

## BEYOND AND ACROSS SCIENCES, LANGUAGES AND CULTURES CULTURAL ASSOCIATIONS OF PLANT- RELATED PROVERBS

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**Key words:** *proverbs, cultural association, plants*

### INTRODUCTION

Phraseological units pertaining to different cultures reflect general human practices and rituals, passed down from generation to generation. Among them, proverbial expressions register variations in both form and meaning, the same units being included in specific categories.

The “onomasiological subcategory of proverbs” (Savin, 2012) reflects the experience acquired by generations, as the key terms used in the expressions are determined by sociological and psychological factors.

### MATERIAL AND METHODS

Proverbs belonging to the onomasiological class have a major familiar and popular character and are selected from specific domains: agriculture, fauna, flora and environment.

To the purpose of systematising and analysing plant-related proverbs, we used as a model of analysis Savin’s *Romanian Phraseological Dictionary*, in which the main criterion of organisation of the lexicographical items is the image created by Romanian food expressions.

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Fauna and flora are frequently used as sources of inspiration in order to characterize different life situations. Our corpus of nature-related proverbs indicates that there are many expressions common to the two languages, which, at the beginning, were free constructions of words with an objective communicative function.

#### **Romanian proverbs    English equivalents**

*Pasărea în colivie nu se bucură, si de e vie.*    *A bean in liberty is better than a comfit in prison.*

*Păunul pene frumoase, dar picioare urâte.*    *The peacock hath fair feathers, but foul feet.*

*Boul se leagă de coarne și omul de limbă.*    *An ox is taken by the horns, and a man by the tongue.*

*Arborele mare cade tare.*    *The post of honour is the post of danger.*

*Albina face miere dulce, dar mai și impunge.*    *Honey is sweet, but the bee stings.*

*Calul de dar nu se caută la dinți.*    *Never look a gift horse in the mouth.*

What is noticeable is that even if the idioms have something in common, they do not always suppose a perfect equivalence of proverbs from one language to another. In order to create units with a significant degree of expressivity, some individuals from each community select different elements from their habitual environment.

Moreover, proverbs from any language can be exposed through several forms: verbal, pictorial and their meaning can be analyzed. Illustrated proverbs are felt of creating a better imprint on our minds when the literal meaning is rendered.

A proverb portrayed is a brief example of allegory and only some proverbs and related expressions can be put into pictorial form. Actually, most often, it is for children that proverbs are represented in order to help them create the story from which the moral and the meaning of the proverb arise.

The truth is that metaphorical ones are more amenable to visualization.

In order to point out the differences between the verbal forms of representation of proverbs sharing meanings in English and Romanian, we have selected some expressions belonging to the classes of fruit and vegetable.

When using to ground products such of cereals, mash, flour, bran (in Romanian, *păsat, făina, târâța*), Romanian proverbial expressions indicate their condition of processed elements. In addition to the popular view that the act of grinding has infernal, demonic powers, there seems to be a signification of violence associated with these images.

If flour has a positive connotation, bran has a negative one. The English equivalents of such proverbs use different referents including flowers, birds or even objects instead of plants.

In order to prove the differences in cultural associations of expressions with similar meanings, there are several examples that may be given.

Romanian proverbs with English equivalents	Literal meaning	Figurative meaning
<i>Altă făină se macină la moară.</i> = <i>There are no birds of this year in last year's nests.</i>	There is another type of flour ground at the millet now.	There's been a change in the way things happen now.
<i>Fiecare grăunță are făină, dar are și târâțe.</i> = <i>No rose without a thorn.</i>	Each grain has both flour and bran.	Man has a good and a bad side, too.
<i>Ieftin la făină, scump la târâțe.</i> = <i>Penny wise and pund foolish.</i>	Cheap to flour and expensive to bran.	shows recklessness of people who don't know the price of things

The image of fruit in proverbs is either a positive or negative one, depending on their sweetness or sourness, freshness or rottenness. This is the case especially in Romanian.

One of the noticeable differences in terms of representations is that created for suggesting likeness between members of the same family.

Romanian proverbs with English equivalents	Meaning and usage
<i>Așchia nu sare departe de trunchi.</i> = <i>The apple doesn't fall far from the tree.</i>	used to show that an occurrence can usually be traced to a nearby origin
<i>Copiii după părinți, ca poamele după pom.</i> = <i>Like father, like son./Like mother, like daughter.</i>	used to show resemblance between relatives
<i>Merele putrede le strica pe cele bune.</i> = <i>The rotten apple injures its neighbours.</i>	one evil individual corrupts his society

Acrid taste is a mark of the negative; it points the idea of unpleasant features: malicious. Ripe fruit, on the contrary, are a good sign. Expectations of accessible food are associated with laziness and lack of reaction in both languages.

The overripe pear falling from a tree finds as a corresponding element roasted larks, which are to be found only at royal feasts and sophisticated tables.

### Romanian proverbs with English equivalents

Romanian proverbs with English equivalents	Meaning and usage
<i>Pică para mălăiață în gura lui Nătăfleată.</i> = <i>To think that larks will fall into one's mouth ready roasted.</i>	used for those who get suddenly lucky without any work
<i>Sub frunza cea mai proastă se găsește poama coaptă.</i> = <i>Under a ragged coat lies wisdom.</i>	Never judge from appearances
<i>Când poame, când frunze, după cum Domnul ne aduce.</i> = <i>Now fruits, now leaves, as the Lord gives.</i>	said about those who are satisfied with anything they get

Smell and taste function as signifying elements in structures based on the image of garlic. Mushrooms may also bear a negative image, as a result of its low nutritional value and of the risk of intoxication.

Romanian proverb with English equivalent	Meaning and usage
<i>Nici usturoi n-a mâncat, nici gura nu-i miroase.</i> = <i>He has neither eaten garlic, nor does his mouth smell.</i>	said about those that have no shame for their evil doings

<i>Parcă mănâncă numai ciuperci fripte.</i> = <i>He looks as if he eats only fried mushrooms.</i>	He is thin, with no blood in the cheeks.
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What these examples illustrate is that plant images specific to Romanian and English culture are exploited in proverbial structures.

In many cases, the physical characteristics of fruit and vegetables create vivid associations in our minds with either positive (sweetness, for example) or negative situations (e.g. acrid, hot, bitter can be a mark of the negative).

### CONCLUSION

The image of the spiritual and material life of Romanian and English communities is sometimes mirrored similarly in proverbs, because of the existence of a universal spirit and of a common European identity.

Other times, this image is differently represented, through geographical and historical peculiarities, which turn them into real cultural symbols of the two nations.

## ABSTRACT

In this paper, we provide a survey of some plant-related proverbs that focuses on the reflection of mental patterns based on which proverbs are created in English and Romanian. The analysis of a selection of proverbs is made from a comparative perspective, by signalling the common aspects of the two languages and rendering their specific characteristics. To this purpose, we have used as a model Savin's *Romanian Phraseological Dictionary*, in which the main criterion of organisation of the lexicographical items is the image created by Romanian food expressions.

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