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Nüshu in the Sense of Pragmatics

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Abstract

Nüshu is the only living female script in the world. It is a complete set of writing signs created and used by women in Jiangyong county and Daoxian County of Hunan Province. Since it was discovered by Chinese scholars in the 1980s, scholars in China and the worldwide have studied Nüshu in succession. However, there are few studies on Nüshu from the perspective of semiotics. Based on Peirce's theories of semiotics and pragmatism, this paper makes an exploratory analysis on the locutionary meaning, illocutionary meaning and perlocutionary meaning of Nüshu from the perspective of Morris' pragmatics, expecting to play a role in the multi-path study of Nüshu signs.

Key words

pragmatism, pragmatics, locutionary, illocutionary, perlocutionary

Introduction

In Jiangyong County and Daoxian County of Hunan Province in China, there has been a kind of special script created by women and only used by women to communicate secret messages with each other. It is considered the only remaining women's script in the world and has been passed down from mother to daughter, elder to younger, for hundreds of years, known as "Jiangyong Female Characters", "Women's Characters", "Women's Script", as well as "Nüshu" (Hereinafter Nüshu)—

a term coined by academics (Six Tone, 2018, Para. 3). In 2005, Nüshu was listed in the Guinness Book of World Records as “the most gendered scripts” (Chen 2013; Vasylijev & Vasylijev, 2021), and it was also included in the first batch of national intangible cultural heritage approved by the State Council on May 20, 2006 (Liu, 2018; Tregubov, Ekkert, & Mikhailovsky, 2021).

Since Nüshu has been used by a specific group of women for a long time and is the only writing system that exists and is used exclusively for women in the world, Nüshu can also be seen as a system of signs. These signs have actually undergone historical changes in a particular group of women. According to Peirce’s semiotics and pragmatism, the ultimate goal of sign activity is “the pursuit of truth”. Pragmatism is the only way to help individuals and groups explore “reality” and thus acquire “perfect knowledge”. The purpose of pragmatism is not to make people explore the change of sign meaning caused by a certain reaction of a specific person, but to explore the effect of a sign in a large enough range and a long enough time, which is “reality” and “truth”. Peirce pointed out that the meaning of signs does not lie in the reactions of individuals, but in the sum of reactions made by a community in a long enough time. Then the meaning of any sign is not fixed; The replacement of times, the depth of inquiry will make it constantly change (CP, 5.300). “Whenever a language game changes, concepts and meanings of words change too” (Wittgenstein 1969; Sergeeva & Panova, 2021). In the female group of Jiangyong County and Daoxian County, for thousands of years since the Nüshu signs came into being, the influence of the meaning of Nüshu is changing with the replacement of time and the deepening of research. However, the rich connotations and meanings of Nüshu signs have not been paid much attention by scholars in China and the worldwide, and few scholars have studied Nüshu from the perspective of semiotics. Based on Peirce’s theories of semiotics and pragmatism, this paper makes an exploratory analysis on the locutionary meaning, illocutionary meaning and perlocutionary meaning of Nüshu from the perspective of Morris’ pragmatics, in order to play a role in the multi-path study of Nüshu.

About Nüshu

According to Zhao Liming (1989, p. 55), there are about 1000 Nüshu scripts. In terms of font shape, Nüshu is in diamond shape, with the font high on the right and low on the left. The writing sequence is from the top to bottom on the right side, and there is no punctuation mark. The carriers of Nüshu mainly include paper, book, handkerchief and fan. The paper on which Nüshu is written is mostly rectangular in shape and has two colors: red and white. Books vary in thickness including a few to dozens of pages and are bound by hand on yellow papyrus or thin wool-edged paper. Women’s handkerchiefs are usually made of woven cloth or satin in white, blue, red and yellow colors. Nüshu signs on them are either written with brush or embroidered with colored thread. The fans are mainly pictures and scripts, with very rich content.

Since Nüshu was discovered by Professor Gong Zhebing (1983) of South-

central University for Nationalities in 1983, experts have carried out extensive field investigations to collect original materials of Nüshu. Five Chinese academic seminars and one international academic seminar have been held (Chen, 2013, p. 1). Scholars have excavated 430 Nüshu works of 10 kinds. Among them, there are 82 Congratulation Sanzhaoshu, 36 complaining songs of autobiography, 22 books of making friends with sworn sisters, 32 legendary narratives, 7 sacrificial songs, 58 wedding songs, 87 folk songs, 47 riddles, 29 translated works and 30 letters (Song, 1995, p. 204). Almost all of Nüshu works are presented in the form of poetry, with the seven-character quatrain style accounting for the vast majority, and the minority are five-character quatrain style. There are narrative poems, lyric poems, devotional poems, letters, books of making friends, biographies, crying marriage songs, mountain songs, children's songs, riddle songs, and Chinese rhymes rewritten with Nüshu translation (Gong, 2018).

Outside mainland China, scholars from Hongkong, Taiwan, the United States, Australia, France and Japan, such as Orié Endo (1995), Elinor Ochs and Lisa Capps (1996), Ellen Widmer and Kang-I Sun Chang (2003), and Liu Feiwen (2010, 2015), have devoted themselves to the study of Nüshu (Chen, 2013, p. 1), and have invested a lot of efforts and achieved great results. Among them, Liu Feiwen, a scholar from Taiwan, is the most fruitful. She conducted Nüshu fieldwork expeditions and got published a series of valuable papers around Nüshu and a book *Gendered Words* (2015), which is the world's first book on Nüshu culture published in English. However, most of these achievements revolve around the structure, origin, characteristics and nature of Nüshu scripts as well as the rescue and protection of Nüshu scripts. There are few research on the connotation and significance of Nüshu signs (Chen, 2013, p. 1), not to mention researches on Nüshu from the perspective of semiotics.

The author, taking Nüshu as the theme, surfed on the China National Knowledge Infrastructure (hereinafter CNKI, data as of 24:00 of June 1st, 2022), and discovered that in the 38 years from the year of 1983 when the first paper on Nüshu got published to the year of 2021, the scholars published altogether 1,323 papers. Among which there are 73 in the last 17 years of the 20th century, accounting for only 6%. From 2000 to 2009, there were 344, accounting for 29%. From 2010 to 2019, there were 769, accounting for 65%. There were 137 in 2020 and 2021. As can be seen from this, the number of papers on Nüshu research has doubled every ten years. The trend chart of the number of papers on the subject of Nüshu published since 1983

and the proportion in three stages are shown in Figure 1 and Figure 2.

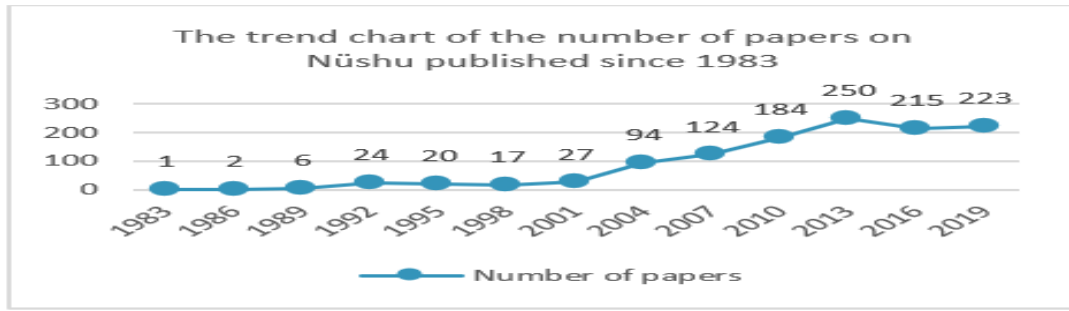


Figure 1 The trend chart of the number of papers on Nüshu published since 1983

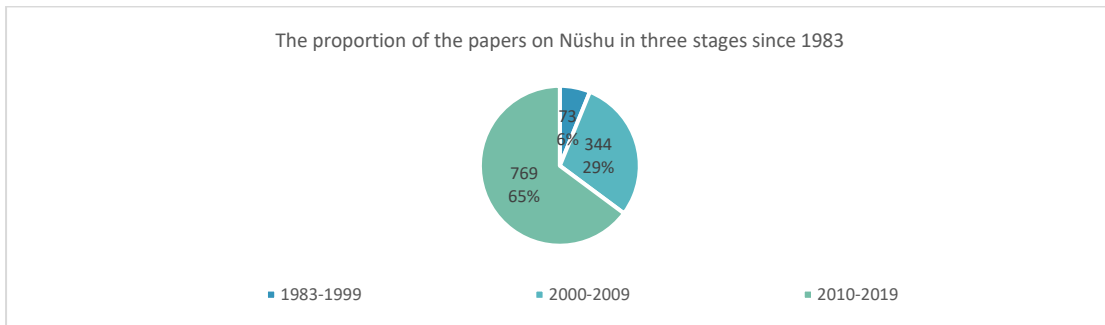


Figure 2 The proportion of the papers on Nüshu in three stages since 1983

The author, taking Nüshu signs as the theme, surfed again on CNKI (data as of 24:00 of June 1st, 2022), and discovered that in the 31 years from the year of 1987 when the first paper on Nüshu signs got published to the year of 2021, there are 195 papers got published, among which 12 got published in the last 13 years of the 20th century, accounting for only 7%. From 2000 to 2009, 33 got published, accounting for 19%. From 2010 to 2019, there were 125, accounting for an overwhelming 74%. This shows that since the 21st century, some scholars have gradually expanded the research field from Nüshu to Nüshu signs. But from the point of view of content, it is mainly from the angle of art and culture to explore the deep meaning of Nüshu signs. The trend chart of the number of papers on the subject of Nüshu sign published since 1983 and the proportion in three stages are shown in Figure 3 and Figure 4.

Finally, the author, taking semiotics and Nüshu signs as the theme, surfed on CNKI (data as of 24:00 of June 1st, 2022), and discovered that there are only four papers, among which one is a master thesis (Yang, 2020).

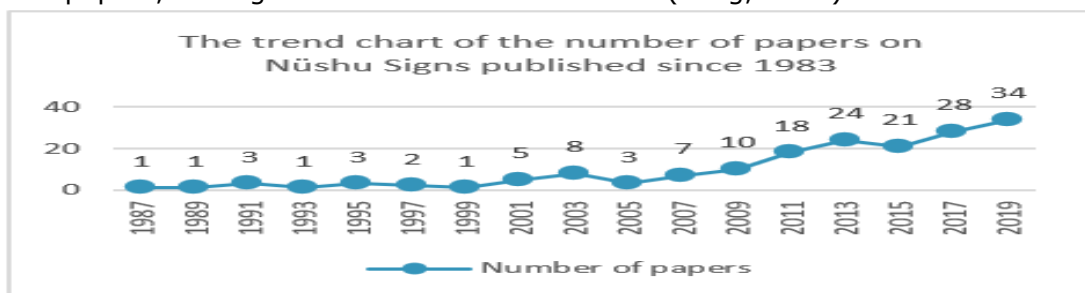


Figure 3 The trend chart of the number of papers on Nüshu signs published since 1983

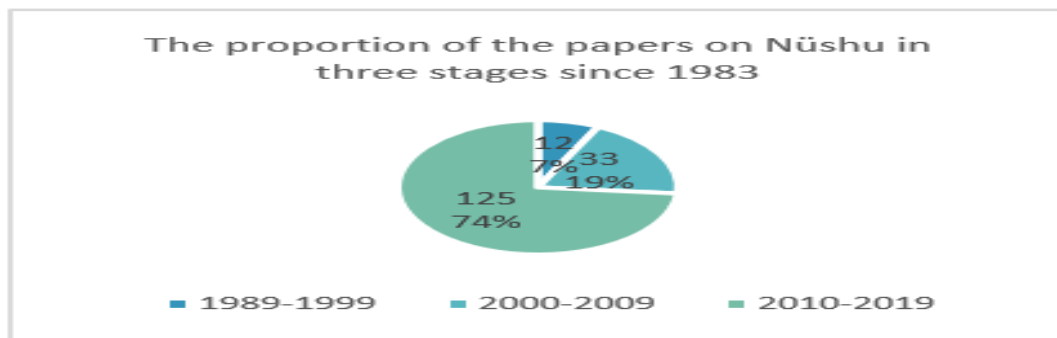


Figure 4 The proportion of the papers on Nūshu signs in three stages since 1983

International studies on Nūshu, from a dozen documents the author can obtain, there is no paper on Nūshu from the perspective of semiotics. It follows that, since the discovery of Nūshu nearly 40 years ago, the connotation of Nūshu signs has not aroused the attention of scholars. Even though there were some academic papers on the artistic form of Nūshu patterns, which expanded the scope of Nūshu research, there is no systematic and in-depth discussion on the rich symbolic meaning and connotation of Nūshu signs, and there is little semiotics involved. This paper analyzes Nūshu signs from the perspective of the locutionary meaning, illocutionary meaning and perlocutionary meaning of pragmatics, so as to explore and expand the research channels of Nūshu.

1 Peircean Semiotics and Pragmaticism

Charles Sander Peirce, an American logician and semiologist, was credited with the formation of the current semiotic theory and he was one of the pioneers of American pragmatism. "Since the publishing of his *Collected Papers* which started in the early 20th century, interest in Peirce's theory of signs has grown rapidly and dramatically" (Gvoždjak & Švantner, 1963, p. 1). Peirce defines "sign" like this:

A sign is anything which is related to a Second thing, its Object, in respect to a Quality, in such a way as to bring a Third thing, its Interpretant, into relation to the same Object, and that in such a way as to bring Fourth into relation to that Object in the same form, ad infinitum. (CP, 2.92)

In the semiotic theory constructed by Peirce, the triadic relation of the signs is the relation among the sign, the object and the interpretant (CP, 1.339), which shows that the semiotic theory is a kind of practice, an activity and an action in essence. It is this practicality of semiotic theory which in turn shows its dynamicity. This dynamicity and practicality reflected in Peirce's semiotics are the most important features of pragmatism. It can be seen that Peirce's pragmatism theory is developed in the framework of sign theory. It is in this sense that Peirce's pragmatic principle is unified with his semiotic theory. It can also be said that pragmatism is rooted in his semiotic theory.

According to Višňovský (1963, p. 12), the relation between Peircean pragmatism and semiotics is as follows: "Peirce first founded semiotics in his papers of 1868–1869, while pragmatism followed a decade later in his papers of 1878–1879". He "became a semiotician before he became a pragmatist philosopher". Peirce remarked in 1904 (as cited in Ladd-Franklin, 1916, p. 720): "Pragmatism is one of the results of my study of the formal laws of signs, a study guided by

mathematics and the familiar facts of everyday experience and by no other science whatever”.

It was not until 1878 that the pragmatic theory was initially elaborated in two papers, “The Fixation of Belief” (Peirce, 1877) and “How to Make Our Ideas Clear” (Peirce, 1878). Later, Peirce thought that the pragmatic theories of others were against his original intention. It is a misunderstanding of pragmatism maxim. Peircean version of pragmatism is different from almost all other versions since it can be explicitly labelled as “semiotic” (Višňovský, 1963, p. 11). To “serve the precise purpose of expressing the original definition, Peirce begs to announce the birth of the word ‘pragmaticism,’ which is ugly enough to be safe from kidnappers” (CP, 5.414). Henceforth, Peirce always used the term pragmaticism to denote his own conception of the doctrine (Kennedy, 1958, p. 583). Peirce’s pragmaticism consists in the assertion that the effect of a sign which constitutes the meaning of a sign is a habit in an interpreter. One sign may be said to differ from any other insofar as it gives rise to a different habit or habits (Fitzgerald, 1966, 158). Peircean pragmaticism refers to:

an explicitly theoretical scientific philosophy whose main goal was to provide a theory of meaning (rather than a theory of action or truth), despite sticking to understanding the problem of meaningfulness in a broader way than the problem of linguistic meaning. To him it is a theory of the meaningfulness of thought (concepts, theories); and since thought is also an action, it is a theory of action; but since thought is also a sign, it must be a semiotic theory. In other words, the pragmatist theory of meaning must also be a general semiotic theory. The pragmatic meaning does not concern only words and language, but also actions and events (as James was eager to prove and defend). To “read” actions and their outcomes, events, semiotically, is to “read” their meaning, which cannot be done otherwise than by taking them as signs. E.g. emotions: what kind of an act is the sign of love, or of hate? (Višňovský, 1963, p. 14-15)

Pragmatism determines the meanings of difficult concepts by considering their practical effects, while Peirce’s theory of signs attempts to explain consciousness and experience (Meyer, 2008, p. 153). There must be a connection between Peirce’s pragmatism and his theory of signs since both are meant to be theories of meaning (Alston, 1956). The theory of meaning is essentially the theory of interpretation, which is one of the most important components of Peirce’s theory of signs. This is one of the most important components of Peircean theory of semiotics.

According to the interpretant theory of semiotics, the three interpretants of signs, namely the immediate, the dynamical and the final interpretant (CP, 8.314), actually contain a kind of habitual interpretation to signs. However, due to the limitation of its own characteristics, only the final interpretant and dynamical interpretant can more prominently reflect the habit. Therefore, both of them are important constructors of semiotic meaning. Although all three are the expression of habits, the immediate interpretant is a habit that has become a fact and summarizes the past and present, while the final interpretant covers the change of habits and points to the future. Compared with immediate interpretant, the final interpretant reflects a developing habit, so it can better reflect the vitality of sign activities. It is precisely because the final interpretant points to the future that the semiotic meaning has the characteristics of development and evolution. The criterion to judge whether a sign is complete is whether it includes all the effects it exerts as a sign. This whole effect not only refers to the actual effect of the sign on the interpreter, but also includes the effect that the sign will have on the interpreter after it is fully developed. Thus, in Peircean pragmaticism principle, the actual meaning that can be thought of for an idea is provided by the final interpretant of the idea, which influences future thinking and behavior. The whole meaning of an idea is contained in all its practical effects that we can think of, otherwise, it is nothing else. Peirce called the whole meaning of a word or a proposition its pragmaticism meaning, and called the method of finding out the true meaning of

any idea, propositional theory or other sign the pragmatism method. From this point of view, Peirce's theory of pragmatism is essentially a theory of meaning. The contribution of semiotics lies in the study of meaning. Anyway, pragmatism and semiotics are generally considered to be Peirce's most important and perhaps most lasting contributions to philosophy and science (Višňovský, 1963, p. 9).

2 Morris's Theory of Pragmatics and Locutionary meaning, illocutionary meaning and perlocutionary meaning

Charles William Morris, Peirce's student and the American philosopher and behavioral semiotician, developed Peirce's theory of semiotics. In 1938, in his article "Foundations of the theory of signs", Morris first proposed the three dimensions of semiotics: syntactics, semantics and pragmatics. Syntactics is "the study of the syntactical relations of signs to one another in abstraction from the relations of signs to objects or to interpreters," (Morris, 1938, p. 13). "Semantics deals with the relation of signs to their designate and so to the objects which they may or do denote" (Morris, 1938, p. 21), and pragmatics refers to "the science of the relation of signs to their interpreters" (Morris, 1938, p. 30).

Standing on Peirce's shoulder, Morris (1938, p. 3) believes that any sign is an entity composed of three parts, namely sign vehicle, designatum and interpretation. The relation among these three parts constitutes the three meanings of semiotics: syntactic relation — the relation between signs, that is, the formalization aspect of meaning or form meaning; semantic relation — the relation between sign and its signified object, that is, the existing aspect of meaning or existence meaning; pragmatic relation — the relation between sign and sign users, that is, the practical aspect of meaning or practical meaning.

The term pragmatics was coined in isolation from the term "pragmatism." Morris' pragmatics is a pragmatic approach to study the relationship between signs and their interpretants or it could be saying their users. To be more precise, pragmatics deals with the biological phenomena in the process of semiosis, that is, the psychological, biological and social phenomena in the process of semiosis (Ran, 2017, p. 223). The features of pragmatics abstracted by Morris from pragmatism can be expressed as: The sign interpreter is an organism, and the interpretant is the habit that the organism reacts to the object not present when facing the sign media, just like a dog might respond to a sound by catching chipmunks (Morris, as cited in Ran, 2017, p. 223).

Morris' semiotics, especially pragmatics, is mainly derived from Peirce's pragmatism. What pragmatics corresponds to the three kinds of meanings of linguistic signs are as follows: locutionary meaning, illocutionary meaning and perlocutionary meaning.

Locutionary meaning refers to the meaning of a word of a sentence. It is the literal meaning, which is basically the same as "implicature" in the traditional sense, that is, expressing literal meaning through phonetic, lexical and grammatical structures (Wang, 2008, p. 167).

Illocutionary meaning expresses the other meaning outside the word, that is, the meaning of utterance is not completely consistent with the original meaning of the sentence and is directly obtained through the rules connected with the illocutionary act. The objects, processes, properties and phenomena in real life represented by signs are generally referred to as the signified, while the relationship between signs and the signified is generally referred to as the illocutionary meaning of signs. Illocutionary meaning refers to the intention of the utterance of a sentence, that is, the meaning conveyed by the speaker by the act of "speaking," which may be a simple message, warning, greeting, threat, request for apology, suggestion, order, or promise (Wang, 2008, p. 167). A good text contains not only sufficient locutionary information but also rich illocutionary meaning (He, 2012, p. 47).

Perlocutionary meaning refers to the influence or consequential effects upon the feelings, thoughts, belief or actions of the audience, or of the speaker, or of other persons: and it may be done with the design, intention, or purpose of producing them. A perlocution can be defined as the intentional act of producing effects on the hearer by a locutionary act, that is, the act of changing the context of the hearer (Zhang, 2013, p. 20). It is the effect of what the speaker says on the hearer.

3 Analysis on the locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary meanings of Nüshu examples

Any sign, including language sign, does not exist in isolation, but as a part of the language system. Therefore, any sign has a variety of complex relations with other signs in the same sign system (or if it is a linguistic sign, the same language) (Liao, 2006, p. 81). In most cases, individual things do not necessarily constitute a cultural sign with rich connotations, but to form a certain relationship through the combination of multiple things, forming an artistic conception to express a relatively complete and rich meaning. Nüshu sign is to construct connotation and meaning through sign expression. Nüshu signs are all used in collocation. Texts written in Nüshu are mostly in seven-syllable lines, which was one of the most typical structures of Chinese literature (Kuang, 2013). So Nüshu sign works are basically seven-character poems, that is, seven characters and signs are combined into a sentence to express a relatively complete meaning. Then there are texts composed of several seven-character sentences to form a more complete and richer meaning. Taking Nüshu sign works as examples, the following parts analyze the locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary meanings of two kinds of Nüshu poems.

5.1 The locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary meanings of Nüshu narrative poems. Most Nüshu narrative poems are about crying over the tragic experiences of the women, therefore, Nüshu poems are also called "songs of complaint". However, there are also some contents in which the heroin criticizes feudal ethics and yearns for freedom and equality. For example, in a Nüshu poem (Xu, 2019, p. 176), it writes (translated from Chinese into English by the author):

Women are not qualified for an official, and there are no women in the school.
Feudal women's feet are bounded, it's a serious harm to a woman's whole

life.

And here's an even more ridiculous thing, men and women are not equal.

Marriage is decided by the parents, she has no right to choose.

How many beauties die untimely, how many lifelong blood and tears there are.

The above Nüshu poem shows a locutionary meaning that women in the past didn't have right to go to school, to be an official, to decide to marry the one she loved. The women realized that men and women were not equal. The author poured out her woes. However, readers can read the illocutionary meaning that women suffered a miserable fate, and they complained and felt dissatisfied with the situation. So, the poem conveyed a perlocutionary that women at that time and that place had a sense of self and rebellion, and even some women would rise up in resistance.

One of the ways that Nüshu women rose up in revolt is that they wanted to go to school, which can be seen in the following poem transcribe from the *Butterfly Lovers/Liang-Zhu*, one of the four great love stories in ancient China.



Figure 5 Nüshu poem: transcribed Butterfly Lovers by He Yanxin (Liu, 2010, p. 249)

In the *Butterfly Lovers/Liang-Zhu* story, Yingtai, the only child of a very rich family, is described as “clever and witty”. She expresses a desire to travel to study in Hangzhou city but is scolded by her father who threatens to cut the father-daughter tie with Yingtai, but Yingtai makes an argument which was rewritten in Nüshu signs, showed in Figure 5 (Liu, 2010, p. 249), by He Yanxin, a natural Nüshu inheritor.

*The Bodhisattva Guanyin of the South Sea was originally a woman,
She recited the sutras in the Buddhist Hall all day.
Emperor Zetian was born a woman,
She managed the empire and ruled across rivers and mountains...
Now squire Zhu of E’mei has a daughter,
She wishes to go to Hangzhou to enter school.* (Liu, 2010, p. 248)

It’s not difficult to see the locutionary meaning of the above Nüshu poem. Bodhisattva Guanyin is a female; she can read sutras; Emperor Zetian is also a female who can manage the empire and rule across rivers and mountains. So Yingtai, a female, should have the qualification to go to school. But the illocutionary meaning is that the prejudice “Only boys are allowed to enter the academy; When have women ever been allowed to enter school?” (Liu, 2010, p. 248) against women from the male-dominated society represented by Yingtai’s father is wrong. The Bodhisattva Guanyin, a goddess worshiped by people, can read. And Zetian can be an emperor. So, women can go to school and can be official. The perlocutionary meaning of this Nüshu poem sign is that women should have a rebellious spirit and rise up to struggle for an equal right with men. This kind of rebellious spirit escalates to glorify the female heroes of life.

5.2 The locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary meanings of Nüshu sworn sisters’ poems. There is a custom of sworn sisterhood among the users of Nüshu signs. Making sworn sisters in Nüshu areas is called “making Lao Tong friends”, which is also called Lao Tong. Lao Tong refers to a close partnership between two or more children or adults of similar temperament and age, a relationship of mutual care and support established on the basis of common oppression, which is the redemption of warmth in the female emotional world (Xu, 2019, p. 176-177). The way to make friends is by writing Nüshu letters. If one of them is interested, she will write a letter to express her desire to make friends with another female. The other female, if she liked it, wrote back in Nüshu signs.

A lot of times, Nüshu poems for sworn sister are to show the destined sisterhood. For example, in 1970s, Gao Yinxian, an important natural Nüshu

inheritor, went to Taochuan Township for a banquet with her sworn sisters, and paid a visit to a sugar factory. One the way, a row of seven old ladies attracted a lot of curiosity, praising and admiration in the crowd. After the event, Gao Yinxian wrote the following poem, showed in Figure 6 (Chen, 2013, p. 31) to praise the friendship of the seven sworn sisters, which also has the three kinds of meanings.

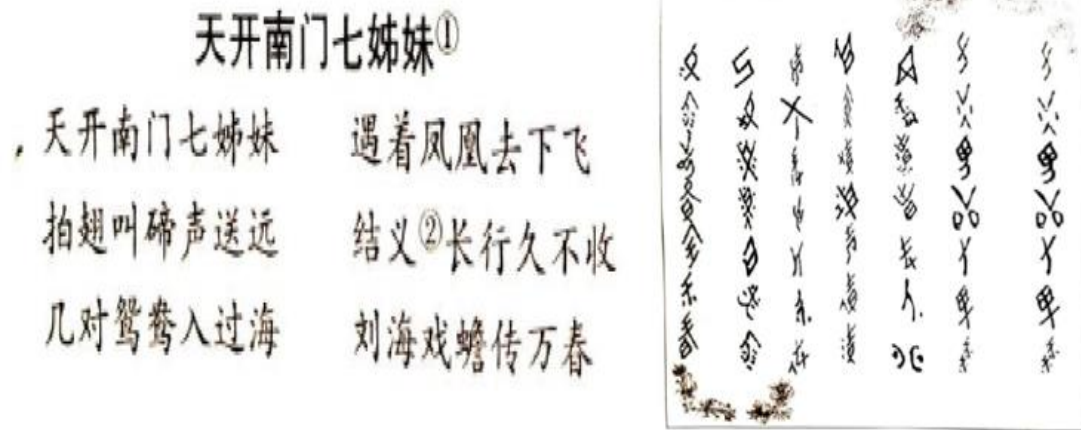


Figure 6 Nüshu poem written by Gao Yinxian for her sworn sisters (left, poem in Nüshu scripts; right, the corresponding Chinese poem) (Chen, 2013, p. 31)

Locutionary meaning: The southern gate of the Heaven opened, and out came the seven sworn sisters, who met the phoenix and rode the phoenix flew off the earth. Along the way the phoenix beat its wings and sang loudly, the sisters are playing in groups like mandarin ducks, and their sisterhood and friendship will last as long as the legendary story of “Liu hai played with cicada” (Xie, 2007, p. 251).

Illocutionary meaning: The seven sworn sisters are like the seven fairies came down to earth, pretty and kind. They gather together happily.

Perlocutionary meaning: the sworn sisters love, help and be loyal to one another. Their friendship lasts forever.

It is undeniable that the making Lao Tong friendship Nüshu poems and its culture play a special role in the process of women’s liberation (Xu, 2019, p. 177). These Lao Tong wrote to each other, told each other their hearts, consoled and encouraged each other. The main purpose of letters of consolation to the sworn sisters is because something very bad happened, such as they lost family members, relatives or intimated friends. They wrote to urge those who suffered a lot not to grieve too much, not to hurt them physically (Peng & Li, 2012) and not to give up. Then the receivers will write back. Letters back and forth are like the cycle of signs (Zhang, 2013). In a certain context, the sender of signs conceives the situational meaning of the discourse and organizes the output signs. According to her own language sign knowledge, the addressee understands the original meaning of the sign conveyed by the letter, namely, the locutionary meaning, and then deduce the meaning behind the sign that is the illocutionary meaning. Finally, the addressee constructs meaning and constructs reply in a changing context. Meanwhile, the role of correspondence changes from receiver to sender. The content of the reply is perlocutionary meaning. From here another cycle of sign communication begins.

Conclusion

The ultimate goal of sign activity is “the pursuit of truth”, pragmatism is the only way to help individuals and groups explore “reality” and thus acquire “perfect knowledge.” The theory of semiotics and the theory of pragmatism are interrelated and blended with each other. From its function, pragmatism theory, as an important part of semiotic theory, can also provide guiding principles for people to conduct scientific research activities and explore truth. The meaning of signs lies not in the reactions of individuals, but in the sum total of the reactions of a community over a long enough period of time. The purpose of pragmatism is not to dig for changes in sign meaning caused by a particular individual’s response, it explores the effect of a sign on a large enough scale and over a long enough time. This effect is reality, is truth. It is also the complete semiotic effect of a sign on the mind after it is fully developed. To study the meaning of Nüshu signs from the perspectives of locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary is to explore their “reality” and pursue their “truth”. There must be a reference to Peirce’s theories of semiotics and pragmaticism, as well as Morris’s theory of semiotics. However, the meaning of any sign is not fixed. The replacement of times, the depth of inquiry will make the meanings of the sign constantly change. In this sense, there is a broad research space for the locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary meanings of Nüshu signs.

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