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## A Pragmatic Study of Some Manipuri and Assamese Metaphorical Proverbs

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### Abstract

The paper examines some metaphorical proverbs used in Manipuri and Assamese, considering proverbs as a speech act, exploring its universality and its linguistic and culture specificity. Proverbs since represent the people's folk knowledge, their collective wisdom, transmitted from generation to generation can be used as a tool to provide insight about the culture, their world view and the reality of the world they experienced.

The purpose of this study is to identify the illocutionary acts performed by metaphorical proverbs in Manipuri and Assamese. Society. 10 pairs of proverbs which are roughly equivalent have been taken up and analyse the type of the pragmatic context and the utility of the proverbs in the actual context of use.

The analysis brings about some interesting facts on the universality of the perception of the world and worldly phenomenon despite differences in language and culture.

### Introduction

Proverbs constitute the most complex folk wisdoms, uses a sensible form imagery, they are used to describe a situation, to advice the youngster and to give a flavour to the speech. According to Lawal (1992 b), proverbs seem to contain the richest pool of pragmatic factor since properly contextualised proverb provides data on linguistic, philosophical, psychological and cosmological aspects of the society thereby exerting some of the greatest pragmatic constraints to language users. Studies on speech acts have focused on the 'how' and 'why' of verbal exchange in the context of natural communication, in literary discourse and in mass communication. The Pragmatics of proverbs with a view of understanding the 'how' and 'why' of them, and how insights gained can enrich the theory of Pragmatics in general. The purpose of this paper is not only giving insights to the polymorphous proverbs it is also to compare and contrast the existing cultural and its associated linguistic knowledge and wisdom of a group of Assamese and Manipuri people who are culturally different. Studies on Manipuri proverbs are rare, only a collection of proverbs with little information regarding the real usage of proverbs are available. Proverbs in both the societies are regarded as folk wisdoms, full of imagery implying reality in a subtle manner. Proverbs are anonymous, traditional and authoritative and are an encapsulation of folk wisdom accumulated through the experience of the language users. Proverbs form a great part of people's traditional repository of what they consider to be of great value and concern to them. Manipuri

term /pawrəu/ ‘corresponded to proverb, and sometimes / pawrəu pawtak /is used for proverb, the meaning of /pawtak/being instructions/advice.

Therefore, the Manipuri term is self-descriptive to mean that proverbs are advice given to the youngsters.

As in other societies proverbs /p<sup>h</sup>əkora jojəna/ in Assamese society serves as a potent means of giving advice, social control in settling quarrel and disputes etc. Assamese proverbs also serve didactic functions, especially, for the younger generation. The proverbs serve as a wise saying reflecting the socio cultural milieu of the people, the experiences and the knowledge built across ages.

Linguistically, the pragmatic study of proverbs is very interesting in the sense that they form because their meaning is realised conceptually in a shared context. Proverbs since are compact expressions of important cultural knowledge, combined with a cognitive economy of reasoning and a pragmatic force is full of wisdom. It served the purpose of educating the youths as well as giving an expert advice in the context.

### **Theoretical Background**

The pragmatics of speech act theory and the functions and sources of Manipuri and Assamese proverbs are the points which provide the insights for formulation the conceptual framework and methodology for this study.

A pragmatician has to describe in adequate terms, the components of the language user’s pragmatic competence. Austin’s speech act theory (1962) postulates that engaging in a speech act means performing the complementary acts of locution, illocution and perlocution. Searle’s classification of illocutionary acts (1979 (1975 a)) include – assertive, directive, commissive, expressive and declarative.

While analysing the pragmatics of a speech act Grice (1975) mentioned for cooperative principles to refer to the interactional agreement which speaker enter into as they perform any speech act. The notion of ‘implicature’ and ‘presupposition’ are also very much important in analysing a speech act. It is on these notions that the meaning of an act largely depends. Bach and Harnish (1979)’s concept of Mutual Contextual Beliefs (MCBs) are also fairly related to these two notions. MBCs Centre around the speakers’ ‘intention’ and listener’s ‘inference’. The resultant of a speech act is that; the listeners puts contexts together that will help him to recognise the speaker’s intentions and may infer directly to the expectations of the speakers. According to Adegbija (1982) – at every stage of the discourse, both speakers and listeners have to mobilise appropriate areas of ‘pragma-sociolinguistic competence. Lawal (1992)’s model took a pedagogical and communicative point of view and put forth the ‘pragma-communicative model’ of analysis of speech act. He advocates the opinions that in encoding and decoding meaning of language the pragmatic competence the interlocutors have a direct relevance, the closer the pragmatic

competencies the more effective is the communication and this competency is a construct comprising the linguistic, the social and situational aspects of the user's language and it encompasses all aspects of the knowledge which competent language users understand the complete meaning of the proverb.

### **A Conceptual Framework for This Study**

The background literature on the functions and source of Manipuri and Assamese proverbs and on the existing theoretical model of pragmatics forms a framework for the study. Lawal's model of the 'Aspects of Pragmatic theory' (2003), the updated version of Lawal 1995, 1997 forms the conceptual framework for this study. According to Lawal's latest model there are six hierarchical contexts of an utterance viz – linguistic, situational, psychological, social, sociological and cosmological contexts. These contexts can be grouped into two hierarchical structures – surface and the background. The surface structure includes situational and linguistic contexts and the background structure include the remaining four contexts referred. And these contexts are related to linguistic components and structure of sentences, the topic of discourse, the preceding context of situation, the interpersonal relation of interlocutors, the socio-cultural setting and the language user's world view respectively. These various levels of context are symmetrically related to the equally hierarchical levels of background knowledge or competence necessary for the for the production and interpretation of speech acts. The competence includes the linguistic (involving lexical, phonological, morpho-syntactic and micro-semantic knowledge), the psychological (awareness of and sensitivity to moods, attitude and points of view), the situational (which refers to the knowledge of and familiarity with the topic of discourse, location, objects and persons in the physical setting), the social (knowledge of the socio-cultural and historical background top the utterance) and the cosmological (which is the language user's knowledge of the world, his factual knowledge and general world view).

In the process of interpretation and classification of an utterance into a particular type of speech act and to respond appropriately, the language users deploy his competencies to identify and understand implications, presupposition and MCBs through inference. Speech acts are also hierarchically organised and are somewhat relate to the contexts and competencies that produce them. The most basic act- the locutionary acts are describes here as the speaker's overt linguistic behaviour. Illocutionary acts occupy a primary level of non-linguistic functions which language users perform with words. The ultimate level of speech acts is that of perlocutionary acts which are conventional or unconventional, intended or unintended consequences of utterance.

### **Methodology**

The study is a descriptive one, employing It is a descriptive study of pragmatic mappings used to convey certain meanings in specific contexts between or amongst the competent users of

the language, which is based on the shared cultural meaning of the interlocutors involved. Only 10 pairs of proverbs which are comparable is selected for this study. The corpus is not intended to be either exhaustive or representative of the full range of Manipuri and Assamese proverbs rather it is only a subset of the existing proverbs. For Manipuri proverbs, a list of metaphorical proverbs are chosen from published collection of proverbs. For Assamese proverbs, the collection was based on the data provided by Assamese teacher trainees learning Manipuri in NERLC. The pairs of proverbs are hereby presented in both their original and English translations. English equivalents of the proverbs are also attempted to be as near as possible to the original, however, agree with any limitations in giving the original freshness and flavour.

### **The Data and the Interpretation**

Each pair of proverbs is analysed pragmatically following Lawal's model of pragmatic theory. Based on this model each proverb is analysed in such a way as to identify the illocutionary act it performs and then the contexts and competencies needed for interpretation are outlined. Lastly a comparison of each pairs of proverbs is made.

#### **1. All the glitters are not gold**

1a) Manipuri: /ləypuŋna san sabə mo k<sup>h</sup>oŋde/ "A cow made of mud do not moo."

1b) Assamese: /cəkəkəkia bəstu manəi hon nəhoi/ "All the bright things are not gold."

#### **1a) Manipuri: /ləypuŋna san sabə mo k<sup>h</sup>oŋde/ "A cow made of mud do not moo."**

Illocutionary act:

- a) Direct: assertive (claiming)
- b) Indirect: directive (warning, advising)

Competencies –

- i) Linguistic- for this proverb the understanding of the personified form of /san/ 'the cow' is needed and the characteristics of the cow is also equally important.
- ii) Situational – a person well known to the interlocutors has revealed the reality of a pretended thing and the possible negative outcome. And thereby gives a warning or shows his repentance.
- iii) Psychological- the speakers wish to express this disgust about the false person's behaviour and the trust maintained by the person involved.
- iv) Social- a relationship of either friendship, acquaintanceship or kinship exist between the interlocutors
- v) Sociological- the Manipuri traditional expectation of 'cow' as a trustworthy animal

vi) Cosmological- knowledge of the need for the person to critically evaluate before trusting as my people, because many times false friend's, false persons run away from responsibilities

**1b. /cəkəkəkia bæstu manəi hon nəhoy/ “All the bright things are not gold.”**

### **Illocutionary act-**

- a) Direct – assertive (claiming)
- b) Indirect – directive (warning, advising)

### **Competencies-**

- 1. Linguistic – understanding of the qualities of gold and sparkling things is the prerequisite to know the proverb
- ii) Situational- the speakers come to the situation of reality despite being in the dark world of believing a false person. The person was made blind with all the pretended attitude of the false person earlier, but the situation is no more now
- iii) Psychological – like the previous proverbs, here also the speaker wishes to express his disgust about the false person's behaviour. It may also serve as a warning signal to younger folks to be careful of the false person.
- iv) Social – a relationship of either friendship, acquaintanceship or kinship exists between the interlocutors
- v) Sociological – the Assamese believe of gold to be sparkled and the limitations of this sparkle and previous things with false things is manifested here.
- vi) Cosmological – Knowledge of the need for gold to be clearly/correctly identified out of the false things is the basic requirement, as a person may be deceived easily by things of imitation

### **Comparison**

Proverbs 1a) and 1b) are of the same meaning, they function in the same environment, i.e. Pragmatically both bears the same meaning. The philosophical implication of both the proverbs are to be cautious of the false things, which are hard to recognise. The only major difference lies in the area of linguistic competency.

### **2. To put insult to an injury**

2a) Manipuri: /lu kokpədə len tabə/ “to fall snow on the shaven head.”

2b) Assamese: /kata g<sup>h</sup>at kala k<sup>h</sup>ar hona/ “ To put acid in injury.”

**2a) Manipuri: /lu kokpədə len tabə/ “To fall snow on a shaven head.”**

**Illocutionary act:**

- a) Direct: assertive (inferring)
- b) Indirect: analogous (comparing)

**Competencies**

- i) Linguistic- The interpreter needs to appreciate the metaphorical use of /lu kokpə/ ‘shaven head’ and /tabə/ ‘to fall ice’ as referring to a suffering and addition of suffering to the already suffered person in a relative sense.
- ii) Situational – the speaker describes the added suffering to the already suffered person
- iii) psychological – the speaker’s mood is to describe the owes freed by the person, i.e. an owe while bearing a previous one.
- iv) Social – No special relationship is requisite for both the direct and indirect or intended illocutionary acts.
- v) Sociological- a very unwelcomed situation is described nicely by using metaphors. The only sociological competency needed here is to understand the metaphorical meanings which also is the basic prerequisite for linguistic competency.
- vi) Cosmological – the general idea that shaven head and falling of snow/ice is an unappreciated thing.

**2b) Assamese: /kata g<sup>h</sup>at kala k<sup>h</sup>ar hona/ “ To put acid in injury.”**

**Illocutionary acts**

- a) Direct – assertive (inferring)
- b) Indirect – analogous (comparing)

**Competencies**

- i) Linguistic – The knowledge of how an acid act on a wound is the primary need to understand the proverb. And the interpreter needs to know the metaphorical extension of meaning of /g<sup>h</sup>at/ ‘wound’ and /k<sup>h</sup>ar/ ‘acid’ to describe additional unbearable pain to a pre-existing pain.
- ii) Situational – the speaker nicely speaks out of the added unbearable suffering faced by a helpless person.
- iii) Psychological – The speaker intends to express the owes faced either by him or by the person known to the listeners in a miserable way.
- iv) Social – No special relationship between the suffered person and either the speaker or the listener is required, only a mere identity of the sufferer is sufficient.

v) Sociological – a very bad situation is described here by using a wise metaphor of acid and the out wound. Acids corrodes the wounds giving an additional pain. An additional pain to an already suffered individual is unbearable.

vi) Cosmological – The general idea of non-preference of an additional injury/suffering to already suffered person

### **Comparison**

Proverbs (2a) and (2b) are of almost the same meaning, they function almost the same illocutionary acts. Pragmatically both the proverbs carry the same meaning. Both the proverbs describe the tough situation of facing additional trouble while one is having another trouble priorly. The only difference observed on these proverbs are the linguistic competency only.

### **3. To build castles in the air**

3a) Manipuri: /maləŋdə ten kapa/ “To shoot arrow in the air.”

3b) Assamese: /akaʃat caŋ pəta/ “To build house in the air.”

#### **3a) Manipuri: /maləŋdə ten kapa/ “To shoot arrow in the air.”**

#### **Illocutionary Act:**

- a) Direct – assertive (inferring)
- b) indirect – directive (advising)

#### **Competencies**

- i) Linguistic – An understanding of the conative meanings of the words /maləŋ/ ‘air or vacuum’ and /ten kapa/ ‘shooting an arrow’ is the basic prerequisite for the interpretation of this proverb.
- ii) Situational – The speaker is not happy with the acts done by either the hearer or the person concerned. The person is doing acts which are far away from the goal. What he is doing is of not worth, all his efforts will go in vain. The speaker disapproves this acts and wish the person concerned to know this.
- iii) Psychological –The speaker disapproves the listener’s act and he expects him to understand this.
- iv) Social – A relationship of either friendship, kinship or acquaintanceship exists between the interlocutors
- v) Sociological – The knowledge of Meitei’s traditional expectation to perform worthy acts rather than enjoy on the imaginative ideas.

vi) Cosmological – Knowledge of the need for a person to be smart enough to judge the right and wrongs in the actions which he intends to perform.

**3b) Assamese: /akafat caŋ pəta/ “To build house in the air.”**

### **Illocutionary acts:**

- a) Direct – Assertive (inferring)
- b) Indirect – Directive (advising)

### **Competencies**

- i) Linguistic – The metaphorical meaning carried by akas ‘sky’ and is needed to be understood here. The sky is empty and to build a house in an empty place without foundation is simply impossible. In addition, the meaning of sky and the meaning of build house may be extended to act with simply are far from possibility.
- ii) Situational – The speaker encounters/reacts to the acts which are simply impossible done by the hearer or the person concerned. He by stating this proverbs wish the hearer to rectify his act.
- iii) Psychologically the speakers intend to make the hearer understand his rejection regarding the act and thereby rectify his act.
- iv) Social – a relationship of either friendship, kinship or close acquaintanceship exists between the interlocutors
- v) Sociological – the Assamese traditional value on doing worthy and rewardable acts is reflected in this proverb.
- vi) Cosmological – Knowledge of the person concerning the ability to judge right and wrong things/acts and uselessness of the thoughts which are hard to get results.

### **Comparison**

The two proverbs pertaining in Meitei and Assamese cultures of the same illocutionary acts. Pragmatically both the provers are used in the same circumstances. The basic difference between these two proverbs lies in then Linguistic competency, that also the topic or the same in both the proverbs. A slight difference is observed in the comment part only.

### **4. Full of Courtesy, Full of Craft**

- 4a) Manipuri: /t<sup>h</sup>otnə ceŋ cəŋbə/ “Having strands of raw rice in soft rice.”
- 4b) Assamese: / əti b<sup>h</sup>ək̄ti coror lak<sup>h</sup>ən/ “Too much pledge is the sign of a thief.”

**4a) Manipuri: /t<sup>h</sup>otnə ceŋ cəŋbə/ “Having strands of raw rice in soft rice.”**

### **Illocutionary Act:**



- a) Direct – Assertive (stating)
- b) Indirect – Veridictive (judging)

### Competencies

- i) Linguistic – The metaphorical meaning carried by /ceŋ cəŋbə/ ‘having half cooked rice’ among ‘the soft well cooked rice’ among the soft well cooked rice /t<sup>h</sup>otnə/ ‘by being soft’ is needed to be understood to appreciate the meaning carried by this metaphorically well-crafted proverb. The relationship between the topic and the comment of the proverb is symbolic and also the meaning can be extended to the situation on which unbelievable things exist among well appreciated things.
- ii) Situational – The speaker reacts to the listener’s deceptive nature and warn him not to be deceptive again.
- iii) Psychological – The speaker is not happy with the way the listener is acting. The speaker expects the listeners to know that his deceptive nature is renewable and ask him to stop it.
- iv) Social – a relationship of close acquaintance and friendship exists between the interlocutors
- v) Sociological – The traditional Meitei belief of being trustworthy towards the friends and relatives.
- vi) Cosmological – The very fact that deceptive fellows or the person who betrays is not appreciated.

**4b) Assamese: /əti b<sup>h</sup>ək̄ti coror lak<sup>h</sup>ən/ “Too much pledge is the sign of a thief.”**

### Illocutionary Act:

- i) Direct – Assertive (stating)
- ii) Indirect – Verdictive (judging)

### Competencies

- i) Linguistic – The meaning given by /əti b<sup>h</sup>ək̄ti / ‘too much of pledge’ and /coror/ ‘of thief’ need to be understood in the primary, literal sense, as well as the extended metaphorical meaning given by /əti b<sup>h</sup>ək̄ti / ‘as too much of humbleness/submissiveness’ and /coror lak<sup>h</sup>ən/ ‘deceptive or the one who is not honest’.
- ii) Situational – The speaker is not phased with the over exceeding dishonest pretention of the hearer. Or the speaker warns the hearer about a person whom the hearer trusts the most.
- iii) Psychological – The speaker intends the hearer to know that the hearer’s deceptive nature is revealed to him despite his attempts to cover it by showing excessive submissiveness.

- iv) Social – a relationship of kinship or friendship or close acquaintanceship is required between the speaker and the hearer.
- v) Sociological – The traditional value of the Assamese being trustworthy towards the friends, associates, and relatives.
- vi) Cosmological – Persons of double standard are not appreciated

### Comparison

Both the proverb carriers the same core meaning both are warning given to a person about the deceptive nature of another person whom the listener trust, or the listener himself being deceptive. Despite similarities in all other five competencies. The two proverbs from different societies are different in linguistic competency. Meitei's proverb is more metaphorical and more complex compared to the Assamese proverb.

### 5. To carry coal to new castle

5a) Manipuri: /ətɔŋbədə læy<sup>h</sup>ɔnbə əkutpədə læy əwbə/ “To dig in a low land and put earth on high land.”

5b) Assamese: /telir murət tel diya/ “ To give oil to the dealer(small).”

**5 a) Manipuri: /ətɔŋbədə læy<sup>h</sup>ɔnbə əkutpədə læy əwbə/ “To dig in a low land and put earth on high land.”**

### Illocutionary Act –

- a) Direct - Assertive (stating)
- b) Indirect – Expressive (blaming)

### Competencies

- i) Linguistic – An understanding of the possible extensions of meaning by the words used in the proverbs fundamental here
- ii) Situational – The speaker is not very much pleased with the discriminating attitude of persons involved. And he is aware of that discriminating attitude and he wants the listeners to know his assertion.
- iii) Psychological – The speaker does not agree with the attitude shown by the other person towards him or to the person whom he/she care. And he is asserting the fact that the third party is practicing on discriminating attitude and that very act is not appreciated.
- iv) Social – A relationship of either a kinship or mere acquaintanceship or friendship is the basic prerequisite here.
- v) Sociological – Manipuri's traditional value on non-discriminating nature of behaviour

vi) Cosmological – The appreciation of non-hierarchical, non-discriminating democratic attitude.

**5 b) Assamese: /telir murət tel diya/ “ To give oil to the dealer(small).”**

**Illocutionary Act –**

a) Direct – Assertive (stating)

b) Indirect – Expressive (blaming)

**Competencies**

i) Linguistic- An understanding of the simple meaning carried by /teli/ ‘oil seller’ and /tel/ ‘oil’ and the possible extension of these meanings to describe an already person and giving of an additional wealth is fundamental here.

ii) Situational – a person of low esteem is discriminated while giving a reward or a beautiful but rather it is directed to a person who is already not lacking of such things, making him much rich.

iii) Psychological – The speaker is not happy with the discriminating attitude practiced in front of him, i.e., to support the powerful while suppressing the powerless fellows.

iv) Social – a mere acquaintanceship is enough to use this proverb.

v) Sociological – The Assamese tradition of treating people the same worth and the practice of supporting the lower section wherever possible.

vi) Cosmological – Knowledge of the universality of the support to be rendered towards the sufferers’ group.

**Comparison –**

Both proverbs carry the same meaning and used in almost similar contexts. Both the proverb raises a voice against the new supportive attitude towards a lovely person. The two proverbs meant it is worthy to support a smaller person of possible rather than giving it to a self-sufficient man. The basic difference between the two proverbs lies in the linguistic competency only.

**6. Pride has a fall**

6a) Manipuri : /watonnə wəŋləgə kwaknə p<sup>h</sup>əmdek i/ “ If the tip of the bamboo is too high crow sits on it.”

6b) Assamese: /əti dərpe həta ləŋka/ “ Too many products made Lanka destroyed.”

**6 a) Manipuri : /watonnə wəŋləgə kwaknə p<sup>h</sup>əmdek i/ “ If the tip of the bamboo is too high crow sits on it.”**

**Illocutionary Act –**

a) Direct – Assertive (stating)

b) Indirect - Verdictive (judging)

### Competencies

i) Linguistic – The metaphorical use of the word /waton / ‘the tip of bamboo’ and /kwak / ‘the crow’ needed to be understood here. Sitting a crow on the tip of the bamboo is a very natural happening, but metaphorically the proverb does not mean this. The proverb gives the sense that if a person is very proud of his ability one day one much abled person will come in his way and will let him down.

ii) Situational – The speaker is reacting on the hearer’s damn care attitude. And he wishes the speaker to be polite and not to be the big show off and warns him for the immediate danger that may come on his way

iii) Psychological – The speaker disapproves the listeners style of dealing and want him to rectify it.

iv) Social – a relationship of either kinship, friendship or acquaintanceship is maintained between the interlocutors.

v) Sociological – The traditional Meitei value system on which humbleness is a virtue of high quality

vi) Cosmological – The universal non-appreciation of proudly nature and expectations to be humble towards fellow mates.

**6b) Assamese: /əti dərpe həta ləŋka/ “ Too many products made Lanka destroyed.”**

### Illocutionary Act -

a) Direct – Assertive (stating)

b) Indirect - Directive (advising)

### Competencies –

i) Linguistic – The metaphorical meaning given by the words /əti dərpe/ ‘many products’ and /ləŋka/ ‘Lanka (of Ramayana) needed to be understood for the real appreciation of the proverb. One needs to know that Lanka was some country rich in every aspect and its king Ravana was very proud of possessing Lanka and ultimately his proudness leads to the destruction of Lanka.

ii) Situational – The speaker is annoyed by the proudly nature of the listener and he wants the speaker to know that that proudness will only result him to losses.

iii) Psychological – The speaker being not happy with the listener’s high headed nature warns the listener for his immediate fall. And he wants the listener to understand that the way he behaves is not appreciated at all.

iv) Social – a relationship of either kinship or acquaintanceship and friendship exists between the interlocutors

v) Sociological – The Assamese value put on being humble

vi) Cosmological – The Universal knowledge that humbleness is preferred over proudness and the great show off to maintain a good social order.

### **Comparison –**

These two proverbs pair from two different societies reflect in some underlying meaning. The basic difference between the two lies only in the linguistic competency other competencies remain the same. Both the proverbs are used in the same context and both are metaphorical.

### **7. To cherish a serpent in one's bosom**

7a) Manipuri: /k<sup>h</sup>urək ki inə lai sabə/ “To do undesirable things by my own people.”

7b) Assamese: /gak<sup>h</sup>ir k<sup>h</sup>uwai hap poha/ “To bring up a snake by feeding milk.”

**7 a) Manipuri: /k<sup>h</sup>urək ki inə lai sabə/ “To do undesirable things by my own people.”**

### **Illocutionary Act:**

a) Direct – Assertive (Complaining)

b) Indirect – Expressive (Blaming)

### **Competencies**

i) Linguistic – Knowledge of the meaning of the metaphorical words /k<sup>h</sup>urək ki in/ ‘blood from my fingers’ and lay ‘god’ is the prerequisite here to understand the meaning of the proverb. /k<sup>h</sup>urək ki in/ here means the near and cared one and lay mean the unpredictable.

ii) Situational – A person whom the speaker thinks very near betrays him and

iii) Psychological – The speaker expresses his discontentment and taunts the hearer who betrayed the speaker or the speaker in other sense expresses his grief for trusting a false person who leads to a harmful consequence.

iv) Social – a relationship of friendship or kinship or acquaintanceship exist between the interlocutors

v) Sociological – Keith and kins are needed to be trustworthy and if they are deceptive according to Meitei cost a lot.

vi) Cosmological – Knowledge of the appreciation of being trustworthy towards near and dear ones and the high price of the act if a person in arm's length acts contradictively.

**7 b) Assamese: /gak<sup>h</sup>ir k<sup>h</sup>uwai hap poha/ “ To bring up a snake by feeding milk.”**

**Illocutionary Act –**

- a) Direct – Assertive (complaining)
- b) Indirect – Expressive (Blaming)

**Competencies**

- i) Linguistic - The knowledge of the metaphor expressed by the word/gak<sup>h</sup>ir/ ‘milk’ and /hap/ ‘snake’ needs to be understood here. /gak<sup>h</sup>ir/ here does not only mean milk but the best of all the things and /hap/ ‘snake’ does not mean only snake but the ill-nature of the person involved.
- ii) Situational – The speaker is meeting a person who really does not know gratitude on which rather despite giving gratitude he/she is doing enough harm to the well-wisher.
- iii) Psychological – The speaker is not happy with what the listener is doing. She/he despite all the good acts done acts done by the speaker is doing harm towards the speaker. And the speaker wants him/her to know this.
- iv) Social – A relationship of either friendship, kinship or acquaintanceship exists between the interlocutors.
- v) Sociological – The Assamese traditional value kept on being trustworthy and to know gratitude.
- vi) Cosmological – The knowledge of being grateful towards the person who helped one.

**Comparison –**

Both the proverbs meant for gratefulness. One must be grateful towards a well-wisher is what both the proverbs teach. Manipuri as well as Assamese culture do not appreciate ungrateful people. The only point of difference observed in these two proverbs is in the linguistic competency.

**8. Every dog is a lion at home.**

8a) Manipuri :/imagidi niŋt<sup>h</sup>wrel niŋt<sup>h</sup> əwɣidi sajikloi/ “King’s fodder supplier is the emperor for the mother.”

8b) Assamese: /nijor desot t<sup>h</sup>akur pəror desot kukur/ “The one who is a priest in his country is a dog in other’s country.”

**8 a) Manipuri :/imagidi niŋt<sup>h</sup>wrel niŋt<sup>h</sup> əwɣidi sajikloi/ “King’s fodder supplier is the emperor for the mother.”**

**Illocutionary Acts –**

- a) Direct – Assertive (stating)
- b) Indirect – Assertive (Inferring)

**Competencies –**

- i) Linguistic – All the words used in this proverb are self-explanatory. No connotative meaning is indicated by these words.
- ii) Situational – The speaker finds a situation in which a simple thing/general one gets a lot of appreciation from the owner.
- iii) Psychological – The speaker goes for the real worth of the thing/person/act concerned. He wants to express his feelings that a worthy thing should be appreciated as worthy and a worthless, a mere appreciation by the possessor will not determine the price of the thing/act.
- iv) Social – A relationship of either kinship, friendship or acquaintanceship is a prerequisite here.
- v) Sociological – The Meitei value put on the reality of the thing/person involved and the non-appreciation of the over praised things.
- vi) Cosmological – The real appreciation not an exaggeration is preferred everywhere.

**8 b) Assamese: /nijor desot t<sup>h</sup>akur pəror desot kukur/ “The one who is a priest in his country is a dog in other’s country.”**

**Illocutionary Acts –**

- a) Direct – Assertive (stating)
- b) Indirect – Asserting (inferring)

**Competencies –**

- i) Linguistic – The understanding of metaphorical extension of the meaning of the words / t<sup>h</sup>akur/ ‘priest’ and /kukur / ‘dog’ is the basic prerequisite here. / t<sup>h</sup>akur/ does not only mean priest, but the learned and well respected fellow i.e. the one who owes respect, and /kukur/ does not mean the animal dog, but the one who goes as per the will of the master concerned having nothing to do of its own.
- ii) Situational – The speaker is not happy with the present situation on which a simple and ordinary person acts very smart despite his little ability and knowing that he is one such person who does not deserve much.
- iii) Psychological – The speaker is blaming the hearer for his great show off and he with the hearer to understand his own limitations and act accordingly.
- iv) Social – A relationship of either kinship, friendship or acquaintanceship is required here.
- v) Sociological – The Assamese real appreciation of deserving persons and not the exaggeration and great show off.

vi) Cosmological – The universal feature of appreciation of the real and deserving persons.

### **Comparison –**

The two proverbs taken up here carries the same meaning. But the Assamese proverbs is metaphorical whereas Manipuri proverb is non-metaphorical. Both the culture value the worthy and deserving acts/persons and decline false exaggerations. Both the proverb is a folk lesson taught to a person to know his/her limitations. The only difference in these proverbs is in the linguistic competency.

### **9. Murder will out**

**9a) Manipuri:** /huranbagi tərani məpuɣi noŋma/ “Ten days for the thief and one day for the master.”

**9b) Assamese:** /pap lukai nə thake/ “Sin cannot be hidden.”

**9 a) Manipuri:** /huranbagi tərani məpuɣi noŋma/ “Ten days for the thief one day for the master.”

### **Illocutionary Acts –**

- a) Direct – Assertive (Claiming)
- b) Indirect – Verdictive (evaluating)

### **Competencies –**

- i) Linguistic – The personification of /huranba/ ‘thief’ and /məpu/ ‘master’ and the rhetoric of /tərani/ ‘ten days’ and /noŋma/ ‘one day’ respectively need be specially appreciated.
- ii) Situational – a long concealed lie has just been revealed and the speaker expresses this new awareness to his listener(s).
- iii) Psychological - The mood is that of present surprise and moral disillusion.
- iv) Social – The interlocutors so close to have both been imprisoned for some in the darkness of the lie.
- v) Sociological – The Meitei traditional observation concerning the seeming elusiveness and the relatively short span of lies which are considered a vice.
- vi) Cosmological – Knowledge of the fact of enduring nature of truth.

**9 b) Assamese:** /pap lukai nə thake/ “Sin cannot be hidden.”

### **Illocutionary Acts –**

- a) Direct – Assertive (claiming)



b) Indirect – Verdictive (evaluating)

### Competencies –

i) Linguistic – Since the proverbs is somewhat metaphorical, the extended meaning given by the words /pap / ‘sin’ and /lukai/ ‘hide’ need to be appreciated.

ii) Situational – a lie that was concealed for enough long time is revealed by the speaker and he is describing the fact to his listeners.

iii) Psychological – The mood is that of pleasant surprise and moral disillusion. The speaker is very happy on revealing the truth.

iv) Social – A close association ship is maintained by the interlocutors.

v) Sociological –Wrong acts or the lies are to be revealed one day as truth is dharma according to Assamese tradition.

vi) Cosmological – a lie can never be hide; one day it will be revealed because of the enduring nature of truth.

### Comparison –

Both the proverbs carry the same meaning and some of the same illocutionary acts. All the competencies needed to understand and appreciate the proverbs remain the same excepting in the competency related to language usage.

### 10. To cast pearls before the swine

**10a)** Manipuri: /ləmboibədə səmjət pibə/ “To give comb to a monk.”

**10b)** Assamese :/bandor ər dijit muktar har/ “Diamond necklace in monkey’s neck.”

**10 a) Manipuri: /ləmboibədə səmjət pibə/ “To give comb to a monk.”**

### Illocutionary Acts –

a) Direct – Assertive (complaining)

b) Indirect – Declarative (resigning)

### Competencies –

i) Linguistic – The extended meanings given by the words /ləmboibə/ ‘monk’ and /səmjət / ‘comb’ need to be appreciated here. What basically the proverb mean is to encourage somebody to do something which the hearer will never do as the need does not arise.

ii) Situational – The speaker is not very pleased with someone’s dealing which is never acceptable.

iii) Psychological – The speaker is expressing his annoyance towards the hearer, for the acts which never accept.

iv) Social – A Relationship of kinship/friendship/acquaintance is the basic prerequisite here.

v) Sociological – Knowledge of the Meitei society's disapproval of all forms of unworthy act and being tricky is not what the Meitei is appreciated.

vi) Cosmological – Certain things have certain areas for utilisation and to know what is to be used or not to be used is needed.

**10 b) Assamese: /bandor ør dijit muktar har/ “Diamond necklace in monkey's neck.”**

### **Illocutionary Acts –**

a) Direct – Assertive (Complaining)

b) Indirect – Declarative (Resigning)

### **Competencies –**

i) Linguistic – The personification of the words /bandor / ‘monkey’ and /muktar/ ‘diamonds’ necklace’ need to be appreciated. Monkey is not a human being, it does not need to beautify, so the costly diamond necklace is of no use to him, Whatever the cost of the diamond necklace costs to a monkey it is completely worthless.

ii) Situational – The speaker is not very happy which the dealing of either the hearer or another party. And he is complaining about their dealing.

iii) Psychological – The speaker shows his discontentment towards the act, which both the hearer and speaker witnessed. The act was really an unwanted and undeserving act. And thereby, he wants the hearer to know this.

iv) Social – A relationship of kinship/friendship/ acquaintanceship is the basic prerequisite here.

v) Sociological – Knowledge of Assamese traditional belief of non-appreciation of undeserving acts.

vi) Cosmological – Things/usages/and persons have specific proper place. Improper usage id of course useless.

### **Comparison:**

Both the proverbs serve the same purpose. They both are assertive and declarative in direct and indirect illocutionary acts respectively. The two proverbs are metaphorical proverbs declaiming the inappropriate use of a praised thing. The only difference between these two proverbs lie on the linguistic competency only.

### **Conclusion**

The study is an attempt to analyse the appropriate use and interpretation of some of Manipuri and Assamese proverbs. Pragmatically, the paper analyses only 10 pairs of proverbs which have similar background structure. It is a descriptive study of pragmatic mappings used to convey certain meanings in specific contexts between or amongst the competent users of the language, which is based on the shared cultural meaning of the interlocutors involved.

The study by answering to the aforesaid intentions could show mere insight on the communicative and ethical significance of proverbs in these two different languages. Yes, the pairs of proverbs serve the same pragmatic functions. All the proverbs pairs are ‘assertive’ though either claiming, inferring, stating or complaining about certain aspects of both physical and subjective worlds. Coming to the pragmatic function of these proverbs what we can observe is these ‘direct’ illocutionary acts of assertion and expression are only foundational to the higher ‘indirect’ acts which require the activation of psychological, sociological, social and cosmological competencies.

The indirect illocutionary forces which happen to intended-acts of these proverbs are used to perform, vary and include the ‘directive’ acts of warning, comparing, advising, the ‘verdictive’ ones of judging assessing and evaluating as well as declarative. It can thus be safely enforced that proverbs perform illocutionary acts that are conventional and intentionally indirect in both the cultures. Proverbs, therefore, in both the cultures serves as an ethical mechanism for regulating human behaviour and for a smooth functioning of the society.

Proverbs in both the cultures represents a feasible tool for affecting and effecting desirable action and for projecting a particular cosmology. An understanding and appreciation of Manipuri and Assamese proverbs will need linguistic, situational, psychological, social, sociological and cosmological knowledge which is designated as background structure by Lawal (2003). Therefore, one needs to visualise the use of proverbs as a complex blend of group intention and cultural conventions, i.e. conversational implication and presuppositions of proverbs are related and instrumental to the indirect illocutionary force of proverbs located on the contexts. Therefore, despite their difference in the surface level of the linguistic context, the proverb pairs of these two different cultures are the same. The pairs as such perform the same Illocutionary Act. One probable reason for the difference of the proverb pairs in the linguistic level is that though people have to mean the same idea and have to face the same situation, their culture conditions the way to appreciate a thing/person whichever the society deems fit. This will support the Whorfian hypothesis that culture conditions the way people speak. But the universality of culture is also claimed by the similarities in other levels of competency rather than linguistic. And proverbs cover all aspects of human life which may be counted as universal and concepts of reality drawn out from the folk knowledge. It is believed that despite culture specific difference, there may be universality of culture visible in certain speech acts and thereby may support the universality of knowledge.

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