



LINGUISTIC ANALYZES OF CITATIONS, MAXIMS AND PROVERBS

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“It is a good thing to read books of quotations, because quotations when they are engraved in the memory give you good thoughts.”
Winston Churchill.

Abstract

This article analyses that they are all made to have a proverbial effect, in other words, they meet the same objective: to influence, to make the recipient act. Also, as they are considered as genres of the spoken language, the boundaries of their distinction remain fine. Oralism does not feel the need to define, unlike the scriptural which is obliged to classify, to describe. It is important to emphasize that paremiologists do not always agree with the restriction of paremiology to folkloric, sociological or even anthropological aspects, because in their opinion paremies are not limited to these considerations alone and that it is should be approached from a linguistic point of view. In other words, proverbs represent a particular type of discourse that deserves to be studied.

Key words: citations, maxims, proverbs, linguistics, proverbial effect.

Introduction

Any reader would agree with this statement which defines in a brief but strong way the notion of quotation which is a formula of the oral language, existing in cultures all over the world. Each language has a series of ordinary thoughts, like a sort of internalized memory of tradition. The quotation opens a window on the collective consciousness of a community, its mentality, its habits and its traditions without forgetting its geographical context.

Methods

Gonzalez Rey did remarkable researches that it was also during this period that paremia separated from other fixed expressions and sought to establish itself as the object of study of a concrete discipline:

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paremiology, on the other hand Léonor Ruiz Gurillo affirms that the term is already found in Homer. Gosselin says If the maxim emanates from cultivated or aristocratic characters, the proverbs seem rather the prerogative of popular characters or the petty bourgeoisie.

Discussion

What is a citation? It is defined as a short statement expressing a popular and practical advice, a truth of experience and which has become through common use, a formula common to an entire social group, presenting formal and stable characteristics. This linguistic form, both obvious and enigmatic, is the most paradoxical genre and one of the oldest in spoken language. But at the same time, it is he who has best resisted time. Its conciseness, its stylistic particularities such as rhymes, assonances or even word associations allow it to take root in the language and above all to engrave itself in memories. We can intuitively see how the quotation can fascinate: this wisdom of nations is given as simply coming from a supposed nature of things and of human beings. The citations are omnipresent and, beyond their poetic features, they give a beautiful illustration of daily life and are considered as a reflection of certain cultural aspects of a people. The use of quotations in everyday language enriches the discourse and its illocutionary force in human communication is always striking. It's also a fun way to learn since they make you think. Condensed and incisive, the quotation contains a moral or a truth of experience and it generally serves as an argument of authority.

Citations are everywhere, in the professional and domestic space, or during a conversation between friends. In other words, the frequency of their daily use is high. Thus they represent a deep approach to a foreign culture by allowing us to discover many cultural aspects of such and such a country and also to make a comparison with our own quotations.

The fixed expressions of a given language are currently enjoying particular favor in various circles of the human sciences interested in the facts of language. They are very important for the mastery of the mother tongue, as well as for the foreign language. For natives of a language, fixed expressions are a solid linguistic base and they obviously use them with remarkable ease. While for foreigners it becomes a real obstacle to overcome. It is, above all, a language that we learn, which is foreign to our mind; in this case, learning fixed expressions forces us to do a quest for logic. Even if learning them seems to us a difficult task, it is above all they who give a particular value to a foreign language in which we are interested. Understanding and using flawless fixed expressions in a particular language, whether native or foreign, gives the measure of our linguistic ability (Gonzalez Rey 2002: 15).

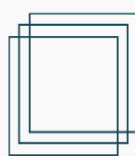
All these studies, proverbs have long remained neglected by linguists, since they were considered only as expressions frozen by time and not arousing any particular linguistic interest.



In fact, even the term *paremia*, which is used to speak of the proverb, is generally used to name fixed statements such as sayings, aphorisms, maxims, slogans, etc. All these statements are linked by certain common traits, such as their binary structure, their contentious value, among others.

They are all made to have a proverbial effect, in other words, they meet the same objective: to influence, to make the recipient act. As they are considered as genres of the spoken language, the boundaries of their distinction remain fine. Oralism does not feel the need to define, unlike the scriptural which is obliged to classify, to describe. It is important to emphasize that paremiologists do not always agree with the restriction of paremiology to folkloric, sociological or even anthropological aspects, because in their opinion *paremies* are not limited to these considerations alone and that it should be approached from a linguistic point of view. In other words, proverbs represent a particular type of discourse that deserves to be studied. However, knowing how to use them wisely involves finding a happy medium in the proper use of these phrases to avoid abusing them or, on the contrary, doing without them. Indeed, on the one hand, they cannot be avoided, because their ignorance (negligence) can lead to regrettable misunderstandings. On the other hand, their excessive use leads to an impoverishment of the conversation. To make a balanced use of them, it is above all necessary to know how to recognize them and this is only possible by analyzing their functioning in the language and of course their behavior in the discourse.

The strictly linguistic study of expressions remained fragmentary for a long time. Until the late 1970s, frozen expressions didn't really get much attention. as such. They were generally considered a marginal aspect of language by traditional linguistics. Until Chomsk's generative-transformational theory, syntax reigned supreme to the detriment of semantics and pragmatics. Therefore fixed expressions were automatically excluded since they did not fit the molds of the established rules. Yet fixed expressions are rooted in our daily lives. The origin of the first allusions made to the existence of expressions in a language dates back to the 15th-16th centuries (Les adages d'Erasmus, Etienne Pasquier's research on the problem of the transformation of quotations, Le Dictionnaire de Nicot, The Comedy of Quotes, by Monluc De Cramail, etc.). In a word, we find them in French, and moreover in all languages, in collections of quotations, maxims and other gnomic formulas responsible for transmitting popular and universal wisdom over the centuries. Over time, the works have sorted through these expressions and their use has expanded. Already in the 17th century, French lexicography made its appearance and dictionaries began to include fixed expressions. It is remarkable that it was also during this period that *paremia* separated from other fixed expressions and sought to establish itself as the object of study of a concrete discipline: paremiology (Gonzalez Rey 2002:19)¹.



But phraseology – a field that studies fixed expressions, will travel a longer path before reaching this right of citizenship that everyone will eventually grant it. It has long been ignored by linguists and was sometimes annexed by lexicology, sometimes by grammar, sometimes by stylistics and sought its place as a field in its own right. The first attestation of the term phraseology, which comes from the Greek phrase “the way of saying” and logos “science”, dates from the 18th century (1778). On the other hand Léonor Ruiz Gurillo (1997: 20) affirms that the term is already found in Homer.

Results

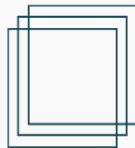
Phraseology has developed in four main directions:

1. Descriptive phraseology which aims to deal with the phraseological system on the formal, semantic and pragmatic axis. It is part of the approach synchronic.
2. The historical phraseology which is developed within the framework of the diachronic approach and who is interested in questions of etymology and genesis of units.
3. Comparative or contrastive phraseology which, in turn, addresses the problems of translation, equivalences or correspondences between several linguistic systems.
4. Lexicographic or phraseographic phraseology is considered the result of lexicographic practices (old and current theories).

Consequently, phraseology can be considered as an autonomous field, endowed with an object of study and a methodology in relation to general linguistics, and as a field considering the set of lexical combinations fixed in a given language in relationship with applied linguistics, and even contrastive linguistics.

The object of study of phraseology is composed of heterogeneous elements of which the range depends on the broad or restricted meaning attributed to the domain. In a restricted sense, limited to lower sentence-level fixed sequences, phraseology includes units that have been addressed by traditional grammar. In a broad sense, the units equal to or greater than the sentence, have also been studied using composite criteria (Gonzalez Rey 2002: 41).

There are different traditional approaches. Lexicology has always focused its attention on lexical creation, especially from composition and derivation which were considered as morphological processes. Therefore, the composition was judged as a union of pre-existing words, often separated by a hyphen, mostly nominal, but not always. Thus, by analyzing them from a lexicological point of view, we distinguish simple lexies (chair, for, ate), compound lexies (corkscrew) and textual lexies (tirade, riddle, proverb, maxim). There are two properties of these unions: rigidity (making an arrow of all wood), and variability (the new/the first/the last born). Gonzalez Rey also shows the presence of determination tests: the non-autonomy of a component (carriage-door), the non-commutability of one of the components (a heavy weight is



not opposed to a light weight), the -separability (it's a round table – “conference” - *this table is round), the particularity of internal structure (to be afraid, to do justice).

The three domains of phraseology having been briefly analysed, we would now like to focus our attention on paremiological phraseology.

since the study of paremies, especially proverbs, constitutes the central object of our research work.

The term “paremia” generally refers to fixed statements such as proverbs, sayings, maxims, sentences, etc. They all have common traits like their contentious value. Paremias are studied within the field called paremiology, which is responsible for addressing all aspects:

- literary: through an approach to oral and folk culture;
- linguistics: thanks to the analysis of the system and the functioning of these elements within the given language;
- sociological and others.

The word “paremiology” comes from the Greek “paromia” which means “proverb”, “oismos” which means “path” and “logy” (Le Petit Robert 2004). This word is therefore related to “along the roads”.

This area, which remained on the fringes of phraseology, has always intrigued paremiologists as well that the phraseologists: J. Sevilla Munoz (taken up by Gonzalez Rey 2002: 76) recognizes that the limits remain unclear in the determination of the paremiological field:

“We do not have an exact notion of the elements that make up the paremiological universe. Some scholars have even declared that neither the ancients nor the moderns succeeded in delimiting the linguistic barriers of the proverbial world.”

Phraseologists in turn remain skeptical about this area, some are to include paremies in all phraseological statements (like A. Zuluaga), while others are against it and want to exclude them from the phraseological field (like J. Casares or G. Wotjak). J. Sevilla Munoz has developed a classification of paremias: The first group includes paremias composed of:

proverbs: A good cat, a good rat

dialogue proverbs,

dialogue proverbial

phrases

dialogisms:

If you like honey, don't be afraid of bees

local or historical proverbs:

All roads lead to Rome

sayings which are divided into three subgroups:

1. weather sayings: When the cat passes its paw on its head, soon the storm
2. the sayings of work: Kill your pig on Saint Martin and invite your neighbor



3. the sayings of belief: Who kills the gull, death awaits
apothegms: Paris is worth a mass (Henri IV)
maxims: Gravity is a mystery of the body invented to hide the faults of the mind (La Rochefoucauld, Maxime 257)
principles: I have always had the principle of never doing by others what I could do myself (Montesquieu)
sentences: The future belongs to no one, the future belongs to God (V. Hugo)

The second group includes:

- comic or ironic paremias: “I will heal her with good words”, says the pastor, throwing the Bible at his wife’s head
- scientific paremias (aphorisms, tautologies, axioms, theorems): The whole is greater than its part (mathematical axiom) chivalrous paremias advertising paremias

This second group is part, according to the author, of “terminological paremiology” and she believes that this would facilitate the task of translators in search of equivalences (taken from Gonzalez Rey 2002: 79).

So, although there are divergent points between paremiology and phraseology, there are also links of dependence between them. Processes such as freezing, idiomaticity, etc., are good proof of this.

The maxim states a general truth about man, but it has a specific author (Pellat 1998:95). Used under different names “sentences” (Richelet Dictionnaire françois, 1680); “reflections” (Furetiere Universal Dictionary, 1690) it was “maxime” that carried the day and it was La Rochefoucauld who consecrated the use of the term: “What makes so much dispute against the maxims which discover the heart of man, it is because one fears being discovered there” (Maximes dismissed: 17; quoted by Pellat 1998: 96). The maxim is characterized by its brevity (one or more sentences) and its conciseness. The Grand Larousse of the French language defines it as “a formula of a pithy brevity stating a moral truth, a psychological remark of general value, etc.”

The maxim is a brief form of moral literature, such as proverb, adage, aphorism, etc. If the maxim emanates from cultivated or aristocratic characters, the proverbs seem rather the prerogative of popular characters or the petty bourgeoisie (Gosselin 1984: 233). It was in the 17th century, the golden age of the maxim, that the genre took hold, dissociated from the proverb treated as a popular genre: “The maxim is a signed individual creation, made up of one or more sentences creating a unity of speech completed, more or less concise and autonomous, both from the grammatical point of view and from the referential point of view. It generally presents a high style and a structure which, without necessarily being categorical, offers the appearance of a general truth, giving it the authority necessary to obtain citational status” (Schapira 1997: 89, quoted by Pellat 1998 :97). The trait of the metaphoricity of proverbs served to make a distinction between short forms, between the proverb and the maxim.



Statistically the distinction between the proverb and the maxim based on the literal/metaphorical opposition may seem justified, that is to say that the proverbs enter the discourse in a metaphorical way while the maxims are interpreted literally. On the other hand, there are also so-called proverbs with a literal meaning:

Nothing ventured, nothing gained

You have to swear to nothing

You have to swear to nothing

Conclusion

The fact of the existence among proverbs of those who are partially metaphorical (Qui a bon neighbor a bon matin (quoted by Schapira 1999:67)) can also be revealed in maxims such as The sun nor death cannot be looked at fixedly (The Rochefoucauld, Maximes, 26, cited by Schapira 1999: 67). Despite these counter-examples, the literal/metaphorical opposition functions as the distinctive criterion between the proverb and the maxim.

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