

Reflection of Ethnocultural Peculiarities in French and Georgian Paremies Composed of Phytonyms

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Abstract:

The object of our research is the comparative-contrastive study of the paremies composed of French and Georgian phytomyms, their semantic classification and description of ethnic peculiarities. The proverbs discussed here will make certain impression about the peculiar features of national vision of the two historically and mentally different peoples. On the basis of such approach it becomes possible to identify different ethnic cultures with the above said aspect (to determine the ethnical individuality of each of them) and, on the basis of the analysis of empirical material given in the article, to determine the similarities and differences in these non-related languages and their cultural characteristic features. The research given in the article is important and interesting for the researchers in paremiology generally as well as linguists working in linguo-cultural and ethno-cultural studies.

Key-Words: Paremiology, Concept, Phytonyms, Semantic Peculiarities, Expressivity.

Introduction

It is well known that a proverb is an indivisible part of the verbal folklore of lingual group formed in the template of a common “mental language” [Haskell, 1987: 264]. Accordingly, it qualitatively (formally as well as contextually) is a micro model of life–style and thinking of the world in which it was created and still functions. Its main loading is to grasp the general regularity of the world; a deep perception of the reality that is placed within a unified system of national thought. Each ethnos, naturally, delivers it in individual forms. Thus, a deep study of proverbs (together with language) means to study the ethnic peculiarities (everyday life and mental) and ethno psychology of the people who created them [Tumanishvili, 2010].

Today, in the epoch of globalization, paremiology is quite important as the study and research of the function of proverb language in traditional and contemporary culture. Together with further study of national paremies, scholars consider it of paramount importance to conduct contrastive-comparative research of the data of differing cultures. According to V. Mieder’s evaluation, modern theoretical and empirical paremiology will undoubtedly lead human behavior and communication to a new type of thinking... By comparing research outcomes on the international level, paremiologists can make a good contribution to the worldwide humane order that is based on experienced and approbated wisdom [Mieder, 1996:2].

The above said clarified the topicality of the given issue and determines the object of our study: namely, the aim of the comparative-contrastive study of the paremies composed of French and Georgian phytomyms is their semantic classification and description of ethnic peculiarities. The proverbs discussed here will make certain impression about the peculiar features of national vision of the two historically and mentally different peoples. On the basis of such approach it becomes possible to identify different ethnic cultures with the above said aspect (to determine the ethnical individuality of each of them) and, at the same time, to determine the characteristic features of cultural globalization (e.g. frames of cultural similarities).

The Main Part

A proverb, as was previously mentioned, is a figurative expression formulated on the level of conceptual thinking within the consciousness of a given lingual community, expressed in a stereotyped formula. It fixes a generalized wisdom created on the basis of historical experience in a figurative imagery. The knowledge placed in it is a resource existing in an irrational form of the nation’s ethno psychical data and rationale. Therefore, it is difficult to thoroughly understand foreign proverbs and determine relevant frames (dissemination area) of the corresponding general-conceptual distribution. As it appears, it is preconditioned by the specificity of proverbs structure and structurally complex semantic mechanism.

These circumstances are probably preconditioned by the diverse specter of the factors that undoubtedly participate in creation process of a proverb's formal and semantic story: historical process of formation of a given ethnos, social reality, consciousness, language, way of thinking, folklore, etc. All these are social and spiritual aspects of human activities. Quite fairly, this sphere of research is considered to be the most difficult. All the factors participating in the formation of proverbs work combined during actualization and, to a certain extent, rely on the "collective unconscious" (C. G. Jung).

Paremiology explicitly admits that the semantic structure of proverbs is created from the thematic-logical combinations (however, the approached are different, [Permjakov, 1970; Krikmann, 1998; Barli 1984]). The fundamental axis of constructing a proverb is revealed on the basis of the existing studies: one sphere of experience gained about certain phenomenon in the process of cognition can be placed as the basis for the other, by means of which the idea presented in a specific semantic form becomes a generalized wisdom. Perception of this wisdom is based on the knowledge obtained through the observation on the world by a given ethnos. This process between the objects and phenomena is accomplished on the basis of the perception of logical relations that is an established and accepted standard and norm in the consciousness of the given verbal/lingual community and its mental space.

We should discuss the semantic structure of a proverb in the synthesis of the three main dimensions. A proverb simultaneously comprises the elements of **logical**, **verbal** and **conceptual** thinking. **Logical**, because it reflects logical relations between the objects and the phenomena in the real world; **verbal**, because it is a communicative unit and essentially connected with speech; and **conceptual**, because discussion and conclusion it contains is based on concept operations [Tumanishvili, 2010].

Decoding of proverbs (especially if they are deeply metaphorical) is a psychologically difficult thinking process during the act of speech. It is not accidental, that J. Milner, while studying psychological aspects taking place in the process of communication act realization, tries to determine imaginary interrelations between phenomena and categories on the example of proverbs. According to him, proverbs can be compared to a mechanism with the help of which consciousness builds wide-scale knots like the case when one-brick construction transfers into a block construction [Milner, 1968:34].

As we see, while studying a semantic plot of a proverb, the approach should be determined with consideration of the specificity of semantics and pragmatics as well as mental and speech psychology.

Levinson defines aims and objectives of pragmatics and the study of the nature of metaphor as the prerogative of a pragmatist and the object of his study. According to him, a pragmatist should find out how a metaphorical utterance is constructed and identified. On the other hand, the objective of psycholinguistics and psychology lies in the creation of a thinking theory based on analogy. Such approach, in his opinion, will enhance the approximation of linguistic and extra linguistic spheres [Levinson, 1994].

Following other scholars, M. Rusieshvili considers it rightly that such complexity of a proverb is preconditioned by the complexity of the structure of metaphorical expressions. It shows itself in the decode process and is reflected in the conceptual actualization as well [Rusieshvili, 1999:35]. The viewpoint is acceptable for us. However, it should be noted that even among similar metaphorical expressions (like, e.g. riddles), proverbs belong to higher and relatively more complex units owing to their specific semantic structure (certainly, with a pragmatic function).

Decoding of a "hidden" essential meaning in a proverb is a difficult thinking process on the level of conceptual thinking. This process is based on the principle of synthetic thinking (combined operating of constituent elements). It involves such complex subconscious operations of thinking as: reflection of logical relations between the objects and phenomena existing in the universe, perception of essential, generalization and abstraction. Unlike surface-level (subjective) perception (although, practically, based on it) it exceeds the boundaries of visual, sensual reflection and strives towards deeper cognition of reality. It is a higher, abstracted form of perception of reality. This is how proverbs differ from spontaneously created metaphors of witty remarks.

While actualizing certain single proverbs into each new context by each new representation of imagination received through logical relations, that is achieved by new "semantic markers" gained in the given case, in the subconscious of the participants of speech act (having a common "mental language") the specific "sensory materials" get activated which are fixed in the experience of the world model of the given ethnos connected to this specific case. In the process of semantic operating based on analogy a "mental processing" of perception data takes place; the essential – "wide-scale knot" (J. Mielner) is separated (differentiated) from non-essential.

Based on the given theoretical analysis, let us discuss the semantic models of paremies composed of phytonyms, and on the basis of comparative-typological study of French and Georgian semantic parallels find out on what experiences the given ethnos based their expressions, what private means, characteristic to each ethnos, creates the wisdom approbated by life.

I. Proverbs that name the following concepts:

1. **Patience:** Avec le temps et la paille les nèfles mûrissent= equivalent géorgien= მოთმინება და შრომა ყველაფერს აადვილებს, [motmineba da shroma kvelafers aadvilebso]. Patience and labor make everything easy.
2. **Result:** Bon champ sème, bon blé rapporte, bon fruit vient de bonne semence= équivalent géorgien= რასაც დათეს, იმას მოიმკიო, [rasac dates, imas moimkio]. As you sow, so shall you reap.
3. **Simulation:** Belle vigne sans raisin ne vaut rien= équivalent géorgien= შორიდან მტერს მოუკლავს გულს, ახლოდან მოყვარესაო, [shoridan mters mouklavs guls, akhlodan mokvaresao]. From far away kills the heart of an enemy, but from the close distance – the friend.
4. **Emptiness, nothingness:** Cela ne vaut pas un trognon de chou= équivalent géorgien= კომბოსტოს მურკადაც არ ღირს, [kombostos murkadac ar girs]. Is not worth a cabbage core.
5. **Laziness:** Celui qui travaille mange la paille, celui qui ne fait rien mange le foin= équivalent géorgien= ერთი არის მთოხნელიო, ოცდახუთი მცოხნელიო, [erti aris mtokhnelio, ocdakhuti mcokhnelio]. One digs and twenty five – chew.
6. **Result:** c'est au fruit qu'on connaît l'arbre, on reconnaît l'arbre à ses fruits= équivalent géorgien= ხე ნაკოფით იცნობაო, [khe nakofit icnobao]. A tree is known by its fruit.
7. **Ignorance:** Jeter (semer) des marguerites devant les pourceaux= équivalent géorgien= ვირმა რა იცის ხურმა რა ხილიაო, [virma ra icis khurma ra khiliao]. A donkey does not know how persimmon tastes.
8. **Similarity:** La pomme ne tombe pas loin du tronc, le fruit ne tombe jamais loin de l'arbre= équivalent géorgien= როგორც ტყე, ისეთი ნადირიო ; ნაკოფი ხისგან შორს არ ვარდებაო ; რაც ქოთანი, ის ყვავილიო. [rogoric tke, iseti nadirio ; nakofi khisgan shors ar vardebaio ; rac qotani, is kvavilio]. The beast is like a forest; fruit does not fall far from the tree; the flower is like a pot.
9. **Result:** La racine du travail est amère, mais son fruit est doux= équivalent géorgien= სწავლის ძირი მწარე არის, კენწეროში გატკბილდება, [stsavlis dziri mtsare aris, kentseroshi gatkbildebis]. The root of learning is bitter but at the top it sweetens.
10. **Tolerance:** Le fruit pourri ne pourrit pas l'arbre= equivalent géorgien= ერთი გონჯი ყველა ოჯახში არისო, [erti gondji kvela odjakhi ariso]. There is one ugly person in every family.
11. **Lucky chance, opportunity:** Le semer et la moisson ont leur temps et leur saison= equivalent géorgien= ბალს ქერქი მაშინ გააძრე, როდესაც გაეცლებაო, [bals tkavi mashin gaadzre, rodesac gaedzvrebao]. Peel a cherry when it peels easier.
12. **Greed:** Les arbres empêchent de voir la forêt= equivalent géorgien= თხამ კომბოსტო დაინახა და ღობე ვერაო, [tkham kombos todainakha da gobe verao]. A goat saw a cabbage but not the fence.
13. **Indifference:** Mi-figue, mi-raisin= équivalent géorgien= Neither fig nor grapes; neither wine nor water. არც ლეღვი და არც ყურძენი ; არც ღვინო და არც წყალიო. [arc legvi da arc kurdzeni ; arc gvinoaa da arc tskali]
14. **Overcoming difficulties:** Pas de vie sans épines= équivalent géorgien= ვარდი უეკლოდ არავის მოუკრეფიაო, [vardi ueklod aravis moukrefiao]. Nobody could ever pick a rose without thorns.
15. **Carefulness:** Souvent la plus belle pomme est véreuse ; entre l'arbre et l'écorce, il ne faut pas mettre le doigt= il ne faut pas juger de l'arbre par l'écorce ; il ne faut pas juger sur les apparences.= équivalent géorgien= შორიდან მტერს მოუკლავს გულს ახლოდან კი მოყვარესო [shoridan mters mouklavs guls akhlodan ki mokvareso]. From far away kills the heart of an enemy, but from the close distance – the friend.
Tout bois n'est pas bon à faire flèche= équivalent géorgien= ყველა ხისგან ისარი არ მზადდებაო. [kvela khisgan isari ar mzaddebaio]. Arrow is made not from every tree.
16. **Devotion:** Ne laissez pas croître l'herbe sur le chemin : il ne faut pas laisser l'amitié sans l'entretenir et la cultiver= équivalent géorgien= ძმა ძმისთვისაო შავი დღისთვისაო [dzma dzmistvisao shavi dgistvisao]. Brother for brother, for the rainy day.
17. **Negative result:** Qui sème les épines, recueille les charbons= équivalent géorgien= ვინც ეკალს თესავს ეკალსვე მოიმკისო. [vinc ekals tesavs ekalsve moimkiso]. One who sows thorns will reap thorns.

A chemin battu, il ne croit point d'herbe =équivalent géorgien=გათელილ გზაზე ბალახი აღარ ამოდისო. [gatelil gzaze balakhi agar amodiso].Grass does not grow on trampled path.

II. Semantic Peculiarities of French and Georgian PhytonymicParemies:

After comparative study of the given proverbs it was possible to determine the origins of the French and Georgian paremies. During the long time existence each nation creates own associations and beliefs on universe while observing the nature and environment. They are later transferred from generation to generation in the form of wisdom, moral and recommendations. It is noteworthy that while studying phytonymicparemies a number of semantic coincidences appeared. However, it should also be noted that the proverbs composed of French phytonyms did not turn out to be containing the same phytonym and vice versa.

While actualized in a relevant context, each proverb expresses the identical concept coded in it – the wide meaning – with different semantic coloring. In each of them the similar sub-textual meaning fixed on the implicit level bears a different (positive as well as negative) connotation. Accordingly, the coloring specter of the contexts, the situational niche, also differs, in which each of them is realized.

There are such phytonymic proverbs in French that are constructed with the help of the plants not existing in the Georgian reality, e.g.

Cœur d'artichaut, une feuille pour tout le monde=fait référence aux nombreuses feuilles du cœur du légume et suppose qu'on donne un peu de son amour à chacun.

Artichoke is a multi-petal plant the leaf of which has a shape of a heart. Correspondingly, the proverb is translated as follows: to give out love. As we see it preserves a specific code characteristic to French inasmuch as this plant is only found in France. Against the background of the described semantic operations, with the help of imaginary logical relations and on the basis of associations the said natural knowledge “activates” and transforms onto a corresponding situation. It preconditions decoding of an implicit content – the grasping of the essential, generalization and abstraction of an idea presented with a specific content and meaning.

The same can be said about a Georgian proverb “I was in the mood of wild plum and ate it”. In the French language and reality the synonym of “wild plum” is “la Mirabelle”. However, it is one of the varieties of plum species and is sweeter than the Georgian wild plum. Hence, we can suppose that the Georgian wild plum does not exist in French.

While making parallels between the French and Georgian phytonymic proverbs, we also discuss paremies similar in semantic meaning. Thus, for example, *Cela ne vaut pas un trognon de chou*= équivalent géorgien=კომბოსტოს მურკადაც არ ღირს [kombostos murkadac ar girs].It is not worth even a cabbage core = it is worthless, useless.

Qui sème les épines, recueille les charbons= equivalent géorgien= *One who sows thorns will reap thorns - ვინც ეკალს თესავს ეკალსვე მოიმკისო* [vinc ekals tesavs ekalsve moimkiso]

A chemin battu, il ne croit point d'herbe =équivalent géorgien=გათელილ გზაზე ბალახი აღარ ამოდისო [gatelil gzaze balakhi agar amodiso].Grass does not grow on trampled path.

Obviously, while decoding they acquire a negative coloring. The discussed examples show that in the given cases the surface images of proverbs become essentially determining factors for the realization of their semantic coloring. Accordingly, while applying them in specific situational contexts a certain degree of interchange and alteration of connotative parameters and intonation field of the text performance will takes place.

Conclusion

From the above discussed we can conclude that the general-semantic and conceptual formula of a proverb is created through the joint work of all the above mentioned components that participate and contribute to its final formulation. Each of them is equally important. The objective reality reflected in it on surface level and in depth cannot be discussed as objects or phenomena independent from one another. By means of logical relations they represent a whole system of regulations in certain conceptual interrelations. Accordingly, cognition of proverbs is possible only through grasping these relations, understanding regularities existing in the historical reality of a given ethnos and studying the conceptual thinking fixed within the frames of existing mentality.

The comparative study of French and Georgian examples revealed that the wisdom expressed in the proverbs of the given languages based on the historical experience of each ethnos is fixed from their characteristic angles. At the same time, the phenomena reflecting reality within the frames of the mental vision of the given peoples are categorized in more or less different ways. For the fixation of one and the

same ideas different ethnoses use their own material, on the one hand, and on the other hand – he analogous one. This aspect highlights once again that, peoples of completely different languages, ethnoses consciousness and cultures create analogous human images against the background of sometimes similar, sometimes different *logical relations* between the objects and phenomena existing in a given situation, and in most cases use the common system of conceptual thinking. That is, they create *stereotype models of conceptual thinking* on the basis of experience accumulated in the process of perception of the universe. The scholars (including the Georgian ones) explain this phenomenon quite rightly (together with famous circumstances – borrowing, current phrases) by universal stereotyped thinking [Chikovani, 1986; Rusieshvili, 1999], common practical experience and wisdom [Qin, 1996].

Today, in the age of cultural expansion, such comparative study acquires special importance in exploring and exposing everyday-life and mental specificity of historically and consciously different peoples as well as their different and similar outlook and perception of their ethno-psychic standing.

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