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TOWARDS A LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS OF SUBSTITUTION IN ANGLO-AMERICAN ANTI-PROVERBS ABOUT MONEY

Abstract: The recent study is to be seen as a continuation of the author's previous research (conducted alone or with co-authors) which is concerned with the study of various techniques of proverb transformation. The study first addresses the background of anti-proverb research and terminology. It then looks at the most frequent themes covered in anti-proverbs, with a particular focus on proverbs about money. The main focus of this study is on the analysis of substitution, one of the most popular mechanisms of proverb variation in Anglo-American anti-proverbs about money. The Anglo-American anti-proverbs covered in the study were taken primarily from American and British written sources. The study lists many examples of these anti-proverbs and reveals a wide range of techniques employed in them. The study seeks answers to the following questions: What are the most frequent types of substitution; What components of the original proverb are replaced when an anti-proverb is created; How many items are replaced from these; Where are the replaced items; What themes appear in our anti-proverbs?

Keywords: anti-proverb, proverb, transformation, Anglo-American, substitution, money

1. Introduction

1.1. Background of research and terminology

For centuries, proverbs have provided a framework for endless transformation¹. In recent decades, the modification of proverbs has taken on such proportions that we sometimes encounter even more proverb transformations than traditional proverbs. Wolfgang Mieder invented the term *anti-proverb* (or in German *Antispruch*) for such deliberate proverb innovations, also known as alterations, parodies, transformations, variations, wisecracks, mutations, or fractured proverbs. This term has been widely accepted by proverb scholars all over the world as a general label for such innovative alterations and reactions to traditional proverbs: *антипословица* (Russian), *anti-proverb* (English), *anti(-)proverbe* (French) (see the general discussion of the genre of anti-proverbs in T. Litovkina 2005; T. Litovkina and Mieder 2006: 1–54; T. Litovkina 2015; T. Litovkina et al. 2021; Hrisztova-Gotthardt et al. 2023).

Although proverb transformations arise in a variety of forms, several types stand out (which are by no means mutually exclusive), e.g., adding new words to the original text, replacing a single word, substituting two or more words, changing the second part of the proverb, melding two proverbs, adding literal interpretations, reversing word order, and reversing sounds, etc.

Anti-proverbs may contain insightful social commentary (*A condom a day keeps AIDS away* (Mieder 1991: 99) {An apple a day keeps the doctor away}²), but they may also be based on mere wordplay or puns, and they may very often have originated with the sole purpose of deriving play forms such as *A fool and his monkey are soon parted* (Margo 1982) {A fool and his money are soon parted}, but nonetheless, scores of phrases like the one cited above can be found in anti-proverb collections in various

¹ Some parts of this study, in particular the Introduction (including the texts of anti-proverbs), have appeared in T. Litovkina 2005, or have been published in Mieder and Tóthné Litovkina 1999; T. Litovkina and Mieder 2006; T. Litovkina 2015; 2025a; T. Litovkina et al. 2021.

² For the reader's convenience all anti-proverbs in this study are followed by their original forms, given in {} brackets.

languages such as English, German, French, Russian, Hungarian, etc. (see the titles of such anti-proverb collections in T. Litovkina et al. 2021: 11–19).

As Mieder and T. Litovkina emphasised: “It should be noted that while some anti-proverbs negate the “truth” of the original piece of wisdom completely, the vast majority of them put the proverbial wisdom only partially into question, primarily by relating it to a particular context or thought in which the traditional wording does not fit. In fact, the “anti” component in the term “anti-proverb” is not directed against the concept of “proverb” as such.” (T. Litovkina and Mieder 2006: 5). Although the term introduced by Wolfgang Mieder has been accepted by many proverb scholars worldwide, the opinion of scholars who have stated that not all anti-proverbs are opposed to proverbs, and who have suggested avoiding the prefix *anti-* (“against”), for example, by using the prefix *para-* (“beside”), should also be noted (for more, see T. Litovkina et al. 2021; Hrisztova-Gotthardt et al. 2023).

In the vast majority of proverb transformations, the structure of the original proverb is maintained. Sometimes, however, the authors of proverb alterations, twist a proverb so dramatically that only a few words of the original text remain—or that the structure of the parent proverb is completely remodelled. Consider some examples below (Ex. 1a–1b):

- (1a) *If you must rise early, be sure you are a bird and not a worm.* (Esar 1968: 250) {The early bird catches the worm}
 (1b) *A valet’s testimony tells you more about valets than heroes.* (Leo Rosten, in Berman 1997: 189) {No man is a hero to his valet}

As Mieder (1993: 121) states, “Mere proverb allusions run the risk of not being understood, even if they refer to very common proverbs. Nevertheless, such lack of communication is rather rare among native speakers...” However, parodies like the ones above (Ex. 1a, 1b) might be completely unrecognizable to a foreigner. This is one more reason why anyone wishing to communicate or read in any language should have an active knowledge of its most popular proverbs (see T. Litovkina 2000, 2005: 120–141, 2023a, 2023b; T. Litovkina and Mieder 2006: 36–45).

When translated from one language to another, an anti-proverb more often than not will lose its message: the puns, parodies or wordplay characteristic of one language will seldom carry over successfully into another. Nevertheless, there are cases in which an internationally spread proverb inspires parallel anti-proverbs in two or more languages. Here are some examples (Ex. 2a–2d) quoted in T. Litovkina 2005: 22 (for more examples, see also T. Litovkina 2005; T. Litovkina and Mieder 2006: 9–11; T. Litovkina 2015; T. Litovkina et al.: 2021: 32–33):

(2a) English: *To err is human – to totally muck things up needs a computer.* (Kilroy 1985: 220)

(2b) Hungarian: *Tévedni emberi dolog, de igazán összekutyulni valamit csak számítógéppel lehet.* (T. Litovkina and Vargha 2005: 90) {Tévedni emberi dolog}

(2c) Russian: *Человеку свойственно ошибаться, но с помощью компьютера это ему удастся намного лучше.* (Walter and Mokienko 2001: 51) {Человеку свойственно ошибаться}

(2d) German: *Irren ist menschlich, aber für das totale Chaos braucht man einen Computer.* (Mieder 1998: 132) {Irren ist menschlich}

(2e) French: *L'erreur est humaine, mais un véritable désastre nécessite un ordinateur.* (Barta³ 2003) {L'erreur est humaine}

1.2. Anglo-American proverbs and anti-proverbs about money

All's fair game for anti-proverbs—there is hardly a topic that anti-proverbs do not address. Among the most common topics addressed in proverb alterations are women (see T. Litovkina 2005; 2018; T. Litovkina and Mieder 2019, etc.), sexuality (see T. Litovkina 2018: 149–170; T. Litovkina and Mieder 2019: 65–79, etc.), professions and occupations (see T. Litovkina 2005, 2016),

³ The text was supplied by Péter Barta.

marriage and love (T. Litovkina 2018; T. Litovkina and Mieder 2019, etc.), children (T. Litovkina 2024), food (Barta 2007), etc.

Undoubtedly, money is a frequent theme in Anglo-American anti-proverbs.

If we look at the list of 580 Anglo-American proverbs that served as a template for variation in the corpus of anti-proverbs (see T. Litovkina and Mieder 2006: 55–348), we will notice the following: First, there are numerous proverbs in our corpus which contain words such as ‘dollar’, ‘penny’, ‘pound’, ‘mammon’, ‘free’, etc., for example: *A dollar in the bank is worth two in the hand; A penny saved is a penny earned; Take care of your pennies and the pounds [the dollars] will take care of themselves; You can't serve God and mammon; The best things in life are free.* Second, 13 proverbs in our corpus contain the word “money”, e.g.: *Money talks; A fool and his money are soon parted.* Last but not least, there are scores of proverbs that might not contain any of the words listed above, but in their transformations, these words still occur. To illustrate this phenomenon with the following three proverb alterations below, all of which contain the word “money” (Ex. 3a–3c):

(3a) *Blondes prefer gentlemen with **money**.* (Safian 1967: 39) {Gentlemen prefer blondes}

(3b) *Love makes the world go round, but it's the lack of **money** that keeps it flat.* (Safian 1967: 56) {Love makes the world go round}

(3c) ***Money** is its own reward.* (Weller 1982) {Virtue is its own reward}

The 13 proverbs containing the word “money” included in T. Litovkina and Mieder’s collections of anti-proverbs (see Mieder and Tóthné Litovkina 1999; T. Litovkina and Mieder 2006; see also T. Litovkina 2005) are listed below (the list below was first published in T. Litovkina 2025a: 85–86). The actual proverbs are given in italics. Each proverb is followed by a number in parentheses indicating the number of anti-proverbs located for it. This is followed by a short statement concerning the meaning of the proverb in angle brackets (< >).

- *Money talks.* (66) <Money is the most influential and important thing in the world.> (T. Litovkina and Mieder 2006: 227–230)
- *A fool and his money are soon parted.* (47) <Foolish people spend their money without consideration and soon find themselves without any money at all.> (T. Litovkina and Mieder 2006: 61–63)
- *Money [The love of money] is the root of all evil.* (36) <All wrongdoing can be traced to the relentless pursuit of riches.> (T. Litovkina and Mieder 2006: 223–224)
- *Money isn't everything.* (35) <Wealth alone does not bring contentment.> (T. Litovkina and Mieder 2006: 224–226)
- *Money can't [doesn't] buy happiness.* (34) <Financial security does not necessarily mean happiness.> (T. Litovkina and Mieder 2006: 220–222)
- *Time is money.* (15) <Time is as valuable as money.> (T. Litovkina and Mieder 2006: 309)
- *Money doesn't grow on trees.* (12) <It is difficult to get money.> (T. Litovkina and Mieder 2006: 222–223)
- *Money makes the mare go.* (9) <If you have money, you can obtain everything.> (T. Litovkina and Mieder 2006: 227)
- *Lend your money and lose your friend.* (3) (T. Litovkina and Mieder 2006: 197)
- *Money makes a [the] man.* (3) <Money is the most influential and important thing in the world.> (T. Litovkina and Mieder 2006: 226)
- *Money burns a hole in the pocket.* (1) <People with money are likely to spend it.> (T. Litovkina and Mieder 2006: 220)
- *He who marries for money sells his freedom.* (1) <Entering a relationship because of money makes a person dependent.> (T. Litovkina and Mieder 2006: 164)
- *Money makes money.* (1) <Wealth breeds more wealth.> (T. Litovkina and Mieder 2006: 226)

2. Substitution in Anglo-American anti-proverbs about money

The following section is devoted to the analysis of one of the main mechanisms of proverb variation in Anglo-American anti-proverbs about money, namely the substitution⁴ (or exchange, or change, or replacement) of one of the components of the proverb. Main emphasis is laid on the formal features of the alterations, and the themes that emerge in them are only briefly discussed.

The 263 Anglo-American anti-proverbs discussed and analyzed in the present study were taken primarily from American and British written sources⁵. The texts of anti-proverbs were drawn from hundreds of books and articles on puns, one-liners, toasts, wisecracks, quotations, aphorisms, maxims, quips, epigrams, and graffiti, the vast majority of which were published in two collections of anti-proverbs compiled by Wolfgang Mieder and Anna T. Litovkina: “Twisted Wisdom: Modern Anti-Proverbs” (Mieder and Tóthné Litovkina 1999) and “Old Proverbs Never Die, They Just Diversify: A Collection of Anti-Proverbs” (T. Litovkina and Mieder 2006).

2.1. The place of substitution

In Section 2.1. the place of substitution is discussed: changing the second part of the proverb (Section 2.1.1.) and changing the first part of the proverb (Section 2.1.2.). Finally, the substitution of words in various parts of proverbs is discussed (Section 2.1.3.).

⁴ For addition in Anglo-American anti-proverbs about money, see T. Litovkina 2025d, 2025e; for punning in Anglo-American anti-proverbs about money, see T. Litovkina 2025b, 2025c, for repetition, literalization, word order reversal, word class change, and many other humor devices in Anglo-American anti-proverbs about money, see T. Litovkina 2025a, 2025c.

⁵ The vast majority of the examples were found when I was in the USA and Great Britain, being supported by a Fulbright research grant and by a Hungarian State Eötvös Scholarship which enabled me to conduct research at the Department of Anthropology at the University of California at Berkeley (1998–1999) and at Oxford University Press (2003).

2.1.1. Changing the second part of the proverb

Very common are such anti-proverbs in which the second part of the proverb is entirely changed. Three transformations of the proverb *A fool and his money are soon parted* are provided below (Ex. 4a–4b):

(4a) *A fool and his money **can go places***. (Woods 1967: 53)

(4b) *A fool and his money **sooner or later wind up in college***. (Loomis 1949: 354)

Phonologically similar words are frequently chosen for this purpose, as in the example below (Ex. 5) (while the word *soon* is substituted by the *saloon*, the *potted* replaces the *parted*):

(5) *A fool and his money are **saloon potted***. (Safian 1967: 46)
{A fool and his money are soon parted}

Completing half-stated proverbs has become a party game of sorts, and teachers have also used this method to see whether children still know proverbs or simply to encourage their creative thinking (Ex. 6a–6c). For more on American children's knowledge of proverbs, as well as exercises to teach Anglo-American proverbs, see Monteiro 1968; Stark 1982; Mieder and Holmes 2000); for employment of proverbs and anti-proverbs about money in teaching English as foreign language, see T. Litovkina 2000: 199–205, 2023a: 15–19, 2023b:11–15):

(6a) *He who marries for money..**better be nice to his wife***. (Stark 1982) {He who marries for money earns it}

(6b) *Money is the root of..**the bank of America***. (Stark 1982)
{Money is the root of all evil}

(6c) *A fool and his money are..**very attached***. (Monteiro 1968: 128) {A fool and his money are soon parted}

Sometimes only one word of the second part of the proverb might be changed (most frequently, the last word, see Section 2.2.1., 2.2.2.), such as in the following transformation of the proverb *A fool and his money are soon parted* (Ex. 7) (for additional examples, Ex. 13a–16d, see Section 2.2.1., 2.2.2.):

(7) *A fool and his money are soon **popular***. (Metcalf 1993: 92)

2.1.2. Changing the first part of the proverb

While changing the second part of a proverb is a common technique in the corpus, changing the first part is relatively rare (Ex. 8, 9a–9d):

(8) ***Television violence** is the root of all evil*. (Liu and Vasselli 1996) {Money is the root of all evil}

The proverb *A fool and his money are soon parted* has provided numerous transformations of this kind (Ex. 9a–9d):

(9a) ***Users and their leisure time** are soon parted*. (Alexander 2004: 160)

(9b) ***A man and his resolution** are soon parted*. (Esar 1968: 677)

(9c) ***The rich man and his daughter** are soon parted*. (Frank McKinney Hubbard, in Prochnow and Prochnow 1988: 160)

(9d) ***A rich man and his daughter** are soon parted*. (Kin Hubbard, in Berman 1997: 141)

Furthermore, replacement of only a segment of the first part of a proverb might also occur in a proverb (Ex.10):

(10) *A fool and **her legs** are soon parted*. (Esar 1968: 638)

Finally, only one word of the first part might be substituted (most frequently the first word) (for numerous examples, see also Sections 2.2.1., 2.2.2., Ex. 12a–12c, 17a–17b, 21d, 22).

2.1.3. Substitution of words in various parts of proverbs

Words might be substituted in various parts of a proverb (Ex. 11a–11b) (for additional examples, see also Section 2.2.3., Ex. 25a–29):

(11a) *Marks' Law of Monetary Equalization:*

*A fool and **your** money are soon **partners**.* (Bloch 1990: 144)
 {A fool and his money are soon parted}

(11b) ***A bald man's hair is soon parted.*** (Christie Davies⁶ 1999)

2.2. How many components are substituted?

In Section 2.2. attention is given to how many components from the original text are substituted in a proverb. The analysis examines replacements in ascending order of quantity: single sound substitutions (Section 2.2.1), single word substitutions (Section 2.2.2), and cases involving two or more word replacements (Section 2.2.3).

2.2.1. Replacing a single sound

The sound (most frequently consonant) is mostly substituted in the initial position (Ex. 12a–12c):

(12a) ***Dime** is money.* (Margo 1982) {Time is money}

(12b) *With corrupt officials, money is the **loot** of all evil.*
 (Esar 1968: 96) {Money is the root of all evil}

(12c) ***Runny** is the **snoot** of all weevils.* (Farman 1989)
 {Money is the root of all evil}

The sound (vowel) in another position (Ex. 13a–13b):

(13a) *A fool and his money are soon **partied**.* (Safian 1967: 28)
 {A fool and his money are soon parted}

(13b) *A fool and his money are soon **potted**.* (Safian 1967: 28)
 {A fool and his money are soon parted}

2.2.2. Replacing a single word

Very popular are such proverb parodies that pervert the basic meaning of a proverb by simply replacing a single word (most frequently the first or last content word).

⁶ This text was submitted to me at Berkeley in May 1999 by professor Christie Davies (Reading, Great Britain) after he had read the collection “Twisted Wisdom: Modern Anti-Proverbs” (Mieder and Tóthné Litovkina 1999).

This type of proverb variation in which the last word is changed is clearly shown in numerous alterations of the well-known proverbs *Money is the root of all evil* and *A fool and his money are soon parted*, in which the last words (such as *evil* and *parted*) are substituted:

Replacing the last word (Ex. 14a–14b):

(14a) *Money is the root of all **wealth***. (Haan and Hammerstrom 1980)

(14b) *A fool and his money are soon **popular***. (Metcalf 1993: 92)

Some anti-proverbs question the truth of a proverb through employing antonyms. See the examples below in which the word *evil* is subsequently replaced by its antonyms, the word *good* (Ex. 15a) and the word *virtue* (Ex. 15b):

(15a) *Money is the root of all **good***. (Ayn Rand, in Clark 1977: 84) {Money is the root of all evil}

(15b) *The love of money is the root of all **virtue***. (Bernard Shaw, in Esar 1968: 255) {The love of money is the root of all evil}

The proverb *A fool and his money are soon parted* is very frequently used for the replacement of one word. Most frequently the last word of it (*parted*) is substituted (most typically based on phonological similarity of the words). Indeed, the selection of words replacing the word “parted” in the transformation of the proverb *A fool and his money are soon parted* is motivated by phonological convergences (Ex. 16a–16d):

(16a) *A fool and his money are soon **partied***. (Safian 1967: 28)

(16b) *A fool and his money are soon **partying***. (Esar 1968: 580)

(16c) *A fool and his money are soon **potted***. (Safian 1967: 28)

(16d) *A fool and his money are soon **spotted**.* (Anonymous 1908: 56)

The first content word is substituted (17a–17b):

(17a) ***Avarice** is the root of all evil.* (Prochnow and Prochnow 1987: 443) {Money is the root of all evil}

(17b) *The **lack** of money is the root of all evil.* (Mieder et al. 1992: 416) {The love of money is the root of all evil}

Replacing a word in another position (18a):

(18) *A fool and his **home-brew** are soon parted.* (Loomis 1949: 354) {A fool and his money are soon parted}

The authors of anti-proverbs very often seek to find a word that is phonologically similar to the one from the original proverb, as demonstrated in some of the examples above (such as the substitution of the last word in the proverb *A fool and his money are soon parted*), as well as in the following examples, which may also be described as paronomastic puns.

There are many different ways of distorting a word on a phonological basis. The most common and popular methods are addition (insertion), substitution, and omission (deletion). The first two basic types of alteration (substitution and addition) will be examined in more detail below, with illustrative examples. (Omission is rarely found in the present corpus.) Replacing a word by substituting one sound (see also Section 2.2.1. above, Ex. 12a–12c, 13a–13b) or a few sounds (Ex. 19):

(19) *A fool and his money are soon **partying**.* (Esar 1968: 580) {A fool and his money are soon parted}

One sound is substituted by two (Ex. 20a–20b):

(20a) *Money doesn't grow on **sprees**.* (Safian 1967: 44, 57)
{Money doesn't grow on trees}

(20b) *Runny is the **snoot** of all weevils.* (Farman 1989)
{Money is the root of all evil}

Addition of one or a few sounds (Ex. 21a–21d):

(21a) *A fool and his **mon**key are soon parted.* (Margo 1982)

{A fool and his money are soon parted}

(21b) *Money makes the **night**mare go.* (New Yorker, June 28, 1956) {Money makes the mare go}

(21c) *Runny is the snoot of all **w**eevils.* (Farman 1989) {Money is the root of all evil}

(21d) ***Mat**rimony is the root of all evil.* (Edmund and Workman Williams 1921: 275) {Money is the root of all evil}

Sometimes, entirely new word compositions can be observed in the anti-proverbs (Ex. 22):

(22) ***Mat**ri-money is the root of all evil.* (Anonymous 1908:

26) {Money is the root of all evil}

Combination of addition and substitution can be clearly demonstrated in the following examples (Ex. 23a–23b):

(23a) *Money is the root of all **id**yls.* (Safian 1967: 45) {Money is the root of all evil}

(23b) *A fool and his money are soon **sp**otted.* (Anonymous 1908: 56) {A fool and his money are soon parted}

2.2.3. Substituting two or more words

Another characteristic mechanism of proverb parody in the corpus of Anglo-American anti-proverbs is the substitution of two or more words. The proverbs which are built on binary structures (Dundes 1975) have become especially popular formulas on which to base multiple proverb variations of this kind, as for example “An X a day keeps the Y away”, “A(n) X in the hand is worth Y in the bush”, “An ounce of X is worth a pound of Y” and “Different X’s for different Y’s.

An Anglo-American proverb most popular for this type of alteration, according to T. Litovkina and Mieder’s data (see 2006), *Old soldiers never die, they just fade away*,⁷ is simply

⁷ For more on this proverb, most popular for variation in the corpus of Anglo-Amer-

reduced in its transformations to the formula “Old X-s never die; they just Y,” in which the words “soldiers” and “fade away” are substituted by whatever seems better to fit the needs of modern times (Ex. 24a–24e):

(24a) *Old accountants never die; they just lose their balance.* (Anonymous 1965: 290)

(24b) *Old farmers never die, they just go to seed.* (Prochnow and Prochnow 1987: 115)

(24c) *Old female lawyers never die; they just lose their appeals.* (Berman 1997: 379)

(24d) *Old lawyers never die, they just lose their appeal.* (Metcalf 1993: 132)

(24e) *Old teachers never die / they just grade away.* (Rogers 1982: 25)

As demonstrated above, the phrasal verb *fade away* from the proverb *Old soldiers never die, they just fade away* is replaced not only by another phrasal verb in one of the transformations above (such as *grade away* in the last example, see Ex. 24e), but also by three words (in the other examples, Ex. 24a–24d). Furthermore, the word *soldiers* is most frequently substituted by one word indicating various professions or occupations (such as *accountants* in Ex. 24a, *farmers* in Ex. 24b, etc.). In Example 24c above, it should be noted that the lawyers are not just lawyers but *female* lawyers. Another anti-proverb in the same mould—omitting the word “female” but most probably referring to it is Ex. 24d. In order to understand these ambivalent puns (as in the cited examples 24c and 24d) one requires the ability to interpret a situation from multiple perspectives.

Attention now turns to anti-proverbs relating to money. The proverb about money most popular for this type of alteration in which two or more words in various parts of the proverb are replaced is, without any doubt, *A fool and his money are soon parted*. In its alterations it is simply turned into the formula “*An X and his Y are soon parted*” in which the words *fool* and *money*

ican anti-proverbs (it has been the basis of 79 anti-proverbs), see T. Litovkina and Mieder 2006: 15–17.

are substituted. This is illustrated by the four examples below. In the first two proverb innovations, the words *fool* and his *money* are replaced by similar-sounding words (i.e. paronyms) *foal* and its *mummy* (Ex. 25a–25b⁸):

(25a) A horse farm made it a habit to bottle-feed its colts when they were only a few days old. Hence: *a **foal** and his **mummy** are soon parted.* (Jennings 1980: 47)

(25b) A Kentucky horse breeder named Schubert invariably has his young colts bottle-fed after they're three days old. He knows that *a **foal** and his **mummy** are soon parted.* (Cerf 1968: 19)

In the next example (Ex. 26), similarly to the previous two anti-proverbs (Ex. 25a–25b), the word *mummy* replaces the word *money*, but instead of the word *foal* the word *mule* appears in the parody. Again, the change of both the words in this transformation is based on phonological similarity:

(26) *A **mule** and its **mummy** are soon parted.* (Farman 1989)

The three examples above (Ex. 25a–25b, 26), in which the substitution of two words is based on phonological similarity, might also be called double paronomastic puns.

Contrary to the previous three examples, the replacement of words in the next two transformations (Ex. 27–28) is not based on phonological similarity:

(27) *A **man** and his **resolution** are soon parted.* (Esar 1968: 677) {A fool and his money are soon parted}

While in the example above (Ex. 27) two words in the proverb's first part are replaced (the *man* and the *resolution* consequently substitute the *fool* and the *money*), in the anti-proverb below (Ex. 28), three words are substituted (in various parts of the proverb):

⁸ These examples could be also discussed in Section 2.4. which addresses word substitution combined with word addition.

(28) *A **widow** and **her** money are soon **courted**.* (Berman 1997: 141) {A fool and his money are soon parted}

The distortion of three or even more words on a phonological basis is extremely rare in the present corpus (Ex. 29):

(29) ***Runny** is the **snoot** of all **weevils**.* (Farman 1989) {Money is the root of all evil}

2.3. Other types of substitution

After analyzing the most frequent types of substitution in anti-proverbs about money, it is also important to mention and exemplify less common types of substitution such as word-order reversal, word class change, and cases when one word is substituted by two (or even more) words.

There is a tradition of parodying individual proverbs by word-order reversal (frequently called metathesis or spoonerism), which questions or even rejects their traditional wisdom. Nouns and verbs are reversed most frequently. Word-order reversal is also a relatively common technique of proverb transformation in the present corpus of anti-proverbs about money.

Two nouns are interchanged subsequently in the following proverb alterations: *happiness* and *money* in the first example (Ex. 30a); as well as *money* and *evil* in the second one (Ex. 30b):

(30a) ***Happiness** can't buy **money**.* (Kandel 1976) {Money can't buy happiness}

(30b) *The love of **evil** is the root of all **money**.* (Esar 1952: 85) {The love of money is the root of all evil}

English has many examples of words with the same form used in both nominal and verbal functions. The twisting of proverbs may cause a change in the word classes. As the word class changes, the written and/or phonetic form of the words may undergo some modification. Extension of the use of some noun to a verbal capacity is shown in the following transformation in which a noun "root" is turned into a phrasal verb "roots out" (Ex. 31):

(31) *Money roots out all evil.* (Rosten 1972: 30) {Money is the root of all evil}

The structure of proverbs usually remains the same in their alterations, the number of words in the alterations, however, may differ (see also some examples above in Section 2.2.3., Ex. 24a–24d). Sometimes one word might be exchanged by two, or even more words (e.g., *parted* and *accepted in the highest social circles*), as in the two examples below (Ex. 32a–32b⁹):

(32a) *A fool and his money are soon **accepted in the highest social circles**.* (Berman 1997: 141) {A fool and his money are soon parted}

(32b) *A fool and his money **can make a lot of trouble before they are parted**.* (Esar 1968: 825) {A fool and his money are soon parted}

Likewise, in the anti-proverb below (Ex. 33) two words (*all evil*) are replaced by four (*the bank of America*):

(33) *Money is the root of...**the bank of America**.* (Stark 1982) {Money is the root of all evil}

2.4. *Combination of substitution with other mechanisms of variation*

Substitution in the present corpus is frequently combined with some other mechanisms of variation such as e.g., repeating words, literalization, extension of the use of word class, rhyme, blending, addition, punning, etc.

This section discusses and exemplifies a single mechanism: addition in combination with substitution. A very popular proverb for this type of variation in our corpus is *A fool and his money are soon parted*. The following proverb transformations (Ex. 34a–37) employ both word exchange and word addition. In

⁹ The Example 32b could be also treated as simultaneous addition of new words and omission of the word “soon”.

the two examples below, new words proceed the proverb (Ex. 34a–34b):

(34a) ***Walton's Law of Politics:***

*A fool and his money are soon **elected**.* (Bloch 1990: 224)

(34b) ***Marks' Law of Monetary Equalization:***

*A fool and your money are soon **partners**.* (Bloch 1990: 144)

The last example above (Ex. 34b) is a very interesting combination of addition and change of two words (the words *your* and *partners* are employed instead of the words *his* and *parted*), the second of which is based on punning. While the word *parted* in the four examples discussed in Section 2.2.2. above (see Ex. 16a–16d) is substituted by the words belonging to the same word class (such as *partied*, *partying*, *potted*, etc.), in this anti-proverb, it is substituted by a word belonging to a different lexical category, i.e. a paronomastic noun *partners*. In the example below (Ex. 35) addition is employed after the proverb text:

(35) *A fool and his **wife** are soon parted. **See Alimony.***
(Wurdz 1904)

A similar example, also based on a word change in a proverb, as well as addition following a proverb text is demonstrated below (Ex. 36):

(36) *Money can't buy you **friends**, **but it can bring you a better class of enemies**.* (McLellan 1996: 158) {Money can't buy you happiness}

Addition of words inside the proverb text (*father's*) combined with the substitution of the second part of the proverb (*can go places*) is seen here (Ex. 37):

(37) *A fool and his **father's money** – **can go places**.* (Lieberman 1984: 98) {A fool and his money are soon parted}

In the two transformations of the proverb *Money is the root of all evil* below there are many things in common (Ex. 38a–38b). First

of all, both of them employ word changes based on sound similarity, i.e. in both examples paronomastic punning is employed. In the first example (Ex. 38a), the word *fruit* substitutes the *root* (i.e. sound addition takes place), while in the second (Ex. 38b), *loot* replaces *root* (sound substitution takes place). Additionally, both examples feature the addition of words. In the first one (Ex. 38a) a phrase is appended to the proverb (*as often as the root of it*), whereas in the second (Ex. 38b), an introductory phrase (*With corrupt officials*) proceeds the proverb. Last but not least, in the first example (Ex. 38a) the word *root* from the original proverb is repositioned within the added phrase. Such anti-proverb might be also called repetitive paronomastic pun¹⁰ (in repetitive puns¹¹ punning words are repeated):

- (38a) *Money is the **fruit** of evil, as often as the root of it.*
 (Henry Fielding, in Lieberman 1984: 88)
 (38b) ***With corrupt officials**, money is the **loot** of all evil.*
 (Esar 1968: 96)

As evident in the example below, word repetition and addition might be combined with employing antonyms to one of the words of original in the tail (such as *talks* and *listens*), helping to add the opposite view to a proverb text (Ex. 39):

- (39) *They say money **talks**. But smart money **listens**.* (Mieder 1989: 274) {Money talks}

There are scores of other mechanisms of proverb variation combined with substitution that could have been discussed in Section 2.4.

2.5. Themes emerging in the proverb alterations about money

There is scarcely any aspect of life to which the humor of our money anti-proverbs employing substitution is not related. Among

¹⁰ Some examples of combination of replacement and punning have already been treated above, e.g., in Sections 2.2.2. and 2.2.3., see Ex. 19–23b, 25a–26, 29).

¹¹ For more on repetitive puns in Anglo-American anti-proverbs about money, see T. Litovkina 2025c.

the themes (other than money) emerging in the proverb alterations in which substitution takes place are marriage, baldness, leisure, violence, mother, wife, elections, etc. The following are just a few examples under the topics brought up above, but without further discussion (Ex. 40a–40g):

marriage

(40a) *Matrimony is the root of all evil.* (Edmund and Workman Williams 1921: 275) {Money is the root of all evil}

baldness

(40b) *A bald man's hair is soon parted.* (Christie Davies 1999) {A fool and his money are soon parted}

leisure

(40c) *Users and their leisure time are soon parted.* (Alexander 2004: 160) {A fool and his money are soon parted}

violence

(40d) *Television violence is the root of all evil.* (Liu and Vasselli 1996) {Money is the root of all evil}

mother

(40e) *A mule and its mummy are soon parted.* (Farman 1989) {A fool and his money are soon parted}

wife

(40f) *A fool and his wife are soon parted. See Alimony.* (Wurdz 1904) {A fool and his money are soon parted}

elections

(40g) *Walton's Law of Politics:*
A fool and his money are soon elected. (Bloch 1990: 224) {A fool and his money are soon parted}

Last but not least, many more types of word substitution and examples of anti-proverbs demonstrating them, as well as many more themes emerging in the examples presented could be addressed in Part 2 of this study.

3. Discussion and conclusion

As stated elsewhere (see T. Litovkina 2005, 2015; T. Litovkina et al. 2021), one of the most popular techniques of proverb alteration is perverting the basic meaning of a proverb by simple substitution (or replacement, or change of one of the components of the proverb). The present study, continuing the research of T. Litovkina and her co-authors on the most frequent types of proverb alteration in anti-proverbs (i.e. deliberate proverb innovations, alterations, parodies, transformations, variations, wisecracks, fractured proverbs) (see T. Litovkina 2005, 2015, 2025a–2025e; T. Litovkina et al. 2021, etc.), focuses on substitution in 263 transformations of 13 Anglo-American proverbs about money. Earlier findings (based on the examination of almost 6000 Anglo-American anti-proverbs, regardless of the themes emerging in them) have proven to remain relevant.

The analysis of substitution reveals that word substitution is one of the most commonly employed techniques in the corpus. Most frequently, the replacement of words occurs at the very beginning or the very end of a proverb. Furthermore, altering the second part of a proverb is also one of the most popular techniques in the material, while changing the first part is relatively rare. The findings indicate that the first half of a proverb is more likely to remain constant than the second. Additional trends observed include:

- Sound changes occur more frequently at the beginning of the word than at its end;
- Word-order reversal most often involves nouns;
- The structure of the proverb usually remains the same, the number of words in the alteration, however, may differ.
- One word is changed to several ones more often than vice versa.

Addressing the semantic and pragmatic functions of the changes observed in the analyzed Anglo-American anti-proverbs, several patterns emerge:

- The authors of our anti-proverbs, when replacing a word, very often try to find a word phonologically similar to the one from the original proverb. Such phonologically

based changes most frequently take place for the sake of language play per se.

- The vast majority of anti-proverbs are the products of the playfulness of a solitary author, and they will definitely not catch on. Furthermore, some anti-proverbs analyzed in the study might be treated as nonce phrases, for example: *Monkey is the route to all people* (Rees 1980: 91) {Money is the root of all evil}.
- In rare cases, entirely new word compositions are created. Words such as *matri-money*, the main purpose of creation of which is simply fulfilling a particular stylistic function (see *Matri-money is the root of all evil* (Anonymous 1908: 26) {Money is the root of all evil}), are unlikely to spread in English.
- Words in the corpus are extremely rarely substituted by their antonyms. Furthermore, the changes expressing different, modern views and opinions that take place in the present corpus most frequently adapt to a specific context. Last but not least, only very few of the anti-proverbs question the truth of a proverb entirely and create a completely opposite meaning.

4. Implications for further research

The analysis has emphasized the formal features of proverb alterations about money involving substitution, while only briefly mentioning emerging themes beyond money. A detailed examination of these themes would be valuable. An equally promising avenue for future research would be to investigate the worldview reflected in anti-proverbs about money and how it diverges from that of original money proverbs. Furthermore, since proverbial language is said to reflect the system of values and conventions of a country, it would be useful not only to discuss basic American or British attitudes presented in anti-proverbs about money, but to conduct cross-cultural comparisons involving the United States, Great Britain and other countries (such as France, Germany, Hungary, Russia, etc. in which anti-proverb collections have been published). Finally, it would be also important to conduct semantic and pragmatic analysis of anti-proverbs about money,

along with a detailed exploration of their functions, following the lead of Wolfgang Mieder according to whom “Scholars must also interpret the use and function of anti-proverbs in oral and written contexts and reflect upon the significance of this pre-occupation with anti-proverbs by the folk themselves” (Mieder 2007: 18).

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