



Proverbs as a Means of Crossing Cultural Borders

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Abstract. “The grass is always greener on the other side of the fence/hill” is an old English proverb which shows that people tend to appreciate more what others have, just by crossing (with their eyes) the border represented by the fence/hill. Though the afore-mentioned proverb is a strong piece of advice against comparing what we possess with what others have, the aim of my paper is exactly that: to compare proverbs belonging to the Romanian culture to those of the Korean one, not for the sake of highlighting the wisdom or beauty of the Romanian over the Korean proverbs or vice versa but rather for identifying similarities and differences in terms of structure, vocabulary, and, above all, meaning, being aware that proverbs are elements of language that best reflect a culture’s beliefs and values. To this aim, 50 Romanian proverbs selected from two memorable Romanian sources (Iordache Golescu’s *Proverbe comentate* ‘Commented Proverbs’ and Anton Pann’s *Proverbele românilor* ‘The Romanians’ Proverbs’) will be compared with their Korean counterparts.

Keywords: proverb, internal and external markers, cultural characteristics.

Motto:

To truly know a people, know their proverbs.
(Chinese proverb, Lau, Lau, and Lau 1995: viii)

1. Introduction

For some centuries now, people of different cultures have been able to travel and meet each other for various reasons: to trade, to conquer, to visit, and, more recently, to study and cooperate on various international projects. Nowadays, intercultural encounters seem, more than ever, to be on the crest of the wave. By analysing proverbs, one can get an understanding of the culture that produced them. This understanding is even deeper if proverbs from one foreign culture reflect the same values as those in our own.

In almost every culture, proverbs offer a set of instructions/pieces of advice for people to follow. These words of wisdom seem to stand the test of time; thus, each and every generation learns what a culture considers relevant. The reasons behind the fact that proverbs have such a long life and are remembered and employed so frequently is that they depict issues that people consider important through vivid and simple language. We could say that, to a certain extent, proverbs, just like specific objects or food items, represent a cultural symbol.

My aim is to illustrate the use of proverbs as a source of figurative language on the basis of two totally different languages, namely Korean and Romanian, starting from the conviction that this folklore genre may provide insight into the symbol systems of these cultures and being aware that knowledge of the values of proverbs contributes to a better intercultural communication.

2. Proverbs: definition, characteristics, and importance

Proverbs, as the smallest folklore genre, have received a lot of attention from scholars in various domains of research such as philosophers, anthropologists, ethnographers, teachers, psychologists, and linguists. As such, they have been defined according to various vantage points. There is, however, some general agreement as to what constitutes a proverb. “It is a saying in more or less fixed form, marked by ‘shortness, sense, and salt’ and distinguished by the popular acceptance of the truth tersely expressed in it” (Finnegan 2006: 14). Finnish paremiologist Outi Lauhakangas (2007: 77–78) is of the opinion that:

[p]roverbs are multifunctional and flexible instruments of everyday reasoning, although they may maintain solidified attitudes or **traditional** [author’s emphasis] modes of thought of a certain culture. Proverbs are propositions loaded with hidden feelings, wishes and intentions of the speaker. They can serve as tools to cover individual opinions in public interactive situations. Like in rhetoric, in general, the proverbs we use in our speech (and in our inner speech, too) protect our personal attitudes by referring to the third party. They give us persuasiveness by appealing to an authority.

It is exactly the concept of *traditionality* (which includes aspects of age, frequency of use, and current validity) that is the crux of the matter. Proverbs came into being a long time ago, and the reason why nowadays they are still considered an important living genre is that they embody the wisdom of the cultures that have created them. They are well-tested truths of condensed knowledge that can be used at present, just as they were used hundreds of years ago, to observe and to instruct. Over centuries, they were passed from one generation to the next,

first, orally, by word of mouth, and then in a written form. This process occurred initially at a local level, having reached an international spread at present.

The beauty of these folklore statements resides in their brevity and in the simplicity of rendering human experience. “Their mission to give a direct message that will reach the heart and mind of the reader is often achieved with aplomb and finesse” (Lau, Lau, and Lau 1995: vii). So, *brevity* would also count as a characteristic feature of proverbs. According to Dundes (1975: 970) and Mieder (1985: 119), a proverb must consist of at least two words (a topic and a comment), e.g. *Tingire spoită* ‘Varnished pot’ (referring to a cheap woman with a lot of make-up), “with the average length of a proverb consisting of about seven words” (Mieder 2004: 7).

Short, traditional statements will acquire a proverbial status also due to the use of certain *stylistic* features such as alliteration (the occurrence of the same letter or sound at the beginning of adjacent or closely connected words), as in *Suta mărită sluta* ‘The hundred marries the ugly woman’ (referring to the fact that ugly women with a consistent dowry could marry easily), parallelism (the use of successive verbal constructions, as in *Tir mi-e baba Rada, tir mi-e Rada baba* (IG)¹ (meaning the same deal), or ellipsis (the omission of words that are superfluous or that can be understood from contextual clues), as in *O vorbă ca o mie* ‘One word [is] worth a thousand words’ (IG). These constitute what Arora (1984) (qtd in Mieder 2004: 7) calls the *external markers* of proverbs. Additionally, the effectiveness of these phraseological units is enhanced by *internal markers* such as personification (the representation of an abstract quality in human form), as in *Râde ciob de oală spartă* ‘The pot calls the kettle black’, paradox (a seemingly absurd or contradictory statement or proposition which when investigated may prove to be well-founded or true), as illustrated by the Romanian proverb *Izvoarele curg în sus* ‘Water springs flow upwards’ (IG), or metaphor: *Taler cu două fețe* ‘A two-faced coin’ (IG) (hinting at the habit of treacherous people to change their attitude depending on the situation or the person they are dealing with).

One other aspect worth mentioning in connection with the structure of proverbs relates to certain universal patterns: “‘Better X than Y’, ‘Like X, like Y’, ‘No X without Y’, ‘One X doesn’t make a Y’, ‘If X, then Y’” (Mieder 2004: 6, Schipper 2004: 25–26), as reflected, for instance, by the Korean proverb *yong-ui kkoliboda baem-ui meoliga nasda* ‘Better be the head of a snake than the tail of a dragon’.

As for the importance of proverbs, it is undeniable that they are an essential part of the folklore tradition; they offer us knowledge concerning human experience and provide a rich and meaningful source for the study of cultural values.

In order to shed light on the similarities and differences between the proverbs in Korean and Romanian, comparable data were needed. These will be briefly presented in the next subsection.

1 The two basic sources of Romanian proverbs will be indicated by the abbreviation of their authors’ names: AP = Anton Pann, IG = Iordache Golescu.

3. Romanian and Korean proverb collections

Proverbs, as part of folklore and as a means of expression of the common people, have been the object of old as well as of recent collections. On the Romanian landscape, there are various types of such collections. Some of them are less scholarly (the online collections, for instance) but good enough for the needs of the general public. Others represent scholarly achievements such as Iordache Golescu's *Pilde, povăţuiri şi cuvinte adevărate şi poveşti*, [Proverbs, Maxims and True Words and Stories], containing approximately 22,500 proverbs and sayings written on 854 pages of manuscript.

According to Paschia (1973), Iordache Golescu was the first to collect and comment on Romanian proverbs, although he never employed the term 'proverb', despite the fact that it had already been in use during his time, proof being Anton Pann's *Culegere de proverburile sau povestea vorbii* 'Collection of Proverbs or the Story of the Word', which was published in Bucharest in 1847. While Golescu listed the proverbs in alphabetical order, Pann provided a thematic classification: human flaws and vices, lies, gossip, poverty, marriage, etc. He was not content only to record them but also turned them into verse, and so quite often proverbs were linked into small satirical poems that conclude each thematic chapter.

Being produced in the 19th century, both collections of Romanian proverbs may pose problems for the contemporary readers as the language is quite archaic and many of the phraseological structures are elliptical of predicate (in most of the cases, the verb 'to be' is missing), following the Latin pattern. An example in this respect would be: *Cel însărcinat, [este/va fi] pururea cocoşat* 'The one who carries the load [will be] always hunchbacked', hinting at the social differences that make poor people bow in front of those that overburden them with various tasks. Moreover, the meaning of the proverbs is indirect, multifarious, and allegoric. Thus, the explanations provided by Iordache Golescu are of great help in understanding the message of these words of wisdom, especially by those readers who are not familiar with country life, with its habits and anecdotes, with the peasants' biting hints and their critical spirit.

The Koreans have also collected their proverbs starting with the Three Kingdoms era.² According to Lee (2006: 74), "the term *soktam* 'proverb' was first used during the Joseon Dynasty in certain books such as *Tongmun Yuhae* (1748)". Pratt and Rutt (1999: 362) state that "the best collection, Yi Kimun's *Soktam Sajeon* (1962), containing 7,000 examples is far from complete". One comprehensive collection is the latest *hangug-eo sogdam sajeon*³ 'Dictionary of Korean Proverbs', published in

2 The Three Kingdoms era in Korea extended between 57 BC and 668 AD. The kingdoms were: Baekje, Silla, and Goryeo.

3 For reason of space and simplicity, only the Romanized version of the Korean proverbs, together with their English translations, will be provided. Moreover, as Korean does not make use of

2006 by Cheon Chong-jin. It includes 50,000 proverbs, many of them drawn from a previous work by Song Chae-seon (1983), *uri mal soktam k'eun sajeon* 'Great Dictionary of Proverbs of our Language', but also covering more recent proverbs that were garnered from literary works. As all these publications are in Korean without an English translation, my only solution was to use the proverbs available on the Internet as well as a long list (150 items) of Korean proverbs provided by professor Jeong Oh Park from Hankuk University of Foreign Studies, who also indicated their English equivalents or translations to me.

For both the Korean and the Romanian culture, we need to be aware that some of the old proverbs die out of use as the social, economic, and historical reality changes, while, on the other hand, new proverbs come into being. An illustration in this respect would be the examples below:

- (1) *Cheongcheopchang-i anira kojiseo-da.*
'It's not a wedding invitation but a tax bill.' (Lee 2006: 75)
- (2) *Civilizația e diferența dintre ogor și maidan.*
'Civilization is the difference between the field and the empty/barren place'. (https://ro.wikiquote.org/wiki/Proverbe_rom%C3%A2ne%C8%99ti)

The Korean proverb highlights the fact that nowadays people who get married do not organize the wedding to enjoy the event with their family members and close friends but rather for pecuniary advantages. On the other hand, the Romanian proverb emphasizes the importance of improving one's knowledge (and standard of living) through hard work (the way you toil in the field).

The questions that I sought to answer in comparing the proverbs of the two cultures (Korean and Romanian) were the following:

- (a) What do Korean and Romanian proverbs have in common?
- (b) Where do the proverbs in these two languages differ?
- (c) What particular cultural features and values do they exhibit?

4. Analysis of Romanian and Korean proverbs

I will pursue my investigation with the identification of the similarities the proverbs in the two languages under investigation share.

capital letters, the titles of the Korean books/dictionaries and the first word in the proverbs will be rendered by lower-case letters.

4.1. Similarities

The major similarity between the proverbs in Romanian and Korean relates to the themes tackled by them. This should not come as a surprise considering the fact that people all over the world are very similar in many respects. Thus, both cultures capitalize on human flaws, weaknesses, poverty, and class differences, as illustrated by the examples below.

- | Korean | Romanian |
|---|---|
| (3) a. <i>pom sadon kkum-e pogi-do museopta.</i>
'In spring, I'm afraid to see my in-laws even in my dreams.' | b. <i>Sacul sec nu poate sta în picioare.</i> (IG)
'An empty sack cannot stand upright.' |
| (4) a. <i>yanban-ui saekki-neun goyangi saekki-yo, sangnom-ui saekki-neun dwaengi saekki ra.</i>
'The child of a yangban ⁴ is a kitten, but the child of a commoner is a piglet.' | b. <i>Bogatul se scarpină și săracul socotește că caută să-i dea.</i> (AP)
'The rich man scratches his itching skin, and the pauper thinks he is looking for some change to give it to him.' |
| (5) a. <i>hwalbalhan salam-eun gyeolko geuui ppyam-eul ttaelige.</i>
'A person who bows never gets his cheek slapped.' | b. <i>Capul plecat sabia nu-l taie, dar nici soarele nu-l vede.</i> (IG)
'A lowered head will never be chopped by the sword, but neither will it be seen by the sun.' |

The proverbs in (3) point to a common element of the two countries, namely the great economic hardships caused by the climatic conditions, the scarcity of natural resources (in Korea), and the tyranny of foreign as well as domestic government officials (in both countries). The Korean proverb, apart from referring to poverty, also highlights the material obligations that married men had towards their in-laws, which under those circumstances could turn into nightmares.

The examples in (4) reflect the class differences that existed in both countries, with the affluent, noble people enjoying a better life and considering their offspring superior to those of common people and the latter struggling hard to make ends meet. There is, nevertheless, a slight difference in that the Koreans were (and still are) aware of the rigid social classes and accept this power difference stemming from Confucianism as their fate, whereas the Romanian people have always struggled against these social inequalities. In strong connection with the social hierarchy, we have the proverbs in (5) that reflect the submissiveness of the pauper to the affluent members of the higher classes. Nevertheless, the weak,

4 Yangban refers to the ruling class/aristocrats of Korea during the Joseon Dynasty.

poor, and famished people would not adopt a submissive attitude in extreme situations, as illustrated by the Romanian proverb:

- (6) *Pîntecele gol n-are urechi de ascultat.* (IG)
 ‘The empty belly hasn’t got ears to listen’, which can be interpreted as the hungry man’s insensitivity to orders.

Sometimes the same rule of conduct, advice, or message can be conveyed by a number of proverbial forms in both languages, this being due to the fact that the fundamental needs, the basic drives, or the experiences are elements shared by the human species. Moreover, proverbs linked by the same theme are meant to highlight a certain attitude or aspect. Consider the examples below:

- | Korean | Romanian |
|---|--|
| (7) a. <i>gajaeneun ge pyeon-ida.</i>
‘The lobster is crabby’.
(E) ‘The crawfish takes sides with the crab.’ | c. <i>Corb la corb nu scoate ochii.</i> (IG)
‘Ravens will not poke each other’s eyes out.’ |
| b. <i>pal-eun an-eulo gubneunda.</i>
‘The arm bends inwards.’ | d. <i>O mână spală pe alta și amândouă obrazul.</i> (AP)
‘One hand washes the other and both wash the face.’ |
| (8) a. <i>doldalido dudeulgyeo bogo geonneonda.</i>
‘I knock the stone and cross.’
Even if the bridge is of stone, cross knocking it. | e. <i>Câinele pe câine nu mușcă.</i> (IG)
‘The dog won’t bite another dog.’ |
| b. <i>aneun gildo mul-eogala.</i>
‘Ask first, then go, even if it’s a road you know.’
Better to ask your way than go astray. | c. <i>Pe cine l-a mușcat câinele se teme și de lătrătură.</i> (IG)
‘One who has been bitten by a dog is afraid even of barking.’ |
| | d. <i>Cine e mușcat de șarpe se păzește și de șopârlă.</i> (IG)
‘One who has been bitten by a snake beware of the lizard.’ |
| | e. <i>S-a ars barba la curcut,⁵ suflă și-n iaurt.</i> (IG)
‘The old woman who got burnt with pap will try to cool even yoghurt.’ |

The proverbs under (7) describe how those who are similar in appearance, character, or background tend to stick together, to protect and help each other

5 Curcut (word of Turkish origin meaning *pap* or *mush*).

(the English proverb corresponding to both the Korean and the Romanian ones is ‘Scratch my back and I’ll scratch yours’). They also remind us that it is in human nature to take care of the ones that we are closest to. Moreover, the Koreans also employ this phraseological expression as a blunt jab at the nepotism of people in powerful positions. The proverbs under (8) highlight the idea that in order to avoid unpleasant surprises, it is advisable to proceed with caution in everything one does. The first Korean example in this category (8a) describes a period in the history of the country when bridges were built out of any material at hand, which made them somewhat dangerous. More recently, when they started being made of stone, people preserved their old habit of knocking on bridges in order to feel safe when running across them. The Romanian proverbs (8c, d, e) depict a slightly different picture: caution is suggested after having already experienced misfortune (being bitten by either a dog or a snake or getting burnt with some hot dish).

Let us now have a look at the differences between these phraseological units of Korean and Romanian.

4.2. Differences

One of the striking differences between the proverbs in the two languages the analysis is focused on relates to their structure. While in very many cases the Romanian proverbs rhyme (I exclude from this category the ones given a rhyming form by both Golescu and Pann), very few of the Korean phraseological units illustrate this characteristic (see Example 3a above). A possible explanation for this situation could be the nature of the Korean language itself, which makes use of particles that indicate the subject/object status of a noun in the sentence and employs various endings for verbs. Moreover, these particles differ depending on the last sound of the root, so rhyme would seldom emerge in Korean proverbs (or at least in those that I had access to).

- (9) a. *Piatra ce se rostogolește nimic nu dobândește* (IG). ‘A rolling stone gathers no moss’ (the meaning of this proverb is that if you wander around, you are not able to acquire anything).
- b. *Cu o stropitură de ploaie pământul nu se înmoaie* (IG) ‘A drop of rain will not dampen the ground’ (this proverb highlights the fact that when there is great need of something, a little of it or nothing would not help).

A second difference concerns the lexical items employed in those proverbs that refer to the same themes. This could be attributed to the impact of culture in shaping the language of each group of people.

- | Korean | | Romanian | |
|---------------|--|-----------------|---|
| (10) a. | <i>nam-ui tteog-i deo keo boinda.</i>
'The other's rice cake looks bigger.'
(E.) The grass is always greener on the other side of the fence. | b. | <i>Puica de la vecin ni se pare gîscă mare.</i>
'The neighbour's chicken seems to be a big goose .' |
| (11) a. | <i>yong-ui kkoliboda baem-ui meoliga nasda.</i>
'The serpent's head is better than the dragon 's tail'.
(E.) Better be the head of a snake than the tail of a dragon. | b. | <i>Decît o săptămîna vrabie, mai bine o zi șoim.</i>
'Rather than [being] a sparrow for a week, better a falcon for a day'. |
| | | c. | <i>Decît codaș la oraș, mai bine-n satul meu fruntaș.</i>
'Rather than [being] the last in a town, it's better to be the first in my village'. |
| (12) a. | <i>mikkulaji han maliga on ungdeong-ileul heulinda.</i>
'A loach is clouding the whole puddle.'
One mudfish muddles the whole pond. | b. | <i>Oaia râioasă umple turma toată.</i>
'One sheep with scabies will contaminate the whole flock.' |
| (13) a. | <i>horangido jae mal hamyeon onda.</i>
'Even the tiger will come if you talk about him.' | | |

The proverbs in (10) emphasize people's tendency to consider someone else's property better than their own, but while in the Korean example (10a) we encounter a word that describes a specific Korean food item (i.e. the rice cake), the Romanian counterpart (10b) makes use of names of birds (chicken, goose). The proverbs in the second set (11) refer to the idea that it is better to be the leader of a small group than the follower of a bigger one. To express it, Koreans make use of the name of a four-legged, winged serpentine creature, which features in the myths of many East and South Asian countries (i.e. the dragon). The Romanian phraseological units, on the other hand, contain names of native birds (sparrow and falcon) or words denominating territorial divisions. The idea of contamination (in the proverbs in group 12) is expressed in Korean by means of a type of fish (the loach), which is native of South Asia; as Romania was (and still is) famous for its large flocks of sheep and as one of the most frequent contaminating diseases among sheep is scabies, it is but normal to find this animal and its most characteristic disease in a proverb. Finally, the meaning of the Korean example under (13) is that if you talk behind someone's back, they

will eventually find out and trouble will come looking for you. Tigers are rare living monsters on the Asian continent and, as such, are feared by men. Thus, even a rare beast will appear once someone talks badly about it and that someone will have to deal with the consequences.

On the other hand, in each language, there are phraseological units that contain specific cultural elements. The themes they approached are not related this time.

- | Korean | Romanian |
|--|---|
| (14) a. gongja <i>ap-eseo munja sseunda</i> .
‘Write hanja in front of Confucius.’
E. <i>Don’t try to teach a fish how to swim.</i> | b. <i>Sub poale de iie nouă, nici mă ninge nici mă plouă.</i> (IG)
‘Under the bottom part of a woman’s blouse, I am saved both from the snow and from the rain.’ |
| (15) a. gimchisugbuteo masiji malla .
‘Don’t drink the kimchi soup first.’
E. <i>Don’t count your chickens before they’re hatched.</i> | b. <i>Îi plăcea maichii hora și luă bărbat cimpoiăși.</i> (AP)
‘My mother liked dancing the <i>hora</i> and she married a bagpipe player.’ |

The Korean example under (14a) alludes to Confucius, who was a model to many Asian people to such an extent that even nowadays they strictly follow his teachings. Moreover, it contains the word *hanja*, which is the Korean name for the Chinese characters that were borrowed and incorporated in the Korean language. So, the meaning of the proverb is that you should not try to teach someone what he/she has already taught you or that you should not try to outbest somebody who is already famous; in other words, the proverb lays stress on modest behaviour or attitude. The other Korean example (15a) makes use of the traditional *kimchi/gimchi*, the pickled cabbage, which is used to make some soup that is eaten after the main course to improve digestion. The Romanian proverbs also reflect certain cultural elements such as the traditional women’s shirts, *iia*, which is richly hand-embroidered, indicating the women’s mastery in using the needle. The example under (14b) is a satirical proverb alluding to those men who use women as a shield to protect themselves. The other proverb makes reference to a typical Romanian dance (*hora*) and a musical instrument frequently employed in the countryside (*cimpoi* ‘Romanian or Moldovan bagpipe’, which is slightly different from the Scottish one). The meaning of this phraseological unit, as Golescu reveals, is that in certain circumstances we may get the help which is to our liking.

A fourth difference I noticed in comparing the proverbs in Korean and Romanian is the fact that the latter presents several such constructions that contain the name of a person or of a place in them. In the Korean phraseological units under scrutiny, not a single example of this kind has been encountered.

- (16) *Liță cu frate-su Ghiță.* (IG)
'**Liță** and his brother, **Ghiță**.'
- (17) *Ride Tanda de Manda.* (IG)
'**Tanda** laughs at **Manda**'
E. *The pot calls the kettle black.*
- (18) *Orbul a găsit Brăila.* (IG)
'The blind man has found **Brăila**.'
- (19) *O viță în Gherghița și alta în Ialomîța.* (IG)
'One vineyard in **Gherghița** and another one in **Ialomîța**'

Finally, what makes the Korean proverbs different from the Romanian ones is the blunt expression of vulgarity. According to Lee (2006: 75), "vulgarity and commonness are essential elements in proverbs, as they were conceived in the consciousness of commoners in traditional Korea". Among the words that emerge quite frequently in the Korean proverbs, there are *dung*, *poop*, and *fart*, as illustrated below:

- (20) *ttong-eun museowoseo pihaneun geos-i anila deoleowoseo pihanda.*
'We avoid manure (**shit**) because it's dirty, not because we are scared of it.'
- (21) *bang-gwi kkwin nom-i seongnaenda.*
'The **fart** is annoying.' 'The one who farted gets annoyed.'
- (22) *bang-gwi-ga jaj-eumyeon ttong ssagi swibda.*
'If **farts** are frequent, it is easy to **poop**.' (Coming events cast their shadows before).

In the Romanian collections of proverbs that I employed for the analysis, I encountered only one example in which the word 'fart' is present:

- (23) *Capra beșe și oaia trage rușinea* (IG).
'The goat **farts** and the blame falls on the sheep/the sheep is shamed.'

This proverb reflects the inequality between classes that characterized the Romanian society for quite a long time, when the members of the upper-class committed various kinds of crimes, which were attributed to the poor people, who received punishment for them.

5. Conclusions

In contrast to the belief that cultures vary greatly, in this small-scale study, I have found fascinating resemblances in the proverbs originating from Romania and Korea. The similarities identified between the proverbs in these two cultures relate to the themes they tackle, such as poverty, class differences, submissiveness, fears, but also the healthy attitude towards life even in cases of despair. These can be attributed to the fact that people all over the world share not only the shape of their bodies but also basic needs, such as safety, food, and shelter, and experiences as human beings. At the same time, the investigated proverbs also reflect cultural uniqueness: they tap into specific local contexts, and, as such, are more difficult to comprehend by outsiders without any additional information. Many of the proverbs subjected to analysis contain lexical items that describe referents typical of the two cultures, which in many cases are untranslatable. This is the case of *yangban* and *kimchi* for Korean and *iie* and *hora* for Romanian. Other items specific to the Korean culture are the *dragon* or the *rice cake*, while for Romanian we can mention names of ordinary birds or animals such as the *sparrow*, the *falcon*, or the *sheep*.

The Romanian proverbs, unlike the Korean ones, make use of proper nouns (names of persons or places) very frequently, which gives the constructions a sarcastic tone. On the other hand, vulgarity is more present in the Korean proverbs than in the Romanian ones. Other differences relate to the structure of the proverbs in these two languages: while in Romanian we come across rhyming phrases very often, this is seldom the case with the Korean proverbs.

I will end my paper with a short quotation from Schipper (2004: 13), who says that “[p]roverbial observations about the most preoccupying elements of life we share form an excellent starting point for a better mutual understanding without suspicion, hostility or polarization. Correctly exploring our cultural legacies together (...) is an excellent way of building bridges between cultures” or of crossing cultural borders.

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