

## Youth Education with Proverbs:

### A Case Study of Polish Proverbs about Work

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#### Abstract

This paper focuses on the place of metaphorical narratives in education and in young people's perceptions of work. *Paremiology*—the study of proverbs—explores cultural stipulates as scripts imprinted in proverbs, based on metaphor and metonymy, stored in collective wisdom. The article aims to present typical features of proverbs, indicating their potential in teaching: for example, helping in value clarification and career planning based on metaphorical narratives found in youth discourse.

The paper discusses theoretical and methodological issues and the potential of applying them in education. First, the basic theoretical assumptions referring to language and culture are introduced, alongside the phenomenon of reasoning through proverbs. Then, proverbs are described, and their use in cross-cultural linguistic research is justified.

The new concept of the *paremioscript* is introduced to demonstrate the power of proverbs in youth culture, and a few case studies are presented as metaphorical carriers of folk wisdom in the collective memory. The paper concerns the mechanism of valuing and embodiment in proverbs and finally discusses the advantages and limitations necessary to be considered in applying paremiology in education.

#### Keywords

Proverbs, Education culture,  
Collective memory

## 1. Language as a Carrier of Culture in Education

Education can be seen as the process of facilitating the acquisition of knowledge, values, and habits that takes place under the guidance of educators. Most formal education takes place in the interpersonal realm, shaped by literal and figurative language. Language and communication, then, are key aspects of the education process. Authors indicate the importance of language permeating all formal and informal influence in the educational universe (Lakoff & Turner, 1989). The distinction introduced by Edward T. Hall (2003) is an adequate perspective from which to see language as a powerful carrier of culture. First, language is a system of symbols and grammatical rules that we can easily learn as a basic component of the educational process. Second, language is a carrier of culture that is inaccessible through regular learning. This part of language is acquired in an unconscious socialization process and is linked to metaphors.

Language is a tool of the mind and one of the basic components of culture—at the level of ethnic groups, as well as various subcultures—and expresses a culture’s characteristic aspects: the worldviews, values, common perceptions, and behaviors of its members. To cognitivists, who claim that our language structures our thinking, what we think is also linguistic by nature: we think using a system of concepts (Sapir, 1978), and the body, the mind, the language, and the culture are seen as closely related (Black, Lakoff, & Johnson, 1981; Lakoff & Johnson, 2010). Concepts in the mind are often interpreted as built upon our sensual and bodily experiences (*embodied language*), as the process—and result—of creating concepts depends on how we experience the world.

Hence, playing crucial roles in our conceptualization, language and education are key components of the rules we acquire to live by (Lakoff & Johnson, 2010). These rules may take the form of “folk wisdoms,” repeated like mantras, often metaphorical or metonymic, such as proverbial statements, which function as kind of auto-instructions within the culture—at both the level of society and the level of individual persons (and their idio-cultures; Cole, 2017). To know the power of language as a carrier of culture, one should get to know the language of power: the internal language of commonly known and memorable statements. An indirect window that unveils the mental dialogue conditioning specific cultures might be metaphorical expressions used in a given group—such as proverbs.

Through language we communicate with others and ourselves, and we develop our own implicit “grounded theories” that help us understand reality and everyday-life behaviors (Li-Jun, 2005). Although for proverbs “theory” is not the most adequate term, as it refers to a systematic, logically consistent set of statements, proverbs certainly function as a set of certain, very powerful “hypotheses.” In this context, proverbs may be heuristically important and thus applied to investigate educational practices and mechanisms.

Proverbs are said to be the simplest form of didactic tools. They teach us how to understand and conduct our lives. Most social groups (family, tribe, school) tend to present behavior codes, or a set of good practices and guidelines, which they “teach” to their members. These groups possess a system of knowledge and “best” solutions used to address various problems, such as how to relate to work. This valuable knowledge is passed on for centuries through metaphorical statements that circulate in a given community, particularly in educational ones. Culture, then, may be seen as a set of “best practices” guiding individuals’ behavior in coping with common problems, expressed in a collection of norms, values, and symbols that are shared and transferred in the environment (Hofstede, 1980; Schein, 2004).

Proverbs by nature concern human experience and express values that a human being follows in everyday reality. A universal component of this reality in all cultures is **WORK**, which we perform in a specific way that is directly related to our cultural and educational context. If we assume that culture is a medium for satisfying the broadly understood human needs, also through work (Malinowski, 2000), then the concept of **WORK** has an exceptional position in every culture and language. Lakoff and Johnson’s (2010) statement that we are immersed

in *metaphors we live by*, paraphrased by Gibbs (2001) as *proverbial themes we live by*, may be further extended to say that there are also *proverbs we live by and work by*. Summing up, proverbs about work as a linguistic tool may support education as a space for metaphoric narratives shaping youth culture, entrepreneurship, and young peoples' attitudes toward work.

## 2. Proverbs and Culture

Proverbs are common in many (perhaps all) cultures, are used intuitively, and may be a useful indirect tool for studying a given culture (Mieder, 1993, 1995, 1997). Permiakov (1970), a paremiologist, recommended creating a “proverbial minimum” without which it is impossible to understand the given culture. How is a culture metaphorically reflected in proverbs? Language, especially proverbial language, is seen as a carrier of collective memory of procedural knowledge based on specific experiences of a certain society, and as a mirror that reflects the national culture of the *homo loquens* (Humboldt, 1999; Sapir, 1978; Whorf, 2002; Wittgenstein, 2000). Proverbs may also be regarded as primary, “innate,” natural, and intuitive linguistic phenomena (Kanyo, 1981; Kroeber, 1923/1948), so the nature of *homo sapiens* also implies the *homo proverbial loquens*.

Culture, seen as a mental program and set of values, assumptions, and norms common to the individuals in a culture (Hofstede, 1980; Schein, 2004), is not accessible directly, so we must use indirect tools to understand and assess it. Following Aristotelian taxonomy, as an inductive generalization of human experience or a basic truth, proverbs are also *apoftegmata*, that is, sayings reflecting universal truths (Rhetoric, 1394a, p. 21) that are often catchy in their acoustic and semantic form (Wołóńcziej, 2009).

The key social and mental functions of proverbs that give them power to “rule the minds” of individuals and groups are that they (1) describe natural laws and human experience, (2) explain reality using rules (with a syllogistic structure and intrinsic “logic,” working as a commonsense theory), (3) evaluate (creating positive/negative stereotypes), and (4) prescribe. As the “genetic code pattern” in culture, proverbs are invaluable sources of information in cross-cultural studies. Wilhelm Wundt (1879), considered the “father of experimental psychology,” who authored a 10-volume work on *Völkerpsychologie*<sup>1</sup>, trusted the power of introspection and experiments but was also convinced that understanding the human mind requires a totally different approach—which seems very close to the aim and methods used in contemporary cross-cultural psychology (Furumoto, 1980).

Proverbs are “never out of season” (Mieder, 1993, 1994), and proverbial thinking is a constant, vivid cultural process. Since culture is always developing, new proverbs are always being *created*<sup>2</sup>: many are passed on and survive across centuries; some evolve; others just die out. An excellent example of describing a culture using proverbs is the painting *The World Upside Down*, by Peter Bruegel, who depicted the specific culture traits of Flemish society by illustrating 118 metaphoric proverbs in the painting (Preussisches Museum, Berlin), which for ethnologists is still an important resource for better understanding 16th-century culture in Holland. In the explanation of the picture provided, each scene is described using metaphorical proverbs<sup>3</sup>. Hence, because a *proverb is the child of experience* (analyzed in Turner, 1987, and Bradbury, 2002), and is “soaked in culture,” it is a useful tool for analyses within cross-cultural studies.

<sup>1</sup>*Völkerpsychologie* (1900–1920, 10 vols.); “Elemente der Völkerpsychologie” (1912).

<sup>2</sup>Contemporary collections (Mieder, Kingsbury, & Harder, 1992; Whiting, 1989) list thousands of new proverbs.

<sup>3</sup>The painting may be seen at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Netherlandish\\_Proverbs](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Netherlandish_Proverbs) (accessed 6.01.2018).

### 3. Proverbs-What They Are

What is a proverb? It is commonly defined as a saying that has become popular and widespread and has gained the role of expressing culturally universal rules or values. It is also intuitively understood as a short statement expressing a rule or recommendation that is valid in a given culture. Proverbs are usually “familiar, fixed, sentential expressions that reflect given truths, social norms or moral concerns” (Gibbs, 2001, p. 167). However, the initial difficulty in studying proverbs is the lack of a uniform formal definition and clear agreement among paremiologists on criteria that allow differentiating linguistic expressions from proverbs, and how these concise statements differ from other common expressions (Mieder, 1993, 1997).

What makes a proverb proverbial? The class of proverbs is rather a radial one, of a prototype nature. Usually, the decision about whether an expression may be considered a proverb is based on the presence of certain characteristic features, markers of proverbiality (samples listed below), such as rhythm, rhyme, and syllogism. Most proverbs are figurative expressions based on metaphor and metonymy. If we look for specific features that make certain linguistic statements proverbial, we may also see that their syllogistic, explicative nature based on typical logical schemas that include the following (Gibbs & Beitel, 1995; Wołośńciej, 2011):

- “if p, then q” (*Jeśli nic nie robisz, le robisz*; “if you do nothing, you do wrong”)
- “as is p, so is q” (*Jaki pan, taki kram*; “as is the master, so is his shop”)
- “what is p, that is q” (*Co wiosn zasiejesz, to jesieni zbierzesz*; “what you sow in the spring, you will harvest in the autumn”)
- “where p, there q” (*Gdzie si z chci zejdzie praca, tam si hojnie trud opaca*; “where work is accompanied by will, there the effort pays off generously”)
- “who p, he q” (*Kto wiele zaczyna, ma o kooczy*; “who starts a lot, finishes little”)
- “better x, than y” (*Lepiej dzie pomyle, ni dzie bezcelowo pracowa*; “better to think for a day than to work pointlessly for one day”)
- “no p without q” (*no gain without pain*), and so forth

Because proverbs are so common in everyday speech and thought (Gibbs, 2001), they not only are used in mass media or public narratives but also perfectly fit education. They metaphorically express numerous rules and values that a human being follows in everyday talk-and in everyday work-for example, the following two functionally equivalent proverbs in Polish and German: *Ohne Fleiß kein Preis* “without effort, no award” / *Bez pracy nie ma koaczy* “without work there are no yeast cakes” (*No pain, no gain*).

### 4. Proverbs as Metaphors in Teaching

Metaphor seems to be the “backbone” of proverbial thinking and a commonly used tool in education. The following questions may arise when investigating the relationship between proverb and metaphor. How may one person’s concrete experience, expressed in a simple statement like a proverb, be seen as analogical to another person’s concrete experience? Should such relation of analogy and mapping between the domains of concrete experiences always be treated as metaphoric? What is the difference between a “mere” metaphor and a proverb?

Paremiology—the study of proverbs—is based on Aristotle’s concept of *paroimía* (Gr. “proverb”), whose key element is its metaphoricity (*Kái hái paroimíai metaforái ap éidus ep éidos eis*; “transferring in another way from one thing to another” [Rhetoric 1413a]) where *paroimía* means “to express in another (*para*) way (*óimos*)” similarly to the role of the metaphor (*metapherein*) as “to carry over, to transfer.” Many proverbs express the same message, using different metaphors-in different languages and also even within a single language. Hence, proverbs that express “the same thing” in their target domain, such as the need not to judge reality only by its

appearance, may refer to source domains of different experiences, such as in *Not all that glitters is gold / Nie wszystko zoto, co si' wiewci*; *Don't judge a book by its cover / Nie s'd' po pozorach*; *Don't judge by appearance / Pozory myl'*; *Appearances deceive / Nie szata zdobi cz'owieka*; and *It is not the robe that makes a human being beautiful / Nie wszystko zoto, co sie wiewci*.

The primary function of proverbs is not to ornament but to express sociocultural values. Through their metaphorical value, proverbs reflect our thinking (Mieder, 1993) and schemes of figurative thought that underlie numerous cognitive processes, perception, and reasoning, integrally related to memory (Gibbs, 2001; Honeck & Welge, 1997). Hence, their impact—and relevance—is greater than that of other, more concrete and context-related statements. As an inductive generalization of human experience, imprinted in language, they are a cognitive code of a given community

Metaphors, such as proverbs, are cognitive schemata that express and shape our understanding of concepts, especially abstract ones; they grasp the otherwise ungraspable and are inevitable in our language and cognitive apparatus (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Neuweg, 1999; Ortony, 1979). Assuming that proverbs are a way of conceptualizing experience, and of adopting the perspective of conceptual metaphor theory (in the sense of Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), we may see many of them as a mapping of a concrete experience or phenomenon onto a more abstract conceptual domain, which the given image concerns. Along this line, we may also say that a proverb is often a case of blending domains (a conceptual blend of, e.g., a concrete and a more abstract one) or conceptual integration (in the sense of Fauconnier & Turner, 1998).

From the point of view of their conceptual structure, proverbs as such are usually metaphors or metonyms that are often based on more than one component metaphor/metonym: we may say that they are often “complex metaphors/metonyms.” For example, using the basic framework of the conceptual metaphor theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), we may see that in *Krowa, kt'ora du'ro ryczy, ma'o mleka daje* (“a cow that moos a lot gives little milk”), the source domain is the proverb’s “literal” sense, where COW is a metaphonym/metonym of PRODUCER and generally worker, MOOING is a metaphonym/metonym of TALKING or ATTRACTING ATTENTION, and MILK is a metaphonym/metonym of PRODUCT or EFFECT, while their combination gives the following statements as the proverb’s target domain: FOCUSING ON TALKING / ATTRACTING ATTENTION MAKES ONE’S WORK INEFFECTIVE and possibly also APPEARANCES ARE MISLEADING. It is then easy to interpret this proverb in the context of various human activities involving work and its effects (a secretary chatting on the phone instead of making appointments for clients, a singer focusing on his or her image rather than practicing songs, etc.) or judging by appearance (a well-advertised product turns out to be of low quality). The German semantic equivalent of this proverb, *Je schlechter das Werk, desto lauter die Posaune* (“the worse the work, the louder the trombone”), is a similar complex metaphor.

Yet, a proverb is more than a metaphor cluster. Unlike any random metaphorical statement, however true, proverbs are “established” in a culture in that they become fixed expressions, understood similarly to idioms, repeated and passed from generation to generation, stored in cultural memory shared by the individuals, and assimilated so that their message (e.g., a rule) is often not questioned by the members of that culture and is treated as a universal truth, like a natural law. Proverbs also become perceived as “typical” for the given culture, as they express its common values and norms. Whether we should consider all proverbs as metaphoric (generic), or perhaps only certain ones, is an open issue, but metaphor and metonymy are the basic cognitive phenomena underlying the emergence and functioning of proverbs.

Thanks to their metaphorical nature, proverbs function as concise descriptions of various realities and experiences: natural phenomena of animals, plants, the weather, and so on, as well as psychosocial phenomena, such as social relations and self-observation—using minimum words to convey maximum meaning. They are

used to explain the world (*There is no smoke without a fire*); to cope with dissonance (as shown by Stalder, 2010) by excusing our failures (*Nobody is perfect; Better late than never; Serce nie suga*: “the heart cannot be tamed”); to regulate, encourage, and request certain behaviors (*Don't look a gift horse in its mouth*); and to express values (*Better a bird in the hand than two in the bush*).

## 5. Proverbs as a Powerful Tool in Learning Education

Proverbs owe their power to the fact not only that we agree with their content but also that we intuitively accept them also for their “pleasant” form. They are “catchy,” sound familiar (simple imagery, colloquial or dialect language), and often rhymed, which makes us assimilate their content almost unknowingly. Passed from generation to generation, proverbs may also be a source of antagonisms and prejudice: social, ethnic, sexist, or against certain professional groups. The occurrence of such negative phenomena confirms the claims by Halbwegs (Gensburger, 2016) that members of a given community may hold beliefs that are not based in their own direct experience—and proverbs belong to carriers of such collective memory.

The force of proverbs lies also in the fact that they are repeated. And repeating, in turn, is enabled by their mnemonic nature. They are often rich in imagery; many contain simple, easily remembered logical implications. Their form often consists of various linguistic figures (rhetorical tropes) that make them easier to remember (Arora, 1984) and may be considered markers of proverbiality. Examples of these figures, alongside with sample Polish proverbs about work, are presented in Table 1.

Please insert Table 1 about here.

Apart from their form, the semantic structure of proverbs also supports their remembering through their imagery and internal logic. They are recorded and processed in the mind through two modalities: logogenes, referring to language, and imagenes, referring to images (as proposed by Paivio, 1986). This two-system reference makes them more accessible and “at hand”: of special value are these elements within the system of language which we are consciously able to retrieve. Hence, *no pain, no gain* is much more available to our long-term memory in its unchanged form than *if you want to have money, you have to work*, for many reasons. First, it contains an image—or rather, a reference to a physical sensation of pain (also implying effort), something which every human being may relate to. Second, it is shorter. Third, it is more rhythmic, and contains rhymes. It also has a parallel structure and contains a covert implication (“if you don't have pain, you won't have gain”). The Polish counterpart of this proverb, *bez pracy nie ma kołaczy* (“without work there are no yeast cakes”), has a similar structure, and its semantic layer contains a concrete, very bodily oriented image, referring to an attractive physical object in the domain of food, which makes it even more “vivid.”

## 6. Valuing and Embodiment in Proverbs

As suggested above, proverbs indicate what is worth striving for in a given culture—its basic values. The axiological aspect is also considered one of the basic aspects of categorization, present in many—if not most—conceptualizations (Krzyszowski, 1997), and perceiving elements of reality as either good or bad is a rudimentary human tendency.

There may not be many truly universal concepts or activities, present in all cultures, but work—in some form—belongs in all of them, as it is one of the basic human activities encompassing basic values such as health, social position, money, identity, self-fulfillment, and their more sophisticated derivatives. Many proverbs about work refer to the body, a domain that is naturally one of the closest to the human being. Especially metaphors

referring to the human body and the senses are often of evaluative and based on the general conceptual metaphor PLEASANT IS GOOD, and, thus, UNPLEASANT IS BAD. This axiological aspect of proverbs generally referring to embodiment may be seen as rooted in our very early sensual experiences, already in the prenatal life (Kornas-Biela, 2011), where our nervous system enables us to learn that whatever is physically pleasant (such as sweet taste, soft and smooth surface, warm temperature, balanced position, stability, rhythm, known voices, touch and physical contact) is desired and perceived as positive, and that whatever is experienced as unpleasant or harmful (pain, bitter taste, rough and hard surface, cold temperature, unbalanced and unstable position, lack of rhythm, rapid and strange voices, no physical contact) is undesired and, thus, negative (Biela-Wołośńiej & Fornalczyk, 2011; Krzeszowski, 1997, 1999).

The axiological aspect in language is often bodily motivated (embodied). References to the domain of taste occurred in proverbs of German and Polish cultures. Metaphors referring to pleasant and unpleasant sensual experiences are especially visible in proverbs whose metaphorization relies on the source domains FRUITS and their TASTE, where WORK is often referred to BITTER:

*Arbeit hat bittere Wurzel, aber süße Frucht* (“work has tart/bitter roots, but its fruits are sweet”) and *Gorzko robi, sódsko jem* (“I do bitter, I eat sweet”) where BITTER/TART, as a metaphor for UNPLEASANT, and thus, for BAD, acquires a negative axiological charge, while SWEET, a metaphor for PLEASANT and thus, for GOOD, a positive one. The first proverb clearly expresses the axiological conflict and its balance between the negative and positive aspects of WORK, in that despite certain negatively charged features of the process of work (bitter ROOTS—metaphor of ORIGIN), its EFFECTS (referred to by the source domain of FRUITS) are positive, and WORK is thus altogether valued positively.

The proverbs about work based on the source domain TASTE have a similar structure and attribute a positive axiological charge to WORK:

- *Praca jest sola zycia*, “work is the salt of life,” where SALT, a metonym of SPICE, is a metaphor of IMPROVEMENT or a similar positively loaded domain.
- *Arbeit macht das Leben süß*, “work makes life sweet”; *Praca jest ostoda zycia*, “work is the sweetness of life”; and *Bez pracy odpoczynek niesódski*, “without work rest is not sweet”; *Nie znaja tego próznacy, jak sódsko odpoczac po pracy*, “lazyheads don’t know how sweet it is to rest after work”; where SWEET metaphorically refers to PLEASANT, and thus, to GOOD.

Although SALTY and SWEET are often considered opposing tastes (and the valuing of SALTY varies), here both are valued positively, as SPICE that adds a desired taste, as summarized by another proverb:

- *Arbeit ist des Lebens Würze*, “work is the spice of life”; *Arbeit würzt jede Speise* “work spices up any dish.”

These embodied metaphorical conceptualizations might be stronger or more universal than references to other domains—the sweet and salty taste were positively charged elements in both Polish and German proverbs, and the source domains and imagery in them were very similar. On the other hand, other, less bodily conceptualizations are often figuratively realized by metaphors whose source domains differ more, even if they are similar, for example *Tonacy chwyta sie brzytwy*, “a sinking man grasps a blade”; and *In der Not greift man nach dem rettenden Strohalm*, “one in emergency grabs a rescue straw.” Here, the source domain for the rescuing tool is either a BLADE or a STRAW, accordingly. Physical sensations as a source domain of metaphors may be more “deeply rooted” in proverbs internationally, and thus more “stable” in the various

language versions of proverbs—while other source domains vary more. This might indicate that embodied metaphorizations are more easily understood, “familiar,” and more natural—and thus are more easily remembered and remain unaltered in many international proverbs, but this hypothesis requires more cross-cultural evidence.

Most proverbs about work focus on its positively loaded aspect of effectiveness (bringing about good, and thus itself good), such as the following examples used in the study: *Lenistwo początkiem złego/Müßiggang ist aller Laster Anfang*, “idleness is the beginning of all evil”; *Większe dobro z większą przychodzi pracą*, “greater good comes with greater work”; *Arbeit pflanzt Rosen auf die Wangen*, “work plants roses on the lips.” However, others refer to its negatively charged aspects: *Pracuj, pracuj, a garb ci sam wyrośnie*, “work, work, and your hunchback will grow by itself”; *Od pracy nawet konie zdychają*, “even horses die from working”; *Gdyby praca dawała bogactwo, młyny należałyby do osłów*, “if work gave wealth, the mills would belong to the donkeys.”

As we see, there also exist proverbs having a mutually disjunctive axiological charge, even within one culture, which means that the realities they refer to may be multidimensional and ambiguous. This means not that the cognitive system of conceptualizations contained in proverbs is internally inconsistent but that the mutually opposing proverbs are actually complementary (Wołośńciej, 2009). To Yankach (1984), oppositions appear because—although they are universal truths—proverbs are valid only in certain situations: only in contextual, personal usage do proverbs operate efficiently as social strategies, whereas proverbs out of context, for example in collections, are “dead.”

Proverbs in normal discourse are not contradictory at all, and they usually make perfect sense to the speaker and listener (Wołośńciej, 2010). In the case of WORK, it also results from the need of balance between work and rest: as, on the one hand, work gives health, but on the other hand, hard work may take health away—hence, it is usually beneficial and good to work, but work itself is hard, and excessive work is bad. However, proverbs where the concept of work would be negatively charged were not found among the German proverbs (whose collection was substantially larger), which seems not a coincidence.

Anti-proverbs, which occasionally emerge in response to a given culture, usually with reference to the already existing set of proverbs (but distorting them, often in a parody), reflect new phenomena, such as those related to the culture of worklessness in *If work gives health, let the ill work*.

## 7. Paremioscripts as a New Technique in Teaching and Learning

If we treat culture as a means to satisfy needs (Malinowski, 2000) and as a set of frequently applied universal solutions (Schein, 2004), then scripts contained in proverbs, that is, paremioscripts, may be seen as instructions for satisfying one’s needs and solving problems. For example, proverbs about work are an imprint of the work culture, stored in collective memory, and figuratively express the rules and value of effective work.

A *paremioscript* is a type of a cognitive and behavioral script expressed in language through proverbs. However, as opposed to the most common understanding of scripts, which refer to concrete solutions, paremioscripts, as figurative expressions, do not necessarily concern recommendations and explanations of concrete situations but occur as rather general and less contextual patterns of behavior that may be activated in various analogical contexts. For example, it is clear that the scripts in proverbs like *Don’t sail out farther than you can row back*; *We cannot direct the wind, but we can adjust the sails*; and *One should learn to sail in all winds* refer not only to recommended behaviors at sea but to many other situations in life that imply a possibly analogical problem involving self-management, self-awareness, and a long-term perspective in any context.

As a carrier of procedural knowledge (e.g., referring to human resources management, like in *Too many cooks spoil the broth*), a paremioscript shapes the pattern of human experience and suggests certain behaviors and thoughts. To sum up, proverbs may function as a specific type of cognitive script (Schank & Abelson, 1988) that we may call *paremioscripts*, as they have the role of learned and memorized recommendations, ready and “available” in the mind of an individual as well as in the collective memory as “ready to use solutions” (Boyer & Wertsch, 2009).

The viability of proverbs that resist the passing of time, and that are integral building blocks of culture, indicates that they play significant cognitive and sociolinguistic roles (Mieder, 1993). Proverbs that lose their power to describe, explain, and solve our everyday problems, or that do not comply with the priorities promoted in a given group, die out. Proverbs may also be treated as part of the vivid collective memory of a given cultural group (Wołośńciej, 2013). Every culture develops through acquiring and storing the common knowledge of its members about who they are and how to live. Experience is the most powerful factor of learning; thus, proverbs, as an imprint of experience, have the potential to be carriers and creators of culture.

Proverbs are not an “individual property” but always function within a group. The concepts of collective memory (Halbwachs, 1992) and cultural memory, an “outer dimension of human memory” (Assmann, 1997, p. 19), point to the fact that memory should be analyzed also with regard to the group when studying social phenomena (Assmann, 2001; Wołośńciej, 2013). To Halbwachs (1992), talking about the personal memory of an individual, one must always refer to the public sphere of memory. In this perspective, the commonly used proverbs become carriers of culturally specific convictions, evaluations, and solutions.

Halbwachs (1992) sees the “collective self-image” as reflected in language, whose key factor is spoken language and everyday communication. Hence, every group member, with his or her set of self-instructions, resembling internal speech, is a creator of collective memory that stores proverbs. Proverbs are proverbs insofar as they are shared within a group. Without the context of collective memory (and, hence, also proverbs), we have very limited access to individual memory (Wołośńciej, 2013).

To Assmann (1997), cultural memory is a way to provide continuity of life to a given community, where in using the so-called cultural mnemonics, it preserves, passes, and reconstructs collective knowledge of many generations, allowing them to maintain their cultural identity. These cultural mnemonics include proverbs and proverblike expressions that figuratively store and pass certain key truths. He sees memory and language as always embedded in a given community, although it is a memory of a concrete individual and his or her experiences from the past.

The advantage of collective memory is that it allows us to learn from the experience of others; for example, the fact that work requires motivation may be metaphorically expressed by proverbs whose source domains refer to various experiences, rarely our own ones, as in the following Polish proverbs: *Kiepskiej baletnicy przeszkadza rąbek u spódnicy*, “a poor ballerina is disturbed even by the edge of her dress”; *Dla leniwego robotnika każdy młot jest ciężki*, “for a lazy worker every hammer is heavy”; *Leniwemu baranowi cięży jego wełna*, “to a lazy ram his own wool is a burden”; *Dobry krawiec to i patykiem zeszyje*, “a good tailor can saw even with a stick”; *Leniwego i mąka w ręce kole*, “for a lazyhead even flour makes his hands sore.” Thus, even having never experienced being a ballerina or a lazy ram, we can recognize the target domain of the metaphor and the potential reference to our real-world experience in a different context.

## 8. Proverbs in Education and Career Guidance of Youth

Proverbs are omnipresent in educational practices. They may also be effectively applied to help young people construct their future careers. Searching for new teaching strategies is a permanent assignment of all teachers, who should constantly seek new ways to increase introspection and self-awareness in young people by stimulating a constructive internal dialogue related to the crystallization of their vocational self.

The essence of this process may be metaphorically expressed as an internal dialogue of the young person that aims to clarify their self-image in terms of their own career and the role they should play in society. The concept of the dialogical self, proposed in the theory of Hermans (Hermans & Gieser, 2012), shows new perspectives for vocational guidance and the way to explore the mechanisms of affective disorders in the sphere of language, commonly used expressions, and culture. The narrative-psychology approach assumes that the self is dialogical. It is inspired by the philosophy of dialogue and literature that describes the nature of the polyphonic self and may be traced to the works of William James, Mikhail Bakhtin, and Martin Buber.

One of the most intriguing latest findings in psycholinguistics explains how language affects the way one thinks, feels, and perceives the world. People need to understand themselves as well as the world—for example, the reality of their career—so that they develop their own implicit theories to help them understand their vocational role, professional performance, and everyday behaviors (Li-Jun, 2005).

Language is a tool of the mind that people use to categorize experience, and it organizes our own conception of the career reality and vocational self. We often experience that which we think is closely related to the language and narratives we live by (Black et al., 1981; Lakoff, 1989). Language may be seen as a mirror that reflects the thoughts of *homo loquens* (Humboldt, 1999; Sapir, 1978; Whorf, 2002; Wittgenstein, 2000), and there is strong proof of how language, and specifically narratives as building blocks of the self, might influence the construction of one's future career (Berne, 1964).

Language is a cognitive tool that serves to categorize experiences (Black et al., 1981; Fauconnier & Turner, 1998); hence, in the mind of the user of the narratives, it may evoke different mental representations of the self-image of the particular career actor. Although empirical support for linguistic determinism—in other words, the idea that linguistic structures determine the way we think—is limited (Ritchie, 2003), language remains deeply implicated in human cognition and strongly affects perception, categorization, memory, attention, and problem-solving processes (Hunt & Agnoli, 1991).

Narrative-psychology researchers suggest that our capacity to narrate, understand, and integrate our most important life stories may be a key to creating the image of the self (Angus, 2012; Angus & Greenberg, 2011). Many clinicians and researchers confirm the key role of self-narrative and personal stories in therapy and counseling.

In regard to narrative psychology and the concept of the internal polyphony and dialogical self (Hermans & Hermans-Jansen, 1995), the phenomenon of internal speech is understood as a way to connect past experience with the ongoing, present decisions of the individual. Self-narratives condition one's coherence and stability over time, providing an explanation for one's different, inconsistent beliefs about one's future vocational role and performance in a specific work environment (Angus & Greenberg, 2011)

Hermans and Gieser (2012) show how the conceptual apparatus of the dialogical self describes the dynamics of psychotherapy, while Gonçalves (Gonçalves, Ribeiro, Mendes, Matos, & Santos, 2011) shows the applicability of the dialogical self and internal narrative techniques and phases for priming new adequate paths of perception and understanding of oneself and the world in the process of vocational guidance. Arnett (2016)

describes the abstract construction process of the self (self-making) as a kind of synthesis where the self is the catalyzing space emerging in the process of constant negotiation and renegotiation of typical narratives and positions of “I.”

An interesting mechanism in the context of the polyphonic self is the reconstruction of the most typical self-instructions that guide the way one perceives the world and oneself. Nir (2016) describes the process of internal negotiations of the dialogical self and creation of ways of resolving internal conflicts that may occur while seeking one’s vocational path. And Dimaggio (Dimaggio, Salvatore, Azzara, & Catania, 2003) gives examples of how to reorganize these dialogues in the process of counseling in the sphere of intra- and interpersonal dialogues.

Hermans and Gieser’s (2012) concept of the dialogical self refers to the internal speech and narratives that may arise in self-awareness, analogic to the system circulating in the community of young people searching for their vocational self. The nature of the self is inseparably linked to the embodied experience of polyphony rooted in the social environment. This theoretical perspective tends to locate sources of possible vocational-identity problems in the sociocultural context of youth, with an emphasis on the role of internal dialogue. An example of certain commonly used metaphoric statements related to typical strategies, the role of mistakes, and life-strategy solutions applicable in vocational counseling is the following list of positive, constructive, and powerful proverblike narratives that may serve in counseling practice:

- *We cannot direct the wind, but we can adjust the sails.*
- *There is no wind that blows right for the sailor who doesn’t know where the harbor is.*
- *Raise your sail one foot and you get ten feet of wind.*
- *Smooth seas do not make skillful sailors.*
- *Fear blows wind into your sails.*
- *Big ships sail on big debts.*
- *One should learn to sail in all winds.*
- *Don’t sail out farther than you can row back.*
- *Make not your sail too big for your ballast.*
- *It is good rowing with the sail set.*

Angus and Greenberg (2011) also view self-narrative representations as guiding future actions and note that life satisfaction often depends on how events conform to our narrative expectations. Accordingly, the verbalization and consolidation of a self through narratives becomes an important part of the constructive change process and enduring personal change.

The theoretical background of narrative psychology allows us to combine two seemingly distant fields such as vocational counseling and paremiology (the study of proverbs). Conceptual apparatus and methodology of youth guidance based on the dialogical self-concept may be considered a new promising path for analysis of the nature of career interests and typical strategies in career navigation.

Hermans and Gieser (2012) in their work in mainstream narrative psychology assume that the system of self is constituted by the multiplicity position “I” (“I-positions”). That narrative approach coincides with proverb thinking (Gibbs, 2001). In this sense we may state that the phenomenon of using common proverbial narratives is a form of externalizing the hidden process of internal speech described by dialogical self theory and embodied in typical proverbs of, for example, individuals seeking their vocational identity. This offers a new perspective for counseling practice.

According to the narrative approach, change in self-narratives may underlie successful vocational intervention, and proverbs (as mini stories) may play a significant role in facilitating narration of specific experiences necessary to help young people in their career construction. As such, Angus and McLeod (2004) advised that internalized self-narratives may have as much impact on guiding actions and behavior as dispositional traits, and that when

counselors help clients construct new self-narrative representations, they are in fact influencing the personalities of vocational guidance clients.

We may assume that young people struggling to find their right place and path in the complex vocational reality are somehow imprisoned in their “personal stories,” struggling to define and express themselves because of their emotional and cognitive condition. In the attempt to articulate themselves, they often use the language of metaphors, images, and common sayings, through which they find it easier to capture and convey their feelings and state of mind.

Summing up, the theory of the dialogical self contributes to analyzing the daily discourse of young people to better understand their interests, contextualized in their education and the labor market reality, and to help them to create their own successful personal story (Bruner, 2004).

## 9. Conclusions

The advantages of using proverbs in teaching are many. First, the practice permits indicating the elements of collective memory and seriously considers the cultural limitations of the educational process. When applying proverbs, one must be especially careful, because proverbs are context-sensitive, and it may be a challenge to find narratives that are semantically adequate. Thus, proverbs must be very carefully selected to find the most appropriate and understandable proverbs for the sociocultural context of young people (Wołośńciej, 2010).

The strength of applying proverbs is that, on the one hand, they come from the local culture and, on the other hand, they express universal rules. Hence, applying proverbs does not impose artificially created narratives but uses familiar stimuli, the code already present in a culture. Using figurative expressions (metaphors, metonymies), the methodology comes nearer to the nature of human cognitive processing and possibly to the nature of the human mind. We may say that it respects both the culture and the human being; however, it requires certain “pre-conditions,” namely to assess how familiar and how comprehensible the proverbs are.

Another challenge is the existence of mutually contradicting proverbs as mentioned above. Proverbs with an opposing content coexist in a culture (*don't leave for tomorrow what you can do today / haste makes waste*), and their occurrence is neither an inconsistency, nor a coincidence, within a culture—they are complementary, and each refers to a different aspect of the multidimensional reality.

The proposed technique of applying paremiology in education is to answer the challenge of *culture-bound* education. Thus, the language of proverbs may become a window to a better understanding of what drives people's thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. They help us to better understand young people with their cultures. Proverbial expressions applied in education are not only its markers but also carriers of specific values and norms, implementing the cultural context of teaching equipped with commonly used, metaphoric narratives and making them useful factors of collective memory working as typical paremioscripts.

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