

Proverbial and Anti-proverbial Pictures of the World: Based on English and Georgian Anti-Proverbs

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Abstract

In contemporary paremiology anti-proverb research is experiencing a boom. A great number of scientific papers on the issue have been written by W. Mieder, A. Litovkina, N. Norrick, D. Zaikauskienė, M. Hanzen, N. Can, V. Pavlovic and many others. Anti-proverbs of different languages (English, German, Serbian, Hungarian, Russian, etc.) are studied from different angles: scientists have studied the semantic, structural and stylistic peculiarities of anti-proverbs, various types of transformations in anti-proverbs, the satirical-humorous nature of anti-proverbs, the status of anti-proverbs, the cross-cultural structure of anti-proverbs. Proverbs form proverbial picture of the world, while Anti-proverbs form an anti-proverbial picture of the world. Anti-proverbs show modern mentality of cultures. The present study aims to compare proverbial and anti-proverbial pictures of the world of English and Georgian languages and see the changes in mentality and world vision. The methods used by the researchers in the article are the following: descriptive and comparative methods. The analysis of English traditional proverbs and their transformations showed that the change in life conditions is the reason of semantic changes in anti-proverbs. Contradictory ideas between traditional and anti-proverbs are verbally expressed with antithesis, antonymous words and rhetorical questions. Anti-proverbs show that the truth of traditional proverb is ridiculous in Modern World. As for Georgian anti-proverbs, they did not change the semantics so much as English ones. In Georgian anti-proverbs, words of traditional proverbs are altered by some other words, but the proverbs retain their original meaning. Georgian anti-proverbs are transformations of old ones where certain words change with the change of context.

Keywords: proverb, anti-proverb, transformation, picture of the world, paremiology

1. Introduction

In contemporary paremiology anti-proverb research is experiencing a boom. A great number of scientific papers on the issue have been written by W. Mieder and A. Litovkina, N. Norrick, D. Zaikauskienė, M. Hanzen, N. Can, V. Pavlovic and many others. They have studied anti-proverbs of different languages (English, German, Serbian, Hungarian, Russian, etc.) from different angles. They have studied the semantic and structural peculiarities of anti-proverbs, various types of transformations in anti-proverbs, the satirical-humorous nature of anti-proverbs, the status of anti-proverbs, the cross-cultural structure of anti-proverbs. Scholars have compared proverbial and anti-proverbial pictures of the world of different languages. Besides scientific works of different types (scientific articles, monographs, dissertations), dictionaries of anti-proverbs are compiled by world-famous paremiographers.

2. Literature Review and Research Question

As we mentioned above, anti-proverb research is very popular nowadays, so scientific literature on the topic is quite rich. We based our research mainly on W. Mieder and A. Litovkina's scientific works, but also shared the point of view of some Russian Linguists: V. Mokienko, H. Walter, A. Reznikov, A. Batulina and E. Ivanaova concerning anti-proverbs. Unfortunately, the problem of anti-proverbs is not well - studied by Georgian scientists. There is only one scientific article by T. Shavladze on humorous nature of Georgian and Anglo-American anti-proverbs. Another Georgian scholar is L. Kamadadze, who devoted a special chapter to anti-proverbs in her dissertation thesis: 'Structural-semantic and ethno-cultural peculiarities of English and Georgian proverbs.' More than that, there is no special anti-proverb dictionary compiled

by Georgian lexicographers. We believe that anti-proverb as a linguistic phenomenon requires thorough study by Georgian linguists and our research is one of the first steps in studying Georgian anti-proverbs in comparison with English ones.

Present paper aims to compare proverbial and anti-proverbial pictures of the world of English and Georgian languages and see the changes in mentality and world vision. Russian linguist, E. Ivanova conducted similar research comparing Russian and English proverbial and anti-proverbial pictures of the world. She did comparative analyses of the concept "Marriage" in the proverbial and antiproverbial pictures of the world and saw both similarities and differences in the outlook on marriage. Our research is different from the above mentioned research as it is based on different pair of languages - Georgian and English.

3. Methods and Data

While working on the article descriptive and comparative methods were used by us. For our research, we gathered 225 English and 200 Georgian anti-proverbs. English anti-proverbs were taken from W. Mieder and A. Litovkina's 'Twisted wisdom: Modern Anti-proverbs' (1999). As for Georgian anti-proverbs, we gathered the examples of anti-proverbs ourselves. We used social nets, the Internet, Georgian TV and newspaper advertisements, TV satirical-humorous shows, where we found the examples of transformed traditional proverbs. On the next stage of the research, we classified the examples of anti-proverbs according to semantic fields: Money, Marriage, Work, Religion, Women. Classification of anti-proverbs showed which semantic field underwent more semantic changes. At a final stage, we compared proverbial and anti-proverbial pictures of the world of two different languages.

In the beginning of the article, we will try to define the term "Anti-proverb" and underline its peculiarities. It is a well - known fact that proverbs have fixed forms, but when we speak about anti-proverbs, it becomes untrue. Anti-proverbs are flexible. They allow speakers change not only the structure of the proverbs but the message of proverbs as well. Because of the flexible form and semantics, anti-proverbs are called as proverb alterations, proverb transformations, parodies, silicon proverbs, pseudo proverbs, twisted proverbs, 'intertextual jokes' (N. Norrick's term). The most popular and the most accepted term for such kind of proverb alterations in linguistics is anti-proverb.

The term **anti-proverb** (Antispruchwort) was coined by Wolfgang Mieder in 1982. W. Mieder defines anti-proverbs in such a way: "anti-proverbs are parodied, twisted, or fractured proverbs that reveal humorous or satirical speech play with traditional proverbial wisdom (Mieder, 2004:28).

Lithuanian scholar D. Zaikauskienė shares W. Mieder's point of view about anti - proverbs and writes: "Anti-proverbs are purposefully created variants of traditional proverbs, wherein form and meaning of the traditional proverb get distorted in order to actualize some kind of idea or simply to achieve comical effect."

According to the above mentioned ideas, we may conclude that anti-proverbs are parodies of traditional proverbs and their dominant feature is their mocking and humorous nature. They show that proverbs have never been considered absolute truths and holy expressions. As Russian paremiographer A. Reznikov metaphorically says: anti-proverb is new wine in old bottles (Reznikov, 2009).

The themes of anti-proverbs are different. In Anglo-American anti-proverbs, the main topics are: money, love, marriage, divorce, sexuality, women, friendship, children and parents, taxes, God and religion, professions and occupations. In Georgian proverb alterations, the main topics are politics, money, religion, social and economic problems (Shavladze, 2015).

4. Findings and Discussion

The comparative analysis of proverbial and anti-proverbial pictures of the world of English and Georgian languages showed that changes in life conditions caused the changes in mentality.

Traditional English proverb "**No pain, no gain**" taught us for centuries – if we do not work hard, we will not succeed. Anti-proverb teaches us the contrary "**Without pain you gain.**" It means that "one can be successful in modern world without hard work." In other words, if one has a good financial support or is helped by a person holding a high rank, he/she can easily reach success.

Hard work is praised in many traditional proverbs. Traditional English proverb “**Never put off for tomorrow what you can today**” is against of laziness, but anti-proverb “**Never do today what you can put off for tomorrow**” tells us that there is nothing wrong in idleness. Hard work is a subject of mocking in many English anti-proverbs: “**Hard work never killed anybody . . . but who wants to be its first victim?**” “**Hard work never killed anybody, but why take a chance?**” (Traditional Proverb – **Hard work never killed anybody**).

Famous traditional English proverb “**If at first you don’t succeed, try, try again**” teaches to be optimistic and continue working hard until reaching success. In modern life the proverb has several alterations. They question the idea stated above and suggest us to quit, to cheat or to believe in the idea that we are average: “**If at first you don’t succeed, quit**”; “**If at first you don’t succeed – cheat**”; “**If at first you don’t succeed, you are average.**”

In old times people were warned not to go to the forest alone, because they might be eaten there by wolves: “**If you are afraid of wolves, don’t go to the forest.**” But nowadays when there is a big chance to be killed by terrorists, anti-proverb “**If you are afraid of bombs, do not go to the metro**” warns people to avoid crowded places;

All that was praised in the past – honesty, friendship, strong family relations are nowadays mocked at in English anti-proverbs: **Beauty is the best policy (Honesty is the best policy)**, **A friend that isn’t in need is a friend indeed (A friend in need is a friend indeed)**, **Matrimony is the root of evil (money is the root of evil)**. The above mentioned anti-proverbs show how much the mentality of the Englishmen changed.

Our era is computerized. Everyone spends much time with a computer. If in the past, home was a place where the heart was (**Home is where the heart is**), where people could talk for hours with their family members, nowadays home is the place where there is a computer (**Home is where computer is**). The anti-proverb mocks at modern society’s terrible addiction spending the whole day in front of the computer and feeling comfortable without face-to-face communication.

A lot of Georgian anti-proverbs are in connection of internet, social nets. In Georgian there is a traditional proverb – “**Rats mamaa is shvili**” (რაც მამაა, ის შვილი = **Like father, like son**) which teaches us to pay attention to genealogy, when we choose our mates. Transformed variant of this proverb is: “**Rats posti, is patronio**” (რაც პოსტი, ის პატრონო = **Like person, like post**). Anti-proverb says that if one wants to see the real face of the person, she/he should read her /his posts on Facebook. This anti-proverb underlines the importance of social nets in modern life.

Traditional Georgian proverb teaches us to think much before taking decision “**asjer gazome, ertkhel gamoscher**” (ასჯერ გაზომე, ერთხელ გამოსჭერ = **Measure before cutting**). The same warning remains as a warning but the context changes: “**asjer tsaikitkhe, ertkhel daalaike**” (ასჯერ წაიკითხე, ერთხელ დალაიქე = **read before giving “like”**).

The attitude of Georgians towards priests were not always good, which is seen in the following traditional proverbs: **sakhit – mghvdeli, saqmit – mgeli** – სახით - მღვდელი, საქმით - მგელი (**face of a priest, action of a wolf**); **Mghvdeli rom magrad gamodzga, diakvans daakhvelao** – მღვდელი რომ მაგრად გამოძღა, დიაკვანს დაახველაო (**When one priest eats too much, another one starts coughing**); **Mghvdeli chilofshits itsnobao** - მღვდელი ჭილოფშიც იცნობაო (**Priests are recognized in the hats**). All the above mentioned proverbs reflect the wrong actions of priests – priests always cheated the parish, their appetite was great. The last proverbs underlines the idea – in spite of the false looks, people can easily recognize their real face. Negative attitude towards priests are found in Georgian anti-proverbs: **Mghvdeli postebshi itsnobao** – მღვდელი პოსტებში იცნობა (**A real face of a priest is seen through his posts**) (transformed from: **Mghvdeli chilofshits itsnobao**); **zogs mghvdeli mostsons, zogs misi postio** – ზოგს მღვდელი მოსწონს, ზოგს მისი პოსტიაო (**some like priests, others – their posts**). Both anti-proverbs mark our attention to the fact that priests are no longer saint, they do not live in solitude, they entertain themselves using social nets. But still they continue moralizing people: **kali shromobda da mamao jipidan chkuas arigebdao** – ქალი შრომობდა და მამაო ჯიპიდან ჭკუას არიგებდაო (**woman worked and a priest from jeep preached her**). This proverb is transformed from famous proverb: **katsi bchobda, ghmerti itsinoda** – კაცი ბჭობდა, ღმერთი იცინოდა (**Man proposes, God disposes**).

5. Conclusion

The analysis of English traditional proverbs and their transformations showed that the change in life conditions is the reason of semantic changes in anti-proverbs. Contradictory ideas between traditional and anti-proverbs are verbally expressed with antithesis, antonymous words and rhetorical questions. Anti-proverbs show that the truth of traditional proverb is ridiculous in Modern World. As for Georgian anti-proverbs, they did not change the semantics so much as English ones. In Georgian anti-proverbs words of traditional proverbs are altered by some other words, but the proverbs retain their original meaning. Georgian anti-proverbs are transformations of old ones where certain words change with the change of context. They also reflect the changes in life condition but the mentality changes are not clearly outlined. Comparison of Georgian and English proverbial and anti-proverbial pictures of the world showed that English anti-proverbial picture has changed greatly, though Georgian mentality reflected in proverbs and anti-proverbs remained unchangeable.

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