

Pragmatic Functions of Proverbs and Phraseological Units About Friendship: Didactics, Evaluation, And Legitimation

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ABSTRACT

This article analyzes the pragmatic functions of proverbs, sayings and phraseological units related to friendship, based on the material of the English and Uzbek languages. The aim of the study is to identify the communicative functions of fixed expressions representing the concept of friendship. The results of the analysis show that these units mainly perform didactic, evaluative and legitimizing functions. Paremiological units more often serve to express normative conclusions and moral instructions, whereas phraseological units are actively used in live communication to express evaluation, regulate communicative distance and mitigate potentially conflictual speech acts. On this basis, it is substantiated that the concept FRIENDSHIP/DO‘STLIK functions not only as a value concept, but also as a pragmatic resource of communication.

Keywords: Pragmatics, friendship, paremiology, phraseology, didactics, evaluation, legitimization, speech act.

INTRODUCTION

Stable language units are not merely a means of preserving semantic content, but are considered a pragmatic resource that performs a specific function in the process of communication. In particular, proverbs and phraseological units related to friendship embody many functions, such as evaluating human relations, defining norms of behavior, softening criticism, showing closeness or giving a warning.

Although the concept of friendship is usually evaluated as a positive value, the “use” of this value in speech requires special attention in its linguistic expression. This is because units related to friendship often do not simply provide information, but influence the interlocutor. Therefore, pragmatic analysis plays an important role in revealing the communicative life of the FRIENDSHIP/DO‘STLIK concept.

The aim of this article is to identify the pragmatic functions of paremiological and phraseological units related to friendship and to show their similar and different features

in the English and Uzbek languages.

Theoretical foundations

In pragmatic analysis, speech act theory serves as an important methodological basis. J. L. Austin’s idea of “doing things with words” shows that speech itself is also an action. John Searle, in turn, emphasizes that every speech act has its purpose, direction and communicative force, and develops a classification of illocutionary acts.

In the analysis of proverbs and phraseological units related to friendship, the Brown–Levinson politeness/face model is also important. This is because friendship often places criticism, advice or warning within a “friendly” frame and makes it socially acceptable. Therefore, the pragmatic study of friendship-related units reveals communicative strategies along with semantics.

Didactic function

The first and most important pragmatic function of paremiological units related to friendship is didactic in nature. Proverbs often provide ready-made answers to questions such as “what kind of friend is a true friend?”, “when is a friend known?”, and “what quality of a friend is valued?” In this sense, they function as a normative conclusion of folk experience.

For example, units such as *A friend in need is a friend indeed* or *Do‘st kulfatda bilinadi* teach that the value of friendship should be assessed in difficult situations. Such units transmit a moral norm to the listener: friendship is proven through practical help and loyalty. Thus, the didactic function turns friendship-related units into a means of social control.

Evaluative function

The second pragmatic function of friendship-related units is evaluation. Proverbs and phraseological units evaluate a friend’s actions positively or negatively and show the difference between true and false friendship. Evaluation here is not only a semantic conclusion, but also serves as a social guideline for the listener or reader.

For example, evaluation is very strong in units such as *Better an open enemy than a false friend* or *Do‘st achitib gapirar, dushman kuldirib*. In the first case, false friendship is presented as more dangerous than open enmity, while in the second, honest criticism is evaluated positively, and pleasant deception is placed on the negative semantic pole. Thus, friendship-related units not only express moral criteria, but also arrange them along positive-negative axes.

Legitimization function

One of the most interesting functions from a pragmatic point of view is the legitimization function. In this case, the concept of friendship is used to socially justify uncomfortable or face-threatening speech acts such as criticism, warning or advice. The Uzbek proverb *Do‘st achitib gapirar, dushman kuldirib* clearly demonstrates this mechanism: the unpleasant form of criticism is justified by its useful intention.

In this case, the concept of friendship determines the ethical status of the speech act rather than its content. That is, who says the “bitter word” and with what intention it is said become primary. If a friend criticizes, this criticism is

interpreted not as hostility, but as benefit and correction. Therefore, the concept of friendship brings uncomfortable information into an “acceptable” form in communication.

There are also units close to this function in the English material. They emphasize the honesty, reliability and truthfulness of a friend and give an evaluative or critical meaning a positive pragmatic tone.

Functional difference between paremiological and phraseological units

Paremiological units usually provide a generalized norm and conclusion. They turn social experience into a “ready-made formula” and transmit advice, evaluation or warning to the listener on behalf of the collective. Therefore, proverbs related to friendship have more didactic and evaluative functions.

Phraseological units, however, function within live speech. They more often perform situational, expressive and pragmatic signaling functions. Phraseological units related to friendship regulate distance, show closeness, soften criticism or give an immediate evaluation of the relationship in communication. Thus, phraseology shows the “practical” communicative functioning of the concept of friendship.

Pragmatic functions and communication ethics

The analysis of the pragmatic functions of friendship-related units actually shows how deeply the concept of friendship is embedded in communicative ethics. If the semantic and axiological layer shows “what” friendship is, the pragmatic layer answers the question “what is done with it?” For example, by means of a proverb, the listener is warned, advised or evaluated; by means of a phraseological formula, distance is softened, criticism is placed in a positive frame, and a signal of closeness with the interlocutor is given.

In this respect, the concept of friendship often functions in speech as a “social safety mechanism”. This is because acts such as criticism, rejection or warning are not always received comfortably. If such content is given together with the frame of friendship, it is accepted as relatively more acceptable and softer. Therefore, friendship-related units often bring not the sharpness of the content, but its intention to the center: that is, the conclusion is formed that “this is not hostility, but a word said for benefit.”

Face-management and friendship

The Brown–Levinson model shows the pragmatic force of friendship-related units more clearly. Within positive face, friendship strengthens the need for closeness, acceptance and “belonging”. Within negative face, friendship serves to soften uncomfortable acts. For example, the Uzbek formula about a friend’s “bitter word” presents criticism as useful and necessary; therefore, the threatening nature of criticism is reduced.

A similar tendency is also observed in the English material: the honesty and reliability of a true friend direct evaluative and critical content towards a positive side. Therefore, friendship-related units serve as a strong pragmatic device from the perspective of face-management.

Practical significance of pragmatic analysis

Such analysis is important for translation studies, language teaching and speech culture. In translation, not only the meaning, but also the didactic, evaluative or legitimizing function of friendship-related units must be preserved. Otherwise, the communicative force of the unit is lost. In language teaching, it is necessary to show “in which situation” these units are used; otherwise, students may master them only at the level of lexical meaning.

Significance of pragmatic results in the research

The pragmatic analysis of friendship-related units shows that the concept of friendship occupies an important place in the language system not only as a moral evaluation, but also as a means of communicative management. This is especially visible in situations where there is a possibility of speech conflicts: acts such as criticism, warning and advice are softened through friendship formulas, become socially acceptable and easier to receive. Thus, friendship is an active concept not only in terms of content, but also from the point of view of communication ethics.

Such results are important for language teaching and intercultural communication. It is not enough to know friendship-related units in a foreign language; it is also necessary to master in which situation and for what pragmatic purpose they are used. Therefore, pragmatic analysis shows the concept of friendship as a “resource of live speech” and increases the practical significance of the research.

CONCLUSION

The results of the analysis showed that although the pragmatic functions of paremiological and phraseological units related to friendship are different, all of them strengthen the social significance of the concept of friendship. While paremiological units have more didactic and evaluative characteristics, phraseological units actively function within communication as a means of legitimization, mitigation and relationship management. As a result, the concept FRIENDSHIP/DO‘STLIK appears not only as a semantic and axiological unit, but also as a pragmatic resource.

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