserts that proverbs must be complete sentences. Finally, he states that proverbs are tradition as they are items of folklore. The characteristic above distinguishes proverbs from statements we encounter every day in speech or in writing. Whereas words in sentences can be replaced with their synonyms, replacing words in a proverb will kill it. This is because proverbs have a fixed form. Moreover, proverbs constitute three important things. **The first** one is that of shortness such that it can be uttered in a breath. **Secondly**, a proverb should have sense and **the third** is that it should have salt; so as not to be easily forgotten. Shortness in a

proverb means that the words contained in them are carefully chosen to deliver the message effectively and also to enhance memorability.

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