# PROVERBIUM

Yearbook of International Proverb Scholarship



# 41:2024

# Proverbium 41 (2024)

*Proverbium* is an open-access peer-reviewed journal of International Proverb Scholarship that publishes papers dedicated to research in paremiology in English, German, French, Russian and Spanish languages. It is published in accordance with the International Ethical Principles for Scholary Publication on the webpage https://naklada.ffos.hr/casopisi/proverbium/

# PROVERBIUM

## Yearbook of International Proverb Scholarship

VOLUME 41:2024

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

REVIEWS

BIBLIOGRAPHIES

## PREFACE

If we had to encapsulate this year of editing the current issue of the *Yearbook* with a proverb, it would undoubtedly be, "Life comes at you fast!" To uphold the visibility and maintain the high standards of our journal, we have made significant strides, including the composition and publication of a Publication Ethics and Malpractice Statement, as well as the integration of our work into the LOCKSS archiving system via the Public Knowledge Project PLN (PKP). Additionally, we are diligently working to convert and archive older paperback issues of *Proverbium* into a new, online format. With the publication of this issue, we proudly announce the open-access availability of more than twenty past *Proverbium* yearbooks in the Archives section. Each article from these older volumes is now individually accessible and searchable, just like those in the current online edition.

As many of you already know, alongside editing this issue, we have dedicated considerable effort to publishing two volumes in the *Proverbium Online Supplement Series*, accessible as open-access books published by the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences Osijek. The first volume, an impressive 828-page surprise book for Wolfgang Mieder on the occasion of his 80th birthday, is the third volume in the *Proverbium Online Supplement Series*. Edited by our esteemed colleagues Saša Babič, Fionnuala Carson Williams, Christian Grandl, and Anna T. Litovkina, *"Standing on the Shoulders of Giants": A Festschrift in Honour of Wolfgang Mieder on the Occasion of his 80th Birthday*, was launched on February 18, 2024. This festschrift features forty-three essays in English and German, many of which draw on Wolfgang Mieder's work, showcasing the wide variety of topics and research approaches influenced by this remarkable individual. On behalf of the Editorial Board, our reviewers, au-

thors, and readers, we extend our warmest wishes to Wolfgang Mieder: Dear Wolfgang, may the coming years bring you even more joy, happiness, and good health. We know your enthusiasm for scholarly work will continue to shine brightly!

The fourth volume in the Online Supplement Series is a true gem. Edited by Aderemi Raji-Oyelade and titled *Postproverbials at Work: The Context of Radical Proverb-Making in Nigerian Languages*, it is a collection of remarkable essays exploring the postproverbial imagination in contemporary African language communities. Drawing on theories in transgressive paremiology, the authors bring perspectives from ethnography, philosophy, history, literature, sociolinguistics, and gender studies to illuminate interpretations of radical text practices. This pioneering book, the first of its kind published in Europe, was launched on June 23, 2024.

In addition to these extraordinary reads on proverbs, the 41st volume of the *Yearbook* presents a wealth of fascinating topics and innovations, from defining proverbs to exploring paremiological prolongations in Slovenian, animals in short folklore forms and in Phalee proverbs, Persian and American embodiment proverbs, proverbs of the Balkans, Spanish and English language, and even in music, in Prince's lyrics. We express our deepest gratitude to the reviewers of this volume—Péter Barta, Mario Brdar, Fionnuala Carson Williams, Elke Cases, Charles Clay Doyle, Maricel Esteban, Anna Konstantinova, Outi Lauhakangas, Anna T. Litovkina, Marcas MacCoinnigh, Matej Meterc, Wolfgang Mieder, Draženka Molnar, Aderemi Raji-Oyelade, Grzegorz Szpila, Katalin Vargha, and Damien Villers—for meticulously reading all submitted papers and selecting only those that meet the high standards of our journal.

In addition to the articles, the review section features critiques of four noteworthy books in the fields of German, English, Kazakh and Slovenian paremiology, whereas Wolfgang Mieder's bibliographies remain a must-read for all scholars interested in proverbs.

As we bring this edition to a close, we wish to extend our heartfelt thanks to all contributors, reviewers, and readers who have supported and enriched *Proverbium* over the past year. Your unwavering commitment and insightful feedback are invaluable

to the continued success and evolution of our journal. We are excited to see the new avenues of research and discussion that will emerge from this volume. We invite you to immerse your-selves in the diverse and enriching content of this issue, explor-ing the depths of proverb studies from various cultural, linguis-tic, and thematic perspectives. May the knowledge and insights contained within these pages inspire new scholarly endeavors, foster meaningful dialogue, and deepen your understanding of the intricate world of proverbs.

Thank you for being part of the *Proverbium* community. We look forward to your continued engagement and contributions in the years to come.

Melita Aleksa Varga and Hrisztalina Hrisztova-Gotthardt

SAŠA BABIČ

# ANIMAL PREDATORS AS A CHARACTERISING ELEMENT IN SHORT FOLKLORE FORMS

*Abstract:* Language reflects how we perceive our surroundings. Not only does it enable us to describe them but we also use linguistic expressions to express our ideas metaphorically. In view of this, language stores our observations and stereotypes and carries them as a culture that humans continually create and think about (Pitkin 1972; Bartminski 2005; Tolstaya 2015) in different linguistic forms that are passed down from one generation to the next. Using an ethnolinguistic approach and the help of semiotics, we can take a closer look at the deeper structures and meanings of short folklore forms and, moreover, social stereotypes. This article focuses on wild animals in proverbs, riddles and swear words, and their role in characterisation in short folklore forms.

*Keywords:* animal, proverb, riddle, short folklore forms, Slovenia, swearword

## 1. Introduction

Language is both a means of communication and the cornerstone of our mental, emotional, and social world. Language reflects our conception of the world – not only by giving names to things or events, but also as a collection of experiences, views, and stereotypes, often conveyed through metaphors.

Metaphors are one of the most important rhetorical figures in short folklore forms, which include proverbs, sayings, rid-

dles and swear words, etc. Short folklore forms are structures with relatively fixed and semantically rich expressions (Grzybek 2014: 74–76). They convey experiences (proverbs), knowledge (riddles), prejudices (swear words), but also stereotypes and expected characteristics and events (incantations, prayers). Short folklore forms that name phenomena, beings and objects are connected with ethnography and tangible and intangible folk heritage. Heritage is filled with information about environmental phenomena, including animals both domestic and wild. Short folklore forms often use animals for figurative language, characterisation and stereotyping. They represent "collective symbols" (Bartminski 2009: 17) and we can use them as cultural keywords.  Language is intertwined with culture through lexical meanings. By observing how animals are named in short folklore forms, we can predict the human worldview of the animal world. An insight into short folklore forms reveals what stereotypical traits were attributed to animals and what the culturally specific behaviour towards them was; what human traits were attributed to wild animals and what animal traits were attributed to humans; how these traits intertwined and linked stereotypical wilderness and civilisation. It should be noted that the characteristics attributed to animals do not always correspond to the facts, as many of them have been invented by society (e.g., the wolf does not change its fur, etc.).

The analysis of short folklore forms is also relevant to contemporary ecology. When considering the development of human cultures, folklore is essential when thinking about animals in the context of ecology (Bulleit 2005). Many fundamental ideas and insights into nature and animals come from ancient myths and folklore. The tradition accumulated in various forms of folklore may ultimately illuminate a different understanding of ecology, especially in the era of modern technology, using Daniel Botkin's assertion that ecologists need the help of folklore specialists as a foundation. However, the argument that animal behaviour is the same as human behaviour is inaccurate: animals engage in certain behaviours to survive and reproduce, while humans engage in behaviours similar to those of animals, but their motivation is different (Nuessel 2010: 224).

## 2. Animals in short folklore forms

Folklore (also) proves that animals have been observed and further characterised by people worldwide. These observations and beliefs have been documented in folklore forms of various lengths. While most animals mentioned in folklore are from the local environment, it is notable that proverbs also feature exotic animals such as lions or camels in European contexts, often associated with the stereotypes from biblical or oriental tales (Rooth 1968: 286; Williams 1982–1983: 127–129, 131).

The lexemes used to describe acting as a particular animal or a personified animal figure (mammal, bird, insect, etc.) are known as zoosemisms, while the resulting expressions are termed zoonyms, which are polysemantic in nature (Omakaeva et al. 2019: 2532). Consequently, the paremiological depiction of an animal through zoomorphic metaphors, where individuals (men or women) are likened to animals, aligns with the cultural zoomorphic code. This code represents a set of ideas about the animal kingdom where animal representatives serve as symbols or benchmarks for specific characteristics. The transfer of animal traits to humans originates from observations of their external characteristics, behaviours and habits (Omakaeva et al. 2019: 2532).

The animals in short folklore forms typically originate from the immediate environment, such as the homestead and the surrounding woods, with a preference for domestic animals over wild animals (Rooth 1968: 286). The predominance of domestic animals in short folklore forms and of wild animals in fables (animal tales and myths) indicates two distinct categories of folk tradition, each with unique characteristics (Rooth 1968: 187). There is, therefore, a significant difference between the two: while the world of wild animals lends itself to longer genres, where animal motivations are explained and their world is viewed through a human lens, domestic animals seem more familiar and closer to everyday life, thus fitting shorter genres. The world of domestic animals requires no additional explanation. Nonetheless, both domestic and wild animals symbolise different aspects of human personality embodied in their instinctive behaviour (Nuessel 2010: 221).

Slovenian short folklore forms primarily feature domestic animals such as dogs, cats, oxen, cows, donkeys, chickens, etc. The number of units with named predators is smaller and they are not analysed as closely as the units with named domestic animals. This article focuses on the large wild predators listed in Slovenian official documents (https://www.gov.si/teme/velike-zveri/ [17. 1. 2023]): bears (*Ursus arctos*), wolves (*Canis lupus*), and lynx (*Lynx lynx*) – all three of which are protected species in Slovenia. Large wild predators posed a threat to farmers, and were stereotypically seen as strong and difficult to subdue, leading to overhunting (https://www.gov.si/teme/velike-zveri/ [17. 1. 2023]). Social perceptions of these predators are reflected to some extent in folklore, with everyday perceptions primarily evident in in short folklore forms.

The wolf had various meanings and functions in mythology, the folk belief system, rituals (see more in Mencej 2001; Balázsi, Piiranen 2016: 29; Plas 2021: 21), and metaphors. The wolf was considered a taboo animal in (South) Slavic folklore and was believed to exert a magical influence on human life, the weather, etc. (Mencej 2001; Plas 2021). Its role was probably similar to that of the bear, but this is not proven due to a lack of data (Mirjam Mencej, personal communication, September 2022). They were both animals from the "edge of our world", from the borderlands; animals that could also go to other worlds and guardians of the wilderness, i.e. not of our world (Plas 2021: 191).

The wolf's significance is seen in its inclusion in life cycle rituals (birth, naming, marriage, death), prohibitions, medicine and demonology, wolf songs, and more (Plas 2021). In Slovenian folklore material, the wolf has mainly been preserved in animal stories and short folklore forms (riddles, proverbs), while the old Slovenian belief system and rituals are more or less forgotten (Mencej 2001). The wolf is one of the most frequent figures in Slovenian fairy tales and fables and appears in various characterisations (Kropej 2015): 1. as a patronising animal ('ATU 76', 'ATU 102') that exploits its environment for its own well-being; 2. as a predator and threat to the weak ('ATU 11A', 'ATU 123', 'ATU 124'); 3. as a helping animal, but one that ends up being outsmarted (usually by a fox, e.g., 'ATU 79'; 'ATU 101', 'ATU 103'), and, therefore, a victim we can sympathise with – fitting

the proverb: no good deed goes unpunished. In all narrative examples, the wolf is not characterised as a clever animal, but rather as an impatient one that wants everything immediately or is easily tricked.

In fairy tales and fables the bear is a positive figure, but not a clever one: 'ATU 41' (Bear and fox stole the meat); 'ATU 49' (The bear and the honey), 'ATU 89' (The bear waits for fruit in vain), etc. In many Slovenian fables the fox tricks the bear so that the bear is beaten, while the fox remains alive and well ('ATU 3'), or the wolf and the bear are tricked together by the fox ('ATU 15' The Theft of Butter (Honey) by the Godfather's Game), 'ATU 38' (The claw in the Split Tree), etc.

The bear and the wolf can also play the same role in certain fables. For example, in the tale typologised as 'ATU 2' – Fishing with the Tail – a bear (or wolf) is persuaded to fish with its tail through a hole in the ice. When it tries to pull it out or escape, the frozen tail breaks off. Both animals may also appear in 'ATU 9' – The Unfair Partner and the Way a Man Tricks the Animal. This interchangeability, as well as the coexistence of wolves and bears, is also supported by the similar taboo status of the two animals.

The lynx is a protected animal in the Slovenian forests, having been extinct for some time before being reintroduced in 1973. It is an animal rarely seen and may even be mistaken for a wild cat. In Slovenian short folklore forms and tales, the lynx is seldom used as a metaphorical element.

Animals as a metaphorical element in short folklore forms, especially in paremiology, are a fairly well-researched topic. Several important contributions that include wild animals have been published. Anna Brigita Rooth (1968) published an article on domestic and wild animals as symbols and referents in Swedish proverbs. Donald Ward (1987) wrote about the proverbial ambivalence of the wolf. Wolfgang Mieder compiled a collection of paremia entitled *Howl like a wolf: Animal Proverbs* (1993). Frank Nuessel (2010) focused on semiotic processes involved in animal allusions in proverbial language, etc. Wild animals that are exotic in Europe have been discussed by Jan Knappert (1998) and Anete Costa Ferrera (2017). Dmitrij Dobrovol'skij and Elisabeth Piirainen's (1999) analyzed animal symbolism in language

and culture. Arvo Krikmann (2001) published an article entitled Proverbs on Animal Identity, and Outi Lauhakangas (2019) presented a review article on animals in proverbs in previously published articles.

In Slovenian paremiological research, animals have been explored mainly in linguistics and phraseology (Keber 1998, Koletnik, Nikolovski 2020, etc.). The topic seems to offer substantial material for comparative analyses of Slovenian and foreign languages in BA or MA assignments (Sobočan 2018, etc.), yet most of the analyses have focused on domestic animals.

At the same time, it is evident that most research on animals in short folklore forms has been done in paremiology, while incantations, riddles and swear words have not received as much attention.

## 3. Methodology

The analysed material consists of Slovenian proverbs from the Proverbs Archive of the Institute of Slovenian Ethnology at the Slovenian Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts (hereinafter referred to as ISN ZRC SAZU). The collection contains 36,461 paremiological units from various sources (both printed and oral), dating back to the 16th century. The riddle material is also from the collection of riddles from the Proverbs Archive of the ISN ZRC SAZU, and consists of 2,381 riddles. The units to be researched were selected using the keywords *medved* [bear], *volk* [wolf], and *ris* [lynx].

Diachronic insight into the relationship between humans and animals is also provided by the application of ethnolinguistics in a broader sense (Lublin School), which allows us to consider language as a social phenomenon (Bartmiński 2005: 159–161). By examining  social stereotypes (both positive and negative), we can determine the "world map" – concepts and stereotypes that significantly influence contemporary understanding of interspecies relationships, as well as the anticipated origin of the relationships. Using ethnolinguistics, we will examine proverbs, riddles, and superstitions that have existed for decades or even centuries, focusing on those that contain animal names and look closely at the lexical environment of the names.

## 4. Analysis of short folklore forms featuring predators

The function of animal metaphors in paremiological units is to represent either present or future human behaviour or consequences, whereas in riddles and swear words (used as euphemisms), it is rather a parallelism of characteristics. Named animals are always in "conceptual dialogue" with humans and their actions. This is also evident in Krikmann's (2001) four categories of functions of "zoo-paremic" paremiological material, based on Estonian material and referring to Matti Kuusi's international type system of proverbs (Lauhakangas 2001; 2019). The proverbs are divided into the following categories (Krikmann 2001):

A.  Proverbs concerning animal identity.
B.  Proverbs concerning the relationship between people and animals (mostly in a metaphorical sense).
C.  Proverbs concerning the relationships between animals (usually metaphorical).
D.  Proverbs concerning the relations of animals (either metaphorical or non-metaphorical) with non-zoological nature and dimensions.

Slovenian proverbs involving predators can be classified into all four groups, with the wolf being the most productive metaphorical comparative animal. The wolf is the most frequent large wild predator mentioned in Slovenian short forms of folklore. A search through the material yields 309 paremiological units in which the wolf occurs, and three different riddles. It is used as a metaphorical name for a disease (a bladder or skin inflammation), as a characteristic sign for humans (loners), and in musical jargon to denote the unclean, rasping sound of strings (obviously connected with the stereotype of the raspy wolf voice). The metaphorical meanings in the dictionary are connected with bloodthirsty, ruthless, and greedy men. In everyday life, wolf (*Volk, Vouk, Vovk*) is quite a common surname, though it does not appear as a first name (in contrast to other Slavic languages, where the name Vuk was quite common). Proverbs characterise the wolf as a ferocious, dangerous, vicious, and witty animal, similar to the people or human actions depicted in proverbs. Proverbs

imply the semantic sign of threat, misfortune, or disaster. These proverbs are semantic signs of warning.

The wolf is one of the first dangerous nocturnal wild predators that the Eurasian Indo-European speaking peoples had to deal with, and it also became important as an image or symbol throughout history. The wolf was often conceptually associated with the devil, which can also be illustrated with the phraseme wolf/devil derived from the paremia *lupus in fabula* [the wolf in the story 'speak of the devil and he will appear']. The phraseme has a wide distribution, varying in most European languages as either wolf or devil, and showing an obvious parallelism of the concepts of wolf and devil. The wolf is primary, while the devil, as an evil spirit or even concept of evil in popular belief, is a secondary adaptation (Balázsi, Piirainen 2016: 40). This adaptation stems from the idea that the devil is furry, has a tail, is dark grey or black in colour, lives in the borderlands, and brings bad luck.

The bear is a predator that appears in only 79 paremiological units and three different folk riddles. "Bear" is not used as a first name in any version but is quite common as a surname. The metaphorical character of the bear is often associated with its fur. For example, there is the comparative phraseme "to be furry like a bear", and the euphemism 300 furry bears (a swearword referring to "300 furry devils"). As an animal, the bear is well represented in Slovenian forests, although it is protected as an endangered animal, which is reflected in the phrase "to be protected like a (Kočevje[1]) bear (semantically expressing protection and immunity: doctors are protected like Kočevje bears).

As already mentioned, the lynx is an animal that is rarely seen, so it is not surprising that it is not used often in Slovenian figurative expressions and fairy tales (nor in naming). It is used only in phraseological units such as "to be angry like a lynx", "to fume with rage like a lynx", and only in one proverb, if we consider the data from our analysed collection. The lynx does not occur as an element of metaphor in any other form of folklore. Nor are there any tales in the archives of the ISN ZRC SAZU in

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[1] The Kočevje region, with the primeval forest, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, is in southern Slovenia; it is known as Europe's most complete forest habitat and a home to bears (and also other predators, such as the wolf and the lynx).

which the lynx plays a role. In folklore, the lynx is not a predator that is visible and accepted in the social cognitive system. This is likely because of its hidden life in the treetops (with most slaughtered chickens, sheep, etc. being blamed on foxes).

The material is divided into paremiological units and riddles. The paremiological units are semantically categorised into four groups, the last one containing weather paremias.

### 4.1. Similarity or even equivalence with the metaphorical implication that man is like a wolf/bear/lynx, highlighting the activities and appearance of a wolf/bear/lynx for semantic needs

In these proverbs the wolf/bear is personified and the human is not mentioned. Some of the wolf/bear characteristics and activities are imaginary, designed to suit the proverb's semantic needs (wolves do not leave their fur on the ground, wolves also fight with other wolves, bears do not jump, etc.) and are not based on facts. The obvious difference between the paremiological units referring to wolves and bears is in the characterisation: the wolf is characterised as aggressive and carries a negative connotation. The wolf is, therefore, a human that causes harm and is a threat, but not to its own species:

(1) *Še zmeraj je bil volk volku podoben.* [Wolves have always looked the same.]

(2) *Vovk vovka ne zakole, pes psa ne vje.* [A wolf does not slaughter another wolf; a dog does not bite another dog.]

(3) *Volk se z volkam druži.* [Wolves hang out with other wolves.]

(4) *Puntarske ovce je volk vesel.* [A wolf is glad when a sheep rebels.]

(5) *Ni treba starega volka klati učiti.* [There is no need to teach an old wolf how to slaughter.]

(6) *Tudi prešteto ovco volk odnese. / Prosto kozo kmalu volk požre.* [Even the counted sheep can be taken by the wolf. / A goat on the loose is soon eaten by the wolf.]

(7) *Ne daj volku koze pasti.* [Don't get a wolf to look after sheep.]

(8) *Kdor odpušča volku,* škoduje *ovci.* [Whoever forgives a wolf harms the sheep.]

(9) Če *volk liže jagnje, je slabo znamenje.* [If a wolf is licking a lamb, that's a bad sign.]

(10) *Tudi komar bo podrl konja,* če *mu volk pomaga.* [Even a mosquito will swat a horse if it is helped by a wolf.]

The wolf is the opposite of laziness and shares its prey with those who are interested:

(11) *Volku ni treba* šume *kazati.* [You don't need to show the woods to the wolf.]

(12) *Volku ni nikamor daleč.* [No place is far for a wolf.]

(13) *Poleg volkov so tudi lisice site.* [Even foxes have their fill in the company of wolves.]

But even wolves have their weaknesses – especially hunger and being hurt or caught:

(14) *Tuljenje napravi volka večjega, kot je.* [Howling makes the wolf seem bigger.]

(15) *Enkrat se ujame tudi najzvitejši volk.* [Even the cleverest wolf is eventually caught.]

(16) *Kjer se volk valja, dlako pusti.* [Wherever wolves lie, they leave their fur.]

(17) *Šibanega volka se niti ovca ne boji.* [Even sheep are not afraid of a wolf that's had a beating.]

(18) *Sestradan volk* še *komarje požira.* [Starving wolves eat even mosquitos.]

Meanwhile, bears are linked with survival – either nutritional:

(19) *Dokler ima medved* še *gnilih hrušk, ne boji se lakote.* [As long as the bear has some rotten pears, it won't be afraid of going hungry.]

(20) *Ko je medved sit sterdi, daleč okolj smrdi.* [You can smell a long way off when a bear has had its fill.]

or behavioural:

    (21) *V zadregi se* še *medved skakati uči.* [When in trouble
    even a bear learns how to jump.]

    (22) *Ni prav, da medved kravo sne, ne prav, da krava v gore
    gre.* [It is not right that a bear should eat a cow, just as
    a cow should not go up into the mountains.]

or with old age – coping with wanting abilities:

    (23) *Starega medveda ne naučiš več rajati.* [You cannot
    teach an old bear how to dance.]

    (24) *Ko se medved postara, postane igračka medvedov.*
    [When a bear grows old, it becomes the plaything of
    younger bears.]

Behaviour, such as our attitude towards the actions of others, is
metaphorised by the lynx, which symbolises pride:

    (25) *Za tuje napake smo risi, za lastne krti.* [For the mistakes
    of others we are lynxes, for our own we are moles.]

Attitudes towards the wolf are also obvious from the paremio-
logical units that seem to come from the direct instruction on
how to act if a wolf is approaching – the dog might be our only
saviour:

    (26) *Kadar je volk v selu, psu ni počitka.* [When there's a
    wolf in the village, there's no rest for the dog.]

    (27) *Dosti psov* še *volka uje.* [Many dogs can bite a wolf.]

    (28) *Ko greš volku naproti, pokliči psa.* [When approaching
    a wolf, call a dog.]

Other social phenomena that are metaphorically linked with the
wolf are connected with money and debt:

    (29) *Dolg je hud volk. / Dolgovi so volkovi*. [Debt is a ter-
    rible wolf.]

    (30) Žakelj je *nenasiten volk.* [A sack is a voracious wolf.]

*4.2. Comparative proverbs in which the wolf carries the meta-
phor of the cruel animal, while the bear hibernates; the empha-
sis is also on the similarity between wolves and dogs, which is
presented as a falsehood in the proverb*

These proverbs use comparison to express negative character-
istics, hypocrisy and ruthlessness; the paremiological units dis-
close that when one is "in the company of wolves" one has to
obey their rules.

(31) *Tat in volk sta vsako dobo zrela.* [Thieves and wolves
are always ready.]

(32) *Laskavci so podobni prijateljem tako, kot so volkovi po-
dobni psom.* [Flatterers are like friends, just as wolves
are like dogs.]

(33) *Dolgo nosi volk ljudske kože, pa tudi drugi njegove.*
[A wolf wears human skin for a long time, as people
do his fur.]

(34) *Človeški oderuhi so kakor volkovi gluhi.* [Human loan
sharks are deaf like wolves.]

(35) *Če se z volkom družiš, moraš tuliti kot volk.* [If you
associate with wolves, you have to howl as they do.]

(36) *Kdor je sladko ljubezniv s tujimi ljudmi, na domače
svoje rad kakor volk renči.* [Those who are all sweet
with strange people, usually snarl like wolves at home.]

(37) *Kdor se poleti preobjeda, pozimi posnema medveda.*
[Whoever overindulges in summer, imitates bears in
winter.]

*4.3. Proverbs that include human activities and wolves or bears*

In these proverbs, the wolf is metaphorically presented as a
wicked and authorative being, while humans seem to be weak
beings that need to be careful and humble:

(38) *Dvema pastirjema volk lažje ovco ukrade kot enemu.*
[It is easier for a wolf to steal a sheep guarded by two
shepherds than just one.]

This proverb expresses the incompetence of women, thematising the incapability of protecting the livestock:

> (39) *Kadar baba gospodari, volk mesari.* [When a woman's in charge, the wolf has its fill.]

Human activities involving bears are linked to economic topics, i.e. selling bear fur, and not to bear activities. This shows that the bear is seen as a trophy, and no longer as a being:

> (40) *Ne prodajaj kože, dokler je medved* še *v brlogu. / Ne prodajaj medveda, dokler tiči v brlogu.* [Don't sell fur while the bear's still in the den.]

The verbs in active form used in the proverbs to describe the wolf's activity include slaughter, devour, growl, take, and lie in wait, while the verbs associated with the bear are milder: eat, grow old, and jump/dance. The latter implies that the bear could be trained (and was trained for the circus), while the wolf was considered an animal that could not be trained (domestication was reserved for the dog).

The adjectives used in proverbs to characterise the wolf include angry, the most cunning, old and whipped, hungry and voracious (glutton). The bear's stereotypical appearance is big and furry.

Comparative phrasemes show the metaphorical meaning and social image of the wolf as a loner (*This man is such a lone wolf*), the bear as a tall and broad-shouldered person (*They're an interesting couple, she's so tiny and he's such a bear*), and the lynx as a furious, cautious and alert animal (*He's as furious as a lynx*).

## 4.4. Weather paremias

The weather paremias differ from the prior categories of proverbs: they are conceptually different, focusing specifically on the weather. Through their observations of the nature and subsequent predictions of future weather, their function narrows down to forecasting. This forecasting is often linked with the behaviour of (wild) animals, demonstrating the human connection with the wild nature.

The behaviour of wolves and bears is most frequently used to express the weather forecast at the end of winter: a sunny and warm February foretells a long winter, so the bear goes deeper into the cave. On the other hand, there is a contradicting weather paremia that the bear goes out of the den if there is nice weather on Candlemas Day. Contradicting paremias are quite common, but considering that we are discussing the weather paremias, which were supposed to observe the physical phenomena (the weather), we could claim that even these paremias do not necessarily reflect reality. Meanwhile, a warm February predicts a bad harvest and the wolf in the barn is preferable to frost in spring:

(41) *Če je na svečnico [2. 2.] jasno, se medved potukne še bolj globoko, kot je bil doslej. Če je megleno, pride iz brloga na dan in zunaj ostane.* [If it's sunny on Candlemas Day [2nd February], the bear will go deeper into its den. If it's foggy, the bear will come out of its den and stay outside.]

(42) *Če medved pogleda iz luknje na svečnico in vidi, da je lepo, gre ven, drugače pa nazaj.* [If the bear looks out of its den on Candlemas Day and sees that it's fine, it'll come out, otherwise it'll go back in.]

(43) *Ob svečnici se medved obrne, saj je mimo šele polovica zime.* [On Candlemas Day the bear turns over because only half of winter is over.]

(44) *Volk ne požre zime.* [The wolf does not eat the winter.] / *Zime pa snega nikoli volk še ni snedel dovolj.* [The wolf has never had enough snow or winter.]

(45) *Iz vsakega oblaka sneg leti, iz vsakega grma volk preži* [Snow flies from every cloud, a wolf lurks in every bush.]. / *Spòmlad'n snégòu so žit'n vówkòú.* [Spring snow is like cereals for the wolf.]

(46) *Na pustni torek je bolje videti volka na njivi kot moža v sami srajci.* [On Shrove Tuesday it's better to see a wolf in the field than a man wearing just a shirt.]

(47) *Bolje je volka v hlevu imeti, kakor pa o svečnici na soncu se greti.* [It's better to have a wolf in the barn than to bask in the sun on Candlemas Day.]

The observation of animals and their behaviour was undoubtedly very important in predicting the weather, and these proverbs also reveal the concept of the wolf: less damage is caused by a wolf – a dangerous animal – in the village than when the weather is too warm in February.  The comparison works as an obvious oxymoron. The concept of the bear and winter is related to the bear's hibernation in a cave, not to any possible harm it could do: if the weather is nice, the bear will wake up; if not, it will continue hibernating (although another paremia is expressing the bear's wisdom that the warm February foretells the return and persistence of winter). We can speculate that harm is predicted with the bear waking up when it is hungry.

### 4.5. Riddles

In Slovenian folklore riddles, the bear and the wolf are used as metaphorical descriptions, but in the ISN ZRC SAZU database we cannot find a lynx in them. In most of the analysed riddles, the bear and the wolf are used in the riddle description. The animal appears as a subject with its characteristics directly or indirectly implied: the bear is heavy and would crush the eggs if it stepped on them, so the first riddle uses a contradiction and an unexpected connection. Similarly, there is also a contradiction between the hungry wolf, which is calm, and the satiated wolf, which howls explicitly:

(48) *Medved po jajcih hodi, pa nobenega ne pohodi. - Luna in zvezde* [The bear walks on the eggs, but does not crush any of them. – The moon and the stars.]

(49) *Pri nas volka imamo, če mu damo jesti, tuli, če ne, pa molči. Kaj je to? – Ponev.* [We have a wolf at home, if we give it something to eat, it howls, if not, it is silent. What is it? – A cooking pan.]

The contradiction between the wolf without fur in the barn and the wolf with fur that goes out implies the phraseme for the expression of rage – to pull someone out of his/her/its skin [to skin someone alive]. The situation in the riddle contrasts with the expected one, when the wolf in the barn remains intact, while the wolf that goes out is injured by the protecting farmer.

(50) *Pri nas imamo volka, v hlev gre brez kože, iz hleva pa v
koži pride. Kaj je to? – Kruh.* [We have a wolf that goes
into the barn without its fur, but comes out of the barn
in its fur. What is it? – Bread.]

The predator's strength is thematised in the riddles by speed (the
bear) and intimidation (the wolf):

(51) *Medved prha čez tri breke, klen pertiska, z ritjo bliska?
– Kosa* [The bear hurries over three hills, pushes the
wooden handle, flashing with its bottom? – A scythe.]

(52) *V leseni hiši sem bolj miren nego jagnje, v koščeni pa
hujši nego volk? - Vino v posodi in v človeku.* [In a
wooden house I am more at peace than a lamb, but in a
bone house I am fiercer than a wolf? - Wine in a barrel
and in a man.]

It is surprising that in these Slovenian folk riddles the bear is
used as a metaphor for natural phenomena (the moon and stars)
and a tool (scythe), while the wolf serves as a metaphor for kitch-
en utensils and culinary phenomena (wine, bread, pan).

Such riddles – joking questions or, classified by Vernam
Hull and Archer Taylor, as 'witty questions' (Hull, Taylor 1955:
67–77) are based on overtly simple questions and in different
versions the animal mentioned can be replaced by 'rabbit':

(53) *Kam gre medved, ko je dve leti star? – V tretje.* [Where
does a bear go when it is two years old? – Into its third
year.]

(54) *Do kje gre volk v gozd? – Do srede.* [How far does a
wolf go into the forest? – To the middle.]

The simplicity of the answers to these joke questions can also be
based just on changing the animal's gender:

(55) *Kdo davi kakor volk? – Volčica.* [Who slaughters like a
wolf? – The she-wolf.]

(56) *Ktera zver je nar bolj podobna volku? – Volčina.*
[Which animal is just like a wolf? – The she-wolf.]

A logical question makes use of the way the two animals are spelt in Slovenian: wolf (*volk*) and ox (*vol*). The riddle is based solely on the similar spelling, not on a semantic basis:

> (57) *Poznam divjo zver, ki se piše s štirimi črkami; ako jej pa odvzameš zadnjo črko, takoj imaš domačo žival pred seboj. Ugani jo. - Volk – vol.* [I know a wild beast that is spellt with four letters, and if you take away the last letter, you have a domestic animal right in front of you. Guess it. – Wolf vs. Ox.]

The collection of Slovenian folklore riddles does not contain a single true riddle where the actual answer is the name of a predator. The predator is used only in the description. This fact is surprising, although it could be assumed that riddles whose solution was the name of a predator existed at some point, even if they have not been archived. Predators were an important part of farm life and it seems impossible that folk traditions would only slightly incorporate it into their repertoire. On the other hand, this fact could also be due to the taboo status of wolves and bears.

## 5. Conclusion

Language as a means of thought and communication reflects our view of the world. People use it to form both simultaneous structures and relatively stable forms, often categorised as folklore. Folklore consists of common experiences, stereotypes, images and views that are woven together in the context of a situation or narrative. Among many other things, basic ideas about nature and animals also originate in or are reflected in folklore. This article focuses on short folklore forms (proverbs and phrasemes, riddles, and swear words). The aim of the research was to analyse short folklore forms containing (mostly) the names of large wild carnivores – wolves, bears and lynx – as the main character or as a comparative element. Wolves and bears are quite common figures in folklore, while lynx is usually not mentioned. Wolves and bears are often interchangeable in the variations of the same fable. This interchangeability suggests that the bear has been closely categorised with the wolf, possibly due to a shared

concept of taboo. In short, both animals have some very different characteristics in folklore: they live deep in the forest, they come to the human world, and they bring their "chaos and wildness" by "stealing" for themselves what humans have. Although proverbs and phrasemes emphasise different characteristics, in the case of the bear it is the animal's appearance that is emphasised: when a bear stands on its hind legs, it evokes a strong human attitude, so it is not surprising that large man with a strong attitude is called a bear. The wolf is used in contexts that concern its character and behaviour: cruelty, slaughtering. Thus, bears and wolves have different characterisation elements in proverbs: the former are based more on visual elements, and the latter more on behavioural elements. Wolves and metaphorically humans are depicted as cruel, slaughtering creatures, while bears are depicted as strong creatures that could also be trained for (human) fun or (ab)use. This was never the case with the wolf. Meanwhile, the lynx is a proud and fiery animal. Weather paremias thematise the behaviour of bears and wolves in nature. Their movements alone in February can be used to predict the weather, i.e. the winter will be either long or not. The database of the Slovenian riddles foregrounds different characteristics: those featuring bears thematise their fur and weight, while those with wolves thematise their howling and a "successful escape". However, true riddles featuring bears and wolves are based on contradiction and the effect of the unexpected. In swear words, the bear is used as a euphemism instead of the devil ("300 furry bears"), while the wolf often replaces the devil in the phraseme "we were talking about the wolf, and the wolf came out of the woods" ("to speak of the devil"). This conceptual association of the wolf and the bear with the devil again brings up the common connection to the liminal world.

Short folklore forms show us what characteristics the animals discussed in the proverbs had – how humans saw their function in nature. If we look deeper, we can say that the wolf received rather negative metaphorical connotations, while the bear received positive ones, or at least not as negative as the wolf. The stereotypes used in these paremias are wrong in many cases (e.g. the wolf is a loner or leaves its fur where it lies, the bear sleeps all winter, etc.). Nevertheless, even with the help of short folk-

lore forms, we can reach a partial (diachronic) social stereotypical understanding of the wilderness and how it functions, as well as society's worldview, expectations and functioning. However, the conclusions should be taken carefully: folklore has persisted in the society for a long time, and it changes slowly over time. Additionally, the material is written down in different periods, and much of it is left only in the archive. The contemporary worldview is much more complex than presented: observing the discourse about the animal predators and their co-existence in the mostly human world, the remaining short folklore forms and the tales that are re-printed as folklore material for children show an extremely positive attitude towards these animals, although they also emphasize their danger.

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# CROSS-GENRE ANALYSIS OF PAREMIOLOGICAL PROLONGATIONS IN SLOVENIAN ACCORDING TO PERMJAKOV'S DISTINCTION BETWEEN EXTENSION AND ADDITION

***Abstract:*** The distinction between extension (Russian: *razvjortyvanie*), i.e. a type of prolongation in which the meaning of the expression is preserved, and addition (Russian: *dopolnenie*), in which the meaning of the expression necessarily changes, was briefly but clearly presented by Permjakov. We are convinced considering the difference between extension and addition is extremely useful for both the phraseological and paremiological theory, as it is inextricably linked to the question of whether prolongation is a variant of an expression (in the case of extension) or a new expression (as is with addition). In this article, we present paremias and humorous phrasemes created by addition or extension and highlight the differences in genre between them. We also point out how the difference between extension and addition can be recognized from the examples of use and explanations of meaning listed in the Slovenian paremiological dictionary. Data on the degree of familiarity of paremias among Slovenian speakers is given based on a survey which was conducted to determine the Slovenian paremiological minimum.

***Keywords:*** prolongation, extension, addition, proverb, anti-proverb, wellerism

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Permjakov's distinction between extension and addition and other related concepts

In order to employ *extension* and *addition* as key concepts for a more in-depth understanding and description of changes and evolution of paremiological genres, a basic distinction among these terms is required. When first introducing the terms, paremiologist and folklorist Grigorij Permjakov (1970: 125) described the difference between extension and addition in terms of "text" because, according to his theory, proverbs are designated as "minimal textemes." To clarify the distinction between extension and addition, he used both to illustrate a semantic relation between proverbs and anti-proverbs:

> To avoid misunderstandings, we point out that the "extension" of the text should be distinguished from the seemingly similar "addition." **"Addition" inevitably changes the meaning of the text** (cf. e.g. *The quieter you go, the further you'll get ... from the place you are going to* or *A drunkard has the sea up to his knees ... and the puddle up to his neck*), while the original **meaning is completely retained in the "extension"**.[1] (Permjakov 1970: 125)

Addition can thus be considered one of the ways in which anti-proverbs are created, since an anti-proverb is defined as "any intentional proverb variation in the form of puns, alterations, deletions or additions" (Mieder and Litovkina 1999: 3).

The notions of extension and addition can be related to Mokienko's (1980: 96–100) antinomy of *explicitness* and *implicitness* in phrasemes and paremias. Mokienko explains (1980: 96–97) that the relation between explicitness and implicitness is connected to the relation between stability and instability of a phraseological expression, since stability is manifested in the tendency to maintain the structural-semantic model of the initial paremiological expression, which is opposed by the tendency to decrease or increase the number of phraseological components.

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[1]  Translation to English and emphasis in the form of bolded text was made by the authors of the article.

Thus, increasing the number of phraseological components also enhances the explicitness of the phraseological expression, while reducing the number of components in the structure of the expression leads to an increase in its implicitness. The work *Slovak Phraseological Terminology* (Mlacek et al. 1995) lists five ways in which new phrasemes are formed: 1. from free word combinations, 2. from fixed word combinations of a non-phraseological nature (e.g. terms), 3. from already existing phrasemes and paremias, 4. with the occurrence of multiple (new) meanings or 5. with the formation of phrasemes based on analogy with another phraseme. Tendencies towards implicitness and explicitness are also determinative factors in the formation of new phrasemes from existing ones (Mlacek et al. 1995), which is important for our consideration of paremiological prolongation.

The formation of new phrasemes based on pre-existing phrasemes occurs in various ways, but most frequently the composition of phraseological components is modified by either lengthening or shortening, which are subject to the tendencies towards implicitness or explicitness. According to Permjakov (1988: 89), addition is often used to achieve meaning opposite to the *initial form*'s[2] meaning. Based on the examples provided in the above quote, Permjakov (1988: 89) also mentions addition in the context of the negative-communicative function of paremias. According to him, the meaning of this function is "to express something without actually communicating anything, to avoid an answer or to reject the interlocutor's argument" (Permjakov 1988: 89). Permjakov attributes this function to *humorous answers*, also designated as *unconventional phraseological replies*, which have recently received attention both in Slovenian and Slovak paremiological research (Pallay and Meterc 2019). We will discuss unconventional phraseological replies below in the context of additions.

In the paremiological literature, we most frequently come across the analysis of additions in "anti-proverbs with a tail"

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[2]  We consider *initial paremiological form* a relational working term which helps us establish a clear structural relation between two paremias – an existing paremia, i.e. a well established one within a certain speech community, and a new paremia that has occurred with a change of the initial one. Extension and addition represent two ways of describing this change from the initial form to the new one.

(Litovkina 2007: 457). Reznikov (2012: 321–322) includes "extension of syntactic structure" among linguistic mechanisms for the formation of anti-proverbs, noting that it is usually "only a vehicle for other, more obvious means – lexical, phonetic, stylistic, etc." He notes that there are also rare cases where syntax is the main method of forming an anti-proverb and gives an example of a Russian proverb (1) *V vine mudrost* [literally: In wine there is wisdom] and an anti-proverb (2) *V vine mudrost, v pive – sila, v vode – mikroby* [literally: In wine there is wisdom, in beer – strength, in water – microbes]. He calls this prolongation "jocular extension," and we must note that when analyzing anti-proverbs, it is understandable that the researcher does not need to look for a terminological expression for prolongations that preserve the message of the initial form. In his typology of Yorùbá postproverbials, Raji-Oyelade (2022: 45–46) describes Category IV, which "usually retains the entire sentence structure of the traditional or conventional proverb." According to Raji-Oyelade (2022: 45), the transgressive act is "achieved in the form of an additional proverbeme to the original text." He also describes this additional text as "an additament" and "an extension, prolongation, usually a deflation of the inherent idea of the main proverb" (2022: 45). To determine the difference between extension and addition, according to Permjakov, the issue of preserving the meaning of the initial form is crucial, which is why the following observation that: "the impression of the retort, a rebuttal, or negation of the conventional text is not far-fetched" (Raji-Oyelade 2022: 45) is particularly interesting.

Prolongations, which are additions from a semantic point of view, also form *wellerisms* (Mieder 2004: 15), as they "consist of a triadic structure: a statement (often a proverb), an identification of a speaker (a person or an animal), and a phrase that brings the statement into an unexpected situation." Compared to anti-proverbs (or postproverbials), prolongation is, according to the definition, the only way to form a wellerism, as it is created by adding the circumstances or speaker and shifting the initial form to direct speech. Therefore, a humorous or parodic attitude is established towards the initial form (e.g. a proverb, but not necessarily) (Grzybek 1994: 287). The very possibility of a wellerism arising from different types of paremiological or

non-paremiological expressions reminds us that the concept of addition is an important way of creating new fixed expressions – not only in the context of the proverb as a central paremiological genre, but also more generally in paremiology and phraseology.

As it would not be prudent to limit the research of additions and extensions only to paremiology, it will be necessary to look for examples on a larger scale – also in pragmatic phraseology, where there are, e.g. extensions of *pragmatic phrasemes*, routine forms that we have defined with the working term "partial depragmatization" (Meterc 2016: 129) by emphasizing the humorous function, e.g. in the English informal greeting (3) *See you later, alligator*. Let us add that outside of paremiology and phraseology, the principle of creating new texts described by Permjakov's concept of addition is a particular figure of speech called *paraprosdokian*, frequently used, for example, by comedians and aphorists.

## 1.2. Aims of the article

In the body of the article, we will present different types of initial paremiological forms in the Slovenian language, their literal translations to English, dictionary meanings, examples of use extracted from Slovenian corpora, and information about their familiarity where it is accessible. We will compare initial forms with prolongated forms on a semantic level, further determining whether they are formed by using extension or addition in relation to their initial form. Analysis of additions and extensions in relation to the initial forms of the selected Slovenian paremias will help us shed light and provide new research data on the following research topics:

1. The variety of paremiological genres and phraseological types in which prolongations can be analyzed, i.e. proverbs, sayings, anti-proverbs, wellerisms, pragmatic phrasemes, phraseological replies, and riddles.
2. The importance of noting the difference between occasional and fixed prolongations.
3. The difficulty of distinguishing between extension and addition in rare or obsolete forms with prolongations from paremiological collections.

4. The variety of paremiological genres that rely strongly on additions.

## 2. Examples of extensions and additions in Slovenian paremiology

As already shown in the article on the distinction between addition and extension in Slovenian paremiographic practice (Meterc 2022: 3), addition can also bring about a different change in the meaning of the initial form than mere parody, which is typical of anti-proverbs and wellerisms. For example, a proverb can be transformed into a new proverb. While addition to a proverb can lead to the creation of a new expression involving anti-proverbs and wellerisms but can also potentially lead to a new proverb, extension of a proverb should be considered in the context of a complex syntactic and lexical variant according to some phraseological theories (e.g. Mlacek 1984). According to Mlacek's typology (1984: 112), this applies particularly to fixed extensions; otherwise, they are regarded as occasional modifications. We will look at the examples of the initial paremiological forms (i.e. forms without addition or extension), which can be identified as proverbs, sayings, anti-proverbs, wellerisms, pragmatic phrasemes, phraseological replies, and riddles. We distinguish between a proverb and a *saying* on the basis of Mlacek's criteria (1983: 131). Proverbs are primarily characterized by a completeness of thought, while sayings typically exhibit a certain degree of openness. In addition, according to Mlacek (1983: 131; 1984: 127), proverbs convey a didactic message, whereas sayings do not.

In the paremiological analysis of the cases below, we provide a semantic explanation and an example of use from the *Dictionary of Proverbs and Similar Paremiological Expressions* (Meterc 2020) (hereafter referred to as the SPP dictionary) if the expression has already been published in the dictionary and is therefore available on the online dictionary portal Fran.si. In some cases, we also list lexical variants of expressions that have arisen through either extension or addition.

Some of the paremias analyzed in this article were included in an online survey to create the Slovenian paremiological minimum (Meterc 2016a; 2017), in which 918 paremias were pre-

sented to 527 respondents, who indicated their familiarity with each paremia by selecting one of the four options, confirming that: 1. they know and use the paremia, 2. they know it but do not use it, 3. they do not know it but understand it, 4. they do not know it and do not understand it. We present data on familiarity with paremias based on the survey results.

For some expressions that are obsolete or rare in modern use, we also provide information from the collection Pregovori 1.1 (Babič et al. 2023). The collection comprises more than 36,000 data sets of proverbs and is designed as a language corpus (Babič 2022; Babič and Erjavec 2022).

### 2.1. Proverb and an addition – a new proverb

    (4) *Dober glas seže v deveto vas* [literally: A good word reaches the ninth village]

    (5) *Dober glas seže v deveto vas, slab pa še dlje* [literally: A good voice reaches the ninth village, but a bad one gets even further]

According to the SPP dictionary, the proverb expresses "that a positive evaluation of something is resounding." According to the survey (Meterc 2016a; 2017), the initial form's level of familiarity is 97.8%. Four respondents mentioned a new proverb with the addition. The meaning of the proverb with an addition differs from the initial form, as can be seen in modern examples of usage, e.g.:

> Another option is to follow the old rule that **a good voice reaches the ninth village**. If possible, ask acquaintances and friends who have hosted one of the masters in their homes about their satisfaction with their services.

> The description of the places and the services offered must correspond to the actual circumstances and reflect the principle: "**A good voice reaches the ninth village, but a bad voice gets even further.**"

In the second example, a "principle" describes a negative situation in which the description of the offer does not match the actual conditions. Therefore, according to the SPP dictionary, the

proverb "expresses the conviction that a negative assessment of something can find even more resonance than a positive one."

## 2.2. Proverb

> (6) *Vaja dela mojstra* [Practice makes perfect, literally: Practice makes master]

According to the SPP dictionary, the proverb "expresses that one must persist in an activity until one has perfected it; expresses an incentive to activity." According to the survey (Meterc 2016a; 2017), the familiarity of the initial form is 97.9%. Three respondents mentioned a variant with an extension, which we will discuss in subsection 2.2.1.

### 2.2.1. Extension – a variant of a proverb

> (7) *Vaja dela mojstra, če mojster dela vajo* [literally: Practice makes master if the master practices]

This extension does not change the meaning of the proverb. Here is an example of use with the basic form and an example of use with this variant from the SPP dictionary:

> After we had successfully passed the theory test, we practiced our driving skills on the practice course. We had the most problems driving between obstacles. But as **practice makes master**, we managed that as well.

> The discipline of regular work, dealing with problems in the here and now, and completing tasks without procrastination strengthens the child's belief that work bears fruit, or in other words, that **practice makes master if the master practices**.

Seven variants with this extension are listed in the SPP dictionary.

### 2.2.2. Addition – an anti-proverb with evidence of evolving into a new proverb

> (8) *Vaja dela vajenca, mojstra naredi mojstrovina* [literally: Practice makes an apprentice, a masterpiece makes the master]

The SPP dictionary gives two meanings for this anti-proverb with an addition and modified lexical structure of the initial form. These two meanings are that the anti-proverb: 1. "express-es a humorous comment on the belief that someone must persist in an activity until they have perfected it" and 2. "expresses that practice is not enough to fully master an activity, a skill, because it requires talent, a special performance." The second meaning can be illustrated by the following example from the dictionary:

> One day I'm going to make a movie based on the literary work One Hundred Years of Solitude as a kind of final swan song. And every-thing I'll do until then will probably be practice. **Practice makes an apprentice. A masterpiece makes a master.**

## 2.3. Saying

(9) *Oko za oko, zob za zob* [An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth]

This saying is of biblical origin and appears in several fixed phraseological expressions both in English and Slovenian. This legal principle is contained within several important Bible pas-sages, for example in Exodus: "And if any mischief follows, then thou shalt give life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe." (21:23–25; KJV)[3] and in Deuteronomy "And thine eye shall not pity; but life shall go for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot" (19:21; KJV).[4] The only passage in the New Testament can be found in the Gospel of Matthew: "Ye have heard that it hath been said, an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth (5:38; KJV).[5] According to the SPP dictionary, the saying "expresses the demand that the punish-ment should be as severe as the crime; describes a situation in which someone behaves uncompromisingly, mercilessly, vindic-

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[3]  Slovenian: "Če pa se nesreča pripeti, daj življenje za življenje, oko za oko, zob za zob, roko za roko, nogo za nogo, opeklino za opeklino, rano za rano, modrico za modrico!" (Mz 2,25-27; SSP3)

[4]  Slovenian: "Tvoje oko bódi brez usmiljenja: življenje za življenje, oko za oko, zob za zob, roka za roko, noga za nogo!" (Mz 4,21; SSP3)

[5]  Slovenian: "Slišali ste, da je bilo rečeno: Oko za oko in zob za zob." (Mt 5,38; SSP3)

tively and responds to violence with violence." According to the survey (Meterc 2016a, 2017), 97.2% of people are familiar with the saying.

2.3.1. Extensions – variants of a saying and numerous modifications that follow the proverbial formula

(10) *Oko za oko, zob za zob, glavo za glavo* [literally: An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, a head for a head.]

This paremia is accompanied by two prolongations that function as fixed extensions in the Slovenian language: (10a) *glavo za glavo* [literally: a head for a head] and (10b) *kri za kri* [literally: blood for blood]. These extensions have taken on a life of their own. Therefore, there are variants that combine part of the initial form ((10c) An eye for an eye) with one or more extensions (for example, (10d) *Kri za kri, oko za oko* – literally: Blood for blood and an eye for an eye), variants with an independent extension (for example, (10e) *Glavo za glavo* – literally: A head for a head and (10f) *Zob za zob* – literally: A tooth for a tooth), and a combination of extensions (for example, (10g) *Zob za zob in glavo za glavo* – literally: A tooth for a tooth and a head for a head). Extension (10a) *glavo za glavo* [literally: a head for a head] even functions as an initial form for the new proverb we will describe in subsection 2.3.4.

The SPP dictionary contains 17 variants that combine the initial form (or part of it) with an extension, and four variants where the extension is present without the initial form *Oko za oko, zob za zob* (An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth). Occasional modifications occur in many paremias with extension. In some cases, we observe such a markedly large proportion of usage with lexical actualization that we are convinced these instances should receive special attention:

"Oko za oko, zob za zob, noht za noht, slepič za slepič /…/" [literally: An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, a nail for a nail, an appendix for an appendix.]

"Zob za zob in glavo za glavo. Zločin za zločin." [literally: A tooth for a tooth and a head for a head. A crime for a crime.]

These unfixed extensions retain the meaning of the paremia, as they follow the proverbial formula X for X of the initial form. They were identified when determining the frequency of the saying (9) *Oko za oko* (An eye for an eye) (Meterc 2017: 90). They do not change the meaning of the saying, and since they only occur once in the corpus, they are most likely not phraseologically fixed.

2.3.2. Addition – an anti-proverb that follows the proverbial formula

> (11)  *Oko za oko, pasta za zobe* [literally: An eye for an eye, paste for the teeth]

The proverbial formula X for X is imitated and parodied in the addition (11) *Oko za oko, pasta za zobe* [literally: An eye for an eye, paste for the teeth]. This addition was formed due to the structural similarity between the proverb (9) *Oko za oko* and the Slovenian term for toothpaste, *pasta za zobe* [literally: paste for the teeth]. It uses the same preposition (*za* – "for") and has the same number of components. The addition is completely absurd and is only connected to the initial form by its structure. Due to its parodic character, it can be classified as an anti-proverb.

A phrase with the same meaning and similar structure in Polish – (12) *pasta do zębów* (toothpaste, literally: paste for teeth) – was used during socialism as a humorous, parodic addition to the slogan (12) *Literaci do piór, studenci do nauki* [literally: Writers to pens, students to studies], resulting in: (13) *Literaci do piór, studenci do nauki, pasta do zębów* [literally: writers to pens, students to studies, paste for teeth] (Chlebda 2005: 69). Parodies of socialist slogans were very popular with people in the Eastern Bloc countries. Such parodic additions could also function as unconventional replies (Meterc and Pallay 2019), a type of intersubjective phrasemes according to Čermák's typology (2007: 432–433), which appears for example in the Slovak language (the example is presented with speakers A and B marked): (14) A: *So Sovietskym zväzom na večné* časy*!* (Forever with the Soviet Union!) B: *Ale ani o minútu dlhšie!* (But not one minute longer!) (Meterc and Pallay 2019: 70).

### 2.3.3. Addition – a proverb (winged word)

(15)  *Oko za oko in svet bo oslepel* [An eye for an eye and the world will go blind]

In the collection Pregovori 1.1 we find the addition (15a) *Oko za oko nas vse naredi slepe* [literally: An eye for an eye makes us all blind], which is a winged word attributed to Mahatma Gandhi. O'Toole (2017: 124), who has studied this winged word, states that Gandhi "may have used the expression, but no conclusive evidence has yet been found." In modern Slovenian usage, we find the forms (15b) *Oko za oko in svet bo oslepel* [literally: An eye for an eye and the world will go blind] and (15c) *Oko za oko in svet bo slep* [literally: An eye for an eye and the world will be blind]. Although this is a proverb that also occurs in Slovenian, it has not yet been included in the paremiological dictionary. It is an interesting case of a proverb originating from a saying (according to Mlacek's criteria mentioned above).

### 2.3.4. Addition – a new proverb

(16)  *Glavo za glavo – najkrajše pravo* [literally: A head for a head – the quickest law]

In the aforementioned collection, Pregovori 1.1, we also find the expression that combines the extension (10a) *glavo za glavo,* [literally: a head for a head] functioning as a new initial form, with the addition (16a) *najkrajše pravo* [literally: the quickest law], meaning that the retribution for a certain offence, carried out in the same way and degree as the offence, will quickly take place. Thus, the offender should remain cautious. This proverb was notably interpreted by Slovenian legal historians Metod Dolenc (1936: 39) and Sergij Vilfan (1996: 124), who both identified the proverb's connection with the so-called *lex talionis* and placed the proverb into relation with other proverbs that have evolved to reflect this law. Dolenc (1936: 39) claimed that the proverb was somehow connected with historical blood feuds, but his claim remains unsupported by historical data.

In the context of contemporary use among speakers of Slovenian, this proverb is rare. Only two examples of its use can be found in the language corpus metaFida.

## 2.4. Proverb – a variant of a proverb and an extension

(17) *Prijatelja spoznaš v nesreči* [literally: You recognize a friend in misfortune]

(18) *Zlato spoznaš v ognju, prijatelja v nesreči* [literally: You recognize gold in fire, a friend in misfortune]

There is a proverb in English that corresponds to this Slovenian proverb: (17a) *A friend in need is a friend indeed*. According to the survey (Meterc 2016a; 2017), 71% of people are familiar with the initial form (17) *Prijatelja spoznaš v nesreči* [literally: You recognize a friend in misfortune], but no respondent mentioned the variant with the extension.

In Pregovori 1.1, we find a prolongation: (18) *Zlato spoznaš v ognju, prijatelja v nesreči* [literally: You recognize gold in fire, a friend in misfortune]. The interesting thing about this extension is that it comes at the beginning of the proverb. We have not found any examples of this extension in modern Slovenian texts in the metaFida language corpus. From its structure, we conclude that it preserves the message of the initial form. In the same collection, we have also identified the forms (18a) *Prijateljstvo preizkusiš v nesreči, zlato v ognju* [literally: You test friendship in misfortune, gold in fire] and (18b) *Prijatelja spoznaš v nadlogi, zlato pa v ognju* [literally: You recognize a friend in misfortune, gold in fire]. In Pregovori 1.1, we also discovered the expression (19) *Kovino se spozna v ognju, človeka pri vinu* [literally: One gets to know metal in fire, a man through wine], which is another proverb following the same proverbial formula. We assume that none of these three forms occur in modern Slovenian, as there are no examples of usage in the metaFida corpus.

## 2.5. Proverb and an extension – a variant of a proverb

(20) *Vsak izgovor je dober* [Any excuse is good]

(21) *Vsak izgovor je dober, pa če ga pes na repu prinese* [literally: Any excuse is good, even if the dog brings it on its tail]

According to the SPP dictionary, the proverb "expresses that it is not difficult to find an excuse to justify something problematic, controversial; describes a situation in which someone's excuse is

bad." In the survey (Meterc 2016a; 2017), 527 respondents were shown the form without extension: 69.6% of people are familiar with the initial form, and six respondents named different proverb variants with such an extension. The meaning of the proverb does not change, as can be seen from the following dictionary examples of usage:

> Have you heard statements like: "I just look at the food and I'm already full," "Every bite of food is noticeable on my body," and "If I go without food, what else will I have left in life?" **Any excuse is good ...**

> Our ancestors used to say: "**Any excuse is good, even if the dog brings it on its tail.**" The excuse that you are going to clean up the construction industry with such measures is utter nonsense!

This extension exists in modern usage in different variants and includes not only a dog's tail but also a cat's and a cow's. The SPP dictionary lists 13 different variants containing this extension.

### 2.6. Proverb and an addition – a wellerism

(22) *Vsak ima svoj okus* [literally: Everyone has their own taste]
(23) *Vsak ima svoj okus, je rekla opica, ko je drek jedla* [literally: Everyone has their own taste, said the monkey while eating shit]

This proverb "expresses that there is a subjective criterion for taste; expresses that people have different tastes, interests, ways of acting" (SPP dictionary). According to the survey (Meterc 2016a; 2017), 83% of people are familiar with the initial form. A wellerism formed from this proverb was not mentioned by any of the respondents – its use was confirmed with language corpora.

Wellerism expresses "a humorous comment on the belief that there is a subjective criterion for taste; expresses that people have different tastes, interests, behaviors." The parody of the proverb's message in this wellerism is also evident from the example in the SPP dictionary:

> Why should you buy a watch for 4,000 euros, a car for 70,000 euros, a rucksack for 500 euros ...? Some people like it, they enjoy it and can afford it. After all, **everyone has their own taste, said the monkey while eating shit** ...

In Pregovori 1.1, we discovered a wellerism with the same part of the initial form and a similar addition: (24) *Vsak ima svoj okus, je rekel hudič in sedel v koprive* [literally: Everyone has their own taste, said the devil and sat down in nettles]. The message of a proverb is no longer applicable to a person if it is expressed in an extreme way (nettles, shit) and articulated by a speaker ascribed traditionally negative qualities (devil, monkey).

## 2.7. Saying and an addition – a wellerism

(25) *Volk sit in koza cela* [literally: The wolf is full and the goat is whole]

(26) *Jaz sit in koza cela, je rekel volk, ko je žrl pastirja* [literally: I am full and the goat is whole said the wolf as he devoured the shepherd]

According to the SPP dictionary, this saying "describes a situation in which both parties are satisfied with a compromise solution even though they have opposing, irreconcilable interests." According to the survey (Meterc 2016a; 2017), 94.5% of people are familiar with the initial form. The addition was not mentioned by the respondents.

The wellerism was found in Pregovori 1.1, but its use in the modern Slovenian language has not yet been confirmed. It is formed by a partial deconstruction of the initial form and the inclusion of one of its lexical components in the addition. The wellerism introduces a double reversal compared to the initial form, since: 1. the position of the speaker changes, meaning they are no longer a human but an animal, and 2. the speaker, a wolf, typically depicted in the proverb as the antagonist of men and sheep, now takes on a new role. This shift leads to a reorganization of relationships. In order to strike a balance between the wolf's hunger and the sheep's life, the wolf is depicted in the wellerism as the one who devours the shepherd. This upsets the

expectations created by the conventional situation expressed in the sayings of a man or "shepherd".

## 2.8. Pragmatic phraseme and an addition – a wellerism

(27) *Bomo videli* [We will see]
(28) *Bomo videli, so rekli slepi* [literally: We will see, said the blind]

This pragmatic phraseme conveys a cautious attitude that something is yet to be seen, something has not yet been decided, and it is clear that it is too early to judge. This phraseme is very common in modern Slovenian (there are more than 40,000 examples of usage in the metaFida language corpus), and it is probably known to a majority of Slovenian speakers, though we do not have exact data on its familiarity.

The wellerism is present in the modern Slovenian language and was also included in the SPP dictionary with the explanation that it is a "humorous comment on the reserved position that something will turn out, that something is not yet decided, it is clear that it is too early to judge." Unfortunately, this wellerism was not included in the online survey, so we have no information about its popularity among Slovenian speakers. It is probably the best known and most common wellerism in the Slovenian language today. In the metaFida 1.0 corpus, we found more than 20 examples of the use of the basic form as well as variants. For example, (28a) *Bomo videli, je rekel slepec* [literally: We will see, said the blind man]. Among the variants listed in the SPP dictionary, there is also an example with a longer addition: (28b) *Bomo videli, je rekel slepi gluhemu* [literally: We will see, said the blind man to the deaf man]. Similar and even longer additions can be found in the *Dictionary of American Wellerisms* with the initial form (29) *I see*, for example (30) *I see, said the blind man to his deaf dog as they stepped off a cliff* (Mieder and Kingsbury 1994: 113–117). An even longer addition, continuing the contrasting pattern of associating human disabilities with impracticable deeds, was found in the 19th-century collection of Russian proverbs by the linguist and folklorist Vladimir Ivanovich Dal' (30) *Uvidim, skazal slepoj, uslyshim, popravil glukhoj, a pokojnik, na stole ljozha, pribavil: do vsego dozhivjom* [literally: We

will see, said the blind man, we will hear, corrected the deaf man, and the dead man, who was lying on the table, added: we will live to it].

Let us mention an interesting example of the use of addition to a similar wellerism in the function of the phraseological reply cited by Norrick (1984: 197): (31) A: *I see*. B: *... said the blind man as he picked up his hammer and saw*. We also confirmed the use of another wellerism as an intersubjective phraseme with the help of an online survey when one of the respondents wrote down the following form: (32) A: *Stvar okusa.* [literally: It is a matter of taste.] B: *Je rekel tisti, ki je* žajfo *jedel.* [literally: Said the one who ate soap]. This wellerism is structurally similar to the expression we listed in section 2.6. An example of the intersubjective use of the wellerism can already be found in Charles Dickens' *The Posthumous Papers of the Pickwick Club*, which Mlacek (1986: 164) points out, noting that the wellerism retains its semantics despite this change. We quote this wellerism in its original context: (33) *"Not a bad notion that, Sam," said Mr. Bob Sawyer approvingly. "Just wot the young nobleman said ev'ry quarter-day arterwards for the rest of his life," replied Mr. Weller.* (Dickens 1837: 540). Wellerisms are therefore not only a bridge between core paremiology and longer narratives but also between what Čermák (2007: 432–433) calls monosubjective phrasemes and intersubjective phrasemes (including unconventional phraseological replies) according to his typology. It would be good to consider in the future whether some types of phraseological replies function similarly to additions, as many of them establish a bond to their stimulus by (deliberately) misunderstanding it (Meterc and Pallay 2019: 168).

## 2.9. Pragmatic phraseme and an addition – a new pragmatic phraseme

(34)  *Na zdravje* [Cheers, literally: To health]
(35)  *Na zdravje, srce kravje* [literally: To health, heart of a cow]

The phrase (34) *Na zdravje* is the most common and neutral way of expressing good wishes before drinking in Slovenian. The prolongation of this phrase with "srce kravje" (heart of a cow) is

based on a rhyme between the Slovenian noun *zdravje* (health) and the adjective *kravje* (cow's). The expression (35) *Na zdravje, srce kravje* still functions as a wish before drinking, but the said function gives way to humor, which takes center stage, and politeness gives way to provocation as *kravje* can be associated with a plethora of Slovenian expressions, containing references to cattle with prevailing negative connotations.

The result of such an addition belongs to the phenomenon that is described with the working term "partial depragmatization" (Meterc 2016: 129). This process results in a typologically different phraseme from its initial form, which takes on a humorous function, e.g. in the English informal greeting (3) *See you later, alligator*. Norrick notes that:

> Some leave-taking formulas provide funny responses to serious formulas, as in: Be good – but if you can't be good, be careful, and Take it easy – yeah, but take it. In addition, we can notice a tendency toward pairing in leave-taking formulas, as parting speakers vie for the final word, e.g. See you later, alligator – After a while, crocodile. (Norrick 2007: 304)

The "tendency toward pairing in leave-taking formulas" emphasized by Norrick is also related to the question of the boundary between monosubjective and intersubjective phrasemes, which we have addressed in several places in this article.

### 2.10. Phraseological reply and an extension – a variant of a phraseological reply

(36)  *Lahko noč.* [Good night]
(36a)  *Pa eno bolho za pomoč – če te pa piči, pa mene pokliči*
       [literally: And a flea for help – but if it bites you, call me]

The phrase (36) *Lahko noč* is the most common and neutral way of expressing good wishes before going to bed in Slovenian. In use, we have confirmed an extension of this phrase with the addition (37a) *Lahko noč pa eno bolho za pomoč* [literally: *Good night and a flea for help*], such as the humorous addition (35) we described in section 2.9, as well as the use of the same form *pa eno bolho za pomoč* in the phraseological reply function uttered

by person B in examples (37) and (37b). The examples below show responses from respondents in an online survey conducted in 2022, with letters A and B designate the first and second speakers, respectively:

(37)
A: *Lahko noč.* [Good night]
B: *Pa eno bolho za pomoč. Če te pa pič, pa mene poklič.* [literally: And a flea for help, but if it bites you, call me];
(37a)
A: *Lahko noč pa eno bolho za pomoč.* [literally: Good night and a flea for help]
B: *Če te pa pič, pa mene poklič.* [literally: But if it bites you, call me];
(37b)
A: *Lahko noč.* [Good night]
B: *Pa eno bolho za pomoč.* [literally: And a flea for help]
A: *Če te pa pič, me pa poklič.* [literally: But if it bites you, call me].

In the Slovenian, Slovak and Polish material (Meterc and Pallay 2019: 166), several examples of chain replies were found in which person A, confronted with the unconventional reply, continues the conversation with another reply. This is also the case in example (37b), in which the form *Če te pa pič, me pa poklič* [literally: But if it bites you, call me] is used as person A's reply, which in the first two examples of use functions as person B's reply (37a) or as an extension of a person B's reply (37).

The phraseological reply (36) *Pa eno bolho za pomoč* [literally: And a flea for help] is very well known among Slovenian speakers: 1533 respondents took part in an online survey and 88% of them stated that they know it, of which 56% stated that they also use it. The respondents also named 25 variants of this reply, all but one of which have different extensions. The meaning and function of the phraseological reply are preserved by the prolongation. Since replies are by definition deliberately inappropriate, humorous and even absurd, responses to the target statement (a stimulus) of the first person (Meterc, Pallay 2019: 166), employ prolongation, which is also inappropriate, and can only be classified as an extension and not as an addition. The

variant with the extension (37) *Pa eno bolho za pomoč – če te pa piči, pa mene pokliči* [literally: And a flea for help – but if it bites you, call me] was mentioned by several respondents. Respondents mentioned a few more forms with other extensions – these were either a combination of the above extension (37) with an additional extension, as in example (38), or a completely different extension, for example (39):

(38)
A: *Lahko noč.* [Good night]
B: *Pa eno bolho za pomoč, če te pa pič, pa mene poklič, če te pa komar, mi ni pa nič mar.* [literally: And a flea for help – but if it bites you, call me, if it is however, a mosquito, I do not care];
(39)
A: *Lahko noč.* [Good night]
B: *Lahko noč, pa eno bolho za pomoč, te bo grizla celo noč.* [literally: Good night and a flea for help, it will bite you all night long].

We have already touched on the issue of transitions between monosubjective and intersubjective phrasemes in this article, so in the following, we will give some more information about the situation in two other Slavic languages that are interesting from this point of view. A phraseological reply with the same motivation as the initial form, a phraseological reply (with *fleas*) for a stimulus with the same meaning (*Good night*) also exists in Slovak (40) and Polish (41):

(40)
A: *Dobrú noc.* [Good night]
B: *Všetky blchy na pomoc.* [literally: All the fleas for help];
(41)
A: *Dobranoc.* [Good night]
B: *Pchły na noc, karaluchy do poduchy a szczypawki do nogawki.* [literally: Fleas for the night, cockroaches in the pillow and pincher bugs in the leg of the trousers].

We would like to highlight that the phraseological reply (40) in Slovak has been documented in the paremiological collection by Adolf Peter Záturecký (1896: 265–268). This collection stands out as the most extensive source from the 19th century, encom-

passing over a hundred phraseological replies. As of now, we have not confirmed any extension of this particular phraseological reply in modern Slovak. In a survey conducted by Leskovar Jereb (2022: 46) among 691 Polish speakers, we also have precise data on the way the reply (41) and its extensions are used: 95% of respondents know the reply and 51% of all respondents also use it. This is very similar to the familiarity and usage of the Slovenian expression mentioned above. Obviously, as we have found to some extent in Slovenian as well as in Polish, some speakers know the whole form as a phraseological reply (41), some know a part of this form as an addition to the expression *Dobranoc* (Good night), while the remaining parts of this form function as a phraseological reply (41a), others know a chain of replies between speakers A and B consisting of two (41b) or three (41c) parts. In an online survey (Leskovar Jereb 2022: 76), the following distribution of usage was found:

(41)
A: *Dobranoc.*
B: *Pchły na noc, karaluchy do poduchy a szczypawki do nogawki.* – 15 %;

(41a)
A: *Dobranoc. Pchły na noc.*
B: *Karaluchy do poduchy a szczypawki do nogawki.* – 14%;

(41b)
A: *Dobranoc.*
B: *Pchły na noc.*
A: *Karaluchy do poduchy a szczypawki do nogawki.* – 6%;

(41c)
A: *Dobranoc.*
B: *Pchły na noc.*
A: *Karaluchy do poduchy.*
B: *A szczypawki do nogawki.* – 12%.

As many as 43% of Polish respondents stated that they knew another extension of this phraseological reply, and 10% that they did not know the extension.

The variability of phraseological replies is particularly strong – both in terms of their lexical structure and in terms of which speaker pronounces what. We suspect that this is because phraseological replies are a type of expression that is strongly tied to the spoken language, but only occasionally occurs in the written language, so standardization, as with many paremiological genres including proverbs, which are disseminated through the media and reach very large groups of people at once, could not occur.

### 2.11. Riddle and an extension – a variant of the riddle

(42) *Poleti te hladim, pozimi te gorkim? – Drevo* [literally: I provide cool in summer and warmth in winter – A tree.]

(43) *Spomladi te veselim, poleti te hladim, jeseni te živim, pozimi te gorkim? – Drevo.* [literally: In spring, I make you happy; in summer, I cool you; in autumn, I live you; in winter, I warm you. – A tree.]

The last category in this analysis represents a text genre that extends beyond the borders of traditional paremiology. Nonetheless, it serves as an intriguing starting point for researching folklore communication and everyday verbal practices, making it one of the central traditional genres in folklore: riddles. From the point of view of phraseology, they belong to intersubjective phrasemes (Čermák 2007: 432–433).

In most examined cases in the monograph on Slovenian riddles and the Slovenian riddles database (Babič, Voolaid, Muhu 2018; Babič 2021), we observed that if a change in the structure of the riddle takes place, it is possible that it functions as an extension added to the riddle question by the questioners. Due to the lack of frequency and more detailed data on the use of riddles in everyday life, we cannot provide comprehensive information on other possible functions aside from offering additional information for the guesser and assisting them in narrowing down the selection of possible solutions to the riddle. At the same time, this hinders us from drawing conclusions regarding whether the structure is incomplete in certain cases, attested in a shorter form due to truncated oral transmission, or if the initial form has genuinely expanded, acquiring additional information.

Another example corresponding to the mechanism of the riddles in (42) and (43) is provided by the following example that may function as an extension:

> (44)
> *V vodi živi, riba ni; po zraku leti, ptica ni. – Vodna kaplja.* [literally: It thrives in water, yet it's not a fish; it glides through the air, but it's not a bird. – A water droplet.]
> (45)
> *V vodi živi, riba ni; po zraku leti, ptica ni; pod zemljo rije, krt ni. – Vodna kaplja.* [literally: It thrives in the water, yet it's not a fish; it glides through the air, but it's not a bird; it burrows beneath the earth, yet it's not a mole. – A water droplet.]

The abundant Slovenian folklore material that contains riddles has been thoroughly revised, but the question whether a transformation of the initial riddle form and its function is possible with an addition remains. At least hypothetically, we can think of additions at the level of the questioner, i.e. the riddler, who asks the questions, but what do riddles with addition represent, as opposed to extension? The latter adds new elements to the initial question to narrow down the set of potential solutions and help the guesser with the challenge at hand, but addition may be perceived quite differently. A successful addition would involve presenting two questions sequentially, where the answer to the first question is designed to mislead – the questioner employs a trick to suggest an incorrect solution to the initial question, a solution known only to them. Despite being perceived as an extension by the guesser, the questioner retains the option to specify the correct solution by posing an additional sub-question if they desire a different answer. While this hypothetical type of riddle lacks attestation in the Slovenian material, its structure is systematically illustrated by examples of riddle with multiple solutions, approachable through various sub-questions. If the questioner deems the sub-question unsuitable for revealing the correct 'solution,' they can effectively change it into addition.

## 3. Conclusion

With additions, the creation of a new expression can either preserve or change the genre characteristics. For example, the genre features are preserved when a new proverb is created, as shown in sections 2.1. and 2.2. The newly created expression may possess typological features that differ from the ones in the initial form. To summarize, we have encountered and confirmed the following typological transformations in the substantially represented Slovenian paremiological material:

- from proverb to anti-proverb;
- from saying to proverb;
- from proverb to wellerism;
- from saying to wellerism;
- from a pragmatic phraseme to wellerism;
- from a pragmatic phraseme to a "partially depragmatized" or humoristic phraseme.

In the analysis, we examined how additions lead to "a shift between genres" (Mlacek 2009: 141), which, according to Mlacek (2009: 141), is a characteristic trait of postmodernism in paremiology, phraseology, and also more broadly. According to Kozioł Chrzanowska (2014: 49), the processes of "contratalking," which were already present in the language, have recently evolved from occasional examples to a dominant communication strategy. Similar processes, which are not limited to additions, are characteristic of a wider range of phraseological types and extend to other areas and texts, such as film titles and parts of popular songs (Chlebda 2005: 69; Mlacek 2009: 141; Kozioł Chrzanowska 2014: 49). On this basis, new terms such as "anti-slogan" (Kozioł Chrzanowska 2014: 49) and broader terms such as "antiparemia" (Mlacek 2009: 140), "antitext" (Chlebda 2005: 69; Kozioł Chrzanowska 2014: 49) and "antiphraseme" (Meterc 2022a: 148) have been proposed. However, it is crucial to investigate whether a concrete text that results from prolongation is phraseologically fixed or not. In this article, we have deliberately focused mainly on examples of expressions that are fixed in the Slovenian language, although we have addressed the aspect of productivity in section 2.4 using the proverbial formulas of initial paremiological forms.

In the future, it will be necessary to find more examples in Slovenian and other languages that cover a wider range of paremiological genres and types of phrasemes, both in the role of initial forms and in the role of new paremiological forms that arise through addition. As we have shown in the examples in sections 2.3.2, 2.7, and 2.9, the additions of monosubjective phrasemes and paremias have much in common with some types of phraseological replies, and they can even function in both ways – either in the role of addition or in the role of phraseological reply. This connection should also be explored in more detail in the future.

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# "ANIMALS ARE KILLED BY THEIR SPOOR AND MEN BY THEIR WORDS": THE RHETORIC OF SPEECH AND SILENCE IN PHALEE PROVERBS

*Abstract:* This paper analyses Phalee proverbs that refer to acts of speaking and holding the tongue in a community rhetorical context. Phalee/ Phadang, spoken in the Ukhrul district of Manipur, falls under the Tangkhul Naga language sub-group of the Tibeto-Burman family but is mutually incomprehensible with it. Tangkhul is the lingua franca among the villages that make up the Tangkhul Naga identity despite every village's quotidian language use, rituals, and laws being unique to the village identity. This is a complex phenomenon, and the proverbs that arise out of the Tangkhul-Phalee composite provide interesting perspectives on identity formation regarding language, custom, and art. The collected corpus of proverbs we studied shows that while speech is considered clearly a necessity in terms of self-expression, community policy determination, and social interaction, most proverbs on speaking nevertheless emphasise the power of spoken words and ultimately counsel minimal and extremely careful speech. Silence seems to be often and poignantly granted greater value in communal life. This paper explores how these accumulated insights into speech reflect cultural attitudes in Phalee society and offer insights into the distinctive forms of social governance as mediated through the rhetorical strategies of proverb context and usage that characterise the village identity.

*Keywords:* Phalee, proverbs, speech, culture and traditional wisdom

## 1. Introduction

"Proverbs are more than an index of men's lives; they are also the record of their vocabulary, so that it is unsafe to leave them out of consideration in studying the language of any community," notes D. E Marvin (1916: 4). Norrick adds that "[l]ike simplex words and idioms, proverbs are form-meaning units which must be included in any complete language description" (1985:2). However, despite the well-recognised role of proverbs in the pragmatics of communication, their self-conscious deployment of symbolism and rhetorical gestures in everyday speech often gets overlooked. Proverbs actively solicit creative interpretation while denying themselves textual status: they appear to suppress the artfulness in their construction and application, presenting as natural and spontaneous modes of expression. This essay reads a selection of collected proverbs based around the act of speaking and the role of spoken language in social communication as rhetorical moments to illustrate the ways in which a language community may self-reflectively deploy aesthetic utterances to articulate the norms and values that lead to the construction of social identity. In this essay, some Phalee proverbs about language use are analysed to see how metaphor and rhetorical figures in proverbs can make a value-based point in everyday speech in Phalee culture. Some contextual information about the language and culture will be offered to underpin the readings of specific proverbs in translation.

## 2. Proverbs and Cultural Exchange

"Because all people, regardless of their culture, share common experiences, many of the same proverbs appear throughout the world," write Samovar et al. (2010:29). Therefore, some of the proverbs in this paper may resemble those in other language corpora in meanings, forms or structures. Despite these similarities, like synonyms within a language, synonymic proverbs across languages and cultures cannot, of course, be fully synonymous since the expressiveness in their meanings are varied, and they cannot be used in similar situations (Abdullaeva 2017:87). Some features or characteristics are necessarily culture-specific, and they reflect the way particular people think of and perceive the

world and engage with it through language. The rhetorical devices or the imagery that are used in the Phalee proverbs have unique aesthetic characteristics that are specific to their social and linguistic expression. Thus, the interpretation of some proverbs demands a historical or cultural contextualisation. "No single application of a proverb exhausts its meaning" (Taylor 2017: 10); therefore, some of the proverbs in this essay might have more than one meaning depending on the situation and the various aspects of the speaker's intention and the listener's inference.

As indicated above, it is a truism in paremiology that proverbs reflect the predominant attitudes of a culture much in the same way that speech communicates human thought (Raymond 1954: 57). Since they are brief by design, they are easy to remember and can be used on any occasion, unlike other traditional oral genres. Despite their simplicity and shortness, many proverbs are poetic, highly embellished with literary devices, and convey essential meanings. Because "[p]roverbs are valued as folk wisdom and bearer of traditional lore," it is not far-fetched to claim that the use of a proverb in any spoken discourse or conversation reinforces the traditional values and beliefs amongst the users (Norrick 2015b: 7). Apart from their didactic purposes, proverbs are employed in conversations to impress or persuade the listeners, recapitulate and emphasise the main points in a concise statement, and ridicule aspects of common behaviour, sometimes with added humour, playfulness, and wit. The roles of proverbs are many and they are used as strategies for dealing with a variety of communicative situations. As Arewa and Dundes put it, "[l]ike other forms of folklore, proverbs may serve as impersonal vehicles for personal communication" (1964:70).

Most of the proverbs on speech, talking and lack thereof in Phalee discussed below express a wariness towards the spoken word that is not uncommon in other languages, although the intensity of the valences does differ across cultures. Fisher and Yoshida's (1868) study of Japanese proverbs, for example, shows that they harbour a predominantly negative attitude towards speech. The authors attribute this to the dynamics of densely populated and closely-knit communities in which stringent control over spoken language needs to be exerted to preempt and limit instances of open aggression. On the other hand,

De Caro (1987), conducting a similar examination of attitudes towards speech in American proverbs, found that they express a predominantly positive attitude towards speech. He argues against Fisher and Yoshida's hypothesis, asserting that these attitudes seem more closely linked to cultural norms and ideas rather than demographic factors, at least in the American context.

Closer home, McNeil's (1971) findings regarding the overall attitude towards speech in Indian proverbs portray a more positive outlook compared to the Japanese. The proverbs of Manipuri and Gangte, which McNeil uses in his study, are spoken in Manipur, the Indian state in which Phalee village is located. However, these two cultures and languages are very different from Phalee. Despite the geographical proximity, its distinct culture and language set Phalee apart from the sources McNeil considers, and his insights are rarely applicable to our corpus. Phalee village remains a special kind of microcosm, retaining several traditional modes of existence such as living in close physical proximity with community members (a phenomenon which may possibly be traceable to a historical fear of enemy raids). However, demonstrating this incontrovertibly is outside the scope of this essay since our focus is on offering critical interpretations of the texts rather than establishing causal connections between the texts and ethno-social realities. Suffice it to note that the emphasis on circumspection in speech in Phalee proverbs could stem from this localised density of population, thereby strengthening Fisher and Yoshida's hypothesis.

This guardedness about language use is manifested in the frequent use of verbal indirection to defuse tense, delicate, and threatening situations. Obeng usefully defines this as "a communicative strategy in which interactants abstain from directness in order to obviate crises or in order to communicate 'difficulty' and thus make their utterance consistent with face and politeness" (1994: 42). In another essay, he attempts to demonstrate how proverbs can be used to mitigate the possible threats that lurk within a discourse: "The proverb "softens" the force of the impending face threatening act (FTA), lest it be misconstrued as a verbal assault or an imposition on the advisee" (Obeng,1996: 521). Moreover, not only the listener's but also the speaker's face is threatened by the FTA embedded in the speaker's utter-

ance and, therefore, needs to be mitigated unless the speaker wants to appear openly antagonistic. Norrick adds that proverbial utterances are doubly indirect and often serve euphemistic purposes because they are an act of quoting. They generate implicatures, and consequently, "the speaker can perlocutionarily prevent his hearer from calling him to account for the form or content of his utterances" (2015a: 148). Also, in order to "avoid openly criticising a given authority or cultural pattern, folk take recourse to proverbial expressions which voice personal tensions in a tone of generalised consent. Thus, personal involvement is linked with public opinion" (Raymond 1994: 301). We will now turn to specific examples to show how some of these rhetorical strategies operate in a selection of Phalee proverbs.

## 3. *Phalee in Song*

The word 'Phalee' refers to the village, the people, and their language simultaneously. Phalee village, formerly called Phadang, is located within the Indo-Burma Biodiversity Hotspot, 22 km west of Ukhrul district and 86 km from the state capital Imphal, in Manipur, India. Its inhabitants belong to the Tangkhul Naga tribe, and the Phalee language is a distinctive variety of East Central Tangkhul Naga (Glottolog). Phalee-speakers are geographically native to two locations in Manipur: Phalee village in Ukhrul and Thoyee (formerly Thawai) village, approximately 80 km away, in the Kamjong district in Manipur. Local sources attribute this geographical dispersion to a wave of migration from Phalee to Thoyee in 1957 (Phanitphang: 2007). As per the Population Census of 2011, Phalee has a population of 3742 and Thoyee 1159.

Phalee is not protected by a script or orthography and exists as a primarily spoken language. All knowledge of history, culture, beliefs, stories, laws, legends, myths, and customs are orally disseminated, especially in songs. Numerous folk songs consist of only one or two lines. The brevity of the songs makes them easy to remember and incorporate into the conversation. In folktales too, characters often communicate through songs. Folk songs can be considered the primary source of information on Phalee culture, which accords equal status to songs and words. This equivalence is reflected in proverbs as well. For example:

(1) *Tewchi lonei, lochi tewnei*[1]
    lit. "Word is song, song is word"[2]
(2) *Khi tewna kup, khilona kup?*[3]
    lit. "What word ends; what song ends?"

The first proverb bluntly states the perceived relation between 'word' and 'song' as synonymous in Phalee. The relation between these two terms is made stronger by employing the rhetorical device of chiasmus. The use of alliteration adds musical charm, and the mirror image structure of this proverb also makes it easy to remember and repeat. The balanced parallel structure of the two clauses suggests that the people consider both song and word as equal, and creatively play with consonance in the phrasing. The second proverb also shows how Phalee speakers perceive these two words *lo* 'song' and *tew* 'word' as indistinguishable. The parallel structure of the clauses in this proverb appeals to the listeners' sense of symmetry and harmony, and the alliteration consolidates meaning while adding lyricism to the expression: the proverb itself becomes song. Songs are intricately woven into Phalee social life as every combination of social interaction provides fresh material for recreating it. The conclusion that the rhetorical question denies to word/song and the eternal unending quality it ascribes to them seems literal: in Phalee, songs (and song-like words such as proverbs) are always welcome and enter seamlessly into the conversational continuum. Songs are easier to remember and an efficient way of articulating emotions, ideas, intentions, and meanings. Given the tendency of Phalee

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[1] The transliteration of Phalee poses its own challenges. It has only recently started being written down due to the increasing use of electronic texting and community WhatsApp groups among the village diaspora living in Indian urban centres. The orthography is still unstandardised and there is a vibrant discussion within the community regarding transliteration (for e.g. the "tew" in "tewchi" is also written as "teu" by some although there is no consensus yet). As a general rule of thumb, Phalee use the Tangkhul orthography derived from Pettigrew's method since that is the only existing reference. Adopting IPA for general usage would involve a steep learning curve for the lay user and require expert intervention, which is not available at the time of writing. Our transliterations therefore follow the Phalee practice and not IPA standardisation.
[2] Only the texts considered to be proverbs are numbered. See n. 6.
[3] The proverbs that start with *Khi* are unique to Phalee. This structure is not found in the printed collections of Tangkhul proverbs. It may be called a rhetorical proverb since it functions as a rhetorical question.

speakers to constantly lapse into song in everyday conversations, especially among elders (field recordings from the study contain many examples), this rhetorical proverb may be read as also suggesting an awareness of the dynamic nature of both words and songs. It implies that there are as many songs as there are words, and that just as words cannot exhaust (quantitatively or figuratively) a language, so songs cannot be exhausted by the limits of the words they use.

An example of how a particular song can change its social function when the real circumstances of its usage change, and how these semantic shifts are dependent upon not only cultural literacy but also an acknowledgement of the inherent symbolic potential of all aesthetic verbal expression will help to establish this point:

| Phalee | English Translation |
| --- | --- |
| *Ungusei kathongshanlo,* | Let's go home, call everyone, |
| *Kongpamshu rewkhawonao.* | Those who are working near the river. |
| *Rewkachumshu mahonung-rayei.* | Chanting can be heard from the ravine. |
| *Kongpamshu rewkhawonaoda hei* | Those who are working near the river |
| *Thingkharuina hoikhanurei.*[4] | Are ensnared by the roots. |

At the literal level, this is a conversation between two groups of people working in different fields. One of the groups, whose field is probably nearer to their village, sends a message to another group of people who are working by the riverside. The song sounds like an everyday conversation, with pleasure and enjoyment, heightened through rhythm and melody, calling friends to go home as usual at the end of the day. The word *mahon*[5] is the

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[4] All the proverbs are translated using literal translation method. However, this song is paraphrased.

[5] This refers to the simple *hei ho* exclamation similar to the nautical heave ho sound while doing physical labour. It also refers to the elaborated musical chanting of non-lexical words like *hei, ho, oh, ei*, etc., in singing and dancing. These words are chanted rhythmically in four voices- *rokri, rokro, katenga*, and *khākri*.

rhythmic chanting while working, singing or dancing. However, in a different context, this everyday exchange can sound like an effective warning note that enemies are approaching. The singers would then use the exchange to give an alarm call, couched in innocuous terms while masking their fear and panic by using metaphor as code in the message. In this context, *mahon* would mean the approaching footsteps or the war chants of attackers. Instead of directly saying that they hear the approaching sound of enemies, the singers sing about hearing the chanting of another group of workers from the farther field on their way home. The riverside group's response would then mean being surrounded by enemies. The image of feet entangled by roots exploits the polysemic potential of figurative language and opens it up to interpretation in a context of danger. It metaphorically invokes unwillingness to put an end to a day spent in companionable communal activity but reverts to literalism in a different practical application, while depending upon its functionality as code in nested models of meaning making.

Moreover, according to Phalee oral narratives, any claim or statement is seen as both valid and true as long as there is a folksong to substantiate it. During fieldwork, a nonagenarian quoted proverb (1) during a conversation while discussing a disputed piece of land. He claimed that the particular piece of land belonged to his village. Then he sang a song to substantiate his claim, ending with proverb (1) as a kind of verbal flourish. The song is truth and there is a proverb that says so: the truth cannot be distorted as there is a song that speaks the truth. It is the strong evidentiary value that is accorded to songs in the culture that could enable him to safely say that his claim is the truth and the other's claim is false. As folksongs and proverbs are communal properties, and the Phalee people highly value ancestral words, the other participants in the conversation are compelled to accept his claim, otherwise it will be considered a direct disavowal of the forefathers, showing open disrespect. By citing this proverb, the speaker implies that the listeners should agree with him, or he performs a perlocutionary act so that the listeners should stop arguing.

## *4. Speaking in the Phalee World: Respect and Care*

As a collective society, the people of Phalee (or Tangkhul as a whole) pay great attention to how they communicate in order to maintain communal harmony. Children are taught *chānhān lohān* (speech etiquette or communicative etiquette) at a young age. Containing both *chān-* 'word' and *lo* 'song,' this phrase also echoes (1) and (2). Moreover, speaking politely and eloquently, that is *chānhān lohān khaye* (lit. "having proper communicative comportment") is considered a sign of good breeding.

Elders are expected to be a competent source of knowledge and their words are considered words of wisdom in Phalee, possibly more so than in many other cultures. Since they have lived long on earth, it is argued, they have gained experiences and knowledge to benefit those who are less wealthy in years. A long life is equated with wisdom and understanding:

(3) *Kharartew nniro kaphunghan shairo*
    lit. "Listen to elders, eat greens"

This may be spoken to reprimand a child who does not listen to an elder's advice (anybody older than them, not necessarily the ederly). *Kharar* means "old" or "elders." The compound word *kharartew* (*kharar* 'old' + *tew* 'word') 'words of the elders' may be metaphorically understood as ancient wisdom (perhaps a proverb or an old maxim). Such words of elders have withstood the test of time and now have attained the status of cultural truisms. Therefore, it is wise to pay heed to such advice. Here, we see the comparison of greens and the words of the elders and consider both of them as something that will be good for the person who uses them albeit perhaps not always appetising or welcome. Children are taught comportment with proverbs such as:

(4) *Hākpai huipai thikhareda khayoshiro*
    lit. "Respect the person who saw the animal's droppings before you did"
(5) *Amik aho somkhareda khayoshiro*
    lit. "Respect the person who got eyes and teeth before you"

It is customary etiquette to respect someone older, even if they are senior only by a few months. They must be addressed with

proper honorifics according to family relations and social status. These proverbs can also be cited when someone wants a junior to agree with what they say because they are older and have more experience, so their words must be taken seriously. Using the proverb, the speakers associate their argument with the one already approved by society to persuade the listeners or win them over to their argument. Generally, the speaker who cites proverbs is relatively older than the addressee or someone of the same age but who has (or think they have) an advantage over the other. It is unlikely that a younger person will use a proverb to someone older or who possesses more social power. Children who speak like adults will be chided with the proverbial phrase *nyaonaona rarning kakhu* (lit. "a child speaking like an adult"). It is considered impolite and indicates a lack of proper upbringing.[6]

Speaking softly and respectfully without fail is encouraged. The proverbial phrase *saho thingni nhoika* describes a person's low voice and polite diction. It may be translated as "as polite as withered leaves." The word *nhoi* means both 'wither' and 'meek and mild' in Phalee. The figurative use of the shrivelling of leaves in autumn to connote not only mellowness but also advancing age offers a built-in justification for the proverb's message: age makes both people and leaves soft and mellow. This is a traditional observation about speech that is drawn from nature. By using such familiar imagery, the speaker can describe a person's pleasant and polite speech and its soothing quality while linking it with seniority. But this proverbial phrase can also be used as a barb. The person in question might be speaking gently, but their intention may be otherwise. So, the speakers using this

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[6] The distinction we make between proverb and proverbial phrase in Phalee and Tangkhul is based upon an analysis of our corpus and the deployment of such expressions in social interaction as observed and recorded during fieldwork. The definitions upon which the distinction is made are the standard ones in paremiology (Taylor 2017: 184; Norrick 1985: 8; Honeck 1997: 13). The thinking through of such definitions in the Phalee context and providing a rationale for making this distinction comprises a major part of devising the methodology for the larger work from which this essay is drawn. Similarly, since Phalee does not possess a script, lexicon, or written grammar, there is no available typology or terminology (to our knowledge) for anatomising or describing the elements that constitute creative and aesthetic oral expression. Therefore, we have used terms from the Western rhetorical tradition for describing the figures of speech that we identify in the proverbs.

proverbial phrase may indicate a desire to warn the listeners to be cautious with the person's soft talk as their benign and harmless words may conceal malicious intention.

Those who speak harshly with no restraint are also compared with the sting of nettles-*chānhān lohan rānghewna kachew theka* (lit. "speaking like a sting of nettles"). A person whose speech is soft but sarcastic is also described with the proverbial expression *shemnerrui theka* (lit. "like a caterpillar"). The person appears mild and unthreatening, but the words that come out of their mouth sting like a caterpillar. The speaker uses the proverbial phrase as a euphemism to comment on the poisonous nature of the person's speech without stating it directly.

(6) *Khi phuirina nru, khi yangnaona saho rākshi?*
    lit. "What python bites, what *yangnao* speaks rudely?"

This proverb talks about the speech etiquette of a dignified individual. *Yangnao* is a hereditary chief of a village, a clan or a sub-clan, and he is addressed respectfully as *mithara*[7] or *wuthara*. It is expected that *yangnao,* as a respected man in the community, should be humble, polite, and friendly to everyone. These individuals are not supposed to speak rudely but are expected to be compassionate and courteous to everybody. Their dignified and unassuming comportment is compared with that of a python. According to Phalee popular belief, a python is harmless and even heeds what human speech has to say and this confidence in a python's benevolent nature is mapped onto a human being. This proverb is quoted when someone speaks rudely or speaks ill of others who are not their equal in age or social status. The speaker makes the addressee feel like the equivalent of *yangnao*. At the same time, this also acts as a gentle reprimand, suggesting that the action or behaviour under discussion is inappropriate for a dignified person. It is a question which emphasises a point or makes a sarcastic jab. People of different classes exhibit differences in their language use (Macaulay 1976), and Phalee society is no exception. As the number of speakers is very small for Phalee, the variation in accent is not clearly discernible in the

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[7] *mi* (elder brother) + *thara* (honorific marker for a noble man) and *wu* (uncle/grandfather) + *thara* (honorific marker for a noble man)

language. Thoyee and Phalee's accent is a little different perhaps due to the influence of the neighbouring villages' dialects, but accent variation does not reveal the socioeconomic status of the speaker. Speaking politely, however, is seen as a sign of good breeding because it shows the humility that a distinguished man should possess. Speaking rudely is seen as undignified, and at the same time, as behaviour that inflicts harm.

(7) *Huina nrushot raka roroiyida miya themachenei*
    lit. "Dog throws up and eats it again; man doesn't"

This proverb may or may not be borrowed from the Bible's "As a dog returns to its vomit, so a fool repeats his folly" (*New International Version*, Prov. 26.11). The dog throws up the food because either it ate too much, or the food is poisonous. In the Bible, the person who repeats his or her folly is considered a fool and compared to a dog who does not understand why it throws up the food or is too greedy and foolish to stop eating when hunger is satiated. In the case of Phalee, those who cannot honour their word are seen as a dog. The dog is asserted to have no sense of dignity and cannot realise that eating vomit is abominable, but human beings can discern what is acceptable and what is not. This proverb is cited when someone tries to deny what they had said earlier. This is seen as repulsive behaviour, as abhorrent as the behaviour of the dog that eats its own vomit. But words, once spoken, cannot be retracted. Therefore, it is advised that words should not be spoken without careful consideration because improper verbalisation may lead to severe consequences and may be regretted in the future, the sort of advice the idiomatic English expression "think before you speak" supplies. This proverb can also be cited when the speaker wants to demean the addressee for what is perceived as their repulsive nature. The speaker may intend to humble and criticise the target simply by quoting this without further elaboration. There is safety in this oblique strategy as it shields the speaker from being accused of a direct personal insult.

(8) *Khi miroyungna mpar, khi tewna mpar?*
    lit. "What fatwood decays, what word decays"

This rhetorical proverb, similar to (2) and (6) above, compares the spoken word with the fatwood of a pine tree: fatwood was not only used for illumination before the coming of electricity, but it also had other cultural significances. The fresh resin of fatwood is used as a balm to heal wounds, cracked hands, and heels. During the village festival called *Risit* which is celebrated after the completion of paddy transplantation at the end of July, a big fire of fatwood is still burned outside every household as part of the festive rituals. In some traditional houses, the pillars would be made with a pine tree that had a good amount of resin. A pine tree would be marked with an axe to let fatwood form, and after the tree had produced enough fatwood, it would be cut down to make the pillars. Fatwood cannot be destroyed easily by weathering and erosion. Its durability is compared in this proverb with the power of spoken words that have the strength to stick long in people's memories. Therefore, caution in speech is frequently advised because improper verbalisation may lead to severe consequences or put the interactants in awkward positions. This proverb can be cited to reproach a person when they find themselves in a tight spot as a consequence of having spoken without thought.

We were able to record this proverb in action during fieldwork. A couple of women were sitting together in a kitchen, chatting about a young couple who, according to rumour, were deeply in love. The boy's family objected to his choice of bride because his mother had once been insulted (when she was a young girl) by the girl's paternal grandmother because she came from a poor family. Some of the ladies knew about that incident. One of the ladies cited (8) to comment on the situation. The grandmother was long dead, but her cruel words are still remembered. The lady cited this proverb as a sarcastic comment and also reminded everyone of the long shadows cast by unconsidered speech or deliberate insults.

> (9)  *Na thire natew mathiye*
>      lit. "Although you die, your words don't die"

The word *natew* lit. 'your word' is ambiguous in the sense that the possessive could mean words spoken *by* someone and the words spoken *about* them (which becomes theirs). As in (8)

above, and in the late grandmother's insults in the anecdote, the primary meaning reflects the ever-lasting effect of one's words. It implies that words travel in time and can serve as a source of inspiration or agony for other people even after the original speaker has died. Another meaning revolves around the understanding that the narratives of someone's good or bad deeds, embarrassing moments, achievements or funny incidents remain alive in people's memory for a long time and they persist even after death. A variant, *Nathire naming mathiye* (lit. "Although you die, your name doesn't die) is also used interchangeably in similar situations. Like several of the texts discussed above, these proverbs have both positive and negative applications and may be used either as a criticism of or a tribute to a person. The personification of words and names (i.e. as entities that could die like humans) shows the special power and value that verbal expression connotes in the culture.

## 5. *The Virtue of Silence*

Because words once spoken are impossible to kill, some proverbs clearly show the necessity of verbal continence. There is a danger that the speaker will inadvertently reveal things about herself that she would do better to keep quiet about. The result of speaking often brings undesirable results. Therefore, speaking is seen as generating regret, and several proverbs counsel against it:

> (10)  *Sona sochonrai thi, mina mitewrai thi*
>        lit. "Animals are killed by their spoor, men by their words"

In this proverb, the animal's tracks become analogous to speech traces left in memory that orchestrate a person's downfall. A loss of control of the tongue and becoming trapped by one's speech is compared with the image of the hunt. Animals cannot help leaving their spoor behind; eventually, the very feet that enable them to run away also make them vulnerable to hunters. Similarly, what is considered a proper vehicle of self-expression can also bring disaster. This proverb is used to counsel not to speak

recklessly. The alliteration and consonance used in the phrasing again add melody and poignancy to the utterance.

(11) *Kashu miru miphungraida yātkhew*
  lit. "One scratches out trouble from the hearth"

The kitchen hearth is the centre of family and communal life, and a place for animated conversations and the sharing of information or gossip. It is the site of communal conviviality. During such warm and cosy discussions, people routinely exchange news about village life and events, including other people's secrets, which is likely to spread further and hurt someone else or boomerang on the gossipmongers themselves. In extreme cases, one could imagine that the referent of the conversation complains against the speaker of slander to the village court. This proverb is cited to warn against oversharing and harmful gossip and exhorts people to keep their own counsel. It is also used to ridicule someone who faces trouble for bad-mouthing somebody.

## 6. Embodied Affect: Speaking on the Body

(12) *Mida nrek misew koi*
  lit. "Talking to people invites hostility"
(13) *Thingda nrek, thing wao; nrungda nrek, nrung kai*
  lit. Talk about a tree, the tree breaks; talk about a rock, the rock breaks

This proverb's context lies in the pre-Christian animistic belief system of the community. Holding natural objects like trees, ponds, and rocks to be inhabited by spirits, they made sacrifices to appease them and prevent them from wreaking havoc in the human realm. If someone fell ill or was harmed, they attributed it to spirits dwelling within these natural objects and would speak of the offended (and offending) spirit, believing that this would offend them and make them leave the rocks or trees, to the extent of forcing an exorcism through the destruction of the identified abodes. It is believed that if everyone talks about the enormous size or uniqueness of a big tree or a rock, the tree falls or the rock breaks and is destroyed. We see that spoken words are believed to affect even the natural environment.

The contextual aspect for understanding the meaning of (12) is a superstition that if people talk about somebody too much, especially for doing something socially unacceptable, the person will lose appetite, feel fatigued, and slowly waste away and even die. This phenomenon is called *khamu-kharang karoka* or *misew koka*. It may be due to the psychological impact on the subject, which is tantamount to social ostracisation that such extreme effects are envisaged. These beliefs, and the proverb that encapsulates it, expresses the view that words possess the power to heal and harm, to vilify and exalt. When an individual loses their good reputation, it affects their mental health, and this can lead to physical illness, too. This embodied attitude towards social well-being in which emotions and imagination are seen to affect both physiology and cognition, pervades the norms and values of the Phalee worldview. Interestingly, it is not the *gaze* of the other, as when warding against the evil eye, but the *speech* of the other, that the Phalee consider to be potentially harmful.

Having low vitality, and even yawning, without apparent physical cause is associated with people saying negative things about the sufferer. It is said that in the past people wore mugwort behind their ears when they travelled outside the village to ward off the evil effects of the ill intent and unkind words of strangers. Both (12) and (13) express folk belief about the negative effect of spoken words, but (13) extends this ill intent as affecting the natural world as well. Similarly, in (12), excessive gossip about someone could ruin the person's life. The following proverb also talks about the occult power of words.

(14) *Nchan rirkha mikharing nam*
     lit. "If (you) talk about someone, (you) get the person's smell"

In English, "Talk of the devil and he will appear" (Flavell and Flavell 2011: 71) is said when we gossip about someone and then the person suddenly appears nearby. Similarly, the Phalee also use the above proverb when someone unexpectedly shows up while others are discussing or gossiping about them. The literal meaning of *mikharing* is 'person who is alive,' which refers to a person who is long lived. If the person spoken about unexpectedly appears in the flesh, *Na okpirakrarei* (lit. "You'll definitely

live long") is said to avoid any awkwardness and to save face (see FTA above), since talking about someone behind their back is disapproved of in Phalee as it is in English. According to an old belief, a person who shows up while people are talking about them gets a long life. People like hearing compliments and, therefore, although everyone knows that it may not necessarily be true, it makes the person happy even for a brief moment. The above proverb is usually used to caution to speak in hushed tones and not to mention the name of the person spoken about in order to avoid awkwardness and inconveniences in case the person unexpectedly appears within earshot.

This proverb also reflects the zoomorphic tendencies in Phalee proverbs. Human beings take on the attributes of dogs, caterpillars, and other animals. Thinking of a person's essence in terms of their smell possibly reflects the Phalee way of not drawing sharp distinctions between the human/animal/natural worlds but considering all creation as enmeshed and entangled with each other.

(15)  *Mi chungkha tewre chung*
      lit. "The more the people, the more the words"

An informal, more forceful, and obscene variant is *Mi chungkha paire chung* (lit. "The more the people, the more the shit"). This proverb talks about the difficulty in taking decisions when there are too many people involved, similar to the English "Too many cooks spoil the broth" (Flavell and Flavell 2011: 54). The contextual application of the variants is obviously different, but the sentiment and syntax remain the same. This proverb is also used in situations that require withholding of information. The sense is that although whatever is being spoken about may be small and insignificant, if too many people talk about it, this can snowball into a major issue, or the content can get distorted as in a game of Chinese whispers. The internal rhyme in this formulation keeps the phrasing pithy, succinct, and memorable. The obscene version plays upon the more formal one's use of balanced consonance in a particularly pungent and effective manner.

## 7. Beyond Silence

    (16) *Nhankhangai yenrumo, yeikashe yenruthak*
            lit. "Hardly encounter the person (we) want to talk
            with, frequently encounter the enemy"

This proverb is not specifically about speech, but here we see the strong links Phalee culture has between conversation and sociability. Liking a person is equated with having a desire to talk to or ask after the person. The literal translation of the word *nhānkhangai* is 'have a desire to ask or enquire' and assumes friendly feelings. Interest in others is a mark of attentiveness and indicative of a desire to make connections and forge bonds. In the Phalee dialect, there is no conventional expression of greeting. Instead of general phrases such as "good morning" that demand no real answer and remain mere courtesies, people ask specific questions such as "What are you doing?," "Where are you going?," "Where will you go today?," and "Have you had your meal?," What dish are you cooking?," "What will you have for lunch?," or What did you have for lunch?" and so on, depending on the place and time in which they encounter one another. These questions, which may be regarded as personal and intrusive in other cultures, are a formalised way of showing genuine interest towards the addressee. In Phalee, conversation usually begins with a question.

In the Phalee worldview, talking is crucial for building relationships, and building relationships between people in a community is essential for strengthening cultural identity, fostering social cohesion, and maintaining communal well-being. We avoid people we do not like and do not want to initiate or continue a conversation. In a village, everybody knows each other and speaks with each other. The only people to whom they do not talk are instantly marked out as enemies in signifying with whom the speaker does not feel any level of comfort. This proverb can be cited when a woman recounts her awkward meeting with an ex-lover.

The implication is that while exchanging words is a pleasant activity, the discomfort of being unable to evade an unwelcome encounter is exaggerated as facing the enemy in a subtle comparison. The intensity of the reluctance turns a single encounter into the compounded discomfort of many such.

(17) *Teimukna nchorongrai kapuraka "Maiti riwukthi-torei" chi*
lit. "Quail perches on a fern and says, 'I can see the Imphal valley'"

Those who have no restraint on their speech and speak as though they know more than they actually do are often ridiculed with proverbs. This wellerism is cited when someone shows off their limited knowledge. The vanity itself is a sign of foolishness, but being shown up as ignorant when the limit of the knowledge is exposed is doubly so. The quail is a ground bird and cannot fly high. The little height it can reach (a bendy fern, not even a tall and erect tree) makes it feel as though it can see the whole valley. Literally speaking, Imphal is located several miles away from Phalee, and therefore, there is no chance that a quail in the village environs can ever see the Imphal valley, even if it were to climb the tallest tree, which it cannot do anyway.

At the metaphoric level, of course, the quail is compared to the loquacious boaster who knows very little yet speaks with exaggeration to impress others and pull their weight in every discussion. The hyperbolic comparison adds sarcasm and dismisses the know-it-all as a fool. This is unsurprising since we have already seen that Phalee highly values humility and modesty in social interaction and personal deportment (which are often indistinguishable from each other). It also adds a buffer of humour to the conversation and turns it into banter. To tell someone directly that they are ignorant and vain is likely to rapidly lead to unpleasantness. However, it is also crucial to offer a good-humoured corrective to the undesirable behaviour and show the addressee that boasting actually leads to an effect diametrically opposite to the intended one. This proverb too is deployed in FTAs.

As in other languages, Phalee proverbs are often cited with an introductory formula like *anikhakharar chāncham theka* meaning 'like the ancient proverb' or *awu-ayi chāncham theka* 'like the proverb of our forefathers' to flag the special self-consciously rhetorical place these linguistic objects occupy in everyday speech. (*Anikhakharar*) *the chāncham sasayei* lit. "There was a proverb like that (from the old days)" is also used after quoting a proverb. This expression softens the didactic tone of

the proverbs. It is frequently used as a communicative strategy to reduce FTAs or as the last word in a debate.

The use of the introductory formula also makes the statement more powerful as it signals that the speaker is not responsible or the source of this particular piece of wisdom but is merely rehearsing traditional and commonly held beliefs. In Arora's words, it belongs to the category of "they say" and not "I say" (1984: 8). Through this rhetorical strategy, listeners who share the same cultural background are urged to accept it as a piece of authoritative traditional wisdom (Mieder 2008:161). Moreover, using such an introductory formula helps to speak impersonally and indirectly and, therefore, as shown above, can be used as a verbal strategy to avoid awkwardness and FTAs.

## 8. Conclusion

The corpus of collected proverbs that have been discussed in this paper unsurprisingly reveals that Phalee culture uses proverbs as an important communication strategy. Indeed, it is the commonality of these formulaic utterances and the very fact that some aphoristic and didactic sayings possess certain formal characteristics that enable us to identify and mark them as proverbs (which is a foreign term in the Phalee context) in the first place. However, the more specific interest of these collected proverbs lies in the implications of the formal and rhetorical strategies that they employ to illustrate an embodied understanding of language and its power that is not very precisely mappable onto how the same theme is engaged with in English. Most proverbs about speaking in Phalee are inclined more toward restraining speech; hardly any proverb encourages speaking, but all are couched in highly-wrought and balanced syllabic constructions that are beautiful to hear. Self-censorship and holding the tongue are construed as a greater virtue, but the proverb forms show how Phalee society also holds the ability to speak well, with the use of aesthetic flourish, in high regard and urges its speakers to pay great attention to what they say and try to reach the standards of verbal skill set by society. As we saw, many proverbs warn to be cautious with words so that speakers may avoid embarrassment and FTAs. It is because Phalee society sets great store by

embellished and lyrical speech that almost all the proverbs in this paper use symbols, metaphors, similes, polysemy, deliberate ambiguity, and figures of speech to magnify the sonic beauty of aesthetic verbal utterance and generate open-ended, layered, and complex networks of signification. The message seems to be that one should rather hold one's tongue than not speak well. The irony (and special interest) lies precisely in the amount of attention that is paid towards the crafting of verbal artefacts to convey exhortations to silence. Phalee proverbs about speech, silence, and human communication, therefore, show how the familiar village environment, quotidian and livelihood practices, and the natural and animal worlds may be gainfully employed by heightened speech to imbue the everyday with an animistic and embodied sense of beauty that moves both speaker and listener to a positive and socially beneficial action.

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# AN INTERCULTURAL COMPARATIVE STUDY ON PERSIAN AND AMERICAN EMBODIMENT PROVERBS INCLUDING DOUBLE SENSORY ORGANS

*Abstract*: This paper explores Persian and American embodiment proverbs including at least two main sensory body organs in each proverb. The aim of this research was to examine the frequency, framing, speech act functions, and figurative parts of proverbs related to embodiment proverbs including at least two sensory body organs. Data were collected from the Persian and the American Dictionary of Proverbs. The data analysis showed that the framing of American proverbs is more gain-framing than loss-framing or avoidance-framing, but the framing of Persian proverbs is more avoidance-framing than gain-framing or loss-framing. The speech act functions of Persian and American proverbs are indirect advice and statements. The results showed that the figurative parts of both Persian and American embodiment proverbs include more metaphors than metonymy. Finally, the frequency of American proverbs which included at least two sensory body organs, was higher than Persian proverbs. The results showed that the human body parts 'hand' and 'eye' as the sensory organs can be considered the most important and most salient body parts used more than other sensory body organs in Persian or American proverbs.

*Keywords*: American proverb, Persian proverb, Embodiment proverbs, sensory body organ, framing, speech act function, figurative part

## 1. Introduction

There are five main sensory organs: hand, eye, ear, nose, and mouth. In cognitive linguistics, embodiment involves recognizing how an individual's physical body significantly influences their daily cognitive functions (Gibbs 2006). Eyes, ears, hands, nose, and mouth, including the tongue, are considered defining features of human beings and play a pivotal role as essential body parts that interact with the external world. Both internal and external stimuli using parts of the body can be analyzed and interpreted (Halprin 2002). Heine mentioned that "the human body provides one of the most salient models for understanding, describing, and denoting concepts that are more difficult to understand, describe, and denote" (2014: 17). This perspective highlights the interconnected development of both the "mind and body" (Maalej and Yu 2011: 12).

Although the origins of using proverbs remain mysterious, the proverbs have slowly become part of everyday language, and are frequently used in conversations in some cultures. While some recent studies have investigated how specific body parts like the heart, hand, foot, and head affect our thinking (Firman and Ratna 2019), there has not been much research on proverbs related to our different main sensory body organs. Also, previous studies have not compared proverbs involving two body parts related to our senses in both Persian and American languages. This study aims to fill these gaps by examining embodiment proverbs in Persian and American, analyzing their frequency, framing, functions in speech, and figurative aspects.

There is a Persian proverb including one sensory body organ and the analysis shows the framing, speech act function, and figurative parts.

> كف دست مو ندارد
> *Kaf-e dast mu nadārad*
> *Palm-EZ hand hair NEG.have.PRS.3SG*
> *Lit. The palm of the hand has no hair*
> *'You cannot get blood from a stone'*

In the given instance, the Persian proverb 'palm has no hair' carries a literal meaning, which is analogous to the English proverb

'You cannot get blood from a stone.' In this case, the Persian proverb serves the function of a statement, while the English proverb serves as 'direct advice'. Notably, a disparity in framing between the Persian and English proverbs is discernible: the Persian proverb employs loss-framing, while its English counterpart employs avoidance-framing. In the Persian proverb, the source and target domains are related to the 'human body' and incorporate metonymical imagery components. Conversely, the English proverb's source domain and target domain pertain to 'liquid vital body fluid' and 'object,' respectively. Consequently, the figurative part of the English proverb is both metaphorical and rooted in a metonymic basis, where 'blood' stands for life. Thus, this paper provides framing, speech acts of function, and figurative parts of Persian and American embodiment proverbs which include double main sensory body organs.

## 2. Figurative Parts, Speech Act of Function and Framing

A proverb may contain a metaphor when it employs a creature from one level to represent a creature at a different level (Kövecses 2002). Lakoff and Johnson (1980) presented a conceptual metaphor analysis model that underscores three key components: the source domain, the target domain, and a collection of mapping relationships or correspondences. Some scholars have observed that metonymy might be a more fundamental cognitive process compared to metaphor (Panther and Radden 1999). Metonymic mapping is characterized as primarily reference-based. It functions within a single conceptual domain or between two domains that are connected by closeness or proximity (Kövecses and Radden 1998). The categorization of metaphor and metonymy is not clearly defined but instead exists on a scale of mapping processes (Barcelona 2000b). Additionally, in numerous instances, the metaphor could be inspired or driven by metonymy (Barcelona 2000c).

According to Lakoff (1987), there are three main classifications of metaphor. The first is 'conventional metaphors', which link multiple concepts from the source domain to various concepts in the target domain. The second is 'generic metaphors', which allows us to grasp a generalized situation by drawing from

the specific, relying on our capacity to extract the general from the specific. The third is 'image metaphors', which are based on perception and connect one image to another. In this case, not only does the source domain include images or mental representations of a specific concept, but so does the target domain. For example, when two completely different concepts share the same physical traits, they represent the mental characteristics by maintaining the same image in mind. They are also called 'attributional metaphors', because "they attribute physical properties to concepts" (Manasia 2016: 4).

In most languages, body-related terms may have shared meanings and functions across languages, but their perception of how the body influences metaphors can vary. Speech acts are forms of communication in which the speaker intends to convey specific content (Sharifi and Ebrahimi 2012). Proverbs are powerful tools, succinctly conveying messages with few words, and they serve a range of functions (Nippold et al 1988). This research focuses on categorizing speech act functions as statements, complaints, direct and indirect advice, or warnings. In addition, framing will be classified as "gain framing", "loss framing", and "avoidance framing" (Brdar-Szabó et al 2023: 288). In different languages, there is a possibility that certain abstract ideas could be linked to various body parts or experiences. Similarly, similar body parts or experiences across languages might express different abstract concepts (Kövecses 2005; Yu 2008).

## 3. Methodology

This research employs both qualitative and quantitative methods. A dictionary of Persian proverbs written by Yusuf Jamshidipour and a dictionary of American proverbs written by Wolfgang Mieder have been used as two popular dictionaries for data collection. The famous dictionary of American proverbs written by Wolfgang Mieder, editor in chief, and Stewart A. Kingsbury and Kelsie B. Harder, Editors, was published by Oxford University Press in 1992 and it includes 15000 American proverbs which is the initial significant compilation of English proverbs derived from spoken rather than written sources.

The dictionary of Persian proverbs includes proverbs, sayings, and superstitions, and both common and obsolete folklore. It was first published in 1968 by Foroughi Publications in Iran. The dictionary, which contains 295 pages, lists proverbs alphabetically based on Persian alphabets, with brief explanations of their meanings and usage provided alongside each entry. This historically significant yet frequently republished Persian dictionary has been selected to emphasize the rich history of Persian Proverbs which dates back many years before the publication of this Persian dictionary of proverbs. While the dictionary is old, the majority of the proverbs it contains are still used in daily conversations by Iranians, with only a few having become obsolete.

The compilation of this Persian proverb dictionary draws from a spectrum of esteemed sources. It encompasses the extensive gatherings of Ali Akbar Dehkoda in 1931, spread across four substantial volumes. Additionally, it integrates Saeed Nafisii's 'Farnoodsad' dictionary from 1931, Suleiman Hayyim's bilingual compilation of Persian and English proverbs from 1955, Seyed Kamaluddin Mortazaviyan's 1961 publication narrating proverbial tales, Seyyed Mohammad Ali Jamalzadeh's catalog of slang words compiled in 1921, Mohammad Hossein Ibn Khalaf Tabrizi's "Decisive Proof" dictionary published in 1963, Sa'di's renowned literary works 'Golestan' and 'Bostan' from the seventh century, and a curated anthology of proverbs by Amirqoli Amini in 1960. The above-mentioned sources have also been used on the proverbs collection of double main perception verbs (Sharifrad 2024).

### 3.1. Research Questions

The study aims to explore the following questions:

RQ1: What are the frequency distributions of Persian and American embodiment proverbs including at least two sensory body organs?

RQ2: What are the most frequent sensory body organs used in Persian and American embodiment proverbs including at least two main sensory body organs?

RQ3: What is the most frequent framing of Persian proverbs and American proverbs including at least two main sensory body organs?

RQ4: What are the most frequent speech act functions of Persian proverbs and American proverbs including at least two main sensory body organs?

RQ5: What are the most frequent figurative parts of Persian proverbs and American proverbs including at least two main sensory body organs?

## 3.2. Data Collection

The proverbial data have been collected by considering all pages of the dictionary of Persian proverbs and American proverbs. Firstly, all embodiment proverbs including five main sensory body parts; eye, ear, hand, nose, and mouth, including tongue, have been collected. In the second phase, all proverbs including at least two sensory body parts, were selected separately from the Persian and American dictionary of proverbs. In the third phase, those Persian collected embodiment proverbs were first transliterated, then they were glossed and translated literally into English. In the fifth phase, the framing, speech acts of function, and figurative parts of a collected embodiment of Persian and American proverbs were analyzed. Finally, all Persian collected proverbs were compared with American proverbs. Some proverb stories have been added to enhance the meaning of some proverbs. All the phases of data collection draw from the same method that was applied for collecting proverbs including double main perception verbs (Sharifrad 2024).

All collected proverbs have been classified separately and analyzed in order. The Persian proverbs have been specified by adding the name of the dictionary of Persian proverbs written by Yusuf Jamshidipour (hereinafter Jamshidipour) as well as writing the page number for each proverb in the dictionary. The American proverbs have been specified by adding the name of the Dictionary of American Proverbs written by Wolfgang Mieder (hereinafter Mieder) as well as writing the page number for each proverb in the American Dictionary of Proverbs. To answer five research questions, a comparison was made between Persian and American embodiment proverbs including two same or different sensory body organs - hand, tongue, ear, eye, and nose.

*3.3. Proverbs including two same sensory body organs*

A. Double Hand

> (1)  Persian Proverb
> *(Jamshidipour-P.22)*از هر **دست** بدهی، از همان **دست** پس می‌گیری
> *Az har dast bedahi, Az hamān dast pas migiri*
> *From each hand give-PRS.2SG, from the same hand give back- PRS.2SG*
> *Lit. From whatever **hand** you owe, you will receive from the same **hand***
> *'What goes around, comes around'*
> *'Every action is followed by a reaction'*
> *'A good deed is never lost'*
> *Framing: gain-framing*
> *Speech Act Function: indirect advice*

This proverb highlights the effects of good and bad deeds on a person's life. Here, the hand is a metaphor for good or bad deeds. Two verses in the holy Quran refer to this proverb, stating "anyone who has done even an iota of good, they will see it, or even if anyone who has done an iota of bad, they will see it in another world or even in this world" (Quran 99: 599).

There is a nice story translation[1] related to this proverb: one day, a generous dervish with limited financial means sold his wife's hand-sewn cloth for one dirham to buy food. On his way back home, he encountered two individuals engaged in a fierce fight over a dirham. Curious about the cause of the dispute, the dervish inquired, and they explained that their fight had erupted over that very dirham. The dervish, moved by their strife, decided to end the quarrel by giving them the one dirham he had just earned from selling his wife's clothes. Thus, he came back home empty-handed and told the story to his wife. Instead of protesting, his wife was delighted by his compassionate act. She found an old cloth and offered it to her husband to sell in place of the one he had given away. Despite his efforts, the dervish couldn't find a buyer for the cloth, but he encountered a fisher-

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[1] https://magerta.ir/culture/literature/from-every-loss-you-get-back-from-same-hand-proverb/

man in need of a customer. He proposed an exchange: the cloth for the fish. The fisherman agreed, and the dervish brought the fish home for his wife to prepare. When the wife cut the fish, she discovered a large pearl inside. Overjoyed, the dervish and his wife took the pearl to a jeweler friend who purchased it at a high price. Through this unexpected turn of events, God rewarded the dervish's generosity and transformed him from poverty to prosperity in exchange for the one dirham he had lost due to his benevolent act.

> (2) Persian Proverb
> اگر حنضل خوری از **دست** خوشخوی به از شیرینی از **دست** ترش روی (Jamshidipour- P.26)
>  Agar hanzal xori az dast-e xos ruy, beh az širirni az dast-e torš ruy
> If bitter watermelon eat from hand kind person, better than sweet from hand grumpy man
> Lit. If you eat bad food from a cheerful **hand**, it will be better to eat sweet from **hand** of a grumpy man
> 'It's the thought that counts'
> Framing: avoidance-framing
> Speech Act Function: indirect advice

This poem excerpt transforms into a proverb advising that it is better to savor a bitter watermelon than ask for a sweet one from someone stingy or ill-tempered, knowing they would refuse it. It metaphorically highlights the value of relishing a simple meal with zest over a luxurious one received begrudgingly.

The story[2] related to this proverb is taken from Golestan-e Sadi, 3rd Section, talking about a man who was injured in the Tatar War, and someone suggested that a particular merchant had remedies available if he wanted them. However, that merchant had a reputation for being very miserly. The injured man firmly decided "Whether I receive the medicine or not, it's of no consequence. Asking for it is a kind of poison that kills the spirit. As the wise have said, even if they sell the elixir of life, don't be so eager for it, for life can become a source of disgrace and

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2  https://ganjoor.net/saadi/golestan/gbab3/sh9, retrieved on 10 December 2023

humiliation, just like in the proverb where water is compared to wisdom".

> (3) Persian Proverb
> *(Jamshidipour-P.76)* با پای خر، **دست دست** یاسه، با اینکار عقلم نمی ماسه
> *Pā pāy-e xar, dast dast-e yās-e, bā inkār aqlam nemimāse*
> *Foot foot-EZ donkey, hand hand-EZ Yas-e, with this wise NEG.undrstand.1SG*
> *Lit. Foot is Donkey's foot, **Hand** is Yase's **hand**; I do not understand this.*
> *'You can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear'*
> *Framing: loss-framing*
> *Speech Act Function: statement*

This proverb's origin tale[3] tells of a Kurdish mother-in-law who owned grape juice called "Khmi Doshab." One day, her daughter-in-law, Yase, accidentally spilled a considerable amount of water on the house floor. While leaving, Yase sat on a donkey and, while leaning down to pick up some bowls, left her handprint on the curve of the donkey's back. Upon the mother-in-law's return and noticing both the donkey's tracks and the handprint, she was puzzled. She mused, "The footprints are from the donkey, and the handprint is Yase's. I can't understand this."

In the Persian narrative, this proverb finds use when an event occurs outside the usual or natural order, surpassing comprehension. The metaphorical use of 'hand' or 'foot' conveys a feeling of frustration when we are faced with a situation that seems purposeless.

> (4) American proverb
> *Busy **hands** are happy **hands** (Mieder-P.275)*
> *Framing: gain-framing*
> *Speech Act Function: indirect advice*

This proverb shows how people, especially children, are happy when their hands are occupied with food or toys. So, the hand is metonymy, and it shows that when there is a lack of meaningful

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[3] http://masal-asal.blogfa.com/1388/11, retrieved on 10 December 2023

engagement, it can have feelings of unhappiness and dissatisfaction on people.

(5) American proverb
*He has three **hands**; a right **hand**, a left **hand**, and a little behindhand (Mieder-P.275)*
*Framing: gain-framing*
*Speech Act Function: statement*

This metaphor expresses that while everyone has a right or left hand, mentioning the "little behind hand" refers to someone who approaches tasks in an extra or innovative way, thinking outside the box.

(6) American proverb
*Never let your left **hand** know what your right **hand** is doing (Mieder-P.276)*
*Framing: avoidance-framing*
*Speech Act Function: direct advice*

This proverb shows that charity and good deeds should be done privately and humbly, without seeking acknowledgment. The proverb uses 'hand' as a metaphor to show generosity. So, it emphasizes the idea that when individuals perform charitable deeds, it is good to keep these actions private, because all acts of kindness are known to God.

(7) American proverb
*One **hand** is better than no **hand** at all (Mieder-P.276)*
*Framing: gain-framing*
*Speech Act Function: indirect advice*

This proverb is used when something is not ideal or perfect, but it is better than having nothing. It employs the concept of a 'hand' as a metonymy for wider opportunities when contrasted with having nothing at all. This proverb is similar to a Persian equivalent in that its literal translation is: something is better than nothing, so it puts emphasis on what we have, and we should be thankful.

(8) Persian Equivalent

کاچی بهتر از هیچی

*Kāci behtar az hici*
*Food better than nothing*
*Lit. Kachi (simple Iranian food which is served as dessert) is better than nothing*
*'Half a loaf is better than none'*

(9) American proverb
*The **hand** that rocks the cradle is the **hand** that rules the world (Mieder-P.276)*
*Framing: gain-framing*
*Speech Act Function: statement*

This proverb is used for admiration for women, especially mothers, as they raise and care for the next generation. This proverb uses the hand as a metonymy. William Ross Wallace penned a poem titled "The Hand That Rocks the Cradle Is the Hand That Rules the World,"[4] celebrating the importance of motherhood. Although originally published in 1865 under the title "What Rules the World," the complete poem might not be widely acknowledged today, yet its recurring phrase remains a well-known proverb.

B. Double Tongue

(10) Persian Proverb
از صد زبان زبان خموشی رساتر است(*Jamshidipour-P.19)*
*Az sad zabān, zabān-e xamuši rasātar ast*
*From hundred tongue-PL, tongue off louder be-PRS.3SG*
*Lit. of a hundred **tongues**, the **tongue** of silence is the most expressive.*
*'Silence is more eloquent than words'*
*Framing: avoidance-framing*
*Speech Act Function: indirect advice*

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4    https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Hand_That_Rocks_the_Cradle_(poem),    retrieved on 10 December 2023

This proverb emphasizes that there are situations where silence can have greater influence than speech and silence can convey a message more effectively than words. For instance, when someone has undergone a significant tragedy, their unspoken grief can be more revealing, as words may inadequately show the depth of their inner suffering. So, the metaphor of "a hundred tongues" represents the multitude of languages or words that can be spoken. It contrasts this with "silence" as a metaphorical choice, suggesting that choosing to stay quiet can be even more influential than verbal expression.

There is no double tongue as sensory body organ in the American dictionary.

C. Double Ear

> (11) Persian Proverb
> (Jamshidipour-P.15 , 23)از این **گوش** می‌گیرد از آن **گوش** در می‌کند
> *Az in guš migirad az ān guš dar mikonad*
> *From this ear listen-PRS.3SG from that ear exit- PRS.3SG*
> *Lit- he listens from this **ear** and exits it from that **ear**. or*
> *Goes in one ear and out the other*
> *Framing: loss-framing*
> *Speech Act Function: complaint*

There are idiomatic expressions and proverbial saying that convey the idea of not paying attention to advice or the opinions of others, such as: "Deaf to advice", "Turn a deaf ear", or "Hard of hearing when it comes to advising."[5] This proverb employs both metaphorical and metonymic elements. The ears are used metaphorically to represent the act of hearing and listening. The ears are used metonymically to represent the process of communication and selective hearing. This proverb characterizes individuals who receive information but promptly forget or ignore it.

There is no double ear as a sensory body organ in the American dictionary.

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[5] https://www.persian-star.org, retrieved on 10 December 2023

D. Double Eye

> (12) Persian Proverb
> به چشم برادری، به چشم خواهری *(Jamshidipour-P.53)*
> *Be cašm-e barādari, be cašm-e xāhari*
> *With eye-EZ brotherhood, with eye-EZ sisterhood*
> *Lit. In the **eyes** of brotherhood, in the **eyes** of sisterhood*
>
> *Framing: gain-framing*
> *Speech Act Function: statement*

There is no direct American proverb equivalent to this Persian proverb. In this expression, the admirer might compare the person's beauty or qualities to those of their sibling. The use of "the eye" as metonymy symbolizes a person.

> (13) Persian Proverb
> چشم چشم را نمی بیند *(Jamshidipour-P.104)*
> *cašm cašm rā nemibinad*
> *eye eye OM NEG.SEE.3SG*
> *Lit. One eye does not see the other eye*
> *'It's as dark as night'*
> *Framing: loss-framing*
> *Speech Act Function: complaint*

This proverb is used metaphorically when there is too much dark. There is no American proverb as an equivalent to this Persian proverb but there is an idiom, It's as dark as night, that conveys the same message.

> (14) American proverb
> *An **eye** for an **eye**, a tooth for a tooth (Mieder -P.190)*
> *Framing: gain-framing*
> *Speech Act Function: indirect warning*

This proverb is metaphorical. It suggests that when someone inflicts harm, the fitting response is to mete out a comparable harm in return. In Islam, this principle is known as Qiṣāṣ, as outlined in Quran 2:178: "O you who have believed, it is ordained for

you to seek legal retribution (Qisas) for those who have been murdered – life for life, slave for slave, and female for female".

(15) American Proverb
*Blue **eyes**, true **eyes** (Mieder-P.190)*
*Framing: Gain-framing*
*Speech Act Function: Statement*

This proverb conveys the idea that individuals with blue eyes are often regarded as trustworthy and reliable. This proverb includes metonymy, using the color of one's eyes (blue eyes) to symbolize their integrity and character. Similarly, there is a Persian equivalent indicating that outward appearances may not necessarily mirror someone's true character or inner goodness.

(16) Persian Equivalent
سینه سپید، دل نیکو، پوستین سیاه، عکس دل و دین بد
Sineh sepid, del niku, pustin siāh, aks-e del o din bad
Chest white, heart good, skin black, image heart and religion bad
Lit. A white chest, a good heart; a black cloak, a bad reflection of heart and religion

(17) American proverb
*It is better to get something in your **eye** and then wink than to wink and then get something in your **eye** (Mieder-P.190)*
*Framing: avoidance-framing*
*Speech Act Function: indirect advice*

This proverb uses a metaphor to emphasize the significance of taking proactive steps to prevent potential negative outcomes. There is a Persian proverb that shows the importance of preparation before a problem comes up.

(18) Persian Equivalent
علاج واقعه را قبل از وقوع باید کرد
*ʔalâʤ-e vâqeʔe rā qabl az voquʔ bāyad*
*Remedy-EZ incident OM before occurrence must*
*SUBJ.do.3SG*

*Lit. The incident must be remedied before it occurs*
*'It is better to avoid trouble'*

(19) American proverb
*No **eye** like the master's **eye** (Mieder-P.191)*
*Framing: avoidance-framing*
*Speech Act Function: indirect advice*

This proverb is used when an individual in a position of authority or possessing the most expertise is well-informed and in control of a situation. This proverb contains a metaphor that shows that people with high rankings and powers can easily guide others just with their supervision.

E. Double Nose

There is no double nose in Persian dictionary of Jamshidi-pour.

(20) American proverb
*A person who looks down his **nose** at people will never see beyond that **nose** (Mieder- P.432)*
*Framing: Loss-framing*
*Speech Act Function: indirect advice*

This proverb expresses that there are some individuals who look at others from a high position. There is a corresponding Persian proverb that metaphorically shows an identical message but with only one nose available in the proverb. It is frequently used to criticize someone who is displaying shortsightedness and is unable to foresee the future.

(21)
نوک دماغش را می بیند
*Nok-e damāq aš rā mibinad*
*Head-EZ nose POSS.ADJ OM IPFV.see.3SG*
*Lit. He/ she can just see his/her tip of nose*
*'He can't see beyond the end of his nose'*

## 3.4. Proverbs including two different sensory body parts

A. Hand and Mouth

> (22) Persian Parable
> به درویش گفتند بساط برچین **دست** بر **دهان** گذاشت (Jamshidipour-P.55)
> *Be darviš goftand basāt barcin dast bar dahān gozāšt*
> *Lit. They told to the dervish to take your stuff, he put his* **hand** *over his* **mouth**
> *Framing: avoidance-framing*
> *Speech Act Function: indirect advice*

This proverb offers guidance and puts emphasis on the hypocrisy of advocating humility without practicing it oneself.

> (23) Persian Proverb
> دستش به **دهنش** می رسد (Jamshidipour-P.131)
> *Dastaš be dahānaš miresad*
> *Hand-POSS.ADJ to mouth-POSS.ADJ reach*
> *Lit. His* **hand** *reaches his* **mouth**
> *'He's got a knack for it'*
> *Framing: gain-framing*
> *Speech Act Function: statement*

This proverb includes a metaphor to describe someone's high level in financial status. So, it shows a person who does not need the help of others because s/he is prosperous, self-reliant, and rich.

> (24) American proverb
> *Divine are many* **hands***; cursed are many* **mouth** *(Mieder-P.275)*
> *Framing: gain-framing*
> *Speech Act Function: statement*

This proverb shows the importance of engaging in acts of kindness rather than merely speaking or making promises. Conversely, using words to make empty commitments can lead to negative consequence. In this proverb, "many hands" and "many mouths" refer to people's actions and words, respectively, suggesting a

comparison between the divine and cursed aspects of human behavior. There is a Persian idiom conveying a similar message.

(25) Persian Equivalent
به عمل کار برآید به سخنرانی نیست
be amal kar barayad be soxanrani nist
Lit. Deeds are better than words

(26) American proverb
*The man with the lazy **hand** has an empty **mouth** (Mieder-P.277)*
*Framing: loss-framing*
*Speech Act Function: indirect advice*

This proverb shows that individuals who lack motivation (symbolized by the "lazy hand") are less likely to achieve success and may have little to show for their lack of action (an "empty mouth" denoting a lack of tangible results). So, in this proverb, "lazy hand" shows the idea of a lack of effort, and "empty mouth" shows a lack of success.

(27) American proverb
*When the **hand** ceases to scatter, the **mouth** ceases to praise (Mieder-P.277)*
*Framing: loss-framing*
*Speech Act Function: statement*

This proverb shows that if a person becomes more selfish and stops sharing their resource, they receive less of the positive recognition and appreciation. In Persian, there is an equivalent that shows that generosity is a mutually beneficial act that positively affects both the giver and the receiver.

(28) Persian Equivalent
دست بخشش را بستن، دل گشاینده را بستن
Dast-e baxeš rā bastan, del-e gošāyande rā bastan.
Closing the hand of giving is closing the heart of receiving

(29) American proverb
*When you get your **hand** in a bear's **mouth**, you'd better*
*work easy until you get it out (Mieder-P.277)*
*Framing: avoidance-framing*
*Speech Act Function: Indirect warning*

This proverb indirectly warns against acting without thinking
by comparing it to the danger of putting your hand in a bear's
mouth. It shows that one should avoid making quick decisions
without considering the consequences.

B. Hand and Eye

(30) Persian Proverb
**دست** کار می‌کند **چشم** می‌ترسد *(Jamshidipour-P.131)*
*Dast kār mikonad cašm mitarsad*
*Hand work-PRS eye fear-PRS*
*Lit. The hand works, the eye is afraid*
*'Walking on eggshells'*
*Framing: avoidance-framing*
*Speech Act Function: statement*

This proverb shows that despite being physically engaged in a
task, someone's mind is preoccupied with anxiety, worry, or fear.
So, "the hand works" and "the eye is anxious" straightforward-
ly symbolize the physical actions and the emotional state of an
individual.

(31) American proverbs
*The **eye** of the master does more than his **hand**= The **eye** of a*
*master will do more work than both his **hands** (Mieder-P.191*
*& P.276)*
*Framing: Gain-framing*
*Speech Act Function: statement*

In this proverb, 'the eye of the master' shows the ability of mas-
ters to oversee and guide, and the hand of the master represents
the work the master does. There is a similar Persian saying which
emphasizes that supervision is important for achieving success.

(32) Persian Equivalent
چشم و راه پدر می افکند
*Cašm o rāh-e pedar rah mifekand*
*Lit.The eye and guidance of the father paves the way*

(33) American proverb
*The **hand** is quicker than the **eye** (Mieder-P.276)*
*Framing: gain-framing*
*Speech Act Function: statement*

This proverb expresses that the human hand, during physical activity, can be exceptionally swift and proficient, making it difficult for observers to perceive and fully understand the intricacies of the hand's actions solely through visual observation. In this proverb, "the hand" directly represents physical actions, while "the eye" directly represents the act of seeing or visual perception.

C. Hand and Ear

(34) Persian Proverbial Saying
*(Jamshidipour-P.130)* **دست** بر سر و **گوش** کسی کشیدن
*Dast bar sar o guš-e kasi kešidan*
*Hand on head and ear-EZ someone touch. GERUND*
*Lit. to put one's **hand** on someone's head and **ear***
*'to have someone eating out of your hand'*
*Framing: gain-framing*
*Speech Act Function: statement*

This proverb seems to imply a situation where one person assumes the role of a mentor, leader, or holds authority over another. It uses metaphor to illustrate the idea of power and guidance. Additionally, it can also be used ironically to slightly improve someone's image or to fix and tidy something up.

D. Hand and Tongue

(35) American proverb
*A long **tongue** has a short **hand**= A long tongue is a sign of a short hand (Mieder-P.603)*

*Framing: Loss-framing*
*Speech Act Function: compliant*

This proverb shows that "a long tongue" and "a short hand" are used directly to symbolize excessive talk and a lack of action.

(36) American proverb
*He who has not a good **tongue** needs to have good **hands** (Mieder-P.604)*
*Framing: Loss-framing*
*Speech Act Function: Indirect advice*

This proverb shows that if someone does not have the ability to persuade others through speech, they should ensure they possess the necessary skills to achieve their goals through practical actions. Here, "a good tongue" and "good hands" directly symbolize effective communication and practical abilities.

E. Mouth and Tongue

(37) Persian Proverbial Saying
(*Jamshidipour-P.146*)زبان دهان کسی گذاشتن
*Zaban be dahān-e kasi gozāštan*
*Tongue to mouth-ez someone put*
*Lit. To put someone's tongue in someone's mouth*
*'To put words in someone's mouth'*
*Framing: avoidance-framing*
*Speech Act Function: complain*

This proverb figuratively signifies speaking on behalf of someone or advocating for them, often without their consent or against their wishes.

(38) American proverb
*Whosoever keeps his **mouth** and his **tongue** keeps his soul from trouble*
*Framing: gain-framing*
*Speech Act Function: indirect advice*

This proverb implies that exercising self-discipline and being careful with one's words can prevent and sidestep various problems and conflicts. There is a Persian equivalent conveying the same message.

(39) Persian Equivalent
هزار لب خموش بهتر از یک لب خندان
*Hezār lab-e xāmuš behtar az yek lab-e xandān*
*Lit. A silent mouth is better than a smiling mouth a thousand times*

F. Mouth and Eye

(40) American proverb
*Keep your **mouth** shut and your **eyes** open (Mieder- P.190 & P.420)*
*Framing: gain-framing*
*Speech Act Function: direct advice*

This proverb advises people to be cautious and refrain from speaking impulsively or disclosing excessive details. In addition, there is an idiom in Persian culture that puts emphasis on speaking only when necessary and being mindful about divulging excessive information.

(41) Persian Equivalent
گوش بزن، چشم ببند
*Guš bezan, cašm beband,*
*Lit. Listen, but close your eyes.*

G. Eye and Ear

(42) American proverb
*It is better to trust the **eye** than the **ear** (Mieder- P.190)*
*Framing: gain-framing*
*Speech Act Function: Indirect advice*

This proverb implies that direct experience and personal observation hold more reliability and trustworthiness compared to information gained through spoken words or rumors, and it emphasizes the superiority of firsthand, experiential knowledge over secondhand or verbal information.

(43) American proverb
*One **eye** has more faith than two **ears** (Mieder- P.190)*
*Framing: gain-framing*
*Speech Act Function: indirect advice*

This proverb expresses that seeing something with your own eyes is often a more reliable and credible source of knowledge because it is less susceptible to the inaccuracies and biases of spoken words. There is a Persian proverb that conveys the idea that visual evidence and firsthand observation are more trustworthy and purer compared to information received through the ears or verbal communication.

(44) Persian Equivalent
چشم از گوش پاکتر است
*cašm az guš pāktar ast*
*Lit. The eye is cleaner than the ear*

H. Ear and Tongue

(45) American proverb
*A pair of good **ears** will drain dry a hundred **tongues** (Mieder- P.173)*
*Framing: gain-framing*
*Speech Act Function: indirect advice*

This proverb highlights the strength of listening, as more valuable than talking. There is a Persian proverb that conveys a similar concept, emphasizing that listening and understanding are more valuable than talking excessively.

(46) Persian Equivalent
یک گوش بهتر از صد زبان

*Yek guš behtar az sad zabān*
*Lit. One good ear is better than a hundred tongues*

(47) American proverb
*The **tongue** offends, and the **ears** get the cuffing (Mieder-*
*P.605)*
*Framing: loss-framing*
*Speech Act Function: statement*

In this proverb, "cuffing" metaphorically shows the opposite consequences or reactions that might result from unkind words spoken by humans.

(48) American proverb
*Have a wide **ear** and a short **tongue** (Mieder- P.173)*
*Framing: gain-framing*
*Speech Act Function: direct advice*

The metaphor in this proverb is the "wide ear" which shows the skill of being an attentive and open-minded listener, and the "short tongue" shows the act of speaking thoughtfully.

I. Ear and Mouth

(49) American proverb
*An open **ear** and a closed **mouth** is the best known substitu-*
*tion for wisdom (Mieder- P.173)*
*Framing: gain-framing*
*Speech Act Function: indirect advice*

This proverb shows that an individual who takes others' advice, and refrains from unnecessary actions, is often considered wise. The "open ear" shows the ability to listen attentively while the "closed mouth" shows the importance of speaking thoughtfully and with self-restraint.

## 4. *Data Analysis*

To answer the first and second questions, a total of 38 embodiment proverbs were analyzed in this research, including 12 Persian embodiment proverbs and 26 American embodiment proverbs. According to Table 1, the total number of Persian embodiment proverbs including double hand, tongue, ear, eye and nose are 3, 1, 1, 2, 0, respectively. For the American embodiment proverbs including double hand, tongue, ear, eye and nose, the corresponding numbers are 5, 0, 0, 4, 1, respectively. This indicates that 17 (out of 38) proverbs included the same sensory body organs.

Table 1. Embodiment proverbs including two same body organs

| Body parts | Hand | Tongue | Ear | Eye | Nose |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Persian Proverbs | 3 | 1 | 1 | 2 | - |
| American proverbs | 5 | - | - | 4 | 1 |
| Total frequency | 8 | 1 | 1 | 6 | 1 |

Thus, the total numbers of proverbs involving double *hand* and *eye* in American and Persian proverbs are 8 and 6, respectively. It shows that the hand and the eye appear more frequently than other sensory body organs. According to Table 1, the total number of Persian and American embodiment proverbs including two same body organs in each proverb is 17 out of 38 proverbs.

According to Appendices 1 and 2, there are 21 proverbs out of the 38 that include two different body organs, with the most frequent combinations being 'hand & mouth', 'hand & eye', 'ear & tongue' and 'mouth & tongue'. The results suggest that *hand* and *mouth* are the most frequent different body organs that have been used in proverbs, indicating the hand's ability to interact with all body organs especially other main sensory body organs such as the eye, ear, nose and especially mouth (tongue)

For research question 3, the speech act functions in Persian proverbs are statement (5), indirect advice (4), complaint (2), direct advice (1), and there was no direct or indirect warning. The speech act functions in American proverbs are indirect advice (12), statement (8), direct advice (3), indirect warning (2), complain (1), and no direct warnings.

Persian proverbs: statement > indirect advice > complaint > direct advice

American proverbs: indirect advice > statement > direct advice > indirect warning > complaint

To answer research question 4, the framing in Persian proverbs is avoidance-framing (5), gain-framing (4), and loss-framing (3), but the speech acts of function in American proverbs are gain-framing (16), loss-framing (6) and avoidance-framing (4).

Persian proverbs: Avoidance-framing > Gain-framing >Loss-framing

American proverbs: Gain-framing > Loss-framing > Avoidance-framing

To answer research question 5, the figurative elements in Persian and American proverbs predominantly include metaphor and metonymy. Body organs are used not only as parts of the whole (human) but also metaphorically to convey a broader meaning.

The data analysis also indicates that there are American and Persian proverbs that share the same meaning and the same body parts are used in the proverbs as demonstrated by the examples 20 (21), 27 (28), 31 (32), 43 (44), and 45 (46). However certain Persian proverbs share similar meanings with American proverbs, but they employ different body parts, as illustrated in example 15 (16). According to example 40 (41), it is interesting that the American proverb advises closing the 'mouth' and opening the 'eye' to be cautious, while the Persian proverb suggests closing the 'eye' and using the ear instead of the mouth to imply that if we hear or see something secret, we should act as if we have not observed it. There are also some Persian equivalents for American proverbs, as illustrated in examples 7 (8), 17 (18), 24 (25) and 38 (39). However, these Persian equivalents do not include any body organ but convey the same meaning as the American proverbs.

## 5. Conclusion

The analysis of the proverbs above show that the sensory body parts, the 'hand' and the 'mouth' are often regarded as the most crucial and prominent aspects of the human body in both Persian

and American proverbs. In certain cases, the human body is utilized to depict humanity more broadly. The metonymic parts of these proverbs involve associating the actions or characteristics of specific body parts with the broader behavior or nature of humans. However, all American proverbs include both metaphor and metonymy, while all Persian proverbs include only metaphor and not metonymy. The most common speech acts functions that are used in Persian proverbs are statements and indirect advice, while in American proverbs, indirect advice is predominant. There were no direct warnings in either Persian and American proverbs. The framing in Persian proverbs is avoidance-framing, while in American proverbs, it is gain-framing. However, the hand has been used with ear only in Persian proverbs and it has been used with the tongue only in American proverbs, but hand has not been used with nose either in Persian or American proverbs. The human body parts 'hand' and 'eye' as the *same* sensory body parts can be considered the most important and most salient parts of the body used both in Persian and American proverbs. However, 'hand' and 'mouth' as *different* body organs are the most frequently used body organs in Persian and American proverbs. Finally, the hand is the most frequent sensory body organ used with the sensory body organs mouth and eye in both Persian and American proverbs.

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*Appendix 1.*

| Persian Proverbs | | Frequency |
|---|---|---|
| *Body Part* | *HAND & MOUTH* | *2* |
| | *HAND & EYE* | *1* |
| | *HAND & EAR* | *1* |
| | *MOUTH & TONGUE* | *1* |

*Appendix 2.*

| American proverbs | | Frequency |
|---|---|---|
| *Body Part* | *HAND & MOUTH* | *4* |
| | *HAND & EYE* | *2* |
| | *HAND & TONGUE* | *2* |
| | *MOUTH & TONGUE* | *1* |
| | *MOUTH & EYE* | *1* |
| | *MOUTH & EAR* | *1* |
| | *EYE & EAR* | *2* |
| | *EAR & TONGUE* | *3* |

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# OPPOSITENESS IN PROVERBS. A CONTRASTIVE STUDY OF ENGLISH PROVERBS WITH THEIR SPANISH AND ROMANIAN EQUIVALENTS

*Abstract:* The aim of the study is to emphasize the importance of antonymy in proverbs through the analysis of opposite relationships of words within English proverbs and comparing them with their equivalents in Spanish and Romanian. Based on a semantic perspective, a classification of opposites has been established and the English proverbs selected from the corpus categorized accordingly. Subsequently, the English proverbs containing opposites have been contrasted with their Spanish and Romanian equivalent proverbs. The objective is to analyse the equality, near-equality, or equivalence of oppositeness found in the proverbs extracted from the corpus in all three languages. The study examines if the Spanish and Romanian equivalents of the English head proverbs also contain pairs of opposite words and if they can be classified in the same group of opposites. Thus, the similarity or equality of oppositeness in the proverbs across the three languages is analysed and contrasted. The quantitative results of the study are presented in this paper, along with reflections that have emerged from the research.

*Keywords*: oppositeness, proverbs, contrastive analysis, English, Spanish and Romanian proverbs containing opposites

## 1. Introduction

Oppositeness has a "unique fascination" as Cruse (1986: 197) noted. It is obvious that we live with and are surrounded by ant-

onyms. Just think of an ordinary day of our everyday life. Most people wake, turn the light on, get off the bed, put their clothes on, go out for work, hop on/off the bus, sit down, stand up, and so on. Then they go back home, take their clothes off, get into bed, turn the light off, etc. Our entire life is based on reversed activities implying opposites of different kind. We turn the TV on and off, we see or hear good and bad news, we use hot and cold water, we have a left and a right hand, we are sad or happy, short or tall, rich or poor, we have bitter or sweet memories, and the list can go on and on. Cruse (2000: 167) considers that "oppositeness is perhaps the only sense relation to receive direct lexical recognition in everyday language." Similarly, Jones (2002: 181) states that "it is no exaggeration to say that antonyms are a ubiquitous part of everyday language and culture."

In languages, antonyms are those correlative words between which a relation of semantic oppositeness is established. Commonly, antonyms are defined as words with opposite meaning, terms, which are the opposite or antithesis of another counter terms. They exist in the form of pairs of words having a standard value. In fact, Jones (2002: 179) defines antonyms as "pairs of words which contrast along a given semantic scale and frequently function in a coordinated and ancillary fashion such that they become lexically enshrined as 'opposites.'" Furthermore, Palmer (1981: 94) states that "antonymy is a regular and very natural feature of language and can be defined fairly precisely." For that reason, Murphy (2003: 40) considers that universality is one of the features of antonymy and implies the fact that it is a semantic relation relevant to the description of any language's lexicon, because antonymy is "arguably the archetypical lexical semantic relation" (Cruse 2000: 169). Moroianu (2008: 7) classifies antonyms into five groups:

  - lexical antonymy, represented by words opposed in meaning;
  - prefixal antonymy, established mainly between homolexemic words prefixed with prefixes opposed in meaning;
  - affixal antonymy, established between prefixes or suffixes which give birth to antonymous terms, most of them being scientific terms;

- phraseological antonymy, established between phraseological units;
- mixed antonymy, the lexical-phraseological antonymy, established between words and expressions, usually within the same morphological class.

Although most attention has been dedicated to prefixation in the process of coining pairs of antonyms (for example, Bauer et al. 2015), some authors, such as Sánchez Fajardo (2020) studies the analogical suffixation of paired antonyms in English. This linguistic formation process has been described in Hungarian (Rounds 2013), in Russian and Uzbek (Žanpera et al. 2020) and Croatian (Yuldoshevna and Suleymanovna 2021).

Opposites of various types are to be met frequently in English phraseology. In fact, opposites appear in a great number of phrases and proverbs, e.g. *day and night*, *by yea and no* (archaic), *through thick and thin*, *to put this and that together*, *the short and the long of it*, *to take for better or worse*, *from top to bottom*, *Good to begin, better to end well*, *Make your enemy your friend*, *The buyer needs a hundred eyes, the seller but one*, *If you love the boll, you cannot hate branches*, *Not so good to borrow, as to be able to lend*, etc. Various types of oppositeness relations are established not only within proverbs, but also between proverbs. There are antonymous proverbs such as *Where there's a will there's a way* versus *You can't have your cake and eat it too*; *Look before you leap* versus *He who hesitates is lost*; *Too many cooks spoil the broth* versus *Many hands make light work*; *You can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear* versus *Clothes make the man*; *The cowl does not make the monk* versus *Fine feathers make fine birds*; *Absence makes the heart grow fonder* versus *Out of sight, out of mind*, etc. According to Gao and Zheng (2014: 237), "when antonyms are used in proverbs, the rhetorical effect of phonological harmony, formal beauty and conciseness are achieved."

In this study, the oppositeness relations of antonymous word pairs within English proverbs are analysed and these proverbs are grouped according to the types of opposites they include. Following this, a comparison is made between these English proverbs and their Spanish and Romanian equivalents to exam-

ine the inclusion of oppositeness relations. The aim of the contrastive analysis is to answer the following questions: Do the Spanish and Romanian equivalent proverbs corresponding to an English head proverb that contains a pair of opposite terms also include a pair of opposites? And do the opposite terms present in the Spanish and Romanian equivalent proverbs belong to the same group of opposites as the ones found in the English head proverb? Our intention is to discover the extent to which the similarities of the oppositeness relations found in the three languages overshadow or, conversely, are eclipsed by the differences in the same relations of oppositeness. Therefore, our major interest is in analysing the equality, near equality, or equivalence of oppositeness relations found in the proverbs extracted in our corpus in the three languages. This paper develops the quantitative part of the study and provides some reflections, which emerged from the results.

## 2. The study

### 2.1. Corpus

The main sources which provide the corpus of this study were the following bi/multilingual works. We present them with the related abbreviations used and their corresponding number of proverbs between brackets, when provided by the author:

FLO (3246): Flonta, Teodor (2001). *A Dictionary of English and Romance Languages Equivalent Proverbs.* DeProverbio.com.

ISC: Iscla Rovira, Luis (1995). *English Proverbs and Their Near Equivalents in Spanish, French, Italian and Latin*. New York: Peter Lang.

CAR (700): Carbonell Basset, Delfín (2005). *The New Dictionary of Current Sayings and Proverbs, Spanish and English*. Barcelona: Ediciones de Serbal.

LEF (2313): Lefter, Virgil (2002). *Dicţionar de proverbe englez-român şi românenglez.* Bucharest: Teora.

SEV (1001): Sevilla Muñoz, Julia and Jesús Cantera Ortiz de Urbina (2001). *1.001 Refranes españoles con su corre-*

*spondencia en ocho lenguas (alemán, árabe, francés, inglés, italiano, polaco, provenzal y ruso)*. Madrid: Ediciones Internacionales Universitarias.

GHE (364): Gheorghe, Gabriel (1986). *Proverbele românești și proverbele lumii romanice*. Bucharest: Albatros.

The starting point was selecting all the English proverbs including opposite words from the FLO dictionary. The FLO dictionary was chosen as the main source of our corpus for two reasons: on the one hand, it assembles the largest number of proverbs among the listed dictionaries; and, on the other hand, it includes equivalent proverbs in five national Romance languages: French, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese and Romanian. This inclusion covers the other two languages besides English that are the focus of our work. The CAR and LEF dictionaries are bilingual, showing English proverbs with their equivalents in only one of the other two languages of interest. The other dictionaries—ISC, SEV and GHE—are multilingual, but in each of them one of the three languages we are interested in is missing: Romanian is missing in ISC and SEV, and English in GHE, which includes only proverbs in Romance languages.

Out of the 3,246 English proverbs recorded in the FLO dictionary, 471 proverbs containing at least one pair of opposite words were selected. This count includes 28 proverbs that repeat because they contain more than one pair of opposites. From these 471 English proverbs, 70 were excluded because the opposites they included could not be classified according to the six types of opposites listed in the Methodology section.

When no equivalent Spanish or Romanian proverb was provided by the FLO dictionary, other sources were consulted to find an equivalent. These sources were also consulted in order to identify variants of one proverb. The 471 English proverbs, along with their English variants and their Spanish and Romanian equivalent proverbs, make a total of 1,532 analysed proverbs. If we add the 70 unclassified English proverbs mentioned above, it means that 1,602 proverbs (English, Spanish and Romanian) were included in our study.

## 2.2. Methodology

Our classification of the proverbs is based on the opposites' categorization from a semantic point of view, since this classification makes a direct reference to the oppositeness relations established between lexical units. In order to establish our classification, two proposals for the categorization of opposites have been used. On the one hand, Löbner's (2002: 88-93) description of opposites in five groups:

    a) antonyms (pairs of opposites which admit intermediate terms between them), e.g. big-small, good-bad, rich-poor, long-short, hot-cold, young-old, difficult-easy, etc.

    b) complementaries (pairs of opposites between which no intermediate term is admitted), e.g. male-female, war-peace, alive-dead, single-married, on-off, true-false, possible-impossible, etc.

    c) directional opposites (opposites implying a certain axis and a point of orientation), e.g. up-down, front-back, north-south, above-below, left-right, here-there, etc.

    d) converses (opposites implying a reversed relation), e.g. husband-wife, debtor-creditor, sell-buy, give-take, offer-accept, etc.

    e) heteronyms (opposites involving more than two words), e.g. Monday-Tuesday-Wednesday, red-green-blue, etc.

On the other hand, one more group has been added, reversives, which was included in Cruse's (2000: 171) classification of opposites:

    f) reversives (opposites denoting movement, change in opposite directions), e.g. read-write, pack-unpack, dress-undress, enter-exit, etc.

According to these types of opposites, English proverbs with their equivalents in Spanish and Romanian languages have been classified into six main groups: proverbs including antonyms, proverbs including complementaries, proverbs including directional opposites, proverbs including converses, proverbs including reversives and proverbs including heteronyms.

    In order to represent the corresponding relations of oppositeness found in the selected proverbs in the three languages under

study and the corresponding connections among them, a system of formulae has been implemented. As it can be seen in Table 1, the corresponding relations of oppositeness identified in the three languages have been transcribed through 32 distinct formulae (see complete formula column). Since our major interest is in the equality, near-equality, or equivalence of the relations of oppositeness identified in the three languages, the complete formulae have been reduced to simpler forms (see the reduced formula column) in order to clearly illustrate the main relations between languages.

Table 1: Corresponding relations of oppositeness in the three languages formulae

|   | COMPLETE FORMULA | FORMULA INTERPRETATION | REDUCED FORMULA |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | E = S ≠ R [-] | Equal relations of oppositeness in English and Spanish. No Romanian equivalent. | E = S |
| 2 | E ≠ (S[-] = R[-]) | No Spanish and no Romanian equivalent proverbs. | S = R = [-] |
| 3 | E = S = R | Equal relations of oppositeness in English, Spanish and Romanian. | E = S = R |
| 4 | E (≠ S[-]) = R | Equal relations of oppositeness in English and Romanian. No Spanish equivalent proverbs. | E = R |
| 5 | E = S ≠ R[0] | Equal relations of oppositeness in English and Spanish. Zero relation of oppositeness in the Romanian proverb. | E = S |
| 6 | E ≠ S[0] ≠ R[-] | Zero relation of oppositeness in the Spanish proverb. No Romanian equivalent proverb. | E ≠ S |
| 7 | E ≠ S[-] ≠ R[0] | No Spanish equivalent proverb. Zero relation of oppositeness in the Romanian proverb. | E ≠ R |
| 8 | E ≈ S ≠ R[-] | Near-equal relations of oppositeness in English and Spanish. No Romanian equivalent. | E ≈ S |
| 9 | E ≠ (S[0] = R[0]) | Zero relations of oppositeness in the Spanish and the Romanian proverbs. | S = R = [0] |

| 10 | E <=> S = R | Equivalent relations of oppositeness in English and Spanish. Equal relations of oppositeness in English and Romanian. | E <=> S = R |
| 11 | E = S <=> R | Equal relations of oppositeness in English and Spanish. Equivalent relations of oppositeness in English and Romanian. | E = S <=> R |
| 12 | E = S ≠ R | Equal relations of oppositeness in English and Spanish, different from the relation of oppositeness found in the Romanian proverb. | E = S |
| 13 | E <=> S ≠ R[-] | Equivalent relations of oppositeness in English and Spanish. No Romanian equivalent proverb. | E <=> S |
| 14 | E(≠S) = R | Equal relations of oppositeness in English and Romanian, different from the relation of oppositeness found in the Spanish proverb. | E = R |
| 15 | E <=> S <=> R | Equivalent relations of oppositeness in English, Spanish and Romanian. | E <=> S <=> R |
| 16 | E (≠S[0]) = R | Equal relations of oppositeness in English and Romanian. Zero relation of oppositeness in the Spanish proverb. | E = R |
| 17 | E <=> S ≠ R[0] | Equivalent relations of oppositeness in English and Spanish. Zero relation of oppositeness in the Romanian proverb. | E <=> S |
| 18 | E ≠ S ≠ R[-] | Different relations of oppositeness in English and Spanish. No Romanian equivalent proverb. | E ≠ S |
| 19 | E ≠ (S= R) | Equal relations of oppositeness in Spanish and Romanian, different from the one found in the English proverb. | S = R |
| 20 | E ≠ S[-] ≠ R | Different relations of oppositeness in English and Romanian. No Spanish equivalent proverb. | E ≠ R |
| 21 | E (≠ S[-]) <=> R | Equivalent relations of oppositeness in English and Romanian. No Spanish equivalent proverb. | E <=> R |
| 22 | E ≠ S ≠ R[0] | Different relations of oppositeness in English and Spanish. Zero relation of oppositeness in the Romanian proverb. | E ≠ S ≠ R |

| 23 | E ≈ (S = R) | Equal relations of oppositeness in Spanish and Romanian, near-equal to the relation of oppositeness in English. | E ≈ (S = R) |
|----|-------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| 24 | E ≈S ≠ R[0] | Near-equal relations of oppositeness in English and Spanish. Zero relation of oppositeness in the Romanian proverb. | E ≈S |
| 25 | E ≠ (S <=> R) | Equivalent relations of oppositeness in Spanish and Romanian, different from the relation of oppositeness found in the English proverb. | S <=> R |
| 26 | E ≠ S[0] ≠ R | Different relations of oppositeness in English and Romanian. Zero relation of oppositeness in the Spanish proverb. | E ≠ S ≠ R |
| 27 | E (≠ S[-]) ≈ R | Near-equal relations of oppositeness in English and Romanian. Zero relation of oppositeness in the Spanish proverb. | E ≈ R |
| 28 | E =S ≈ R | Equal relations of oppositeness in English and Spanish, near-equal to the one found in Romanian. | E =S ≈ R |
| 29 | E ≈ S ≈ R | Near-equal relations of oppositeness in English, Spanish and Romanian. | E ≈ S ≈ R |
| 30 | E ≈ S <=> R | Near-equal relations of oppositeness in English and Spanish, equivalent to the one found in Romanian. | E ≈ S <=> R |
| 31 | E ≈ S = R | Near-equal relations of oppositeness in English and Spanish, equal to the one found in Romanian. | E ≈ S = R |
| 32 | E <=> S ≠ R | Equivalent relations of oppositeness in English and Spanish, different from the relation of oppositeness found in the Romanian proverb. | E <=> S |

Here is an explanatory chart of all the symbols used in our analysis's formulae:

Table 2: Explanatory chart of symbols

| SYMBOL | MEANING | COMMENT |
|---|---|---|
| = | Equal (totally equivalent) to | When the same relation of oppositeness found in the English proverb appears in its equivalent Spanish or Romanian proverb. |
| ≈ | Near-equal | When the relation of oppositeness in one language is nearly totally equivalent to the relation of oppositeness in the other language. |
| <=> | Equivalent to | When the same relation of oppositeness found in the English proverb appears in its equivalent Spanish and/or Romanian proverb, but the terms are not totally equal. |
| ≠ | Different from | When the relation of oppositeness in one language is different from the (non)existing or the [0] relation of oppositeness in the other language(s). |
| [-] | No equivalent proverb | Used when no equivalent proverb of the English head paroemia was found in the language it refers to. |
| [0] | No opposite term | It represents the missing opposite term. When a proverb and its equivalent in one of the other two contrastive languages contains no antonymic pair. |
| () | To pay attention the relations of the corresponding relation of oppositeness | When the corresponding relation of oppositeness formula can be wrongly interpreted, parentheses are used to help the reader to clearly decode the distinctions/equivalences of the oppositeness relations. |

In Table 1, we used different colours to group together formulae, or, more specifically, similar relations established among all or between two of our contrastive languages. Those formulae with a white background have been left aside because they include no equal, near-equal or equivalent relation of oppositeness between the English head proverbs and their Spanish or Romanian counterparts. Most of them contain, in their reduced forms, the '≠' symbol for different relations of oppositeness between the corresponding languages in which such a relation of oppositeness exists, e.g.: formulae number 6, 7, 18, 20, 22, 26, while this symbol does not appear in any of the coloured background reduced formulae. Even though the '=' symbol can be found in the

short forms of the second (S = R = [-]) and the ninth (S = R = [0]) formulae, its interpretation in these cases (no Spanish and no Romanian equivalent proverbs and zero relations of oppositeness in the Spanish and the Romanian proverbs respectively) leads us to the same decision of excluding them from our valid formulae. According to the similarity of the relations of oppositeness established between two or three of our languages, based on the reduced formulae, the yellow colour indicates equal, near-equal or equivalent relations of oppositeness in English, Spanish and Romanian (=/≈/<=> E & S & R); the pink colour signals equal, near-equal or equivalent relations of oppositeness in English and Spanish (=/≈/<=> E & S); the green colour indicates equal, near-equal, or equivalent relations of oppositeness in English and Romanian (=/≈/<=> E & R); and, finally, the blue colour marks equal, near-equal, or equivalent relations of oppositeness in Spanish and Romanian (=/≈/<=> S & R).

## 3. Contrastive analysis results

The initial findings focus on the number of the proverbs examined in our study. We reviewed 3,246 English proverbs, from which 471 English head proverbs were selected. These include 28 repeated proverbs that were incorporated into more than one category: 27 proverbs were included in two classes, while the proverb *Fire and water are good servants, but bad masters* was classified into three categories because it contains 3 pairs of opposites. Additionally, 70 proverbs were excluded because their opposites could not be classified according to the six types listed in the Methodology section. The 471 English proverbs, including their English variants and their Spanish and Romanian equivalents, make up the corpus of our study. This brings the total number of analysed proverbs to 1,602, distributed as follows: 649 English proverbs (counting the repeated ones mentioned above) – which include 579 proverbs, being the 471 English head proverbs with their 80 English variants, plus the 70 unclassified proverbs –, 631 Spanish proverbs and 322 Romanian proverbs.

The 471 English head proverbs were classified into six groups, according to the opposites they include. If we take a brief look at the English proverbs' classification according to the op-

posite words included in them (Table 3), it may be said that all of
the six groups of opposites are represented.

Table 3: Proverbs' class number (English)

| RANK | PROVERBS' CLASS | Nº OF PROVERBS | PERCENTAGE |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Proverbs including ANTONYMS | 254 | 53,93 % |
| 2 | Proverbs including COMPLEMENTARIES | 75 | 15,92 % |
| 3 | Proverbs including CONVERSES | 43 | 9,13 % |
| 4 | Proverbs including REVERSIVES | 34 | 7,22 % |
| 5 | Proverbs including HETERONYMS | 33 | 7,01 % |
| 6 | Proverbs including DIRECTIONALS | 32 | 6,79 % |
| TOTAL | | 471 | |

From the six types of opposites, the first one, namely that of the
antonyms, is the most productive, detaching considerably from
the other groups with 254 English proverbs, while the last one,
proverbs including directionals, is the least productive with 32
English proverbs.

Regarding the corresponding relations of oppositeness found
in the selected proverbs in the three languages, as can be seen,
the 32 formulae are listed in descending order according to their
frequency (see Table 4).

Table 4. Frequency of corresponding relations of opposite-
ness in the three languages

| | COMPLETE FORMULA | REDUCED FORMULA | FREQUENCY |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | E = S ≠ R [-] | E = S | 119 |
| 2 | E ≠ (S[-] = R[-]) | S = R = [-] | 95 |
| 3 | E = S = R | E = S = R | 89 |
| 4 | E (≠ S[-]) = R | E = R | 21 |
| 5 | E = S ≠ R[0] | E = S | 19 |
| 6 | E ≠ S[0] ≠ R[-] | E ≠ S | 19 |
| 7 | E ≠ S[-] ≠ R[0] | E ≠ R | 16 |
| 8 | E ≈ S ≠ R[-] | E ≈ S | 11 |
| 9 | E ≠ (S[0] = R[0]) | S = R = [0] | 11 |
| 10 | E <=> S = R | E <=> S = R | 9 |
| 11 | E = S <=> R | E = S <=> R | 7 |
| 12 | E = S ≠ R | E = S | 6 |
| 13 | E <=> S ≠ R[-] | E <=> S | 6 |
| 14 | E(≠S) = R | E = R | 5 |
| 15 | E <=> S <=> R | E <=> S <=> R | 5 |
| 16 | E (≠S[0]) = R | E = R | 4 |
| 17 | E <=> S ≠ R[0] | E <=> S | 3 |
| 18 | E ≠ S ≠ R[-] | E ≠ S | 3 |
| 19 | E ≠ (S= R) | S = R | 2 |
| 20 | E ≠ S[-] ≠ R | E ≠ R | 2 |
| 21 | E (≠ S[-]) <=> R | E <=> R | 2 |
| 22 | E ≠ S ≠ R[0] | E ≠ S ≠ R | 2 |
| 23 | E ≈ (S = R) | E ≈ (S = R) | 2 |
| 24 | E ≈S ≠ R[0] | E ≈S | 2 |
| 25 | E ≠ (S <=> R) | S <=> R | 2 |
| 26 | E ≠ S[0] ≠ R | E ≠ S ≠ R | 2 |
| 27 | E (≠ S[-]) ≈ R | E ≈ R | 2 |
| 28 | E =S ≈ R | E =S ≈ R | 1 |
| 29 | E ≈ S ≈ R | E ≈ S ≈ R | 1 |

| 30 | E ≈ S <=> R | E ≈ S <=> R | 1 |
| 31 | E ≈ S = R | E ≈ S = R | 1 |
| 32 | E <=> S ≠ R | E <=> S | 1 |

The results indicate that the most common formula is E = S ≠ R[-], occurring in 119 instances where the English and Spanish proverbs share equal opposites, but no Romanian equivalent is found. This is followed by 95 cases in which the head-English proverb has neither Spanish nor Romanian equivalent that could be found in our corpus, represented by the E ≠ (S[-] = R[-]) formula. Notably, perfect concordance (E = S = R) is seen in 89 instances, indicating equal opposites in all three languages. The fourth place is taken by the E (≠ S[-]) = R formula, with 21 cases in which no Spanish equivalent proverb was provided by the sources of our corpus, while the relations of oppositeness found in the English head-proverb and its Romanian equivalent are equal. The following two formulae, E = S ≠ R[0] and E ≠ S[0] ≠ R[-], occupy the same position with a frequency of 19 appearances. They are both characterized by the fact that one of the English head-proverb's equivalents contains a zero relation of oppositeness due to the lack of one or both opposite terms. Number 7 formula - E ≠ S[-] ≠ R[0] - is very similar to the previous one (E ≠ S[0] ≠ R[-]) but with less appearances, 16 instead of 19. We notice that the difference lies in the inverted situations of the Spanish and Romanian equivalents, with a '0' relation of oppositeness when they exist in the sources of our corpus. Regarding the formulae numbers 8: E ≈ S ≠ R[-] and 9: E ≠ (S[0] = R[0]), we see again an equal rate, namely 11 appearances, but this is the only particularity these two formulae have in common.

The next two formulae, E <=> S = R (9 entries) and E = S <=> R (7 entries), are very similar because they both include an equal and an equivalent relation of oppositeness. The 12th (E = S ≠ R) and the 13th (E <=> S ≠ R[-]) formulae share the same number of entries (six) and the fact that the relations of oppositeness that interest us are established in both cases between the English and the Spanish proverbs. Formulae numbers 14 (E (≠ S) = R) and 15 (E<=> S <=> R) also have the same frequency, i.e. five entries each. Moreover, the 14th one is near-equal to

the 16th with the only difference that the latter includes a zero relation of oppositeness in the Spanish proverb. E <=> S ≠ R[0] and E ≠ S ≠ R[-] formulae, corresponding to numbers 17 and 18, are connected only by the same frequency number, namely three. The following nine formulae (from 19 to 27) share an identical number of appearances, i.e. two. Last but not least, our formulae 28-32, unique by their one entry, are among the most important corresponding relation of oppositeness formulae due to the equal and equivalent relations of oppositeness established between the English head-proverbs and their Spanish and Romanian counterparts.

In the previous table, we used different colours to group together formulae, or, more specifically, similar relations established among all or between two of our contrastive languages. Formulae with a white background have been left aside because they include no equal, near-equal or equivalent relation of oppositeness between the English head proverbs and their Spanish or Romanian counterparts. Most of them contain, in their reduced forms, the ≠ symbol for different relations of oppositeness between the corresponding languages in which such a relation of oppositeness exists, e.g.: formulae number 6, 7, 18, 20, 22, 26, while this symbol does not appear in any of the formulae with coloured background. Even though the = symbol can be found in the short forms of the second (S = R = [-]) and the ninth (S = R = [0]) formulae, its interpretation in these cases (no Spanish and no Romanian equivalent proverbs and zero relations of oppositeness in the Spanish and the Romanian proverbs respectively) leads us to the same decision of excluding them.

According to the similarity of the relations of oppositeness established between two or three of the languages in this study, based on the reduced formulae, we reached the following results:

Table 5: Rates of equal/near-equal/equivalent relations of oppositeness

| COLOUR | MAIN RELATION | FREQUENCY | PERCENTAGE |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Equal/near-equal/ equivalent relations of oppositeness in English, Spanish and Romanian | 116 | 24.63 % |
| | Equal/near-equal/ equivalent relations of oppositeness in English and Spanish | 167 | 35.46 % |
| | Equal/near-equal/ equivalent relations of oppositeness in English and Romanian | 34 | 7.22 % |
| | Equal/near-equal/ equivalent relations of oppositeness in Spanish and Romanian | 4 | 0.85 % |
| **TOTAL** equal/ near-equal/ equivalent relations of oppositeness | | 321 | 68.15 % |

As it has already been explained, what interests us the most is the yellow zone, to be precise the equal/near-equal/equivalent relations of oppositeness in English, Spanish and Romanian. In our study, 116 English head proverbs establish such relationship with their Spanish and Romanian counterparts, namely:

- 89 groups[1] of proverbs have equal relations of oppositeness in English, Spanish and Romanian (E = S = R - this is the ideal formula. In 25 cases the perfect equality is due to the common biblical origin of the proverbs);

- 9 groups of proverbs have equivalent relations of oppositeness in English and Spanish, and equal relations of oppositeness in English and Romanian (E <=> S = R);

- 7 groups of proverbs have equal relations of oppositeness in English and Spanish, and equivalent relations of oppositeness in English and Romanian (E = S <=> R);

- 5 groups of proverbs have equivalent relations of oppositeness in English, Spanish and Romanian (E <=> S <=> R);

- 2 groups of proverbs have equal relations of oppositeness in Spanish and Romanian, near-equal to the relation of oppositeness in English [E ≈ (S = R)];

- 1 group of proverbs has equal relations of oppositeness in English and Spanish, near-equal to the one found in Romanian (E = S ≈ R);

- 1 group of proverbs has near-equal relations of oppositeness in English, Spanish and Romanian (E ≈ S ≈ R);

- 1 group of proverbs has near-equal relations of oppositeness in English and Spanish, equivalent to the one found in Romanian (E ≈ S <=> R);

- 1 group of proverbs has near-equal relations of oppositeness in English and Spanish, equal to the one found in Romanian (E ≈ S = R).

It draws our attention that the most representative set is the pink one, specifically, that of the equal/near-equal/equivalent relations of oppositeness in English and Spanish. Thus, 167 English proverbs contain similar relations of oppositeness to their Spanish counterparts. We have three variants: identical relations (E = S) - 144 cases; near-equal relations (E ≈ S) - 13 groups of proverbs; and equivalent relations (E <=> S) - 10 groups of proverbs.

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[1] By group of proverbs we mean an English head-proverb with its English variants and its Spanish and Romanian equivalents, which are the object of the contrastive analysis.

The third position in our ranking is occupied by the green zone, i.e. that of the equal/near-equal/equivalent relations of oppositeness in English and Romanian, with 34 occurrences. The same three variants as in the previous case appear: identical relations (E = R) - 30 groups of proverbs, being the most representative variant in this case, near-equal relations (E ≈ R) - two groups of proverbs, and equivalent relations (E<=> R) – also two groups of proverbs.

With only four occurrences, the blue area occupies the last position in our ranking, representing the equal (S = R of proverbs) relations of oppositeness in Spanish and Romanian. To these four groups of proverbs we should add the 11 cases of similarity between the two languages, both containing zero relations of oppositeness (S = R = [0]).

We have just seen that, from the 471 analysed groups of proverbs, 321 (68.15 %) are linked by at least one equal/near-equal/equivalent relation of oppositeness, combined in different ways (either the three languages together or two by two of them). This percentage represents more than a half of the total number of the analysed groups of proverbs. The rest of 150 groups of proverbs are all characterized by the fact that the relation of oppositeness identified in the English head proverb is different from the Spanish and Romanian counterparts when these exist. The difference is due to various causes, namely:

- no Spanish and no Romanian equivalent proverbs were found in the sources of our corpus (E ≠ (S[-] = R[-]);
- there is a zero relation of oppositeness in the Spanish proverb and no Romanian equivalent proverb was found in the sources of our corpus (E≠ S[-]≠ R[-]);
- no Spanish equivalent proverb was found in the sources of our corpus and there is a zero relation of oppositeness in the Romanian proverb (E ≠ S[-] ≠ R[0]);
- there are zero relations of oppositeness in the Spanish (S[0] = R[0]);
- there are different relations of oppositeness in English and Spanish and no Romanian equivalent proverb was found in the sources of our corpus (E ≠ S ≠ R[-]);

- there are different relations of oppositeness in English and Romanian and no Spanish equivalent proverb was found in the sources of our corpus (E ≠ S[-] ≠ R);
- there are different relations of oppositeness in English and Spanish while there is a zero relation of oppositeness in the Romanian proverb (E ≠ S ≠ R[0]);
- there are different relations of oppositeness in English and Romanian while there is a zero relation of oppositeness in the Spanish proverb (E ≠ S[0] ≠ R).

In the table below, the number and the percentages of the cases in which the equivalent proverb in one or both of the contrastive languages (Spanish and Romanian) is either missing or it contains a zero relation of oppositeness, are presented:

Table 6: Frequency of no or zero relations of oppositeness

| [-] / [0] RELATION OF OPPOSITE-NESS | FREQUENCY | PERCENTAGE |
|---|---|---|
| No Spanish and no Romanian equivalent proverbs | 95 | 20.17 % |
| No Spanish equivalent proverbs | 43 | 9.13 % |
| No Romanian equivalent proverbs | 158 | 33.55 % |
| Zero oppositeness in the Spanish equivalent proverb | 25 | 5.31 % |
| Zero oppositeness in the Romanian equivalent proverb | 42 | 8.92 % |
| Zero oppositeness in both the Spanish and the Romanian proverbs | 11 | 2.34 % |

## 4. Reflections on the results

The quantitative analysis of the proverbs in the three languages leads us to several reflections on the results of the research. To begin with, putting English, Spanish and Romanian languages and proverbs side by side might seem surprising at first sight. Simpson, in the Foreword of Carbonell Basset's dictionary, confesses he was surprised to find out that the proverb *It takes all sorts to make a world* came from a 17th century translation of Don Quixote into English. The author himself declares:

> I'm not sure why I wasn't expecting this: after all, English (at least since the Norman Conquest) shares much of its proverb heritage with the countries of continental Europe. (...) this European heritage of proverbs is strong. Many exist in parallel in a number of European languages, as the records of these languages show. Proverbs often arise as a response to the trials and tribulations of human existence, and the European experience meant that a proverb that was relevant to Spaniards, or to the French, may well be equally relevant to the English. (Foreword, Carbonell Bassett 2005: 11)

Although a Germanic language, let us not forget that English suffered significant influences from Latin and French. Part of Britain was under the Roman Empire in ancient times, and Latin heavily influenced the language. Later, the Norman Conquest in 1066 introduced French into English, particularly during the Middle Ages when Latin was "the language of church and of education" while French was "the language of law and of the Norman rules" (McDowall, 1989: 41). Nowadays English vocabulary is approximately half Germanic (from the Saxons and Vikings) and half Romance (from French and Latin). Similarly, Hispania was also under Germanic invasions, the Visigothic domination lasting 300 years, from 409 to 711 (del Moral, 2002: 180). This historical context explains why, despite belonging to different language families, English and Spanish share many similarities, as evidenced by the proverbs analysed in our study. It also illustrates why the pink set of proverbs representing the equal/near-equal/equivalent relations of oppositeness in English and Spanish is the most representative.

Normally, one would expect the highest rate to be represented by the blue set of proverbs, which pertains to the equal/near-equal/equivalent relations of oppositeness in Spanish and Romanian.  This expectation arises from the close kinship of these two languages, both being Romance languages with Latin as their common ancestor. Curiously, this was not the case. Interestingly, it is the green set of proverbs, i.e. those showing equal/near-equal/equivalent relations of oppositeness in English and Romanian, that surpasses the blue set. This is notable considering that English is a Germanic language and Romanian is a Romance language, unlike the direct relationship between Spanish and Romanian.

This anomaly can be attributed to the socio-linguistic and historical factors influencing the similarities among proverbs in these three languages. In fact, many of the proverbs linked by the E = S = R formula have the same biblical origin. It is also important to acknowledge the significant role of Latin in the English language, particularly since the first English translation of the Bible was overseen by John Wycliffe, an Oxford professor, who translated it from Latin, completing the work in 1396 (McDowall, 1989: 49). At the same time, as Iscla Rovira (1995: XI) observes "Latin has traditionally been a source for proverbs and aphorisms in science, medicine, law and philosophy. In addition, Latin writers collected and preserved many Oriental and Greek proverbs and sayings for posterity". Mieder also refers to these aspects:

> There is no doubt that many of our proverbs originated in classical antiquity. (...) A large number of proverbs from various ancient languages and cultures entered the Latin language and eventually reached many of the vernacular languages when medieval Latin proverbs were being translated. Proverbs like 'One hand washes the other', 'Love is blind', and 'A sound mind in a sound body' all followed this path and became translated proverbs in many languages. In fact, these classical proverbs are today some of the most widely disseminated proverbs, some of them enjoying international currency. Biblical proverbs went the same route, and such proverbs as 'Man does not live by bread alone' (Matthew, 4: 4), 'Pride goes before the fall' (Solomon, 16: 18), 'It is better to give than to receive' (Apostles, 20: 35) are known in dozens of languages. (Mieder 1993: 12-13)

Apart from the common and/or intersected roots of the three languages that make the object of our research study, we must take into consideration another very important aspect, namely the universality of proverb legacy. As Simpson (1992) observed, English shares a great part of its proverb legacy with the countries of continental Europe. Teodor Flonta is one of the paroemiologists who became aware of this reality, and his dictionary (2001) undoubtedly proves that thousands of English proverbs have their equivalents in five national Romance languages: French, Italian, Portuguese, Spanish and Romanian. The other

mentioned and used dictionaries we used in our corpus are also the living testimony of the correspondence of English proverbs with counterparts from other languages such as German, Arabian, Polish, Provencal and Russian. This makes proverbs an indisputable world patrimony. As Lomotey (2019: 161) points out, "They are universal in nature as they can be found in all societies around the world".

The proverb is usually interpreted as the expression of the outlook on world or on life. It is not at all weird or extraordinary to find the same or similar views on life among different peoples. As Álvarez Curiel (2008: 88) points out, "las lenguas, las costumbres, los modos de vida pueden ser diferentes; pero los miedos, los anhelos, los tabués de los hombres de cualquier tiempo o lugar han sido siempre los mismos".[2] Furthermore, the author adds "la conciencia, la ética, la moral y las costumbres constituyen un tejido común para el hombre de todos los tiempos sobre el que se han ido elaborando normas de conducta y de prejuicios sociales que modulan el comportamiento de la comunidad"[3] (Álvarez Curiel 2008: 134-135). Similarly, Načisčione (2022: 6) considers that "proverbs reflect the whole gamut of human thoughts and emotions, and the external world with its various personal, political, social and cultural experiences". In fact, proverbs are viewed as multidimensional language units, which form part of a cultural heritage.

John B. Carroll (qtd. in Negreanu, 1983: 56) considers that it is not plausible that the speakers of distinct languages have different concepts about the world, "in spite of the languages they speak". He believes that "there are more similarities than differences in the manner in which the linguistic codes symbolize concepts because these concepts are the result of the transactions made by the human society with a social and physical environment that has many uniformities throughout the world". Ovidiu Bârlea observes that the Romanian proverb repertoire includes

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[2]  Author's translation: "languages, customs, ways of life may be different; but the fears, the yearnings, the taboos of humans in any time or place have always been the same".
[3]  Author's translation: "conscience, ethics, morals and customs constitute a common fabric for mankind of all times on which norms of conduct and social prejudices have been elaborated, modulating the behaviour of the community".

many proverbs equivalent to the Latin ones, some of the former even seem to be the translation of the latter. No matter how tempting the hypothesis that we are in front of an inheritance transmitted at the same time with the language would be, we cannot exclude another hypothesis, that of an amazing independent creation, born out of the perception of the same reality. (Bârlea quoted in Tabarcea, 1982: 36)

Based on Carroll's theory and related to proverbs, Negreanu comes with another assumption, namely that

Due to their long use, the paroemiological units of different languages polished themselves and acquired a very concise form. We think that the identity of proverbs belonging to distinct languages - the same proverb appears in many tongues, often being a sort of a literary translation (...) - may be an argument which does not deny the hypothesis of linguistic relativity, but reduces it. (Negreanu 1983: 57)

Referring to the great number of equivalent paroemias included in his *Romanian-English Dictionary of Proverbs*, Virgil Lefter declares himself not surprised by this fact since

It is unanimously accepted that the paroemiological literature is a very mobile field in which interferences and borrowings are very frequent. At the same time, it is worth mentioning that the analogies are also due to the influence of the Romance literatures (French, Italian, Spanish) on the English culture, mainly during the Renaissance period. (Lefter 1978: 6-7)

Sevilla Muñoz and Cantera Ortiz de Urbina (2001: 17) refer to the type of proverbs included in our analysis with the syntagm "universales paremiológicos", defining them as "paremias existentes", mutatis mutandis, "en las distintas lenguas de sentido e incluso, a veces, forma muy parecida".[4] Tabarcea (1982: 36) uses a synonymous concept when talking about the "spiritual paremiologic universal" ('universal paroemiological spirit'), while Álvarez Curiel (2008: 133) gives those equivalent proverbs coming from different languages and cultures the name "refranes ge-

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[4] Author's translation: "paroemias existing in the different languages, sometimes with a very similar meaning and even a very similar form".

melos" ('twin proverbs'). Trying to explain the universality of proverbs in his *Los refranes filosóficos castellanos* (1962), Pablo León Murciego considers that the proverbs

> están extendidos por todos los países y a través de los siglos, porque siendo la Humanidad una, una la conciencia universal, y uno el orden moral, unas han de ser, en todas partes, las leyes que presiden el raciocinio, unas la inducciones y deducciones y unas, por tanto, las normas que, basadas en la razón y en la experiencia, regulen los pensamientos y acciones de los hombres. De ahí la unidad prodigiosa que tiene ese idioma mental y ese código manual.[5]
> (León Murciego 1962: 31)

The same idea is reiterated by the Moroccan paroemiologistt Boichta El Attar, as Álvarez Curiel (2008: 135) explains, this author believes that "Los refranes, como expresión de una civilización, permiten dibujar el tipo de hombre o de sociedad de donde provienen. Pero lo que es expresión de una civilización, muchas veces es reflejo de toda la humanidad".[6] At the same time Mircea Duduleanu-Pelendava (qtd. in Avram, 2002: 10-11) remarks that "Proverbs contain truth similarly or identically expressed at different peoples from wide geographical areas. This proves not only the homogeneity of the human thought on several levels, but also a strong closeness of the human spirit regarding the good relations and collaborations of peoples".

Of course, we must not ignore the fact that there are also unique proverbs, belonging exclusively to one language. These are, in our case, those English proverbs linked with Spanish and Romanian by the E ≠ (S[-] = R[-]) formula, meaning that no Spanish or Romanian equivalent proverb exist, at least not in the sources of our corpus. Nevertheless, the unicity and singularity

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[5] Author's translation: "(Proverbs) are widespread in all countries and throughout the centuries, because Humanity being one, the universal conscience being one, and the moral order being one, the laws which govern reasoning, inductions and deductions, and therefore the rules which, based on reason and experience, regulate the thoughts and actions of men, must everywhere be one and the same. Hence the prodigious unity of this mental language and this manual code".

[6] Author's translation: "Proverbs, as an expression of a civilization, allow us to draw a picture of the type of man or society they come from. But what is an expression of a civilization is often a reflection of the whole of humanity".

of a proverb is relative, meaning that, in our case, the English head proverb is not always singular and alone in the international paroemiological world; sometimes it has counterparts in other language(s).

Example 1:
English: *Bear with evil and expect good*.
Spanish: [-]
Romanian: [-]
Italian: *Soffri il male e aspetta il bene*.
Example 2:
English: *Old men go to death, death comes to young men*.
Spanish: [-]
Romanian: [-]
French: *Les vieux vont à la mort et la mort vient aux jeunes*.

Another similar and eloquent example is "the strange coincidence which builds unexpected bridges over centuries and continents" (Tabarcea, 1982: 14) represented by the equivalence of the Romanian proverb *'A ars moara dar şi şoarecii s-au dus dracului'* (lit. transl. 'Not only the mill burnt but also the mice went to hell') with its counterpart Western African Wolof proverb *'Când arde coliba, plesnesc ploşniţele'* (lit. transl. 'When the cabin burns, the bedbugs are bursting'). This near-perfect equality raises the following question which Tabarcea (1982: 14-15) launches rhetorically: "Can we even talk about a proverb having its origin in a certain language or in a particular people if there is always a possibility of discovering a parallel proverb in a culture which it is impossible to prove any filiations with?" At a more profound thought, it is true that, as Álvarez Curiel (2008: 135) explains "sucesos de idéntica o parecida índole, ocurridos en distintos países, han dado como resultado sentencias muy semejantes en el fondo, con corta diferencia en la forma".[7] Therefore, proverbs in different languages similar in form reveal instances of cultural sharing but, at the same time, they may reflect the diversity in world views.

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[7] Author's translation: "events of the same or similar nature in different countries have resulted in judgments that are very similar in substance, with little difference in form".

## 5. Conclusions

The classification of the English head proverbs according to the opposites they include indicates that, among the six types of opposites, antonyms are the most productive, though all types are represented. In addition, more than half of the total number of the analysed groups of proverbs, 321 (68.15 %) are linked by at least one equal/near-equal/equivalent relation of oppositeness, in either all three languages under study or in pairs. The remaining 150 (36.6 %) groups of proverbs are characterized by the fact that the relation of oppositeness found in the English head proverb is different from the Spanish and Romanian counterparts when these exist.

Regarding the analysis of the equal/near-equal/ equivalent relations of oppositeness, the most representative group of proverbs in our study was the pair English and Spanish with 167 proverbs, significantly more than the pair Spanish and Romanian with just 11 cases, whereas the pair English and Romanian had 34 occurrences. In total, this relation of oppositeness across the three languages under study accounted for 116 groups of proverbs. Alongside the similarities found in our contrastive language study, which imply that the three linguistic communities share paroemiological elements based on identical or analogous conceptualizations and perspectives, we must not forget those cases where, instead of similarities, differences were observed among English, Spanish and Romanian. This fact often proves the peculiarity and individuality of each language, shaped by the metaphorical structures inherent to each culture. Nevertheless, it is notable that English and Spanish, as well as English and Romanian—pairs from different linguistic families—share more proverbs in common than Spanish and Romanian, despite both being Romance languages.

There is obviously a common repertoire of proverbs shared by English, Spanish and Romanian languages and cultures. In all the cases we have analysed in this study, the similarity (often equality) among these triplets is primarily rooted in the meaning of the proverbs, the main idea and the message they convey. Sometimes similarities also arise from their structure, form, and lexicon, further reinforcing this resemblance. Therefore, we can only agree with Maurice Molho's assertion (qtd. in Álvarez Cu-

riel, 2008: 133), according to which a great number of proverbs "poseen un sello internacional y se encuentran de forma idéntica, o ligeramente cambiados, entre los pueblos más antiguos como entre los más modernos".[8] To illustrate this point, consider the following well-known proverb present in various languages, which underscores the universality of proverbs and their status as a cultural heritage of humanity, enduring across temporal and spatial boundaries:

> Latin: *Una hirundo non efficit ver*.
> English: *One swallow does not make a summer*.
> Spanish: *Una golondrina no hace verano*.
> Romanian: *Cu o floare nu se face primăvară*.
> French: *Une hirondelle ne fait pas le printemps*.
> Italian: *Una rondine non fa primavera*.
> German: *Eine Schwalbe macht noch keine Sommer.*

In this group of equivalent proverbs, we observe two notable points of similarity. First, the protagonist, which is a bird (swallow) in all languages, except in Romanian where it is a plant (*floare* '*flower*'), though fauna and flora usually go hand in hand. Second, there is a temporal reference to a season (spring in Latin, Romanian, French and Italian, and summer in English, Spanish and German) across all languages.

From these observations, we can conclude that the similarity or equality of oppositeness in the proverbs in the three languages under study is primarily based on the similarity/equivalence of the corresponding proverbs, which is largely rooted in the origins of these proverbs. On the one hand, we have those with biblical origin; on the other hand, those deriving mainly from Latin that have transcended time through translations. Additionally, there are also proverbs that have emerged from a shared perception of reality among different peoples, transcending borders and cultures.

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[8] Author's translation: "A large number of proverbs have an international character and are found in identical or slightly changed form among both ancient and modern peoples".

## *Acknowledgements*

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# PROVERBS IN COMPARISON AND CONTACT: EXAMPLES FROM THE PROVERBIAL DISCOURSE OF THE BALKANS

**Abstract:** Comparison is an inherent process in folkloristics. The inclusion of paremiology in folklore studies and the concept of proverb being a folklore genre allows the comparison of proverbs too, which are most suitable for a study of this kind. However, what needs to be defined is what comparison consists of and how it differs from other approaches like those of contrast and typology. In this paper we will try to highlight this concept and see how it is related to variation, a key feature to folklore, using examples from the proverbial discourse of the Balkan peoples. The methodology employed in this study revolves around establishing specific criteria for determining comparability among proverbs, while the examples mentioned are taking into account both the etic and the emic view regarding the interpretation of the proverbial material. The examples selected illustrate proverbs that are either directly comparable or perceived as equivalents by the folk themselves, evident in their integration into daily discourse.

**Keywords:** proverbs, folklore, comparison, contrast, typology, variation

## 1. Introductory remarks

A very popular view among folklorists since the beginning of the discipline is that a folklore phenomenon is not unique to the specific sociocultural context in which it is traced. It is generally accepted that analogies exist within cultures, something that in-

evitably leads to comparisons, and as Alan Dundes argues "one cannot know a priori what is or is not unique to a culture without seeking possible cognate phenomena in adjacent or historically related cultures" (Dundes 1986: 138).

Thus, comparison is an inherent process in folklore studies. But what does comparison in folklore studies consist of? How does it relate to the concept of variation, which is central to folklore theory, and how does it differ from contrast and typology? We will attempt to answer these questions using examples from the proverbial discourse of the Balkans. This approach aims to reveal both the etic and the emic views regarding this phenomenon: initially through the comparison a folklorist would make, and subsequently from the point of view of the *folk*, by revealing their own perception of comparison and contact of proverbs. This may even lead to the combination of proverbial material from different languages.

## 2. Theoretical framework: Comparison and Variation

The principles of comparatism may be based on the finding that similar folklore phenomena may exist in different cultures, but cross-cultural comparisons constitute only one side of the comparative approach to folklore studies. According to Robert Georges,

> …no one can be a folklorist without also being a comparatist, for finding phenomena to study and identifying those phenomena as examples of folklore or, more specifically, as examples of folksongs, folktales, folk games, folk costumes, folk art and objects, etc., require one to make numerous comparisons whatever identifying criteria one employ or whatever ordering system one utilizes – whether by genre, type, informant, informant's ethnic or occupational group, or fieldworker, for instance – comparison is required. (Georges 1986: 3-4)

Multiple existence and variation are the two main characteristics of folklore (Dundes 1999: vii-viii). The concept of variation is particularly central to folklore theory. This fact, combined with the inherent comparative dimension of folklore studies, calls for the creation of a theoretical scheme that will combine the con-

cepts of variation and comparison. Such a theory was formulated by Lauri Honko, which we believe can also be applied to proverbs.

Honko speaks of a three-dimensional comparative model under the perspectives of tradition phenomenology, tradition ecology and tradition history (Honko 1986: 111).

Regarding tradition – phenomonelogical comparisons, he thinks that "…this type of comparison reveals global categories characteristic of human culture, i.e., if they occur in different cultures in different parts of the world and are not derived from any particular historical genetic traditional basis" (Honko 1986: 111).

What these kinds of approaches point out are phenomenological categories. Such categories are the very genres of folklore. The proverb as a genre of folk speech is one such category, and this kind of comparisons are about whether it is a cross-cultural universal genre. Cross-cultural types of genres are usually a topic of academic debate. This fact concerns the etic approach to the issue. However, scholars need to be familiar with both etic and emic conceptualizations (Granbom – Herranen 2016: 324-325).

Pekka Hakamies proceeded with such a phenomenological comparison, trying to establish whether the type of proverb exists in different peoples and cultures, concluding that the conditions may exist to accept the view that there is an analytical-ideal type for the proverb in global scale (Hakamies 2016: 314).

Of course, in this case the concept of variation is linked to the phenomenon examined (proverbs in our case) and we should always remember that:

> A phenomenological category must therefore provide for the possibility of unknown future manifestations of the phenomenon that may affect the category in question. The manifestations of a phenomenon may be singled out and compared with each other or with manifestations of other phenomena, but the phenomenon as such only lends itself to an approximative, temporary definition. (Honko 1986: 113)

In the framework of tradition-ecological dimension of comparison, attention shifts, according to Honko, to three factors: the

tradition itself, the community maintaining it, and the natural environment embracing them both (Honko 1986: 116). In this case

> the variants stand in "live" relation to each other; they may be considered as being in contact with each other or dependent upon each other in the sense that they are governed by similar conditions and rules within the system. This approach tends to emphasize the importance of individuals and communities, because it is in the minds of individuals and in the values and norms of communities that systems of tradition exist. (Honko 1986: 119)

This kind of variation is extremely important because it brings to the fore the concept of communication and the perception of folklore as a communicative process (Ben-Amos 1971: 13), where the products of tradition are used in specific contexts, while at the same time highlighting the spaces of their social circulation.

The proverb genre is a representative example of this kind of variation because proverbs are used in certain contexts where morphological variation may be minimal due to their brevity, but contextual variation is observed because of the situational character of communication, and thus meaning-making may vary.

Finally, as far as the tradition-historical dimension of comparison is concerned, Lauri Honko argues that,

> Tradition-historical comparisons readily speak of culture loans, justifying this by saying that a foreign counterpart can be found for a given phenomenon. The only discussion is then of the direction of the borrowing. But this method of research is neither satisfactory nor sufficient. It is also necessary to study the nature of the loan and the use of the borrowed element in the receiving culture […] The history of tradition must be viewed as a series of expansions and regressions by populations, cultural institutions, forms of tradition, and so forth, and the accompanying assimilation. (Honko 1986: 120-121)

This kind of comparison highlight the historical dimension of the whole issue, as well as the criteria of comparability. It is not feasible to compare everything without predetermined criteria, making it essential to distinguish between comparison, contrast, and typology.

## 3. Comparison – Contrast – Typology: Issues of terminology

For a comparison to be successful, one must always clarify *what* is being compared and *how* the comparison is made. In linguistics, in addition to the term *comparison*, the term *contrast* is used, which may refer to different approaches. In a 'narrower' sense the term *contrastive* "implies a truly systematic comparison between two or more languages, on the basis of all their differences and similarities. Finally, a more restricted interpretation of 'contrastive' is also possible, in which only the differences between languages are taken into account" (Colson 2008: 194). This is the case especially in linguistics, where contrastive analysis is used mainly in tracing the differences among languages (James 1985: 2). This dual approach is why students are often asked to "compare and contrast" (Dundes 1986: 135), as comparison refers to similarities and contrast to differences.

However, as far as paremiology and paremiography are concerned, there is no clear distinction between the two terms while, at the same time, it is argued that comparison is mostly linked with diachronicity, a view shared by several scholars (Marti Solano & Rondinelli 2021). This means that contrast usually refers to the synchronic study of language or proverbs, while comparison is interested in their diachronic research, "… which takes into account the evolution of a text, or the chronological change of some aspects of a proverb text or group/class of proverbs" (Petrova 2015: 244).

This fact is extremely important regarding folkloristic comparison, because emphasis is also laid on the historical factor in folklore phenomena, that is the fact that they take place in a place and time historically defined (Meraklis 2004: 15). Such an approach also highlights the fact that while contrast may not presuppose specific criteria, this is not the case for comparison, especially when it comes to folklore phenomena (proverbs included), since the phenomena being compared must be comparable to each other in order to draw safe conclusions.

In the cases of comparative and cross-cultural approaches in particular, one must be careful not to compare for comparison sake. This means that the phenomena that are compared to each other must have some relevance, and be based on some historical

basis, especially if it comes to comparisons concerning Euro-
pean peoples. If the above conditions are not met, we should
probably talk about typology and not comparison, in the sense
that typology is more about a theoretical and abstract level of
interpretation that is not determined by spatio-temporal factors
and leads to simplifications (Puchner 2009: 235-236). Typology
is more related to contrast since it does not necessarily presup-
poses the establishment of specific criteria, as it moves mainly at
the synchronic level.

Therefore, to conduct a comparative study, it is necessary to
define comparable concepts, sufficiently defined so that compar-
ison is possible. One good example for this kind of comparison
for Greek folkloristics is the folklore of the Balkan peoples, be-
cause of the historical and geographical conditions that allow
such a comparison (Antoniadis – Bibicou 1996; Antonijević
1996), as the Balkans constitute an ethnographic area, something
that is related to the so-called areal model, where the emphasis
shifts on neighbouring people, but not necessarily linguistically
related (Honko 1986: 110). This is something common regarding
Europe as regional proverbs[1] emerge, more precisely: Balkan,
East-European, Italo-Franco-Iberian, Nordic, Scottish-Gaelic-
Irish-Welsh etc. (Paczolay 1997: 15). And of course, in typology
research the whole continent is considered as a common linguis-
tic area (Piirainen 2008b: 244).

Thus, comparison and typology are not mutually excluded.
According to Walter Puchner:

> In the scales and gradations between typology and comparison
> there are also cases that allow both approaches, e.g. in proverbs:
> In the Greek tradition, their diachronicity is due to the written tra-
> dition, which at times fed back to the oral tradition· while on a
> Balkan scale the similarity of the proverbs can be perfectly due
> to dissemination, the partial similarity on a global scale, however,
> belongs to typology, that is, parallel situations of human life lead
> to similar sayings.[2] (Puchner 2011: 130)

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[1]  Several such studies have been conducted so far regarding paremiography. Some
of the most important are the following: Bilgrav 1985; Kuusi et al. 1985; Gheorghe
1986; Grigas 1987; Paczolay 1987.

[2]  Such proverbs to be found universally are: "There is no fire without smoke", "Con-

Of course, we must always keep in mind that typology may have to do with wider geographic areas, however—and especially in more recent periods—common proverbs and widespread idioms on a European scale or even worldwide may be due to "textual dependence" (Piirainen 2008b: 253), meaning wide knowledge of common texts. From a folkloristic point of view, in this case the process of dissemination must be examined as well. So, the folklorist again must work comparatively across time and space, taking also into account the media and the ways of transmission.

## 4. *Methodology issues: Conditions and criteria of comparability*

Given that a comparison of the proverbs of the Balkan peoples is possible,[3] as there is a historical basis for such a thing, what needs to be determined are the criteria of comparison. For a comparison to be successful there must be a *comparans*, a *comparandum* and a *tertium comparationis* (Grzybek 1998: 263). In this case, Greek proverbs will be used as a comparans and the proverbs of the other Balkan peoples as a comparandum. However, the determination of the tertium comparationis requires considering several factors. In particular, the fact that the comparison attempted here is a folkloristic one, means that proverbs are understood as cultural expressions, as cultural texts, which implies that they express attitudes towards values (Petrova 2003: 339).

Thus, as Petrova argues, several factors could be determined as a tertium comparationis such as the thought/idea of the proverbs, a logical type, a syntactic structure, a selected topic or theme, an image, a value, an anti-value, a general concept, some human characteristics etc. (Petrova 2015: 249-250). However, before defining the tertium comparationis several characteristics of this folklore genre should be considered.

The most important characteristic of proverbs when treated as a folklore genre is that of traditionality. Traditionality has to

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stant dropping wears away a stone", "Walls have ears" etc. (Paczolay 1997: 16).
[3]  Already several attempts concerning the comparison of the Balkan peoples have been made. The pioneer in this field was the Bulgarian scholar Nikolaj Ikonomov (1968), while other studies concerning this field are the ones from L. Djamo – Djaconiţa (1968), Michael Meraklis (2007), Georgios Tserpes (2019).

do with the age and the currency of a proverb (Mieder 1993: 6), something that cannot be recognized by the text itself, since collections or dictionaries of proverbs are static. Thus, the researcher is led into a process of selecting or hiding meanings. But even in this case, the problem still exists as the content of the meanings cannot be fully explored since the textual situations described in the proverbs do not find fully equivalent extratextual situations (Krikmann 1974: 866-867).

In an ideal situation, the semantic analysis of proverbs should initially involve studying their meanings as texts, that is, to go through a process of potential interpretation of the proverb. This means finding parallels across as many times and places as possible (Taylor 1968: 238), followed by a process of semantic interpretation in all possible real situations of proverb usage (Krikmann 1984: 51).

According to Matti Kuusi, the components that shape a proverb are an idea, a structure, and a kernel (Grigas 2005: 266). However, due to the fact that proverbs usually "tend to belong to the figurative type, i.e. they have less obvious, implicit, idiomatic, or metaphorical meanings" (Petrova 2015: 248), some other characteristics[4] often arise in proverbial discourse such as image and metaphor (Meraklis 2007: 10; Doulaveras 2010: 92, 94).When these features are used in proverbial discourse, proverbs function as cultural expressions using signs in a way that their primary content is denoted to another content (Piirainen 2018a: 211).

That is why in our attempt to find equivalents among the proverbs of the Balkan peoples, image and metaphor will be used as *tertium comparationis* so that similarities and differences are traced.

## 5. Proverbs from the Balkans compared. The etic and the emic view

When discussing the proverbs of the Balkan peoples, we refer to thousands of proverbs. So, in order to limit the material, three

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[4] For a thorough analysis of the characteristics and how they function within the concept of "proverbiality", see: Arora 1984 and Doulaveras 2010: 75-96.

categories were examined:[5] family relations, wealth, and poverty. The preference for these categories stems from the fact of the coexistence of the Balkan peoples in the region for several centuries, which has resulted in the existence of strong similarities that are also related to the past (Šubert 1990: 87). At the same time, the fact that "family as an institution cannot be cut off from the rest of human experience and is determined, among other things, by economic factors" (Tserpes 2018b: 186) leads to the conclusion that these three categories are interrelated (see also Tserpes 2020).

Because of the folkloristic nature of the research, we also took in account the popularity and currency of the proverbs since, if the comparison is not based on empirically documented material, it can at best provide hypothetical results (Grzybek 1998: 271). To ensure empirical accuracy, we conducted interviews with focus groups using questionnaires. Only proverbs that were known by at least 50% of the respondents were included in the study.[6]

At the first level, this study attempts to present semantic equivalents of proverbs from the Balkans. Of course, this is an easy task if the proverbs compared use the same linguistic equipment such as vocabulary. However, this task could be proved quite difficult if different vocabulary is used, different images and different metaphors. In this case, the scholar should be aware of some kind of sameness among proverbs (Petrova 2014: 247). In such cases, scholars like Matti Kuusi and Alan Dundes "suggested that equivalence should be sought in proverbs which employ different images while putting across the same message" (Petrova 2014: 254).

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[5] The examination of these three categories refers to the writer's doctoral dissertation defended in 2019. In the research conducted for the purpose of the dissertation, 5,294 proverbs from the Balkans (Albania, Bulgaria, Greece, Romania, Serbia, Türkiye) were examined.

[6] For more details regarding the empirical research see: Tserpes 2018b: 186-191 and Tserpes 2019: 154-163. As far as the proverbs presented in this paper is concerned, apart from those that the qualitative research showed that are known and current and were used during the interviews with informants, also others are presented which someone may consider as obsolete. However, they are included so that different proverb types are presented.

In the case of the proverb "Blood is thicker than water" (Tserpes 2018a) the sameness is obvious as this proverb exists in all the studied languages with the same vocabulary:

Albanian: *Gjaku ujë s' bëhet*
Bulgarian: *Кръвта вода не става*
Greek: *Το αίμα νερό δεν γίνεται*
Romanian: *Sângele apă nu se face*
Serbian: *Крв није вода*

This proverb has proven to be extremely popular among the Balkan peoples and the empirical research showed that it is widely known.[7]

So, there is no problem for the researcher to trace the equivalents in the case of this proverb. At the same time, proverbs provide interesting information about values and acceptable behaviour in a certain society/culture (Piirainen 2008a: 212). However, "what matters here is that some such knowledge is actually *accessed*: the type of explanation offered is an instance of interpretation, or reconstruction, from the (changing) present perspective, based on some knowledge of cultural history, or, more precisely, on what speakers consider to be relevant facts of cultural history" (Sabban 2008: 235).

This is quite important to folkloristics because it highlights the *folk* and not only the *lore*. This way, the folk could interpret the meaning of the proverb. If this is not possible during the actual interaction, the *hypothetical situation technique* (Herskovits 1950) can be used, and thus *oral literary criticism* (Dundes 1966) is revealed. In an ideal situation where the researcher may have the opportunity to record the use of proverbs in real interaction, what is of extreme importance is the meaning-making at that exact moment, as according to Honko:

a meaning does not have to last very long from the point of view of ongoing action; it is normally superseded by other meanings. […]

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[7] According to the qualitative research conducted for the writer's doctoral dissertation, the percentage of knowledge of the proverb is the following: Greeks: 80%, Albanians: 90%, Bulgarians, Romanians, Serbians: 100% (Tserpes 2019). Of course, these results are related to specific focus groups and their informants.

> A folklore text, be it a proverb that can be reproduced in exactly the same form or a free narrative that is recreated on the basis of plot scheme and key lines, is in its latent, inactive state in the human mind void of meaning, open or empty. On the other hand, the situation in which a folklore text is recalled, actualized, produced and performed is full of meaning. The presence of people, their mutual relations, previous events, future hopes and fears, expectations concerning actual event, expressions and reactions create a field of forces where meanings are continuously born and messages conveyed. (Honko 1985: 38,39)

The oral literary criticism approach and the folk commentaries showed among others that this proverb ("Blood is thicker than water") is

> also related to the affinity patrilineal system. Patriarchy emerges as a key element of the Balkan family and seems to impose a strict hierarchical structure among its members […] However, apart from these observations, it is worth noting that our informants can make various projections on the way they use the proverb, and it is thus very important to show the adaptation of folklore to every occasion and to each present, which makes it up to date and necessary for the *folk.* (Tserpes 2018a: 338)

This is especially evident in various uses of the proverb. Using the Hellenic National Corpus (H.N.C.)[8] for Greek language, an online platform, we detected several uses of the proverb:[9]

(1) *Σε κάθε περίπτωση, οι εκλεκτικές πολιτικές συγγένειες δεν κρύβονται και το (πολιτικό) αίμα, νερό δε γίνεται* (In any case, selective political affinities are not hidden and (political) blood is thicker than water).

(2) *Μπορεί να κράτησε αποστάσεις η ΑΝΤΑΡΣΥΑ από τον ΣΥΡΙΖΑ, αλλά το οπορτουνιστικό αίμα νερό δεν γίνεται*

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[8] https://hnc.ilsp.gr/index.php?current_page=main&lang=en (accessed on 18 April 2024).

[9] According to the Hellenic National Corpus the first three examples were drawn from texts published between 2021 and 2023. For the last one no data are available regarding the year of publication.

(ANTARSYA may have kept its distance from SYRI-ZA[10], but opportunistic blood is thicker than water).

(3) *Άλλωστε είσαι και ανεψιός μου και πώς να το κάνουμε, το αίμα νερό δεν γίνεται* (After all, you are also my nephew and whatever we do, blood is thicker than water).

(4) *Ας μου επιτραπεί μια συμπληρωματική ευχή στο ιδιαίτερα προσφιλές μου Γραφείο Τεκμηρίωσης, στο οποίο πέρασα πάνω από 30 χρόνια της επαγγελματικής μου ζωής (το αίμα νερό δεν γίνεται…). ΝΑ ΜΑΚΡΟΗΜΕΡΕΥΕΙ, πάντα με δημιουργικότητα, κέφι και δυναμισμό!* (May I be allowed a complementary wish to my very beloved Documentation Office, in which I spent more than 30 years of my professional life (blood is thicker than water...). TO PROSPER, always with creativity, fun and dynamism!).

The above examples highlight the use of the proverb in a variety of contexts. Of particular interest are those coming from the field of politics or professional life. Politics, professional life and affinity intertwine and while the proverb refers to blood affinity, the various contexts in which the proverb is used show that affinity does not have to do only with kinship but also with other groups of human life in which the person shares common characteristics, such as colleagues, like-minded people in politics etc. In fact, in the examples drawn from the field of politics, the adjectives that precede the word blood are of interest, shifting the proverb from the semantic field of kinship/family to that of politics, presenting an analogy between the two and confirming the proverb's popularity and currency even today.

Even though this proverb is widely known and used in the Balkans, this does not seem to be the case elsewhere in Europe. For example, the German variant (*Blut ist dicker als Wasser*), is known in the German space only in a percentage of 10%, so is this proverb "German"? (Grzybek 1998: 271-272).[11] On the other hand, the distribution of the proverb, according to dictionaries, is wide throughout Europe and in North America (USA and

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[10] ANTARSYA and SYRIZA are Greek political parties.
[11] For the distribution of the proverb in Germanic languages, see also Franck 1896 and Hartmann 1896.

Canada) as well, where is it is also very popular (Grzybek 1998: 271). So, in this case the similarity is obvious since the proverb has been recorded in 43 European languages (Paczolay 1997: 233-235), but the popularity and currency may differ because of many factors. As Honko puts it:

> Although the comparison may be concerned more with cultural elements than with tradition communities, the changes taking place within these elements are nevertheless regarded as related to changes affecting the entire community. Demographic factors, the mobility of the population and communication, natural ecological aspects, technical innovations, political and cultural hegemonies (e.g., linguistic and religious) are hardly ever the primary objects of ethnological or folkloristic research, yet both the ethnologists and the folklorists gladly refer to them in constructing explanations, in the interpretation of similarities and divergences alike. (Honko 1986: 110)

Things are different, though, when different images are used.[12] For example, in the Balkans, there are proverbs for men who are not married or, in any case, do not have the companionship of a woman:

(5) *Burri pa grua – si shkopi në furrë* (Albanian)
    A man without a woman – like a branch in the oven.
(6) *Мъж без жена е като гърне без рьчка* (Bulgarian)
    A man without a woman is like a pot without a handle.
(7) *Άνδρας χωρίς γυναίκα, είναι άλογο χωρίς χαλινάρι* (Greek)
    A man without a woman is like a horse without a bridle.

The same stands for the coveted birth of boys:

(8) *Ku len djalë, gëzohet gjeth'e bar* (Albanian)
    When a boy is born, leaves and grasses are happy.

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[12] The proverbs presented in the paper derive from various collections: Albanian proverbs (Panajoti & Xhangolli 1983), Bulgarian proverbs (Grigorov & Kacarov 1986), Greek proverbs (Kapsalis 2005), Romanian proverbs (Botezate & Hîncu 2001), Serbian proverbs (Karadžić 1969).

(9) *Όταν γεννιέται αρσενικό, γελούνε και τα κεραμίδια* (Greek)
When a male is born, even the roof tiles are laughing.

Another phenomenon that is presented in proverbs is the relationship between a child and its mother:

(10) *I ngian mazi pelës* (Albanian)
The foal resembles to the mare.
(11) *Всяка крава телето си ближе* (Bulgarian)
Every cow licks her calf.
(12) *Κείθε που πηδά η γίδα, πηδάει και το κατσικάκι* (Greek)
Where the goat jumps, the kid jumps also.

The following examples refer to happiness and unhappiness, honesty and dishonesty regarding wealth and poverty:

(13) *Ma mirë i vorfën e i knaqun se i pasun e i mjerë* (Albanian)
It's better to be poor and happy than rich and unhappy.
(14) *Κάλλιο φτωχός κι ευχαριστημένος, παρά πλούσιος αρρωστιάρης* (Greek)
It's better to be poor and happy than rich and sick.
(15) *Mai bine sărac şi curat, decât bogat şi pătat* (Romanian)
It's better to be poor and clean (honest) than rich and stained/dirty (dishonest)

In the above examples, on a semantic level, one could argue that these proverbs are equivalents as they express the same idea. In this case, we speak of semantic equivalence, a term that suggests "a kind of sameness that very significantly differs from the much more obvious type of lexical equivalence of two or more words, or string of words, in different languages, which have the same denotational, or dictionary meanings" (Petrova 2014: 248).

So, despite the lack of unity at the level of the image, there is unity at the level of the ideas expressed. This is very natural within the framework of various languages, where reality is often perceived in different ways. However, the same phenomenon

of different images expressing the same idea may occur within the same language:

> (16) *Sa ka peshk pa hale, aq ka sthëpi pa fjalë* (Albanian)
>       There is not a fish without fishbones and a house without words (fighting)
> (17) *Shtëpi pa sherr e garth pa ferrë nuk gjen* (Albanian)
>       You cannot find a house without quarrel and a fence without thorn.

The same stands for also in the following examples depicting the relationships between the rich and the poor:

> (18) *Atllarët përlahen e magarët hanë shqeoma* (Albanian)
>       Horses fight and the donkeys get kicked.
> (19) *Lëvrihen byejtë, shçypen zhabat* (Albanian)
>       The cuttle plow and the frogs are being trampled.

In the framework of one language, it could be argued that these two proverbs express the same idea. However, the fact that different images are used, means that we speak of two different proverb types.[13]

Furthermore, the role of oral literary criticism mentioned above—about how the folk comments on an item of folklore—is also crucial to comparison in the sense that a folk view regarding the equivalent proverbs in two languages and their use emerges.

In a manuscript found in the proverb archive of the Hellenic Folklore Research Centre dated 1900,[14] which contains proverbs from the city of Sozopol in Bulgaria, a proverb is included which has a very interesting characteristic: it is bilingual. The proverb is the following:

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[13] Proverb type is "a set of national variants (on an international scale – multilingual equivalents) of a separate proverb" (Grigas 2005: 265 and 278).

[14] The manuscript contains proverbs from the city of Sozopoli (today belonging to Bulgaria) and was sent partially to Nikolaos Politis (founder of the Folklore Archive in 1918) from 1899 to 1900, by Konstantinos Papaioannides. The proverb referred here was sent in 1900.

(20) *Τόπο δήν οργή και затури вратата*
     (Give) place in the rage (you feel) and close the door.

The fascinating fact about this proverb is that it is a combination of a Greek[15] and a Bulgarian proverb,[16] which, according to the collector, was in use only in Sozopoli.[17] More specifically, the collector of the proverb mentions that the Bulgarian part has the exact same meaning as the Greek proverb alone. Finally, the collector argues that the Greek population of the city often used only the Greek part; however, though rare, this half-and-half proverb was in use.

This is a typical example of an emic approach to proverbs in terms of collecting the material and in terms of a process of mixing, connecting, joining, or blending of proverbs,[18] in the sense that two proverbs are articulated together. The Greek part is *τόπο δήν οργή* and literally means: (give) place to the rage (you feel), while the Bulgarian part is *затури вратата* and literally means: close the door.

Both proverbs may have different metaphorical images, however, they express the same idea: even though you may be right you should not be angry or, to put it more simply, avoid quarrels. The interaction between Greeks and Bulgarians in Sozopoli naturally lead to the interaction of languages and cultures. The populations of the town found the two equivalent proverbs and combined them into one.

We consider this an important fact in the sense that the folk themselves, through comparison, found the equivalent proverbs and used them simultaneously in the form of one proverb. And while the different images may refer to different types, the conflation of the two proverbs since they express the same idea is

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[15] The Greek proverbial type is found at Paul the Apostle's epistle to the Romans. His advice to them was to put aside their anger and personal differences and not take revenge on each other so that they can live in peace (Kouvelas 2018: 650).

[16] Here the term proverb is used without making any differentiations between proverbs and proverbial expressions, following the collector's view on the subject.

[17] This information is very important as it reveals the social space of circulation of the proverb, while the fact that it was in use only in Sozopoli shows that it was an element of local folklore of the town.

[18] For the term "blending", see Litovkina et al. 2021: 121-140.

acceptable. So, what is highlighted here is that the bearers of folklore are mostly interested in meanings (Honko 1985: 39). The text, although different, is not an obstacle for the message conveyed. On the contrary, the identity in meaning of the two proverbs led to their conflation in order to enhance the meaning of the two proverbs by their combination into one.

This view is also strengthened by the fact that the two proverbs may function in a complementary way. The Greek proverbial type means, as mentioned above, to avoid quarrel even if you are right. But the Bulgarian type of closing the door seems to function in a more definite way, meaning probably closing the door to your rage (anger) so that there is no possibility for it to be manifested. So, apart from the fact that languages are in contact, something that shows the equivalent meanings, the proverb types also complement each other reinforcing these meanings.

## 6. Conclusions

Considering that the Balkan peninsula constitutes an ethnographic area, it is obvious that the proverbs, from a phenomenological point of view, exist in the region as a folklore genre shared by all Balkan peoples. Thus, from a generic aspect, comparison is possible since there seems to be mutual acceptance as far as what constitutes a proverb.

As far as the traditional and ecological dimension of comparison is concerned, variation is obvious due to different contexts and due to different images and metaphors. However, these variations often express the same underlying idea. This reveals the communicative aspect of folklore and, at the same time, allows informants to evaluate what a proverb means.

Finally, tradition–historical dimension allows for comparison in the case of the Balkans, since the diachronicity and dissemination of proverbs can be traced due to historical factors that lead to cultural loans etc. This might also apply to other regions of Europe or even the whole continent.

However, how receiving cultures use these proverbs should be studied. For the proverb "*Blood is thicker than water*" for example, empirical research has shown different levels of knowledge and use across Europe, despite it being considered a com-

mon and well-known European proverb. Of course, the similarities among proverbs often concern specific regions, that is why we may speak of regional proverbs (i.e., in the Balkans). Broader dissemination may be due to typology or textual dependence.

Different kinds of variation can be traced: those observed only by scholars that pertain to the folklore genre itself (proverb), the meaning–making and situational use of proverbs, and the manner in which proverbs are received in each culture in the case of borrowing.

At the same time, the emic comparisons taking place in bilingual or multilingual communities are of particular interest. In this case, the folk themselves may proceed with the combination of comparable elements (in our case proverbs) which may be equivalent and, at the same, time complementary, revealing that meaning is of high importance for folklore performers. This is because meaning is connected with social life and everyday situations, leading to the use of folklore to deal with them. As a result, several variations, contextual mainly, are created to suit specific situations.

This fact proves that, from a folkloristic point of view, research should always consider the *folk*, the people using items of folklore, not only in terms of knowledge (what and how much they know) but also in terms of use and meaning-making, which mainly has to do with the current use of proverbs. The current use of proverbs, along with the examination of the context and general communicative circumstances in which the proverbs are used, reveals potential shifts in their meaning to different semantic fields. These shifts satisfy the communicative needs of the performers. Therefore, we must always distinguish between what a proverb literally means (out of context), the extent to which the proverb is known (popularity and currency), and, finally, if the *folk* thinks that a proverb applies to the present, applies in a different way compared to the past, or that it does not apply to the present at all (considered obsolete and for that reason inappropriate for use).

This process highlights that folklore is not a sterile remnant of the past, but a living process of adaptation, evolution, and transformation.

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# DEFINITION MATTERS: THE PITFALLS OF PROVERB STUDIES

*Abstract*: This article serves two main functions: it warns about the complexity and risks surrounding proverb definition and also offers solutions to increase insight and avoid pitfalls. The first part analyses the reasons for the absence of clear consensus among scholars and includes a summary of the main trends or views in specialised literature, as well as a "scale of consensus" for definition criteria. The second part advocates for an optimistic approach and a strict methodology to define proverbs, including several principles to boost legitimacy and bypass common obstacles. The final part showcases, through concrete examples, how terminology and proverb definition can influence or distort results in several fields of paremiology.

*Keywords*: paremiology, phraseology, proverb, definition, methodology, terminology

## 1. Introduction

In many countries, the study of proverbs is becoming increasingly popular among scholars, including young ones. Whatever the subject of their articles, dissertations, or monographs, they inevitably have to deal with a very delicate matter in the introduction or first part of their works: proverb definition. Very often, the chosen solution is to quote a renowned scholar and get on with the subject at hand. Those who delve deeper into the matter quickly realise proverb definition is a can of worms.

## 2. On the impossibility of a universal definition

Unlike organic matter or objects made of atoms, proverbs cannot be identified via scientific detection methods: no electron microscope or chemical reaction can pinpoint this class of sayings. As a consequence, paremiology—like many "soft" sciences—is prone to typological and terminological entanglements or squabbles. Numerous scholars have pointed out the absence of clear consensus when it comes to proverb definition. In his entry on proverbs in the encyclopaedia of short forms, Grzybek (1994: 39) states that "There is no generally accepted definition which covers all specifics of the proverbial genre". Decades later, this statement still holds true. In his chapter on proverb definition, Norrick (2015: 14) notes that "there is no single proverbiality and no single inclusive definition of the proverb", adding that "The attempt to discover a definition of proverbiality based on specific properties is probably just as fruitless as a definition of the proverb itself in such terms". Yet, countless attempts have been made. Mieder (1989: 13) even claims that "there are more definition attempts than there are proverbs". In a nutshell, there seems to be a consensus among proverb specialists that **no consensus** has been reached on proverb definition.

The main reasons for the absence of an undisputed definition fall back to varying mentalities, cultures, languages, needs, and methods among scholars, as well as the interdisciplinary nature of paremiology. First of all, not all scholars believe it is possible to define proverbs. The most famous scholar sharing this "pessimistic" approach is without a doubt Archer Taylor, whose words have been cited so many times that they have somewhat become "proverbial" among paremiologists:

> The definition of a proverb is too difficult to repay the undertaking; and should we fortunately combine in a single definition all the essential elements and give each the proper emphasis, we should not even then have a touchstone. An incommunicable quality tells us this sentence is proverbial and that one is not. Hence no definition will enable us to identify positively a sentence as proverbial. (Taylor 1962: 2)

Other scholars believe it is not possible to define proverbs because of the instability of their essential features. For instance,

Meschonnic (1976: 425) claims that proverbs cannot be defined because "the referent depends on the situation", while Krikmann (2009) has famously argued in favour of the "semantic indefiniteness" of proverbs. This viewpoint is particularly common among scholars who favour a semantic or sociolinguistic approach to proverb definition. This highlights a very important factor: the interdisciplinary nature of proverb studies.

Even among "optimistic" scholars, who believe proverb definition is possible, there are numerous approaches. Firstly, some use the word *proverb* in a very broad or loose manner, making it an umbrella term and a category that includes many sub-genres. Others use the term more specifically but focus on various criteria since paremiology is at the crossroads of numerous disciplines: folklore, semantics, pragmatics, stylistics, narrative studies, and many more. Honeck (1997: 5) lists seven main "views" in proverb studies:

- The subjective view, based on personal feelings or intuition
- The formal view, based on linguistic and semantic-logic features
- The religious view, based on their moral message in religious texts
- The literary view, based on their emotional or aesthetic value in prose or poetry
- The practical view, based on real-life applications (psychotherapy, advertising, etc.)
- The cultural view, based on sociocultural contexts and situations
- The cognitive view, defended by the author, based on mental processes.

The author notes that the formal, cultural, and cognitive views are more scientific in nature and in their goals. It is also necessary to note that views may sometimes merge, or even branch into numerous subcategories, as is the case with the formal or "linguistic" approach. Given the vast number of fields it comprises, it is hard to imagine this approach is a unified one, however "scientific" it may be. Unsurprisingly, non-scholars and scholars alike – be they preachers, linguists, folklorists, or, neuroscientists – devise definitions in order to apply them to a specific field

or work. This means that definitions are prone to what may be called **proverbial solipsism**: the vast majority of scholars who try to solve the mystery of proverb definition do so by relying on their area of expertise and criteria related to it.

Thus, most folklorists – such as Archer Taylor or Wolfgang Mieder – stress the importance of notions like currency while scholars who specialise in pragmatics, for instance Arvo Krikmann, put forward their functions and communicative potential. Similarly, linguists who choose a rhetorical or stylistic approach tend to claim that poetic or stylistic features – like rhyme or parallelism – are obligatory components, while those with a semantic or semiotic approach, namely Grigori Permyakov or Peter Grzybek, will give more importance to the role of the interaction situation. This is why proverbs have been characterised as "names" (Permyakov 1974, Kleiber 2019) or "strategies" (Burke 1941, Kuusi 1998) to describe or deal with situations. Scholars with a less linguistic and more cultural approach tend to choose widely different features, as with Winick (2011: 367), who puts the "communication of wisdom" at the centre of proverb definition. The list could go on nearly indefinitely but it needs not be exhaustive to convey the point: this abundance of approaches entails a range of very diverse, **need-oriented** definitions. Conversely, some scholars pay little heed to proverb definition as it is not central to their studies. This was the case with the pioneer Matti Kuusi, who preferred to focus on the meaning and applications of proverb lore.

Other scholars choose a very different methodology to define proverbs. Instead of basing their definitions on their own criteria, they base it on the criteria of others. This is the case with the *emic* approach, mostly used by anthropologists, where definition is based on the beliefs of the members or "insiders" of a cultural group, as opposed to that of "outsiders" such as scholars, who represent the *etic* view. The emic approach may be summarised as follows: "if people believe it's a proverb, then it's a proverb". It takes root in the "subjective" view introduced earlier but it is indirectly subjective. From a linguistic viewpoint, such an approach likely amounts to typological anarchy – the very opposite of what is scientific and methodical. But anthropologists or folklorists would argue that its validity lies in the fact that definitions

depend on cultural aspects. This approach does offer one serious advantage: it makes proverb definition much easier. By avoiding complex analytical methods, it solves a famous paradox summarised by Milner (1969: 50), who wonders why it is "so easy to recognise proverbs when you hear them – even for the first time – and yet so difficult to agree on how to define them". The answer lies in the **perception** of proverbiality.

In order to assess how people perceive proverbs, Wolfgang Mieder conducted a survey on 55 non-specialists. He summarised their answers as follows: "A proverb is a short, generally known sentence of the folk which contains wisdom, truth, morals and traditional views in a metaphorical, fixed and memorisable form and which is handed down from generation to generation" (Mieder 1989: 13; 2004: 3). Although he immediately comments that this definition is not very scientific, one cannot help but wonder how it differs from those proposed by scholars. Whiting (1932), Honeck (1997: 19-24), Villers (2014; 2020), or Bhuvaneswar (2015a) have reviewed a large number of scholarly definitions or taxonomies and it turns out that the criteria put forward by experts are quite similar. If a condensate were to be written, it would be very similar to Mieder's summary. This shows that perception does play an important role in many definitions. In his chapter on proverb definition, Norrick (2015: 14) even argues that proverbiality should be viewed as "a matter of *prototypicality*". According to the author, a statement should be considered proverbial if it contains a certain number of proverbial markers such as metaphor, rhyme, or parallelism.

Despite the absence of clear consensus on proverb definition in specialised literature, it is possible to observe a consensus on certain definition *criteria*. This is particularly true in articles, chapters, and books focusing on definition. Thus, criteria may be arranged into a **scale of consensus**[1], as follows:
- Criteria non-grata: structural implication, humour, ancientness, formal archaism.

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[1] Naturally, this notion does not depend only on the *frequency* of such criteria in proverb definitions. Although currency, brevity, fixedness, truth and wisdom are the most *cited*, they are not necessarily the most undisputed criteria in works and studies on proverb definition.

- Controversial criteria: metaphor and figurativeness, truth, prescriptiveness, wisdom, concision, semantic implication, rhythmic traits, fixedness and "frozenness".
- Criteria with low frequency but high ratio (rarely cited but often considered obligatory once taken into account): human activities as a theme, collective anonymity[2].
- High-consensus criteria: grammatical autonomy, generic meaning, preconstruction or "currency" (also known as "commonness", "conventionality", etc.).

Among the most undisputed criteria, grammatical autonomy implies that proverbs are full statements as opposed to mere syntagmas or verb phrases such as *to spill the beans,* which are usually referred to as idioms. Scholars who have a more conversational approach, like Norrick (1985), prefer the label "free conversational turns". Generic meaning indicates – from a semantic point of view – that proverbs contain generalisations as opposed to expressions that are bound to a specific situation, e.g. *That's the way the cookie crumbles*. Norrick (2015: 11), who chooses a different angle, refers to the generalising quality of proverbs as their "didactic value". Lastly, currency implies that proverbs are used in a speech community or folk group. This, in turn, entails, from a psycholinguistic point of view, that they are *preconstructed*, i.e. not invented as we speak, and retrieved from memory (hence the frequent use of the label "reproducible"). Many other labels have been given to this aspect: some entail a cultural or ethnographic approach, such as "conventional", "traditional", or "culturally confirmed" while more formal approaches focus on the ensuing notions of "stability" or "fixedness[3]". The three high-consensus criteria from the list, along with the two criteria with low frequency but high ratio, are those chosen in the present article, after being deemed the most relevant in a doctoral thesis on proverb definition by Villers (2014).

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[2]  This notion implies that a proverb is not *associated with* an author regardless of actual or provable authorship.

[3]  The notion of fixedness is controversial if it is understood as absolute frozenness. Formal stability should be understood as a set of combinations or variants that evolve with time, while discourse variation can be apprehended as a case of deproverbialisation (cf. Villers 2014).

Ultimately, Norrick's statement about the lack of "single proverbiality" holds true (2015: 14). Even the consensus on some definition criteria will not be enough to unite all scholars. However, this article is in no way part of the "pessimistic" current spearheaded by Archer Taylor. Rather, it embraces an "optimistic", interdisciplinary, analytical view of proverb definition. This is why it defends a simple compromise: if it is not possible to agree on a single definition, then we should start by trying to find an agreement on definition **methodology**.

## 3. Towards methodology principles for proverb definition

Since it is not scientifically possible to prove that a proverb must contain this or that feature, and since a universal consensus is not possible, the best option is to focus on methodology. In order to obtain the most functional, objective, and legitimate definition, it is necessary to take into account several pitfalls and principles, which may be labelled as follows.

### 3.1 The Analytical Principle

The analytical principle holds that proverb definition should be based on an *analytical approach*, with a specific set of criteria, and **not on perception** or intuition as is the case with the prototypical and the emic or "personal" approaches described above. The latter relies on the notions of cultural "insiders" and "outsiders". However, in the case of proverbs, scholars (outsiders) are not just cultureless observers; they are proverb users who belong to a cultural group. Secondly, both approaches rely on the expertise of non-experts, who are often not interested in proverb definition and not competent[4] for such a task. Finally, these approaches are too prone to cognitive bias as they rely heavily on the perception of proverbiality. In the case of proverbs, perception greatly depends on appearances. As we all know, appearances are deceptive. Surveys and tests conducted by Arora (1984),

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[4] Although anthropologists such as Kenneth Pike – the father of the emic / epic distinction – and Marvin Harris consider non-experts to be as competent as "outsiders" (scholars) to *give an account of their culture*, it must be noted that writing a definition is a very complex task that requires specific skills.

Litovkina (1994), and Villers (2014) reveal that the presence of proverbial markers or "poetic features" – such as rhyme or metaphor – is enough to deceive respondents into believing that sentences fabricated for the surveys are more "proverbial" than attested proverbs. It has been argued in Villers (2017) that this heavy dependence on proverbial markers is due to their primary function of replication boosters[5].

The drawback of that principle is that even a scholar, if presented with a formula they do not know, cannot immediately tell if it is a proverb or not. Before reaching a conclusion, they would need to verify several elements, including whether the formula is or has been used in a folk group or if it is associated with a specific author. This may sound disappointing, but the easiest solution is not always the best one.

### 3.2 The Distinction or "Discrimination" Principle

The distinction principle asserts that a good definition should not just explain or describe things. It should also **set boundaries**. Therefore, the chosen definition criteria should be a set of obligatory features instead of common attributes. As a consequence, gradation, frequency, or approximation adverbs should be avoided: claiming that proverbs are "rather" short, "more or less" ancient, or "often" metaphorical is no definition. It is merely a description, which can be helpful, but not sufficient. The distinction principle also entails that subjective or fuzzy notions should not be used to define proverbs. Notions such as catchiness or brevity may be very appealing but they make it very difficult to decide which candidates qualify as proverbs and which do not. The same applies to notions like wisdom, which would grant the proverbial status to a vast range of sayings despite vastly different features. Unsurprisingly, this principle is completely incompatible with the prototypical view of proverb definition, where sayings gain their proverbial label if they reach a certain – yet very uncertain – "degree" of proverbial veneer.

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[5] This term, which draws from memetics – the study of how cultural units spread – means that proverbial markers help proverbs gain and maintain their status by making them "fitter" for survival.

## 3.3 The Systemic Principle

The systemic principle, which derives from the previous one, implies that the class of proverbs should be clearly separated from its close "neighbours" in order to locate where the proverb stands in a **broader typology** of preconstructed polylexical units. This is why definition criteria are important: not only do they define what a proverb is, but they also indicate what it is not. Thus, currency / preconstruction separates proverbs from spontaneous proverb parodies or personal creations and maxims. Autonomy separates proverbs from verb phrases (to spill the beans), noun phrases (a wet blanket), similes (as blind as a bat) and many other types – traditionally considered idioms – as well as truncated proverbs. Their generalising meaning separates proverbs from sentence-type idioms such as "That's another pair of shoes" or conventional formulae like "Nice to meet you". As for the Human criterion, it separates proverbs from weather sayings and superstitions, while anonymity distinguishes them from famous quotations, winged words, and apothegms.

The same distinctions can be operated with more controversial criteria. For instance, metaphor is sometimes used to separate "true" proverbs from maxims or aphorisms. Whatever criteria are chosen, incorporating the proverbial class in a typology greatly increases the understanding of an author's viewpoint.

## 3.4 The Sub-class or "Hyponym" Principle

This principle, which complements the previous one, implies that the term *proverb* should not be used as an umbrella term or hypernym to refer to all types of preconstructed sentence-type formulae with a generalising meaning (paremias). It is more productive and logical to view it as a hyponym, i.e. a **subtype** of paremias, for two reasons. Firstly, the "loose" usage of the term *proverb* may result in a lack of precision and may therefore cause misunderstandings. Secondly, the loose or hypernymic usage is needlessly redundant with many generic terms that already exist: specialists traditionally use labels such as "paremia/paroemia" or "sapiential forms" while non-specialists generally use the word *sayings*.

As for the even broader category of preconstructed phrases, there is already an even greater profusion of terms. The most common umbrella terms include "phraseme", "phraseological unit", "set phrase", "multi-word unit", or "formulaic language" (cf. Villers 2020 for a more comprehensive review of labels).

## 3.5 The Interdisciplinary Principle

The interdisciplinary principle holds that proverb definition should not be tackled with a single approach but from **a variety of angles**, in order to evaluate the relevance and weight of an optimal number of criteria. This requirement arises from the multifaceted nature of proverbs. Take for example the linguistic approach. It may be the most common one and it may take into account several important features (grammatical autonomy, generic meaning, etc.) but it relies too much on formal – and controversial – criteria such as frozenness or stylistic features. Besides, it often overlooks the key notion of currency. Conversely, the folkloristic approach may focus on the more consensual notion of currency or "conventionality" but it rarely heeds criteria such as generic meaning or grammatical autonomy. As for the Human criterion, very few approaches take it into account. This is why all potential criteria should be assessed even if most of them are eventually discarded.

Fortunately, this principle seems to manifest in several definition attempts, even if is often only partial. Bhuvaneswar (2015b: 78) laments about this situation: "mainstream linguists are all partially blind. Formal linguists are functionally myopic; functional linguists are formally hypermetropic; cognitive linguists are formally and functionally astigmatic; and anthropological linguists are culturally jaundiced. Finally, all the linguists are ka:rmikally blind". Despite the necessity of an interdisciplinary – and not just linguistic – approach, it is important to point out that some viewpoints are less productive and transferrable than others, especially if they are too abstract or subjective. Thus, a philosophical or moral approach to proverb definition would not be very exploitable in most contexts.

## 3.6 The Comprehensive Principle

The comprehensive principle holds that proverb typologies and definitions should account for all commonly recognised proverbs and **assign them a category** in case they are denied the proverbial status. This principle is all the more important when the rejected candidate is traditionally considered proverbial. The typology designed by Anscombre (2008: 256) is a case in point for this difficulty. The author makes "rhythmic traits" an obligatory criterion and therefore rejects non-rhythmic paremias from the class of proverbs. However, his typology does not account for the rejected candidates and simply places them in a junk category named "others", which begs the question: what are they? Ultimately, this incentive to process all proverbial candidates is an opportunity to test the soundness and robustness of the typology and the pre-existing definition criteria.

## 3.7 The Clear-Terminology Principle

This principle holds that proverb definitions should be as **clear and simple** as possible. Thus, pejorative and subjective terms such as "clichés" should not be used to define them, even if it is already often[6] the case. The same goes for abstract or complex concepts or terms with extreme connotations (e.g. "frozenness" for fixedness, or "anti-proverb" for proverb parodies). The "ka:rmic linguistic" approach chosen by Bhuvaneswar (2015a; 2015b) is a very interesting dilemma. The author, who is one of the most prolific and innovative on proverb definition, uses concepts from traditional Indian philosophy, astrology-inspired diagrams, and Hindi terms to describe proverbs. While his simplified definition is much easier to grasp ("a proverb is a culturally confirmed frozen prototypical illocution as a text[7]" (2015a: 31), such a sophisticated and creative approach may appear daunting.

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[6] This term is used as a hypernym by Permyakov (1970) and for subgenres by Mel'cuk (2015), Norrick (2015), or Schapira (1999). Although it is used in its original meaning, i.e. a plate used in printing, it is hard to dissociate it from its pejorative connotations. Besides, using it to refer to a subtype of PU is an arbitrary choice.

[7] This definition actually implies four criteria: frozenness, cultural confirmation (i.e. currency), illocutionary function (i.e. speech act) and prototypical-categorial instantiation (i.e. generalisation).

This principle also entails that terms referring to disputed categories should not be used to define proverbs, as is the case with dictionaries, in which a proverb is at times defined as a sort of maxim or aphorism (Villers 2014: 19).

## 3.8 The Redundancy Principle

The redundancy principle holds that proverb definitions should not contain criteria that are **redundant or repetitive** with another more obvious or objective criterion. In other words, when two obligatory criteria are interconnected, only one should appear in the definition. The notion of fixedness is a good example for this situation. If one chooses to include currency in the definition, then it is not necessary to include fixedness, since the former implies the latter. Similarly, fixedness requires preconstruction. However, preconstruction and fixedness do not necessarily entail currency or conventionality.

In specialised literature, many scholars present "new" features as the solution to the mystery of proverb definition, although these features actually derive from more famous ones. For instance, if proverbs are defined as complete sentences, it is neither necessary nor sufficient to define them as topic-comment structures, as in Dundes (1975). The same may be said of the definition proposed by Milner (1969: 54), who claims proverbs are "quadripartite" structures, although his – rather subjective – segmentation can be applied to numerous non-proverbial sentences. Gomez Jordana Ferary (2012) foregrounds a similar point. In her linguistic approach – and doctoral thesis – to proverb definition, she claims that proverbs can be defined[8] by their rhythmic features and concludes that there are seven main proverbial patterns, such as "Subject Verb Object" (ibid. p. 139). However, such patterns, along with other features – didactic value, speech acts, etc. – are features that are common to many types of non-proverbial sentences with a generalising meaning.

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[8]  In her conclusion (*ibid*. p. 360), she retains the following criteria: the "absence" of author (which is an ambiguous wording), the proverbial "pattern" (which is a redundant criterion), the generic meaning, the semantic structure P→Q (which is controversial but also redundant as it derives from the generic meaning). She does not include criteria such as currency insofar as her approach is purely linguistic.

## 3.9 The Corpus Scope Principle

This principle holds that the quality or "scope" of a corpus is correlated to the legitimacy of the proverb definition it backs. In other words, a very **limited corpus** cannot lead to a generally valid definition. For instance, Russo (1983) and Guiraud (1984) try to define the proverbial genre by underlining their stylistic or poetic features while their corpora are only composed of Latin and Ancient Greek proverbs. As a consequence, their definitions can only be valid for Latin or Ancient Greek proverbs, not for modern ones. This principle – along with the inclusion principle – also warrants that the corpus should not be frozen but evolve and adapt as new candidates or criteria are considered or discarded.

## 3.10 The Hybridity Principle

The hybridity principle holds that definitions and typology should take into account the hybridity of certain formulae. Depending on the way they are used or the angle from which they are observed, proverbs and many other types of phrasemes may **shift to another category** or receive different labels. For instance, a proverb may be reduced to a proverbial phrase (*Don't put the cart before the horse* → He's *putting the cart before the horse*), used as a precept to offer guidance or as an adage in a trade, or viewed as an aphorism (because of its descriptive structure) or even as a quotation, provided the user knows its creator. This phenomenon of "genre-shifting" is inevitable and should therefore be integrated into typologies, instead of being discarded as a grey area or an anomaly.

## 3.11 The Transparency Principle

The transparency principle is the simplest and yet most essential principle of all. It can shield scholars from unwanted criticism and can also prevent terminology from leading the reader away from the more important issues. It involves two easy steps: first, acknowledging that there is no universal consensus on proverb definition; secondly, **stating your position** on the matter. In other words, "I know that it is subject to debate but here is what I mean when I say *proverb*".

## 4. The impact of proverb definition on paremiology

The absence of consensus on proverb definition – and therefore terminology – is not simply a petty squabble for pernickety linguists. It may lead to misunderstandings and has a major impact on numerous fields of paremiology, including the most notorious ones. The following part aims to present a short sample.

### 4.1 Paremiography

Paremiography, which studies the collection and writing of proverbs, is a very prominent field at the crossroads of lexicography and paremiology. Its main application is the creation of proverb dictionaries. The main difficulty of such a task is to accurately describe the meaning and usage of proverbs despite the numerous functions and situational meanings they can have. Another difficulty lies in choosing which "proverbs" should be included in a collection (Kispál 2015). Indeed, the contents of a proverb dictionary greatly depend on the *definition* it is based on. Very often, the term *proverb* is used very loosely as dictionaries include a large proportion of preconstructed syntagmas containing metaphors, often labelled as idioms. It is the case with the *Wordsworth Dictionary of Proverbs* (2006 edition), or *The Oxford Dictionary of English Proverbs* (1970 edition) before it was compiled again and condensed into the much more proverbial *Concise Oxford Dictionary of Proverbs* (from 1982 onwards). If a linguist decided to choose the former dictionaries as a corpus for their study on proverbial features, the results would assuredly be different from a study based on the more recent Oxford edition.

Even dictionaries that filter idioms contain a significant number of sayings that would be denied the proverbial label in one approach or another. For example, a stylistic approach based on rhythmic or poetic features would lead to discarding many proverbs contained in the excellent *Concise Oxford Dictionary of Proverbs* (2015 edition), even though it puts currency – the most consensual criterion in proverb studies – in the forefront. Conversely, a dictionary focusing on "true" proverbs that are still in use would not be of much help to scholars looking to examine "fallen" proverbs. In a similar manner, the *Penguin Dic-*

*tionary of Proverbs* (1987 edition) would be of no use to scholars looking for proverbs that are still in use, as most of them show no currency at all in any period of time. This dictionary may thus be viewed as a mere list of aphorisms but its classification system may prove very useful to readers looking for sayings on specific themes such as fear, love, or honesty. However, using it as a corpus to draw culturally relevant conclusions may not be the safest option.

In extreme cases, even entire dictionaries of proverbs may be called into question. Take for instance Charles Clay Doyle, Wolfgang Mieder, and Fred Schapiro's *Dictionary of Modern Proverbs*, which centres on sayings that are less than 100 years old. Although ancientness is rarely considered an obligatory criterion, those who choose this controversial approach based on the supposed age of proverbs will deny modern "proverbs" their proverbial status. As a result, they are likely to disagree with the claims made by a linguist who used this dictionary as their corpus. In a nutshell, some approaches may deem some dictionaries as flawed, hence the importance to identify their angle before choosing them as a corpus.

### 4.2 Corpus linguistics and variation

Corpus linguistics is an extremely popular approach where tools based on large corpora (Google Books' n-gram viewer, Sketch Engine, or NOW and iWeb on English-corpora.org, etc.) are used to study aspects such as variation or frequency. Take for example the well-known proverb *The early bird gets the worm*. A search based on collocates (combinations for *bird + worm*) with some of these tools will reveal a high number of combinations. A concordance check for some of the resulting combinations will give the following numbers:

Table 1. Variation patterns for *The early bird gets the worm* in large corpora (26 Sept. 2020).

|                                       | iWeb | NOW | Google Books |
|---------------------------------------|------|-----|--------------|
| 1. The early bird gets the worm       | 439  | 128 | 9,730        |
| 2. The early bird catches the worm    | 279  | 153 | 15,900       |
| 3. The early bird does get the worm   | 4    | 6   | 155          |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 4. It is the early bird that gets the worm | 15 | 0 | 458 |
| 5. The early bird got / getting the worm | 5 | 5 | 1,013 |
| 6. To be an early bird (+ is an early bird) | 140 | 80 | 7,070 |
| 7. An early bird / early-bird discount | 1,088 | 469 | 4,620 |
| 8. An early bird / early-bird offer | 255 | 248 | 954 |
| 9. Early bird / early-bird tickets | 1,196 | 1,355 | 737 |
| 10. The early worm gets the bird | 8 | 1 | 2,760 |
| 11. The early bird may get the worm but… | 17 | 1 | 875 |

Several questions may spring to mind. Is the main variant 1 or 2? Does example 10 have real currency or is it just a pun with coincidentally high frequency? Is the currency in 6 sufficient to grant it the proverbial label? In these cases, proverb definition is even more important than the corpus chosen. Scholars who study variation but use the term *proverb* in a loose manner may use these results to posit that proverbs vary greatly and offer too many combinations to be fixed. They consequently refuse to view fixedness as an obligatory criterion (Anscombre 2008, Gomez Jordana Ferary 2012) or they make it relative at best. However, a scholar with a more analytical definition will argue that it is imperative to differentiate between the phenomenon of *variation* and a specific *variant*. While 1 and 2 may be seen as true variants, the other variations are not compatible with the consensual proverb definition criteria presented in the first part. Therefore, 3 to 11 may be viewed as cases of *deproverbialisation*, where the loss of one obligatory criterion causes the utterance to shift to other categories such as proverbial commentaries (3 and 4), proverbial phrases (5 to 9), or proverb parodies (10 and potentially 11). Ultimately, the latter approach puts variation into perspective and makes fixedness or stability less controversial as a criterion.

## 4.3 The definition of paremiology

The delimitation of paremiology is, like proverb definition: subject to debate. Its Greek etymology ("along the road", *para* + *oimos*) is of little help. The only consensus on the matter is that proverbs form its core. Thus, it is no surprise that several con-

ceptions of paremiology coexist. The main ones may be sum-
marised as follows:

- The narrow conception, which reduces paremiology to
  the study of proverbs only. This view is present in the im-
  pressive *Introduction to Paremiology* (2015, p. 358) but
  can also be found in most dictionaries that incorporate the
  term. To avoid confusion, some scholars choose the label
  *proverb studies* while others argue in favour of the more
  transparent term *proverbiology* (Bhuvaneswar 2015a).
- The intermediate conception, which is the most com-
  mon one, where paremiology is limited to sentence-type
  phrasemes or "paremias" (proverbs, famous quotations,
  weather sayings, Wellerisms, aphorisms, maxims, proverb
  parodies, etc.), excluding phrases that are not complete
  sentences. It may either exclude or include sayings that
  are not preconstructed or conventional, making it either a
  *subfield* of phraseology or only partly comprised in it.
- The broad or "loose" conception, where paremiology
  encompasses nearly all types of sayings and phrasemes,
  making it a near or true synonym for *phraseology*. This ap-
  proach is not uncommon among folklorists, who often use
  the term *proverb* in a loose or hypernymic manner. Thus,
  because of their conventionality, idioms or similes (e.g.
  "mad as a hatter") may be referred to as "proverbial phras-
  es" (Taylor 1962: 184) or "proverbial comparisons" (Mie-
  der[9] 2004: 12-13, Norrick 2015: 8). Such a hypernymic
  usage of the adjective *proverbial* entails a terminological
  encroachment of paremiology on phraseology and may
  lead to misunderstandings and unnecessary complications.
  Many linguists argue against such a broad conception of
  paremiology, including Burger et al (2007: 11).

## 5. *Conclusion*

It is evident that achieving a global or absolute consensus on
proverb definition is unattainable in light of the vast number of
fields, goals, terminologies, cultures, and methods among schol-

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[9]  Despite his hypernymic use of the adjective "proverbial", he acknowledges that
phraseology should be seen as a "broader area" (Mieder 2004: 118).

ars. However, this endeavour is far from being impossible or futile. The present article may be viewed as a plea in favour of an analytical definition of proverbs, as opposed to the prototypical or emic approaches. After presenting the main angles and challenges to proverb definition, it proposes methodological principles to tackle this task. It may indeed be argued that definition attempts will never be entirely "scientific" – they will always include a part of subjectivity as they will always entail the choice of a specific perspective or terminology. Nevertheless, the proposed safety measures ensure a more objective, transferrable, and legitimate definition. As demonstrated in the fourth section, terminological accuracy can greatly influence various types of studies and their results. Therefore, it is crucial to keep terminological relativity in mind so that proverb definition does not turn into the trees hiding the forest.

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# "A FIRE DON'T BURN UNLESS IT'S STARTED": PRINCE'S PROVERBIAL LYRICS

***Abstract:*** This article explores the use of proverbial language in songs by the late rhythm and blues and rock music artist, Prince. This article uses a selective array of the songs in which Prince used proverbs, proverbial sayings, and proverbial expressions during the time frame that spans from his first release, *For You* (1978), through his last release before his death in April 2016, *HITNRUN Phase Two* (2016). Using Sw. Anand Prahlad's grammatical and situational categories of meaning as primary tools for the discussion, the author interprets the meaning of Prince's proverbial language in the larger context of three "masks" or personae that the artist adopted during his long career (The International Lover, Goldnigga, and The Purple Yoda). Finally, the article compares Prince's proverbial output in song to those of known proverb users in literature.

***Keywords:*** Prince, R&B lyrics, rock lyrics, proverbs, folklore, masking

## 1. Introduction

One of the first things I ever read about Prince, in the popular teen magazines of 1979 or so (*Rock & Soul* and *Right On!*), was that he wrote all his songs, played all the instruments and produced each song. As a youth, I found those qualities simultaneously unusual and appealing. Years later, as a scholar who collects and studies proverbs, I noticed that while part of his prolific

song-writing ability could be attributed to his musical prowess, the other portion was related to his lyrical prowess. Proverbs, that small, nearly ubiquitous piece of folklore, formed part of the scaffolding he used to erect a song-writing career that includes literally hundreds of official releases. Like other some other successful songwriters who emerged before him in the world of R&B (such as Ashford and Simpson, General Johnson[1], and Smokey Robinson), Prince's use of proverbs was extensive. This article is an intellectual exercise in identifying and interpreting proverbs in Prince's songs to discern what light this process may shine on the meanings of his songs. To that end, this article identifies proverbs in select songs, determines their meanings, and interprets them in the context of the remaining lyrical content of Prince's songs. Three Prince personae provide the structure for this exploration of this aspect of the artist's creativity: The International Lover, Goldnigga, and the Purple Yoda.

## 2. What are proverbs?

Proverbs are a form of folklore. My definition below draws from the example noted by Archer Taylor in his definitional attempt in 1962. At the simplest level, he noted, the proverb may be defined (as Britain's Lord Russell apparently did in the 19th century) as a brief phrase that contains "the wisdom of many and the wit of one" (Taylor 1962: 3). In Judi Moore Smith's 1984 radio program "Proverbs: Wit and Wisdom," African American proverb scholar Jack Daniel referred to proverbs as those statements that "old people used to say;" Smith, the host, referred to the speakers as "grandparents and parents" and "aunts and uncles" (1984). In her text, Newroth maintained that she compilation her collection of proverbs so that future readers might know "the words of wisdom from our ancestors" (2007: 9). Using the ideas of antiquity

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[1] General Johnson was the lead singer of the R&B group Chairmen of the Board. He also wrote songs for the group and other acts at Motown and Invictus Records. Over time, I began to notice his name as a songwriter on a number of songs containing proverbial lyrics and began to seek out his songs as a result. One of his songs with the female group Honey Cone, 1971's "One Monkey Don't Stop No Show" includes a proverb as the title. Some of his later songs (circa 2006) include songs like "You Gotta Crawl Before You Can Walk" and "The Blacker The Berry."

from Taylor (citing a more than century old definition) and wisdom of "old folks" implied or stated by previous definitions, I chose to define proverbs as relatively short sayings that convey ancestral wisdom. In this way, I sought to create a definition that could reflect the proverb use in African American culture. Just as some people cite specific "old folks" who used them in the past (as my father often cited his mother's proverbs), I wanted to highlight the idea that many of the original speakers of proverbs are now deceased and are now among the ancestors (like the grandmother who died when I was a toddler). Though my definition reminds me to respect the proverbial wisdom of those who lived long before me, it is not intended to cover every instance of proverb use everywhere.

No matter how these researchers (or myself) have defined them, some scholars have shown the importance of proverbs to Africans as part of their communication and native pedagogical strategies, noting that proverbs appear to be conveyed in novels, court proceedings, plays, and music (Messenger 1959; Yankah 1989: 221; Prahlad, "All Chickens," 1998). Indeed, as one scholar showed, one can wear proverbs in Africa's Akan culture (Domowitz 1992)! Building upon such scholarship, some (like Whiting) have contended that proverbs should be found in African American cultures. Subsequent research has proved that quite conclusively. Yet, the search goes on for other venues, other areas wherein African American proverb use may be found and other writers have contributed their own definitional approaches.

## 3. Proverbs in African American Culture

Sw. Anand Prahlad, for example, released two books on proverb use among black folk (in 1996 and 2001): the former about U. S. African Americans, and the latter featuring Jamaican proverb use in reggae music. Wolfgang Mieder has produced several journal articles and some book-length studies of proverbs used by African Americans, including studies of Frederick Douglass, President Barack Obama, and Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. (2001; 2009; 2010; 2011). Prahlad's *African American Proverbs in Context* is, thus far, the most comprehensive look at African American proverbs using an ethnographic approach (Prahlad

1996). *Reggae Wisdom*, however, may be a more direct model for this article, as Prahlad uses several chapters to explore specific reggae artists' use of proverbs in their lyrics (Prahlad 2001). Mieder's studies of the proverbial usage of political figures such as Frederick Douglass, President Barack Obama and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. have shown the presence of proverbs in political speeches by these renowned African Americans (2001; 2009; 2010; 2011). This paper seeks to demonstrate that a fruitful area to explore in pursuit of African American paremiography and paremiology might be African American popular music.

Beyond that broad range of materials, there is not a great deal of extant literature on proverbs in African American music. As noted earlier, one chapter in *African-American Proverbs in Context* explores proverbs in blues lyrics (1996); a chapter of Mieder's *American Proverbs* takes on the proverb "Different Strokes for Different folks." Mieder focuses on the use and popularization of the proverb in the Sly and the Family Stone song "Everyday People" (1989). Taft discusses proverbs in blues lyrics in a 1994 article. That general dearth of works exploring proverbs in African American music is one of the factors leading me to the subject at hand. As a paremiologist and paremiographer, I am continually in search of new sources I can use for collecting African American proverb use. Over the past decade, I noticed that Prince used proverbs in some of his songs, and I began collecting them. To collect these proverbs, I use blank journals to write down proverb containing songs I hear during any listening session. I didn't set out (initially) to systematically collect the Prince proverbs. As my general collection grew, Prince songs began to stand out for this Prince fan. This article is the fruit of that labor.

The discussion here is also influenced by the categories of meaning outlined by Prahlad in *African-American Proverbs in Context*. When dealing with proverbs and proverbial expressions, Prahlad's **grammatical** category of meaning calls for the determination of the meaning of the words as rendered, thus deriving a literal meaning of the proverb (Prahlad1996: 23). At the next level of meaning, Prahlad's **situational** category of meaning comes into play (Prahlad1996: 24). With a situational meaning, the interpreter of the proverb attempts to discern the "intent

of the speaker" in the context of the utterance (Prahlad1996: 24). In the absence of being the author of the song or interviewing the songwriter, situational meaning is the final level of Prahlad's categories an interpreter could reach. I treat each song as a very short story, with the singer as the protagonist and the meaning(s) derived from the contexts displayed within the song. The limited selection of songs used in this article fit the length of a scholarly article. While I have not yet surveyed his entire output, I have gone through the lyrics included in Prince's first twelve releases. In total, 66 instances of proverbial language appear on those releases. This article includes songs that go beyond his first twelve album/cd releases because the collection became more systematic only when I started noticing the proverbs in songs I listened to for my own recreational purposes. My initial collection of his proverb use lumped Prince's proverb use with instances from many other songs in African American popular music. An exploration of his entire output over four decades would likely need a book-length study.

## 4. Prince's "Masks": The Personae of the Artist[2]

Prince Rogers Nelson was a prolific songwriter and a performer who, while wowing people with his technical skills, took time to develop his persona simply known as "Prince." Young Prince was perhaps not ready for the spotlight and he was probably most "himself" during the time of his first album, *For You*. This was his adolescent romantic stage. The album cover shows him with an Afro in a close-up picture. It is not a particularly memorable cover. His artistic control with the album design did, however, begin to show some uniqueness with his second album, *Prince*, where a perm-wearing shirtless Prince appears on the front while a possibly nude Prince rides a winged horse on the back of the album. His overtly sexual side is more fully expressed. Folklorists like me look for "masks" or "personae" that a person might inhabit or perform at certain moments in life. The persona on

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[2]  Prince is not the only public figure to engage in masking or the creation of different personae. As D. A. Boxwell argued, Zora Neale Hurston performed as a trickster (Sis Cat) during her anthropological research, using her skills to make people feel comfortable enough to share their folklore with her (Boxwell 1992).

display at the beginning of his career was that of the child prod-
igy/musical genius. He was also a romantic. He was becoming
"Prince" the performer he would later become. In his first perfor-
mance on *American Bandstand* in 1980, he showed strong per-
formance chops, but was mute in his interview with Dick Clark
(*American Bandstand* 1980; Draper 2008: 13).

At the time of *Dirty Mind* (1980), Prince moved to overt-
ly sexual display and songs that were not radio appropriate for
the most part (Draper 2008: 25). As the Revolutionary Rock and
Roller Prince wore a trench coat, bikini bottoms and thigh high
boots on the album cover photograph. He began to bring forth
his "International Lover" persona/mask with the song "Do Me
Baby" on his third full-length release, *Controversy*. I pose it as
a distinct persona because Prince showcased his seductive side
in that song and later tunes like "International Lover," "Scandal-
ous," "Adore," "The Most Beautiful Girl in the World," "Betcha
By Golly Wow," and "Breakfast Can Wait." Prince, however,
was multifaceted. Sometimes, he wanted to perform another per-
sona. "The Kid" that he played in *Purple Rain* was a rock star,
perhaps the same rock star that Prince became with the release
of that film and album. In his 1986 song "Movie Star" (available
on *Crystal Ball*), Prince runs through a humorous monologue
that shows him attempting to portray that character in a trip to a
club. In the movie *Under the Cherry Moon*, his comic trickster
(who also tries to be a serious International Lover) hints at his
Goldnigga persona. While Goldnigga has poise, swagger, and
never loses the woman or his cool, Christopher Tracy loses his
cool and his life in *Under the Cherry Moon*. The Artist Formerly
Known as Prince incorporates the mystery Prince displayed ear-
ly in his career while also bringing forth hints of several other
personae. When he wrote "Slave" on his cheek while battling
with Warner Brothers over control of his masters, his Purple
Yoda (the "deep" thinking Prince) persona met real-life oppo-
nents. In no way do I propose that these are mutually exclusive
categories or personae. Each persona was Prince in performance
mode. Sometimes, he blended these personae and clearly more
research needs to be done on this subject. However, I do not have
space to explore the many personae he employed throughout his
career; I chose to use three personae to showcase Prince's use of

proverbs: The seducer also known as The International Lover, Goldnigga (a comic trickster), and the deep thinker: The Purple Yoda. While it appears that I pulled these personae at random, it is more accurate to state that the proverbs used here led me to these personae. The personae are vehicles for showcasing a discussion of Prince's proverb use.

## 4.1 Proverbs from The International Lover

The "International Lover" moniker derives from a song of that name on the *1999* album. In that song, Prince portrays himself as a veteran seducer of women. In producing this song, Prince situates himself within a tradition of creating songs designed for love and seduction (while also using proverbs to argue for that seduction). He promises to be the best and most attentive lover in "International Lover." Using this persona, Princes identifies and performs the swagger he would perfect over time. An early hint of that swagger appeared in real life when Sheila E first met Prince in 1978. In a 2014 interview, Sheila E. said she had "never seen a man so beautiful" and that she had to get to know him. She was attracted to his look and his charisma. Though *1999* is Prince's fifth studio album, he would showcase himself as a woman lover on his first album, with "Soft and Wet," "I Wanna Be Your Lover" on the second album, and "Do Me, Baby" on the third album.

Prince's proverb use debuts with songs on his first album, *For You* (1978). I have also collected proverbs from his last release prior to his death, *HITnRUN Phase Two* (2015). That nearly forty-year span includes wildly popular releases and relatively obscure ones, but the focus here scratches the proverbial surface of Prince's proverb use. Of note is that proverbs remained part of his writer's toolbox throughout his career. In an attempt at inclusivity, I have collected sayings that appear to be bona-fide "true" or authentic proverbs, a number of proverbial expressions, some proverbial allusions (alluding to a proverb that is not fully uttered), and some statements that seem proverbial but *may* have been invented by Prince himself.[3] That said, sometimes an in-

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[3] Alan Dundes' discussion of the distinctions between proverbs and proverbial expressions is useful here. Dundes wrote of the true proverb as something in sentence

vented saying does, in fact, become a proverb when people begin to employ it as such (Arora 1985: 1). A statement can only truly be considered "proverbial" when it becomes part of a "tradition." Shirley Arora describes "traditionality" with respect to proverbs via "the sense of historically-derived authority or … community-sanctioned wisdom that they convey" (1985: 1). Traditionality derives directly from two sources: active use of the saying as a proverb, and relative age. Scholars verify that a given saying is proverbial through "repeated or widespread records in the field" (Arora 1985: 5). Relative age is critical in that the "older" the statement, the greater likelihood that it is considered "true" and is accepted as proverbial. The listener must also recognize that he or she is being addressed in a traditional proverbial fashion (Arora 1985: 4). Since some of Prince's proverbial (or proverb-like) statements have yet to gain wide currency, I include them here, but make no argument for their use as proverbs beyond Prince's invention of them.

Prince's first single "Soft and Wet" from his first album, *For You* showcases his early use of proverbs. As the album's liner notes indicate, Chris Moon was both co-producer and co-writer on this song. The lyrics, however, do seem to carry on the sort of themes Prince would cover many times in his music: a salacious highly sexualized love affair. This song showcases Prince's falsetto voice singing a love/sex song designed to be mildly titillating, as the lyrics suggest. Prince sings to and about a woman he calls "lover" with whom the song alleges a tryst. He sings about being with her and that she "loves him to death." He sings multiple times in the chorus about her "love" being "soft and wet'. The song was a hit for Prince, peaking at 92 on the Billboard Hot 100 chart in November 1978, the first of 46 of his songs to reach that chart, while reaching 12 on the Billboard Hot R&B chart (Billboard)[4]. He sings about his desire for her and her desire for

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form that consists of a "minimum of topic and a comment" citing examples like "money talks" and "honesty is the best policy"(vii). Proverbial phrases, proverbial comparisons, and proverbial expressions include statements like "as blind as a bat" or "to call a space a spade" (vii-viii). Whereas the "true" proverb is usually a fixed phrase, the largely descriptive proverbial expressions change subject, agent, and tense.

[4] The song reached the same position as "If I was Your Girlfriend" from *Sign O' The Times* did later.

him. He also begs her to tell him that she loves him. In describing how he sees her, Prince uses two proverbial expressions: "*you're just as soft as a lion tamed*" and "*you're just as wet as the evening rain*." What the song lacks in subtlety, Prince makes up in proverbial expressions. Each of these proverbial comparisons seem to be of Princely origins. In the end, though, Prince proclaims that he is "crazy" about her love. Whether that is her emotional love, or her body is debatable, but the song strongly suggests that Prince is enamored of her physical self. Yet, he asks again and again if she loves him. This duality introduces a theme Prince would repeat in his music. He sang about carnal and spiritual (or emotional) love in the same song, the lyrics playing that out. The sacred and the profane appear in complementary fashion in this early song as it would in several other songs later in his career (Azhar). While his songs would become much more explicit by his third album, the "soft and wet" phraseology in use for that song is meant to communicate carnal desire in a slightly less obvious fashion. Prince's credited co-writer on that early song indicated that Prince was only suggesting in this song what *Dirty Mind* would overtly state. By the time he wrote *Dirty Mind*, Prince indicated that he wanted the matter to be made explicit on that 1980 release (Miller). If the songs became more explicit, they also showed a maturing songwriter whose attempts to woo lovers became more polished, with Prince using proverbs to buttress his arguments while perfecting his International Lover persona.

What Prince is doing here, though, reflects a man using his words, his "rap," to get a woman to pay attention to him in the way that he desires. In doing so, Prince is following a long tradition of using proverbs in conversation or in song for the express purpose of seduction. In her autobiography *Dust Tracks on a Road*, Hurston writes about one of Eatonville's finest citizens employing a proverb in his attempted seduction. Hurston (as a child) witnessed a verbal exchange in which of the men on the perpetually-occupied front porch of Joe Clarke's general store/ post office tries to seduce of one of Eatonville's women. The man asks the woman to hold her ear close as spoke to her with a proverbial expression stating that "he had *a bug to put in her ear*" (Hurston 1942:46). The woman bends over to hear what the man has to say, but very quickly stands up and exclaims in disgust

saying, "The idea of such a thing! Talking like dat to me, when you know I'm a good church-worker, and you a deacon (Hurston 1942: 47)! Surely, that would be enough to shame him into backing off. Yet, as Hurston writes the story, the man appeared undeterred. In fact, he confidently pursued the issue further, citing a proverb to promote his case: "Dat's just de point I'm coming out on, sister. Two clean sheets can't dirty one 'nother, you know. (Hurston 1942:47)." With his use of that proverb, the man argues that since they are both church people, there's nothing wrong with a sexual union. He attempts to persuade her with a prevalent image, that of two clean sheets drying on a wash line or in a closet on top of each other.

The literal meaning conjures the image of two clean bed sheets coming into contact. If neither is dirty, each will come away unsoiled by the connection. The proverb's performed situational meaning, however, is that these two religious folks should develop no problems from engaging in a sexual relationship. Those without strong religious convictions are "dirty" and will only soil each other with such activities. The man's argument made it clear that he believed (at least outwardly) that both he and the woman could easily emerge from the union in the same "pure" state in which they both entered it. Though Hurston left the story at the point of the man's use of the proverb, one may safely assume from the woman's reaction that the proverb failed to sway her. The way Prince portrayed his efforts in song, it appears that he had few such problems.

Prince's 1986 song "Kiss" addresses the issue of mis-communication in a potential courtship. One imagines a succession of women approaching Prince and wanting to be "with" him (at least, that's the way Prince tells the story). Yet, it appears, many of these women don't know how to properly approach Prince or how to gain his attention. Maybe some of them acted a role they thought appeal to him. Perhaps others changed their looks to suit him. Prince, however, sings that he wants a woman who doesn't do any of that.

Prince sings that he wants something "real," not a woman playing games and not being herself (or the best "version" of herself) in his opinion. The song begins as a response to a query outside the song, along the lines of "what type of woman do

you (Prince) like"? His responses are that she need not be rich or cool, but simply herself. There's no zodiac sign or type that he prefers. Again, she simply needs to be herself. Invoking a proverb, Prince sings "*act your age, Mama, not your shoe size*" in a proverbial lyric. She needs to know herself, behave like herself, and be a grown-up. His surmise, then, is that games are for children. Real life and real relationships require adults to be involved. Women who learn about relationships from dramatic television shows, for example, are not his type. If she were to behave like herself, not a character from the nighttime soap opera *Dynasty*, then she has a shot with him. One presumes that if he were to revise the song for today's world, a reality show might substitute for the old-time soap opera. This forms part of an imagined dialogue Prince is having with a composite woman representing an amalgamation of concerns different women might have raised at one point or another.

Like some singers who emerged before him, Prince used proverbs as part of his direct efforts at seduction through song. Barry White's 1994 CD, *The Icon is Love*, for example, contained the song "Practice What You Preach." In that tune, White appears as a seducer engaging in a playful banter and proverbial signification with a potential lover. According to White's "character" in the song, she (his potential sexual partner) has been making assertions about her desirability and skills as a lover. White challenges this woman with the consistent proverbial refrain, *practice what you preach*. White tells the woman to dare to *turn him out* (a proverbial phrase itself), insisting that if she thinks she can get him to go crazy for her, show him so new sexual trick, she should do so. White's refrain, *practice what you preach* exhorts his potential lover to make good on her threat to showcase her allegedly considerable sexual talents. The only thing that really matters in this case is the action. The proverb is part and parcel of the "rap" (seductive talk) in the song; the romantic rap's intent is to "get over" on women (Smitherman 1977: 83, 95). Prince's International Lover uses the music and the lyrics to accomplish his goals, situating the artist in a tradition of using proverbs to generate romantic or sexual contact.

An unreleased tune from a similar time frame as "Kiss," one featuring the singer Boni Beyer, with Prince is "The Line" (also

known as "Cross the Line"). Beyer was a member of the band in *The Sign 'O' the Times* era, singing a prominent accent line with Prince on "I Could Never Take the Place of Your Man." The Prince Vault information suggests that the song was recorded during the *Lovesexy* sessions and was originally slated for that 1988 album release. In "The Line," Prince is attempting to convince an intended lover who is a friend to "cross the line" from friend to lover. He seems to recognize that the effort is a difficult one, but he nevertheless persists. On this fast-paced song, Beyer sings first as the friend and intended lover, asking him to name a very good reason to potentially toss out the friendship, asking if he can be her lover and still be her friend. The chorus exhorts her to "cross the line" multiple times. As the chorus' lyrics state, life would be so much better if she would only cross that line. Prince sings back that life is so much better on the other side of the line. He cites or invents the proverb *the water's so much better on the other side*. At the grammatical level, it is truly hard to believe that the water could be any better across the imaginary line. If, however, as I imagine, Prince intended the utterance to be similar to "the grass is always greener on the other side of the fence," he intended for it to have a similar meaning. Where she was, situationally, was not preferable to the side on which she could currently be standing, he intimates in song to Boni. The song proves to be another lyrical attempt at seduction by the International Lover. The song, however, does not reveal a resolution to this hypothetical seduction event.

In his 1989 song "Scandalous," Prince moves into the physical intimacy one can maintain in a long-term relationship. He is no longer in the apparent begging mode of "The Line." This later song is a seductive ballad designed to show Prince as an attentive lover desirous of making sure his lover knows she is wanted. While the song doesn't specify a marriage, it implies something long-term, noting at several steps his desire for her. At the heart of the song is Prince's suggestion that they will do "scandalous" things that might call for the neighbors to call the police.

Prince initially released "Scandalous" in 1989 on the *Batman* soundtrack. Later, "Scandalous" appeared on *The Scandalous Sex Suite* extended single/EP in three parts. One of Prince's apparently beloved slow/love songs, it remains in rotation on

old school/Quiet Storm format radio. I heard it one evening on Atlanta's Kiss 104 in 2017. Along with with songs like *1999's* "International Lover," *Controversy's* "Do Me Baby" and "The Most Beautiful Girl in the World," this song helped Prince secure a reputation as a sexy song-maker.

Prince returned to falsetto on "Scandalous," The song's subject is seduction. Prince portrays himself as the quintessential "International Lover," the type of lover who would do anything it took to please his woman. In this song, Prince employs the braggadocio that the romantic rapper uses to talk himself into an intimate encounter (Smitherman 1977: 97). The song showcases a fervent desire to make her needs, desires, and fantasies come true. As Prince sings to the fantasy lover, he will do all these things and more:

(1) Come closer
    Feel what you've been dying for
    don't be afraid, baby

The goal, again, is to explicitly seduce this woman. He explains that he simply cannot wait to make her his lover before moving to the chorus, stating:

(2) Tonight it's going to be scandalous
    'Cause tonight I'm going to be your fantasy

Prince sings as if that moment is imminent, but that he also needs to convince her that he's the lover she needs or wants him to be. If the listener "reads" through the lines of the lyrics, it becomes clear that she is not yet convinced.

The proverb comes into play just before Prince sings that he can no longer wait for her to realize the obvious choice. Using the proverb as a rhetorical tool designed to make a very convincing argument even more convincing, Prince sings:

(3) Everybody always told me
    *Good things come to those who wait*
    But *I've got so much on the menu*
    I just can't wait

The proverb and proverbial expression in use in this section of the song are designed to light the pathway to his seduction of this imagined lover. In the process of employing a proverb and a proverbial expression, he hopes to finally convince her. In this instance, Prince employs a formulaic proverb precursor by using the statement "everybody always told me." In some settings, that is seen as a dispassionate way to make the proverbial argument but without taking full charge of the proverb. It simply makes logical sense that all the accumulated wisdom that existed prior to this conversation/song makes the point that "*good things come to those who wait*." At the situational level of meaning for this song, Prince is the good thing that she's been waiting to find. A second situational meaning could be that she is the good thing for which he has been waiting. The song is unclear on this point, but this dual meaning may be what Prince intended in the first place. Nonetheless, this is what may be inferred. The proverbial expression *so much on the menu* is used to alludes to the idea that he has grand plans for their rendezvous. He intends to "serve" her the sort of love she craves at the desired level and in the desired abundance.

As a rhetorical tool, The International Lover uses proverbs to lure his conquests. Like the brother in Eatonville decades earlier, Prince used the proverb as <u>part</u> of his seduction effort. While the mere fact of his being Prince might have enticed many, Prince sings about women who pose some a challenge for him. Prince's songs suggest that he'd rather have to work hard to seduce a woman than secure an easy conquest. Prince also used proverbs that allowed him to showcase his sense of humor. His sometimes subversive and devastating sense of humor comes to light in the story Charlie Murphy told on a 2004 episode of *Chapelle's Show* and the fact that he appreciated Dave Chapelle's portrayal of him (Parker). To show his appreciation (and to perhaps get back at Chapelle), Prince later included the image of Chapelle as Prince on the cover for his 2013 single "Breakfast Can Wait." More than a year later, the song appeared on Prince's thirty-seventh album release.

## 4.2 Goldnigga: The Trickster Prince

That Prince could be laugh--out--loud funny was known by those paying close attention to some of his interviews, film roles, and

songs. This section borrows inspiration from the 1992 NPG cd *Gold Nigga*. Prince showcases a biting sense of humor on this release, though taking something of a backseat to the rapper Tony M. He showcased the same biting humor on an unreleased project from the 1980s, *The Black Album*. Though the release is on NPG records and NPG is listed as the artist. As he did with the group Madhouse or his producer alter ego Jamie Starr, Prince put his creativity to use while reserving the right to not use his regular name as a performer; he recorded so much music that he needed other outlets other than his usual outlets through his own name (Azhar). Some of his more experimental efforts emerged with pseudonyms attached, from the initial efforts of The Time, the Family, or Madhouse (Miller 1983). The "Goldnigga" persona straddles two related trickster categories, that of the comic trickster and the malevolent trickster. Prince's trickster persona was never truly malevolent, but his humor would occasionally cut with a very sharp metaphorical knife. I posit here that the character leans toward the comic side. Prince's style brings dark humor to a difficult and dark subject on "Black M.F. In the House" wherein Prince voices the racist white character who disparages the Black people who've wandered into the fictional bar that is the backdrop of the song. The bar is the "house" into which the "Black Mfs" entered. On *the Black Album*, "Dead On It" is an earlier attempt by Prince to showcase the world of rap (rap from hip-hop culture, not love rapping). While on the *Gold Nigga* release, rap is privileged, it is used but comically disparaged on *The Black Album*.

As the comic trickster, Prince as Goldnigga performs in a fashion similar to "John" in that he and the stories about him usually employ humor as part of the trick and the story in those older African American folk-tales. John manages to trick his slave owner through ingenious subterfuge. In *Mules and Men*, for example, Zora Neale Hurston includes several John stories, including one ("How the Negroes Got Their Freedom") in which John manages to gain his freedom and that of everyone else on the plantation through a well-orchestrated illusion (Hurston 1935: 82-83). Elsewhere in African American culture, the folkloric trickster Hairy Man becomes the character Harry Mention (a malevolent trickster) in the 1990 Charles Burnett film *To Sleep*

*with Anger*. He does cause harm to befall the family of "friends" on whose doorstep he appears after being out of contact with them for decades. As a trickster, Prince's Goldnigga character uses subversive humor to make a point on racism and cites a proverb along the way on the 1987 song "Dead On It." In that song, Prince muses that rap isn't really music. As such, it and the rappers who perform it, should be annihilated.

*The Black Album* was released by Warner Brothers in 1994. I had the bootleg cassette in my hands in 1988. With the official release, a good studio version was finally available and immediately purchased. The songs are a mix of unusual subjects for Prince. On "Dead on It," Prince sings; Prince also raps on "Dead On It." An objective observer might conclude that Prince should not have put himself in the position to rap. Aesthetic questions aside, Prince released a song that made some rather humorous yet ludicrous statements about rap and rappers along the way.

In the fourth verse, Prince leaves the subject of rappers in something of a non-sequitur, rapping about what women want. He riffs on the proper way to please a woman before moving in to a "semi" dozens moment at the end of the verse. I contend "semi" only because he doesn't begin with "your mama" before making the statement. As Prince raps at the beginning of that verse:

> (4) All the sisters like it when you lick them on the knees
>     Don't believe me? (no)
>     Try it once then stop, they'll be begging
>     Please, please, please (please, please, please)

Prince then raps that what he just said has nothing "to do with the funk," but that is his song and the song is on his dime, so indicating that he could rap about whatever he wanted. It is his song, after all. At the end of the verse, he moves to the dozens:

> If you don't want to lick my knees, I'm sure your mama will.

The verbal game known as the dozens has a long presence in African American folk life. As a form of signifying, it does tend to be associated with children and their "your mama" jokes. "The dozens" is a ritualized game, a sort of playful contest, of-

ten played by African Americans. The object of the game is to insult one's opponent, hurling insults at him/her or his/her mother until he/she breaks away from the game. Basically, a player humorously signifies on the other person's kinfolk (Smitherman 1977: 128-131). In doing so, it is hoped that the opponent may be rattled and lose concentration, and therefore lose the match. The dozens is also known by the contemporary names "cutting," "joning," or "battling." Prince's reference does not begin a full-fledged dozens game, but can be understood in that context by those who recognize the game.

In the first verse of "Dead On It," however, Prince deploys the anti-proverb that brings the song into this article. Anti-proverbs can be parodies of known proverbs or variations that negate the meaning of the original proverb or even jokes based on the original proverb (Mieder and Litovkina1-3). In that initial verse Prince raps:

(5) Riding in my Thunderbird on the freeway
    I turned on my radio to hear some music play
    I got a silly rapper talking silly shit instead
    And *the only good rapper is one that's dead* on it

Prince pauses at the end of dead, delaying his uttering of "on it." This places emphasis on the proverb construction: *the only good rapper is one that's dead*. Later, he would simply use the phrase "dead on it" in the chorus of the song.

Prince here apparently coins an anti-proverb based on a much older formula. As Mieder argues, the proverb the *only good Indian is a dead Indian* emerged during the times of Euro-Americans' Western expansion and paired with the concomitant need to either subdue or eliminate the Native Americans who so unwillingly moved aside to make the move possible. Another old proverb, going back to post-bellum days, is the *only good nigger is a dead nigger*, reflecting racist whites' ideas that if Blacks could not be properly subservient, as they appeared less likely to be in their new-found quest for freedom and full citizenship, they should probably be killed (Mieder 1993: 53). This very idea gave rise to American-grown terrorist hate that saw the killing of Af-

rican Americans as necessary to make the rest of the population subservient enough to maintain white advantages.

In that vein, Prince as Goldnigga coins the anti-proverb *the only good rapper is one that's dead*. Of course, he could not mean that he wanted rappers dead because he also had his dancer Cat do a rap on his song "Positivity" from 1988's *Lovesexy*. He later employed rapper Tony M as part of his band. At a situational level of meaning derived from the context of the song, it appears that Prince wanted to take a swipe at a genre that would later come to eat at his share of the popular music market. It does not appear that Prince's anti-proverb gained any currency as a proverb, either. Anti--proverbs also appear in Agatha Christie's novels and short stories, for example, when she has the fictional Belgian detective Hercule Poirot incorrectly use proverbs or re-word them as a way of showing how the character remains somewhat set apart in his adopted home, England (Bryan 1993). Advertisers invent anti-proverbs to suit their needs (Mieder and Litovkina 2002). In that case, the anti-proverb usually never goes further than the advertising slogan as in the case of "different volks for different folks," an ad campaign for Volkswagen (Mieder and Litovkina 2002: 67). Prince, however, wasn't selling anything but his music at that time, must have had a reason to invent this anti-proverb.

One good approach to understanding Prince's anti-proverb "the only good rapper is one that's dead" comes through an exploration theme of the entire song. Prince used the song to trash talk other performers. Whereas the dozens involve the "yo' mama" jokes, this kind of signifying allows for comic putdowns of rappers and otherwise fine musicians who had the misfortune of not being from Minneapolis. Prince's "rap" lampoons the idea of tone-deaf rappers attempting to sing during their concerts and clearing the arena as a result. He says bassists from Brooklyn are good, but the ones from Minneapolis really know how to play. If they really want to be good, though, they would have to be like him: dead on it. In his private life, he was also known as a trash talker. On the day that Prince died, his friend Van Jones remembered that Prince "… would kill you in ping-pong and talk trash the whole time" (de Moraes 2018). In this song, the anti-proverb

is part of his trash talking other performers. After all, the song indicates, he was Prince and they weren't.

In another song using this edgy comic trickster persona, "Black M.F. In the House" from the cd release *Gold Nigga*, Prince constructs a story about a band (presumably like Prince's) wandering into a bar/club somewhere in the United States. This bar is apparently located in a territory hostile to the largely African American band. While it appears this song is done as a tongue-in-cheek take on life on the road, it delivers a message about racism. Prince plays the part of a racist white man dropping offensive racial epithets at every turn while Tony M raps some aggressive lines. It also appears to be a satirical effort to highlight white racism. As such, it is not simply a traditional song; it is more of a musical skit.

As the song proceeds, the band begins interacting with people in the club and one of the young women in the club takes a liking to one of the guys in the band, while the bar's patrons are heard continually expressing their discontent and contempt for the African Americans in the club. Prince voices the character "Clem" who consistently states that they aren't on *Soul Train*, so why are they flailing about in their club. They simply don't belong there. Clem's (Prince) derisive comments read as follows

(6) Don't you hate it when a jig is in the house
     He ain't been in the club 5 minutes
     'Fore 6 or 7 cuss words flyin' out his mouth
     ...
     Next time we need a big white sign at the door saying
     no Black motherfuckers in the house

Prince, the writer of the NPG scenario, orchestrates a tune, then, wherein the casual racism of these people in the club escalates from merely derisive to life-threatening. Additionally, Prince inserts a short version of the jigaboo epithet here. Following an instrumental break, Prince's Clem character cites a proverb, "*best place 4 a coon's in a tree*." The other racist in the conversation ("Billy Bob") replies, "Yep, get a rope!." At this point, Prince has either cited or coined a racist proverb that seems to fit the bill of standard proverbial wording. I can find multiple proverbs

wherein coon is the subject, but nothing quite matches the use here. Including the standard coon racial insult lends a level of verisimilitude, but the grammatical meaning suggests that there's a call for a lynching of these African Americans. That sentiment is reinforced by Billy Bob's affirmative reply, showing that the character agreed that the implied lynching is a good course of action, even suggesting that they get a rope. At the situational level of meaning it suggests the need for these African Americans to leave from this place. The use here showcases a continuing confrontation that threatens to degenerate into race-inspired violence. Upon introducing this proverb, Prince calls attention to racism in the present (circa 1992) by referencing racism from the past. Prince ends the song abruptly with the chant "Stop racism now.!" The comic nature of Prince's satirical performance as Clem on the song comes across to me as something worthy of a skit on something like a *Chapelle's Show*. At other times, Prince would put on the deadly serious mask of The Purple Yoda and leave the comic trickster behind.

## 4.3 The Proverbial "Purple Yoda"

Prince also has a history of releasing songs that highlighted his intellectual acumen. That side would make commentary on a myriad of social ills and would often inject Prince's version of religiosity into the songs as well. Proverbs can be used as a didactic tool. During the time of enslavement, for example, African Americans used proverbs to teach the value of silence. The words indicated that certain things were best left unspoken, lest the wrong ears overhear and negative repercussions ensue. Two proverbs, *mole don't see w'at his naber doin'*, and *a locked jawbone's sure to be out of trouble*, express the need for silence and secrecy in relationship to potentially dangerous white folks (Roberts 1978: 131). At the times when Prince donned the guise of the "Purple Yoda," like the fictional Jedi Master of *Star Wars* fame, he disseminated his own special wisdom via his songs. He called himself the Purple Yoda on the last song on *20Ten* (listed as "Bonus Track #77" or "Laydown"). I surmise here that Prince recognized the intellectual musical personality he had shown before, but finally named it on that song.

Prince addresses the finality of death in a song from his 1986 release *Parade*, "Sometimes It Snows in April." The slow acoustic song, not sung in falsetto, begins with the lyric "Tracy died soon after a long fought civil war." Thus, Prince sets the stage for a very sad song that closes the cd and deals with the character Christopher Tracy (portrayed by Prince) who died in the movie *Under the Cherry Moon*. Prince muses that Tracy was doing better than those left behind to mourn him. The lyric "sometimes it snows in April" equates with sadness and mourning in this song. The song also muses that Tracy is in heaven and Prince sings about him as if he were a friend.

That April snow may be the harbinger of a longer darker winter in locales like Minneapolis, Minnesota. The song also portrays Prince as crying for Tracy because he was that rare thing: a true and only friend. April snow makes one feel sad, then. The passing of a friend also makes one feel sad. Snow in April forestalls Spring and reminds him of his friend's tears. Included in the chorus of the song is the proverb: *All good things never last*. The full lyric is as follows:

(7) Sometimes it snows in April
    Sometimes I feel so bad
    Sometimes I wish that life was never-ending
    *All good things*, they say, *never last*.

As the final of those four lines in the chorus, it brings to mind the finality of death, the ripping away of that presence from friends and family. At the grammatical level, sentient beings know that nothing lasts. Things change. People change. Circumstances change. Friendships end. New friendships begin. People relocate and change jobs. People die. For many, it never stops it from being painful and it never stops people from regretting the loss of what was before. At the situational level of meaning, the proverb indicates that the friendship described in this song was never destined to continue forever. One or the other of these friends would likely die first. This is also one of the few times Prince employed the formulaic marker of the presence of a proverb with the included statement "they say." The "they say" statement indicates some received wisdom that Prince merely conveys in

verse. As Prince sings of Tracy's death, a profound sadness is apparent through the music and Prince's singing. The song evokes an actual loss, not a filmic loss.

After Prince died on April 21, 2016, the tribute channels on Sirius XM radio and iHeartRadio put the song in rotation. Some of Prince's fans saw it as Prince singing his own epitaph. It was as if he were a prophet predicting his own death three decades later. One need not believe the artist happened to be prophetic to see this as a truly effective musical epitaph. I may have been one of the few who purchased every Prince release from 1978's *For You* to *HITnRUN Phase Two* (2015), never really contemplating that it would all come to a screeching halt so quickly. As Prince sang, though, even his good thing would never last. If he had predicted that he would die in April, the Purple Yoda would be truly profound.

He may not have been a prophet, but he managed to tackle some other difficult and sensitive subjects in addition to death. Before he released a dance song in 1987 that managed to weave in concerns about gang violence, drugs, and AIDS, I might have predicted that such a feat was impossible. He wrote, recorded, and released the song and it became a hit. With the 1987 release *Sign O' The Times*, Prince had managed to release two double albums in less than a decade (*1999* being the other one). The rumor mill suggested that he had so much material that he wanted to release a triple record, but Warner Brothers balked (Chesterton 2017). Apparently, Warner Brothers was concerned that Prince's two previous releases didn't sell as well as the company thought they should and didn't want to invest in a potentially risky triple record (Chesterton 2017). The title song and first single release, "Sign 'O' The Times," discusses several social ills, from drug use to gang violence, but never leaves the funk behind.

Prince began the song with a verse about a man dying of a "big disease with a little name" that he never actually names, but one may safely presume that he meant HIV and the disease that could result from that viral infection, AIDS. The Purple Yoda was bringing his audience's attention to a very serious issue: death from an incurable viral infection. At the time of the album's release, March 1987, President Reagan had yet to utter the words HIV or AIDS during any official public address and

his administration had reduced funding for the effort to find a cure (Partridge 2017, Topping 2015, Eschner 2017). President Reagan's first public address about AIDS occurred in May 1987, months after Prince sang about it to his whole audience (Topping 2015). While dancing to the tune, perhaps curious listeners researched the issue themselves. The person Prince sang about in the opening verse died of AIDs due to intravenous drug use (heroin). Prince then sang about teenagers in gangs running around "high on crack" and "toting a machine gun," a reference to the damage crack was currently wreaking in the African American community by at least 1985 (Oetting et al. 1989: 128). Again, Prince addressed a topic before it appeared to be a household topic, though scholarship would soon address the devastation.

"Sign O' The Times" also addresses infanticide, the devastation of hurricanes, a cousin using marijuana before moving on to heroin, the potential for nuclear war, and the space shuttle Challenger explosion, among other desperately bleak topics. Despite the shuttle explosion, Prince sang that people still wanted to fly and included what may be an invented proverb: "Some say *man ain't happy truly until the man truly dies*." It seems odd, at the grammatical level, to suggest that anyone would be happy with impending death. He invokes the formulaic "some say" as a way to introduce the proverbial statement, again providing the listener with an unidentified authoritative source for the proverb. At the situational level of meaning, Prince contrasts the negative images with the great achievements of humanity like sending people to the moon, suggesting that until we have all our people taken care of and mothers no longer kill children they cannot afford to feed, we should perhaps concentrate on taking care of those who cannot take care of themselves. With the proverb, Prince suggests that our priorities as a species (and country) may be askew. Additionally, it fits with Prince's religious views. Touré argued that Prince used the proverb as an affirmation that he believed earthly death only led to heavenly ascension (Touré 2013: 130). Prince called for specific forms of social justice with this song, among them ending gang violence, treating HIV/AIDS, and feeding our poor. He also focused his listeners on the possibility of entering the kingdom of heaven following their physical deaths.

"A Large Room with No Light" emerged from the sessions that would lead to *Sign 'O' The Times*; it was originally slated to appear on the three-disc album *Dream Factory* that was never officially released (Prince Vault 2018, Chesterton 2017). The proverb "*A fire don't burn unless it's started*" appears in the first verse of Prince's "In a Large Room with No Light;" the entire song considers deplorable and avoidable situations that would have been better not begun in the first place, including criminal activity and wars. Briefly interpreted, the proverb indicates that a destructive force doesn't just appear from nowhere. It must be deliberately initiated.

The web-site Prince Vault reported that while the song emerged first in 1987 recording sessions, Prince played it live at the Montreux Jazz Festival in 2009. Recordings of that performance made the rounds and fans have disseminated it through the usual channels, resulting in my possession of that version. The studio version discussed here appears on YouTube, where I heard it in 2016. The song discusses the idea that life brings unknown challenges. Often, the song suggests, we may be wandering around without any clear answer or foreknowledge of the correct path to solving the problem we've just faced. The chorus lyric states "did U ever feel that life was like lookin' 4 a penny in a large room with no light?" In that statement, Prince conjures a visual image of one seeking that elusive coin in a space devoid of lighting, bumping into furniture, perhaps feeling along the baseboards, checking under obstacles like tables and chairs, or even searching drawers for that penny. A shiny new penny might readily reflect bright light, but darkness would make finding that penny remarkably difficult. The difficult search for a penny in the dark correlates with the, sometimes, daunting task of facing a trying life situation for which one has no roadmap. When facing the unknown, one may grope about for the correct action. Often, experiences lead people to make seemingly rational decisions knowing that they don't know where they're going or what they're doing. If one, for example, faces the imminent death of a loved one due to a terminal cancer diagnosis, how does one proceed at that point? When is it time to dive in--to treatments like radiation or chemotherapy? When is it time to recognize that it is best to let one's loved one go, that loved one having been made

as comfortable as possible under hospice care? One may struggle to find the correct action just as Prince posits it would be difficult to find that penny "in a large room with no light."

Sometimes, the choice is as seemingly mundane as choosing a career, mate, or new home. Sometimes, it is as grave as deciding what to do for a loved one with a terminal illness. Prince posits several difficult circumstances to begin the song. One scenario has a child's drawing depicting her mother's drinking, with the result of making her mother sad; another lyrical vignette shows a guy who implicates his girlfriend in a crime so that he would not be the only one serving time. In each circumstance, Prince posited a clear idea of some seemingly intractable problems. Prince used the proverbial phrase "*drop the dime*" (*to drop a dime*) to refer to the boyfriend's act of implicating his own girlfriend in a crime. In the next lyric, Prince cites a proverb, "*a fire don't burn unless it's started*."

Back in the days (early 1980s) before cell phones were a ubiquitous feature in our lives, one could literally "drop" a dime into a pay phone coin slot to make a call.[5] The **grammatical** category of meaning suggests that one would simply make a phone call (Prahlad 1996: 23). Long after the cost increased and even after pay phones all but disappeared, some still refer to that process as "*dropping a dime*." Once the phrase moves into the realm of the proverbial expression, Prahlad's **situational** category of meaning comes into play (Prahlad 1996: 24). At the level of situational meaning, having heard and used this proverbial expression many times over the years, it means to tell something on someone (Prahlad 1996: 24). If one were to be a police informant, for example, one could "*drop a dime*" by calling the police about that crime. If one were a gossip or deeply concerned about a friend's child, one could "*drop a dime*" by calling that child's parent to report errant behavior. One could even *drop a time* by texting said information. The child then arrives at home, none

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[5] The R&B group Skyy released the song "Call Me" in 1981 where the female singer suggested that her intended love interest should call her because his then girlfriend wasn't treating him properly. She sang "here's my number and a dime; call me anytime." By 1981, as Sinclair reported in *The Washington Post*, phone companies were pushing to raise the cost to a quarter from a dime. Some states had already seen the dime pay call disappear by that time.

the wiser, only to face punishment for that indiscretion. In the case of this song, the boyfriend in question *dropped the dime* on his own girlfriend based on a truly selfish motive. As Prince wrote, "Danny *dropped the dime* on his girlfriend. He said he didn't wanna go 2 jail alone." He didn't want to be the only one charged and convicted of a crime. It would be one thing to implicate himself, but to implicate someone else in the crime is a selfish and malicious act.

In the next few lines of the song, Prince raises the specter of seeds being sown (*to sow a seed*), a proverbial expression that appears to allude to the proverb *you will reap what you sow* (though Prince never actually cites that proverb). The lyric reads "seeds are sown" after stating that people are always looking for angels above them when they're "broken hearted." Even if Prince isn't alluding to the proverb *reap what you sow*, the proverbial expression *to sow a seed* at the grammatical level of meaning indicates that something is beginning to grow. What that is, at the situational level of meaning is that something has begun in the relationships previously discussed in the song.

If the proverb refers to those persons' actions, then the girl is slated to be damaged in adulthood as she is shown to be in the drawing described (a girl with no eyes holds her mother's hand while the mother holds a drink in the other hand). If the mother is abusing alcohol, as the lyrics suggest, it may result in serious damage to the child. In other words, the seed was sown for the child's inevitable damage through the mother's actions. In dropping the dime on his own girlfriend, the boyfriend has probably irreparably damaged or destroyed his relationship. Incarceration issues aside, relationships begun prior to incarceration can persist and sometimes people are able to reconnect upon release. His having implicated her is likely problematic to the relationship. It may be fatal to the relationship.

The proverb that immediately follows *seeds are sown* is *a fire don't burn unless it's started*. A grammatical reading of that proverb strongly indicates that one must, indeed, actually light a fire in order for it to burn. We need a starter, like a spark, a lighter or matches to start a fire in the fireplace, for example. Then again, "everybody" knows that. The situational meaning allows for interpretation based on the previous troubling scenar-

ios Prince referenced at the beginning of the song. Prince may be indicating that none of the results he alludes to - a damaged child and snitching for a crime - could have been started without the "original" sin that precipitated those problems. The mother's drunkenness precipitated damage to her child. The boyfriend's bad decision to commit a crime leads to the cowardly decision to falsely implicate his own girlfriend. Prince suggests that the solution for a myriad of the social problems he discussed here was knowledge of history when he sings "if you could just pass your history class, then maybe life would be all right." Perhaps knowledge of previously bad situations and their outcomes could deter one from making poor decisions oneself. With this song, Prince again addressed substance abuse (as he had with "Sign O' The Times.") as a problem that he needed to shine light upon.

When he heard about Freddie Gray's death, Prince was moved to write a song about it. He would later perform in a benefit concert. *Washington Post* reporter Justin Moyer wrongly thought Prince was new to the world of writing protest songs. Moyer's writing revealed that he did not know about any of the many songs Prince wrote on a variety of controversial racial, social ills, and other social justice topics (Moyer 2015). Freddie Gray died on April 19 and Prince wrote and recorded the song by the end of the month, releasing it for a streaming audience on 9 May 2015, the eve of the Rally 4 Peace benefit concert in Baltimore (Perez 2015). Prince told reporter Isis Perez that he "had a lot" to get off his chest with the song "Baltimore."

After the Rally 4 Peace concert, Prince released the song on his last album/cd, *HITnRUN Phase Two* on Sunday 10 May 2015. In *Vanity Fair,* Bruce Handy described the single release as follows, "'Baltimore,' released as a single, is a protest number about police murders, which Marvin Gaye or Stevie Wonder or Brown might have admired, though its melody and arrangement are oddly upbeat, at least until the disco strings I mentioned above take a briefly sour left turn (Handy 2016)." Whatever the merits of Handy's "disco strings" take on the song, it is clear that in writing "Baltimore," Prince follows in the tradition of writing songs (from time to time) that speak to some social issue. Prince also pulled from his well-used writers' tool-box and employed a few proverbs in order to complete the song.

The song begins with the lines "nobody got in nobody's way, so eye guess u could say, it was a good day," then adding that at least the day was marginally better and preferable to recent days in Baltimore, which faced violent unrest following Freddie Gray's death. The statement fits the apparently guardedly optimistic tone of the song itself. The Purple Yoda also wondered if people heard him and others crying over the deaths of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri in 2014 and that of Freddie Gray in Baltimore in 2015. At the Grammy Awards earlier in 2015, Prince had already drawn attention to the Black Lives Matter movement, saying "like books and black lives, albums still matter," so it was clear that it had been on his mind for some time (Moyer 2015). The song articulated what Prince wanted to say from his own version of the "bully pulpit." While Prince wasn't known for speaking many words in casual conversation or doing interviews, his release of the song was designed to draw attention.

Prince wondered lyrically if the violence could end. After asking if anyone heard the prayers for Michael Brown and Freddie Gray, Prince called for peace through the use of the proverb "*peace is more than the absence of war*" to bolster his argument. In the literal or grammatical reading of meaning, the proverb indicates that he wanted to identify that war is war and peace is peace, but that more than a lack of war is necessary to achieve peace. At the situational level of meaning, it seems that Prince is leaving us to wonder what needs to be there in order for peace to transpire. It seems that he means prayer (faith in a higher power) is necessary as is enough love to have the strength to remove all the guns. Without guns, then, it is clear that Michael Brown couldn't have been shot to death (police action notwithstanding).

Prince also wonders if we have had enough. Had we seen enough death? Had we grieved more often for more people than we should have? Apparently, he was, as the old folks say, sick and tired of this kind of killing. Arguing for a certain segment of the U.S. populace, he argued that "we" were tired of crying and tired of people dying. He then used the proverb "*enuff is enuff*," employing his own unique spelling to cite the proverb. *Enuff is enuff* speaks, at the situational level of meaning, to the idea that it was time for this to be over. It was time for the end of Black

deaths at the hands of or while in the custody of the police. He thus mirrored the sentiments of the Black Lives Matter movement. How can it be ended?

Prince's last proverb on the first single to emerge from his last album in 2015 indicated that for America to live up to the promises and ideals laid out in the Declaration of Independence, the United States Constitution and the Bill of Rights, America needed to commit itself to eradicating injustice. As far as the lyrics of The Purple Yoda were concerned and stated, justice would be the ultimate solution via the proverb: "*if there ain't no justice then there ain't no peace*." At the situational level of meaning, it appears that this proverb attaches lasting peace to justice in America for Black people. From the perspective of some African Americans, justice is all too elusive. One wonders if even an unrepentant thief receives justice by being shot dead in the street for what is not normally a capital crime. A court of law, following arrest, could be used to prove guilt. Why not protest, then, if these killings continue, some would argue. Peace is an active process, so the active pursuit of equal justice appears to be Prince's goal. In using the final proverb in the song, the Purple Yoda employs a different technique. He pushes the song further than simply singing the proverb after his understated guitar solo; instead of just using the proverb, a chorus of voices chant the proverb repeatedly (four times). At this point, it becomes almost like a chant one would hear at a street protest or march. Perhaps Prince borrowed artistically from the chant that can be heard at some protest marches: No justice, no peace. Perhaps he wanted to create a rallying cry in the form of a proverb.

## 5. Conclusion

Prince used a substantial number of proverbs in his writing. Some appear in major proverb collections and some don't. Having heard some of them outside Prince's songs, I take these statements to be proverbial and err on the side of inclusion here. As a collector of proverbs for the last quarter of a century, I have previously collected many statements that also do not yet appear in standard proverb collections. Nevertheless, it appears that Prince employed proverbs or proverb-like statements from his first sin-

gle from his first album ("Soft and Wet") to his first single from his last album ("Baltimore"). In between, he used more or fewer proverbs per release. Having surveyed the first 12 years of his output, I can state that he used proverbs on every album. At the low end of his proverbial output, 22% of the songs on an album contained proverbs (*For You*). At the high end of his proverbial output, 67% of the songs contained proverbs (*Around the World in a Day*). *Purple Rain*, his most popular release, came in nearer the lower end, at 33%. In total, Prince employed 66 proverbial texts in his songs during the first dozen years of his career. At some point in the future, I plan to identify all of the proverbs in all the songs in his catalog. Once that task is complete, I imagine I will have another scholarly project in mind.

While the texts of the songs on an album are far shorter than novels, Prince's proverbial output seems fare well compared to that of folklorist and novelist Zora Neale Hurston. In turn, Hurston's work compares favorably to that of other writers in Black Atlantic writing traditions.[6] Earlier research shows that the late Nigerian novelist Chinua Achebe employed an average of 57 proverbs per novel (Williams 1997: 229). Achebe's frequency of proverbial usage provides the basis for Adéẹ̀kọ́'s assertion that "Achebe's use of proverb [sic] is itself proverbial in the criticism of African literature. These sayings are so conspicuous in his novels that they constitute the most studied singular feature of his craft" (Adéẹ̀kọ́ 1991: 141). A study of Hurston's use of proverbial material shows that her novels contain an average of approximately 55 proverbs per text (Williams 1997: 230). Alice Walker's best-known work, *The Color Purple,* contains 68 proverbial texts, including well-known items like *every Tom, Dick and Harry* (30) and *the Lord don't like ugly* (Williams 1997: 238). Prince's frequency of proverb use stands up to some of the best writers of the Black Atlantic.

As this article has shown, Prince used proverbs in many song lyrics. He joins writers Zora Neale Hurston and Alice Walker as one of the most prolific purveyors of African American prov-

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[6] I borrow the term "Black Atlantic" from Paul Gilroy's book of the same title. He uses the term to refer to "intercultural" and "transnational" linkages between people of African descent on the African continent, the Caribbean, Europe, and the Americas.

erbs. Those proverbs connect him to folk wisdom (motherwit) and a tradition of using proverbs to pack a great deal of meaning into a few words. Proverbs didn't <u>make</u> the songs, but they helped Prince make the songs. Like some other prolific songwriters mentioned in this article, he used proverbs frequently. Those proverbs also infused his songs with additional poetic language. Prince used proverbs to spice up memorable love songs. In the best traditions of his African and African American ancestors' proverb use, Prince also used proverbs to teach, inform, and challenge.

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Prince. "Sometimes It Snows In April." *Parade,* Paisley Park Records, 1986.

## *The Princely Proverbs*

"Baltimore"

       Peace is more than the absence of war

       Enuff is Enuff

       If there ain't no justice, then there ain't no peace!

"Black M.F. in the House" (as NPG)

       Best place for a coon's in a tree

"Dead on It" (*Black Album*)

       The only good rapper is one that's dead

"In a Large Room with No Light" (ca. 2009)

Danny dropped the dime on his girlfriend (to drop a dime)
Seeds are sown (to sow a seed)
A fire don't burn unless it's started

"Kiss" (1986)

Act your age, Mama, not your shoe size

"The Line"

The water's so much better on the other side

"Scandalous"

Good things come to those who wait
I've got so much on the menu (to have on the menu)

"Sign O' The Times"

Some say man ain't happy truly until the man truly dies

"Soft and Wet" (*For You*)

You're just as soft as a lion tamed
You're just as wet as the evening rain

"Sometimes it Snows in April" (*Parade*, 1986)

All good things, they say, never last

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# NIKOLINA MILETIĆ

Untersuchungen im Bereich der Phraseologie und Parömiologie sind ein weitläufiges und komplexes Forschungsfeld, innerhalb dessen zahlreiche Fragestellungen behandelt werden. Die Forschungsbereiche beziehen sich auf theoretische und angewandte Aspekte der Phraseologie und Parömiologie, wie z. B. lexikografische, translatologische, sprachdidaktische u. a. Aspekte. Prof. Dr. Vida Jesenšeks Monografie mit dem Titel *Beiträge zur deutschen und slowenischen Phraseologie und Parömiologie* veranschaulicht nicht nur theoretische Darstellungen zu relevanten Fragestellungen im Bereich der Phraseologie und Parömiologie, sondern etabliert auch eine praxisorientierte Verbindung im Kontext des Sprachenlernens, der Entwicklung von Lern- und Lehrmaterialien, der Konzeption lexikografischer Produkte sowie bei Übersetzungsprozessen. Die Monografie besteht aus drei Teilen mit jeweils vier Beiträgen zu ausgewählten Forschungsthemen zur deutschen und slowenischen Phraseologie und Parömiologie.

*Teil I* beinhaltet vier Beiträge zum Sprachphänomen *Sprichwort* aus semantisch-pragmatischer und grammatisch-syntaktischer Perspektive. Im Beitrag *Zeit in Sprichwörtern* wird untersucht, welches Verständnis von Zeit in bestimmten Sprachen und Kulturkreisen durch den Einsatz von Sprichwörtern vermittelt wird. Dabei wird nicht nur die lexikalisch-grammatische Ausdrucksweise dieses Zeitverständnisses analysiert, sondern es werden auch zwischensprachliche Ähnlichkeiten und Unterschiede untersucht. Zunächst widmet sich Vida Jesenšek der Betrachtung der Zeit aus einer historisch-wissenschaftlichen

Perspektive und erläutert dabei grundlegende Postulate der kognitiven Metapherntheorie. Diese Ansätze werden im Anschluss in einen kulturgeschichtlichen Kontext eingebettet und sind grundlegend für die interlinguale Analyse ausgewählter Sprichwörter. Anhand ausgewählter deutscher und slowenischer Sprichwörter wird beispielhaft verdeutlicht, dass die Art und Weise wie in parömiologischen Kontexten im Deutschen und im Slowenischen über Zeit gesprochen wird, weitgehend mit der metaphorisch-konzeptuellen Vorstellung von Zeit als Bewegung oder Zeit als Geld übereinstimmt. Einzelne Sprichwörter können konzeptuell präzisiert und verschiedenen metaphorischen Subkonzepten – wie beispielsweise zu Wandel, Dauer, kostbarem Gut, Macht u. a. – zugeordnet werden. Dazu wird (die) Zeit häufig personifiziert und als positiv oder negativ bewertet. Diese exemplarische Analyse trägt zu einer detaillierteren Erkenntnis interlingualer und interkultureller parömiologischer Zusammenhänge bei.

Der Beitrag *Pragmatische und stilistische Aspekte von Sprichwörtern* befasst sich mit den vielfältigen stilistischen und pragmatischen Möglichkeiten von Sprichwörtern. So können sie verschiedene Rollen im Text übernehmen; sei es, um die Aufmerksamkeit in eine bestimmte Richtung zu lenken oder ästhetische Anforderungen zu erfüllen. Vida Jesenšek weist darauf hin, dass aus lexikografischer Sicht unterschiedliche Stilschichtdifferenzierungen existieren, wie z. B. die Stilebenen *gehoben*, *umgangssprachlich*, *salopp, vulgär* u. a. Hinsichtlich der Pragmatik wird das breite Spektrum potenzieller textueller Funktionen thematisiert. Die Funktionen von Sprichwörtern können nur im Kontext identifiziert werden, wobei ihnen mehrere Funktionen zugeschrieben werden können und sie dementsprechend gleichzeitig mehrere Funktionen im Text erfüllen können. In ihrer kurzen Darstellung der Stilistik und Pragmatik von Sprichwörtern bietet die Autorin eine Orientierung und Anregungen für künftige Forschungsansätze.

Sprichwörter können in einem Text auf zwei Weisen auftreten. Sie können selbstständig in ihrer kanonischen Form ohne textuelle Konnektoren und Kommentierungen vorkommen oder sie können durch verschiedene konnektive Mittel eingebunden werden und dazu kommentiert, typologisch markiert und umrandet sein. In dem Beitrag *Zur Systematik von Sprichwörtern* wird die vorteilhafte Nutzung der textuell-konnektorialen Ein-

bettung von Sprichwörtern im Kontext der Wörterbucherstellung untersucht. Dabei werden nicht nur Erkenntnisse präsentiert, sondern es werden auch weitere Forschungsvorschläge für eine vertiefte wissenschaftliche Auseinandersetzung mit diesem Phänomen vorgestellt. Folgende Charakteristika von Sprichwortkonnektoren werden hervorgehoben: (1) Konnektoren erhöhen die Auffindbarkeit von Sprichwörtern in Textkorpora, (2) sie sind semantisch-pragmatisch vielseitig einsetzbar und ihre Analyse liefert lexikografisch relevante Informationen über den textuellen Gebrauch von Sprichwörtern, (3) sprachvergleichende Untersuchungen zeigen bedeutsame Parallelen auf, die für die zweisprachige Parömiografie von Nutzen sein können.

Der Beitrag *Text im Text. Sprichwortkonnektoren im deutsch-slowenischen Vergleich* erörtert den gegenwärtigen Sprichwortgebrauch in unterschiedlichen Kontexten. Die textuelle Verwendung von Sprichwörtern und die Häufigkeit ihrer konnektorialen Einbettung lassen sich heutzutage durch systematische Untersuchungen in umfassenden Textkorpora eingehend analysieren. Vida Jesenšek bietet eine kontrastive Analyse des kontextuellen Auftretens von Sprichwörtern im zeitgenössischen deutschen und slowenischen Sprachgebrauch. Das Forschungsvorhaben stützt sich auf eine Auswahl von 300 äquivalenten deutschen und slowenischen Sprichwörtern aus der *SprichWort-Datenbank* aus dem Jahr 2010. Durch diese Untersuchung konnten Gemeinsamkeiten im Bereich der Sprichwortkonnektoren zwischen den beiden betrachteten Sprachen identifiziert werden. In den Schlussfolgerungen werden potenzielle Forschungsrichtungen skizziert, darunter die Entwicklung einer kontrastiven Typologie von Sprichwortkonnektoren sowie die detaillierte Erforschung typischer textueller Funktionen dieser Konnektoren.

*Teil II* der Monografie besteht aus vier thematischen Beiträgen zu lexikografischen und translatorischen Aspekten der Phraseologie und Parömiologie. Im Fokus des Beitrags *Sprichwörter im Wörterbuch* steht die lexikografische Darstellung von Sprichwörtern. Durch die Analyse der Ergebnisse des Forschungsprojekts *SprichWort* werden Herausforderungen und problematische Aspekte identifiziert, die bei der Zusammenstellung von Wörterbüchern auftreten können. Das Augenmerk liegt auf den makro- und mikrostrukturellen Aspekten der lexikografischen

Sprichwort-Darstellung. Einige hervorgehobene Problemstellen bei der lexikografischen Erfassung von Sprichwörtern sind die Suche und die Auswahl relevanter Belege. Hierbei fehlt es an entsprechenden Qualitätskriterien, insbesondere da Lexikografen bei der Selektion und Analyse von Belegen häufig auf ihre subjektive Einschätzung angewiesen sind. Es ist von großer Bedeutung, dass der Inhalt des Belegs dem Sprachniveau des Benutzers entspricht, damit dieser die Bedeutung entschlüsseln und die aktuelle Verwendung des Sprichworts einordnen kann. Die geschilderten Aspekte der lexikografischen Beschreibung von Sprichwörtern in der *SprichWort-Datenbank* fungieren als Anregung für weitere ähnliche Projekte.

Ein weiterer Beitrag zu makro- und mikrostrukturellen Problembereichen der lexikografischen Erfassung von Sprichwörtern ist folgender: *Sprichwörter in einem allgemeinen elektronischen Wörterbuch*. Jesenšek untersuchte das online Wörterbuch PONS für das Sprachenpaar Deutsch-Slowenisch und leistete einen Beitrag zur parömiografischen Erfassung des Slowenischen; desweiteren eröffnete sie eine weiterführende Diskussion zur theoretischen Parömiografie. Die grundlegenden Empfehlungen beziehen sich auf eine theoretische Definition des Sprichwortes in Wörterbüchern, die Erfassung methodologischer Grundlagen für die Datenerhebung, die Regelung der Makrostruktur in Wörterbüchern sowie die Ausarbeitung einer für Benutzer nachvollziehbaren Mikrostruktur.

Im Beitrag *Das lexikografische Beispiel in der Parömiografie* wird die Funktionalität des lexikografgrafischen Beispiels, das ein Lemma-Zeichen beschreibt und im semantischen, pragmatischen und grammatischen Sinne illustriert, aufgegriffen. Jesenšek erarbeitet ein mehrdimensionales Beschreibungsmodell für Sprichwörter mit semantischen, pragmatischen und grammatischen Angaben, so dass die demonstrativ-illustrierende Funktion eines lexikografischen Beispiels realisiert werden kann. Diese Erkenntnisse können als Grundlage für weitere Untersuchungen im Bereich der Parömiografie dienen.

Der letzte Beitrag im zweiten Teil ist *Phraseologie:* übersetzerische *Entscheidungen zwischen Text und Wörterbuch*, welcher sich der Problematik der Übersetzung von Phraseologismen und insbesondere von Sprichwörtern widmet. Zuerst wird die trans-

latologische Komplexität von Sprichwörtern angegangen und anschließend werden anhand einer deutsch-slowenischen literarischen Übersetzung die Übersetzungsverfahren geschildert. Die Autorin kam zum Schluss, dass eine zwischensprachliche Äquivalenz für den Übersetzer unzureichend ist. Dies liegt daran, dass der Übersetzer nach einer funktional-pragmatischen Äquivalenz strebt, welche kontextspezifisch festgelegt werden muss.

In *Teil III* der Monografie, der insgesamt vier Beiträge enthält, richtet die Autorin ihren Fokus auf die Integration der Phraseologie in den Sprachlernprozess. Aus der Perspektive der Phraseodidaktik sind Phraseme in Lehrwerken quantitativ selten vertreten und werden qualitativ nicht systematisch behandelt. Jesenšek betont im Beitrag *Phraseologie und Fremdsprachenlernen. Zur Problematik einer angemessenen phraseodidaktischen Umsetzung* die Wichtigkeit der systematischen Förderung der phraseologischen Kompetenz beim Sprachenlernen und nennt drei Argumente dafür: Zunächst einmal sind Phraseme Teil der sprachlichen Realität, des Weiteren erfolgt die Entwicklung der muttersprachlichen phraseologischen Kompetenz parallel zur allgemeinen kognitiven Entwicklung, außerdem konzeptualisieren alle Menschen die Welt metaphorisch. Anschließend werden Anweisungen für die Entwicklung mehrsprachiger phraseologischer Lern- und Lehrmaterialien gegeben, wobei der Rückgriff auf die muttersprachliche phraseologische Kompetenz hervorgehoben wird. Ein Vorschlag, welche didaktisch relevanten Phraseme für Lern- und Lehrmaterialien ausgewählt werden sollen, basiert auf den Kriterien der Funktionalität der Phraseme, auf ihrer thematischen Relevanz für das Sprachenlernen und auf ihrer Aktualität. Diese Kriterien werden ausführlicher im Beitrag *Aspekte der Phrasemselektion* für didaktische Zwecke beschrieben.

Im vorletzten Beitrag *Sprichwortgebrauch heute. Linguistische und sprachdidaktische Überlegungen* liegt der Schwerpunkt auf der Funktionalität des Sprichwortes aus linguistischer Sicht sowie auf Anregungen für die Vermittlung von Sprichwörtern im Sprachlernprozess. Sprichwörter sind in Sprachlernprozessen relevant, zumal sie im Sprachgebrauch aktuell sind, mit ihnen unterschiedliche pragmatische Ziele erreicht werden können und sie Träger kultureller Inhalte sind. Die Autorin verweist auf vier linguistische Aspekte, die in der Phraseodidaktik noch

immer zu wenig berücksichtigt werden. Dies sind die textuelle Identifizierbarkeit, die strukturell-semantische Modellhaftigkeit und Variabilität, der pragmatische Mehrwert und die interlinguale Übereinstimmung. Jesenšek verbindet die aktuelle Sprichwortforschung mit der Fremdsprachendidaktik bzw. theoretische Konzepte mit ihrer praktischen Umsetzung.

Die Monografie wird durch eine sprachdidaktisch orientierte Studie über den Einsatz von Kollokationen im DaF-Unterricht vervollständigt. Im Beitrag *Kollokationen zum thematischen Feld Essen* wird die Relevanz von Kollokationen beim Fremdsprachenlernen aufgegriffen. Sie sind vor allem bei mündlicher und schriftlicher Sprachproduktion wegen ihrer Geläufigkeit und lernpsychologischen Unterstützung im Lernprozess bedeutend. Trotz der vorliegenden theoretischen Erkenntnisse werden Kollokationen in der DaF-Didaktik nicht systematisch bearbeitet. Als eines der größten Probleme gilt die Auswahl von Kollokationen für das Fremdsprachenlernen. Die Autorin beschreibt drei Aspekte der Auswahl, die zu einer systematischen und realitätsnahen Vermittlung von Kollokationen beitragen können. Besondere Betonung liegt auf der Berücksichtigung der Muttersprache der Lernenden und der Förderung des Bewusstseins für muttersprachliche Kollokationen, zumal sie zu positiven Auswirkungen bei der Kollokationsvermittlung in der Fremdsprache führen können.

Die in der Monografie präsentierten Studien schildern die vielfältigen Forschungsperspektiven in der Phraseologie und Parömiologie. Diese Untersuchungen gewähren nicht nur Einblicke in theoretische Aspekte, sondern auch in translatologische, lexikografische und sprachdidaktische Themen. Darüber hinaus bieten sie wertvolle Anregungen und Hinweise für zukünftige Forschungsvorhaben auf diesem Gebiet.

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## AREZOO SHARIFRAD

T. Litovkina, Anna. *Practice makes perfect. Workbook of English and American proverbs for students.* Budapest: Tinta Könyvkiadó, 2023. 169 p. ISBN 978-963-409-385-5

Proverbs are "traditional sayings that offer advice or present a moral in a short and pithy manner" (The Oxford Dictionary of Proverbs, 2004: ix). Meider has defined the proverb as "a short, generally known sentence of the folk which contains wisdom, truth, morals, and traditional views in a metaphorical, fixed and memorizable form and which is handed down from generation to generation" (1985: 119). According to what Mieder (2004) has mentioned, the significance of proverbs has not been decreased in modern society. While the frequency of their usage may vary among individuals and contexts, proverbs exert a considerable influence across diverse communication in life. So, proverbs are the most effective devices to communicate wisdom and knowledge about human nature and the world and are used to attract people's attention by using them in books' titles, newspaper headings, and advertisements (Mieder 2004).

Workbooks play a crucial role in the learning process, especially in educational settings. Workbooks often present information in a structured and organized manner which helps learners to learn the lesson easily. Proverbs may be easy to memorize but difficult to understand and learn in every language, especially in English and the American language due not only to the metaphorical meanings of some proverbs but also to their meaning in different contexts. The primary goal of this workbook is to make learning proverbs an enjoyable process through various activities and exercises. This workbook is helpful for memory reten-

tion and provides learners with structured activities to practice their acquired knowledge.

Anna T. Litovkina is an experienced teacher in Hungary, Slovakia, and Poland and her latest workbook is a condensed version and concise adaptation of the book *A Proverb a Day Keeps Boredom Away* (2000). The topic that the author has selected for this book is *Practice makes perfect. Workbook of English and American proverbs for students*. It was published in Budapest in 2023. The Hungarian title is *Angol és Amerikai Közmondások Gyakorlókönyve*. The workbook presents 450 common proverbs in both American and British English, offering learners enjoyable and humorous activities and exercises to understand how to use these proverbs in various situations. This review summarizes not only the workbook's content and structure but also provides perspectives on its educational benefit for language learners. Therefore, proverbs continue to play a major role as a pedagogical tool in modern societies, especially among family members and in schools.

The workbook consists of 18 units, divided into three main parts, each including six units that cover proverbs alphabetically related to specific topics such as 'money and love', 'knowledge and wisdom', 'children and parents', 'speech and silence', 'words and deeds', and 'necessity and adversity'. Anna T. Litovkina starts the workbook with an insightful introduction and each of the three main parts is followed by a test for the 18 units. The inclusion of tests at the end of each part is highlighted as a particularly beneficial feature, emphasizing comprehension and application.

The author concludes that the workbook serves as a valuable resource for intermediate learners, providing examples, activities, and exercises that contribute to a better understanding of English and American proverbs in context. At the end of this workbook, there are key answers to each test, a carefully chosen bibliography of collections on British and Anglo-American proverbs, and an index to help locate specific proverbs.

The topics of each of the six units in Part One are money, love, sexual relationships, weddings and marriage, knowledge, wisdom, folly and ignorance, appearance and taste, as well as children and parents. The topics of each of the six units in Part

Two are home, family, relatives and surroundings, associates and friends, medical and weather proverbs, action and consequence, reciprocity, optimism, success, hope as well as pessimism and misfortune. Finally, the topics of each of the six units in Part Three are discretion, risk, caution, thrift and prudence, necessity and adversity, speech and silence, words and deeds, work, opportunity, procrastination, patience and haste.

The main focus of the first three activities in each unit is guessing the meaning of underlined italicized proverbs, matching the proverbs, and filling in the blanks. For instance, the first unit in the first part presents 13 proverbs which include the word 'money' such as *Money can buy happiness*, *Money doesn't grow on trees*, *Money is power*, *Money talks*, etc. Then the author introduces proverbs related to money such as *A penny saved is a penny earned*, *Easy come, easy go*, etc. The following exercises depend on the proverbs and the activities that are best suited for each unit such as matching the beginnings of proverbs in column A with their endings in column B. Then the authors provide different sentences or jokes related to the proverbs in each unit and the learner should guess the proverb that best matches the definition, or try to identify the proverbs from the initial letters given by the author.

Proverbs often vary across cultures, and learning them through diverse exercises promotes cross-cultural understanding. This review emphasizes the significance of understanding cultural and metaphorical elements in proverbs as a means to achieve communicative competence. According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, a proverb is "a brief popular epigram or maxim" and "a saying often in a metaphorical form that typically embodies a common observation". Norrick (1985:78) also defines the proverb as "a traditional, conversational, didactic genre with a general meaning, a potential free conversational turn, preferably with a figurative meaning."

As proverbs are "linguistic signs of cultural values and thoughts" (Mieder 2004), their role in foreign language teaching and corpus linguistic aspects of paremiology cannot be ignored. They have been studied as teaching tools in schools, and for imparting general human experiences for centuries (Mieder 2000). Workbooks and exercises on proverbs help learners un-

derstand the cultures and histories behind these proverbs, motivating them to learn how different societies share important lessons and truths. This enhances their cultural comprehension. Proverbs often contain rich vocabulary, idiomatic expressions, and figurative language, which contribute to linguistic proficiency. Engaging in activities with proverbs also improves learners' language use. Overall, the cultural and metaphorical aspects of proverbs significantly impact learners' achievement of communicative competence.

In conclusion, proverbs are valuable in both spoken and written language. Learning proverbs enhances communication skills by introducing effective ways of expressing ideas succinctly. It helps learners explain complicated ideas briefly and powerfully, which is useful for both speaking and writing. The workbook is recognized as a useful tool for enhancing memorization skills through engaging exercises. Activities involving proverbs help stimulate cognitive development by encouraging memory retention, pattern recognition, and idea connectivity, fostering overall mental growth. In particular, the tests at the end of each part make it more valuable and emphasize a deeper understanding of proverbs in context.

Overall, the workbook is considered a valuable collection of proverbs, providing a significant benefit for learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and students aiming to improve their language proficiency. I strongly recommend this workbook because it helps students memorize proverbs more effectively while solving the exercises. In my opinion, learning proverbs through workbooks, exercises, and activities holds significant importance as it offers a structured and engaging approach to understanding these traditional expressions. Analyzing and interpreting proverbs in workbooks and exercises encourages critical thinking, requiring learners to deduce meanings, consider context, and draw connections between the proverbial wisdom and real-life situations. Thus, using workbooks, exercises, and activities when learning proverbs helps learners create a complete and interactive learning experience. This approach promotes cultural understanding, improves language skills, encourages critical thinking, and develops other important abilities for a comprehensive education.

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## PETER UNSETH

Mieder, Wolfgang. *International Bibliography of Paremiology and Phraseology (2008-2022)*. Osijek: Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Osijek, 2023, 699 p. ISBN 978-953-314-194-7, (eBook) https://naklada.ffos.hr/casopisi/proverbium/supplement

The publication of another bibliography volume of proverb studies by Dr. Wolfgang Mieder is a great event, but not a surprise. He published his first bibliography volume in 1982, *International Proverb Scholarship: An Annotated Bibliography*, each item with a paragraph of annotation. He then added additional volumes in 1990 and 1993, each with annotations, published with dark green covers. (These older books are treasures because of Mieder's annotations.) He produced an updated volume in 2001, a light green cover, with index words instead of annotations. Then in 2009, de Gruyter published his two-volume work with burgundy bindings, each entry marked for certain key words. With a large index, these two volumes are incredibly useful, but expensive.

He is known for his annual bibliographical collections published in each year's volume of *Proverbium*, each containing over 300 entries. In 2023, Mieder combined the listings of proverb publications from the 2008-2022 *Proverbium* listing and has produced an updated bibliography volume, distributed with the 2023 volume of *Proverbium.* A simple examination of this volume shows that 262 items were written by Mieder, plus additional items he co-authored with others. For most of us, 262 publications about proverbs are more than we hope to do in our lifetime. The volume contains 6,364 serially numbered entries. As scholars use this bibliography, these serial numbers are useful

as we study a subject and note the entry numbers of each entry that we think may be relevant.

This new volume is different from its predecessors in some important ways. The first and major difference is that it is *freely* available on the Web. Free access to this book is a huge advantage for students and scholars who do not have access to the previous expensive books. Second, this new bibliography is also different from his previous volumes because articles are not marked with thematic words and there is no index of any type. Third, the PDF form of the book is entirely searchable, so readers can do creative searches on their own. Fourth, the bibliography includes proverb-related publications written in a wider variety of languages. In past bibliography volumes, almost all of the entries were written in European languages. This volume has more entries written in non-European languages, and entries written in a wider variety of non-European languages, such as Malayalam of India and Arabic. There are even 15 entries published in the Turkish language journal *Milli Folklor*.

This review examines the contents and format of the book itself. But the book was not intended to be used only as a paper book. Therefore, this review also examines some of the possibilities that this digital format now allows.

The title includes the dates "2008-2022", referring to the dates of his annual bibliographies in each volume of *Proverbium*. The bibliography contains a number of items that were published previous to 2008, but these are included here if they had not been included in the 2009 two-volume bibliography. For example, when he prepared his 2009 two-volume bibliography, Mieder had not yet discovered the following item from 1999, so he included it in this volume:

> **5380** Siemens, Ruth Derksen. "Quilt as Text and Text as Quilt: The Influence of Genre [Proverbs] in the Mennonite Girls Home of Vancouver (1930-1960)." *Journal of Mennonite Studies*, 17 (1999), 118-129. With 2 illustrations.

Note that the previous entry includes not only the usual facts of publication, but also adds the useful information that the article includes two illustrations.

Mieder has continued a useful pattern that he began in his earliest bibliographies: he lists not only the page numbers of each article or chapter, but he also lists the total number of pages for books that are listed. This allows readers to estimate the amount of data and its importance to their research:

**4973** Rodríguez Valle, Nieves. 'Los refranes del "Quijote": Poética cervantina.' México, D.F.: Colegio de México, Centro de Estudios Lingüísticos y Literarios, 2014. 426 pp

Using this new bibliography is different than using the previous paper volumes, in some ways easier, in some ways harder. Just like the previous volumes, the items are entered alphabetically by author's name. This enables a reader to find in one place all the entries by an author. (The reader can also search to see if the author is listed as a second author of some other items.) I am interested in the spread of proverbs over wide areas, so I searched for "areal". This took me to a number of entries, some by Elisabeth Piirainen. She had published some other items about "areal" spread of proverbs, but because those items did not include the words in searches, I did not find them in my keyword search. But because all of the entries by Elisabeth Piirainen were grouped together, I found more items on the topic, even though they did not contain the keyword I was using.

Since many of the entries are not written in English, readers will have to be alert to find entries written in other languages. For example, a reader thinking only in English would search for "Russia", expecting to find examples about the country and the language. However, if the user keys "Russi", they will also find additional articles about Russian proverbs written in German with the word "russischer".

I searched for the English word "gender" and found 64 items. I searched also for other gender-linked words, such as "woman", "women", female", "male", "masculine". Then I searched in other languages and found more matches, e.g. "femme", "frau", "mujer". When using keywords to search, it is often useful to omit the final letters of words since suffixes will vary. For example, by searching for the "masculin", I found the English words "masculine" and "masculinity", as well as Spanish "masculino" and "masculinas". I searched for "wellerism" and found 26

matches, but searching for "weller" found one more, a Polish article that spelled the word "welleryzmy".

Similarly, I wanted to know how many entries studied the "paremiological minimum". There were nine matches for the English phrase "paremiological minimum". But when I searched for only "minim", there were over 30 matches, because authors writing in other languages about the "paremiological minimum" generally use some form of the Latin-based word "minimum", but use an adjective from the language in which they are writing, e.g. "paremiološkega minimum", "paremiološkog minimuma", "parömische Minimum", "minimum parémiologique", "mínimo paremiolóxico", "mínimo paremiológico", "minimum paremio-llogiczne", "minimum parémiologique".

Scholars can also use this book to study trends in proverb scholarship. For example, in Mieder's 1990 bibliographical volume, the index did not include "gender". In his 2009 two-volume bibliography, there were over 230 proverbs indexed under "gender", 2.3% of the total proverbs in the collection. In this volume, I identified 225 proverb entries that touch on gender using such keywords as "woman", "women", "femme", "feminin", "frau", "mujer", or "masculin". These 230 proverbs are 3.5% of the total collection (and there will be other proverbs that touch on gender issues, even if they do not use one of these words in the title). We should realize that these numbers are not exact, but it does show that since 2009, there has been an increase in the number of studies of gender in relation to proverbs. The bibliography in digital form allows readers to study such topics.

The volume has no index identifying the relevant country for an entry. However, Mieder has helpfully inserted country names in some entries. For example, he helpfully inserted "Ethiopia" in the following entry:

> **1898** Gebeyehu, Tsegaye Abie. "The Negative Representation of Women in the Language of Awngi [Ethiopia] Proverbs." *International Journal of Research and Analytical Reviews*, 6, no. 2 (2019), 479-490.

It is interesting to note that searching for "Bible", "Biblical", "Biblia", "Bibel" I found over 60 matches. In addition, there are additional items about the book of Proverbs in the Bible, and a

few that used "sermon", "priest", etc. In contrast, searching for "Koran" and "Quran", "Qur'an", only one entry title mentioned the Koran/Qur'an, a 346-page book:

> **3979** Mohamed, Yomna Y. *A Linguistic Study of Selected Proverbs in the Glorious Qur'an and their Translations into English*. Saarbrücken: Lambert Academic Publishing, 2017. 346 pp.

In addition to this item, there are two entries that mention "Hadith" and three that mention "Islam". Searching for "Mulla", "Molla", "Mosque", "Islam" found no entries. Certainly, additional entries would be identified as linked to Islam by reading the actual content of the items listed. I am sure there are more publications about proverbs in Islamic contexts, but it is clearly an area for more studies of proverbs.

This book will be used frequently by proverb scholars around the world, very senior scholars and students who are just beginning to study proverbs. It is a gift to us all from Wolfgang Mieder.

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For too many decades proverb scholarship in the language communities of the former Soviet Union was available only in Russian and local languages, accessible to a limited number of scholars elsewhere. This collection of 13 articles about Kazakh proverbs, all written in English, gives outsiders an opportunity to read multiple approaches to the study of their proverbs written by Kazakh scholars.

The book is the result of a research project sponsored by Nazarbayev University in Astana, Kazakhstan. The goal was to have scholars publish their work in English. This was a success as the chapters are written in a high level of English. The project specifically promoted the use of the "discourse ecologies" approach to studying proverbs. This approach examines the situation and speakers in different contexts. Because of formality or other factors, people may use different proverbs to communicate the same underlying ideas. Aasland, the co-editor, had introduced discourse ecologies to proverb scholars earlier, specifically illustrating its relevance in a study of Kazakh proverbs in his article "Contrasting Two Kazakh Proverbial Calls to Action: Using Discourse Ecologies to Understand Proverb Meaning-Making" in *Proverbium* (2018).

The editors are a Kazakh professor and an American professor, each bringing their perspectives on proverb study. "We see this book as a meeting of Kazakh and Western scholarship" (p. xv)

They are explicitly aware that there are different expectations for such academic writing between the West and the Commonwealth of Independent States (as well as other parts of the world). They cited two examples that differ from Western scholarship: "The long introductory paragraphs extolling the virtues of proverbs and the literature review sections having a long list of the names of key scholars" (p. xv). To this I would add that explanations of methodology are sometimes general and non-specific.

Some of the questions that the book addresses are different from Western proverb scholarship. The answers may seem incomplete, tangential, or even irrelevant for Western scholars until they learn to think through the categories and questions used by Kazakh scholars, some of which can be traced to using approaches developed by both Kazakh and Russian scholars. It is wise for Western scholars to remember the proverb, "Don't criticize a person until you have walked a kilometer/mile in their shoes."

The chapters in this book touch a wide variety of topics related to Kazakh proverbs, including a software corpus of Kazakh proverbs, proverbs used in Kazakh literature, gender and Kazakh proverbs, translation of proverbs between English and Kazakh, and teaching proverbs in digital education. Several use the concept of discourse ecology to study the use of proverbs.

The first two chapters use the theoretical lens of discourse ecology to examine how proverbs are changed and selected in different discourse contexts.

The editor Gulnara Omarbekova wrote the opening chapter "Perspectives on Proverb Use Among Kazakhs: Ecological Issues". She asks, "Does the younger generation know proverbs well? How well are the proverbs transmitted to the young generation? If their proverb competency is adequate, it is an indication that cultural embeddedness provides a strong moral character in a globalized world" (p. 6). She found "some traditional proverbs have lost their relevance to modern realities. Therefore, new proverbs that reflect contemporary society are created instead" (p. 14).

In sorting various sayings into categories, the intuitions of the test subjects (who included scholars) did not match the categories that the author had in mind (p. 12). This is a reminder

that defining and categorizing proverbs and similar sayings will never be rigidly exact. However, people did agree about categorizing anti-proverbs.

Omarbekova's opening chapter studied people's knowledge and use of a list of proverbs. Not surprisingly, younger people know and use fewer proverbs than older people. In her research, Omarbekova also asked if respondents supported changing traditional proverbs. That question must have started some interesting discussions!

The second chapter is Aasland's article, reprinted from *Proverbium*. Aasland presents evidence that some proverbs are used more frequently to refer to large issues, such as national identity. Other proverbs are used in more "private contexts" (p. 27).

Aiman Zhanabekova explains the origins and goals of the Kazakh proverb corpus. The article gives a description of several different ways to use the search tools. This corpus will be a standard tool for all who study Kazakh proverbs in the future.

Funda Guven and Aidana Amalbekova studied the tradition of *kindik sheshe,* "a spiritual mother of a baby who takes a role in their life from birth to death in Kazakh society." State-sponsored medicine has reduced her role in the birth itself, preventing her from cutting the baby's umbilical cord. Some symbolic parts of *kindik sheshe's* role remains, illustrated by four proverbs.

Fauziya Orazbayeva and Elmira Orazaliyeva wrote about "Kazakh Proverbs from the Perspective of Cultural Cognition and Communication". Their wide-ranging article touched on how some of their proverbs reflect the Koran, noting that Mieder had observed that the Bible was a major source of proverbs in Europe. They use a different approach to communication than what some in the West will know, neither Conduit, Code, nor Relevance models. The Nazarbayev University research project was aware of differences in the use of proverbs by different generations so they conducted a test asking students to read the beginning of a proverb and then complete it. This showed that younger people are less knowledgeable about traditional proverbs.

Gulzia Pirali and Aizhan Kurmanbayeva studied the use of proverbs by Muktar Auezov (1897-1961), a great Kazakh writer,

who produced poetry, plays, novels, and stories. His collected works fill 50 volumes. The authors list some of Auezov's use of traditional proverbs in some of his writings. In addition, they also list some of his quotations that have become proverbs, e.g. "The punishment of conscience is the most severe punishment" (p. 81).

Zhanar Abdigapbarova examined the use of proverbs by the Kazakh writer, Mukhtar Maguin. In 1969, during the Soviet era, Maguin wrote "Death of Tazy", *tazy* being a valued dog breed of Kazakhstan. "The death of that *tazy* is a death of our spirit, traditions, and people" (p. 90). In the story, a man defends his *tazy* from death, quoting a proverb "White does not bend" (a pure person does not bow) (p. 90). Abdigapbarova shows that this traditional Kazakh proverb, used twice, made this story more powerful. Abdigapbarova summarized, "the main problem raised in the work is the destruction of the centuries old native culture and national values of the Kazakh people by the colonial Soviet Union" (p. 90).

Dolores Nurgaliyeva and Bakhyt Arinova examined the use of proverbs by Mashkhur-Zhusip Kópeiuly, a famous Kazakh poet who wrote at the end of the 19th century. He also collected proverbs from people, noting where and from whom he collected them, adding explanations as needed. The authors categorize his proverbs by two sets of criteria. In his poetry, he used a number of proverbs from the *Koran* and the *Hadith*.

Three times the authors noted that he used "ancient words". This is likely related to the fact that some of the proverbs he quoted have already fallen out of use. They believe it is important to revive his works. "The legacy of Mashkhur-Zhusip [Kópeiuly] in the history of humankind has profound educational value and strength and is the beginning of wisdom."

Gulzhan Shokym, Elmira Burankulova, and Karylga Duisenova wrote about gender in Kazakh proverbs. They stated a six-point framework for characterizing people. They matched Kazakh proverbs about gender to three of these. Then they describe traditional Kazakh expectations of women and illustrate each of these with proverbs.

Gulmira Abdimaulen wrote about different words that are used for women, roughly distinguished as "girl", "daughter-in-

law", and "mother". She explains the expected social roles of various stages of life, illustrating each with several proverbs. She illustrated one point by citing a similar English proverb from English proverb collections, "Who finds a wife finds a good thing", echoing a Biblical proverb (Proverbs 18:22). The chapter concludes that the status of some women in society may change, but "the status of *ana* [mother] remained unchanged" (p. 132).

Gulnar Bekkozhanova, Rozalinda Shakhanova, Gulmariya Ospanova wrote a chapter titled "Cognitive and Linguo-cultural Aspects of Transference of English Proverbs and Sayings into the Kazakh Language." They analyzed more than 100 proverbs and sayings, studying the ways they had been translated between English and Kazakh languages. "We tried to distinguish cultural realia and understandings of different objects through cognitive and linguo-cultural peculiarities of proverbs and sayings in Kazakh and English languages" (p. 137). For some proverbs, they identified similar proverbs in the target language.

Roza Zhussupova and Aizhuldyz Tolegen wrote about "Teaching Paremiological Units in Digital Education". These authors explained the most rigorous research design in the book, examining and evaluating teaching English proverbs using mobile phones. Their results are both quantitative and qualitative. This chapter can be useful for those interested in using digital methods for teaching proverbs and language, for teachers in Kazakhstan and in other countries.

The final chapter is a collection of contemporary anti-proverbs. In the Foreword, Gulnara Omarbekova wrote, "The anti-proverb has not yet become an object of close attention of linguists of the Kazakh language" (p. xv). As a big step to change this, the final section of the book is a collection of 100 anti-proverbs. Each traditional proverb is translated and explained, then the derived anti-proverb is also translated and explained. For example, there is a traditional proverb "Marry the girl after knowing her mother, eat her meals after looking at her dish." After this translation, an English equivalent is given, "Like mother, like daughter", the English form being derived from the Bible (Ezekiel 16:44). The Kazakh anti-proverb is "Marry the girl after looking at her Instagram" (p. 223). This very recent anti-proverb

shows the awareness and use of proverbs by the young, though not always valuing the traditional form.

The title of the book is *Contemporary Kazakh Proverb Research*. The word "Contemporary" is important. All through the book, the authors cite many points where changes related to proverb research and proverb use are seen: freedom from Russian control, the loss of proverb knowledge among the young (but at the same time, the rise of anti-proverbs based on traditional proverbs), teaching proverbs digitally instead of in conversations, the changes in the role of *kindik sheshe*, the beginning of a digital corpus of Kazakh proverbs, using internet tools (e.g. Google.kz) to study proverbs, use of the "discourse ecologies" approach.

Readers should remember that it is a book about proverb research in Kazakhstan, not a collection of Kazakh proverbs, it is paremiology not paremiography. This book will obviously be of interest to all those who want to know how proverb scholarship is done in Central Asia, covering such topics as proverbs as important elements of national character, the use of proverbs in literature, proverbs being created and lost, teaching of proverbs, etc. I plan to use it in my teaching, both for lecture material but also assigning passages for my students to read.

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# INTERNATIONAL BIBLIOGRAPHY OF NEW AND REPRINTED PROVERB COLLECTIONS

For Marinela and Rui J.B. Soares

It is with great pleasure that I list the thirty-six collections of proverbs and other phrases that I have been able to add to my International Proverb Archive at the University of Vermont. It is a relatively small number, but it is getting ever more difficult to obtain collections that have appeared abroad. The international postage for just one small book is incredibly high and the books themselves are also quite expensive. As I have said every year in these short introductory paragraphs, I only list those publications that I have been able to obtain. So let me make my usual request for sending me new collections. I will be glad to pay for them out of my own pocket.

As will be seen from this list, my American brother George Schumm, Professor Emeritus of Philosophy at Ohio State University, has once again given me two very old collections as Christmas presents. They are true treasures in my archive.

This year's bibliography is dedicated to my friends Marinela and Rui J.B. Soares from Tavira, Portugal. They are the founders and leaders of the International Association of Paremiology and organizers of the annual Interdisciplinary Colloquium on Proverbs. They have thus been responsible for a truly international community of proverb scholars.

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# INTERNATIONAL PROVERB SCHOLARSHIP: AN UPDATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

For Melita Aleksa Varga and
Hrisztalina Hrisztova-Gotthardt

It is with much pleasure that I once again can present an annual bibliography of international proverb scholarship from around the world. It lists over four hundred publications that have appeared primarily in 2023 but also at earlier dates. Even though I attempt to list as many new publications for each calendar year as possible, there are always still new discoveries to be made. Thus, the list includes articles and books that have only now been discovered. But "Better late than never", as the proverb states so well.

It is with much joy that I have added hard copies of these publications to my International Proverb Archive here at the University of Vermont. This means that I register and read at least one new publication a day, quite an undertaking to be sure. It continues to amaze me how much is being published in our field of paremiology every year, a clear sign that there is much international and interdisciplinary interest in proverbs, proverbial expressions, and other types of phraseological units worldwide. At times it is difficult if not impossible to obtain the publications, but it is certainly much appreciated when scholars send me their new publications as attachments. I don't mind printing them out here to add them to the archive that now contains well over fifteen thousand publications that are ready to be used by welcome guests from anywhere. Of course, I must once again thank my good friend Pete Unseth from Dallas, Texas, for his untiring help

in hunting down articles from distant lands and languages. Without his diligence and expertise in computer searches this bibliography would be quite a bit shorter indeed.

I have already stated that I regret having missed important scholarship in my previous bibliographies. I must admit that this is true even for some publications of such dear friends like Melita Aleksa Varga and Hrisztalina Hrisztova-Gotthardt. After becoming aware of this problem, they have been so kind as to send me the articles I had not registered, and I am so happy to list them in this bibliography. Of course, they know how thankful I am that they have taken over the editorship of our *Proverbium: Yearbook of International Proverb Scholarship*. This is now already the third volume that they have edited and that has appeared at the University of Osijek in Croatia. There is no doubt that under their superb editorship our *Proverbium* has become a truly superb professionally refereed annual publication. Their excellent and dedicated work mean the world to me, and it is a pleasure and honor to dedicate this annual bibliography to my two dear friends in recognition of their untiring work on behalf of the paremiological community.

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