

**Sadia Belkhir.** *Proverbs within cognitive linguistics. State of the art.* Amsterdam / Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company. 2024. Pp. 351.

Proverbs, defined as concise expressions that convey recurring rules and fragments of knowledge, and often enriched with stylistic elements, have long been a subject of interest for rhetoricians, ethnologists or linguists. Semantically, they encapsulate social values, collective wisdom, moral norms, and community identities within highly condensed and memorable forms. The development of phraseology, as a related field, has significantly advanced the study of proverbs, known as paremiology, by refining its methodological tools and frameworks. Contributions from scholars such as Röhrich and Mieder (cf. Röhrich & Mieder 1977; Mieder 1992, 2008) have been instrumental in advancing the systematization of paremiological terminology. Unlike idioms – multiword, stable, and figurative non-sentential expressions – proverbs are strongly rooted in the folk culture of societies, as evidenced by numerous comparative publications. Cross-linguistic studies of proverbs (cf. Wierzbicka 1985; Ulland & Dixon 2023) highlight universal cognitive patterns and conceptual metaphors, as well as culture-specific values and problem-solving strategies embedded in vernacular speech traditions. Numerous research studies examining the use of proverbs in press and discourse – especially with regard to their modifications – have demonstrated their significant argumentative and pragmatic functions, while contemporary constructivist publications highlight the structural versatility of proverbs, underscoring their adaptability across a range of contexts. Despite the extensive body of work on proverbs, the constantly changing research perspective and the interpretative richness of proverbs necessitate the ongoing exploration of proverbs' potential. Certainly a noteworthy book in this regard is the co-authored volume edited by Sadia Belkhir *Proverbs within cognitive linguistics. State of the art* published in 2024 by the John Benjamin Publishing Company.

The book features a comprehensive introduction by the editor and is organized into 12 chapters, divided across four distinct thematic sections: Section 1 *Theoretical discussion of proverbs in cognition and culture*, Section 2 *A cognitive-cross-cultural linguistic approach on proverbs*, Section 3 *Cognitive categories in the proverbs of individual languages and culture*, and Section 4 *Proverbs and related phenomena in a cultural-cognitive linguistic framework*.

The first section delves into the study of proverbs "from a cognitive linguistic stance, recognising the importance of considering the cultural contextual dimension featuring proverb use" (p. 14). It begins with a contribution by Zoltan Kövecses, who explores the application of his Extended Conceptual Metaphor Theory and a multilevel view of metaphor to the context-specific analysis of proverbs. The author draws attention to the difference between the interpretation of a non-proverbial and a proverbial metaphor, and emphasises the important role of context in the use and interpretation of a metaphorical proverb. These differences, he argues, stem from the much deeper cultural embeddedness of proverbial expressions.

The second paper in Section 1, *Metonymic layers in proverbs: A cross-linguistic and cross-cultural view*, authored by Mario Brdar, Rita Brdar-Szabó, and Daler Zayniev examines the role of conceptual metonymy in proverbs, presenting a valuable classification system. The authors conclude that many proverbs are rooted in metonymy, which manifests at multiple levels. These metonymic layers contribute significantly to a proverb's meaning, encompass-

ing its illocutionary force and the participants involved. The study identifies and categorizes five distinct levels of metonymic layers (p. 58), which are observed both at the holistic level of the proverb and within its individual components.

In the following piece, *Contradiction in proverbs: The role of stereotypical metaphors*, El Mustapha Lemghari explores the limitations of standard conceptual metaphors in accounting for proverbs with contradictory meanings. The author argues that stereotypical metaphors are "more crucial [...] in the process of proverb understanding" (p. 66), as their inherent flexibility allows them to address opposing concepts more effectively. This adaptability makes stereotypical metaphors better suited to explain the contradictions often found within proverbial expressions.

Paper four, entitled *Metaphors of love before and after marriage in proverbs and anti-proverbs* by Anna T. Litovkina opens the second section of the book. The paper compares love metaphors in proverbs before and after marriage, drawing on examples from Anglo-American and other cultural proverbs. It explores the evolution of conceptualizations of love. The analysis reveals a notable shift toward negative metaphors following marriage, reflecting changing cultural attitudes and perceptions of love over time.

In the subsequent piece *Proverbs of Latin and French origin in the history of English: A socio-cognitive analysis*, the author – Julia Landmann – delves into the use of proverbs borrowed from Latin and French into English, focusing on their cultural significance and emotional impact in contemporary discourse. The study shows that the majority of loan proverbs reflect the universal nature of human behaviour and society. The research also confirmed that the use of French or Latin proverbs in their unchanged original language is still a symbol of prestige and higher culture, which is why they are not used in less formal sources.

The following, sixth article – *Cognitive linguistics and expressing / interpreting proverbs in a second language* – written by Gladys Nyarko Ansah, focuses on cross-linguistic Akan-English proverb interpretation. The author addresses the question "how do native speakers of Akan who have become second language speakers of English, interpret and express proverbs across their two languages?" (p. 133). This inquiry is particularly intriguing given the typological differences between the Akan and English languages. The study places significant emphasis on the role of cultural competence in interpreting metaphoric proverbs. The findings confirm that proverbs, whether non-metaphorical or metaphorical but grounded in universal concepts, are relatively easier to interpret. In contrast, proverbs rooted in culturally specific worldviews pose greater interpretative challenges. However, the methodology employed in categorising proverbs into metaphorical and non-metaphorical groups raises questions. The author relies on Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) and uses criteria of literal and combined literal-metaphorical meanings as the basis for classification. Yet, some proverbs categorised as non-metaphorical, such as "Don't bite off more than you can chew" (p. 139), arguably exhibit both literal and metaphorical meanings. While the proposed classification appears to have a theoretical basis, the methodological description provides only partial support, suggesting that further refinement and clarification could be beneficial.

The beginning of the third section of the volume revisits the theme of love and romantic relationships, this time focusing on Greek proverbs. In Chapter seven, titled *Emotion in Greek proverbs: The case of (romantic) love*, Maria Theodoropoulou examines Greek figurative prov-

erbs on romantic love, and love in comparison to non-figurative expressions. Her analysis highlights that romantic love is depicted in a highly figurative manner and is more prevalent in proverbs than other emotions. This prevalence underscores the cultural significance of romantic love in Greek society, reflecting its central role in emotional and cultural expression.

In chapter eight that follows, Yaw Sekyi-Baidoo turns their attention to the metaphor LIVING IS MOVEMENT in Akan proverbs, exploring how proverbs reflect ideas of sustenance, progress, and security in Akan culture.

This study proceeds with the understanding that beyond target and source concepts, the Akan proverb exploits an overriding conceptualisation that connects living to movement, and that within the broad image schema of living is movement, conceptual and orientational metaphors are intricately exploited to reflect the Akan philosophy of life and its living (p. 205).

The research demonstrates that Akan proverbs about life and living are grounded in the cognitive schema of movement. Operating under the principle that living is movement, these proverbs employ conceptual metaphors to represent sustenance, progress, and security, thereby highlighting the philosophical significance of movement in achieving these core life domains. Moreover, the analysis reveals that the overall cognitive framework is structured by notions of 'outside' and 'inside,' articulated through orientational metaphors such as success is up, security is in, and failure is in.

Section 3 concludes with the contribution of Mohsen Bakhtiar *The role of Persian proverbs in framing Iran's nuclear program: A cognitive linguistic approach*. It explores the use of Persian proverbs in the discourse around Iran's nuclear program, focusing on how proverbs can influence political debates and public opinion. The study reveals that Persian proverbs are used to manipulate political discourse and shape public perceptions of the nuclear program. The author concludes his text as follows

Proverbs are shown to be appropriate tools for the conceptualisation of aspects of Iran's nuclear program as a complex issue with various dimensions. Proverbs encapsulate a bundle of integrated figurative conceptualisations that provide users with ready-to-use conceptual slots to apply to complex scenarios with multiple roles and relations. [...] The proverbial metaphors examined are shown to perform a range of functions: they are employed to obscure facts and political reality, establish and stress ideological viewpoints on the nuclear deal, raise emotions and demonise the West (p. 254).

The fourth and final section of the volume opens with Kim Ebensgaard Jensen's article, *The only good snowclone is a dead snowclone: A cognitive-linguistic exploration of the frayed ends of proverbiality*. This is a well-considered and designed study anchored in the construction grammar of *snowclones* – playful proverb-like expressions. The author argues that while *snowclones* share certain features with proverbs, they do not qualify as true proverbs. Instead, they are proverb-like constructions that lack the conventional characteristics traditionally associated with proverbs. This distinction underscores their unique role in language and highlights their departure from established proverbial norms.

In the following piece in the section 4 entitled *A cultural linguistic study of embodied Hungarian proverbs representing facial hair* by Judit Baranyiné Kóczy the reader's attention is drawn to Hungarian proverbs with "beard" and "moustache" as components. The author examines Hungarian proverbs involving facial hair, analysing their metaphorical and cultural meanings in relation to manliness, age, and wisdom. In light of the data examined, the researcher contends that moustache metaphors are mostly positive, while beard metaphors have both positive and negative connotations, reflecting cultural attitudes.

The volume's closing paper '*We are in the same storm, not in the same boat': Proverbial wisdom in environmental debates*' by Anaïs Augé concentrates on a popular modified proverb, frequently used in crisis discourses, based on the Latin sentence *in eadem navi* (see also Peil 1986; Schuppener 2020; Woźniak 2023). The author uses the climate change debates as a corpus and explores the rhetorical and cultural implications from the study. As a result of the findings, Anaïs Augé reaches the conclusion that the proverb is used in environmental discourse mainly to highlight shared struggles while acknowledging differences in individual experiences.

*Proverbs within cognitive linguistics: State of the art*, edited by Sadia Belkhir, is a commendable contribution to the fields of cognitive linguistics, cultural studies, and paremiology (the study of proverbs). The volume brings together a diverse array of perspectives, theories, and methodologies, making it a significant and timely exploration of proverbs through the lens of cognitive linguistics. What sets this volume apart is its interdisciplinary approach. It integrates cognitive and cultural dimensions, providing a holistic understanding of proverbs not only as linguistic artefacts but also as cognitive and cultural phenomena.

The theoretical discussions throughout the volume are a combination of established and recognised theories with fresh and forward-thinking. A major strength of the volume is its cross-cultural analysis of proverbs which allows for insights into the universality and specificity of proverbial expressions. Another positive aspect of the book is an empirical rigor of most of the chapters. They rely on empirical data, either from corpora, bilingual speaker studies, or real-world political and cultural discourse. However, it should be emphasized that the studies presented in the volume are mainly small-scale empirical studies. The volume lacks both large-scale and data-driven research, which would help complete the view of proverbs, and it would have enhanced the empirical grounding of many of the discussions. This would have also provided stronger evidence for the theoretical claims, making the research more compelling and reflective of current trends in cognitive linguistics.

However, the volume addresses a crucial gap in paremiological research by placing proverbs within the cognitive and cultural frameworks of linguistics. It may be a valuable resource for linguists, cognitive scientists, and cultural scholars alike. It serves as a reminder that proverbs, despite their brevity and simplicity, hold a wealth of cognitive, cultural, and linguistic insights. Despite some minor areas for improvement it is an essential contribution to linguistic scholarship, and it promises to inspire further research in cognitive and cultural linguistics for years to come.

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**Received:** 24.01.2025; **revised:** 15.03.2025

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<https://doi.org/10.14746/gj.2025.52.1.12>