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LINGUOCULTURAL ASPECTS OF PROVERBS AND SAYINGS

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ABSTRACT

This article offers an in-depth and classification of proverbs and sayings. It analyzes a range of linguistic and cultural elements such as syntax, semantics, pragmatic, and sociocultural factors – to showcase the diverse and complex nature of proverbs and sayings. The article explores how proverbs and sayings reflect cultural values, beliefs, tradition, and social interaction, highlighting their lasting importance in oral traditions and communication.

Keywords: wisdom, oral tradition, cultural dimensions, syntax, semantics, creation, linguocultural, pragmatics, sociocultural influences, social interactions, metaphorical, figurative language, linguo-culturology, linguocultureme.

INTRODUCTION

A proverb is the beauty of language, a sharp tool of speech, and the wisdom of the people. Each nation's history, thought and spiritual state find expression in its proverbs and sayings. Every proverb reflects the identity of the people who created it, showcasing the nation's cultural heritage. Proverbs and sayings promote ideals such as love for one's homeland, the importance of hard work, and other human virtues. Just about everyone heard at least one proverb, sayings and most people heard more. Proverbs offer a concise record of folk wisdom and have appeared in oral tradition, literature, art, and popular culture for centuries. In translation, understanding proverbs and sayings correctly and conveying them artistically holds a special place. To preserve their meaning, the translator needs keen insight and considerable skill. Failing to translate proverbs and sayings effectively can compromise the literary works impact.

Example 1: "Don't count your chickens before they hatch"

Literal meaning: Don't assume the outcome of something before it's certain.

Cultural relevance: Reflects agricultural societies where outcomes are unpredictable

Translation challenge: In French, the equivalent proverb is "Il ne faut pas vendre la peau de l'ours avant de l'avoir tué" ("Don't sell the bear's skin before you've killed it"). The imagery differs completely, with one rooted in farming and the other in hunting. A direct translation of either proverb into the other language could mislead or confuse readers.

Example 2: "The early bird catches the worm"

Literal meaning: Acting early leads to success.

Cultural relevance: Relates to the behavior of birds, but not all cultures value early action the same way.

Translation challenge: In Spanish, the equivalent is "Al que madruga, Dios lo ayuda", which means "God helps those who wake up early."

A direct translation could overlook the religious nuance in the Spanish version or fail to highlight the importance of punctuality in a way that aligns with the target culture.

Example 3: "Out of the frying pan, into the fire"

Literal meaning: Moving from a bad situation to an even worse one.

Cultural relevance : Relates to cooking, a universal activity, but the specific imagery might not resonate in all cultures.

Translation challenge: In German, a similar proverb is "Vom Regen in die Traufe", meaning "From the rain to the eaves." A literal translation into another language might miss the metaphor or cultural essence, making it essential to find a proverb with a similar meaning.

Many proverbs use specific cultural symbols, objects, or animals that hold meaning that resonate deeply within a particular society. These elements are chosen because they carry specific connotations or associations unique to that culture.

1. Cats: In English-speaking cultures, the proverb "curiosity killed the cat" suggests that excessive curiosity can lead to trouble. However, in some Japanese folklore, a cat (especially the "Maneki Neko," or beckoning cat) is a symbol of good luck and fortune.

2. Elephants: In Thai culture, elephants represent strength, loyalty, and wisdom, and a proverb like "white elephant" means something valuable yet burdensome. In English, "elephant in the room" refers to an obvious problem that people avoid discussing.

3. Dogs: In Western cultures, a dog is often a symbol of loyalty, leading to proverbs like "a dog is a man's best friend." In contrast, in Arabic culture, the phrase "the barking of a dog doesn't reach the sky" implies that insignificant things can't affect greater truths, showing a different symbolic view.

4. Crows: In many Western proverbs, a crow often symbolizes bad omens or death, as in "a murder of crows." However, in some Native American traditions, crows are seen as clever and resourceful animals, respected for their adaptability and intelligence.

"The Wisdom of the Native Americans" is a great source for understanding the values and worldview of Native American traditions, including how animals like crows, wolves, and eagles are viewed symbolically in these cultures. Native American proverbs often highlight the intelligence, adaptability, and sacredness of animals, contrasting with how they might be viewed in other cultures.

The structure and syntax of proverbs are often concise, using rhythm, rhyme, or alliteration to make them memorable. This linguistic style can vary across languages, affecting how these sayings are perceived or used in communication.

For example: In English, proverbs like "A stitch in time saves nine" and "Actions speak louder than words" use rhyme and brevity to leave a lasting impression. Spanish ones like "Más vale tarde que nunca" (Better late than never) highlight local expressions and idiomatic structures. These linguistic elements can make proverbs unique to each culture, shaping how they resonate or are applied in conversation. Another example can be found in French and Russian. In French, the proverb "Petit à petit, l'oiseau fait son nid" (Little by little, the bird builds its nest) uses rhyme and repetition to emphasize patience and persistence. Meanwhile, in Russian, "Без труда не вытащишь и рыбку из пруда" (Without effort, you can't even pull a fish out of a pond) uses rhythm and imagery to underscore the value of hard work. These linguistic features in each language give the proverbs their own cultural flair, affecting how they are remembered and understood.

CONCLUSION: In conclusion, proverbs and sayings provide valuable insights into the cultural and linguistic characteristics of different societies. They reflect the values, beliefs, and traditions of a community through vivid imagery, metaphors, and moral lessons. These expressions, often tied to nature, social norms, or historical events, reveal how people in different cultures perceive the world. Proverbs not only serve as communication tools but also preserve cultural identities. By examining the linguocultural aspects of proverbs, we gain a deeper understanding of diverse human experiences, fostering a greater appreciation for cultural differences and improving cross-cultural interactions.

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