

INTERPRETATION OF PROVERBS: THE SOCIOCOGNITIVE JOURNEY IN THE RELATION OF MEANING AMONG PROVERBS BY APHASIC SUBJECTS

Sandra Elisabete de O. CAZELATO, Universidade Estadual de Campinas, *Brazil*

Abstract

This study has aimed to analyse the sociocognitive journey in the relation of meaning among proverbs in the context of aphasia, highlighting linguistic-cognitive aspects of interpretation about meaning used in proverbs and in proverbial parodies by aphasic subjects. In the interpretation of proverbial enunciations and parodied proverbs, we could find many processes of verbal signification (linguistic, discursive, inferential, *etc.*) and non-verbal (gestural, mnemonic, *etc.*) that show different levels of reflection of the subject about language and its functioning (Cazelato, 2008). The way in which the aphasic subjects act on the proverbial enunciations show what is present in different co-occurring processes (linguistic, mnemonic, discursive) in the functioning of language. The linguistic-cognitive instability caused by the brain pathology takes the subject to have metalinguistic difficulties. However, these difficulties do not hinder them to use reflexive actions with and about language.

Key-words: aphasia, proverbs, interpretation, signification, linguistic, cognition.

The interpretation of proverbs and parodied proverbs

The proverbial enunciations (the proverbs) have traces of enunciative heterogeneity, what is, a set of enunciative processes that are organized by a complex relationship with other discourses, that are "pre-constructed", according to Authier-Révuz, (1998); characterized by the metalanguage and enunciative reflexivity and enables the investigation of the factors of the constitution of meaning and the cognitive-linguistic functioning. Therefore, it is a place of discourse about the practice of language, for the constitution of meaning and signification which, according to Morato (2002b), related the linguistic and the cognitive involved in the human symbolic activities.

The parody, as a metalinguistic phenomenon, what is a form for the language to return to itself: the language that talks about another language. In the parody, the metalinguistic phenomenon involved in the constitution and in the recognition of parody discourse emphasizes some reflexive capacity of the subjects, in the practice of language. For example, emphasis on what they say and mean in the interpretation and construction of meaning, and in the processes of signification involved in the recognition and explicitation of meaning in human practices.

The parodied proverbial enunciation presents all the characteristics of a proverb and a parody, but it presents a more sophisticated language work, because the enunciative reflexivity focuses on the recognition of the proverbial-origin enunciation, at the same time as the parodied meaning. In parodied proverbs, the proverb enunciator identifies the meaning of the proverb-origin and uses the linguistic properties (syntactic, phonetic, morphological) of that proverb. It is necessary from the interlocutors the recognition of linguistic, metalinguistic, semantic, discursive and pragmatic elements of parodied proverbs.

The proverbial parody shows and convokes the subjects to a reflexivity and an intense meta-enunciative activity with language, to recognize and to interpret the meaning of the proverb-origin and the proverbial parody, which depends on the type of intertextuality, the degree of metaphoricity and the degree of crystallization of expressions in discursive and cultural memory. Interpreting parodied proverbs implies a linguistic-discursive-cognitive work of

subjects about the proverb-origin, the parodized proverb and the relationship between intertextuality among them.

The interpretation and manipulation of proverbial enunciations and parodized proverbial enunciations depend in some way on the pragmatic competence of the subjects, in order to establish a relationship between the linguistic-cognitive processes (knowledge of the language and knowledge of the world), to contextualize the emergency and mobilization of several processes characterized as a target in the language functioning (metalinguistics, metapragmatics, metaenunciatives, metaformulatives, metadiscursives). It can be observed, in this case, that the movement of the subject and his “linguistic maneuvers” related to his own speech and the speech of others, that tend to confirm the hypothesis that the ways of functioning of the “meta” (“target”) component are not depended on language or cognition *strictu sensu*.

Aphasia and the interpretation of proverbs

According to Morato (2002a) and Coudry (1988), aphasia is a disorder of discursive activity in which there is an alteration of language mechanisms at all levels, in production and interpretive aspect, caused by structural lesions acquired in the Central Nervous System by Cerebrovascular Accident (CVA), Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) or Tumors. Aphasia is a language issue; involves the functioning of language and the use (linguistic and cognitive) performed by interlocutors (MORATO, 2002a). Aphasia can manifest in the production and comprehension of speech, reading and writing.

In the interpretation of proverbs, the way in which the aphasic subjects act on the proverbial enunciations show what is present in different co-occurring processes (linguistical, mnemonic, discursive) in the functioning of language. In the analysis of the interpretation of proverbs, it's possible to verify the metalinguistic, metadiscursive and metaenunciative phenomena presented by aphasic subjects in the construction of meaning, as a condition for the possibility of reflexivity of the language, to ensure the success of interpretation and interaction.

The Corpus

The *corpus* of this study composed by data of aphasic subjects NS, LM e ES who attended the Cultural Center of Aphasia (CCA - IEL / UNICAMP). Their ages are between 30 to 60 years and with different levels of education. The data were collected from the Protocol of Equivalent Proverbs and Protocol of Parodized Proverbs prepared especially for our purposes. The goal of development of these Protocols was to study the processes of signification involved in proverbial interpretation. In the selection of the proverbs of the Protocol, we tried to select some proverbs that were appropriate to sociocultural configuration and sociolinguistic reality of the subjects attending CCA, and proverbs that were more recurrent and crystallized in our culture. As for the degree of metaphoricity, we consider, as Kleiber (2000), that there are metaphorical proverbs and non-metaphorical proverbs according to the existence of an implied meaning present in literal way in certain proverbs.

For data collection, we did individual interviews with the aphasic subjects who were recorded in digital recorder and digital video camera, after that we transcribed them according to the note system established by the Research Group coordinated by Professor Dr. Edwiges Maria Morato (2007), which includes items concerning the non-verbal context. The Protocols was presented orally and written to the aphasic subjects.

With the Protocols, we tried to focus on linguistic and sociocognitive work, as well as the enunciative journey undertaken by the subjects in the interpretation of the meaning of the proverbs and the parodied proverbs, when they demonstrate different levels of reflection on language and exhibit a linguistic-cognitive work involving in the target process in the process of signification in the construction of meaning. The manner in which the subjects act on the proverbial enunciations is indicative of what is involved with different co-occurring processes of signification.

The interpretation of proverbs of Equivalent Proverbs Protocol

The purpose of the elaboration of the Equivalent Proverbs Protocol was to study the process of signification taking place in the interpretation and linguistic-discursive use of proverbial enunciations used by aphasic subjects, more precisely, the equivalent proverbs. What mattered here was the enunciative course taken by aphasic subjects when they recognized or demonstrated an attempt of recognition of determined proverbial enunciation and its corresponding semantic-pragmatic (the equivalent proverb).

Those who want everything, lose everything - Those who grasp everything, keep a little (Don't take a step bigger than your leg)

Those who want everything, lose everything

Don't take a step bigger than your leg
The last will be the first ones
One hand washes the other
Those who grasp everything, keep a little

INV: "Those who want everything, lose everything" has the same meaning as "Don't take a step bigger than your leg", "The last will be the first ones", "One hand washes the other" or "Those who grasp everything, keep a little"?

NS: this one, look (pointing the proverb "One hand washes the other")

INV: "One hand washes the other"?

NS: Yes

INV: What is the meaning of "One hand washes the other"?

NS: Like a, like a, like a, like a, what's the name for...

INV: A person?

NS: Yes, ouch, what's the name...?

INV: What did she do?

NS: No, I, poor him, ouch, my God. What is the name... yeah... the woman what's her name, Ana, Ana. It's shanty, is... fire, poor her, she's gone, poor her crying. "why? Poor her..." I, I, I poor her, I think poor her, I how I that, I don't have, but I I I I don't have, but I I I have it's the..., what's the name... rice, beans you know, rice, beans, everything, ah all right, I don't know this, look. (pointing to the proverb "One hand washes the other")

INV: "One hand washes the other"

NS: Yes

INV: And what's the meaning of "Those who want everything, lose everything"?

NS: What is the name?

INV: "Those who want everything, lose everything"

NS: Lose. Like this, like this, look, like Regi "I want more" (laughter). "You can't, slowly"

INV: So, “Those who want everything, lose everything” has the same meaning as “Don’t take a step bigger than your leg”, “The last will be the first ones”, “One hand washes the other” or “Those who grasp everything, keep a little”?

NS: So, it’s here (pointing to the proverb “One hand washes the other”) and here, look (pointing to the proverb “Don’t take a step bigger than your leg”)

INV: Ah, so you think that it is “One hand washes the other” and also “Don’t take a step bigger than your leg”?

NS: Yes, this is it.

NS pointing to the proverb “One hand washes the other” as the proverb equivalent to the target proverb. The investigator asked NS to explain the meaning of the proverb “One hand washes the other”: *“no, I, poor him, ouch, my God. What is the name... yeah... the woman what’s her name, Ana, Ana. It’s ... is... fire, poor her, she’s gone, poor her crying. ‘why? Poor her...’ I, I, I poor her, I think poor her, I how I that, I don’t have, but I I I I don’t have, but I I I have it’s the..., what’s the name... rice, beans you know, rice, beans, everything, ah all right, I don’t know this, look.”* (pointing to the proverb “One hand washes the other”). The subject here gave an example of a situation which explains the meaning of the proverb “One hand washes the other”.

Later on, the investigator asked about the meaning of the target proverb “Those who want everything, lose everything” and NS explained: *“Lose. Like this, like this, look, like Regi ‘I want more’ (laughter). ‘You can’t, slowly’.* This explanation shows us that NS recognized the meaning of the target proverb, but didn’t recognize this same meaning in the equivalent proverb “Those who grasp everything, keep a little”.

In the following moment, the investigator asked about the proverb which carried the same meaning as the target proverb, to which she answer: *“So, it’s here (pointing to the proverb “One hand washes the other”) and here, look (pointing to the proverb “Don’t take a step bigger than your leg”)*”. The proverb “Don’t take a step bigger than your leg” carries a meaning close to the meaning of the target proverb, but not properly the same meaning. Anyway, even in doubt about the equivalence to be done, NS didn’t exclude the proverb “One hand washes the other” from her choice relative to the proverb which carries the meaning that is equivalent to the target proverb. It seems that, as NS always associates the proverbs to concrete facts about her life, the verb “to lose” was associated to the neighbor Ana having lost her shanty and NS having helped her, maybe after Ana having helped her in another situation. There is the relation with “One hand washes the other”.

One bird at hand is more worth than two flying - Better few than nothing (Better be safe than sorry)

One bird at hand is more worth than two flying

In a land of blind people who has an eye is the king
Better few than nothing
In a closed mouth flies won’t come in
Better be safe than sorry

INV: “One bird at hand is more worth than two flying” has the same meaning as “In a land of blind people who has an eye is the king”, “Better few than nothing”, “In a closed mouth flies won’t come in” or “Better be safe than sorry”?

LM: Ah, it seems, to me it is the last one here, see.

INV: Read it for me.

LM: "Better be safe than sorry".
INV: what does it mean "Better be safe than sorry"?
LM: Hmm... ah, in a...
INV: what are you thinking sir?
LM: it is "Better few than nothing".
INV: Hmm. You think it's this one, then?
LM: Yes.
INV: Why? What does it mean "One bird at hand is more worth than two flying"?
LM: Ah, what's on my hand, I can hold, right?
INV: Yes.
LM: Yes, and "Better few than nothing" is, it is better to hold the few, right.

In the first moment, LM considered as equivalent the target proverb and "Better be safe than sorry". After that, he wondered about the proverb "Better few than nothing". Then, the investigator asked what is the meaning of the target proverb "One bird at hand is more worth than two flying". LM explained "*Ah, what's on my hand, I can hold, right?*". To the proverb "Better few than nothing", LM explained: "*Yes, and 'Better few than nothing' is, it is better to hold the few, right.*". LM recognized the equivalence of meaning between the target proverb and the equivalent proverb. The subject LM, when asked by the investigator, explicited the meaning of the proverbs, which seems to have helped him recognizing the meanings and changing, sometimes, to choose the equivalent proverb.

It is relevant for the study here undertaken the observation that the subjects comprehend the proverbs (they make use or establish an equivalence between them) only if they interpret the contexts in which they are produced. The linguistic-cognitive course taken by the aphasic subjects in selecting the equivalent proverb indicates that the sense does not depend only on the linguistic system, but is also constituted by cognitive, discursive and cultural processes included in the different approaches that the external objects presents itself to us.

The interpretation of proverbs of Parodized Proverbs Protocol

With the elaboration of the Parodized Proverbs Protocol, we aimed at identifying and analyzing processes of signification in the context of aphasias, highlighting linguistic-pragmatic aspects of interpretation and enunciative manipulation of meaning used in the proverbial parodies by subjects. What was important in this work was the presence of some characteristic phenomena of the parody present in the interpretation of parodized proverbs, such as: different target processes (linguistical, pragmatical, enunciative, discursive), intertextuality, inferentiation, degrees of metaphoricity and linguistic-discursive crystallization.

Money does not bring happiness, but it helps to buy it (Money does not bring happiness)

In the interpretation of parodized proverb "Money does not bring happiness, but it helps to buy it", the subject ES recognized the parodized proverb "Money does not bring happiness, but it helps to buy it" and recognized the proverb-origin "Money does not bring happiness", when the researcher pointed it to ES. She agreed with the meaning used in parodized and origin proverbs. With the parodized proverb, ES commented that we must be careful with money and that happiness is the affective: "*but ... happiness full don't have ... is ... money ...*

for example ... is ... happiness ... money house all ... so ... is ... (5s) is ... the happiness ... affective ... affective”.

In fact, ES presented a reflection with the meaning used in the parodized proverb and explicited the meaning of the proverb-origin, demonstrating to recognize the implicit involved in the proverbs origin and parodized, making the necessary inferences to interpretation, for the recognition of a type of intertextuality between proverbs and the difference of meaning among them. In other words, ES worked metaenunciatively over enunciations indicated a metaenunciative/metadiscursive reflection about the language. Here we can see a competence relative to language that was present in form more explicit, showing the relationship among the linguistic and cognitive processes involved in proverbs and parody, as well as the relationship between language and cognition in a sociocognitive perspective. Moreover, ES also explicited the meaning of the parodized proverb exemplifying with a particular situation: “*is ... is ... to support ... is ... to support ... to buy the things ... is ... my house ... a car*”.

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((movement with her hand indicating things))

ES: *ah ... stroke ...*

INV: *hum hum*

ES: *eight months without receiving ... (5s)*

INV: *retirement ...*

ES: *no ... aid disease ... them ... I ... thank god ... my mother ... is ... helped ... the the people ... I ... for example ...*

INV: *ok ...*

ES: *eight months ... eight months ... eight months ... eight days ...*

We observed in the data of ES, first she explicited the meaning used in the proverb and, later, introduced an exemplification of the meaning with a particular situation. To explain the meaning used in parodized proverb, ES presented several breaks and a gesture with the hands that followed her speech indicating various things (“*to buy the things ... is ... my house ... a car*”). The breaks seem to occur as a way to reflect about what she wants to say and organize to be comprehend by her interlocutor. We also observed that the researcher participated of the meaning’s construction of the parodized proverb by introducing a comment that led ES to clarify and gives information about what she was saying. This movement of interaction between ES and the researcher is to ensure the success of the interaction, in other words, the understanding about what ES explicited about the meaning used in the proverb by her interlocutor.

Better late than later (Better late than never)

In this data, we can see how the subject LM looked to explicit the meaning of the parodized proverb “Better late than later” and the proverb-origin “Better late than never”. LM recognized the proverb-origin, he did not recognize the parodized proverb and agreed more with the meaning used in parodized proverb. In an attempt to explicit the meaning of the parodized proverb, LM compared the meaning of the two proverbs, as we can see below: “((*movement of statement with his head*)) *is: this maybe will happen ... that better late than later... but is... good ... before late ((laughter))*”.

First, LM attempted to explicit the meaning of the proverb-origin “*maybe will happen*” and in the parodized proverb “*that better late than later... but is ... but is ... good ... before late*”, recognizing a type of intertextuality between the proverbs and interpreting the parody. He

recognized in the parodized proverb the meaning that it is better "late" than "even later". After this explicitation, LM laughed and seems to be that the laughs were by the fact that he considers the meaning of the parodized proverb like "*but is ... good ... before late*".

We observed that LM did the relevant inferences to the recognition of implicit present in the proverbs and to the explicitation of the meaning. The linguistic movements that LM did, around the explicitation of the meaning of these proverbs and the difference of meaning between them, show a enunciative reflexivity of LM that characterizes the recognition of the effects of meaning of proverbs and the meaning's effects of parody that are relevant in the interpretation and in the explicitation of the meaning used in the proverbs. This required of LM a linguistic, discursive, metaenunciative, socio-linguistic attitude related to the proverb and the parody, in other words, a work about language and its exteriority.

The way in which the aphasic subjects act on the parodized proverbial enunciatives shows what is present in different co-occurring processes (linguistical, gestural, mnemonic, discursive) in the functioning of language and in the enunciative act. Occasionally, we could observe in the data of the aphasic subjects, the expressive use of gestures, laughter, facial expressions and body posture, signs of the interpretative task and meaning explanation. More than merely supporting phenomena, these data have shown to be constitutive of the process of signification and meaning construction, being relevant to the interpretation and expression of the parodized elements.

Conclusions

i.) The aphasic subjects used strategies of construction of meaning to facilitate the understanding, make explanations, examples, reflect about the own enunciation (Koch, 2004). We also highlight metalinguistic, metadiscursive and metaenunciative phenomena presented by aphasic subjects in the construction of meaning, as a condition for the possibility of reflexivity of the language, to ensure the success of interpretation and interaction.

ii) In the interpretation of proverbs and parodized proverbs, we find elements or verbal processes of signification (linguistic, discursive, inferential, references *etc.*) and also non-verbal (gestures, mnemonics, perceptual *etc.*) inter-acting at different levels of reflection about the language and its functioning.

iii) The social-cognitive journey of recognition and explicitation of meaning in proverbs performed by the aphasic subjects show us the importance of semantic-pragmatic familiarity for the interpretation, as well as the formal and discursive crystallization of proverbs. Added to this, was the socio-cognitive journey of the interpretation of the proverb's parody, the degree of metaphoricity and the type of intertextuality that establish with the proverb-origin.

iv.) We could observe that the linguistic-cognitive instability caused by the brain pathology causes the subject to have metalinguistical difficulties. However, these difficulties do not hinder them from using reflexive actions with language and about language.

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Curriculum Vitae

Sandra Elisabete de O. Cazelato is a Speech Therapist who works with aphasic people and has research in the Linguistic, more precisely, in Neurolinguistic area. The research involve identifying and analyzing processes of signification in the context of aphasias, highlighting linguistic-pragmatic aspects of interpretation and

enunciative manipulation of meaning used in the proverbs and proverbial parodies by aphasic and non aphasic subjects. In the interpretation of proverbs is important the different target processes (linguistical, pragmatial, enunciative, discursive), the intertextuality, the inferentiation, the degrees of metaphoricity and the linguistic-discursive crystallization. The objective is to study the linguistic-cognitive work implied in the interpretation of the proverbs and parodized proverbial enunciations in order to reaffirm the relevance of the proverb and of the proverbialization for neurolinguistics studies. In the interpretation of parodized enunciations, we could find many processes of verbal signification (linguistical, discursive, inferential, referential *etc.*) and non-verbal (gestural, mnemonic, facial *etc.*) that show different levels of reflection of the subject about language and its functioning, showing yet the presence of a competence relative to language where it could be lost or altered, according to the current definition of aphasia in the traditional aphasiologic literature. The way in which the aphasic and non aphasic subjects act on the proverbs and parodized proverbial enunciations shows what is present in different co-occurring processes (linguistical, gestural, mnemonic, discursive) in the functioning of language and in the enunciative act. The language cannot be reductive to the *stricto sensu* linguistic system.

Email: sandracazelato@afasia.com.br