

Contrastive Phraseology

Contrastive Phraseology:

*Languages and Cultures
in Comparison*

Edited by

Paola Cotta Ramusino and Fabio Mollica

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FOREWORD

The idea behind this volume was to gather into a single publication the papers presented at the congress “**Contrastive Phraseology: Languages and Cultures in Comparison**”, held in Milan from the 9th to the 11th of November 2016. To these have been added other relevant articles. We would like to thank all the colleagues who participated in the congress, and all of those who contributed subsequently. We are also indebted to our students, without whose support this congress would not have been possible. Last but not least, we would like to thank Claire Archibald for her precious help in proof-reading the articles in English.

We dedicate this volume to the memory of the late *Elisabeth Piirainen*, our plenary speaker and highly respected colleague, whom we had the great honor to meet at the congress.

CHAPTER ONE

CONTRASTIVE PHRASEOLOGY: PRELIMINARY REMARKS

PAOLA COTTA RAMUSINO / FABIO MOLLIKA

Phraseology has come to occupy an ever more central role in linguistic studies. It has embraced numerous, often interacting, theoretical approaches and has generated practical applications in areas from language teaching to translation and the production of ever more accurate lexicographic tools.

Among the currents of research that have arisen within phraseology, that of contrastive, or comparative, phraseology has seen intense development since the 1960s, although a historical-comparative tradition involving examination of the evolution and etymology of mainly proverbs and sayings, dates back to the end of the 19th century (Dobrovol'skij 2011a, 219). Fifty years on, comparative phraseology can rightly be considered one of the mainstays of phraseology, a rich source of inspiration for research that in turn opens new perspectives for further investigation (Colson 2008). It is not within the scope of this introduction to describe all the approaches and aspects of phraseology that have emerged over time, or to refer to the whole of the immense body of literature that has been produced: our objective is simply to give a brief outline of those areas of research represented by the papers published in this volume.

According to Dobrovol'skij / Piirainen (2005) and Korhonen (2007), 'contrastive' has at least two main meanings, to which can be added a third. In the first, broader sense, 'contrastive' and 'cross-linguistic' can be considered synonymous, and any comparison of phraseological units in different languages can be considered to be contrastive phraseology (Colson 2008, 194; Dobrovol'skij 2011a, 219). In a more restricted sense, 'contrastive' implies a systematic comparison of the phraseologies of different languages (Colson 2008, 194). Thirdly, as Colson notes, phraseology

is contrastive only when it takes into consideration the differences between languages.

The contrastive approach is so stimulating because from the concrete analysis of phraseological units in different languages, there emerge simultaneously theoretical and practical issues (Colson 2008, 192). Comparisons are concerned with the relationship between the semantic and the syntactic levels of meaning; between the cognitive level—especially metaphor and metonymy—and the syntactic level; and with the manifestation of this relationship in concrete phraseological units. Finally, it is also concerned with phrasemes as carriers of culture, which oblige research to give attention to cultural phenomena (Pirainen 2008).

In terms of methodology, contrastive analysis has benefitted from corpus linguistics, which, as in many other areas, has transformed research. Access to large corpora of texts in different languages has been decisive in clarifying the nature of phraseological units and in giving them the relevance they deserve (see, for example, Bubenhofer 2009; Cowie 1998; Sinclair 1991; Steyer 2013). In the light of these large quantities of authentic samples, idiomatic expressions—until then one of the main focuses of phraseological research—were seen to make up an almost irrelevant proportion of language, whereas far more frequently occurring word combinations with varying degrees of semantic and syntactic fixedness, like collocations, have acquired central importance in phraseographic as well as in phraseological studies. This is also due to the practical importance of the results of comparative studies in translation and foreign language teaching.

More abstract phraseological units, like *constructional phrasemes* or *syntactic phrasemes* (see Croft / Cruse 2004, 234; Dobrovolskij 2011b, 114; Fillmore / Kay / O'Connor 1988, 505-506; Fleischer 1997, 30; Mellado Blanco 2015; Schafroth 2015, Ziem 2018a, 2018b), still largely uninvestigated in interlinguistic phraseological research, can be considered the embodiment of conceptual structures that are at the heart of the differences and similarities between languages. Long neglected in phraseological studies because they were considered to be an expression of the overlap between lexis and syntax, constructional phrasemes have been rediscovered and reevaluated because of their frequency in language. These partially lexically specified phraseological units are what have attracted the attention of phraseologists in recent years, thanks also to the growing impact of studies in the area of Construction Grammar (Goldberg 1995, 2006; Fillmore / Kay / O'Connor 1988).

Probably the largest contribution to contrastive studies in the last few decades has come from the cognitive approach, which has also recast the

cultural aspect of phraseological units. That culture played an important role in phraseology has never been in doubt: definitions like *culture-specific*, *culture-based*, and *culturally-marked* have always been widely used in studies. Although intuitively obvious, however, the concept of culture has a range of different acceptions (Piirainen 2008, 209). As Sabban (2007, 2008) suggested, it would be better to speak of cultural boundness (Bragina 1996, 199; Glaser 1999, 156) than of culture specificity. In the case of referential phrasemes, the investigation of cultural boundness involves “establishing explicit links between the phraseme’s literal level, [...] and culturally relevant aspects” (Sabban 2007, 592). In terms of the cultural aspect of phrasemes, Piirainen’s (2012) and (2016) studies on widespread idioms in 74 European and 17 non-European languages, which deal with interlinguistic convergences, could have an important influence on foreign language teaching and on phraseography.

One new theoretical framework based on the cognitive approach is Dobrovol’skij and Piirainen’s (2005) Conventional Figurative Language Theory (CFLT). Anchoring them culturally, this theory applies the key concepts of cognitive metaphor–source domain and target domain–to the analysis of idiomatic language from a large number of languages. It shows the relevance of the image component to the meaning of figurative units, and discusses whether it is possible to establish regular correspondences between the literal, image-based readings of figurative units and their conventional meanings. Within this perspective, comparison between figurative units in different languages may lead to the simultaneous identification of what is universal and what is specific to each culture, based on the understanding of the processes ruled by general principles of human cognition. The image component also accounts for some of the restrictions to the use of figurative units, and by extension, to the problems that arise when translating figurative units from one language to another, or to the pragmatic and semantic differences between quasi-equivalent figurative units (Dobrovol’skij / Piirainen 2005, 5). One example of a figurative unit with an image component is the English idiom (*to be caught*) *between a rock and a hard place* (Dobrovol’skij / Piirainen 2005, 15), explained as ‘to be in a very difficult position’. According to Dobrovol’skij and Piirainen, in this case the key elements of the image–*rock and hard place* (the source domain or concept)–are the realization of the conceptual metaphor DIFFICULTIES ARE IMPEDIMENTS TO MOTION: it is this underlying conceptual structure, reflecting the mental idea of ‘lacking freedom of movement’, that accounts for the differences in usage. This

example shows a cognitive relationship that is not culturally marked but that can be defined as universal instead.

Because it categorizes the cultural knowledge structures that underlie them, CFLT allows the establishment of regular relationships between the literal level of figurative phraseological units and their conventional, lexicalized meaning. Dobrovolskij and Piirainen have proposed a 5-category typology of the main cultural phenomena they believe underlie phrasemes: a) textual dependence; b) pre-scientific conceptions of the world; c) cultural symbols; d) aspects of material culture; and e) aspects of culture-based social interaction (Piirainen 2008, 210). Categories d) and e) enable recognition of the culture of provenance of the referential material, from aspects of daily life, to social roles, to institutions, to other traditions and so on (Sabban 2007, 593). In them, the image component is motivated by direct experience of some phenomenon or aspect of daily life, and its perceived meaning relies on metonymic and metaphoric processes. Sabban (2007, 593) offers as an example a phraseme from the Westmunsterlandic dialect *he is in 'n Diiüstern wossen*—(lit. he has grown (up) in the dark—that is, 'he is not very bright', studied by Piirainen (1998, 683), according to whom this phraseme reflects the human experience that a tree does not grow in the dark.

As Sabban observes, in cases like these, the term culture-boundness can be taken in a broad sense to mean human experience as perceived in a certain way in a specific context. From a cognitive point of view, the very fact that the same portion of reality is frequently selected both demonstrates its importance in human experience and reiterates the specific vision of the world it reflects. While idioms make up the lion's share of image-based figurative language, other types of phraseological units such as similes, collocations, and proverbs too, likewise contain figurative elements with cultural implications. Take, for example, the simile in *it. fumare come un turco* (lit. smoke like a Turk) 'smoke like a chimney' (Mollica / Schafroth 2018), which draws from aspects of culture-based social interaction (the excessive use, from the Italian point of view, of tobacco by the Turks), whilst others, like *to eat like a wolf*, found in several languages, is probably motivated by cultural symbolism rather than by direct observation of the phenomenon (Piirainen 2008, 214). Some types of collocations, and obviously many proverbs, also reveal a connection with other cultural texts and with types of social interaction.

But the types of phraseological units mentioned so far, those with an image component that reveals a cultural aspect, by no means account for the entire range of structures embraced by phraseology. Indeed, "comparison between languages reveals that phraseology turns out to be a

major aspect of all languages” (Colson 2008, 197). The co-occurrence of linguistic elements has become one of the main foci in the comparison between languages, both in the process of translation and in foreign language acquisition. Access to corpora has made a critical difference, on the one hand, confirming the frequency of certain co-occurrences within single languages, and on the other favouring inter-linguistic comparison of how fixed expressions are distributed in different languages, on their degree of equivalency, and lastly on the different types of equivalence (Colson 2008, 197–199).

The translation-phraseology relationship is bidirectional: while translation highlights phraseological discrepancies—especially in the case of collocations, which are less easily distinguishable, as opposed to more easily detectable idiomatic expressions—it must also develop strategies to fill the gaps in the transition from one language to the other. Despite the obvious need for research, work in the field of phraseology and translation is still at an early stage (Colson 2008, 200). This volume contains several contributions to this area, which is characterized by complexity and interdisciplinarity. Possibly one of the most perspicuous of the recent classifications is that of Dobrovol’skij (2011a, 2014), which traces the entire, heterogenous field of interlinguistic correspondences to four fundamental types, i.e. total equivalents, partial equivalents, phraseological analogues and phraseological units without equivalents.

One linguistic phenomenon that has implications both for foreign language didactics and for translation is that of the so-called “phraseological false friends” (see Dobrovol’skij / Piirainen, 2005, 2009; Siegrist 1998). These are mostly idiomatic expressions and collocations that are false friends at a semantic and/or structural level (Siegrist 1998). An example of semantic false friends, the most-studied of these types of interference error (see Dobrovol’skij / Piirainen 2004, 2005; Guławska-Gawkowska 2013; Piirainen 1999; Szpila 2006), is the pair it. *non avere peli sulla lingua* (lit. not to have hairs on one’s tongue) ‘to be outspoken’/ ‘to make no bones about saying something’ and ger. *Haare auf den Zähnen haben* (lit. have hairs on one’s teeth) ‘to be overbearing/a bully’. The difference in meaning, in contrast with the resemblance between the images, is due to the different types of motivation that underlie the two phraseological units: metaphorical in Italian, symbolic in German, see Mollica / Wilke (2019). Still, lexical (it. *fare di una mosca un elefante*—eng. *to make a mountain out of a molehill*—ted. *aus einer Mücke einen Elefanten machen* (lit. to make an *elephant* out of a *mosquito*) and syntactic asymmetry (it. *far girare la testa a qcn.* and ger. *jdm den Kopf verdrehen*, lit. make someone’s head turn ‘make someone fall in love’),

i.e. to do with the formal aspects of phraseological units, can lead the learner and even the translator to make lexical and/or morphosyntactic errors (see Mollica / Wilke 2019).

It is now widely recognized in the field of L2 acquisition that naturalness in the use of language is due above all to the competent use of phraseological units (Granger 1998; Hasselgren 2002). Of the various types of phraseological units, collocations and—amongst these—light verbs, are especially insidious: from a comparative point of view, they show a wide range of variety and risk going unnoticed; and if they have not been noted, are very likely to result in interference errors (Altenberg / Granger 2001; Nesselhauf 2005; Cotta Ramusino / Mollica 2019). We present some examples of typical interference errors from comparisons between Italian and other languages: eng. **to make a photo* from the it. *fare una foto*, instead of eng. *to take a photo*; rus. **delat' èkzamen* from the it. *fare l'esame*, instead of *sdavat' èkzamen* (lit. dare l'esame); sp. **hacer parte* from the it. *fare parte*, instead of *formar parte* (lit. formare parte); and ger. **eine Frage machen* from the it. *fare una domanda*, instead of *eine Frage stellen* (lit. mettere (= porre) una domanda). While it is well-known that greater difficulty is encountered in L2 production, than in the passive competences, in the comprehension of L2 texts, context may still not always be enough to clarify the meaning of a phraseological unit.

Collocational competence is an issue not only in the learning of typologically distant languages, but also—and maybe more so—in typologically similar languages like Spanish/Italian (Bini / Pernas / Pernas 2007), whose L2 learners take a long time to integrate collocations into their interlanguage. Briefly put, collocational competence creates difficulty in the passage from L1 to L2 for the following main reasons: a collocation in L1 may have a non-collocational equivalent in L2 (frequent especially, but not only, with light verbs); the L1 collocation may have an L2 collocational equivalent that does not resemble it; the L2 collocation may not correspond to a collocation in L1; and there are apparent equivalents, but these actually have different meanings (false friends) (Cotta Ramusino / Mollica 2019).

The phraseology of languages constitutes an extremely complex, continually evolving system that is consequently difficult to commit to lexicographical description. Nevertheless, in recent years, concerted efforts have been made to improve mono- and bilingual dictionary entries of phraseological units, in terms of both quantity and quality. The following are the most crucial issues in the treatment of phraseological units: what lemma they should be recorded under; how they should be recorded; their position within the dictionary entry; and how to paraphrase

them and what stylistic value to attribute to them. Bilingual dictionaries are also burdened with the problem of finding a functional equivalent with the same meaning, which may nevertheless have a different formal structure. Mono- and bilingual phraseological dictionaries, i.e. those specialized in phraseological units, are very helpful both to native speakers and to L2 learners, with collocational dictionaries being particularly helpful to learners.

Authentic data drawn from corpora now form the basis for lexicographical description, influencing both the choice of items—those effectively having the highest frequency—and their description. Indeed, it is only by means of automated access to vast corpora of data that the most relevant phraseological units can be selected and described accurately in accordance with the objectives of the dictionary, without neglecting the requirements and expectations of those who will use the dictionary.

The contributions to this volume, written in several languages—English, French, Italian, Russian, Spanish and German—bring a variety of perspectives to the issues presented here. The theme that unifies them is that of contrastive analysis, with sometimes very different languages being compared, from the more widely-spoken—English, French, Spanish and German—to the less diffused—Thai, Latvian, Greek and Georgian.

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PART 1

PHRASEOLOGY AND CULTURE

CHAPTER TWO

WIDESPREAD IDIOMS AND WIDESPREAD IDIOMATIC PATTERNS: RESULTS FOR PHRASEOLOGY AND RELATED DISCIPLINES

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Abstract

The starting point for this article is widespread figurative units, in other words linguistic signs which exist in a variety of languages with a very similar formal structure and with an almost equal meaning, and that at the same time have the feature of figurativity (semantic irregularity). The aim of my paper is to present this outstanding group of linguistic elements, to identify the possible causes of their widespread dissemination, and to discuss some theoretical and practical results. The data are drawn from extensive surveys carried out in collaboration with competent native speakers of various languages in the context of two large-scale research projects.

1 Categories of widespread figurative elements

Widespread figurative elements manifest themselves in quite different ways. The following is an attempt to map them to three basic categories, although there are overlaps. Categories 1 and 2 consist of *idioms* in the sense meant in European phraseology research. By definition, idioms, have the characteristic of figurativity (they are semantically ambiguous, having a literal, and a secondary, figurative meaning). As recent work has shown, *widespread idioms* (i.e. category 1) exist in large numbers.

However, certain lexically unspecified *syntactic patterns* can be spread across a number of languages in the same way. Here, the syntactic pattern itself contributes to the non-literal meaning. Realizations of the same pattern with different lexical fillers can thus lead to the same or a similar semantic result.

A subset of common construction patterns (category 2) has long been known to researchers. These are idioms (as well as proverbs, which will be neglected here), which share a similar syntactic structure and figurative core meaning, but differ lexically. This group was a popular subject of ethnographic and semiotic proverb research, both in terms of multilingual comparisons and in terms of formalizations of the syntactic-semantic structure on a more abstract level. From the earliest ages onwards, paremiology usually made no distinction between proverbs and proverbial sayings. Thus, the “proverbial sayings” of this group are *de facto* “idioms” in a more modern linguistic terminology. I suggest the term *widespread idiomatic patterns* for this category.

Another subgroup of widespread patterns is best understood and described by Construction Grammar (CxG). This subgroup embraces constructions which are lexically unspecified but at the same time can be treated as units of the lexicon. A particularly relevant class from the point of view of CxG is the so-called *phaseme constructions*, which are rather neglected in traditional phraseology research. I restrict myself to this subgroup (category 3).¹ Phraseme constructions are syntactic structures which have a lexical meaning as a whole. Only certain positions in their lexical structure are filled. Other positions represent slots that must be satisfied. The lexical filling is not entirely free but subject to semantic restrictions.

So far there has been little preliminary work on which to base a multilingual approach to phraseme constructions. Construction Grammar is usually the subject of study of a single language, more rarely of comparative studies of two or three languages. Exceptions are Van Pottelberge’s study on the “*am*-progressive” in several West Germanic languages and Bücken’s (2012), in which he examines “non-finite predication constructions” in German and adds a chapter on parallels in 12 other European languages². Patterns of the same or very similar formal

¹ Various terms have been used to describe these phenomena, including those in the English-speaking world: *lexically open idioms* (Fillmore et al. 1988), *syntactic idioms* (Nunberg et al. 1994), *constructional idioms* (Booij 2002), *schematic idioms* (Croft / Cruse 2004, 248), etc. See also Dobrovolskij 2011b.

² The book title *Construction Grammar in a Cross-Language Perspective* (Fried / Östman 2004) seems to be misleading, as Hilpert (2007, 484) explains in his

structure and meaning can even occur in a larger number of languages, as evidenced by the initial investigations reported here. As far as I know, this finding is a novelty in phraseology and Construction Grammar research.

In the following, the three categories of “widespread figurative elements” are illustrated by means of examples. The difference between category 1 and 2 becomes visible through a multilingual approach. Category 1 consists of idioms present in many languages, which are largely the same in the three areas: syntactic structure, lexical structure and figurative meaning, see (1).

- (1) English *to swim against the current/stream*, Faroese *svimja moti streyminum*, North Frisian *töögen di Stroom swum*, Yiddish *shvimen kegn shtrom*, Welsh *nofio yn erbyn y llif*, Catalan *nedar contra la corrent*, Romanian *a înnota împotriva curentului*, Ukrainian *пливти проти течії*, Upper Sorbian *přećiwo prudej pluwać*, Serbian *пливати против струје*, Karelian *uija vaste virdoa*, Komi-Zyrian *ва паньд катны*, Tatar *агымга каршы йозу*, Azerbaijani *axına qarşı üzmək*, etc.

Example (1) from *category 1* presents only a small selection of our data. It can be seen that correspondences exist in standard languages and lesser-used languages throughout Europe. The literal reading of all idioms is ‘to swim against the stream’; the figurative meaning can be approximated by ‘to go against prevailing opinion or thought, to do or say something that is in opposition to what most other people are doing or saying at the time’. In the tradition of cross-linguistic phraseology, an idiom pair such as German *gegen den Strom schwimmen* and the English item above would have been called “full equivalents”.

Category 2, widespread idiomatic patterns, includes idioms which share only two features: a similar syntactic structure and the figurative core meaning; they are lexically different. Often, they are two-tier idioms of the type [OUT (OF) X IN/INTO Y], e.g. *out of the frying pan into the fire*, German *vom Regen in die Traufe* ‘from the rain to the eaves’, Irish *amach as na muineacha is isteach sna driseacha* ‘out of the scrub into the brambles’. X and Y are filled differently but are in the same semantic relation to each other (‘bad’ vs. ‘even worse’) within the same concept (FIRE, WATER, THORNS), which leads to the same semantic result ‘from a bad situation into an even worse one’.

review, since “[t]he title suggests a comparative, typological approach which is never realized, as each study deals with just one individual language”. However, there are some multilingual approaches in the area of language contacts, of influence of a foreign language on constructions and borrowability of a construction; see Höder (2012); Doğruöz (2016) among others.

A prime example are idioms such as *to carry owls to Athens, to bring wood into the forest, to carry water into the sea* (example (2)) which, in addition to a similar syntactic structure [CARRY X TO Y], have a similar figurative meaning ‘X being something which exists abundantly in Y’.

- (2) French *porter de l’eau à la rivière*, Slovene *vodo v morje nositi* ‘to carry water into the sea’, Hungarian *a Dunába vizet hord* ‘sb. carries water into the Danube’, Finnish *kantaa vettä kaivoon* ‘to carry water into the well’; Polish *nosić drzewo do lasu* ‘to carry firewood to the forest’, Kashubian *wòzëc drzewò do lasa* ‘to take the wood into the forest’, Estonian *puid metsa kandma* ‘to carry wood into the forest’; West Frisian *turf yn it fean bringe* ‘to bring peat to the bog’; Norwegian *gi bakerens barn brød* ‘to give bread to the baker’s child’; Spanish *vender miel al colmenero* ‘to sell honey to the beekeeper’, etc.

Idiom pairs of this category have also been classified as “equivalents”; however, this is not correct since the different images evoked by the lexical structure prevent a real equivalence. An example is the pair *to carry coals to Newcastle* and German *Eulen nach Athen tragen*. They reveal subtle semantic differences, which can be described as either ‘to bring certain objects or pieces of information to a place where there are already many of that kind’ or ‘to present certain mental entities as being new when they are already well-known at a given place’.³

Let us look at example (3) to illustrate widespread phraseme constructions (*category 3*). Correspondences of the English construction *the simplest/best/most natural/most normal/... thing in the world* are reported for 20 European languages so far, among them Finno-Ugric languages, Turkish and Basque. We shall restrict ourselves to examples meaning literally ‘the simplest/easiest thing in/of the world’.

- (3) German *die einfachste Sache der Welt*, Swedish *världens lättaste sak*, French *la chose la plus facile du monde*, Italian *la cosa più semplice del mondo*, Spanish *la cosa más fácil del mundo*, Latvian *visvienkārākā lieta pasaulē*, Belorussian *самая простая рэч на свеце*, Polish *najprostsza rzecz na świecie*, Czech *ta nejjednodušší věc na světě*, Croatian *najlakša stvar na svijetu*, Macedonian *наједноставната работа на светот*, Albanian *gjë e lehtë/thjeshtë në botë*, Greek *φν πῦν βρῦλ ρβγδμ εϕηθ κςμν*, Hungarian *a legegyszerűbb dolog a világon*, Finnish *maailman helpoin asia*, Estonian *lihtsaim asi maailmas*, Turkish *dünyanın en basit şeyi*, Basque *munduko gauzarik errazena*, etc.

Idioms of all languages have the superlative of an adjective (or: THE MOST + adjective) as an open slot, while the lexical-syntactic template

³ See Dobrovolskij / Piirainen 2005, 233f.

correlates with the intensification of the meaning of the adjective, ‘very, particularly’. For example: *to drive a car is the easiest thing in the world* meaning ‘to drive a car is very easy’, Italian *superare l’esame di tedesco non è la cosa più semplice del mondo* ‘to pass the German exam is not very easy’, Spanish *la preparación de un plato sabroso es la cosa más sencilla del mundo* ‘preparing a tasty dish is very simple’. Due to the typology of the languages in question, the formalization of the pattern [THE adj^{superlative} THING IN THE WORLD] (as for English) may result in different sub-formalizations such as [THE WORLD’S adj^{superlative} THING] (Swedish, Finnish), [THE THING THE MOST adj OF THE WORLD] (French), [THE MOST adj OF THE WORLD] (Spanish), and so on. The question whether these “similar” constructions can be subsumed under one generalizing model concerns the degree of abstractness in the formalization.

2 Historical excursus

Some of the topics addressed in this article have a long tradition. Interlinguistic similarities in the area of figurative expressions have attracted the attention of researchers and, above all, proverb compilers, for a long time. Multilingual proverb collections and proverb dictionaries have enjoyed great popularity in Europe since the time of Humanism and Reformation. Let us recall Hieronymus Megiserus’ *Paroemiologia Polyglottos*, in which he unveiled similarities in the figurative lexicons of a variety of classical and modern languages. His first edition from 1592 was expanded to become a collection of proverbs and proverbial sayings in more than 13 languages (final edition 1605). Various other scholars have presented extensive polyglot collections of proverbial units up to the modern age.

Erasmus of Rotterdam should be mentioned in another and wider context since he was one of the first to recognize the existence of a pattern underlying several figurative units. The first edition of his *Adagia* (1500) swelled to 4,151 monographs on proverbs and proverbial sayings in his famous *Adagiorum Chiliades* (1536) which is still a standard work for cultural studies on phrasemes. Erasmus listed “idiomatic patterns” in the sense of our category 2 above, i.e. syntactically consistent but lexically different “sayings” (*idioms* in contemporary linguistics) which convey the same abstract “proverb idea” (i.e. the same figurative meaning)⁴.

⁴ See, for example, his *adagia* (1 v 10–13) “as like as one egg to another / as milk to milk / as water to water / as bees to bees” all meaning ‘(of two persons) to resemble each other very much’ or (1 iii 80) “when I am dead the earth can burn

Modern proverb research has continued this line. Multilingual approaches have now been accompanied by structural proverb research; and efforts have been made to formalize the syntactic and logical deep semantic structures of proverbs. An early attempt is signalled in Milner's (1969) claim "that far too much attention has been given, in the past, to the meaning of proverbs, and far too little to their formal structure" and—including little-known and exotic languages—in his observation about Igbo "that in its most typical form a traditional saying is a quadripartite structure divided into two halves, each consisting of two quarters" (Milner 1969, 380f.). The structural approach to proverb studies was then implemented consistently, see Matti Kuusi's (1972) *International Type-system of Proverbs*. Let us also refer to Alan Dundes' study *On the Structure of the Proverb* (1975). His attempts to deduce "formulaic patterns" (A = B; Where there is an A ...) and semantic oppositions (few-many; always-never, little-great, etc.) from proverbs of different languages clearly show similarities with our above-mentioned categories 2 and 3.

These ideas were introduced much earlier by the Russian scholar Grigory Permyakov [Григорий Пермяков], although they were received by the Western world only later. His work *Grammar of Proverb Wisdom* (1979a), provides a logical-semiotic classification of proverbs; see also Grzybek (2004). Permyakov's logical modeling of the relation between two things, for example, can be applied to various idioms of the structures [Y out of X], [from X to Y], such as (*to make*) *a mountain out of a molehill*, German *aus einer Mücke einen Elefanten (machen)* which are common to many languages with various lexical fillings. According to Permyakov (1979b, 297), the relation can be logically modeled on a deep-semantic level [X←Y], [X→Y] (Y being something big or strong and X being something small or weak)—within the same semantic field (HILL, ANIMAL, etc.). From this perspective, the work of Permyakov and other scholars may be regarded as the simpler precursors of the form-meaning pairing carried out by Construction Grammar researchers.

To sum up, paremiologists have long been aware of the wide diffusion of figurative units across many languages and their formulaic character which can be modeled. Proverb studies were carried out on a European, if not worldwide, scale from the beginning, and included languages of non-European continents. Thus, paremiology is familiar with terms like *world*

up" / "even if earth mixes with sea" meaning 'I don't worry about the future; it doesn't matter what happens when I have gone' (Erasmus of Rotterdam 1982–2006, vol. 1, 39f. and 299).