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**ABSTRACT
DOCTORAL THESIS**

***ROMANIAN AND TURKISH
PAREMIOLOGICAL STRUCTURES:
A CONTRASTIVE-TYPOLOGICAL ANALYSIS***

**Doctoral Advisor:
Professor Petre Gheorghe BÂRLEA, PhD**

**PhD Candidate:
Emel M. ISMAIL**

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Proverbs, Romanian language, Turkish language, paremiological structures, contrastive-typological analysis.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Motivation

The work we propose has a *linguistic character*, although both the study materials and the means of investigation necessitate extensive forays into various other fields of knowledge, such as anthropology, sociology, psychology, then literature, especially its early manifestations, namely literary folklore, with indispensable elements of social history, religion and the theory of mentalities¹. Moreover, the processing of the immense corpus of examples on which we have

¹ The entire theory of the German neogrammarians of the late 19th century – G. Brugmann, G.I. Ascoli, H. Paul, and others – is based, as we know, on this inextricable relationship between real life and the language of a community. Building on the achievements of historical comparativism established by the previous generation, their professors Fr. Bopp, Fr. Diez, A. Schleicher and others, they introduced the principle of “*Wörter und Sachen*” – “Words and Things,” through which they explain the “life of words” by human living, thinking and feeling, even though the truth of the “arbitrariness of the linguistic sign” is maintained.

based on our observations confirms the assertions of experienced linguists regarding the impossibility of conducting “purely linguistic” analyses².

Specifically, the study we propose here focuses on *applied linguistics*, more precisely, applied to the *contrastive-typological domain*, as, in the appropriate metalanguage, it will involve *comparative*, *sociolinguistic* and *pragmalinguistic* analyses of a corpus of proverbs from the Romanian and Turkish languages.

The *goals* of our research aim to *reveal the relationship between the “internal genius of languages”*, as defined by Wilhelm von Humboldt, and the *“universals of language”*, analysed from the perspective of *paremiological phraseologies*, which means an emphasis on lexico-semantic structures, but with numerous phonetic, morphosyntactic and stylistic-pragmatic implications³.

The *premise* from which we start is that paremiological structures, through their elaborate formulas, as speech acts that have accumulated millennia of experiences, account for the balance between the particular and the general, between the individual and the universal, in the “cutting” of reality better than other forms of language manifestations.

1.2. Working material

Our corpus of texts was compiled after several series of successive selections, given the immense material provided by anthologies, collections and specialised dictionaries. In the first phase, we reviewed approximately 4,500 Romanian proverbs and about the same number of Turkish proverbs, not to mention that many proverbs are repeated, with slight variations in form, in the 10 basic sources we consulted. This general evaluation was necessary to establish a segment as consistent and as unitary as possible, to ensure a real basis for comparative analysis, that is, a grouping of structures with a well-defined conceptual theme.

1.3. Working methods

Given the dual source of paremiological structures, as well as the premises and goals of our research, we primarily employed the *contrastive-typological method* of language fact research.

² Cf. P. Gh. Bârlea, 2022, *Mirajul cuvintelor. Studii de lingvistică*, Bucureşti: Editura Universitară, p. 27 *et passim*.

³ For the idea of the “individuality” of language, we used the Romanian translation of W. von Humboldt’s treatise, *On Language: The diversity of human language-structure and its influence on the mental development of mankind*. Romanian version, introduction, note on the translation, chronological table, bibliography and indices by Eugen Munteanu, Bucharest, Editura Humanitas, 2008. For the concept of “linguistic universals”, we primarily relied on Eugenio Coşeriu’s study, “Universaliile limbajului (şi celelalte)” revisited in *Dacoromania*, Cluj-Napoca, no. VII-VIII, 2002-2003, pp. 15-45, from E. Coşeriu, *Gramática, semántica, universales. Estudios de lingüística funcional*, Madrid: Gredos, 1987, pp. 148-205.

The complexity of paremiological linguistic structures, manifested in inverse proportion to the brevity of the enunciative formulas, necessitates the use of principles, methods and working tools from several fields of language sciences. We primarily used the *procedures of synchronic, descriptive grammatical analysis* for each of the two proverbs – Romanian and Turkish – that we will subject to general examination. Additionally, we utilised the tools offered by *historical grammar* and *dialectology*, as many proverbs bear the imprint of the old language from the two cultural spaces, in forms specific to various stages of its evolution, often with regional forms.

2. STRUCTURE AND CONTENTS OF THE WORK

The compositional organisation of our work was primarily determined by the specific nature of proverbs – considered as speech acts.

2.1. However, we preceded the strictly linguistic and pragmatic-stylistic study with a chapter dedicated to the history of the Turkish and Tatar-speaking community in Dobruja, as we also considered some examples of proverbs with a somewhat ethno-linguistic and predominantly local mental character. Thus, we provided a ***brief history of the Turkish-Tatar community in Dobruja***, discussing the ethnolinguistic diversity of the area, the old and current forms of culture here, as well as the relationship between the standard literary language and dialectal variants in the linguistic structure of proverbs.

2.2. The central chapter, which also occupies the most substantial part of the work, is dedicated, of course, to ***the contrastive-typological grammar of Romanian and Turkish proverbs***. We considered it a paradox of contrastivity that the analysis of proverbs performed in two languages with different grammatical systems demonstrates that both the imagery based on very different *realia* elements and the capabilities of each language to encapsulate the universals of thought in words have many common points. Beyond the symbolism of the “bacon in the attic” and the “coffee that strengthens friendships,” incompatible with the socio-historical context of Turkish and Romanian communities, the mode of thinking and feeling manifests incredibly uniformly.

2.2.1. Morphology of proverbs

The verbal subsystem represents a clear case of linguistic divergence between the two languages, both in structure and in the syntactic functionality of expressing the predicative nuclei of proverbial utterances. Compared to the Romanian inflectional structure (root, thematic vowel/consonant, endings), the Turkish agglutinative structure refers to nuances. The frequent

use of the grammatical category of tense is noteworthy, for example. While Romanian uses the so-called present tense, through the valorisation of the “eternal present” (marked only discursively, not morphologically), Turkish uses the aorist tense, which also expresses an aspectual nuance of “extended time” (called *geniş zaman* in Turkish grammars). Turkish language teachers point out that this is usually illustrated with examples taken from paremiology, precisely because it conveys the universality and duration of expressed actions:

Rom. *Cine culege trandafirul atinge și spinii.* (i.e., ‘He who picks the rose touches the thorns as well’)

Tk. *Dikensiz gül olmaz.* (‘Every rose has its thorn’)

Such observations were also imposed on other lexico-grammatical classes, such as the absence of gender and number opposition in Turkish adjectives, the general preference for nominal structures in Turkish, the different use of adverbs or prepositions etc.

2.2.2. Syntax of proverbs

2.2.2.1. Simple syntactic structures

Given the above, it is clear that, no matter how simple and concentrated a paremiological structure may be, its paradigm cannot fall below the level of a *classical logical statement*, as defined in Aristotelian formal logic:

Subject + Predicate + Determinations of the Predicate Verb + Determinations of the Subject Noun

This means that in both languages, the sentence is the most frequent unit of syntactic organisation and, in both languages, it functions according to the same logical-semantic patterns of simple statements:

Implicative structures (“A is B”)

Inclusive structures (“A has B”)

Propositional actantial structures (“A does B”)

Structures with adverbials (“A is in situation B”)

From the hundreds of possible examples, we shall provide a revealing one for the first pattern:

Rom. *Sănătatea este cea mai mare avere a omului.* (‘Good health is above wealth’)

Tk. *Akıl kisiye sermayedir.* (‘Mind is man’s health’)

2.2.2.2. Complex syntactic structures

As regards syntactic coordination in paremiological sentences, our study highlighted the common preference of both languages for the four types of relationships: copulative, disjunctive, adversative and, somewhat less, conclusive.

As for syntactic subordination in paremiological sentences, only a few types are privileged. The subject clause predominates, followed, in the order of logical-syntactic occurrences, by causality in paremiological formulas, conditionality and finality. Other types of subordination appear less frequently in paremiological formulas.

The most striking particularity of logical-syntactic relational mechanisms, both at the level of coordination and subordination, is parataxis, preferred in proverbs from any language in the world, due to the law of brevity of paremiological structures, but accentuated in Turkish by its typological nature:

Rom. *Măsoară de două ori și taie o dată!* ('Measure twice **and** cut once')

Tk. *İki ölç, bir biç!* ("Measure twice, cut once!")

Rom. *Muierea în pat, bărbatul sub pat.* ('The woman in bed, the man under the bed')

2.2.3. Pragmatic-discursive organisation of paremiological utterances

In a separate chapter, the third in the composition of the work, we analysed the pragmatic-discursive typology of proverbs from the same contrastive-typological perspective. In both languages, the utterances discussed here are organised, in relatively comparable proportions, into:

Assertive proverbs;

Interrogative proverbs;

Imperative proverbs;

Exclamatory proverbs.

The differences lie in placement and syntactic particularities, in the sense that Turkish utilises interrogative particles, for example, and a certain order of words and clauses in the sentence, apart from the usual interrogative pronouns and adverbs specific to the inventory of each language.

2.2.4. Pragmatic and stylistic values of proverbs in Romanian and Turkish

The fourth chapter of our work was dedicated to the expressiveness of paremiological structures in the treasury of folk wisdom of the two languages.

2.2.4.1. The stable formulaic aspect of proverbs

Firstly, we analysed, as infrastructural elements, the particularities of the "formulaic" aspect of proverbs, i.e., the general traits that confer unmistakable specificity to this type of locutionary expressions in any natural language:

- *Conciseness* and structural brevity procedures;
- *Accessibility*, i.e., the quality of being understood, regardless of the depth of thoughts transmitted over centuries;
- Particularities that ensure the *formulaic*, repetitive, easy-to-memorise *character*, namely *ellipsis*; *parataxis*; *logical-semantic and formal symmetry* (i.e., morphological, syntactic, topical); archaicity and popular and anonymous character etc.

Here, perhaps more than anywhere else, we are dealing with the universals of language and thought, those that generate the stability and relative stereotypy of paremiological structures.

2.2.4.2. *The style of paremiological structures*

In this part of our research, we started from the premise that, although not all proverbs have metaphorical value, all have a specific expressive aspect. Practically, not even a single proverb is at the “zero degree” of discursiveness, even if it expresses an apparently simple commonsensical assertion:

Rom. *Cine caută prieteni fără cusur rămâne fără prieteni*. (‘He who seeks a faultless friend remains friendless’)

Tk. *Kusursuz dost arayan, dostsuz kalır*.

The so-called denomination, i.e., the simple naming of an observation, the simple denotative definition of a phenomenon with significant meanings for people, does not mean a dry statement, completely devoid of connotative content. There is always an expressive charge, at least imperceptible, in the composition of a proverb. Therefore, we analysed *figures of sounds* (alliteration, assonance, vocalic harmony and consonantal harmony); *lexico-semantic figures* (epithet, simile, metaphor, metonymy and synecdoche); *figures of lexico-grammatical and topical insistence* (repetition and its variants, hyperbole and its variants); *poetic figures* (rhyme, rhythm and measure); *figures of thought* (allegory and symbol).

Here, of course, differences between the two languages also appear. For example, vocalic (and even consonantal) harmony naturally and definitively pertains to the specific succession of sounds in the structure of words.

3. Conclusions

3.1. The contrastive-typological analysis of the corpus of paremiological utterances from each of the two languages – Romanian and Turkish – confirmed the stable and “formulaic” character, to the point of stereotypy, of some speech acts governed by the laws of “universals

of thought” and “universals of language”. Grouped as much as possible into unitary sets of two, according to the criterion of thematic content, it was proven that many proverbs also have similar forms, despite typological and structural linguistic differences. Three different degrees of general similarities – content and form, beyond the inherent specific details – were revealed:

a) Structures with striking similarities, susceptible to transfer through translation or at least through circulation and adaptation in a common historical-geographical, cultural and linguistic space, i.e., Balkan, in this case:

Rom. *Spune-mi cu cine te însoțești ca să-ți spun cine ești!* (‘A man is known by the company he keeps’)

Tk. *Arkadaşını söyle, senin kim olduğunu söyleyeyim.* (‘Tell me who you go with and I’ll tell you who you are’)

Rom. *Întinde-te cât ți-e plapuma!* (‘Stretch no further than your coverlet’, i.e., ‘Cut your coat according to your cloth’)

Tk. *Ayağını yorganına göre uzat.* (literally ‘stretch your legs as far as your quilt’)

Rom. *Tatăl mănâncă struguri acri, iar fiului i se strepezesc dinții.* (‘The father eats sour grapes and the son’s teeth are set on edge’, i.e., ‘The sins of the fathers are visited upon the children’)

Tk. *Baba koruk yer, oğlunun dişi kamaşır.* (‘The father eats sour grapes and the son’s teeth are set on edge’)

Rom. *Calul de dar nu se caută la dinți.* (‘Never look a gift horse in the mouth’)

Tk. *Bahşış atın dişine bakılmaz.* (‘Don’t look a gift horse in the mouth’)

b) Structures with medium similarities, i.e., with common ideational content but different imagery and, consequently, relatively different lexico-semantic and grammatical composition:

Rom. *Cu o floare nu se face **primăvară**.* (literally ‘one flower does not make a **spring**’, i.e., ‘One swallow does not make a summer’)

Tk. *Bir çiçekle yaz **olmaz**.* (‘One flower does not make a **summer**’)

Rom. *Mai bine cu înțeleptul la pagubă decât cu prostul la câștig.* (‘Better to lose with a wise man than to win with a fool’)

Tk. *Cahil dostun olacağına okumuş düşmanın olsun.* (‘It’s better to have an educated enemy than an uneducated friend’)

Rom. *Dacă-i cal să tragă, dacă-i popă, să cânte, dacă-i copil să se joace!* (translated as ‘If it’s a horse, let it pull; if it’s a priest, let him sing; if it’s a child, let him play!’)

Tk. *Cambaz ipte, balık dipte gerek.* ('The acrobat belongs on the wire, and the fish in the depths of the water')

Rom. *Mi-e milă de tine, dar de mine mi se rupe sufletul!* (literally, 'I feel sorry for you, but my heart breaks for myself!', i.e., 'Charity begins at home')

Tk. *Can candan tatlıdır.* ('My soul is sweeter than yours.')

c). Structures with relatively large differences in mentality, generating images and symbols, dressed in very specific compositional, lexico-semantic and grammatical forms. Of course, with persistent searching, a common ideational core can always be found, but concretising comparable paremiological formulas will be more difficult to identify. For example, the idea of administering beatings to children as an effective means of education is generally valid in the traditional paremiology of peoples:

Rom. *Bătaie e ruptă din rai.* (which translates as 'A beating is a gift from heaven', i.e. 'Spare the rod and spoil the child')

Tk. *Kızın dövmeyen dizini döver.* (literally, 'He who does not beat his daughter beats his knees')

3.2. When we talk about "generality" and "specificity", about "universal" and "local", we should consider not only the possible correspondences between two languages with different typological systems but with a mentality support determined by a common space, Balkan, in this case, but also any other natural language. Comparative or contrastive-typological grammar and vocabulary studies prove that the same structure, with the same ideational message, with the same mentality and with similar compositional and linguistic frameworks, appears in the paremiological corpus of many peoples. What we selected for Romanian and Turkish is also found in French, English etc.:

Tk. *Öyle babanın, öyle oğlu.*

Rom. *Aşa tată, aşa fiu.*

Fr. *Tel père, tel fils.* etc.

i.e., 'Like father, like son'

3.3. The dynamics of similarities/contrasts are, therefore, very strongly marked by the cognitive-mental aspect and by the aspect of "cutting" and "reflecting" reality with the help of the language system, in the Humboldtian sense.