

VECU project "Proverbs".

3. The role of proverbs in the history of education and as part of national identity.

Proverbs and sayings are linguistic parts of phraseology which form elements of small folklore, comprising a number of other items, such as: Pranostics, Wellerisms, puzzles, etc. They have specific linguistic, but also cultural and folkloristic values.

They are linguistic units, which express in a brief, witty, ironic, sometimes in metaphorical or laconic way life truths, deep thoughts or moral rules put in a pregnant often pictorial form.

The proverb puts more emphasis on verbal FORM: Bipartite, conciseness, brevity.

(*Kto druhému jamu kope, sám do nej spadne* . – *Who digs a pit for others falls into it himself. Or - Harm set, harm get*). The proverb traditionally is said to be an element of the so-called popular literature, although in reality many proverbs are evidently of artificial origin.

Sayings are easily rememberable formulated thoughts - often rhyming and mostly of unknown origin. A saying serves to describe or underlie a certain situation. It also may word a wish at certain occasions. It is therefore always important to state what kind of wish is being made: statements, witty statements, mottos, blessings, confessions The FUNCTION is always emphasised: education, warning, teaching .

(*Je mu ako trň v päte* – *He is like a thorn in the heel*. Who Whom?)

Sentences and gnomes directly and visibly announce certain moral principles and advice: (*Pýcha predchádza pád*. - *Pride goes before a fall*.)

Many proverbs, sayings, sentences and gnomes originate in old Roman law books, from the Old and New Testament or even older sources. They cannot be called popular, for they have only become popular.

They travelled with people migrating from place to place over centuries and were modified, added to, and increased the amount of proverbs in every country they reached. Thus, they arrived to Slovakia as well.

A lot of Slovak proverbs and sayings have been adapted from phraseologies of foreign origin, thus making contacts between our culture and European culture. Their body of thought and moral teachings are in Slovakia since centuries.

Not only the common people but also writers and poets used these wordings as an integral part of their literary texts. These "grains of folk wisdom" entered magazines, calendars, textbooks.

An example of the role of proverbs in the courtly Baroque period is the "colored chamber" in the House of Ludwigsburg, Schleswig-Holstein. It shows 145 emblems, small paintings with a motto or a proverb, which is presented on the picture as an allegory, for example " This is a Work of piety, frees you of many suffering". "In the picture is to see a flying stork who wears another stork on his back and feeds him with a frog (7). Remarkably is the use of six European languages, including Latin, suggesting a trans-national, one might say European culture of the county courts.

In the Romantic era integration of common speech into artistic poetical expression was dominating. At this time many national collections of proverbs were made (example: Carl Simrock in Germany). In the prose, there was integration with national history. This new artistic direction was a means of national identification and the fight against all oppressions.

These literary forms (proverbs and sayings) convey old experiences of centuries and human wisdom which is to a large extent high value folk culture.

They also may be used at school, to motivate, to bring a correct atmosphere, to train correct pronunciation and intonation. When correctly used they may have a high formative influence on forming the personality of students. Last not least they serve to enrich and enlarge the vocabulary. The formative and informative function of proverbs is unique and unrepeatable. They allow a lot of variability in teaching and they are a rich source, out of which every teacher can gain a lot.

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