



PRAGMATIC STRATEGIES AND COMMUNICATIVE FUNCTIONS IN AFANDI AND ROBIN HOOD NARRATIVES

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Abstract. Folklore narratives across different cultures often serve not only as entertainment but also as instruments of social critique, moral instruction, and pragmatic communication. This article explores pragmatic strategies and communicative functions in two culturally significant narrative traditions: the Eastern figure of Afandi (Nasreddin Hodja) and the Western legend of Robin Hood. Although these characters emerge from distinct historical and cultural environments, both function as symbolic agents of social justice, resistance to authority, and moral reasoning through humor, irony, and strategic communication. The study applies pragmatic theories such as speech act theory, relevance theory, and politeness theory to examine how meaning is constructed beyond literal language. It also analyzes how humor, satire, indirectness, and contextual inference are used to convey deeper social messages.

Keywords: Pragmatics; communicative functions; Afandi; Nasreddin Hodja; Robin Hood; folklore discourse; speech act theory; implicature; irony; indirect communication; narrative analysis; cultural pragmatics; social critique; discourse analysis.

Afandi (widely known in various cultures as Nasreddin Hodja) and Robin Hood are two legendary folkloric figures originating from entirely different cultural and historical contexts, yet both occupy a similar symbolic space in the collective imagination of humanity. Afandi emerges from Eastern, particularly Central Asian, Middle Eastern, and Anatolian storytelling traditions, where humor, paradox, and wisdom are tightly interwoven. Robin Hood, on the other hand, is rooted in medieval



English folklore and represents resistance against injustice and the redistribution of wealth. Despite their cultural distance, both narrative traditions demonstrate remarkably similar pragmatic mechanisms in the way meaning is constructed, transmitted, and interpreted. From a pragmatic perspective, these stories are not merely fictional entertainments but complex communicative acts that operate through indirectness, implicature, contextual interpretation, and social meaning-making. Their communicative power lies not in literal language alone but in what is implied, suggested, or symbolically represented within the narrative structure.

Pragmatics as a linguistic discipline focuses on language use in context and investigates how meaning is shaped by speaker intention, listener interpretation, and situational factors. In this sense, Afandi and Robin Hood narratives provide rich material for pragmatic analysis because they rely heavily on implicit meaning rather than explicit statement. The interpretation of these stories requires cultural knowledge, cognitive inference, and sensitivity to social context. In Afandi stories, meaning is often hidden behind humor, irony, and paradoxical reasoning. The character frequently appears foolish at the surface level, yet this apparent simplicity masks a deeper layer of social criticism and philosophical insight. Robin Hood narratives, by contrast, rely on moral reframing and ideological justification, where acts that are legally defined as criminal are reinterpreted as morally legitimate resistance against injustice. In both cases, the communicative function of language extends beyond description and becomes a tool for reshaping social reality.

One of the key pragmatic strategies in Afandi narratives is the use of irony. Irony allows Afandi to criticize authority, social norms, and human behavior indirectly without explicit confrontation. This indirectness is particularly important in traditional societies where direct criticism of rulers or social institutions could be dangerous. Through ironic statements and humorous situations, Afandi communicates critical messages while simultaneously protecting himself and maintaining social harmony. For example, in one widely known anecdote, Afandi



searches for his lost key under a streetlight rather than where he actually lost it. When asked why, he replies that the light is better there. On the surface, this appears illogical, but pragmatically it serves as a critique of human behavior: people often seek solutions where it is easiest rather than where the truth actually lies. The humor in the story forces the audience to reinterpret the situation and derive the intended meaning through inference rather than direct explanation. Another important pragmatic feature of Afandi narratives is conversational implicature. Many of Afandi's responses are intentionally ambiguous or seemingly irrelevant, requiring the listener to infer the intended meaning. This mechanism engages the audience cognitively, making them active participants in the construction of meaning. According to Relevance Theory, communication is successful when the listener is able to derive the most relevant interpretation based on contextual clues. Afandi stories frequently rely on this principle, as their humor and wisdom emerge only after the listener reconstructs the hidden meaning behind the utterance. This process enhances memorability and strengthens the communicative impact of the narrative.

Speech act theory also provides a useful framework for understanding Afandi's communicative strategies. His utterances often perform multiple functions simultaneously, such as criticizing, advising, mocking, or educating. A single sentence may carry both a literal meaning and an illocutionary force that differs from its surface structure. For instance, when Afandi responds to a judge or authority figure with a seemingly naive remark, the literal meaning may appear irrelevant, but the pragmatic function is often a subtle critique of power or hypocrisy. This layered structure of meaning demonstrates how language in folklore can function as action rather than mere representation [3].

Robin Hood narratives also rely on pragmatic reinterpretation, especially through moral reframing. In these stories, Robin Hood's actions—particularly stealing from the rich—are legally criminal but are presented as morally justified within the narrative context. This shift from illegality to legitimacy is achieved by



emphasizing social inequality, injustice, and moral responsibility. Thus, the same action is evaluated differently depending on ideological framing and context. Another key pragmatic strategy is opposition discourse. Robin Hood narratives construct a clear binary between corrupt authorities, such as the Sheriff of Nottingham and the aristocracy, and morally justified outlaws, represented by Robin Hood and his companions. This structure is not only narrative but also pragmatic, as it shapes audience interpretation and moral judgment, legitimizing resistance and encouraging empathy for marginalized groups. Repeated storytelling strengthens this ideological perspective and contributes to collective moral understanding [4].

In conclusion, Afandi and Robin Hood narratives represent two culturally distinct yet pragmatically similar systems of storytelling that rely on indirect communication, contextual inference, and moral reinterpretation. Their pragmatic strategies include irony, implicature, reframing, and speech act diversity, while their communicative functions encompass education, social critique, ideological expression, and cultural identity formation. Afandi embodies the linguistic and intellectual dimension of pragmatic storytelling, where meaning is generated through humor and paradox, whereas Robin Hood embodies the action-oriented dimension, where meaning is constructed through resistance and moral justification. Together, these traditions demonstrate the universal nature of pragmatic communication in folklore and highlight the role of narrative as a powerful tool for shaping human understanding of justice, authority, and social order.

References

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