BG Pulse Journal USA
ISSN:1947-2536 http://www.bgpulseusa.com/index.php/bg
BG PULSE JOURNAL

LINGUOCULTURAL FEATURES OF MARRIAGE AND SPOUSAL RELATIONS IN GERMAN FOLK PAREMIA

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Abstract: This article examines the linguocultural features of marriage and spousal relations reflected in German folk paremias. The study analyzes the interpretation of marriage as a sacred union, the promotion of responsibility and prudence in choosing a life partner, and the representation of gender roles within paremiological units. Furthermore, the research explores the cultural values, social stereotypes, and family relationship patterns embedded in German proverbs, highlighting their pragmatic and cognitive characteristics.

Keywords: paremiology, proverb, marriage, spousal relations, family values, linguoculturology, gender roles, German language.

Introduction

Language is one of the most significant reflections of a nation's culture. A people's worldview, values, customs, and life experience find their most concise and expressive representation in proverbs and sayings. The concepts of family and marriage constitute one of the central thematic layers of every nation's paremiological corpus. German folk paremias likewise extensively reflect issues such as marriage, husband–wife relationships, family responsibilities, and gender roles.

Paremiological units function as cultural codes that transmit historical experience and social norms from one generation to another. Therefore, the linguocultural analysis of German folk proverbs provides valuable insights into German family values and the national mentality.

Research Methods

The study employs descriptive, comparative, linguocultural, and semantic analysis methods. German paremias related to marriage and spousal relations were classified into semantic-thematic groups, and their semantic content as well as pragmatic functions were examined.

Results and Discussion

Marriage as a Sacred Union

German folk paremias frequently portray marriage as an event determined by divine will. This is illustrated by the following proverb:

Ehen werden im Himmel geschlossen. [1.125]
(*"Marriages are made in heaven."*)

This proverb expresses the idea that marriage is a sacred union predetermined in human destiny. Its conceptual foundation originates from Christian religious traditions. The proverb emphasizes that marriage is not merely a legal contract but also a spiritual covenant.

The issue of careful preparation for marriage and the choice of a life partner also occupies an important place in German folk wisdom:

Heiraten ist kein Pferdekauf. [2.67]
(*"Getting married is not like buying a horse."*)

This proverb presents marriage as a serious life decision that cannot be compared to an ordinary commercial transaction. Its pragmatic function is to encourage young people to make thoughtful and responsible decisions before marriage.

Similarly,

Heiraten in Eile bereut man mit Weile. [3.132]

(*"A marriage entered into hastily leads to long-lasting regret."*)

This proverb warns that impulsive marriages often result in prolonged regret. It carries a clear didactic message by promoting prudence and careful consideration.

The Roles of Husband and Wife in the Family

German proverbs clearly reflect traditional gender roles within the family.

Der Mann ist das Haupt der Familie und die Frau ist der Hut darauf. [4.340]

(*"The man is the head of the family, and the woman is the hat upon it."*)

In this proverb, the husband is portrayed as the head of the family, while the wife is presented as an element that complements his status. From a linguocultural perspective, this reflects traditional patriarchal values that historically characterized German society.

Another proverb highly appreciates the woman's economic contribution and thriftiness:

Was die Frau erspart, ist so gut, als was der Mann erwirbt. [5.431]

(*"What the wife saves is as valuable as what the husband earns."*)

According to this proverb, a woman's ability to save resources is considered equal in importance to a man's ability to earn income. It recognizes the significant role women play in maintaining the family's economic well-being.

At the same time, certain paremias preserve negative stereotypes about women:

Die Frau kann mit der Schürze mehr aus dem Hause tragen, als der Mann mit dem Erntewagen einfährt. [5.431]

(*"A woman can carry more out of the house with her apron than a man can bring in with a harvest wagon."*)

This proverb metaphorically suggests that excessive spending by a wife may outweigh the husband's hard-earned income, thereby threatening the family's prosperity.

Marriage and Power Relations

German paremias also reflect the relationship between family authority and economic status:

Wenn eine Frau einen goldenen Stuhl mitbringt, will sie auch darauf sitzen. [6.512]

(*"If a woman brings a golden chair into the household, she will also want to sit on it."*)

This proverb implies that a woman's wealth may influence her position and authority within the family. Through metaphorical expression, it establishes a connection between material capital and family power structures.

Conclusion

The analysis demonstrates that marriage and spousal relations constitute one of the key linguocultural concepts reflected in German folk paremias. These paremias emphasize the sacred nature of marriage, the importance of responsibility and careful decision-making in family formation, traditional gender roles, and economic relations within the family. As a result, they serve as valuable sources for understanding the historical experience, cultural values, and social stereotypes of the German people.

Furthermore, although contemporary German society increasingly embraces the principles of gender equality, many traditional proverbs continue to preserve traces of historical patriarchal attitudes. This confirms that paremias function as important carriers of collective cultural memory and national mentality.

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