THE PRAGMATIC AND SOCIOLINGUISTIC APPROACH TO FOLKLORE

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Abstract

In 1846, William Thoms introduced the word folklore, and since then arguments about the true definition of the word have been widely developed (Dundes, 1965). Folklore includes all knowledge, meanings, values, attitudes, assumptions, feelings, and beliefs transmitted in traditional forms orally or by customary examples. The variability in the context of a community and the functional and stylistic features of folklore materials, at a time of social change (Hendricks, 2019), reveal the universal character of the connection of folklore with pragmatic and sociolinguistics. The sociolinguistic method of description and analysis (Gumperz, 2003) of the linguistic features of the folklore text, in social contexts, shows that its structure can be integrated into the linguistic structure, while Pragmatic Theory (Lawal, 2012) identifies two main structures: the structure surface and background texture. The main structures consist of six levels. The first level is linguistic and is located in the surface structure. The linguistic level is the level at which utterances are produced: phonological, morphological, syntactic, lexical, and semantic features. The other levels are further divided into contexts and competencies symmetrically. Taking these into account, the different approaches to the study of the folklore text as a linguistic object are easily distinguishable.

The object of this paper is the pragma-sociolinguistic approach to proverbs. The study of the formal features of proverbs expands, including the social contexts in which they are used and the participants in the acts of communication. Our paper relies on the pragma-sociolinguistic theory of Adegbija 1982, revised in 1987. This theory posits that the pragma-sociolinguistic concept (cf. 1982) refers to the various speech contexts facilitating effective communication. The concept of pragma-sociolinguistics means historical, personal, environmental, sociocultural features and linguistic aspects of all factors related to the context in which a certain discourse occurs.

Keywords: social context, pragmatic and sociolinguistic theory, language level, proverbs, folklore.

Introduction

In 1846, William Thoms introduced the word folklore and since then arguments about the true definition of the word have been widely developed (Dundes, 1965). The word "folklore" replaced existing terms, including popular literature, because it is more of a story than literature (Letter to the Editor. In The Athenaeum. Ldn, 1846, no. 982, p. 862-863). Dundes argued that the word 'folklore', being a compound of 'folk' (people) and 'lore' (knowledge), would be a good Anglo-Saxon compound instead of all other terms. According to Tolken (1996), "...folklore is context, performance, attitude, cultural taste". It includes all knowledge, meanings, values, attitudes, assumptions, feelings and beliefs transmitted in traditional forms orally or by customary examples.

Forms of cultural expression are transmitted from generation to generation and are an important part of a nation's history and identity, the fundamental part of which is language. So, folklore is an important part of a society's culture, while language is the basic tool for its transmission and preservation (McDowell, 2018). Charles Briggs (2008), sees folkloristics as an entry into "areas of dialogue with existing disciplines". The variability in the context of a community, and the functional and stylistic features of folklore materials, also at a time when the circumstances of society change (Hendricks, 2019), reveal the universal character of the connection between folklore and pragma-sociolinguistics. The specific features of the culture are reflected in

folklore in all its forms of myths, legends, songs, proverbs, etc. To complement the long diachronic orientation in the field of folklore, being bound by a synchronic focus, we must try to understand specific moments in time, in the context of all active variables. The unknown author, the reader, the manifested reality, and the knowledge that is transmitted in the text to realize the creative idea, are important components of its structure. On the other hand, the study of a folklore text is based on understanding the language of folklore as a complex formation. Therefore, language, its social side and its realization are intertwined and distinct. Each sound or phrase acquires meaning through its placement in a larger scheme, i.e. a structure.

The sociolinguistic method of description and analysis (Gumperz, 2003) of the linguistic features of the folklore text, in social contexts, has as its main aim to show how the structure of the folklore text, mentioned above, can be integrated into the linguistic structure. Pragmatic theory (Lawal's, 2012) identifies two main structures: surface structure and background structure. The main structures consist of six levels. The first level is linguistic and is located in the surface structure. The linguistic level is the level at which utterances are produced: phonological, morphological, syntactic, lexical, and semantic features that are embedded in the linguistic level. The levels are further divided into contexts and competencies symmetrically. Taking these into account, the different approaches to studying the folklore text as a linguistic object are easily distinguishable.

Let us refer, for example, to the mythological narrative which makes possible the conception of real and imaginary reality. This process is manifested through bright and colorful images that not only have an artistic function but also have a special cultural meaning, as well as evaluative and emotional categories, which play a major role in the worldview of a people. The image can be a complex sign which can refer to various objects and phenomena of reality. The concept of an image is closely related to the notion of a symbol. The symbol is characterized, above all, by its mythological interpretation (Cassirer, 1972). On the other hand, the sign is not only a unity of meaning but also a unity of codes. In this case, to analyze the images, we can apply pragmatic and semiotic approaches. Pragmatics, which according to Levin (1997), "is an aspect that accounts for all those mechanisms that connect language with the context of its use", orients us to understand the totality of the dimensions of meaning that will form our focus in this deed. Also, important for the study is sociolinguistics, which aims to analyze language habits to identify those features that are limited to the use of language by certain individuals in certain contexts. The theory of the classification of speech acts is also essential, which helps us understand the linguistic functions in a certain speech or text (Adegbija, 1988; Adeniji & Osunbade, 2014).

Semiotics and folklore

The main object of this paper is the pragmatic-sociolinguistic approach to proverbs. The study of the formal features of proverbs expands, including the social contexts in which they are used, as well as the participants in the acts of communication.

Proverbs summarize situations and advise short phrases (Bertram, 1996). Considered the "wisdom of one and many," proverbs are also sharp philosophical sayings. They "wrap conventional wisdom in a poetic wrapper, making it aesthetically pleasing and memorable" (Yankah, 1986).

Proverbs are based on experience and close observation of life and natural phenomena, and through metaphorical language they can warn, advise, or reprimand, drawing attention to the moral or ethical consequences of human behavior. All this comes down to the fact that proverbs are prevalent in all societies. Since they belong to universal truth, they are received as discourse ornaments. However, considerable cultural sensitivity is needed to understand their full semantic nuances in social interaction (Yankah, 1986).

The lessons often contained in proverbs become tools for moral education (Yankah, 1986). In addition, the element of education in the use of proverbs can be included in the rhetorical function, that is, as a tool of persuasion in social interaction, where the user of the proverb seeks to change or reinforce the listener's conviction, referring to parallels within the universe of proverbs. By making the transmitter agree with the proverb's moral principle, the speaker thereby hopes to win him over. The proverb's rhetorical power derives in part from its authoritative sources.

In proverbs, abstract ideas, values, and emotions are represented by certain linguistic signs. Furthermore, the actualization of the meaning of proverbs in situations depends on the skill of the user, the context of the speech, the cultural background, and the interpretive ability of the listeners, as well as on other linguistic considerations. Fashina (1998), summarizes the argument on the definition of proverbs when he writes that "a proverb is a condensed text that includes a whole range of historical, cultural and moral narratives with the aim of didactic values as a philosophical school of thought".

Our proverbs come in the form of conclusions, involving a long work of analysis and synthesis, in the form of truths verified in the past. They evaluate life events and phenomena with an educational and ethical-moral purpose. Ideo-artistic features, polysemous nature, and a high degree of generalization make proverbs have multiple classification systems. The more important a problem is for the people, the more characteristic a phenomenon or situation is for its history, and the wider the cycle of proverbs related to them.

This paper relies on Adegbija's (1982) pragma-sociolinguistic theory, revised in 1987. This theory posits that the concept of pragma-sociolinguistics (cf. 1982) refers to the various speech contexts that facilitate effective communication. The concept of pragma-sociolinguistics means historical, personal, environmental, sociocultural features and linguistic aspects of all factors related to the context in which a certain discourse takes place.

Leech and Thomas (1990), define pragmatics as the meaning possibilities that utterances have for their users and interpreters. Pragmatists agree that pragmatic study is stimulated by context. Therefore, contextual exploration is successful if the contextual factors of each text are well explained.

Pragma theory (Acheoah, 2015) includes these concepts:

Setting: The physical context of the communicative event in both the immediate and distant (referential) meaning.

Subject: The message conveyed in/by text.

Sociolinguistic variables: Meanings conveyed by age, cultural background, social status, race, gender, relationships, etc.

Psychological acts: Different emotions expressed through linguistic and extra-linguistic acts.

Inference: Making logical inferences from the available linguistic and extra-linguistic components of the text.

Indexers: Grammatical categories that have the potential to establish the relationship between language and context.

Shared contextual knowledge: Refers to the pieces of available information available to the participants of the ongoing discourse for effective communication.

Emergent context: Any emergent situation in an ongoing communicative event. It redirects the performance and interpretation of subsequent linguistic, extra-linguistic and psychological acts.

Linguistic implication: Any meaning implied through language.

Behavioral implication: Any meaning conveyed by extralinguistic and psychological acts.

Contextual presupposition: The product of shared contextual knowledge.

Background Assumptions: In an ongoing communication, participants derive meanings from verbal and nonverbal cues.

Deviants of the pragma: Deviant expressions used by the participants of the discourse, as an illocutionary strategy.

Interactive participant: A communicative participant who performs linguistic, extra-linguistic, and psychological acts, as communicative contributions that do not affect the interpretive process, but determine or generate continuation (speech act).

Non-interactive participant: A non-interactive participant who does not participate in an ongoing communication, but is present intentionally or not.

The research is conducted at the levels of linguistic, situational, psychological, social, and cosmological contexts. Each folkloric creation, and proverbs, constitute a separate encyclopedia of wisdom, thought, psychology, artistic and aesthetic consciousness. They constitute the popular ethical-moral code. They aim to guide people in their work, behavior, and activity as a citizen and member of a certain society.

1. *Me mirë të shkojë koka se fytyra*

Word values: affirmative, evaluative
Linguistic context: A man of honor has two fingers, a good name is something important, so it must be guarded with great care.
Context of the situation: A man of honor and dignity is held in very high esteem and the people around him will do anything to show respect to him.
Psychological context: Every individual should try to do what will bring respect and honor to him.
Social context: In Albanian culture, honor, among other things, means virtuous attitude and behavior, honesty. Society will respect a person more if he respects himself.
Cosmological Context: Nature has a way of respecting people who live with honor.

2. *Trimi i mirë me shokë shumë*

Word values: Affirmative, evaluative
Linguistic context: He is brave and fearless, he is not afraid and does not break before anything, that does not frighten his eyes. Everyone wants to stand next to the brave.
Context of the situation: The value of the fearless man is enhanced when he is surrounded by friends and companions.
Psychological context: Every leader needs the support of the people to achieve a reasonable degree of success.
Social context: Human support is a great asset.
Cosmological context: Unity is strength.

3. *Nuk ka majë, pa rrëzë*

Word values: Declarative, advisory
Language context: Take all the necessary measures before starting a job.
Context of the situation: No one or anything can move forward without a sound foundation.
Psychological context: There is no development without sound support.
Social context: You have to work hard since you are young; you have to get your life in order from a young age.
Cosmological context: We must take care of the education of people since they are minors and young people.

4.   E di ku i dhemb dhembi

Word values: Affirmative, predictive
Linguistic context: One knows for himself what he needs most and where he has the weakest point.
Context of the situation: He knows where the problem is.
Psychological context: Your mind wanders or dwells on the thing that worries you the most.
Social context: He who deals with a job knows better its flaws and difficulties
Cosmological context: In life, everyone must clarify their obligations.

5.   Luga e madhe të zë fytin

Word values: predictive, warning
Linguistic context: Do not covet too much or it will turn out badly later.
The context of the situation: Where something is done with great fanfare and noise, nothing comes of it.
Psychological context: Don't be fooled by the hype.
Social context: When you brag too much about something, don't expect too much from it.
Cosmological context: Where they show the big piece take the small spoon.

6.   S'merret bota në krahë (në kurriz).

Word values: affirmative, suggestive
Linguistic context: No one or anything can move forward without having a sound foundation;
Context of the situation: The work must be done in sequence according to the conditions of the opportunities.
Psychological context: It is not possible to do or finish all work at once, nothing comes ready-made.
Social context: There is no development without sound support.
Cosmological context: It takes effort to do a difficult job.

7.   E bardhë është edhe bora në mal, por po ta prekësh mërdhin.

Word value: suggestive
Linguistic context: Not everything beautiful and bright is necessarily good.
Context of the situation: Looks lie.
Psychological context: Don't be fooled by the hype.
Social context: Where you show the big piece, take the small spoon!
Cosmological context: To evaluate something, don't rely on the external sides, but look inside, the essence, the foundations, the causes, and the goals.

Conclusion

The richness and moral lessons inherent in proverbs are understood in the context of their use to achieve a certain illocutionary effect. The analysis made above brings the proverbs in the form of advice, warning, prediction, suggestion, and affirmation, showing that respect and honor are earned, that people are respected in society, relying on what they do, that the value of something does not stand on the outside, but on the inside, etc. So, using proverbs as didactic tools with the truth they carry, the aim is to preserve and promote cultural values.

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