

Situational Uses of Proverbs in Pakhtoon Community: Dominance in Discourse

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ABSTRACT

This study is about the uses of proverbs in Pashto languages. Proverbs are significant in any language of the world and people use them in their daily conversation. The study investigates the prominent motives behind the use of these proverbs in a situation in Pakhtoon culture. It is noted from their continuous talk that a majority of the Pakhtoon people use proverbs more often and they try to get dominance in discourse through these proverbs. They want to marginalize a group or individual by adding proverbs to their talks during conversation. More often, they use specific proverbs to marginalize and ridicule the female section of the society. Many proverbs are famous in this regard and the use of these types of proverbs is very high in frequency. We collected data from the real situation to analyze that how these people use proverbs to marginalize and ridicule the weaker and female portion of society through language.

Key Words: Proverbs, marginalize, ridicule, women, individual, groups

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Introduction

The idea of the present research paper came into our mind when our relative friend was talking to his wife according to the situation in which his wife had done something wrong just earlier. In their talk the husband used a proverb (ka da khazo pozi na we nu ghol ba ye Khwaral) (که د بشخو پوزې نه وې نو غول به ئې خوړل) which means (if the women would not have noses then they would eat dirt). They both belong to the Pashto language speaking community and their conversation was purely in the concerned language. This simple example compelled us to think on the uses of the Pashto language proverbs in the conversation of the people in their daily life. It is designed in such a manner to find out answer for the question that when and why people use a certain type of proverb?

According to Deborah Tannan (1990), language is a man-made construction, and it is language that is making men and women two different species on earth. They are speaking different words from different worlds. Their communication is cross-cultural and in this communication man wants the dominant position over woman (Tannan cited by Em Griffin p 435-436). Sandra Harding and Julia T. Wood in their theory, ‘Standpoint Theory’ (2006) say that man has marginalized woman through their talk. My above example from a real situation strengthens their claims as the man has used such type of language which affects the mind of the women. It ensures that women have no mind to think rather they use senses to understand things. It is man who has a high wisdom and only he/they can understand the world and its matters. From the ‘Muted Group Theory’, Cheri Kramarae (1981) stresses on the process of the creation of

language by men. She suggested that, “The language of a particular group does not serve its all speakers equally, for not all speakers contribute in an equal fashion to its formulation.” (Kramarae cited by Em Griffin p 460).

It is now understandable that language is the creation of the powerful section of the society i.e. man. But it is also a fact that all men or not equal within a culture and society. And the men in power not only try to marginalize women but also they try to subordinate the weaker. Language is shaped to serve the aims and objectives of the powerful portion of the society. Language is the systematic whole which is crafted in such a way that can carry the burden of ideologies. It is the only tool that resides in mind, thus affecting the mind or can be the effect of the mind. Every language has a luggage of idioms, proverbs, narratives, life stories and jokes. Consequently these jokes and proverbs are used to fulfill the wishes of a certain group. They represent the powerful class free from any ill and the marginalized class full of all ills. These jokes and proverbs ridicule the marginalized class. The process of marginalization is gradual and always one step upper. Might is right serves at all stages and steps.

Language and discourse are interdependent terms. According to Barbara Johnstone (2008: 2), discourse usually means actual instances of communicative action in the medium of language. Thus, language is the medium in which the contents of discourse are interchanged. Discourse and ideas are closely related in the medium of language. Ideas and discourse both influence each other. The sets of related ideas in discourse constitute ideologies. Discourse analysis then is the methodology that can be applied to answer many kinds of questions. It can answer the questions in the field of linguistics as well as in other disciplines. Such questions can be about linguistic structures, language acquisition or language change and can be also about social roles and

relations, communication and identity. However in all and every process of discourse analysis language has the central role and importance. Language and discourse both shape each other.

Power and solidarity are two important aspects of social relatedness expressed in discourse. Power represents relationship in asymmetric order and solidarity represents it in symmetric form. They both are always at play in human relationship (Tannen, 1994. Cited by Barbara Johnstone). Human life is a social activity and it is represented everywhere in group size. Humans claim on the basis of solidarity in a social group but all members of a community are not treated equally. They are divided in subordinate and super subordinate groups on the basis of gender, cast, color and social classes. The power terminology is based on differing access to economic, cultural, or political powers. Within a group or community people do discourse and during that process they always try to dominate the ongoing process. The language of the person on hegemonic position is different from the person who is marginalized. In a specific situation people try to dominate discourse and show themselves powerful against the others. In such situations the person in hegemonic position uses such a language that can ridicule, embarrass or to show inferior the other.

Anoosh Khan (2012) says that culture primarily shapes discourse and gender identities. It has an important role in the shaping and building of ideological process within the Pakhtoon community. Culture in Pakhtoon society is also under the effect of ISAs like religion, family, education and media. Proverbs are the integral part of Pashto language. People use them very frequently in their daily talk. There is hardly a talk or conversation which is without a proverb in Pakhtoon culture. According to Lal Badshah Khayali (2012: 33) proverb is always used to tell a reality or truth. It is used to indicate towards an incident which had been truly done in the past

times. There is a huge quantity of Pashto proverbs said and preserved about the matters of men and women and most of the proverbs are set to ridicule the women of Pashto society. A big portion of these proverbs are funny and when said on a specific occasion, they make the people laugh. Dr. Enayat Ullah Shahrani (2008) collected and preserved a big portion of Pashto proverbs. He says that proverbs are a source of transferring thoughts, culture and customs from one generation to another. Proverbs seem to be a simple statement or sentence but they preserve history inside them. These proverbs are short meaningful sentences. Pashto language is a rich source of these kinds of proverbs.

Research Method

In this research paper we used qualitative method because we interpret collected data from the real situations in daily life of Pakhtoon people. We recorded different conversations at different situations from the people when they speak together about certain matters. They were kept free and unaware about the recordings that they should speak freely. The transcripts of recordings are given in appendix no. 1. The names of the participants are given in the annexure no.1. We present here only the translation of those recordings and then try to interpret them in the light of Althusser's (1970) ISAs. The conversations are limited to only present the proverb in its before and after contexts. The researcher tries to analyze the pre-text and post-text in relation to the used proverbs. Discourse markers of Penelope (1990) helped to point out how a specific person or group is unconsciously tried to marginalize in the real life conversation with the help of proverbs. This research is based on the interpretations of data collected from the real life situations. The data is collected through recordings. The researcher ignores noise made by the other participants and only writes the translations of the focused participants.

Annexure No. 1

Names and Address of the Participants

Note: All the participants belong to village Sharif Abad Bughdada District Mardan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Their native language is Pashto and they talked in that language. All the speakers are Adult having age between 20 and 50.

1. Zar Badshah
2. Hanif Ahmad
3. Khaista Rehman
4. Kishwar Ali
5. Masood Alam
6. Anwar Khan
7. Johar Shah
8. Zahir Shah
9. Humayoun Khan
10. Asif Khan
11. Sarzameen Khan
12. Amjid Islam
13. Ishaq khan
14. Aftab Gul
15. Bakhti Karam
16. Javed

17. Inayat ur Rehman

18. Raham Zada

19. Bahar Ali

20. Zafar Ali

Data Analysis

Situation No.1 Friends playing cards (pair of two friends contesting with other two)

001. Participant no.1 (to his friend) I told you be a bit careful

002. You do not have any wisdom

003. And

004. Disgraced me

005. Don't come for game again.

006. Participant no. 2. I.....

007. What should I do?

008. I did not have a jack. (Joker)

009. Participant no. 1. Pah!

010. When it comes to my side

011. I always find a friend who don't have upper jaw tooth. (Translation of a Pashto proverb)

012. (Eight persons are present at the occasion and they all laugh loudly)

اولنې ا ملگري د تاش لوبه کوي دوه دوه ملگري جوړه دي

1 (خپل ملگري ته) تا ته ما ووې چې لږ خيال کوه

تاسره عقل

نيشته مړه

هسي دې وشرمولو

بيا گيم له مه راځه

2 ما

څه کړې و

ما سره جوکړنه و

1 مړه څه وکړم

چي زما په نصيب ورسې نو د بره جامي غاښ ئې نه وي

(اته کسان په موقع موجود وو اته واره خاندې)

In the discussion, the proverb is used in L. 011. In Pakhtoon culture the upper jaw tooth is a symbol of wisdom (Aqal darra). Here from the proverb it is clear that the participant no. 2 is marginalized systematically. This participant, in comparison to the other, belongs to the lower class in the society. His talk represents his status as he now and again repeats the pronoun 'I'. In

one continuous talk he repeated 'I' three times. It is evident from the lines 006, 007 and 008. The participant no.1 used order sentence in line 005, this shows his upper hand over the marginalized one. The way of speaking of participant no 1 is different from the participant no. 2. One is shifting the responsibility of defeat from his shoulders and the other is taking it through his talk. It is evident that powerful try to marginalize the others in their daily talk and conversation and proverbs play an important role.

Situation No. 2 Friends talking about local bodies elections of May 2015. Participant no.1 is contestant and the other is his supporter. They are talking about the other contestant.

001 Participant no. 1. Look

002 I will

003 in this election..... bring him down to earth. (Laughter)

004 Participant No.2 He is a mad man.

005 P1. Very true.

006 P2 How he

007 He dared to stand against you?

008 P1

009 we all...

010 P2 Hahaha

011 P1 we all support each other

012 but we will see him

013 P2 yes yes

014 I am with you

دويم ۲ ملگري د مئ ۲۰۱۵ د بلدياتي اليكشن په حواله خبرې كوي يو پكښې پخپله په اليكشن كښې برخه اخلي او دا نور ئې مرسته كوي ټول د نورو برخه اخستونكو په حواله خبرې كوي

1 ته گوره

زه به تري درله

په اليكشن كښې په خپل كلي كښې ټپك وباسم

(خندا)

2 دے پاگل دے

1 او کنه

2 دے تانه

څنگه په مقابله كښې ودریده؟

1 زما پيشو او ما ته مياؤن

مونږ ټول

2 هههههه

او کنه

1 مونږ ټول

يو بل سپورټ کوو

خو دة سره به گورو

2 او او

زه هم ستا ملگرے يم

The discussion is natural and the situation is about to show superiority over others in discourse.

The local bodies elections of 2015 in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan was a psychological war among the contestants and a suitable amount of discourses is used to show how one is powerful than others. Proverbs played crucial role. It is evident that how the hegemony is tried to be imposed on others. A male to male discourse for dominance is done in a proper way where the opposite is targeted with the pronoun 'he' and this 'he' and 'I' discourse is changed into the pronoun 'we' in line 009. When it is about to bringing disgrace to the opponent then a harsh 'he' and 'I' discourse is processed but when it comes to personal interests then a group discourse with the presentation of 'we' pronoun is stimulated by the participant no. 1.

Situation No.3 Conversation among teachers during break in a primary school in Mardan

001 Participant 1: Man

002 complete that admission/withdrawal register.

003 Participant 2: I am....meanwhile

004 I am not free

005 I requested Mr. Zahir Shah

006 he will complete it.

007 Participant 1: I ordered the dog and dog ordered its tail. (Translation of a Pashto proverb)

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008 a huge burst of laughter.

دریم ۳ د مردان د پرئمری په سکول کښې استاذان په برېک
کښې خبرې کوي

1 هلکه هغه

داخل خارج رجسټر

برابر که کنه

2 زه لیر في الحال

نه یم وزگار

ما ته وئيلي دي

هغه به ئي وکړي

1خه ، ما سپي ته اووئ او سپي لکی ته اووي

(ټول خاندي)

The ridiculing process of others through proverb in actual life conversations is enhanced by the head of the institution. Participant no.1 is the head of the school, and most of his utterances are ordered. It is he on the hegemonic position who uses the proverb. It is in line no.7 in which he uses the proverb. In this proverb he tries to make the other person inferior by comparing him with the dog and further more comparing the third person with the tail of dog. This process of humiliation and inferiority and superiority is a continuous phenomenon in daily routine conversation of people in Pakhtoon society. Proverb is most of the time used by the upper hand person to support his dominance in the discourse and the target person or group is

always ridiculed under the hegemony of dominator. Pakhtoon people consider dog inferior specie because of its greedy nature. Calling someone dog means considering someone very low in society. Further, more lowness is added to the character by adding dog's tail. Thus, here two level of humiliation is done by the person in dominant position.

Situation No. 4 four friends are talking on women empowerment

001 participant no.1. Benazir's government....

002 had given rights to women.

003 Participant no.2 buddy! Women look beautiful at home

004 participant no. 3 No no no

005 women are flying planes

006 these days.

007 participant No. 2 (laughter) boy's circumcise ceremony was in progress and girls drew their paints down (proverb)

008 participant no. 4 now

009 you speak the truth!

010 P1. I do not agree with you.

011 P4. It is a popular saying that misusing one man

012 do not affect the majority.

څلورم ۴ څلور ملگري گپ لگوي د ښځو پرمختيا Empowerment

- 1 د بيې نظيري گورنمنټ ښځو له ډير حقونه ورکړي وو
- 2 مړه ښځه په کور ناسته ښه ده
- 3 نه نه نه مړه ښځي نن صبا جهازونه الوزئ
- 2 هاهاها هلکان ئ سنتول نو جينکو هم لمني اوچتي کړي
- 4 هاهاها بالکل صحيح دي اووي
- 1 دي خبري سره دي
- زه اتفاق نه کوم
- 4 څه مړه په يو هندو بت خيله نه وړانيږي

This conversation is done between the educated people. Participant No.1 is a lawyer, and the 2, and 3 are teachers. The fourth participant is a jobless youth. It is about the women empowerment which is a hard reality to accept. Men oppose this reality in talk and the two proverbial usage show that those who support women empowerment are subtracted from the majority. The line 011 and 012 shows that there is a huge majority which is not in favor of women empowerment and this majority cannot be effected by one or two men. In line 007 the proverb shows that women lack many things than men and they are considered inferior to the man.

Situation no. 5 Three friends talking about local body election of 2015

001 Participant no. 1 O boy!

002 your female neighbor is contesting the elections.

003 Participant no. 2. Yes,

004 I told to her husband not to do this act of shame

005 but he does not agree to anybody.

006 Participant no. 3. Friends he is helpless in front of his wife.

007 P1. Her husband said that she will develop the village.

008 P3. This is not the job of women

009 they cannot do this.

010 She donkeys cannot spend a night at desert. (Proverb)

011. Laughter

پنځم ۵ د انتخاباتو باره کښي خبرې 3 ملگري

1 هلکه!

گاونډی دې ووتونه ته ولاړه ده

2 او کنه!

يار څه ووکوو

خاوند ته مي ورله ووي چي هسي شرمول مه کوه

خو هغه د چانه مني
3 مړه د بشخي نه مجبوره دي
1 خاوند ئ وائي چي كلي له به كار وكي
3 دا د بشخو كار نه دے مړه
خرې ته گوره او په صحرا شيې ته گوره
ټول خاندې –

In this conversation, women are considered so weak and inferior that she cannot take part in the development process of the country. The proverb actually means that hard type jobs can only be done by the male portion of the society. Women are compared with the donkey who is weak and cannot dare to spend a night in the desert. Moreover, in line nos. 004, 005 and 006 we can see that such type of men who support their female family members are considered coward and such action is called an action of shame and disgrace.

Conclusion

Pakhtoon culture has a lot of proverbs in its daily life. It has a huge amount of proverbs and the people use them in their conversation so often that the Pashto language may be called proverbial language. Here I must say that the ISAs of Althusser like culture, family and language are being in operation and Pakhtoon people are good subject to them. In Pashto language talk people try to show other people inferior through proverbs. It is like the might is right, because the upper status male is ridiculing the lower status male through the use of proverbs. However, in such type of conversation an individual is tried to show inferior by an individual and they go for the group very rarely. On the other hand, women are also tried to show inferior, weak and fool. With the usage of proverbs, women are always disgraced and marginalized by the men. The fact is very

clear that in such process of marginalization, male always refer to the group of women. They generally indicate towards the whole community of female. The process of marginalization through proverbs in Pashto language is a continuous process.

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