Outi Lauhakangas

3 Categorization of Proverbs

3.1 Introduction

In this paper, we shall go through different ways of classifying proverb material, both unilingual and multilingual. The history, background, aims and motives of these efforts will broaden the perspective to two serious attempts to systemize international proverb lore and open the way for new attempts to categorize this special genre of folklore. Secondly, a critical point of view to a huge number of popular and systematic proverb collections, cultural comparisons and multilingual data banks will be offered. The idea is to develop the *proverb literacy* of readers so that they are able to analyze, evaluate and create questions concerning their own research material. Ultimately, we shall provide a summary of the different needs in constructing categorizations of proverb corpora and also review the possible bias in applying conventional classification methods to proverbs. On the base of these conclusions we shall try to make an outline of the best possible universal database of proverbs that should take into account culture-specific challenges and discuss the practical conditions for it.

These three aims tell about the difficulty of scientific proverb research but perhaps particularly these challenges and open questions have been one reason for the constant enthusiasm for collecting and interpreting proverbs through the centuries. Proverbs have become separate items like esteemed quotations that seem to bear probed wisdom and useful knowledge within them. This industrious, prolonged, large-scale and often purposeful collecting has resulted in a huge number of collections of proverbs. Most of them are either unilingual or contrastive between two languages but there have also long been multilingual collections. Paremiologists like to construct order in their material that seems to tell more about universal human experience than any other source.

3.2 The Specificity of Proverbs

After reading the introductory article of this book you certainly have a good view of the specificity of proverbs and even proverbial expressions compared to other statements and utterances. The long history of this genre of speech, anonymity, traditional flavor, memorable form, figurative meanings in contexts, and often universality define proverbs. Those items, which I shall call proverb-like expressions, develop this tradition and make use of memorable forms of familiar proverbs. Daniel Andersson (2013: 28) shows from his cognitive linguistic point of view that actually every proverb should be interpreted in its whole meaning potential. If a proverb is in real use, the

base meaning of it is continuously in a blending process. It is used in context-bound meaning creation. The impressive and interactive features of proverbs tell about their fitness to get over language borders. Thus, any categorization of proverbs should be done keeping in mind their importing and exporting history, their potential flexibility to immigrate or emigrate as folklore.

In order to identify proverbs of different languages and culture areas, agreement about their features does not stay as evident as when recognizing physical objects. An innovation like the ax was transported from one area to another. We have evidence of its age from archeological findings. In Finland we know that *kirves*, our word for an ax, has been adopted from Baltic languages. But the history of adopting a proverb from a language to another may have different stages and motivations. We do not even know if we can call it a proverb from the very beginning. The age of a single proverb can sometimes be assessed but the reconstruction of the process of some expression becoming a proverb in a certain language community is always dependent of many repetitive and coincidental influences.

3.3 Whose Tradition Are Proverbs?

Is there a common view of the origin of proverbs around the world? Do we think that our familiar proverbs are our endogenous and private cultural heritage, some general wisdom owned by the *folk*? Or do we believe in God's truth behind the noblest proverbs used by our wise men? Some researchers see proverbs as a part of the common man's contesting speech (Lombardi-Satriani, 1974: 103–104). This kind of speech reflects people's countereaction when being disadvantaged. Statements of proverbs can function in a reversed way, if they are used in situations where balance of power is unequal. A proverb is an indirect way to question generalizations. Didactic use of proverbs and their ironic use cannot both realize the same function. Along with the question of different functions comes a question of traditionality of proverbs. In which level of tradition do we refer when we define proverbs as traditional expressions?

We cannot claim that proverbs belong only to oral tradition. The impression one gets reading for instance Finnish proverb collections is that they deal with agrarian living conditions of the 19th century. Historically, part of their use has been like invoking authoritative literal texts, although the users have been illiterate. This holds true for most of the European proverb lore. British proverbs may remind us of Shakespearean era. Chinese proverbs tell about Confucian tradition and most of the Sub-Saharan proverbs reflect a tribal way of life. All these conceptions live side by side in the world of proverb users.

Most of European proverb collectors were clergymen and public servants. The great Dutch humanist Erasmus of Rotterdam (1466-1536) was a Catholic priest, although he was a reformist striving for more harmonious change in the church than

Luther (1483-1546). The last version of Erasmus' *Adagia* included over 4000 Greek and Latin proverbial expressions, many accompanied by richly annotated commentaries. It has been the core of the written Western proverb lore in addition to the Bible and German proverbs in Luther's texts.

Proverbs known before Erasmus' times, like *One swallow doesn't make a summer* or *Don't look a gift horse in the mouth*, have become known all over the world or have turned out to be common earlier than we thought. It is difficult to say whose proverbs people of different cultures use today, since proverbs or recognizable fragments of them have become popular elements of popular and global communication, lately in social media.

3.4 Practical and Ideological Needs to Categorize Proverb Material

Organizing linguistic matter has been a practical question for centuries. Lexicography has developed to a branch of science (see e.g. F. Čermák's (2011) work on the Czech National Corpus and R. Almind's, H. Bergenholtz' and V. Vrang's work on the *Danish Idiom Dictionary*), and encyclopedists have organized human knowledge according to themes of life and hierarchies of general values. For lexicons as well as proverb collections there has been one universal system to organize the chosen entries: alphabetical order seems a neutral way to present things.

The aim to collect proverbs and to construct a national heritage of them and other genres of folklore of a language community brings with it a supposition of consistency between the proverbs of one's own community. The belief that proverbs as such, form a coherent narration of their local users seems natural. Interesting examples of national collections are those which have the aim to present proverbs of one culture but which are compiled by an immigrant. For example William Scarborough (1875) was an American Presbyterian missionary in China in the 19th century. He compiled "a careful and enthusiastic study" of *Chinese proverbs* in which he also presented English translations. He certainly had good intentions doing this but we are not able to evaluate his choices and interpretations without experts of the Chinese culture. Scarborough writes in his preface:

In making this selection of proverbs, it was not thought fair to exclude altogether the vulgar and immoral. A few of these are admitted – veiled under free translations—as the representatives of a class, which, so far as my experience goes, is not a very large one (Scarborough, 1875: ii-iii).

This collection of Chinese proverbs was made before the political revolution of the 20th century but it has its bias arising from narrow Christian attitudes. The author is glad but at the same time quite confused to find many proverbs closely resembling the sayings of the Holy Bible. "Many of the Proverbs of Solomon have their counterparts

in the proverbs of China”, he writes (Scarborough, 1875:xiv). As a missionary Scarborough had to reason that these pagans are “not as good as their proverbs”, their virtue was not in deeds. We notice that biblical Proverbs were his yardstick.

The need to preserve an endangered language or dialect is a strong reason to elevate the value of proverbs in this language. Consequently, constructors of national romantic identity and high moral have been selective. Some proverbs have been excluded being too vulgar and some sounding too literal. Thus, we cannot avoid intentional and unintentional choices already made by our predecessors, if we are going to use as our sources any ready collected proverb material.

Thematic collections have different classifications according to the author’s interests or ways to interpret the material to be published. A good example of thematically arranged collections that have a clear national aim is Vladimir Dalj’s (2003, original 1862) Russian collection, which is still or again very popular. New editions are published at regular intervals. In Dalj’s collection there is one headline *punishment, kapa* that is repeated seven times in different compositions. In any scientific categorization the ideal should be that you do not create overlapping categories. Yet, proverb material is not so one-dimensional that you could easily determine the one and only category for every expression. Dalj was a profoundly well-read humanist who knew the Russian tradition. Thus, he was inclined to transfer his overall conception to the collection. He presents the theme of *penalty* in connection with *obedience* and *disobedience*, *compassion*, *recognition*, *submission*, *attack* and *threats*. *Judiciary* is repeated three times in Dalj’s subheadings. It is connected to *order*, *truth* and *extortion*. The theme of law and order seems central and closely connected to questions of social position. There are not just titles like king, wealth and poverty, or master and servant, but these are dealt in connection with order. The central question is again willingness or refusal to serve, control and humble oneself.

There is another theme that is underlined among Dalj’s classification. He presents detailed forms of spirituality. In his book Dalj has headlines like *Mystery*, *Mystery and curiosity*, and *Faith and mystery*. He combines *destiny*, *patience* and *hope* and differentiates even a title called *Fanaticism and hypocrisy*. The collection begins with *God and faith* that are connected with *sin* and *faith*.

Thinking about the proverb genre we can find plenty of omens and “superstitions and signs” (as Dalj himself calls them) brought to these groups. Dalj’s classic is a good example of a national collection that constructs a national character by categorizing proverbs. His way to categorize demonstrates how significant cultural variety can be when we are interpreting proverbs. Data banks of proverb texts are never neutral.

3.5 Differences in the Accuracy of Proverb Material

If we compare proverb texts of two different cultures the most general versions of synonymous proverbs apply to points of reference. For intralingual and especially for comparisons between two cognate languages we need more accurate knowledge about similarity between proverb notes. Although the structure and the wording is the same in both proverb texts, the common use and interpretation may differ.

If you see one proverb text representing a certain attitude in one language area, it is difficult to estimate how representative for this area it really is. Behind a single proverb text there may be many varying texts. E.g. in the inclusive collection of Estonian proverbs (Krikmann & Sarv, 1980) a proverb *Ega kuer siis kiljata, kui kondiga visata* [The dog will not yelp if you throw him with a bone] (nb 4020.) has 17 slightly different variants. E.g. *Vai koer siis valu tunneb, kui teda kondiga visatakse* [The dog will hardly feel pain when it is thrown with a bone.] In the same entry you are encouraged to compare this proverb to two synonymous proverbs about an ox and a cat. Those are synonymous proverbs that might have same idea in other languages, too. But they are not variants of this dog-proverb type.

What are the preconditions for starting to systemize a proverb material? Actually, we should not start organizing *purely* from the basis of proverb texts. Although we imagine we are making neutral choices, our hypotheses are based primarily on the knowledge of our own culture and society. We know the history, social circumstances, culture and hierarchies of our own society from where we presume the familiar proverbs in our own language have arisen. We have inevitably preconceptions of the phenomena we plan to organize. This would not be a very disturbing problem, if the material were unilingual and from a single cultural area.

Thus, it is a somewhat different aim to construct a collection of proverbs of two or more languages. The knowledge determined by our own cultural categories influences our interpretation of the phenomena and certainly the subsequent proverb material we are going to add to our classification. The basis for the work might still be quite similar as in the previous unilingual case. Now you just search for cohesive construction made of differences and similarities. Selectivity may be even stronger in this project of contrastive languages than in constructing an image of one language community. Still, even alphabetically arranged comparisons of proverbs are always choices. It is difficult to notice any missing item while reading an alphabetical list of titles. Let us take e.g. the collection *Turkish proverbs and their equivalents in fifteen languages* (Yurtbaşı, 1996). If you start from *Endurance*, next titles are *Enemy*, *Envy* and *Equality*. A quick look at an English dictionary raises terms like *enjoy* or *entertainment*, which are missing. Perhaps there were no such proverbs in Turkish that would have dealt with those subjects.

As soon as we begin contrastive work with two or more languages this problem arises. For example, if we choose *Master and servant* to be a group title, this covers most of the cultures we know but a more detailed classification, subgroups for

proverbs dealing with these issues, will be determined by the most familiar material we have. A practical question arises: How do we succeed to form common subtitles for proverbs coming from completely different cultures? Do we know we are dealing with the same phenomenon without exactly knowing the variety of proverbs in another culture? This kind of uncertainty follows us in any project of comparing proverbs used in distant cultures.

Even if the connections between proverb texts from two cultures can be clarified, the degree of popularity and divergent use in those cultures will often obscure the comparison. A proverb has been translated from a language to another, but is it the same proverb, if its use and common interpretation are totally different in two cultures? The receiving culture is always stratified and often polarized, and perhaps in a community there has already pre-existed a synonymous proverb.

With the term *synonymy* we refer to proverbs, which have the same idea but not the same form. If proverbs have both the same idea and they vary only by some words or grammatical structures, they are proverb variants to each other. This is the case if we compare proverb texts inside a language or between cognate languages.

An example of changes in proverb loans is a proverb emphasizing the value of other people's help, *A friend in the way is better than a penny in the purse* (Tilley, 1950: 242, nb F687). This proverb has been carried from Holland or England to Finland. In Finland this proverb has somehow been translated and transformed to *Parempi reppu reessä kuin ystävä kylässä* [Better to have a sack in your sleigh than a friend in the village]. The text or its variants alone do not prove anything about Finnish mentality compared to the European style. The misuse of hospitality has perhaps been worse in Finland than in the south. (Kuusi, 1954: 74.) This is just an example that even a reverse variant of a proverb can develop and find a sounding board in new circumstances, if the topic is functional enough.

The above mentioned strictly analyzed Estonian national proverb corpus has already been compared with proverb corpora of cognate languages- Finnish, Karelian, Votic, Vepsian and Livonian. (Kuusi & Krikmann & al, 1985). Searching for proverb equivalents between cognate languages has quite clear rules. If you find an equivalent, you can be almost sure that those expressions have the same roots. Comparing proverbs of cognate languages means primarily surveying distribution and different variations of the same proverb type. In case we had information of conventions of proverb use in different countries, the interpretations might prove to be different. We could not be so sure anymore that we deal with the same proverb, although it is outwardly the same. Basically the same problem might arise between proverb variants of different dialects within one language. For example an Estonian proverb *Käsi aitab kätt, jalg jalga* [One hand helps the other, a foot helps a foot] is slightly different in its few Finnish variants: *Käsi käden noutaa* [One hand satisfies the other hand]. This proverb type is not known in the southern and western parts of Finland. As a plain texts it can easily be mistaken for *One hand washes the other* (Ibid. nb 6.), which is a

universal type and well-known in Finland, too. Only close study of contextual meanings or different actual uses of texts define them to two different categories.

In their pilot study concerning a corpus of German proverbs Peter Grzybek and Christoph Chlosta, both native speakers of German, noticed that they could not always reach the meanings of proverbs from different parts of the country (Chlosta & Grzybek, 2000). After this experiment Grzybek sees the challenge to set side by side proverb materials that differ much in their degree of semiotic analysis (analysis of meanings). If we make very detailed analyses of contexts and use of proverbs in one language, a successful comparison requires the same level in the other language. Focusing on one language is different from having items from many languages. In order to proceed to systematic categorization and not only symptomatic (based on coincidences) work you are *forced* to go deeper into details than you would like².

3.6 From Intuitive Orderliness to Systematic Categorization

Scarborough, the collector of Chinese proverbs mentioned above, describes a condition which seems to be internalized in the proverb enthusiasts of the Western cultural area. In order to feel that he understood the inherent orderliness of proverbs he had to become familiar with a great number of proverb texts.

It may seem, at first, as though there were no rules shaping them after any models whatever. But, just as to the eye of a skilful botanist, the promiscuous growths on the sides of a shady stream fall into ranks and classes, so to one who examines these proverbs with a little care, they will be seen to class themselves together, until, out of what seemed a perfect chaos, several orders arise (Scarborough 1875, ix).

In this way Scarborough finds for example parallelism in Chinese proverbs. The stylistic features are not the only thing he becomes interested in. Scarborough discusses a more important quality which seems apparent in Chinese proverb texts: virtue or morality. This has been a natural and logical order for scholars systemizing their vast material. It is proportioned to your own, most familiar ways to perceive human action and motives. Subjectivity can never be totally excluded, but researchers have tried to diminish it by making classifications that would comprehend all possible cases.

We shall introduce and discuss about two concrete attempts to construct a systematic categorization of international proverbs. The first suggestion for proverb classification is a part of Grigory L. Permyakov's *General theory of cliché* that he describes "folkloristic in its main material and linguistic in its method" (Permyakov, 1979). The

² A private discussion between Outi Lauhakangas and Peter Grzybek in November 2012.

other classification system is the *Matti Kuusi international type system of proverbs* (Lauhakangas, 2001).

3.7 G. L. Permyakov's Logico-semiotic Classification of Proverbs and Proverbial Phrases

After the English publication of his work Grigory Permyakov (1919–1983) became well-known among paremiologists but actually his work is not very deeply understood. Maybe for that reason, his scientific approach to categorization of international proverbs is not much applied or developed. His experiment of proverb classification is part of his notes on the *General Theory of Cliché*. Permyakov's logico-semiotic theory of invariants in language functions especially in folklore. The part concerning proverbial expressions is based on an "investigation of several tens of thousands of proverbs and proverbial phrases belonging to 72 peoples of the East, and the equal number of Russian folk sayings" (Permyakov, 1979: 163).

Along his theoretic pursuit Permyakov also had a practical reason to develop a classification as he prepared a collection of *Selected Oriental Proverbs* (Permyakov, 1968). He used both translated collections of proverbs and proverbial phrases and dictionaries of Russian-Eastern languages. Permyakov's theoretical considerations are based on structural paremiology and semiotics.

Permyakov seemed to be fond of proverbs and proverbial phrases. He wrote about folklore items, "artistic miniatures reflecting facts of everyday life in a vividly expressive form". From proverbial expressions he got an idea to study clichés in general. He considered them to represent a special type of logical (logico-semiotic) constructions (Permyakov, 1979: 163). Permyakov's commentator Y. V. Rozhdestvensky (1979: 259) clarifies that linguistics clichés are conventionally defined as ready-made and reproducible language units. Linguists' interest in clichés was focused merely on vocabulary and inventory of units that can be used. These language items were only described.

Instead, Permyakov's hypothesis was that there are rules of producing reproducible units. He approached them from the standpoint of grammar, poetics and rhetoric. He was not very interested in collecting and describing clichés (like lexicologists or other paremiologists) but rather in the way they are created. He saw the mutable character and social aspects in the development of folklore as well. (Rozhdestvensky, 1979: 261, 267.) From the current point of view he was ahead of his time in his ethno-psychological and structural approaches to folklore phenomena.

Permyakov applied Vladimir Y. Propp's (1958 [1928]) functional analysis of fairy-tale texts. Rozhdestvensky (1979: 265) specifies qualities of Permyakov's analysis. Firstly, it is empirical and inductive analysis of language texts (from cultural text

sphere). His analysis is a description of the rules of building clichéized texts and it considers clichés originating as oral speech.

In his article *On paremiological homonymy and synonymy* Permyakov (1979, 248) goes deeper to the questions of semiotic categorization. He gives an example of a homonymic proverb of the Nyang tribe (in Cameroun) *If a nut above (on a tree) hasn't grown (ripen yet), it will fall down (on the ground)*. The first meaning is that not every evil is apparent at once, but sooner or later it will come out. The other meaning for the same proverb is how a good deed takes time to be accomplished. Permyakov emphasizes that the two different meanings are revealed in contexts where this proverb is used. Thus, the homonymy will be removed in social situations. For the categorization of proverbs these examples are still important.

The most characteristic feature in Permyakov's analysis is his concept of *situation*. He specifies the situations, *real life contexts* in which folklore texts are created and used. A word resolves a situation but it does not itself depend on the situation. The figurative meaning of the clichéized text makes it possible to use folklore texts as rules for identifying new and previously unknown situations. (Permyakov, 1979: 272)

Permyakov (1979, 180–195) demonstrates his categorization by giving text specimens classifications according to four *logico-semiotic arch-invariants* each falling into three categories. All twelve categories are divided into subcategories according to combinations of features. Permyakov concentrates on proverbs of over twenty Eastern minority cultures, peoples living under the Soviet regime from Abkhazian to Uzbek. He has also taken proverb texts from other Oriental and Arabic cultures and samples even from Sub Saharan tribes.

Permyakov (Permyakov, 1979: 30, 157) sees that features of proverbs centre around a limited number of invariant opposition pairs of the type *one's own – another's*, *near – faraway*, *good–evil* etc. Different images in proverbs are just indicators of these general properties. He notes that sometimes only one member of the pair is present in a paremia (proverb or proverbial saying). However the other member is implied. The problem in his approach is his attempt to make differences between proverb types according to their negative, positive and mixed forms. This seems to result from Permyakov's way to interpret proverbs as answers to potential questions in social situations. He sees that proverbs and proverbial phrases are signs of situations or of a certain type of relationships between objects (Permyakov, 1979: 20).

Table 3.1: G. L. Permyakov's (1979: 180–195) logico-semiotic arch-invariants represented by logico-thematic groups and subgroups A–C. (The subclasses and oriental proverb variants are not presented in this table.)

Logico-semiotic arch-invariant	I A	I B	II A	II B
Logico-thematic group	<i>Permanence and Mutability</i>	<i>Producer and his goods</i>	<i>Action and reaction</i>	<i>One's own and another's</i>
A	All things preserve their qualities and do not become other things under any circumstances (neutral things staying neutral, good things good, and bad things bad)	The producer and his goods are inseparably connected, each producer owning and enjoying the things he produces	Each action causes a corresponding reaction	One's own (native, habitual) is good, what is another's is bad; One's own is always better than another's
B	All things – neutral, good and bad ones – keep changing, and one thing may turn into another	There is no inseparable connection between the producer and his goods; No producer ever owns or enjoys the things he produces (or else, he owns and uses inferior ones)	Each action causes an incongruous reaction	One's own (to which one is used) is bad, another's is good; Another's things are better than one's own
C	Some things are changeable, and others are not	Sometimes the producer of the goods owns them and sometimes not; Sometimes he uses them and sometimes not	Sometimes the action causes a corresponding reaction and sometimes an incongruous one	Both one's own and another's are good; Sometimes one's own is better, and sometimes another's

The table 3.1 shows only a short part of Permyakov's whole-scale system. In the previously mentioned experience Chlosta and Grzybek (2000) tried to make a classification of German proverbs according to Permjakov's system. Proceeding item per item they found the classification a painstaking task. The difficulties are not only due to the complexity of Permyakov's system, but because it seems to be more exact than our everyday usage of proverbs. This seems to be related to the fact that we only have some *feeling* about what proverbs mean. Actually we use many proverbs only in some vague manner without bothering ourselves much about what they mean³.

3.8 The Matti Kuusi International Type System of Proverbs

Academician Matti Kuusi (1914–1998) was the Professor of Finnish and Comparative Folk Poetry Studies (today called folkloristics) at the University of Helsinki from 1959 to 1977. One of his areas of expertise was paremiology, research on proverbs. This particularly drifting genre of folklore led him to establish contacts with scholars around the world. One of the most esteemed paremiologist ever, Professor Archie Taylor (1890–1973) from California, the author of *The Proverb* (1931), was behind Kuusi's (1957) first international classification *experiment*, which was realized as a universal inquiry, when Kuusi published a question about a common but peculiar natural phenomenon explained in a proverbial phrase. What does the paraphrase *If it rains while the sun is shining* mean or what is its second part?⁴

In Finnish archives he had found several variations of the phrase, e.g. *piru piiskaa akkaansa*; *...vanhoipiikoi naijaa*; *...huoran lasta kastetaan* [...the devil is beating his woman; ...old maids will get married; ...a whore's baby will be christened]. He decided to write *the world history* of one paraphrase. Having a closer look at one single phrase he could also see how relative a folklore genre is according to its actual use in a certain culture. Universally and even inside a cultural area one and the same expression varies. It can be a folk belief, a particular way to explain this peculiar natural phenomenon, a paraphrase, a weather proverb (The code A3a 25 in Kuusi's classification), a riddle or a folk tale.

Kuusi got 3000 variants of the sunshine and raining paraphrase from 97 different cultural areas. He undertook to organize the complex material and got practice in comparing variations from different cultures.

³ A private discussion between Outi Lauhakangas and Peter Grzybek in November 2012.

⁴ Taylor also provoked Kuusi to start as the first editor-in-chief of the journal *Proverbium*. His pioneering and active paremiological period at the head of the journal lasted from 1965 to 1974. A strong network of paremiologists formed when he invited proverb scholars to contribute to the same forum. New contacts brought proverb collections from every part of the world.

Kuusi's (1970) essential experiment on international classification sprang from his comparative analysis of African proverbs that he had begun almost by chance a few years earlier. He noticed that surprisingly many proverbs in Ndonga language, which was his point of departure, had same ideas as Finnish proverbs. This was a clear break with his Finnish predecessors using the historical geographic method and believing only on the theory of evolution. Kuusi emphasized that there must be a difference to study literary texts from oral tradition. The research material of folklore studies cannot be only text collections but you must be aware of the functions, performance practices and real users of this speech – if it is possible. Proverb collections were the basis of Kuusi's systematic index of international proverb types. Starting from comparisons of Finnish proverb texts to Nordic and European equivalents he broadened his search to all possible language areas and comparisons between non-Finnish proverbs. Kuusi was able to continue with his type-system of proverbs during his retiring age, when his daughter Outi Lauhakangas started transferring the proverb index of literature references into a relational database in 1990. At the same time they developed Kuusi's classification of international proverb types. This database was made for the purpose of folkloristic and linguistic research. The aim was and is not to collect all possible proverb texts from every possible language area to one big pool but to study structures of proverb texts and main themes of proverbial thinking and give sources for further research.

The database and classification of proverbs presented here is named *The Matti Kuusi International Type System of proverbs* (Lauhakangas, 2001). The database consists of three core elements:

1. A special library of proverb collections in the folklore archives of the Finnish Literature Society in Helsinki,
2. A database of international proverb types and literature references on the internet,
3. A thematic and structural classification of international proverbs.

The concept of proverb type alternates between a concrete proverb title and a cluster of proverbs having the same idea. The type system gathers together similar proverb titles from different nations into an international or even a global type having a common idea. You can study the whole structure and proverb types on the internet address of the database⁵. An introduction to the background and construction of Kuusi's classification and material is presented in Lauhakangas' (2001) report. Here are the main themes of Kuusi's classification. You can notice while going through the titles that most of the groups are thematic.

⁵ *The Matti Kuusi International Type System of Proverbs*.
In <http://lauhakan.home.cern.ch/lauhakan/cerp.html>

- A Practical knowledge of nature
- B Faith and our basic attitude
- C. Basic observations and socio-logic
- D. The world and human life
- E. Sense of proportion
- F. Concepts of morality
- G. Social life
- H. Social interaction
- J. Communication
- K. Social position
- L. Agreements and norms
- M. Coping and learning
- T. Time and sense of time

Anyway, some exceptions are indicated already on the main theme level. One of them is the theme C. Basic observations and socio-logic. The structural analysis Kuusi demonstrated for this section is comparable to Permyakov's logico-semiotic approach. The theme is named after Paul Goodwin's and Joseph Wenzel's (1981) term *socio-logic*, which refer to same kind of socially determined reasoning. From the titles of the classes under this theme you can notice how opposition pairs are applied (little in relation to big; appearance in relation to internal values).

- C1. Durability of X's nature / durability of identity
- C2. X yields /requires /belongs to X
- C3. Nothingness/emptiness yields /loses nothing
- C4. Little : big / a little : a lot
- C5. Signals & their meaning /interpretation
- C6. Appearance : internal values

Subgroups of the first class C1. *Durability of X's nature / durability of identity* are shown below as an example of the content of these classes.

- C1a X's basic nature/character will be unchanged; characteristics will not change
- C1b X is always X, even if...
- C1c there is no need to teach X things belonging to its character; hopeless to teach things not belonging to X's character
- C1d X will preserve X's habits and customs

The titles above describe well the kind of notation used in Kuusi's categories. One could consider these titles examples of the moulds of proverbs. Some of them are quite near the most general proverb types in the corresponding group. For example, in the subgroup C1d you will find a global proverb type C1d 19 *An old ox makes a strait*

furrow. Equivalent proverbs will be found through literature references. For example a Japanese synonymous proverb *An old horse doesn't forget his path*. As a cross-reference we shall find the subgroup G6f *the treatment of the elderly* that interprets the proverb type in a thematic context, where the comparison between the young and the old is in the focus. For example the proverb type G6f 15 is *Older and wiser*.

In order to move the Kuusi's database of proverbs to the internet for international use, we had to study the generality of proverb types. The language and cultural areas that form together the global brand are: Africa (Sub-Saharan), Islamic, European, Orient (old Eastern cultural area), Pacific. American cultures are not seen as being apart from European influence. If a proverb type is common to most of these language areas, it is considered a global type. The meaning and use of a specific proverb can vary from culture to culture.

Alongside the original index of Finnish proverb titles the titles of the international proverb types had to be translated into English. This was necessary, if original English equivalents were not available. This meant that the sum of proverb titles decreased from 8287 Finnish entries to 1808 English entries. Still the classification remained identical to the original Finnish type system and the reduction did not cause any empty subgroups. The tempting possibility to find any proverb you are interested in cannot yet be realized for those who cannot use the Finnish part of the database.

3.9 Comparison Between Permyakov's Logico-semiotic Categorization and Kuusi's Type System

In both suggestions of proverb classification the starting point has been a real proverb corpus, collections and archives of proverb texts with their explanations. Thus, both Permyakov and Kuusi have constructed empirical and inductive classifications. Both researchers have come to the conclusion that there are universal structures for proverbial creativity. They share the view that most of the proverbs gather around a finite number of opposition pairs. This can be seen in the titles of their classes.

Permyakov's aim has been to test his general theory of clichés and functionality of the logico-semiotic hypothesis concerning folklore items, ranging from proverbs to folk-tales. The ready-made categorization of proverbs has apparently led Permyakov choose suitable samples for each subgroup, although this process is difficult undertake again in order to scientifically validate it. Kuusi (1972) wanted to make an experiment of international classification of proverb types already when constructing his pilot article about the criteria of proverb systematization. He took numerous proverbs as a testing ground. His aim in this stage was also to give critical remarks on Permyakov's system of classification. This does not erase the fact that Kuusi had already simultaneously with Permyakov started to develop an international classification of proverb types. Kuusi abandoned later his plan to publish more far-reaching suggestions of

the classification, because he understood that the complexity of proverb semiotics, practically the difficulty of taking into account all possible cross-references, would be impossible to present in a printed form. Not until new possibilities in information technology had arisen with tools for making networks of internal references, he wanted to start his systematization work anew. (Lauhakangas, 2001: 16.)

As was shown in the previous chapter, Permyakov (1979: 249) gave examples of his way to deal with synonymic proverbs. Kuusi defines the synonymy of proverbs in the same way. Especially categorizing proverbs from different languages as belonging to the same type presupposes that we consider them synonymous proverbs. Now it is possible to compare Permyakov's grouping to Kuusi's combinations. Permyakov's two pairs of typical Russian synonymic proverbs are presented here with Kuusi's codes after each proverb. Every code of Kuusi's classification consists of

1. a main theme letter from A to T,
2. a class number inside the main theme,
3. a small letter telling about a subgroup, and
4. the individual number of every proverb type.

3.9.1 Permyakov's *is not worth* in Kuusi's System

When Permyakov introduces a class consisting of a structure and also of a meaning *is not worth*, Kuusi has put same proverbs to two different subgroups J1p *Tolerance of jokes and criticism* and C3e *from air, water or useless materials one gets no valuable or durable things*. The first one is a European and Islamic type and the second case is a global type that has cross-references to groups M5c *quality and ways of handling materials* and M6c *enterprise, perseverance and toughness is better than short-sightedness, giving up easily, the easy way*. Titles of subgroups are quite concrete (and quite long!) descriptions of the idea of each group of proverbs. The texts may come from different languages and they are translated to English, of course originally to Kuusi's own language, Finnish.

The game is not worth the candles, J1p 13
The goatskin is not worth the making, C3e 18

3.9.2 Permyakov's *absence of* in Kuusi's System

In the absence of fish a crayfish is a fish
With no people around, even Foma is a nobleman

This second pair of Permyakov's proverbs belongs to a same subgroup called E1e *the value of X increases through lack of Y* in Kuusi's international type-system

of proverbs. The first proverb is equivalent to an individual proverb type E1e 16. If you have a possibility to check the database in the internet you can notice that this proverb type is European, Islamic and oriental and it has cross-references to groups G4a, D3e, and L2c. This means that its various proverbs can be interpreted in different situations (and in different cultures) from different angles and they could be positioned to those subgroups as well.

The Foma-proverb above is not so clearly a part of any readymade individual proverb type. I can just say that it suits to this same subgroup. My hypothesis is that it is used likewise the other proverbs in Kuusi' subgroup E1e.

Let us look closer at Kuusi's whole main theme E, which has a title *Sense of proportion*. It has exceptionally only one group in the next hierarchical level E1 *Relativity of ranking / the essential unity of differing things*.

- E1a the incompleteness / uncertainty / relativity of everything
- E1b the esteemed also have their faults and imperfection (which must be endured)
- E1c an intelligent person can make mistakes, an able man can fail
- E1d minor, inferior, late etc. is better than nothing
- E1e the value of X increases through lack of Y
- E1f insignificant and despised things share basic features in common with the rest of us
- E1g the same origins / values / basic rights shared by human beings and nature
- E1h apparently opposite beings have basic features in common
- E1i 'coincidentia oppositorum'; the fusion of opposites
- E1j the wisdom of the 'middle road', avoidance of exaggerations and extremes, compromise is best
- E1k things look different when seen from different perspectives, paradoxes concerning luck in misfortune
- E1l internal contradictions among essential nature, action or situation

In order to get a better view to contents of these subgroups we can open the already presented subgroup E1e. I shall go through the English (translated) proverb types now available in the database. The first (nb 10) is a global proverb type *We never know the worth of water until the well runs dry*. The next title (nb 14) presented with an English translation is *Copper is a poor man's gold, pewter a pauper's silver*. In addition to the Finnish proverb text *Tina on köyhän kulta, vaski vaivaisen hopia* in the Finnish zone of the database this proverb type includes for example a synonymous African proverb: *The tooth of a pig is a poor man's ivory*.

The next type (again translated into English) in this subgroup is the one we already dealt with: *When there is no fish in the river, shrimps are valued* (E1e 16). The title text is taken and translated from a Chinese proverb. This proverb idea is almost global with the exception of the Sub Saharan Africa.

Then there is an example text known both in Finland and Estonia: *One has to screw the aunt since there is no other bride* (E1e 18). The same idea is familiar also in the Western Europe. Both the next proverb type *A drowning man will catch at any straw* (E1e 21) and the last one *In the kingdom of the blind the one-eyed man is a king* (E1e 26) are global proverb types.

Studying closer the proverb examples in the previous subgroup we could ask what are the criteria for these proverb types to be separated from each other. You could call the group title a generalised proverb type and deal with all those proverbs as synonymous texts. But we might as well ask, if there are any basis to join quite different proverbs to a single type. A problematic area of any classification work is to decide how to distinguish one proverb type from another without losing information about the relationship between them.

3.10 Automatic Data Processing and New Possibilities to Construct Proverb Databases

An obvious challenge for improvement of any categorization of proverbs and databases is lack of contextual data. Nonetheless, the classification signs serve as guidance for understanding the most common situations where these proverbs are used. Hrisztalina Hrisztova-Gotthardt (2010) has made an analysis of the development from the printed dictionaries and proverb collections to modern database systems applied to proverb research. Taking into account multidimensionality and new possibilities to use networks we may find new ways to approach proverb material. Once proverbial collections are digitized, advanced search capabilities can be applied on them. These capabilities include morphology- and semantics-aware search (e.g. by stem, by syntactic criteria, by semantic domain), search across numerous and different information sources, and convenient presentation and manipulation of search results. Third, information technology offers convenient means for organization and classification of proverbs. Linking between various proverbial and non-proverbial resources, associating of textual data with multimedia data (video, audio, maps) and other widely used methods of organizing data allow for creation of powerful dynamic, multi-dimensional indices of proverbs. Such indices (also known as ontologies, using the terminology of information systems) are going to substitute the traditional proverb collections. (Kats & Lauhakangas, 2010: 114.)

A truly qualitative leap would be to connect to Kuusi's original database supplementary national proverbial databases proportioned to Kuusi's classification tool. Perhaps Permyakov's ideas could also be applied to this kind of combination. We should not also forget Aderemi Raji-Oyelade's (2004; 2008: 150) observation that there is a steady increase in the number of non-conventional proverb types which also deserve further interpretive classification. He sees that these new proverbs especially

popular in Africa assimilate ancient thoughts and observances but explode the conventional meanings and deconstruct the logic of traditional sayings.

3.11 Summary

Some lexicographers (Almind et al.) write about the neglected role of the common, non-academic user who has little need for an in-depth classification. Instead of over-theorizing they want to show, how an online dictionary puts the simplified theory into use and focuses on the user's needs, thereby reducing the necessity for complicated classifications. It is always good to put theories into use and in the case of theories about proverb categorization the criteria for evaluation should always be real and not artificially constructed. In order to test any classification of proverbs one should employ as testing grounds proverbs in their interactional contexts and texts from cultures as different from each other as possible. The demand for user's needs as the main criterion for classification should not prevent basic research on systemization of proverb corpora. In order to serve scientific paremiology and better comprehension of social psychological and cultural aspects of proverb use the need for in-depth categorization is clear. It must be based on deep familiarity of proverbs and proverb-like expressions as a genre of folklore and on knowledge of its interactional functions. This does not exclude developing user-friendly search systems for databases of proverbs.

References

- Almind, R., Bergenholtz, H. & Vrang, V. Theoretical and Computational Solutions for Phraseological Lexicography. Aarhus. *Linguistik online* 27, 23/06, 159–181.
http://www.linguistik-online.de/27_06/almind_et_al.pdf (accessed September 9, 2013)
- Andersson, D. (2013). "Understanding Figurative Proverbs: A Model Based on Conceptual Blending." *Folklore* 124: 1, 28–44.
- Chlosta, C. & Grzybek, P. (2000). Versuch macht klug?! Logisch-semiotische Klassifikation bekannter deutscher Sprichwörter. In P. Grzybek (Ed.) *Die Grammatik der sprichwörtlichen Weisheit von G. L. Permyakov. Mit einer Analyse allgemein bekannter deutscher Sprichwörter* (pp. 169-199). Baltmannsweiler: Schneider Verlag Hohengehren.
- Čermák, F. (2011). The Case of the Czech National Corpus: Its Design and History. In S. Gozd-Roszkowski (Ed.), *Explorations across Languages and Corpora* (pp. 29–44). Frankfurt: Peter Lang.
- Dalj, V. (2003 [1862]). [Пословицы русского народа] *Proverbs of Russian people*. Moscow.
- Goodwin, P. D. & Wenzel, J. W. (1981). Proverbs and Practical reasoning. A study in Socio-logic. In W. Mieder & A. Dundes (Eds), *The Wisdom of many. Essays on the Proverb* (pp. 140-160). New York/London.

- Hrisztova-Gotthardt, H. (2010). *Vom gedruckten Sprichwörterbuch zur interaktiven Sprichwortdatenbank. Überlegungen zum linguistischen und lexikographischen Konzept Mehrsprachiger Sprichwortdatenbanken*. Sprichwörterforschung. Bd. 27. Frankfurt: Peter Lang.
- Kats, P. & Lauhakangas, O. (2010). Proverbial databases, variety and challenges. In O. Lauhakangas & R. Soares (Eds), *Acta Proceedings of ICP 09* (pp. 110-120). Tavira: AIP-IAP.
- Krikmann, A. & Sarv, I. (Eds). (1980-1988). *Eesti Vanasõnad. Proverbia Estonica I-IV*. Tallinn: Eesti Raamat.
- Kuusi, M. & Lauhakangas, O. *The Matti Kuusi International Type System of Proverbs*. In <http://lauhakan.home.cern.ch/lauhakan/cerp.html>
- Kuusi, M. (1954). *Sananlaskut ja puheenparret*. [Proverbs and proverbial phrases.] Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura.
- Kuusi, M. (1957). *Regen bei Sonnenschein. Zur Weltgeschichte einer Redensart*. [If it rains while the sun is shining. World history of one phrase.] FF Communications 171. Helsinki: SKS.
- Kuusi, M. (1970). *Ovambo Proverbs with African parallels*. FF Communications 208. Helsinki: Academia Scientiarum Fennica.
- Kuusi, M. (1972). *Towards an International Type-System of Proverbs*. FF Communications 211. Helsinki: Academia Scientiarum Fennica.
- Kuusi, M., Krikmann, A., Laukkanen, K., Sarv, I. & al. (1985). *Proverbia septentrionalia. 900 Balto-Finnic proverb types with Russian, Baltic, German and Scandinavian parallels*. FF Communications 236. Helsinki: Academia Scientiarum Fennica.
- Lauhakangas, O. (2001). *The Matti Kuusi International Type System of Proverbs*. FF Communications 275. Helsinki: Academia Scientiarum Fennica.
- Lombardi-Satriani, L. (1974). Folklore as Culture of Contestation. In *Journal of the Folklore Institute XI: 1-2*, 99–121.
- Permyakov, G. L. (1979 [1970 in Russian]). *From Proverb to Folk-Tale. Notes on the General Theory of Cliché*. Moscow: Nauka
- Permyakov, G. L. (1968). [Избранные пословицы и поговорки народов Востока.] *Selected Oriental Proverbs*. Moscow: Nauka.
- Propp, V. J. (1958 [1928]). [Морфология сказки] Morphology of the folktale. *International journal of American linguistics* 24, 4.
- Raji-Oyelade, A. (2004). Posting the African Proverb: A Grammar of Yoruba, Postproverbials, or Logophagia, Logorrhea and the Grammar of Yoruba Postproverbials. *Proverbium* 21, 299–314.
- Raji-Oyelade, A. (2008). Classifying the unclassified: the challenge of postproverbiality in international proverb scholarship. In O. Lauhakangas & R. Soares (Eds), *Acta Proceedings of ICP* (pp. 146-155). Tavira: AIP/IAP.
- Rozhdestvensky, Y. V. (1979). What is 'the general theory of cliché'. In G. L. Permyakov: *From Proverb to Folk-tale. Notes on the general theory of cliché* (pp. 259–284). Moscow: Nauka.
- Scarborough, W. (1875). *A Collection of Chinese Proverbs*. Shanghai: American Presbyterian Mission press.
- Taylor, A. (1931). *The Proverb and an index to the proverb*. Hatboro/Copenhagen.
- Tilley, M. P. (1950). *The Proverbs in England in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries*. Ann Arbor (MI): University of Michigan Press.
- Yurtbaşı, M. (1996). *On bes dilde atasözlerimiz. Turkish proverbs and their equivalents in fifteen languages*. Istanbul.