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ROLE OF FULFULDE PROVERBS IN PEACE AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION: A PRAGMATIC APPROACH

Umar Ibrahim Alhaji
Department of French,
Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria
ibrahimumar@abu.edu.ng

Hariratu Sanusi
Department of African Languages and Cultures,
Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria
harirahamzasanusi@gmail.com

Abstract

Disputes do occur as long as people of diverse races, nations, cultures, tribes, clans and families co-exist. To manage this human phenomenon, the leaders of communities devise ways and means of realizing peaceful integration. Linguists are of the view that language, and precisely proverbs, play a significant role and are seen as important tools needed to achieve sustainable peace. Therefore, this paper aims to study the roles of Fulfulde proverbs in achieving peace and national integration. The study also attempts to highlight the hidden concept of peace embedded in the proverbs by adopting the pragmatic approach as its theoretical framework. A purposive sampling method of data collection and a descriptive textual analysis were adopted for data analysis. The study established that Fulfulde's proverbs play a significant role in conveying timeless wisdom by promoting peace and national integration, encouraging tolerance and understanding, fostering a sense of community and promoting social cohesion. The study concludes that language is at the forefront of sustaining peace and national integration.

Keywords: Proverb, Peace, Integration, Fulfulde,

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Introduction

For a nation to develop and grow strong, it needs peace and integration, which are vital for stability and development as well as the prosperity of the society. Peace and national integration are essential ingredients of any society as they help to preserve the cultural heritage, traditions, and language and ensure development that can benefit the people and other tribes sharing the same space. They contribute to economic growth and political stability which is crucial for effective governance as people are more likely to support collective decisions that benefit the community. Also, it ensures a harmonious society that fosters tolerance and reduces social tensions. Peace and integration enhance security by making it easier for leaders to govern the community effectively. They can also assist in the preservation of culture and identity as it will enable members of the society to focus on preserving their traditions, and language without the disruption of internal or external conflicts. This is why Ibrahim et al. (2020.p.134) see peace as a state of harmony of people and their relationship with the ecosystem (environment). While national integration refers to the awareness of a common identity central to fostering cohesive security consciousness amongst citizens of a country. Therefore, peace and national integration are vital aspects that bring about peaceful co-existence among people living together as a family, in a neighbourhood, community, or nation. These two important aspects of national development are generally achieved through the use of language. This is so, as language plays a crucial role in shaping our thought and belief system.

Thus, language is regarded as a weapon through which ideas, thoughts, opinions, messages and information are generally exchanged between groups of people to ensure interpersonal relationships. It is a symbol of people's identity and a means of identifying their norms and value systems. This is to say that there is a deep relationship between language and culture as language is used to maintain and convey culture and cultural ties. Also, the structure of a language is determined by a person's worldview. This is because speech can bring about rapid change in people's behaviour and mindset. According to Bowman et. al. (ND p.7), "language (especially spoken) is used to change lives by changing minds, shaping thoughts and making a world of difference merely by what is said and not said". This is true as people with wisdom often, chooses their words carefully when giving a speech and is fond of using proverbs; idioms etc. to capture the attention of their listeners, change people's perspective about a particular issue or remind them about the virtue of patience and tolerance as well as a sense of community. This is why this paper attempt to look at the proverb used by Fulɓe to promote peace and harmony among themselves and other tribes living in the same community. This is chosen, as proverbs are one of the spoken languages used for dialogues which play an important role in bringing about peace and integration among people from different backgrounds, communities and tribes. The aim of the paper includes the analysis of the Fulfulde proverbs to see how they provide guidance and inspire tolerance to promote cross-cultural understanding among Fulɓe and other ethnic groups in Nigeria. It also investigates how Fulfulde proverbs break stereotypes and misconceptions about Fulɓe. These are attained, using the pragmatic theory as the model of analysis.

2.1 The Concept of Peace

Absence of violence, conflict and presence of respect and understanding between people and communities are among the characteristics that define peace. Providing a clear-cut definition of the concept seems demanding as historical events, ideologies and peculiar regional circumstances have shaped the meaning of peace. However, many scholars have tried to define it. Generally, it is described as a non-violent and calm atmosphere among people living together. According to Mustafa et al (2023 p.854), peace is the elimination of war in the state. It is the negotiation, compromise and cooperation among people with different interests and viewpoints. It is seen as a state devoid of civil disturbance, violence and turmoil. Peace is said to be a state of perpetual liberty and freedom from oppression, unpleasant thoughts and emotions (Ibrahim et al, 2014, p. 134). Peace means the absence of war, haughtiness, avarice, artifice, mutual desperado and rancour. As Kant (1995) puts it, peace includes respect for human rights. Peace is generally defined as the absence of conflict, violence, or war, but it extends beyond just the cessation of physical violence. As Spinoza emphasised, peace is not merely the absence of conflict but a virtue that involves a state of mental tranquillity and national cooperation. Therefore, peace can be said to arise when people live according to reason and social harmony. Peace can also refer to a state of social harmony where individuals, communities, and nations co-exist with mutual respect, justice, and equality. Galtung (1969) categorized peace into negative peace which refers to the absence of violence or war. positive peace which refers to the presence of justice, fairness, and institutional structures that promote equity, security, and well-being for all citizens.

2.2 National Integration

National integration is the awareness of a common identity amongst the citizens of a country. It means that though we belong to different religions and ethnic groups, and speak different languages, we recognize the fact that we are all one. It is unity despite great differences. In other words, unity in diversity. Omachonu (2014 p.88) sees national integration as "the bringing together into equal membership of a common society, those groups or persons previously discriminated against on cultural ground". It means a feeling of oneness. It implies social, political, economic, linguistic and cultural unity. According to Gould and Williams (1994), National integration is the process by which people from different ethnic, religious, linguistic, or cultural backgrounds within a nation develop a sense of belonging and unity. It involves the creation of a cohesive national identity, minimizing divisions based on regionalism, tribalism, or other social cleavages, and fostering a commitment to the nation's goals and values.

2.3 The Concept of Proverbs

Proverbs are timeless treasured sayings that strongly reflect the cultural values and physical environment of a people. They are generally known sentences of folk that contain wisdom, advice, morals, and traditional views and state truths in a metaphorical, fixed and memoizable form handed down from generation to generation. According to Norrik (1985), "A proverb is a traditional, conversational, didactic genre with general and figurative meaning considered as a potential free conversational turn". This means that words contained in a proverb are carefully selected to contain wisdom and morals that are acceptable within the cultural values of its people. They have their origin in oral tradition therefore, they are generally worded in such a

way that would be remembered easily and changing a little from generation to generation. They are traditional sayings that offer advice or present morals in a short and piety manner. Proverbs are abstract statements expressing general truth using specific observations from everyday experience to make a general point. This is because they are used to support arguments and provide lessons as well as stress shared values.

Proverbs play a vital role in conveying timeless wisdom, they offer insights into the nature of man's values, social norms, and experiences from one generation to the next. These include conflict resolution and social harmony by helping to foster a culture of peace. Proverbs are also used to convey tolerance and understanding by often highlighting the importance of respecting differences and promoting and contributing to national integration. This is why they are also used in conveying guidance for conflict resolution as they offer practical advice on resolving disputes, managing conflicts and promoting peaceful resolution. Proverbs also promote a sense of community by bringing people together by showing the importance of community and shared values through helping to build a sense of national identity and unity. This brings about social cohesion which helped breach cultural and linguistic divides and promote social cohesion and national integration.

2.3. 1 Fulfulde Proverbs

A proverb is always a traditional metaphorical and wise short phrase expressing a memorable general truth piece of advice or insight into life. This will always be a part of every tribe's and nation's heritage, no matter how old the people are and what country they come from. In the Fulɓe society, effective speech and the ability to converse efficiently depend on the effective use of proverbs. This can be probably because Fulɓe are people known to be reticent and always thoughtful. They usually use few words in speech. Therefore, proverbs hold great importance in the community, especially in maintaining peace and harmony. They are part of Fulɓe's cultural identity and are a significant part of their oral tradition. Proverbs reflect the community's worldview by preserving the cultural heritage of the Fulɓe people concisely and memorably. They use proverbs for moral guidance as they often contain moral lessons and ethical principles, guiding the action and inaction of individual behaviours within society. As the wisdom says *Pullo walndataa fewre* (A Pullo does not give a false proverb), they used to teach younger generations about respect, honesty, truthfulness, hospitality, and other core values. Another important use of proverbs within the Fulɓe society is to resolve conflict and promote peace. In the Fulɓe community, proverbs are frequently employed in conflict resolution and mediation. They offer wisdom in handling disputes and maintaining harmony within the group, often being used by elders or leaders to convey advice diplomatically and respectfully. Proverbs also serve as an educational tool, allowing people to share knowledge in a manner that is easily understood and retained. They encapsulate life experiences, making complex ideas simple and relatable. It is also used in expressing complex ideas Through proverbs, the Fulɓe can express profound insights into life, nature, and human behaviour. Fulɓe often employ proverbs to communicate deep truths using simple and concise metaphorical language to connect the past and present through wisdom and shared cultural heritage.

3.1 Pragmatics

Pragmatics refers to the study of how language is used to express what somebody really means in particular situations, especially when the actual words used appear to be something

different (Garba 2022:79). According to Leech and Thomas (1990:1) pragmatics is a branch of linguistics that accounts for the meaning which utterances have for their users and interpreters. It is a branch of linguistics that studies how context influences the interpretation of meaning in communication. Pragmatics examines how speakers use language in real-life situations and how listeners interpret it based on context, social norms, shared knowledge, and the intentions of the speaker. It deals with how utterances are made and their effect on the listeners. According to Lakoff (1979:2), pragmatics deals with various aspects of speech situations. It is also concerned with meaning as a triadic relation as well as people's language choice in the social context and its effect on other people. It holds the relation between the form, meaning and context. It can therefore be said that pragmatics is concerned with the study of the utterance made, how it is understood by the listener and the context in which the utterance was made. The aim of pragmatics therefore is to find the real reasons for the speaker's language choice in communication. This is why this paper chooses to study the pragmatic effect of Fulfulde proverbs in bringing about how they express peace and national integration.

3.2 Grice Cooperative Principles

Context is an important factor in pragmatics as it helps the speaker choose the proper words and sentences that suit the context. It also helps the listeners to understand the spoken language appropriately. This is why this paper uses Herbert Paul Grice 1975's Cooperative Principle to analyse the selected Fulfulde proverbs, to see the extent to which they bring about peace and national integration within the Fulɓe society. Paul Grice's cooperative principle was first proposed in the second half of the 1900s. However, the theory came to light with William James' lectures and a series of invited lectures published in (1975) at Havard University with the name "Logic and Conversation" (Laila 2020). Grice in the theory proposed that there are specific conversational rules that are crucial to be followed by all conversational participants for meaningful communication. He proposed four maxims that speakers will follow up to achieve effective communication. According to Li (2015:5), communication is based on cooperation between speakers and listeners though, interlocutors do not follow the maxims all the time in speech. He proposed four conversational maxims to explain how people achieve effective communication: Maxim of Quantity (Provide the right amount of information), Maxim of Quality (Be truthful), Maxim of Relation (Be relevant) and Maxim of Manner (Be clear and orderly).

4.1 Analysis of Fulfulde Proverbs

For the analysis of the data, the paper made use of the pragmatic approach using Paul Grice's Cooperative Principles Theory to analyse the Fulfulde proverbs portraying peace and integration. The proverbs are classified into segments consisting of proverbs portraying tolerance and understanding, a sense of community, social cohesion and guidance for conflict resolution. These are essential elements that need to be emphasized for a society to achieve peace and national integration. The crucial nature of these aspects of Fulfulde proverbs is necessary for the leaders and elders in the community to be able to persuade their followers to bring about peace and integration among the citizens.

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1. **Tolerance and Understanding**

Fulɓe often use these kinds of proverbs to highlight the importance of respecting differences and promoting unity among themselves and the non-Fulɓe living together. To promote understanding, they tend to encourage peaceful co-existence amongst people living together by using proverbs that frown at actions that instigate chaos. They use proverbs to promote togetherness and respect for peoples' differences as illustrated in the following:

a. Gondal ɗum daaɓoral
Living together means learning from one another.

Proverb 1a above is used to encourage Fulɓe to tolerate and understand the differences between one another when living together. People living together should not disregard one another's opinions as each person has his/her good attitude that the other can learn from. When people live together, they learn new things which are not familiar to them. They learn from one another about things that can improve their well-being such as life and healthy living and share ideas about issues that concern them.

This proverb coincides with Grice's conversational maxims of clarity, orderliness, truthfulness and relevance in a conversation. A leader or elder who uses this proverb will capture the attention of his people because his speech is concise but it carries weight and is relevant to promoting both peace and national integration amongst people of different ethnicities and cultures living together. Fulɓe also use proverbs to promote tolerance and togetherness by encouraging people living together either as family, neighbour or community to tolerate one another. This is illustrated in the following proverb:

b. Mo walaa sakiike sakitake
He who lacks brotherhood lags.

Proverb 1b above shows the extent to which Fulɓe value communalism by encouraging brotherhood and tolerating each other. People living together should be of help to one another, share responsibilities and watch after one another by being each other's brother's keeper. Grice's conversational maxims also fit into this proverb as the truthful nature of the proverb will help to encourage society to do the right thing. The proverb provides enough information needed for effective conversation.

c. Ko meemi hinere fuu meemi yitere
Whatever touches the nose touches the eye too.

The above illustration is used to promote togetherness and to show that what touches one, touches all. It shows that society as a whole is one therefore, they protect one another. They go through difficulties together and celebrate success together as a community. The leaders of the Fulɓe society often advise the Fulɓe to embrace this culture.

2. Sense of Community

Fulɓe often use proverbs to promote the importance of community and shared values which help to build a sense of national identity and unity. To achieve this, they use proverbs to encourage collaboration among the Fulɓe and non-Fulɓe living together. The proverbs promote national integration and encourage people to be helpers to one another as illustrated below:

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a. Jungo wuddo nyaanyataa ɓaawo
An amputated (half) hand cannot be used to scratch one's back.

Proverb 2a above is used to express the importance of communalism and discourages individualism. It teaches one sense of responsibility and shows that we all need one another to strive and grow strong. This is because Fulɓe believe that a person is incomplete without a companion. Therefore, they give much value to collaboration and togetherness as many Fulfulde proverbs express this, as can also be seen below:

b. Jawo wooto son'yataa
A single bangle cannot make noise

Proverb 2b above also show how important togetherness is to the Fulɓe, as they often live together in an extended family system. Here, every member of the family protects the other. This proverb encourages the culture of togetherness among neighbours in the Fulɓe community. The culture of unity is always practised in the Fulɓe community where one sees the heads of families in a neighbourhood bring mats and food from their houses to eat with their neighbours. This practice promotes a sense of community and unity as the wise Fulɓe say:

c. Nyaamo loota nano, nano bo loota nyaamo
The right-hand washes the left hand and the left hand washes the right hand too.

The above proverb in 2c. Shows the extent to which Fulɓe value a sense of community. The elders and leaders of the Fulɓe community always use this kind of proverb to persuade their members to help one another and the community as a whole. The proverb is taught to children right from a young age so, they can develop a sense of responsibility. Leaders and elders within the society also use the proverb to persuade family members to always be of help to one another. These proverbs conform to all of Grice's conversational rules which include that the amount of speech should be brief, clear and orderly, relevant, and truthful.

3. Guidance for Conflict Resolution

Fulɓe use proverbs to offer practical advice on resolving and managing conflict within society. This helps to promote peaceful resolution and harmony among the members of the society. Leaders as well as elders in the community use different kinds of proverbs to guide members of the community about the virtue of patience and perseverance to achieve a peaceful co-existence and move the society forward. This is illustrated in the following proverb:

a. *Muydo curɗe hewtoto 'yulɓe*.
He who is patient with smoke will obtain charcoal.

The above proverb shows how Fulɓe value patience and perseverance as it teaches both physical and mental endurance among Fulɓe. The elders and leaders in the community often use this proverb to convince their members to be strong, brave and trustworthy. This is because he who is patient has a good virtue. Yet, they caution their members to be careful about how they exercise their rights as it can lead to trouble as portrayed in the following proverb:

b. Ndikka hula hisa dow worɗa heɓee
It is better to be afraid and be saved than to be brave and get hurt.

The verb *worɗugo* which refers to bravery, is regarded as one of the virtues of *Pulaaku* (Fulɓe code of conduct). Even though Fulɓe highly regard this as an important virtue, leaders and

elders of the society often guide and advise members to be peaceful and patient while relating with one another. The Fulɓe elders often use this proverb to prevent disputes among their people by counselling them on how to overlook their neighbour's shortcomings.
These proverbs agree with five of Grice's maxims, as the proverbs when used in conversation, capture the attention of the listeners and help instill in them, a sense of responsibility, patience and perseverance which brings about peace and national integration. The Fulɓe leaders often emphasise being patient with one another which is why they use the following proverb:

c. Munyal wonnataa, wo'inan
Patience does not destroy peace but curtails conflict.

The above proverb is used to show that people living together should be tolerant despite their differences as patience is to peace and national integration.

4. Social cohesion

Proverbs can help to breach cultural and linguistic divides and promote social cohesion and national integration. Leaders and elders within the Fulɓe community often encourage peace and resolve conflicts among the members of the society by cautioning them about utterances that promote bigotry and cultural prejudice in the society. They use proverbs to draw the attention of their members to the danger of such acts as illustrated in the following proverb:

a. Ko hallini mboodi hunduko mu'um
What made people dislike a snake, is its mouth

Proverb 4a is used to advise Fulɓe to watch their tongues, speak only when it is necessary and say that which is positive all the time. The proverb uses a snake to describe the attitude of a person who speaks badly about people and causes trouble in society. A snake looks beautiful but its mouth is deadly having the same attitude as a chauvinist and a bigot who might be handsome/beautiful but has a toxic tongue. This is why society frowns on this attitude and leaders discourage people to desist from such.

b. Ɗuuɗa haalaajo yoɓan nyamaande maama mum
A talkative will pay his grandmother's debt.

Proverb 4b regards a talkative person as a menace because he/she can use his mouth to destroy or cause trouble. Therefore, he becomes a threat to the society. Elders and leaders in the Fulɓe society there use the proverb to advice members to desist from it. This proverb conforms with Grice's maxim of relevance.

c. kerangal waddani boofiingal ɓokkaare
a chicken that moves about causes trouble for a chicken that is laying on eggs

Proverb 4c is often used by elders and Fulɓe community leaders to remind members that malevolence is a bad behaviour that can cause both physical and verbal attack on other innocent members of the society.

5.1 Conclusion

From the analysis above, the paper concludes that elders and leaders in the Fulɓe societies can achieve peace and national integration using these proverbs to settling disputes amongst

families, couples, friends, communities and the society at large. As well as to encourage peaceful co-existence among the Fulɓe and non-Fulɓe living in the same society. The Proverbs teach the fundamental wisdom about life, culture and norms of Fulɓe as embedded in *Pulaaku.* The proverbs when used in conversation conform to Grice's cooperative principles of the pragmatic theory of 1975.

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