

A CONTRASTIVE ANALYSIS OF PROVERBS BUILT AS PHRASES IN ENGLISH, ROMANIAN AND RUSSIAN

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ABSTRACT. *A contrastive analysis of Proverbs built as phrases in English, Romanian and Russian.* After discussing briefly the concept of phrase, the present research aims at analysing from the syntactic point of view the paremiological phrases that appear in reputable dictionaries of proverbs of English, Romanian and Russian languages as independent units, not included in the proverbs built as sentences or complex sentences..

At paremiological level, we highlight in the three languages the frequency of word combinations represented by 1) noun phrases with no predication, 2) verb phrases that include infinitival constructions and 3) adjective phrases that have the principal term expressed by an adjective. The phraseological organization at paremiological level has a special importance because on the basis of the relationship between the two combining elements, determinate and determinant, the main figures of style in the proverbs are created, the metaphor and the comparison.

Keywords: *paremiology, paremiological, proverbial phrases, phraseology.*

THE CONCEPT OF PHRASE

The concept of phrase is profoundly treated in the grammars of contemporary **Russian language**¹, in the chapter where phrase begins (as fundamental syntactic unit) and that precedes the study of the sentence / *простое предложение*, unlike the traditional grammars of **English language**² and **Romanian language**³, where this concept is just vaguely mentioned. An explanation would be that the phrase concept is relatively new (it appeared in the middle of the first half of the twentieth century), being introduced by the linguists that study the language first from the point of view of the structure and relations (and they call themselves structuralists) and hasn't been adopted yet by all traditional grammars that must be accessible to the great public and not exceed the general use package of knowledge.

The "traditional" syntax is defined as part of the grammar structure that studies the rules of joining words in sentences and sentences in phrases. Depending on the research fields, only two subsystems (compartments) of syntax stood out: *sentence syntax* and *phrase syntax*.

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¹ *Limba rusă contemporană [Contemporary Russian Language]*, Editura Didactică și Pedagogică, București, 1982, p. 241-245; Onufrie Vințeler, *Sintaxa limbii ruse contemporane [Syntax of Contemporary Russian Language]*, Cluj, 1973, p. 16-21.

² Georgiana Gălățeanu-Fârnoagă, Ecaterina Comișel, *Gramatica limbii engleze [English Grammar]*, București, 1992.

³ Mioara Avram, *Gramatica pentru toți [Grammar for All]*, Humanitas, București, 1997; *Gramatica limbii române [Romanian Grammar]*, II, ediția a II-a, Editura Academiei, București, 1963.

In the twentieth century linguistics and implicitly grammar are enriched with new concepts and new working methods. Especially after the appearance of the famous *Cours de linguistique générale* of Ferdinand de Saussure, as a reply to the reproach addressed by him to pre-structuralist linguistics, (“In the matter of language we contented ourselves to operate with badly defined units”⁴), researchers focus on a series of aspects that were not studied before. The linguistic conception founded by Saussure and based on the idea that the language is a *system* whose elements are tightly connected between them through a network of relations, suffered a sudden change and remarkably encouraged linguistic research. The systematic character of the language highlighted by F. de Saussure implies the existence of relations between the elements of the whole and their relations with the whole. Levels distribute the elements of the language and there is stratification and a hierarchy of the levels. Most of the structuralist research – more exactly, prior to the creation of the generative-transformational model – proposes a methodology capable of discovering the repertory of *units specific to each level*, to specify the *relations* between them and to establish the *combinations* that are made at each level.

A frequently used method in **English and American linguistics** (especially used by those who build generative grammars⁵) is the *analysis in immediate constituents*. The first indications about this method can be found in Bloomfield’s book⁶, but the work that even today remained fundamental for the knowledge of the analysis in immediate constituents is the exposition of R.S. Wells⁷. This method continues and develops the phrase idea of Ferdinand de Saussure: the sentence is decomposed in “nominal group” (equivalent of the traditionalist concept of “subject group”) and “verbal group” (“the verb’s group” in traditionalist terminology). Each of the two groups (immediate constituents of the sentence) is divided in two immediate constituents and so on, until we arrive at morphemes, “the ultimate constituents” of any utterance. A „tree” usually represents the organization of utterances as a hierarchy of immediate constituents schematically. By the successive segmentation of a text in a hierarchy of immediate constituents, the infinity of utterances of a language (ever spoken or written or only possible) is reduced to a series of schemes (**English** “patterns”, “models”). Based on distributional analysis, the decomposition in immediate constituents proposed to avoid the disadvantages of syntactic analysis made by semantic criteria.

In the series of modern syntactic models, the so-called “generative-transformational” ones are the most recent and the most discussed lately. In a first form, the transformational model is the work of Z.S. Harris⁸ and can be presented as a type of syntactic analysis, special and at the same time “complementary” compared to the analysis in immediate constituents and with the analysis in chains⁹. The second form of the transformational

⁴ Ferdinand de Saussure, *Cours de linguistique generale [General Linguistics Course]*, 1916, p. 154.

⁵ Noam Chomsky, *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax*, Cambridge, Mass, 1965; Terence D. Langendoen, *The Study of Syntax, The Generative Transformational Approach to the Structure of American English*, New York, 1969.

⁶ Leonard Bloomfield, *Language*, London, 1965, p. 158-170.

⁷ R.S. Wells, *Immediate Constituents Grammar*, *Language* (23), 1943, p. 81-117.

⁸ Zellig S. Harris, *Co-occurrence and Transformations in Linguistic Structure*, *Language* 33, 1957; idem, *Transformational Theory*, *Language*, 41.

⁹ Zellig S. Harris, *Structural Linguistics*, Chicago, 1951, p. 42.

model belongs to Noam Chomsky¹⁰ and dates back to 1957, year of high importance in the history of syntax. The doctrine of Chomsky opposes grammar structuralism by the fact that it does not aim to describe a finite body of texts, but to explain that any speaker can emit and understand an infinite number of original utterances – feature called “the creativity of the speaker”. A generative grammar is a model capable of generating all the correct utterances of a language and only correct utterances. The list of the linguists involved in the study of generative transformational orientation is impressive and increases rapidly from one year to another¹¹.

Following the progress done in linguistics and implicitly in grammar, it was more and more obvious that the object of study of syntax is *the phrase*. Most of the contemporary experts, even if there are disagreements and nuances in interpretation, admit and accept as *units of syntax* the word, the part of sentence, the phrase, the sentence, the complex sentence, the enunciation and the text. These syntactic units form subsystems or own levels: of the parts of sentence, phraseological, sentence and phrase.

In **Romanian linguistics** the phrase is treated and used with different meanings. Thus, although it does not use the term of phrase, the *Grammar of Academy* speaks of “combination of words” made of at least two semantic words, but without a verb; this structure is characterized as “the smallest syntactic unit inside of which a syntactic relation can be established”¹², that does not communicate itself a logical and sufficient message, but is a component of an enunciation in sentence or enunciation phrase. The Grammar of Academy reminds us to use the term of phrase as synonym with “*combination of words*” or “*group of words*” in the formulations of traditional grammar. In *Romanian Grammar*, Mioara Avram appreciated: “The basic unit of syntax is the sentence, the smallest unit of syntax that can appear independently” and “the smallest syntactic unit inside of which a syntactic relation can be established is the *combination of words*, made of at least two words with full lexical meaning”¹³. Mioara Avram also mentions the term of *phrase*, identifying it with the combination of words characterized by the lack of semantic autonomy, lack of verb, materialization of a syntactic relation and by the fact that it is just a segment of a logical communication accomplished by sentences and complex sentences. Therefore, Mioara Avram believes that the fundamental units of syntax are only the sentence and the complex sentence, given their quality of being independent enunciations in autonomous and logical communications.

Valeria Guțu Romalo suggests avoiding the concept of “word” and interpreting the phrase as “object of phraseology or syntax” by which we understand “any combination of morphemes”¹⁴. Vasile Șerban identified three inferior syntactic units of the sentence (syntagmoid, syntagm and configuration) and three superior syntactic units of the sentence

¹⁰ Noam Chomsky, *Syntactic Structures*, Mouton, the Hague, 1957.

¹¹ H. Krenn, K. Mülner, *Bibliographie zur Transformations Grammatik*, Heidelberg, 1962, p. 262; A. Radford, *Transformational Grammar*, Cambridge University Press, 1988; M.S. Rochemont, *Focus in Generative Grammar*, Benjamins, Amsterdam, 1986; R.A. Jacobs and P.S. Rosenbaum, *English Transformational Grammar*, Ginn, Waltham, Mass, 1968.

¹² *Gramatica limbii române*, II, Editura Academiei, 1963, p. 7-8.

¹³ Idem, *Ibidem*, p. 7-8.

¹⁴ Valeria Guțu Romalo, *Sintaxa limbii române. Probleme și interpretări [Romanian Syntax. Problems and Interpretations]*, Editura Didactică și Pedagogică, București, 1973, p. 9.

(the complex sentence, the paragraph and the text)¹⁵. The phrase is understood as a structure with two members or several members of coordination type (“homo-functional” phrases) and of referential (or appositive) type that has semantic unit, but has no verb or verb index.

Iorgu Iordan and Vladimir Robu share the opinion that syntax is “a grammar of autonomous phrases” and limits the syntactic units to three: *autonomous phrase, sentence and complex sentence*. The phrase is defined as “the minimal syntactic unit of an enunciation”, and the sentence and the complex sentence are considered enunciations or “maximal units of the language”¹⁶.

Major contributions to the development of syntax studies in structuralist vision are those of Sorin Stati, especially by his works *Theory and Method in Syntax* (1967), *Phrase and its place in the structure of language* (study published in the volume *Elements of structural linguistics*, 1967, coordinator I. Coteanu), *Linguistic Interferences* (1971), *Elements of Syntactic Analysis* (1972), *Elementary Analysis of Syntactic Structures* (in the volume of Sorin Stati, Gh. Bulgăr, *Syntactic and Stylistic Analyses*, 1970)

The renowned linguist associates the field of syntax with the concept of structure, and the syntactic system with the assembly of the types of syntactic structures of a language, from which it results that the object of syntax is syntactic structures and syntactic relations, the inventory, the description and their comparison. Sorin Stati regards *phrase* as a “minimal syntactic combination” or a microstructure made of a group of words that forms a semantic syntactic unit, as a binary subordinate group, part of an enunciation, of a hierarchy of phrases. So, phrase is a structure made of at least two parts of sentence that form a relation of subordination or interdependence. “In fact, - in the words of Sorin Stati -, subordination does not exclude interdependence... subordination is a species of interdependence, is not opposed to interdependence”¹⁷. Sorin Stati completes the hierarchy of the levels of the language (of phonemes, words and sentences) with the phraseological level, interpolated between the level of words and the level of sentences since phrase is a syntactic unit superior to word and inferior to sentence. A systemic conception is promoted by the linguist Dumitru Irimia from Iași, who claims that the syntactic level includes all the other levels of the language: of phonemes, lexical and of morphemes¹⁸. Dumitru Irimia believes that the basic units of syntax are *the word and the enunciation*. Yet, he also mentions phrase, concept that is sometimes used with a wider meaning than by other researchers, by references to phrases without a verb and phrases with a verb. Dumitru Irimia does not share the quasi-general opinion that phrase is a minimal syntactic unit, but states that phrase is “a condition of accomplishing the enunciation and different structural units (sentence, complex sentence), which means “a specific linguistic structure by which the lexical level of the language is included in the syntactic level that it builds by developing a syntactic relationship...”¹⁹.

¹⁵ Vasile Șerban, *Teoria și topica propoziției în româna contemporană [Theory and Order of Sentence in Contemporary Romanian]* Editura Didactică și Pedagogică, București, 1974, p. 141.

¹⁶ Iorgu Iordan, Vladimir Robu, *Limba română contemporană [Contemporary Romanian Language]*, 1978, p. 540-544.

¹⁷ Sorin Stati, *Sintagma și locul ei în structura limbii [Phrase and its Place in the Structure of the Language]*, în vol. *Elemente de lingvistică structurală [Elements of Structural Linguistics]*, București, 1967, p. 113-127.

¹⁸ Dumitru Irimia, *Gramatica limbii române [Romanian Grammar]*, Editura Polirom, Iași, 1997, p. 327-330.

¹⁹ Idem, *Ibidem*, p. 333.

D.D. Draşoveanu claims that there are just three levels of the language: phonetic, lexical and phrasal. So, in the opinion of the professor from Cluj “the last level of the language is the phrase”, and “the relationship with its two terms – phrase – represents the unit, the relational unit – and minimal and maximal unit of the phrase”²⁰. D.D. Draşoveanu accepts only binary phrases, not ternary phrases and considers that the phrase is “the most general category of phraseology, more general than the sentence or the complex sentence” that are considered just “peculiarities of phrase” and species subordinated to phrase. The central category of phraseology - as D.D. Draşoveanu states – is the *relational meaning*, and the “carriers of relational meanings” are the connectives and morphemes.

During the evolution of the **Russian syntax** the concept of phrase was the object of many controversies, knowing various acceptations. We shall mention the conception that appeared in *Russian Grammar*²¹ according to which the *phrase* and the *combination of words* are distinctive notions, having nothing to do with each other. According to this conception, phrase is a less syntactic notion, and a more semantic notion. Some linguists²², in a wider acceptation, understand by phrase any grammatical or lexical association of words. From this perspective, the sentence is considered a variant of phrase, and syntax becomes the science that studies phrase. Other linguists²³ make a rigorous delimitation between the concept of sentence and the concept of phrase, appealing to the functional level. The sentence is a communicative unit while the phrase is a nominal unit. Following the fact that the notion of phrase has several meanings in general (universal) linguistics and the opinions differ as for its components (monemes, morphemes or nonsemantic and autosemantic words), as for the exclusively binary character and the types of relationships that are established between the components (subordination and/or coordination, interdependence and appositive), the present analysis aims at investigating the phrase conceived as “stable semantic and syntactic unit made of a group of two or several words between which subordinate (phraseological) relations are established”²⁴.

Within the phrase the words become terms: one of the terms is *determinate*, and the other one is *determinant*, or according to the terminology of D.D. Draşoveanu²⁵, *regent* and *subordinate*.

In “modern” grammars of **English language** the notion of phrase (phrase) is studied in the chapter devoted to phraseological categories (*phrase-level categories* versus *word-level categories*). The term of „phrase” is defined as “a set of elements that form a constituent”²⁶ without stating the number of elements. For example, the nominal phrase (*noun-phrase*) is defined as “an expression that has a noun as nucleus (*head-noun*)”²⁷ without specifying if the same

²⁰ D.D. Draşoveanu, *Teze și antiteze în sintaxa limbii române [Theses and Antitheses in Romanian Syntax]*, Editura Clusium, Cluj-Napoca, 1997, p. 29-34.

²¹ В.В. Виноградов, *Русский язык. Грамматическое учение о слове*, М., 1972, с. 67.

²² А.М. Пешковский, *Русский язык в научном освещении*, изд 7-е, М., 1956.

²³ *Вопросы синтаксиса современного русского языка*, М., 1950, с. 127-177.

²⁴ cf. Gh. Constantinescu-Dobridor, *Dicționar de termeni lingvistici [Dictionary of Linguistic Terms]*, 1998, p. 292; Roxana Sorescu, *Sintagmă [Phrase]*, in *Dicționar de termeni literari [Dictionary of Literary Terms]*, 1976, coordinator Al. Săndulescu, p. 407.

²⁵ D.D. Draşoveanu, *Legături de la stânga la dreapta, [Links from left to right]* în CL, XIV, 1969, nr. 2, p. 241-246.

²⁶ A. Radford, *Transformational Grammar*, Cambridge University Press, 1988, p. 84-85.

²⁷ Idem, *Ibidem*, p. 85.

phrase must contain another noun except the nucleus noun. It is obvious that in **English language** the phrase can be made of a single term, the *nucleus term (head-noun)*”, unlike **Romanian** and **Russian**, but the present analysis starts from the idea that “*the phrase is the group of two words forming a relation*”; so, the phrase is obligatorily binary, as Charles Bally claimed²⁸.

The classification of phrases is not a universal classification, even if it has common features for a large number of languages. The taxonomy of phrases depends, first of all, on the possibilities of combination in groups of words in the language for which the syntax is built and, secondly, on the word that is the main element of the phrase. In the phrases characterized by the relationship of dependence, as the present case, the main word is the word that cannot be suppressed.

Thus, in **English language**, the generally accepted *phrase-level categories* are the noun phrases (NP), the verb phrases (VP), the adjective phrases (AP), the adverb phrase (ADVP) and prepositional phrases (PP), so *five phrase-level categories*. In **Romanian language** we find *four phrase-level categories from English language*, noun phrases, verb phrases, adjective phrases, and adverb phrases, to which we may add a *five phrase-level category, characteristic of Romanian language only, the interjection phrases*. In **Russian language**, phrases are classified in three large groups common to both **English and Romanian languages**, the noun phrases, the verb phrases and the adverb phrases; the adjective phrases, treated as a distinctive phrase-level category in **English and Romanian**, exist in **Russian language** as well, but they are included in the category of noun phrases.

The classification of phrases has a common feature in the three languages – the existence of noun, verb, adjective and adverb phrases – but also a distinctive feature, the existence of prepositional phrases specific only to the **English language** and the existence of interjection phrases, a peculiarity of the **Romanian language**.

THE PHRASE IN PROVERBS

G.L. Permiakov²⁹, considered the father of paremiology makes a distinction between *proverbs* and *proverbial expressions* (*phrase* means in **English** both syntagm and expression). In Permiakov’s opinion *proverbs* are *closed sentences* made of stable elements that do not suffer changes, while *paremiological phrases* are *open sentences*, partially stereotype formulas that contain variable parts and are subject to change in a given communicative situation. Starting from the examples “*to fire cannon at sparrows*” and „*only the grave will straighten the hunchback*”, he draws our attention to the fact that in a given communication situation both can take the form of sentences with two members: “[*Somebody*] *is firing cannon at sparrows*” and „*Only the grave will straighten the hunchback*”. The difference is that while the first example has final shape and concrete content only in a certain communication context, the second example is entirely reproduced in speaking.

Archer Taylor³⁰ included the paremiological phrases in the study of the proverb, considering them figurative expressions of higher dimensions, structured around a verb.

²⁸ Charles Bally, *Lingvistique générale et lingvistique Française [General Linguistics and French Linguistics]*, ediția a III-a, Berna, 1950.

²⁹ G.L. Permiakov, *On Paremiological Homonymy and Synonymy*, *Proverbium* 24, 1974, p. 941-943.

³⁰ Archer Taylor, *The Proverb*, Hatboro Pennsylvania, 1962.

Other paremiologists, such as Friedrich Seiler and Wolfgang von Schmidt-Hiddings³¹ include them in the field of phraseology, even if they have a more comprehensive conception than Taylor does of proverb phrases.

The present research does not aim at differentiating the paremiology from phraseology, but aims at analysing from syntactic point of view the paremiological phrases that appear in prestigious dictionaries of proverbs of **English, Romanian and Russian languages**³² as *independent units, not included in the proverbs built as sentences or phrases*.

The phraseological organization at paremiological level has a special importance because on the basis of the relationship between the two combining elements, determinate and determinant, we create the main figures of style in the proverbs, the metaphor and the comparison. At paremiological level, we highlight in the three languages the frequency of word combinations represented by 1. *nominal groups* without verb (*apple of discord, norocu' prostului, собачья жизнь*), 2. *infinitive constructions* (*to handle without mittens, a îndruga verzi și uscate, звёзды считать*) that can be analysed as verbal groups, 3. *adjective constructions* - that have the principal term expressed by an adjective (*drunk as a beggar, roșu ca rasi, чёрный как саж*).

1. Noun Phrases / Именные словосочетания

At paremiological level, the noun phrases are built as independent units (closed sentences) without verb. Through noun phrases we make the metaphorical meaning of the proverbial expression. The metaphorical meaning is expressed either by the determinate: *the modern Babylon (London), Burtă-verde, ветхий Адам*, or by the determinant: *the cause of Cromwell, cuiul lui Pepelea, judecata lui Papuc, до греческих календ*, this one being the best represented in paremiological expressions, or by both terms: *California fever, Canterbury tale, barca lui Noe, șoarece de bibliotecă, кайново клеймо, аннибалова клятва*. The combinations of words in which both terms express a metaphorical meaning are the most interesting from the point of view of expressiveness. In noun phrases, attributive relationships are established between the determinate expressed by a noun and the determinant expressed by an adjective.

Adjective noun phrases

The most simple noun phrase used as paremiological expression is when the determinate is accompanied by an adjective attribute; in most cases the metaphorical meaning is expressed by an epithet: *A black swan; The golden calf. ■ Moară stricată; Sărăcie lucie; Călătorie sprâncenată. ■ Золотое сердце; Собачья жизнь; Смертная скука*.

The paremiological expressions in which the attribute is expressed by a numeral are less frequent: *The four eights; The ten commandments. ■ Doi bani în trei pungi; În doi peri; Între patru ochi; Pe șapte drumuri. ■ Пятое колесо в телеге; На один зубок*.

The most frequent noun phrases at paremiological level are those where the determinant is expressed by a noun. The attributive relationships established between the

³¹ Friedrich Seiler, *Deutsche Sprichwörterkunde*, Munich, 1922; V. Schmidt-Hiddings, *Sprichwortliche Redensarten, Abgrenzungen-aufgaben der Forschung – Reinisches Jahrbuch für Volkskunde VII*, Bonn 1950, p. 100-104.

³² William George Smith, *The Oxford Dictionary of English Proverbs*, Oxford, 1963; A. Iuliu Zanne, *Proverbele românilor [Proverbs of Romanians]*, Editura tineretului, 1958, George Muntean, *Proverbe românești [Romanian Proverbs]*, Editura pt. literatură, 1966; В.И. Даль, *Пословицы русского народа*, Москва, 1957.

two nouns, determinate and determinant are either *genitival*, indicating the belonging or origin, or *adverbial*, indicating the purpose, destination, time, etc., through prepositions.

The genitival noun phrases are attributive expressions that contain an epithet in the genitive case or accusative with preposition: *Crocodile's tears*; *Bow of Ulysses*; *A bone of contention*. ■ *Mintea românului a din urmă*; *Lucrul dracului în casa popii*; *Norocul prostului*; *Viața de câine*. ■ *На закате жизни*; *Ирония судьбы*; *Кладезь знаний*; *Клятва верности*; *На край земли*; *На краю могилы*.

As one can see from the above mentioned examples, the genitival attribute is expressed by a noun in the genitive case without preposition (in **English** the synthetic genitive in 's) or with preposition (*of, de*). The attributive expressions of genitival type are metaphorical and between the genitival attributes and the determinate a variety of relations are established. The most common relation is the relation between the determinate that is a metaphor and the genitival attribute that supplies the context. In **English language**, the noun attribute has the capacity of expressing belonging or origin without being marked in genitive. In many **proverbial expressions** the noun attribute is expressed by personal names: *Cassandra warnings*; *A Cornish hug*; *Cambridgeshire camels*; *Gloucestershire kindness*.

The basic word in genitival attributive phrases is a personified noun related to the parts of the human body or a man's activity: *The lap of Delilah*; *The heart of England*; *On the knees of the gods*. ■ *Călcaiul lui Achile*; *Mintea românului a din urmă*; *Образ de scoarță*; *Om de paie*; *Talpa găștei*. ■ *Рука закона*; *В объятиях Морфея*.

The adverbial noun phrases are combinations of words connected by prepositions. A structural peculiarity of prepositional combinations is that the terms connected by preposition offer a larger variation than the other ones. The preposition contributes to the precision of concrete image. In: *A day after the fair*, *De joi în Paști*, *После дождика в четверг*, the prepositions describe, in: *Brass for gold*, *Bani buni pentru zile negre*, *Белая деньга про чёрный день* they express purpose, in: *Enchantments to Egypt*, *De la vlădică până la orincă*, *В когтях у смерти* they indicate destination, etc. The intervention of the preposition contributes to giving a hue to the metaphor in noun phrases. The very possibility of variation with the aid of prepositions explains the large number of this type of expressions: *A friend at court*; *An almond for a parrot*. ● *Judecată după sprânceană*; *Sărăcie cu ciucuri*; *Trai pe vătrași*; *Vorbă din torop*. ● *Камень на сердце*; *Верность до гроба*.

The metaphorical phrases introduced by a preposition have a more complex use than those which contain just a preposition inside them. From the syntactic point of view they represent different types of adverbs: - location relations: *Out of the frying pan into the fire*. ● *De la Tanda la Manda*. ● *Из хомута в ярмо*. – modal relations: *By a long chalk*. ● *Cu suflet viteaz și cu trup leneș*. ● *С затаённым дыханием*. – temporal relations: *At the Greek calends*. ● *De joi în Paști*. ● *Во веки вечные*. – causal relations: *For want of a nail*.

The more obvious the opposition between the general abstract value of the complement and the images brought by the metaphors is, the more expressive the phrase is. The most complex noun structure appears in the coordinated association of two or several phrases: *An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth*; *Child's bird and a knave's wife*. ● *Ochi pentru ochi și dinte pentru dinte*; *Cu cumpăna dreaptă, dar în mâna stângă*; *Peste nouă mări și nouă țări*. ● *Око за око, зуб за зуб*; *Лисий хвост, в волчий рот*.

In such parallel series we can see better the contribution of the terms of the phrase to the expressivity, the weight lying with the determinant. Much more interesting combinations are the associations of phrases based on antonymic relations, especially between determinants:

Good land and evil way; Great cry and little wood. • *Cu cumpăna dreaptă dar în mâna stângă; Carne tânără și pește bătrân.* • *Кость от кости и плоть от плоти; Часом с квасом, а порою с водою.*

The antonymic relations are more obvious from the point of view of expressivity in the asyndetic association of two phrases in the proverbial enunciation, which is frequently encountered in **English proverbs**: *A hungry man, an angry man; Hot soup, nasty vengeance; A little labour, much wealth; Young saint, old devil.* • *Gură multă, ispravă puțină; Cu mâna pe psaltire, cu ochii pe la fetile; Din ochi miere, din gură fiere.* • *Счастье на коне, несчастие под конем; Богатый на деньги, убогий на выдумки.*

The paremiological phrases can be made of the association of two phrases with subordination relation. This type of compound phrases is accomplished in three ways: 1) by adding an attribute to the determinate, 2) by adding an attribute to the determinant and 3) by adding an attribute to both the determinate and the determinant. Thus, in **English proverbs**, the most representative compound phrases are those where a combination of words is added to the regent term (or an attribute is added to the determinant): *Country for the wounded heart; A chip of the old block; The devil on Dun's back.*

This type of phrases is also found in the **Romanian and Russian proverbs**, but in a small number: *Manta de vreme rea; Cătel de două uși; Curaj de curcă beată; Șarpe cu cap de muiere; Ca braga în ziua de Paște; Olăcar de cai schiop.* • *Волк в овечьей шкуре; Колос на глиняных ногах.*

In the **Romanian proverbs** the most representative phrases of this type are those where both the determinate and the determinant are accompanied by an attribute expressed by an adjective, a noun, a numeral or a pronoun: *Chip frumos la un cap prost; Bucurie mare în mâini străine.* ■ *Altă brânză în ceea traistă; Dragoste chioară pe rogojină goală.* ■ *Obicei nou în țară veche; Lucru dracului în casa popii.* ■ *Doi bani în trei pungi; Brânză bună în burduf de câine.*

This type of phrases is encountered quite rarely in the **English and Russian proverbs**: *An iron hand in a velvet glove.* ■ *Белая деньга по чёрный день; Два ерша в одну вершу.*

The cases when an attribute is added to the determinate are few in the paremiology of the three languages: England's **wooden** walls; **Cheshire** chief of men. • *Altă capră la cârlig; A noua spiță la roată.* • *Четыре страны света; Пятое колесо в телеге.* ■ *Вся правда в счёте; Два гриба на ложку.*

2. Verb Phrases / Глагольные словосочетания

As for verb phrases, the present analysis will refer to infinitival constructions from the point of view of figurative value without trying to distinguish them from the idiomatic expressions. We will follow a wide range of infinitival sequences from simple combinations to complex combinations. The most simple verb phrase frequently encountered in proverbs is when the verb in the infinitive is accompanied by a direct object: *To break the ice; To cry quits; To cut a feather; To kiss the cup.* • *A face ochi; A goni vânturile; A cere luna; A deșerta coșul; A avea proptele; A bate câmpii.* • *Гонять собак; Считать ворон; Звёзды считать; Колоть глаза.*

The contrast between the figurative verb and the object used in its own meaning creates a high degree of expressiveness. As with the noun phrases, prepositions offer a high variety of hues, contributing to the precision of the action expressed figuratively. Thus, we have many indirect and adverbial determinations (and prepositional determinations in the

English language): *To go to the dogs*; *To kick against the pick*; *To handle without mittens*; *To leap at a daisy*; *To dance in a net*; *To gaze for a benefice*; *To go to pot*. • *A duce de nas*; *A fi pe drojdii*; *A-i cânta din cobză*; *A face de petrecanie*, *A învăța pășărește*; *A se juca cu focul*. • *Играть глазами*; *Пожурить глазами*; *Заплатить головой*; *Писать на воде*; *По углам говорить*; *Бросать деньги на ветер*.

The structure of the verbal expression is more complex when the object (direct, indirect, adverbial or prepositional in **English language**) is accompanied by an attribute with which it forms a synthetic image: *To eat humble pie*; *To go the whole hog*; *To cry roast meat*; *To dine with Duke Humphrey*; *To speak false Latin*. • *A atinge coarda simțitoare*; *A-i așterne un pod de argint*; *A ajunge de râsul curcilor*; *A asculta la fereastra altuia*; *A oprări cu apă rece*. • *Иметь каменное сердце*; *Вырваться из когтей смерти*; *Отдать последнюю рубаику*; *Обеими руками перекреститься*.

In the paremiology of the three languages, the most representative compound verb phrases are those where the verb in the infinitive is followed by a direct object and an object introduced by a preposition: *To hold a candle to the devil*; *To hit the nail on the head*; *To measure the meat by the man*; *To hold an eel by the tail*. • *A mânca aur cu limbura*; *A pune țara la cale*; *A astupa soarele cu degetul*; *A alege din două una*. • *Брать быка за рога*; *В решете воду носить*; *Возить дрова в лес*; *Огреть змею за пазухой*.

The structural organization of this type of verb phrases becomes more and more complicated by adding an attribute to one of the objects or even to both objects: *To kill two flies with one flap*; *To kill two birds with one stone*. • *A căuta acul în carul cu fân*; *A căuta seartă cu lumânarea aprinsă*; *A da burduful de brânză în sama câinilor*. • *В шумной воде рыбу ловить*; *Пропить всё до последней рубаику*; *Убить двух зайцев одним выстрелом*; *Закрыть дверь перед самым носом*.

The above mentioned examples show the most complex combinations of words as structural organization and expressive effect, in which all the elements contribute synthetically to the figurative value. The combinations with several figurative terms offer greater expressiveness than the concentration of the metaphorical value on just one of them. Therefore, the figurative meaning in such cases is less predictable, but endowed with a greater expressive quantity of information. Apart from the verb phrases determined by various types of objects that build the metaphorical meaning of paremiological expressions, we mention the verb phrases in which the verb in the infinitive is determined by comparisons having the role of an object of manner and comparison. We will first refer to the classical phraseological relation where the comparison is expressed by a single word: *To speak like an oracle*; *To run like a deer*; *To gaze like an oyster*; *To melt like wax*. • *A crește ca din apă*; *A îndruga ca la moară*; *A arde ca șoarecii*; *A cădea ca din pod*. • *Сидеть как на углях*; *Ходить как тень*; *Плавать как топор*; *Идти как на виселицу*; *Чувствовать себя как дома*; *Жить как кукушка*.

Another category of comparisons are those where the metaphorical term (the determinant) is accompanied by either an attribute or an object introduced by a preposition that in most cases are essential because the image of the comparison is focused on them: *To grin like a Cheshire cat*; *To die like a Chrisom child*; *To live like fighting dogs*; *To fret like a gummed taffeta*. • *A căuta ca iarba de leac*; *A cere ca la ușa cortului*; *A fi ca sarea în bucate*; *A trăi ca-n sânul lui Adam*. • *Жить, как кот с мушкой*; *Лнуть как мухи на мёд*; *Бежать как чёрт от ладана*.

Unlike the comparisons correlated with predicatives that have the role of raising adjectives to the superlative degree by an image: *roșu ca racu* = „foarte roșu”, the comparisons that appear as determinations of verbs in the infinitive with the role of adverbials of comparison bring precise indications as to the way the action takes place. The more complex the structure of the object is, the more concrete it is: to hold on *like grim death*; a trăi *ca-n sânul lui Adam*; *как баран на новые ворота*.

In the **Romanian and Russian proverbs** we often encounter comparative expressions introduced by the comparative adverb *ca/kak* that appear as completions of a non-existing nucleus term. When creating a communicative act, this nucleus term may be reconstructed with approximation, under the form of a new verb, or an adjective, depending on the speaker's intentions: *Ca Hristos între cei doi tâlhari*; *Ca braga în ziua de Paști*; *Ca de la cer la pământ*; *Ca două picături de apă*; *Ca frunza pe apă*. • *Как загнанный зверь*; *Как заноза в сердце*; *Как в бездонную бочку*; *Как в стену горох*. *Как грибы после дождя*.

3. Adjective Phrases / Адъективные словосочетания

Another phrase-level category found in proverbs is the category where the regent term is an adjective or a determined participle: (1) either by a noun preceded by the preposition that completes the meaning of the adjective (2) or by a comparison.

The adjective phrases with a determinant expressed by a noun with preposition.

The sequences composed of an adjective or a participle determined by a noun with preposition are more evoking as expressiveness framed in proverbial enunciations, especially by antonymic or synonymic relationships established between the two parts of the paremiological phrase: *Quick at meat, quick at work*; *Far from home, near thy harm*; *Poor by condition, rich by ambition*; *Present to the eye, present to the mind*; *Full of courtesy, full of craft*; *Plenty of lady birds, plenty of hops*. • *Lung în mână, scurt în vână*; *Vinovat de moarte, dar vrednic de milă*; *Lacom la bogăție și sărac la minte*; *Din afară mai frumos/Și-nlăuntru găunos*; *Grabnic la auzire și zăbavnice la grăire*. • *Багровый от знева*; *Верный своему слову*.

Following the model of the adjectives, participles may also be used as regent terms of a phrase. It is true that in this case we do not deal with a predicative near the implicit verb *to be* but with a verb in the passive voice, yet the participle has the value of a qualification adjective. *Sooner begun, sooner done*; *Soon ripe, soon rotten*; *Once bitten, twice shy*; *Lightly gained, quickly lost*; *Narrow gathered, widely spent*. • *Цернут și prin sită și prin ciur*; *Născut cu căiță*; *Tras de păr*. • *Испорчен до мозга костей*.

In the **English proverbs** the antonymic relationship is established either between determinates (*begun...done*), or between determinants (*once...twice*), or between both categories (*lightly...quickly/ gained...lost*). In the case of the double antonymic relationship, the expressive force of the proverb is much more powerful.

Adjective phrases determined by comparisons. In proverbs the most frequent type of adjective phrases is the adjective phrases that express a comparison and appear as groups of independent words that do not fall within a proverbial enunciation.

For the adjectives determined by an object of manner and comparison, we can see that the regent term is concrete in most cases: *Free as the wind*; *As red as a cherry*; *Fresh as a rose*; *As large as life*. • *Iute ca ardeiul*; *Gras ca scripsca*; *Sătul ca de mere acre*; *Mic ca acul/Și rău ca dracul*; *Curat ca un pahar*. • *Черный, как сажа*; *Хрупкий, как стекло*; *Свирепый, как тигр*; *Быстроногий, как лань*.

The concrete comparisons contribute to the creation of very suggestive descriptive images, highlighted by the comparisons with dynamic aspect: *Slippery as an eel*; *Unstable*

as *water*; *Sound as a trout*. • *Roși ca raci*; *Sănătos ca cobza*; *Iute ca săgeata*; *Iute ca fulgerul*; *Isteț ca broasca*. • *Тихий, как мыши*; *Свободный, как ветер*; *быстроногий, как лань*.

We find a larger variation in abstract adjectives. Here the determinant contrasts with the adjective by its concrete character, ensuring a high degree of expressivity: *True as gospel*; *Silent as death*; *Wise as a goose*; *Wise as a woodcock*; *Rich as a lord*. • *Tras ca prin inel*; *Gata ca o cămașă de soacră*; *Amar ca otrava*. • *Хрупкий как стекло*; *Гольй как колено*; *Пьян как стелька*; *Белый, как снег*; *Красивый, как лилия*; *Свободный, как ветер*.

The associations between the adjective and the adverb are isolated cases, being characteristic of the **English language**: *Ever busy, ever bare; Ever drunk, ever dry*.

The present analysis reveals the complexity of phraseological relations in the figurative expressions in **English, Romanian and Russian languages** and highlights the importance of the context in the appreciation of the expressive effects.