

Cognitive linguistics and English proverbs with moral issues

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Morality is the basis of things and truth is the substance of all morality.

(Mahatma Gandhi)

Abstract:

As linguistics is a broad field which includes and works on many various aspects of both academic and social sphere it is obvious that it has its co-spheres that are important to be mastered while learning language. Cognitive linguistics is one of the mostly learned branch of linguistics and it is a combination of knowledge and research from linguistics and human psychology. This is a description of how language and cognition interact with each other. It is irrefutable that language forms the thoughts of the learners. Furthermore when another language is being picked up new information, culture is absorbed. Morality and mentality is effected by language. Another way of being aware of one culture is to learn proverbs in this language.

Key words:Experiential view, prominence view , Attentional view of language, Generalization commitment, Cognitive commitment, Metaphor,

Introduction

The term cognitive linguistics should be defined clearly firstly, according to Merriam-Webster “cognitive” means “of relating to being, or involving conscious intellectual activity as means of thinking, remembering, reasoning. Socio-cultural impact of the language is believed to be vital in teaching and training process. An individual can not be socialized or master language without being impacted. For this notion, cognitive linguistics study cognitive capacities of human beings, topics of special interest. Cognitive linguistics is a brand new approach in the linguistic sphere which is a combination of both knowledge and behavior. But some linguists describe cognitive linguistics as a “movement” or an “enterprise” because of its temporary nature. Cognitive linguistics deals with the problems of linguistic sphere . Language is assumed to be a window to the inner nature of human psychology, it provides to have a look inside the structure and organization of thoughts and ideas. This subject is one of the contemporary aspects of linguistics which is being learned and researched more in both academic and cognitive spheres. However the field is considered to be new subject for science and its general framework emerged in seventies, there are two topics should be considered:

-some of the cognitive assumptions are not new which are studied in cognitive linguistics. Many of the ideas about the subject present in modern science were already in the minds of earlier philosophers, thinkers and philologists. Academics and scholars who are from totally different backgrounds have obtained the same or nearly the same results independently of each other. Although there are different views in cognitive linguistics, the majority of linguists who are working together in this paradigm, announced new theory that linguistic knowledge is part of general thinking and cognition;

-it is not homogenous framework. There are three approaches suggested as a main ones: the Experiential view, prominence view and the Attentional view of language.

Firstly, experiential view explains more empirical and practical description of meaning; instead of postulating logical rules and objective definitions which are mainly based on theoretical considerations, in short terms, this approach studies on what might be going on in the minds of speakers when they produce and understand words and sentences. According to this framework, the events they know well, the experience or knowledge can be transferred to those other objects and events which they may be unfamiliar, and even abstract concepts can be addressed to predict by the usage of initial inner knowledge. This framework was on the basis of metaphors. However, it does not only apply to the field of metaphor but to other figurative resources which are estimated as deviant from the rules of grammar in traditional generative linguistics. Metonymy has been put forward to be an example for this notion.

Second is “Prominence view” is a phenomenon introduced by the Danish gestalt psychologist Rubin. It is based on concepts of profiling and ground or figure segregation. The prominence principle explains why, when we look at an object in our environment, only conceptually prominent figure can be stood out to the eyes of observers. This principle is to be applied to the study of language too, especially to the study of local relations. It is also used in the sphere of profiling. It was explained as to explain grammatical constructs while figure and ground is employed for the explanation of grammatical relations.

The last one is “Attentional view” describes what is actually going to express, reflects those parts of an event which is attractive to the eyes people. A main concept to this notion was introduced by Fillmore’s theory of “frame”, i.e. an assemblage of the knowledge in particular situation. The notion was used to analyze event chains and cognition. Conceptual elements and relationships were set as an event frames which co-evoke each other and shared by speakers. Certain parts of event-frame are sometimes brought into the foreground of minds while others are kept in background. So, this framework explains why cognitive ability is highlighted to direct the ability to direct our attention. This also called as “windowing attention” and it is a result of different linguistic expressions. The motion event is one of the examples of this given event. It includes a set of central defining elements such as figure, ground, path, motion, manner, and cause. Different and specific framing devices are used in different languages. Thus motion elements such as path and manner are reflected in various ways in various languages.

Cognitive linguistics is mainly addressed by some of its broad fields. Two key commitments to the notion of the subject are: “Generalization commitment” and “Cognitive commitment”. The orientation and approach is underlay by these two commitments.

The generalization commitment –the assumption which was made by cognitive linguistics is estimated to be structure and principles holding different aspects of the language. It means that cognitive linguistics can not be studied without the other fields of linguistics such as syntax, semantics and phonology. It is said to be academic concept of learning cognitive language.

Cognitive commitment-it is known from its name that the meaning of the words in language is learned and it is often done with the help of imagination or memory. For example: when it is said like” a cat is sitting on the table” it is imagined that any kind of cat is sitting on the surface of the chair.

Cognitive linguistics claims that metaphor is one of the vital feature of human language. Metaphor is meaning extension. New meaning in the word can be risen. Furthermore, metaphor is a huge impact in describing new meaning.

Theoretical principles in cognitive linguistics

It is not possible to summarize in a few words what the main theoretical ideas underlying linguistic paradigm are, especially in cognitive linguistics. The foundations of theoretical principles are divided into two aspects.

- language as an integral part of cognition;
- language is symbolic in nature.

Language as an integral part of cognition-the difference between language and other mental processes in not one of means but as one of degree. According to As Saeed (1997:300) gives explanation to the notion that:

Externally, principles of language use embody more general cognitive principles; and internally, that explanation must cross boundaries between levels of analysis.

Language is symbolic in nature-it is defined by Langacker(1987:11) in his book Foundations of cognitive grammar precisely with this assertion , namely that language:

Makes available to the speaker ...an open-ended set of linguistic signs or expressions, each of which associates a semantic representation of some kind with a phonological representation.

Cognitive linguistics defines the link between perception and cognition in these two examples on the basis of conceptual organization. Human brain can perceive and comprehend two of these processes related. In this sphere metaphor is used as a tool key for the comprehension of any given meaning . Metaphor is a utilized in mostly proverbs in linguistics. By utilizing metaphor moral meaning is transferred.

Linguistics also works with other concepts such morality which is necessary notion in the development of human behavior. Moral cognition is a process which allows a person to do or not to do by analyzing the issue carefully. Morality can not be easily learned or put into practice but society, people and surrounding are supportive of being morally intellectual. In modern sciences moral concept is important in educating children. It has been learned by many academics that, morality changes through personal development. Different moral characteristics is considered to develop by various factors including society, attitude of other people towards individual. Cognitive development occurs in the context of caring, mutually responsive relationship. People are naturally prone to be moral, and sense of responsibility to pursue moral goals they are, occasionally, engage in immoral behavior. As an alternative to viewing morality as an personal trait, sociologists and psychologists claim that morality can be seen by examining how people interact in social interaction. In learning cognitive factors and morality folk is incredible useful. From time to time the folk is being developed by the nation, it is obvious that myths, songs, novels are acceptable all the time when it comes to learn the issues quickly. Proverbs are one of the oldest version of folk. It has its own peculiarities while using. They make the speech more touchy and beautiful.

There are many academics worked on the notion of proverbs .Proverbs from the gist of what cultures consider of real concern to them (Lawal et al.1997:636), presenting cultural undesirables

and desirables, all of which betray the cultural models a culture lives by (Shore 1996). Honeck and Welge (1997:609) capture this as a “cognitive-ideals hypothesis,” consisting of “ideal-diaconfirming” and “ ideal-confirming” proverbs. Ideal- disconfirming proverbs exhort people to shun undesirable behaviors and ideal-confirming ones propagate desirable cultural values. People of the same culture transmit proverbs to posterity, and, above all, use them not only as a regulatory mechanism for their life, but also as a privileged mode of understanding. As representing

1.As Saeed (1997:300)where cognitive linguistics meets peremiology:A cognitive-contrastiveview of selected English proverbs.

2.Langacker(1987:11) exploration in English language and linguistics: ExELL.

3(Lawal et al.1997:636) proverbs and the ethnography of speaking folklore. American atropologist .

4.). Honeck and Welge (1997:609)proverb sand an LSD cult. The journal of American folklore.

recurrently lived and deeply entrenched cultural experiences, proverbs are invoked to make sense of abstract and concrete everyday experiences.

Metaphor is the thing which makes proverbs understandable and interesting. It is mainly used for rhetorical effect, directly refers to one thing but mentions another. It may have two different objects but similar in meaning. Two ideas may be concluded as one single moral look. One of the mostly cited examples are proverbs and it is used in literature to emphasize meaning or highlight similarities. Shakespeare used metaphor professionally in his monologues of heroes or heroines.

All the world's stage,

And all the men and women merely players;

They have their exits and entrances...(“All the world’s stage”monologue As you like it)

This expresses a metaphor because the world is compared to the stage. By using the word stage Shakespeare described the world as a stage, people are players who have own roles to complete. They have their own roles, coming, performance and leaving time. People’s behavior is like the role of stage players.

There are commonly known metaphors for all the people can be easily understood all over the world. A well-known proverb” Better be the head of a dog than the tail of a lion”. This proverb is to be understood metaphorically head is the upper part of human body, leaders are described as a head of any social group and they are compared to the head. Who is physically up it is defined as a head and preserves the generic-level structure. Heads stands in a sub-domain relation with particular person. From this point head has the leading role for other people. Tail is the final part of animals and they are not so important as head. Thus there is a metaphor in the words “head” and “tail”. Mainly animals are used as a metaphor and their meanings are famous such as:

Pigs are dirty, messy and rude.

Lions are courageous and noble.

Foxes are clever.

Dogs are loyal, dependable and dependant.

Cats are frikle and independent.

Wolves are cruel and murderous.

Gorillas are aggressive and violent.

By learning the proverbs of a country one can have a wide range of knowledge about the society and moral issues of these people. Whatever the interest in proverbs, studying them is a matter of great value in comprehension of the variety of cultures, societies, for proverbs like other oral traditions reflect people's values, the way they think and their attitudes towards their surroundings. S.J.Mohammad(1988).

American researcher on proverbs Weber had the conclusion that the American like to use proverbs about risk taking and risk. She says: *"Proverbs are part of a nation's beliefs and values, by looking at proverbs, we were able to show that long-standing cultural differences are one reason that the Chinese are wisdom loving tan American when it comes to financial and risk taking*

5. S.J.Mohammad(1988). Proverbial understanding. Child development.

issues". It is obvious that the mentality and way of living can be observed by the means of folk and people's behavior. Proverbs are the most ancient type of folk and there are many proverbs about the history, traditions of various cultures. Family affairs, beliefs, national values are obviously presented in the usage of proverbs. Society educates any individual if or if not he is the active member of the it. Even the way of expressing the ideas is clear from their folk. And Finnegan notes: "Proverbs are used on particular occasions, by individuals in particular contexts and their wit, their attractiveness, their insights, even their meaning must be seen as arising from the context(1972:425). Folk is utilized by the people in their own way of use. Many proverbs are always there for using in any sphere or theme of conversation among people. Mostly used proverbs are about moral issues. It is ranged that the most used moral proverbs are about:

-family affairs;

-friendship;

-motivational, behavioral;

It is more effective to use proverbs in speech because they are influential and well-built rather than simple words. Any kind of proverbs are utilized in upbringing children or being more passionate. These are some highly used English proverbs.

Actions speak louder than words-what people do is more important than what they say. Because executive is more difficult than promise. It is more highlighted than saying" Do not tell but do it". Weather the meaning is the same the effectiveness is less than proverb.

A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step-it is must to begin if it is hoped to finish. Anything even it takes long time to complete should be started at first. Then it will continue on its way. This proverb is used to motivate people who are afraid to start something new.

Better late than never- it is better to do something late than to never do it at all and miss your chance or regret till the end of your life.

Fortune favors the bold-people who are brave and who take risks are mostly successful in life than the people who are lack of commitment. Safety is not all the time safe place to live happily. If you have a chance to change something to good never miss the chance. Meaning of the proverb is used for the people who are afraid of taking risks.

God helps those who help themselves- good things do not come to anyone they can be reached by trying to obtain them. Nothing is taken for granted for anyone.

Practice makes perfect- it is impossible to be master at any field without attempt or failure. The more practice the more result is gained.

When in Rome, do as the Romans do- time or place requires to accept changes and change when it is time to be different. It helps to be more socialized with people.

All that glitters is not gold- it is impossible to understand anything before testing it. Outside of things can not show its real quality or value. Things that look good outwardly may not be as valuable or good. Even people who are attractive are not easily evaluated as with a beautiful mind and soul.

A stitch in time saves nine- if problem is dealt with on time it can help to prevent some disasters beforehand. Little steps to tackle with challenge is to be done or considered its upcoming affects is important.

As you sow, so you shall reap-it is impossible to get another thing if we give the bad thing. If you are not satisfied what you get, be aware of the things you give to others.

Cowards die many times before their death- cowards have problems with accepting the hardships in future so they think something dangerous or lethal happens to them and it makes them suffer all the time.

Do not bite off more than you can chew- it is difficult to accept responsibility which is tough for you. Overconfidence is a hard thing to satisfactorily accomplishment.

Proverbs are the translation of cultures, it is essential to emphasize that, tradition effects to the usage of proverbs. Moral issues are emphasized in proverbs such as how to choose good friends, keep relationships strong and be responsible to the attitude of your closes.

” *A man is known by the company he keeps*”. – your friend should be like you, people are evaluated with their friends. Good people do not choose bad company. Companionship will define your nature, education.

Conclusion:there are many theoretical and methodological approaches to the sphere of cognitive linguistics. Language is a symbolic and cognitive material in nature. Human experience is the driving force for what is meaningful in human mind; thought is a manipulation of symbols but the application of cognitive processes to conceptual structures. Meaning does not come from only external structure but by internal notions such as prior knowledge. Morality is taught by the means of proverbs in the usage of proverbs. Cognitive linguistics is an important in forming human mind with moral issues.

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