

## COMPARATIVE SEMANTICS IN FRENCH PAROEMIAS

### *SEMÂNTICA COMPARATIVA EM PAROEMIAS FRANCESAS*

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Natalia Sergueevna ANDRIANOVA<sup>1</sup>

Olga Fedorovna OSTROUMOVA<sup>2</sup>

Elena Anatolyevna VANCHIKOVA<sup>3</sup>

**ABSTRACT:** This article presents a system analysis of paroemias with comparative semantics of the French language. The structure of paroemias is studied both from the perspective of their linguistic specificity, and in view of interpretive semantics. The comparative space of French paroemia is represented by comparative constructions and, to a greater extent, by conjunctionless clauses of identity, suggesting an analytical nature of the syntactic structure of French paroemias. Various types of comparative constructions inside of French paroemias are not only compositional, but also semantic elements of proverbs. Various logical relations which lie not only in comparison or juxtaposition but also in opposition within the framework of negative comparison are realized in them. The linguopragmatic aspect of paroemias is that allotopic (incoherent), at first glance, proverbs act as isotopic sequences after actualization of common afferent features, which are, as a rule, socially codified. French paroemias with comparative semantics are characterized by full figurativeness, based either on the metaphorization of one or more components, or on contiguity carrying. Thus, the components of the studied paroemias appear in a proper meaning and need to be decoded, since they often establish the identity between two incompatible ideas

**KEYWORDS:** Paroemia, Comparison, Semantic structure, Metaphor, Metonymy, Isotopy

**RESUMO:** *Este artigo apresenta uma análise do sistema de paroemias com a semântica comparativa da língua francesa. A estrutura das paroemias é estudada tanto do ponto de vista de sua especificidade linguística, quanto do ponto de vista da semântica interpretativa. O espaço comparativo da paroemia francesa é representado por construções comparativas e, em maior medida, por orações de identidade sem conjunção, sugerindo uma natureza analítica da estrutura sintática das paroemias francesas. Vários tipos de construções comparativas dentro das paroemias francesas não são apenas composicionais, mas também elementos semânticos dos provérbios. Nelas realizam-se várias relações lógicas que residem não apenas em comparação ou justaposição, mas também em oposição no quadro da comparação negativa. O aspecto linguopragmático das paroemias é que alotópicos (incoerentes), à primeira vista, os provérbios agem como sequências isotópicas após a*

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<sup>1</sup> Candidate of Philology, Associate Professor of the Department of Theory and Practice of Foreign Language Teaching, IPIC, Kazan Federal University, natalia\_an83@mail.ru, t. 89033067327, id Scopus 57191290199, ORCID <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5631-9115>

<sup>2</sup> Candidate of Pedagogical Sciences, Associate Professor of the Department of Theory and Practice of Foreign Language Teaching, IPIC, Kazan Federal University, ofostroumova@mail.ru, id Scopus 56435869500, ORCID <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2587-691X>.

<sup>3</sup> Candidate of Philology, Associate Professor of the Department of Theory and Practice of French, NSLU after N. A. Dobrolyubov, <sup>2</sup>N.A. Dobrolyubov Nizhny Novgorod State Linguistics University, vanchik510@yandex.ru, ORCID <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2742-5717>

atualização de características aferentes comuns, que são, via de regra, codificadas socialmente. As paroemias francesas com semântica comparativa são caracterizadas por uma figuratividade plena, baseada tanto na metaforização de um ou mais componentes, quanto no transporte de contiguidade. Assim, os componentes das paroemias estudadas aparecem em um sentido próprio e precisam ser decodificados, pois muitas vezes estabelecem a identidade entre duas ideias incompatíveis.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** *Paroemia, Comparação, Estrutura semântica, Metáfora, Metonímia, Isotopia*

**RESUMEN:** *Este artículo presenta un análisis del sistema de paroemias con semántica comparada de la lengua francesa. La estructura de las paroemias se estudia tanto desde la perspectiva de su especificidad lingüística como desde la semántica interpretativa. El espacio comparativo de la paroemia francesa está representado por construcciones comparativas y, en mayor medida, por cláusulas de identidad sin conjunción, sugiriendo una naturaleza analítica de la estructura sintáctica de las paroemias francesas. Varios tipos de construcciones comparativas dentro de las paroemias francesas no solo son elementos compositivos, sino también semánticos de los proverbios. En ellos se realizan diversas relaciones lógicas que se encuentran no sólo en comparación o yuxtaposición, sino también en oposición dentro del marco de la comparación negativa. El aspecto linguopragmático de las paroemias es que los refranes alotópicos (incoherentes), a primera vista, actúan como secuencias isotópicas después de la actualización de características aferentes comunes, que, por regla general, están codificadas socialmente. Las paroemias francesas con semántica comparada se caracterizan por una figuración completa, basada en la metaforización de uno o más componentes, o en la contigüidad. Así, los componentes de las paroemias estudiadas aparecen con un significado adecuado y necesitan ser decodificados, ya que a menudo establecen la identidad entre dos ideas incompatibles.*

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** *Paroemia, Comparación, Estrutura semântica, Metáfora, Metonímia, Isotopia*

## **Introduction**

The target of research is paroemias, the units of language that have moral utilitarian content and render typical real-life and imaginary situations or relations between individual objects (GOLOVIN, 2014). The scope of research is a comparative semantics of paroemias of the French language. The necessity for studying the comparative semantics of paroemias is that “the ability to compare is organically included into a human consciousness and is embodied in a language”, and “the study of the comparison plays a big role in perception of the world” (BOLGAROVA ET AL., 2014).

The relevance of applying to the paroemiological fund of the French language is due to the fact that there is scant coverage of both the linguo-pragmatic aspect of the French language paroemias and their internal form. The studies of paroemiological units lie at the intersection of “such approaches to the study of linguistic units as lingvocultural, discursive-

cognitive and pragmatic-ethnolinguistic ones” (FATTAKHOVA & KULKOVA, 2014). The figurativeness of paroemia is understood as “such that has semantic planes of content created by the means of language and based on the representation of one object (event, situation) through another object (event, situation)” (YASYUKEVICH, 2002). The study of paroemias with comparative semantics makes it possible to identify the features of the substance of proverbs, their diverse syntactic structure.

## Materials and Methods

The material of the present study is French paroemias with comparative semantics. To analyze paroemias, the approaches based on the principles of semantic-cognitive analysis and interpretive semantics have been used.

In the studies we have also used a mix of descriptive methods, including such methods and techniques as description, classification, content explication method, material comparison and typology, statistical method and method of frequency analysis of language material of explanatory and specialized French dictionaries.

To achieve the goal of the study, we have compiled a corpus of paroemiological units of the French language (200 units), selected by continuous sampling from modern explanatory and specialized dictionaries of the French language (Le Petit Larousse illustré (Le Petit Larousse illustré, 2010), French proverbs and sayings and their Russian equivalents (KOGUT, 2016)).

## Results and Discussion

“The metaphoricity, laconicity, accuracy, and expressiveness of paroemiae are attained through their syntactic structure” (NABIULLINA ET AL., 2014). From the viewpoint of syntactic structure, first of all, it is necessary to single out the paroemias with comparative constructions introduced by the conjunctions *comme* and *et*. These paroemias can be broken up into two groups: a little more common paroemias are those syntactically arranged as a simple sentence:

C'est le feu et l'eau. – Это как земля и небо / as different as day and night.

Fier comme un pou. – Гордый как петух / as vain as a peacock .

Il est propre comme une écuelle à chat. – Грязный как свинья/ dirty as heck.

Triste comme un bonnet de nuit sans coiffe. – Быть как в воду опущенным / be downcast.

Proverbs syntactically arranged as complex sentences are divided into:

1. the proverbs where the second part semantically reveals the content of the part that is with the elements of comparison, acts as the basis for comparing this structure, that is, indicates a feature by which something is compared:

L'avarice est comme le feu: plus on y met de bois, plus il brûle. – Чем больше есть, тем больше хочется / the more he has the more he wants (word-for-word: Скупость как огонь: чем больше подглядываешь в него дров, тем ярче он разгорается /avarice is like fire: the more it gnaws firewood, the more it outblazes)

Les hommes sont comme les melons, il faut en essayer plusieurs pour en trouver un bon. – Мужчины, что арбузы, нужно испробовать нескольких, пока не найдешь хорошего / Men are like watermelons : one should taste several to find a good one.

Il est comme le camelot, il a pris son pli. – Горбатого могила исправит / What is bred in the bone will not go out of the flesh (word-for-word: Он как камлот, который принял свою форму / He is like camlet that has taken its form)

2. the proverbs where the comparison is expressed in a form of syntactic parallelism:

Le moine répond comme l'abbé chante. – Каков поп, таков и приход / Like priest, like people.

L'envie suit la vertu comme l'ombre suit le corps. – Где счастье, там и зависть/ Where there is happiness, there is envy (word-for-word: Зависть следует за добродетелью, как тень за человеком / Envy follows virtue like man's shadow).

Juger d'une chose comme un aveugle des couleurs. – Разбираться в чем-то как слепой в красках / One is knowledgeable in something like a blind man in colors.

In the French language common are the conjunctionless proverbs with comparative semantics where comparison is clearly expressed as a form of syntactic parallelism:

Homme sans femme, corps sans âme. – Муж без жены, что тело без души / Man without woman is the same as body without soul.

Au prêter ange, au rendre diable. – В долг давать – дружбу терять / One that gives credit loses friends.

Nul noble sans noblesse, nul chevalier sans prouesse. – Тот не рыцарь, кто подвига не совершил (word-for-word: Нет дворянина без благородства, нет рыцаря без подвига / No a nobleman without nobility, no a knight without a deed).

Point de roses sans épines ni d'amour sans ennuis. – Нет розы без шипов, а любви без огорчений / there is no rose without a thorn, there is no love without pain.

The last two examples present no indication of the apparent similarity of any objects, but only the absence of identity between them. The comparison, however, is carried out by the subject of perception at a higher level of abstraction, and paroemias containing a “negative” comparison preserve the transparency of meaning. This type of paroemias are quite common in French:

Apprenti n'est pas maître. – Всякий спляшет, да не как скоморох / It takes some time to become a master (word-for-word: Подмастерье не мастер / An apprentice is not a craftsman).

N'est pas beau ce qui est beau, mais est beau ce qui agréé. – Не по хорошему мил, а по милому хорош/ Not nicely sweet, but sweetly nice.

On ne connaît pas le vin au cercle ni l'homme à l'habit. – Не угадаешь ни вино по обручу (бочки), ни человека по одежде / Never judge a book by its cover.

Also in French there are paroemias where the comparison is expressed:

1. by comparative forms of adjectives and adverbs:

La lisière est pire que le drap. – Слуги всегда вреднее своих господ / Servants are always worsen than their master.

Il a plus d'affaires que le légat. – У него дел больше, чем у папского нунция / He is always snowed under his work.

Very common in this group of paroemias are set expressions with the phrases like Il vaut mieux ... que, Mieux vaut ... que. For example:

Il vaudrait mieux tenir un panier de souris qu'une fille de 20 ans. – Замок да запор девки не удержат (word-for-word: Лучше иметь корзину с мышами, чем девицу 20 лет / It is better to have a basket with mice than a damsel in her 20).

Mieux vaut bon gardeur que bon amasseur. – Запасливый лучше богатого / A provident man is better than a rich one.

Mieux vaut bon voisin que longue parenté. – Ближний сосед лучше дальней родни / A neighbor is better than distant relatives.

2. by lexical elements *похожий (общий), какой ... такой /be alike (common) like...like:*

Qu'a de commun l'âne avec la lyre? Qu'a de commun le savant avec l'ignorant. – Разбираться в чем-либо как свинья в апельсинах (word-for-word: Что общего между

ослом и лирой? То же, что и между ученым и невеждой / What way are a donkey and a lyra alike? Like a learned man and an ignoramus).

Tél arbre, tel fruit. – Каково дерево, таков и плод / As the tree, so the fruit.

Tel rat, tel chat. – Какова пашня, таково и брашно / Like plough land, like food.

The most frequent group of paroemias with comparative semantics are the paroemias where the comparison is expressed by conjunctionless sentences of identity.

Coeur content, grand talent. – Счастье – это талант / To be happy is a talent.

Grand jasseur, grand menteur. – Большой болтун – большой лгун / A great talker is a great liar.

La vanité est la mère du mensonge. – Тщеславие – мать лжи / Vanity is the mother of lie.

In such paroemias a verbal predicate has the function of comparison. For example:

L'aigle n'engendre pas la colombe. – Каков отец, таков и сын / His father's son (word-for-word: От орла голубка не родится / An eagle does not beget a dove).

Le malheur des uns fait le bonheur des autres. – Кому горе, а кому радость / War makes some people rich / Счастье одних строится на несчастье других / One's happiness is built upon unhappiness of others.

L'écoutant fait le médisant. – Молва не по лесу ходит, а по людям (Wors-for-word: Тот, кто слушает, порождает того, кто сплетничает / One who listens to begets those who gossip).

In general, it is necessary to point out the analytical nature of the syntactic structure of French paremiological units which are often represented by conjunctionless simple sentences, including simple two-member nominative sentences (Longs cheveux, courte cervelle. Волос долог, да ум короток / Long hair and short wit. Menteur-voleur. Кто лжет, тот и ворует / He that is a liar is a thief.).

Being syntactically similar, French paroemias, however, reveal various logical relationships represented by:

1. comparison per se: Être chargé (ou pourvu) d'argent comme un crapaud de plumes. – Он гол как сокол / He is as poor as a church mouse.

2. juxtaposition: La sauce vaut mieux que le poisson. – Соус лучше рыбы / Sauce is tastier than fish.

3. overlapping: L'exactitude est la politesse des rois. – Точность – вежливость королей / Promptness is the politeness of kings.

4. causality: Le temps, c'est de l'argent. – Время – деньги / Time is money.

5. hypo-hyperonym relations *Apprenti n'est pas maître*. – Всякий спляшет, да не как скоморох (word-for-word: Подмастерье не мастер / An apprentice is not a craftsman).

The convergence of two different, apparently incompatible concepts related, as a rule, to different thematic groups, in proverbs is often carried out through the metaphorization of one or more components. “It is known that metaphor helps to understand new concepts through their analogy with the old ones” (ZAMALETDINOVA ET AL., 2017).

In the studied paroemias, metaphorization is realized through an equivalence relationship between two or more sememes, which, in turn, is established through an identity relationship between the semes having a common semantic attribute. For example, in a proverb *L'homme marié est un oiseau en cage* (Женился – на век заложился / Marry in haste and repent at leisure (word-for-word: Женатый мужчина – птица в клетке / A married man is a bird in the cage)) likening of a person to a bird takes place on the basis of the feature “not free”, and the abstract concept, however, is explained via a simpler, material one.

The juxtaposition of objects or concepts in a French paroemia is also achieved by establishing adjacency transfer within the framework of the figurative basis of the proverb. The anthropomorphic metaphors and metonymy peculiar to the French language are reflected in the paroemiological fund of the language: *Bouche de miel, cœur de fiel*. – На языке мед, а на сердце лед / honey tongue, a heart of gall; *Longs cheveux, courte cervelle*. – Волос долог, да ум короток / Long hair and short wit; *Longue langue, courte main*. – Где много слов, там мало дела / Great talkers are little doers. In the above examples, the names of the parts of the body metonymically act as the designation of a person.

From the point of view of semiotics, paroemia is characterized by a combination of discursive and linguistic means: on the one hand, paroemia is a reflection of a prototypical situation, on the other hand, it is microtext. The compositional basis of paroemia can sometimes make the image enclosed in it opaque. In such ambiguous sentences, a special role is played by semantic relationships between components, which provide an understanding of the structure that serves as the basis for the unity of the metaphorical image. In the proverb *Les mœurs sont un collier de perles, ôtez le noeud, tout défile* (Одна паршивая овца все стадо испортит / One scabbed sheep will mar a whole flock (word-for-word: Нравы похожи на жемчужное ожерелье, развяжите узел, все рассыплется / Morals are like a necklace of pearls – untie a knot, it will come undone )) individual signifiers correlate immediately with two signified, and, accordingly, the words having figurative meanings, do not make a usual meaning of the proverb in isolation. Understanding of the proverbs comes to

building an analogy, and this, in turn, explicates the image bearing base, which consists of a series of interconnected and mutually complementary images.

### **Summary**

The French paroemiological fund represent paroemias with comparative semantics, where the comparison is expressed by conjunctionless sentences of identical equations, including simple two-member nominative sentences with a form of syntactic parallelism. The second largest is a group of paroemias with various comparative conjunctions. Paroemias with comparative semantics are also represented by proverbs and sayings with negative comparison and comparative expressions containing the forms of a comparative degree of adjectives and adverbs and lexical elements of identity. Thus, they contain not only formal indicators of comparison, but also comparative semantics expressed by “negation of identity” (NIKOLAYEVA, 2010).

The comparative semantics of the paroemias under consideration implements various logical relations between the compared objects (Savenkova, 2015). The establishment of such relationships is achieved via metaphorization or, to a lesser extent, metonymy. Often the figurative basis of paroemias is opaque and the interpretation of such expressions is possible only by foregrounding a common afferent feature. In metaphorical transposition, the afferent feature is, as a rule, socially codified and depends not only on “associative perception of the surrounding world” of the interpreter, but on “many extra linguistic factors (the presence of specific geographical, historical or other realities, customs and traditions)” (GURYANOV et al., 2017). Extralinguistic factor features prominently in revealing an identity between the semes of paroemias “with both “live” and with lost or opaque internal form” (ANDRIANOVA et al., 2018).

### **Conclusion**

A comprehensive analysis of French paroemias with comparative semantics enabled to establish a connection between metaphor and metonymy with the paradigmatics and syntagmatics of the language. The specificity of the syntactic organization of paroemias expresses the identity of a characterized or evaluated phenomenon or object through the previously known ones by establishing equivalence between two or more sememes. The unity



of understanding of the studied paroemias is determined not only by semantic competence but by pragmatic as well, i.e. the reference to the culturally significant realities of a society.

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