

VECU project, part „Proverbs“.

8. Evaluation of the proverb tables.

1) Survey of the proverbs Type A, B, C , and of the „cover up degree“ (Percentage of the proverbs type A+B to type A+B+C).

A: The proverbs in both languages are almost the same.

B: The proverbs have in both languages the same message, but use a different metaphor/image.

C: At the moment no equivalent proverb to the German reference had been found.

	A	B	C	Cover up degree in % of 161 reference proverbs
German/English	56	55	50	69
German/French	54	56	51	68,4
German/Polish	77	47	37	77
German/Latin	68	26	67	41,6
German, Slovakian + Czech	74	61	22(26)	86,3(83,8)

The numbers in brakes are valuable for Slovakian proverbs alone.

2) Special cases for Yiddish and Gaelic proverbs, without reference to the 161 German proverbs, but also with numbers of types and cover up degree.

	A	B(+AB)	C	Cover up degree in % of () reference proverbs
German/Gaelic/English				
to German	12	32	53	45,4 (97)
to English				100 (97)
German/Yiddish	20	10	1	97 (31)
German/Yiddish/Polish				
to German	3	2	23	17,9 (28)
to Polish	11	6	11	16,7 (28)

Because of the lower number of compared proverbs the evidence of equivalence is not so clear; moreover in some tables proverbs were intentionally chosen which have equivalence in German or English, so the „cover up degrees“ are not comparable with those of 8.1.

3) Basic list of English proverbs compared with the English reference table 7.1.1.

In addition to the English reference table a basic list of 241 English proverbs with German equivalence of 100% has been established, because in this case we had more resources and more time.

So it is evident, that higher „cover up degrees“ are available, when the comparison is not reduced to the 161 reference proverbs, which had been chosen without system.

Certainly this is valuable for other languages as well.

4) Comparison of some proverbs type B with the same meaning in all reference languages.

+ Think twice before you speak once (D, PL), first think and then speak (GB, SK), turn your tongue seven times in your mouth before you speak (F), who wants to speak well must think well before (Latin).

+ It is not easy to preach a hungry stomach (D), a hungry belly has no ears (GB, F), you can't satisfy a hungry man by fairy tales (PL), empty stomach, deaf ear (SK), the stomach doesn't care about orders (Latin).

+ A child hit by fire fears it (D), once bitten, twice shy (GB), once burned blows on cold too (PL), a cat hit by fire doesn't like hot water (F), once hit by fire fears the spark (SK).

+ Well done needs time (D), slow and steady wins the race (GB), slow goes far (F, PL, SK), slow overtakes quick (Latin).

+ You can easily fall in your own trap (D, PL, SK), harm set, harm get (GB), who believed to catch was caught himself (F), he fell into the trap dug by himself (Latin).

+ He that doesn't work shall not eat (D, SK, Latin), he that will not work shall not eat (GB), without work no cake (SK, PL).

Notice:

The origin of this proverb is the 2nd letter of St. Paul to the community of Thessaloniki, but not exactly the same text: „He that **doesn't want** to work shall not eat“, which is the same in Martin Luthers translation (17), in line with the English proverb and in the actual editions of the Holy Gospel.

About 1600 the version of the common German proverb can be found in a text collection of the protestant preacher Friedrich Petri: „he that does not work shall not eat...“

Evidently the social background may change proverbs significantly – see the Slovakian/Polish version - , in spite of common origin.

5) Which reference proverbs exist – in line with the actual state of the study – only in German?

Live and keep living,
learn to suffer without complaining,
Don't tease animals, they feel pain as you do,
Don't speak much but true, much talk may be dangerous,
Only hard work and effort is life,
that is life: One has the purse, the other one the money,
in case of greatest need God is near by,
he that doesn't listen must suffer,
where people sing you may stay, wicked people have no songs.

6) Proverbs in the collection of Martin Luther.

In the first column of the table of Latin proverbs those proverbs have been marked with (L), which had been found in the collection of Martin Luther as well. Anyhow 18% of the 161 reference proverbs are covered by this specification, which suggests, that proverbs were currently used in that time for religious education and sermons. (See also file 5. about proverbs and religions).

7) Short summary of the evaluation.

+ Taking into account, that the reference proverbs were chosen unsystematically, the „cover up degrees“ of the compared proverbs are pretty high, having in mind that we intentionally chose reference languages of Germanic, Romance and Slavonic origin.

This gives support to the statement, that European countries make up a community of values. We would have to compare proverbs outside Europe as well to see, whether this community is perhaps worldwide.

Asking for the reason of this community of values, we have to look for the roots of our culture: The heritage of the Greek and Roman culture and the Jewish – Christian roots. Still in the 19th century education had been to a great part influenced by Christian churches, Latin being the language of international communication. (See chapter 4.)

The high „cover up degree“ of Slovakian proverbs (84%) may be founded by the fact, that the actual Slovakia had been – before the Agreement with Hungary - included in the educational system of the Habsburg Monarchy.

Another reason for the evident affinity of European proverbs could be, that many proverbs signify practical wisdom of life, which probably are in common for all cultures; this would be an interesting follow up of our study.

+ The Gaelic and the Yiddish show a lower „cover up degree“ with the reference, therefore we directly looked for equivalent proverbs. These languages were spoken by a reduced number of people in more or less closed regions; this might be the reason for the reduced affinity of proverbs.

The special case of the Yiddish language is explained in file 6.

+ German proverbs without equivalence in other languages might demonstrate special attitudes of German speaking people („Only hard work and effort is life“, or „Learn to suffer without complaining“). But one has to be cautious: Perhaps some more equivalent proverbs might be found by more effort and in other studies significant national differences in proverbs were not noticed. „Between corresponding German, Dutch and Polish proverbs lexical national differences don't exist.....the living conditions, habits and attitudes are quite similar.“ (2), (Analoge Sprichwörter im Deutschen, Niederländischen und Polnischen, Iwona Bartoszewicz, Universitätsverlag Wroclaw 1994.)

Text by W. Spitaler for EFOS.