

## THE PLACE OF PROVERBS IN LINGUISTIC STUDIES

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**Abstract.** Proverbs are by far the richest man's prominence being a privilege and a multifaceted reflection of communication activities. They serve the presence of an ongoing process of mentality as effective spoken or written instruments conveying countless senses, intentions, experiences, purposes and so on. This paper aims to explore the significance of proverbs at various levels of communications through a thorough depiction of the essential traits and various possible inherent and intended meanings which they convey. It is mainly concerned with viewing the communicative significance of proverbs through involving them to the possible speech acts they intend to provoke and through expounding the multiple congenital meanings which they imply when used in a communicative situation. It can be explicitly demonstrated through this paper that proverbs are used as an intrinsic estimation of the communication process emphasizing different values of instructive functions, moral considerations, knowledges, wisdoms and experiences at and for the will of human being

**Key words:** Proverbs, speech acts, functions, meaning, significance

## МЕСТО ПОСЛОВИЦ В ЛИНГВИСТИЧЕСКИХ ИССЛЕДОВАНИЯХ

**Аннотация.** Пословицы - это, безусловно, выдающееся положение самого богатого человека, являющееся привилегией и многогранным отражением коммуникативной деятельности. Они служат присутствию продолжающегося процесса мышления в качестве эффективных устных или письменных инструментов, передающих бесчисленные чувства, намерения, переживания, цели и так далее. Целью данной статьи является исследование значения пословиц на различных уровнях коммуникации посредством тщательного описания основных черт и различных возможных внутренних и предполагаемых значений, которые они передают. В основном он занимается рассмотрением коммуникативного значения пословиц посредством вовлечения их в возможные речевые действия, которые они призваны спровоцировать, и посредством объяснения множества врожденных значений, которые они подразумевают при использовании в коммуникативной ситуации. В этой статье можно наглядно продемонстрировать, что пословицы используются в качестве внутренней оценки процесса общения, подчеркивая различные значения поучительных функций, моральных соображений, знаний, мудрости и опыта по воле и по воле человека.

*Ключевые слова: Пословицы, речевые акты, функции, смысл, значение.*

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### **Introduction**

Proverbs, presumably, are a reflection of the most powerful resources which language make available whenever humans are prepared to reach the utmost atmosphere of elegance.

Shaping the language figuratively and non-literally may touch a level beyond language itself. In fact, proverbs would be described as one of the most important utilizations in English getting an increased consideration at the basic levels of language understanding, teaching and learning. In the broadest sense, they are the precious products of human thoughts, realities, attitudes,

feelings and beliefs. Such a broad area of human experience has made proverbs universally accepted. The present paper tackles the various speech acts which they implicitly or explicitly express and, hence, it is concerned eventually with viewing their possible envisioned senses and their significance when used in any communicative event. To get an efficient plausibility of the force of proverbs, the paper is coloured with various thematic groups of proverbs on society, justice, weather and other kinds. The reason behind quoting various kinds of proverbs is to elaborate and enhance the validity that proverbs have indeed communicative significance and value when used in communication being an impressive and widely used tool of expression in language. According to Whiting, a proverb is "An expression which owing its birth to the people, testifies its origin in form and phrase.

It expresses what a fundamental truth is apparently in a homely language, often ornamented, however, with alliteration and rhyme (Whiting, 1983). In a more general sense, proverbs are described as "self-contained, pithy, traditional expressions with didactic content and fixed, poetic form" By self-contained is meant that their grammatical units can't be replaced by other units (Norrick 1985.p 31) Proverbs are simple and concrete sayings popularly known and repeated, which express a truth, based on common sense or the practical experience of humanity.

They are traditional sayings which offer advice or present a moral in a short and pithy manner (The Oxford Dictionary of Proverbs, 2004: ix). Proverbs are often metaphorical. Proverbs that describe a basic rule of conduct may also be known as maxims. The study and collection of proverbs is called paremiology (from the Greek word *paroimía*, "proverb") and can be dated back as far as Aristotle, and the person who is interested in the study of proverbs is called a paremiologist (a proverb scholar).

Proverbs are found in all world languages and cultures and they are "often borrowed from other languages and cultures" (Hernadi & Steen,1999: 11; Fair,2000:

5). The origins of proverbs are often unknown and lost with time; it is not easy to trace back the origins of most of them. Proverbs are often found among the literate as well as the illiterate people and they are transferred orally. Proverbs dig deep in the history of mankind, and they are not confined to a specific country, culture or language. In other words, "they go beyond all frontiers; they have been found and used by the most ancient nations like the Sumerians, Egyptians, Indians, Chinese, Persians, Greek and Romans" (Sagiv, 1997: 1). Moreover, although proverbs are often borrowed from similar languages and cultures, they sometimes come down to the present through more than one language and culture. The Bible and Medieval Latin have played an important role in spreading proverbs across Europe.

The process of coining, remembering and sharing proverbs results in transferring "accumulated human experience", which is an advantage of developing human language (Hernadi & Steen,1999: 2

**Definitions of Proverbs** It seems that defining proverbs is not an easy matter; it is similar to that of defining the concept of word. There is no unanimous agreement among paremiologists on a fixed and convincing definition to the term proverb. Most paremiologists admit the difficulty of defining proverbs and some of them even deny the possibility of defining them. Among them, are the most famous scholars, Taylor, the old paremiologist, Whiting and Jones. For Taylor, it is difficult, or even impossible to define a proverb and there is an "incommunicable quality which tells us that whether a sentence is a proverb and the other is not " (Grzybek, 1995: 4). Whiting, on the other hand, believes that there is no necessity for defining proverbs, "since all of us know what a proverb is". Moreover, Jones states, implicitly, that there is a real difficulty or even impossibility in defining proverbs. For him, a proverb is just "an expression we recognize as proverbial" (Paczolay, 2004: 2).

On the contrary, in spite of the dispute on the possibility of giving an exact and satisfying definition of a proverb, some well-noted paremiologists like Arewa and Dundes, Nagy, Yusuf, Mieder and Paczolay have tried to give a possible definition. Arewa and Dundes (1964: 71) define a proverb as "a statement which sums up a situation, passes judgment, recommends a course of action, or serves as a secular past precedents for present action". For Yusuf (1997: 1), a proverb is a "term which refers to a short, repeated, witty statement of experience which is used to further social end.". For Nagy (1979, as quoted in Paczolay, 2004: 2), a proverb is: a popular set phrase having no author, known mostly in different languages, expressing in one sentence a principle,

advice, a genuine or assumed truth in a general, concise form, its basic idea being of general validity, or at least its user considers it as such.

To Mieder (1989, as quoted in Paczolay, 2004: 3), proverbs are "short, generally known sentences of the folk that contain wisdom, truths, morals, traditional views in a metaphorical, fixed and memorable form and that are handed down orally from generation to generation". In fact, Mieder has noticed the disagreement among paremiologists concerning giving an agreed-upon definition to proverbs and tried to solve this issue. To this purpose, Mieder (1999: 2-5) made an experiment of asking fifty-five people to write down their definitions of proverbs. He obtained the following definition: a proverb is a "phrase, saying, sentence, statement or expression of folk which contains above all wisdom, truth, morals, experience, lessons and advice concerning life and which has been handed down from generation to generation."

Paczolay, the famous Hungarian paremiologist, (1996: 1) notes that when trying to give any definition to a proverb, it "should distinguish it from other similar items like quotations and aphorisms. It must also include a set of recognized and necessary characteristics of proverbs". Similarly, he states that "proverbs appear in the form of short sentences, they have no known author or literary source, they have a currency and they have history". Thus, he (1996: 1) proposes that a proverb is: a short standard statement having an evident or implied general meaning, related to a certain field of general human conditions, attitudes or actions, where it is valid with implied limitations.

It is known and often quoted in a period of time in a certain language community, sometimes in a short form (the rest being implied). In common knowledge it has no known author or literary source.

Lyons (1968: 177) proposes that proverbs are ready-made structures or utterances and from a grammatical point of view they are not regarded as sentences, "even though they are distributionally independent and thus satisfy the definition of the sentence".

From the above-mentioned definitions offered by the most famous paremiologists, we can deduce that there is no specific or agreed-upon definition to proverbs and paremiologist differ and vary in their comprehension of the concept of a proverb.

#### Characteristics of English Proverbs

There is a set of features that characterize English proverbs. These features make them easy to learn and remember. This is due to certain stylistic devices that encircle them (Hernadi & Steen, 1999:4). These features are alliteration, parallelism, rhyme and ellipsis. Some of these stylistic devices are phonemic like alliteration, assonance, and rhyme, syntactic like parallelism or balance and ellipsis.

Alliteration, the repetition of similar consonant sounds, is a common characteristic of English proverbs as in the alliteration between "will" and "way" in the proverb "Where there is a will, there is a way." and the alliteration between forgive and forget in the proverb "Forgive and forget". Also assonance, the repetition of similar vowel sounds is a very familiar feature of English proverbs, as in the assonance between the short vowel sound /i/ of stitch and in and also between the diphthong sound /ai/ of time and nine in the proverb "A stitch in time saves nine." (Hernadi & Steen 1999:4)f.

#### Conclusion

Proverbs are short, eloquent and wise forms of expressions. They are important structures in all languages of the world and they play an important role in cultural as well as linguistic studies. Proverbs are found in almost all cultures and they are often derived from other cultures. The origin of proverbs are often unknown or missed with time. Proverbs reflect the cultural aspects of the language users. Proverbs derive from the actual observation and use of everyday life and they can express different topics. Some proverbs are universal and are found in almost all languages, some are often culture-bound and language specific. The comprehension of proverbs depends on the linguistic as well as the nonlinguistic context in which they are used in.

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