

LATIP 2021**International Conference on Language and Technology in the Interdisciplinary Paradigm****PROVERBS ABOUT FRIENDS AND ENEMIES: IMPLICATIONS
AS THE REFLECTION OF COGNITION**

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Abstract

The article covers a comparative and cognitive review of English proverbs about friends and enemies including their etymological aspects and the historical viewpoint. The aim was to determine the way a proverb fulfils its function as a country-specific element within historical and cultural context and reflects kinds and stages of cognition. The cognitive analysis of friend- and enemy-related paroemias' implications as well as the association test based on friend and enemy stimulus words were carried out. Based on the research findings, a proverb is seen as a condensed wise saying having potential to actualize a fragment of worldview in a semantically accurate non-ambiguous way in the given context, but having a wider range of implications and interpretations at its core. The association test with friend and enemy stimulus words demonstrates a more limited list of reactions predominantly based on personal experience and basic associations, thus resulting in positive reactions to a friend stimulus word and negative ones to an enemy counterpart. It can be concluded that the proverbs' etymological aspect turns out to be an essential ground to understand the roots and dynamics of cognitive processes and the worldview as its fundamental component of a particular nation or society. A comparative analysis of proverbs with the given key notions in different languages helps to find evidence of the universal core elements of cognition as well as country-related variations. A cognitive review of friend- and enemy-related proverbs results in a wide scope of implications tending to embody relatively polar interpretations.

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Keywords: Association, cognition, culture, implication, proverb, paroemia



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1. Introduction

Proverbs are the source of culture-specific information about a particular nation and its identity (Skandera, 2008); they also reflect a certain way of life and historical aspects at a definite time period. The linguistic code of the nation, its cognitive models of thinking, decision-making, evaluation and judgement are kept within the language system. The system of language and its vocabulary reveal a way of thinking, manners and customs of a certain nation and society. In other words, language is the basic and inevitable keeper of nation-related information. A proverb is not only an indispensable part of the vocabulary of a certain language, but also an essential research matter in terms of cognitive linguistics.

In this context, proverbs and sayings serve as a valuable subject matter to provide not only a typological analysis, but also some review of cognitive models underlying the proverbs under analysis. Making typological comparisons enables linguists to identify linguistic and etymological background of paroemias, their specific and universal features thus characterizing the linguistic world-image related to a particular nation (Ivanov & Petrushevskaia, 2015). While analyzing a linguistic world-image, the three basic components are taken into consideration: the real world, the world of thinking (the mentality) and the linguistic world-view. It should be mentioned that it is the linguistic world-view that initially and primarily guides native speakers (Siyanova-Chanturia & Martinez, 2015).

Paroemias are generally considered to be the subject of ethnolinguistics and folklore studies, but the cognitive approach to linguistic research highlights other important questions concerning proverbs and the way people use and interpret them. Although a considerable number of proverbs have originated from folklore and daily routine of common people, their interaction with the real world, some of them have ambiguous roots. The etymology of proverbs can be found in various types of dictionaries, but there are still some paroemias that are only supposed to have a certain background and there are different theories referring to the reasons that caused their coming into being. Their relevant meanings are preserved and interpreted appropriately. Paroemias with similar key words, notions and meanings are found in different languages as they express the fundamental concepts. As paroemias possess a great deal of metaphoric meaning (Boers, 2000), they can be applied to various contexts. The use and interpretation of paroemias reflect different kinds and stages of cognition of humanity. Thus, paroemia is an essential unit of analysis in cognitive and linguistic studies. It should be thoroughly considered in terms of etymological and semantic peculiarities and its cognitive function (Szczepaniak & Lew, 2011).

2. Problem Statement

A cognitive approach to the analysis of proverbs with identical key notions in different languages helps to find evidence of the universal core elements of cognition as well as country-related variations. The active metaphoric core of proverbs provides their semantic diffusion in terms of application and interpretation in different types of texts and discourse. Paroemias have been widely used to develop collective cognitive and cultural representations within a group, a society or a nation (Charteris-Black, 1995; Gibbs, 2001). These highly stable statements are an indispensable part of the language system. However, there is a difference between knowing about paroemias and their functions, even knowing the particular ones, and the deliberate use of a paroemia within a given context. Though a proverb states a

maxim, resulting in its applicability and distribution, the contextual use of it requires a thorough consideration of its implication (Davidson, 2015). The evoked stylistic effect is also subject to preliminary cogitation. ‘Friend’ and ‘enemy’-related paroemias (98 Proverbs about Enemies, 2021; Folarin, 2020) have been analysed to specify the implications of the above-mentioned key notions. These key elements have been chosen as they conceptualize the most general notions and moral standards found in any society and country of all time. They are generally seen as contrary ones naming and characterizing opponent concepts. Thus, an important task is to find out if there are solely opposite sets of features referring to these contrary notions within paroemias. Another level of comparison of ‘friend’ and ‘enemy’-related features is provided by the analysis of reactions by respondents to these stimulus words. Thus, the cognitive value of ‘friend’ and ‘enemy’-related paroemias is investigated in further detail.

3. Research Questions

- Is the study of paroemia important to narrow the gaps of our understanding of different processes of cognition and its stages in the course of development of the humanity?
- Is the etymological aspect of paroemias essential to understand the roots and dynamics of cognitive processes and the worldview as its fundamental component of country-related society?
- What are the types of associations of ‘friend’ and ‘enemy’ stimulus words? Do they coincide with the implications triggered by proverbs with ‘friend’ and ‘enemies’ key elements?

4. Purpose of the Study

The aim of the study was determining the significance of the etymological ground of paroemias to advance understanding of the cognitive aspects of use and interpretation of proverbs as well as of the reception and keeping of ethnolinguistic information. The use of paroemias in literary works of different epochs witnesses not only the attitude to these language items, but also demonstrates the genesis and change of their peculiarities. Another task was to find out if there is any significant difference between the first reactions to ‘friend’ and ‘enemy’ stimulus words by respondents and a range of implications in friend- and enemy-related paroemias.

5. Research Methods

The semantic analysis of paroemias was selected as the basic research method. The principles of cognitive semantics actualize the problematic issues under analysis. A cognitive approach to the study of the subject matter determines the potential of paroemia as an essential unit of analysis in the context of human cognition.

The study subject was proverbs with “friend’ and “enemy” key elements in English. We identified the implications in friend- and enemy-related paroemias and sayings. The analysis of 200 paroemias enabled us to reveal implications from a double-sided perspective highlighting polar features. We summarized the characteristic features and values implied by the analysed paroemias resulting in eliciting

positive and controversial implications for friend-related proverbs and sayings and negative and controversial ones for paroemias about enemies.

- The analysis of implications of friend and enemy-related English proverbs was used to find the undertones of wise sayings eliciting indirect messages apart from evident statements.
- The associative test was used to find out the first reactions to ‘friend’ and ‘enemy’ stimulus words by respondents.

6. Findings

The first recollections of the most well-known proverb with a ‘friend’ key element *A friend in need is a friend indeed* can be traced back to the literary work ‘Hecuba’ by Euripides, an Ancient Greek dramatist, who also declares that true friendship becomes evident in trouble’s hour (Euripides, 424 B.C.E.). ‘The Durham Proverbs’ dated from 1035 is another historical manuscript containing 46 Anglo-Saxon proverbs. Scientists draw analogies between them and Book of Proverbs (Solomon quotes) full of sacred meaning and folk wisdom (Grossi, 2017; Keefer, 2016). There are proverbs concerning friendship there as well: friendship between people with no blood ties is often compared with instability of relations between relatives. People think of brotherhood as something eternal and not necessarily triggered by blood ties (Gilkerson, 2014). As we can see, the idea is quite relevant to the above-mentioned common proverb given as the example eliciting loyalty and attachment to a friend. The analysis showed that in medieval times proverbs were also appreciated and quite often used in literary works. Prominent writers and outstanding personalities of different times also reflected on friends and enemies and verbalized their ideas in their quotes. The understanding of friendship even by people belonging to different epochs and nations is characterized by the unity of reflections resulting in some universal core ideas.

While the metaphoric basis of paroemias provided their applicability and adaptability in different contexts and types of discourse, a range of values and characteristic features embodied in paroemias with ‘friends’ and ‘enemies’ key elements was revealed. It should be mentioned the absolutes and key ideas found in the analysed paroemias are not solely contrary having positive and negative meanings and connotations and thus evoking relevant emotions. On the contrary, all of them stimulate a deeper reflection on the proposed wisdoms and implications. Such polar notions as ‘friends’ and ‘enemies’ do not necessarily imply diametrically opposite characteristic features and connotations depending on the cognitive capacity and critical thinking skills of the interpreter (Table 1). While assessing ‘friends’ and ‘enemies’ as stimulus words (Figure 1), personal experience guides the person in polar ways: negative experience might bring to life negative connotations and associations while positive or unusual experience might evoke positive emotions and connotations. At the same time, the analysis of paroemias with ‘friend’ and ‘enemy’ key elements demonstrates a wider range of associations and their characteristic features. The mentioned key elements have more implications. A set of characteristic features of an enemy in paroemias is presented to a greater extent indicating some positive meanings as well, the basic ones being wisdom and smartness of an enemy as well as one’s self-development and self-worth. The main message of the proverbs pointing out different features of enemies is the sender-oriented self-reflection and the mode of interaction with the world and other people with a different approach to something. Thus, self-development of a message recipient turns out to be the positive implication of

enemy-related proverbs. The proverbs under analysis highlight the importance of enhancing one’s strong points and acquiring new skills so that one can overcome difficulties in interaction with opponents and even outdo them. In other words, the enemies’ strengths revealed in paroemias serve as benchmarks for self-improvement.

Table 1. Implications of Friend-Related (FP) Proverbs and Enemy-Related (EP) Proverbs

FP: Controversial or Negative	FP: Positive	EP: Negative	EP: Controversial
Instability	Loyalty	Contempt	Smartness (of an enemy)
Devotion as weakness	Altruism	Inevitability	Spiritual growth
Great mutual efforts	Unconditional love	Danger	Wisdom
Opaqueness/blindness	Sincerity	Harm	Self-development
Patience	Understanding	Pain	Cooperation skills
Rareness	Strong bonds	Disgrace	Self-control
Vulnerability	Generosity	Manipulation	Self-worth
Duplicity	Uniqueness	Deception	Patience
Underestimation	Support	Hostility	Motivation
Bad influence	Sharing	Hatred	Experience
	Forgiving	Conflict	Strategizing
	Trust	Downfall	The Reflection of one’s success

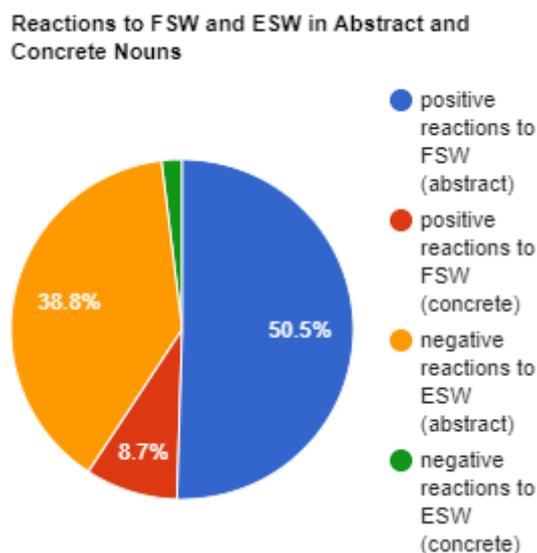


Figure 1. Reactions to ‘Friend’ Stimulus Word (FSW) and ‘Enemy’ Stimulus Word (ESW)

7. Conclusion

It is interesting to know that while using enemy- and friend-related proverbs commenting on something or responding to someone’s argument, the speaker takes into account the implication of the paroemia to a full extent. A deep consideration of the paroemia used in the particular context takes place. However, when reacting to ‘friend’ and ‘enemy’ stimulus words, the respondent’s associations are

primarily based on the personal experience, both positive and negative, the emotional involvement of the personality and a set of common and individual values and moral standards.

Country-specific vocabulary including proverbs reflect national identity and culture-bound items (Kotova et al., 2021). Nevertheless, paroemias reveal the core universal models of cognition as they contain the basic concepts. The research provided the analysis of friend and enemy-related proverbs and their implications. The study found not only positive implications for friend-related proverbs and negative ones for enemy-related counter elements, but also controversial implied sense of both types of paroemias. The found implications were presented in the list of the most basic implied meanings.

The next stage of the research process dealt with the respondents' reactions to 'friend' and 'enemy' as stimulus words. The results of the association test confirmed the dependence of respondents' associations on the personal experience, as well as the most stereotypic expectations. The difference of implications of friend and enemy-related proverbs and reactions by respondents to 'friend' and 'enemy' stimulus words is substantial. Thus, the analysed proverbs demonstrated a wide range of implications indicating numerous ways for self-development as the main message. The implications of the proverbs under analysis also revealed controversial implied sense of the opposite concepts due to their nature. In contrast to findings about the proverbs' implications, the majority of associations by respondents with stimulus words were positive for 'friend' and negative – for 'enemy' demonstrating solely polar results.

The stylistic effect of the proverb used in speech or written text depends on many factors. The basic ones are as follows: the metaphoric potential of the given language, the particular user of the proverb, the recipient, cognitive skills of both communication parties and the context of interaction.

The study also helped to find traces of language-related peculiarities of the analysed proverbs, as well as universal core models of cognition within the given context.

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