https://doi.org/10.36007/5390.2026.518

THERE IS NO TIME LIKE THE PLEASANT: TIME SEEN THROUGH PROVERBS AND ANTI-PROVERBS

Anna T. LITOVKINA[36]

ABSTRACT

The focus of this study is on the ways how time is viewed and conceptualized in the body of Anglo-American proverbs and anti-proverbs (or proverb transformations). My discussion is organized in two parts. After the introduction I demonstrate the background of research and terminology. The second—and the main part of the study—is devoted to different mechanisms of proverb variation in Anglo-American anti-proverbs about time, e.g., replacing a single word, punning, adding new words.

KEYWORDS

anti-proverb, Anglo-American, time, cognitive linguistic approach

THE FOCUS OF THE STUDY

In this study, I discuss the ways how time is viewed and conceptualized in the body of Anglo-American proverbs and anti-proverbs (i.e., deliberate proverb innovations, also known as alterations, parodies, transformations, variations, wisecracks, mutations, or fractured proverbs).

My discussion is organized in two parts. In the first part of the study, I briefly demonstrate the background of research and terminology. The second—and the main part of the study—is devoted to the analysis of Anglo-American anti-proverbs about time. At first, I list the proverbs containing the word 'time' and numbers of their transformations (13 proverbs and 117 anti-proverbs). Then, I treat different mechanisms of proverb variation in Anglo-American anti-proverbs about time. I examine various mechanisms of proverb variation, as well as I treat various types of semantic change occurring with proverbs during their modification. Although proverb transformations arise in a variety of forms, several types stand out. The focus of my last section is on different mechanisms of proverb variation in Anglo-American anti-proverbs about time (which are by no means mutually exclusive). I demonstrate numerous mechanisms of proverb variation: e.g., replacing a single word, punning, adding new words, substituting two or more words, changing the second part of the proverb, repeating words, melding two proverbs, word order reversal, etc.

The material for the investigation of American proverbs comes primarily from the largest dictionary of American proverbs: *A dictionary of American proverbs* (1992) by Wolfgang Mieder et al., as well as *The Prentice Hall encyclopedia of world proverbs: A Treasury of wit and wisdom through the ages* (Mieder, 1986). The examples cited from languages other than American English mainly come from the following proverb collection (Mieder, 1986) and other collections as well.

The Anglo-American anti-proverbs discussed in the present study were taken primarily from American and British written sources. The texts of anti-proverbs were drawn from

[36] Dr. habil. T. Litovkina Anna, PhD, J. Selye University, Faculty of Education, Department of English Language and Literature, litovkinaa@ujs.sk

hundreds of books and articles on puns, one-liners, toasts, wisecracks, quotations, aphorisms, maxims, quips, epigrams, and graffiti the vast majority of which have been published in two dictionaries of anti-proverbs compiled by Wolfgang Mieder and Anna Tóthné Litovkina: *Twisted wisdom: Modern anti-proverbs* (Mieder & Tóthné Litovkina, 1999) and *Old proverbs never die, they just diversify: A collection of anti-proverbs*" (Litovkina & Mieder, 2006).

BACKGROUND OF RESEARCH AND TERMINOLOGY

For centuries, proverbs have provided a framework for endless transformation. In recent decades, the modification of proverbs has taken such proportions that sometimes we can even meet more proverb transformations than traditional proverbs. Wolfgang Mieder has invented a term *anti-proverb* (or in German *Antisprichwort*) for such deliberate proverb innovations, also known as alterations, parodies, transformations, variations, wisecracks, mutations, or fractured proverbs. This term has been widely accepted by proverb scholars all over the world as a general label for such innovative alterations and reactions to traditional proverbs. Mieder has published several collections of anti-proverbs in both German and English (e.g., see T. Litovkina & Mieder, 2006; Mieder & Tóthné Litovkina, 1999).

As Mieder and T. Litovkina pointed it out: "It should be noted that while some anti-proverbs negate the "truth" of the original piece of wisdom completely, the vast majority of them put the proverbial wisdom only partially into question, primarily by relating it to a particular context or thought in which the traditional wording does not fit. In fact, the "anti" component in the term "anti-proverb" is not directed against the concept of "proverb" as such." (T. Litovkina & Mieder, 2006: 5). Although the name introduced by Wolfgang Mieder has been accepted by many proverb scholars worldwide, it is also worth noting the opinion of scholars who have stated that not all anti-proverbs are opposed to proverbs, and have suggested avoiding the prefix *anti-* ("against"), for example, by using the prefix *para-* ("beside") (for more, see T. Litovkina et al., 2021; Hrisztova et al., 2023).

Anti-proverbs may contain revealing social comments (*American money talks in just about every foreign country* (McKenzie, 1980: 343) {Money talks}[37]), but they may also be based on mere wordplay or puns, and they may very often be generated solely for the goal of deriving play forms (*A fool and his monkey are soon parted* (Margo, 1982) {A fool and his money are soon parted}). The vast majority of anti-proverbs are the products of the playfulness of a solitary author; they do not catch on. Typically, an anti-proverb will elicit humour only if the traditional proverb upon which it is based is also known, thus allowing the reader or listener to perceive the incongruity (violation of expectation) between the two expressions. Otherwise, the innovative strategy of communication based on the juxtaposition of the old and 'new' proverb is lost.

Among the main mechanisms of proverb variation are replacing a single word, substituting two or more words. changing the second part of the proverb, adding new words, omitting words adding literal interpretations, melding two proverbs. punning, etc. Many anti-proverbs include several ways of transformation (for more on the background of research and terminology, see T. Litovkina et al., 2021).

All's fair for anti-proverbs—there is hardly a topic that anti-proverbs do not address. Among the most frequent themes discussed in proverb alterations are women (see T. Litovkina,

[37] For the reader's ease all anti-proverbs in this study are followed by their original forms, given in { } brackets.

2005, 2018a), sexuality (see T. Litovkina, 2011b; 2018a, pp. 149–170; T. Litovkina & Mieder, 2019: 65–79), professions and occupations (see T. Litovkina, 2011a, 2013, 2016), marriage and love (T. Litovkina, 2017; 2018a; 2018b; 2024a; T. Litovkina & Mieder, 2019), money (T. Litovkina 2025a–2025d), children (T. Litovkina 2024b). Without any doubt, time is also a very frequent theme in Anglo-American anti-proverbs.

THE ANALYSIS OF ANGLO-AMERICAN ANTI-PROVERBS ABOUT TIME

This part of the study is devoted to the analysis of Anglo-American anti-proverbs about time. At first, I list the proverbs containing the word "time" and numbers of their transformations (13 proverbs and 117 anti-proverbs). Then, I treat different mechanisms of proverb variation in Anglo-American anti-proverbs about time. I examine various mechanisms of proverb variation, as well as I treat various types of semantic change occurring with proverbs during their modification.

Proverbs about time and numbers of their transformations

The 13 proverbs containing the word "time" and transformed from Litovkina and Mieder's anti-proverb collections (Mieder & Tóthné Litovkina, 1999; T. Litovkina & Mieder, 2006) are listed below. Each proverb is followed by a number in parentheses indicating the number of anti-proverbs that I have been able to locate for it:

You can fool some of the people all the time, all the people some of the time, but you can't fool all the people all the time. (31)
A stitch in time saves nine. (20)
Time is money. (15)
Time and tide wait for no man. (13)
Time flies. (9)
Time heals all wounds. (9)
There's no time like the present. (6)
Procrastination is the thief of time. (4)
Time will tell. (3)
There's a time and place for everything. (3)
These are the times that try men's souls. (2)
There's a time for everything. (1)
Time works wonders. (1)

Main mechanisms of proverb variation

Although proverb transformations arise in a variety of forms, several types stand out. The focus of this section is on different mechanisms of proverb variation in Anglo-American anti-proverbs about time (which are by no means mutually exclusive). I demonstrate now three of the most common mechanisms of proverb variation: replacing a single word, punning, and adding new words, with some representative examples.

Replacing a single word

Very popular are such proverb parodies that pervert the basic meaning of a proverb by simply replacing a single word. The authors of our anti-proverbs very often try to find a word phonologically similar to one from the original proverb:

> *A stick in time saves nine.* (Barbour, 1963, p. 100) {A stitch in time saves nine}

This type of alteration is very frequently combined with some other mechanisms of variation (see numerous sections below).

Punning

Punning is one of the most popular techniques of proverb variation. In this section, I treat the most frequent types of punning in Anglo-American anti-proverbs about time: paronyms and homonyms. I also briefly consider some other types of puns, e.g., double puns and story puns.

The following examples might be called *paronomastic* or "imperfect" puns (non-identical in sound, i.e., based on paronymy, for more on paronomastic puns in Anglo-American anti-proverbs, see T. Litovkina, 2005, pp. 57–61, 2006, 2009b):

> *A bitch in time saves nine*. (Crosbie, 1977, p. 48) {A stitch in time saves nine}
> *Dime is money*. (Margo, 1982) {Time is money}
> *There is no time like the pleasant*. (Anonymous, 1908, p. 35) {There is no time like the present}
> *Time and tyke wait for no man*. (Plummer & Ashforth, 1997) {Time and tyke wait for no man}

A word is sometimes substituted by a similar-sounding word with a sexual connotation:

> *Procreation is the thief of time*. (Rees, 1980, p. 103) {Procrastination is the thief of time}

Numerous proverbs in our material have provided good models for exploiting ambiguity through the use of a single word that is polysemous (i.e., having two meanings) or two words that are homonymous (i.e., having identical graphemic and phonemic representation). Puns of this nature are referred to in our study as *homonymous*, or "perfect" (Hockett, 1972, p. 157) puns (for homonymous puns in Anglo-American anti-proverbs, see T. Litovkina, 2005, pp. 62–71, 2006, 2009b).

Certain ambiguous words have become real favorites of punsters in our material (T. Litovkina, 2005, 2006). Two of such favourites in Anglo-American anti-proverbs are words *time* and *present*. The two anti-proverbs below, apparantly all in the form of wellerisms, both of which are based on different proverbs, play on the polysemy of the word *time* (which in these examples refers to either a watch or clock):

> *"Time is money," as the man said when he stole the patent lever watch.* (Mieder & Kingsbury, 1994, p. 138) {Time is money}
> *"How time flies," as the monkey said when it threw the clock at the missionary*. (Mieder & Kingsbury, 1994, p. 139) {Time flies}

The following two alterations of the proverb *There is no time like the present* play on the word *present*, which adopts here another meaning as well (i.e., 'gift'). Furthermore, while in the first proverb transformation the word *gift* substitutes the word *time* of original proverb, the second anti-proverb contains the word *present* twice, first time in the original text of the proverb, second time in addition to it, adopting the meaning of a word *gift*:

> *There's no gift like the present.* (Crosbie, 1977, p. 261)
> *There is no time like the present for a present*. (Esar, 1952, p. 91)

The last pun could be called a *repetetive pun*.

According to L. G. Heller, "[i]n theory one may have any number of puns embedded in the same utterance" (Heller, 1974, p. 280). (for double and triple puns in Anglo-American anti-proverbs, see T. Litovkina, 2005, 2009a). In just a few anti-proverbs about time, a *double pun* appears.

In the following parody of the proverb *There is no time like the present* the first pun plays on the word "present," which, similarly to the last two examples in the previous section, also adopts another meaning (i.e., gift), and the second pun, similarly to the first two examples in the previous section, gives a different connotation of the word "time" (i.e., watch). In addition, a word order reversal occurs here as well (words "present" and "time" change their positions). While the first pun is an example of a homonymous, or "perfect" double pun, the second one is an "imperfect" double pun (non-identical in sound, i.e., based on paronymy):

> *I gave my wife a watch for her birthday. I figure there's no present like the time*. (Henny Youngman, in Berman, 1997)
> *A switch in time saves crime*. (McKenzie, 1980, p. 75) {A stitch in time saves nine}

Let us now take a look at an example of a mixed double pun (combination of a perfect and imperfect pun). In the following parody of the proverb *There is no time like the present* the first pun plays on the word *present*, which adopts here another meaning (i.e., gift), while the word *time* is transformed into the title of the newspaper, *the Times* (there is also a transposition of punning words):

> *There's no present like* ***the Times***. (New York Times advertisement). (New York Times Book Review, January 2, 1977, p. 24)

In some stories (particularly fables and jokes) the moral is framed as a parodied proverb. Some stories end with the quotation of an anti-proverb in the form of a pun. John Farman uses such anti-proverbs to provide punchlines for each of the short stories in his book *You can't tell a rook by its cover*, the title of which is also a paronomastic pun based on the alteration of the proverb *You can't tell a book by its cover* (see Farman, 1989). Such stories are sometimes known as shaggy dog stories (for shaggy dog stories, see Brunvand 1963). Binsted and Ritchie (2001, p. 275) call this particular class of joke the *story pun*. This class of joke "consists of an anecdote, which is sometimes quite long and often has no inherently humorous content, followed by a final line which is a distorted form of some well-known phrase, proverb or quotation. Usually, this final line purports to summarize or draw a moral from the preceding

story" (for a model of story puns, see Binsted & Ritchie, 2001). Let us observe four examples of such stories.

The first two stories use transformations of the proverb *A stitch in time saves nine* as a punchline:

> *A G.I. returned from Germany with an antique beer mug. To keep it safe, he put it in a special recess in his grandfather's clock. As the G.I. and his grandfather both lived in California, it was only a matter of time before an earthquake happened, and when it did, the clock was destroyed. But, amazingly, the beer mug hidden in the clock was safe. Which only goes to prove that* ***a niche in time saves stein***. (Jennings, 1980, p. 122)
> *The famous if sometimes unintelligible Gertrude Stein was about to cross the Champs-Elysées in Paris one afternoon when she paused to rub a mosquito bite on the back of her neck. Just then an automobile out of control careered down the avenue, missing Gertrude by a matter of seconds – and inches. Miss Stein's companion, Alice B. Toklas, murmured thankfully,* "***An itch in time saves Stein***." (Cerf, 1968, p. 81)

In both punchlines above the words "stitch" and "nine" are changed on phonological base, i.e., the substitution of two words occur. The proverb *A stitch in time saves nine* is simply reduced in its transformations to the formula "*A X in time saves Y"* in which the words *stitch* and *nine* are substituted by whatever seems better to fit the needs of modern times.

The change of two words on phonological base occurs in the following example as well:

> *Why am I standing on these newspapers? My feet are wet.* ***These are the Times that dry men's soles.*** (Crosbie, 1977, p. 106) {These are the times that try men's souls}

Let us finish this section with quoting a story pun based on the two meanings of the word *time* discussed above:

> *Going through the woods one day, a man came upon a boy with an apple on his head and a stopwatch in his hand. "What are you trying to do?" asked the man. Without moving, the boy answered out of the side of his mouth*, "***Time Will Tell.***" (Crosbie, 1977, p. 361) {Time will tell}

Adding new words

Many proverb transformations keep the actual text of the original proverb intact, but add new words, or a tail, to it. Evan Esar calls this type of twisted proverbs "the extended proverb." According to his opinion, this is the most extensive class of proverb alteration. "The popularity of the extended proverb is due to the ease with which all proverbs can thus be transformed" (Esar, 1952, p. 201). Some of proverb transformations of this type have become proverbial in themselves, for example, *An apple a day keeps the doctor away, and an onion a day keeps everyone away; Absence makes the heart grow fonder—for somebody else; A new broom sweeps clean, but the old one knows the corners*. In a few cases, only one word is added to the original proverb text. In the vast majority of anti-proverbs about time a phrase, a sentence or even a few sentences are added to the proverb text:

> *You can fool some of the people all of the time, and all of the people some of the time, but you cannot fool all of the people all of the time... Don't be greedy; fooling some of the people all of the time is good enough.* (Berman, 1997, p. 143) {You can fool some of the people all of the time, and all of the people some of the time, but you cannot fool all of the people all of the time}

It is amazing with what ease some proverbs (e.g., *Time is money; Time is a great healer; Time and tide wait for no man*) have been extended into a great number of twists of this kind.

Let us observe three transformations of the proverb *Time is money:*

> *There's time for everything—if you're selective*. (Lubran, 1985) {There's time for everything}
> *Time is money, especially when you're having the time of your life*. (Esar, 1968, p. 183) {Time is money}
> *Time is money, especially when you're talking to a lawyer or buying a commercial*. (Frank Dane, in Lieberman, 1984, p. 245) {Time is money}

As we have seen from the three examples above, the additions are introduced by the conjunction *if* and the adverb *especially*, emphasizing the truthfulness of the original proverbs transformed. In numerous cases, however, the added elements are introduced by the conjunction *but*: it emphasizes the contradiction to the wisdom in the proverb. For instance, the transformations of the proverb *Time and tide wait for no man* below are all introduced by the conjunction *but* and contain commentaries that put the wisdom of a proverb into question or negate it completely:

> *Time and tide wait for no man*
> *But a woman expects all three to wait for her*. (Safian, 1967, p. 20)
> *Time and tide wait for no man—but a woman will*. (McKenzie, 1980, p. 558)
> *Time and tide wait for no man—But time always stands still for a woman of thirty*. (Wurdz, 1904)
> *Time and tide wait for no man, but time always stands still for a woman of thirty*. (Robert Frost, in McLellan, 1996, p. 225)
> *Time and tide wait for no man*
> *But time always stands still for a woman's birthday*. (Safian, 1967, p. 25)
> *Time waits for no man, but it usually hesitates a while for a woman of twenty-nine*. (Esar, 1968, p. 812)

Observe some additional anti-proverbs with the conjunction *but*:

> *Time is a great healer, but it's far from being a beauty specialist.* (Safian, 1967, p. 14) {Time is a great healer}
> *Time is money, but not when you're doing it in jail.* (Esar, 1968, p. 632) {Time is money}

Doubts about the truthfulness of a proverb may be also expressed by adding the modal *may* to the original proverb, followed by a commentary (usually introduced by the conjunction *but*) questioning the truth of the proverb:

> *Procrastination may be the thief of time, but it breeds time-and-a-half*. (Esar, 1968, p. 569) {Procrastination is the thief of time}
> *Time may be money, but it's much easier to persuade a man to give you his time than to lend you his money*. (McKenzie, 1980, p. 51) {Time is money}

The extended type of proverb variation and parody can be clearly shown through *wellerisms*. Wellerisms, named for Charles Dickens' character Samuel Weller, are particularly common in the USA, Great Britain and Ireland (see Mieder & Kingsbury, 1994, Mieder, 1989, pp. 223–238, Mieder, 1982, Mieder & Bryan, 1994, Williams, 2002). This form of folklore is normally made up of three parts: 1. a statement (which often consists of a proverb or proverbial phrase), 2. a speaker who makes this remark, and 3. a phrase that places the utterance into an unexpected, contrived situation. The meaning of the proverb is usually distorted by being placed into striking juxtaposition with the third part of the wellerism. "In this way a wellerism often parodies the traditional wisdom of proverbs by showing the disparity between the wisdom of the proverb and actual reality" (Mieder, 1989, p. 225). Observe the following two wellerisms, the first of which plays on two meanings of the word *time*:

> *"Time will tell," as the monkey said when he hid the limburger in Grandpa's clock.* (Mieder & Kingsbury, 1994, p. 139) {Time will tell}
> *"Time works wonders," as the lady said when she got married after an eight years' courtship*. (Mieder & Kingsbury, 1994, p. 138) {Time works wonders}

According to Mieder,

> many wellerisms are reactions against proverbial clichés. Proverbs have a tendency to oversimplify life and its problems, and the wellerism is a splendid way to parody them through a proverbial structure.... On the one hand wellerisms might effectively parody existing proverbs since they appear at times not to fit the modern world any longer, but on the other hand wellerisms also continue to be used because they give us the opportunity to react satirically or humorously against complex problems by using a triadic proverbial structure which has served that purpose for centuries. (Mieder, 1989, p. 226f)

New words may be added not only after the original text of a proverb, but before it, though in our material it happens not as often as adding a tail. View the examples below:

> *If you think time heals everything, try sitting in a doctor's office.* (McKenzie, 1980, p. 398) {Time heals everything}
> *To the mother of young children, there's a time and place for everything, except rest*. (Esar, 1968, p. 533) {There's a time and place for everything}
> *Both management and unions agree that time is money. They just can't agree on how much!* (Metcalf, 1993, p. 215) {Time is money}
> *Since time flies, it's up to you to be the navigator*. (McLellan, 1996, p. 225) {Time flies}

The following proverb parody is postulated in the form of a question:

If time is money, why is it that wealthy executives never seem to have a moment to spare? (Esar, 1968, p. 105) {Time is money}

Addition of new words only at the beginning occurs very rarely (it can happen in jokes and stories, see our discussion above)

Quite rarely in our material words or phrases are just put somewhere inside the proverb text. Here are three examples, each a transformation of the proverb *Time and tide wait for no man*:

Time, tide and bus drivers wait for no man. (Esar, 1968, p. 103)
Time, tide and tax collector wait for no man. (Esar, 1968, p. 418)
Time, tide and women drivers wait for no man. (Safian, 1967, p. 37)

Miscellaneous

After analyzing the most frequent types of transformations in proverbs about time, let us mention and exemplify below less frequent types of proverbs variation. There are a number of other mechanisms of proverb variation, e.g., substituting two or more words; changing the second part of the proverb; repeating words; melding two proverbs; word order reversal, etc. Another characteristic mechanism of proverb parody is the substitution of two words, as it is exemplified below by two transformations of the proverb *A stitch in time saves nine*:

A woman on time is one in nine. (Safian, 1967, p. 36)
A drink in time means nine. (Loomis, 1949, p. 357)

Again, phonologically similar words are very often chosen for this purpose, as I have pointed out in the proverb alterations discussed above in section on double puns and in section on story puns.

Very frequent are such anti-proverbs in which the second part of the proverb is changed:

A stitch in time is a surprise to many a husband. (Safian, 1967, p. 35) {A stitch in time saves nine}

Word-repetition is very common in American proverbs and has been found in about a quarter of American proverbs (for more on repetition figures in American proverbs, see Norrick, 1991; Tóthné Litovkina, 1994, 1998). In our 13 proverbs about time, however, only one such proverb (i.e. 7.7%) has been found:

You can fool some of the people all the time, all the people some of the time, but you can't fool all the people all the time. (31)

In the proverb above all content words but one are repeated at least twice, e.g.: *you* (2), *some* (2), *can* (2), *fool* (2), *all* (4), *time* (3), *people* (3).

In simple repetition, a word might appear twice. It sometimes happens when the proverb text itself does not change, and the word in question appears in an extension (i.e., a tail) which usually follows the original proverbial text:

> *There is no time like the **present** for a **present***. (Esar, 1952, p. 91) {There is no time like the present}

The repeated words might be homonymous or polysemous, as in the previous example. Such anti-proverb could be called a repetitious pun.

Sometimes two or more words are repeated twice, as in the following transformation of the proverb *Time is money*:

> *Time may be money, but it's much easier to persuade a man to give you his time than to lend you his money*. (McKenzie, 1980, p. 51)

In the following variation of the proverb *Time is money*, both the words *time* and *money* are repeated even thrice:

> *Time is money and money is time—so get all the money you can without getting time*. (Esar, 1968, p. 631) {Time is money}

The use of triplication and quadruplication is less common among our examples than simple duplication; such proliferation frequently occurs when the original text of the proverb itself also contains duplication (as has already been shown in the examples above):

> *You can fool some of the people all of the time, and all of the people some of the time, but you cannot fool all of the people all of the time... Don't be greedy; fooling some of the people all of the time is good enough.* (Berman, 1997, p. 143) {You can fool some of the people all of the time, and all of the people some of the time, but you cannot fool all of the people all of the time}

Rhyme is not particularly common in Anglo-American proverbs. Thus, a random sampling of American proverbs from *A dictionary of American proverbs* (see Mieder et al., 1992) showed that only 10.8% are rhymed (see Tóthné Litovkina, 1994, 1996). Out of our 13 proverbs about time only one (7.7%) contains rhyme: *A stitch in time saves nine*. Out of its 20 transformations 12 maintain the rhyme, e.g.:

> *A switch in time saves crime*. (McKenzie, 1980, p. 75)
> *Heading on a London Times story about a stool pigeon: A Snitch on Crime Saves Time*. (Crosbie, 1977, p. 307)
> *A woman on time is one in nine*. (Safian, 1967, p. 36)

In 8 proverb variations, however, a rhyming proverb might be changed so that the rhyme disappears from its transformation:

> *An anecdote in time saves boredom*. (Alexander, 2004, p. 13) {A stitch in time saves nine}
> *A stitch in time is a surprise to many a husband*. (Safian, 1967, p. 35)
> *A stitch in time saves losing your petticoat.* (Anonymous, 1961, p. 200)

And vice versa, sometimes rhyme is created in anti-proverbs even if it does not exist in the original proverb texts:

> *Time and tide make man for a ride*. (Esar, 1968, p. 333) {Time and tide wait for no man}

The mixing of two proverbs (i.e., contamination, or blending) has occurred only once in our material. In this example, the beginning of one proverb is combined with the ending of another proverb, without any further change:

> *A stitch in time gathers no moss*. (Anonymous, 1961, p. 200) {A stitch in time saves nine; A rolling stone gathers no moss}

There exists a tradition of parodying individual proverbs by word-order reversal (frequently called metathesis or spoonerism), which questions, or even rejects, their wisdom. Nouns and verbs are reversed most frequently. A common feature of word-order reversal is that it almost always occurs with some other techniques of proverb transformation (e.g., word addition, word substitution, etc.)
Word order reversal and addition of new words at the beginning of a proverb are exploited in the following proverb transformations:

> *Heading on a London Times story about a stool pigeon: A Snitch on Crime Saves Time*. (Crosbie, 1977, p. 307) {A stitch in time saves nine}
> *Olympic officials: The souls that time men's tries*. (Lederer, 1988, p. 121) {These are the times that try men's souls}
> *Time wounds all heels*. (Anonymous, 1961, p. 200) {Time heals all wounds}

In the second proverb transformation, the order of three words (*times, try, souls*) is changed.

The twisting of proverbs may cause a change in the parts of speech, as in the two last examples above. In the last example, besides the transposition of the noun *wounds* and verb *heals* the noun *wounds* switches its nominal function to the verbal, and the verb *heals* is turned into a noun sounding identically *heels*.

Sometimes one word might be exchanged by two, or even more words, as in the three transformations of the proverbs *A stitch in time saves nine* below:

> *A stitch in time saves a lot of embarrassment*. (Safian, 1967, p. 37)
> *A stitch in time saves embarrassment, maybe*. (Anonymous, 1961, p. 200)
> *A stitch in time saves losing your petticoat.* (Anonymous, 1961, p. 200)

The opposite of word addition, word omission appears seldom in our examples. It is understandable if I consider the average amount of words in proverbs. Furthermore, omission appears seldom alone, without combining with another method of twisting. It happens in our corpus in case of an untypically long proverb: *You can fool some of the people all the time, all the people some of the time, but you can't fool all the people all the time*.

The omission of the first part of the proverb (*You can fool some of the people all the time, all the people some of the time but*) is combined with adding a tail to it in the following transformations:

You can't fool all of the people all of the time, but if you do it just once it lasts for five years. (Rees, 1981, p. 52)
You can't fool all of the people all of the time – but it isn't necessary. (Fuller, 1943, p. 80)
You can't fool all of the people all the time, but if you do it just once it lasts five years. (Beck, 2004, p. 53)
You can't fool all the people all of the time, but the average politician is contented with a sizable majority. (Detroit News, in Prochnow, 1955, p. 236)
*You can't fool all the people all the tim*e
But lots of folks are always trying. (Safian, 1967, p. 22)
You can't fool all people all the time, but it isn't necessary. A majority will do. (Prochnow, 1955, p. 109)
You can't fool all the people all the time but you can fool some of the people some of the time and make a living. (Roberts, 1996)

SUMMARY

This study has focused on Anglo-American anti-proverbs (deliberate proverb innovations, alterations, parodies, transformations, variations, wisecracks, fractured proverbs) about time. The most frequent types of proverb alteration (e.g., replacing a single word; punning; adding new words; substituting two or more words; changing the second part of the proverb; repeating words; melding two proverbs; word order reversal; the omission of words, etc.) were discussed and demonstrated here.

I hope that the present study will project some implications for further research into this field of study not only in American culture but also in other cultures. Thus, it would be important to do a detailed cross-cultural analysis of anti-proverbs about time in American and other societies, and to compare and contrast basic attitudes towards time reflected in anti-proverbs from different languages.

REFERENCES

Alexander, J. (2004). *The world's funniest proverbs*. Cheam: Crombie Jardine.
Anonymous. (1908). *Toasts and maxims. A Book of humour to pass the time*. New York: R. F. Fenno & Company.
Anonymous. (1961). Perverted proverbs. *Western Folklore, 20*, 200.
Barbour, F. M. (1963). Some uncommon sources of proverbs. *Midwest Folklore, 13*, pp. 97–100.
Beck, H. (Ed.), (2004). *Graffiti*. Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam.
Berman, L. A. (1997). *Proverb wit & wisdom: A treasury of proverbs, parodies, quips, quotes, clichés, catchwords, epigrams and aphorisms*. Berkeley: A Perigee Book.
Binsted, K. & Ritchie, G. (2001). Toward a model of story puns. *Humor: International Journal of Humor Research, 3*, pp. 275–292. https://doi.org/10.1515/humr.2001.004

Brunvand, J.H. (1963). Classification for shaggy dog stories. *Journal of American Folklore, 76,* 42–68.

Cerf, B. (1968). *Treasury of atrocious puns*. New York: Harper & Row, Publishers.

Crosbie, J. S. (1977). *Crosbie's dictionary of puns.* London: Futura Publications Limited.

Esar, E. (1952). *The humor of humor*. New York: Horizon Press.

Esar, E. (1968). *20,000 quips and quotes.* Garden City: Doubleday & Company.

Farman, J. (1989). *You can't tell a rook by its cover*. London: Pan Books Ltd. (without page numbers).

Fergusson, R. (2000). *The Penguin dictionary of proverbs* (2nd ed.). London: Market House Books.

Fuller, E. (1943). *Thesaurus of epigrams*. New York: Crown Publishers.

Heller, L.G. (1974). Toward a general typology of the pun. *Language and Style*, *4*(4), pp. 271–282.

Hockett, Ch. F. (1972). Jokes. In M. Estellie Smith (Ed.), *Studies in Linguistics in Honor of George L. Trager* (153–178). The Hague: Mouton.

Hrisztova-Gotthardt, H., K. Vargha & P. Barta. (2023). *Deliberate proverb innovations: Terms, definitions, and concepts.* In Hrisztova-Gotthardt, H., M. Aleksa Varga & W. Mieder (eds.). *DILIGENCE BRINGS DELIGHT: A Festschrift in honour of Anna T. Litovkina on the occasion of her 60th birthday*. Online Supplement Series of Proverbium Yearbook of International Proverb Scholarship Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek, pp. 175–196.

https://naklada.ffos.hr/knjige/index.php/ff/catalog/view/14/17/37

Accessed January 21, 2024.

Jennings, P. (1980). *Pun fun*. Feltham, Middlesex: The Hamlyn Publishing Group Ltd.

Lederer, R. (1988). *Get thee to a punnery*. New York: Dell.

Lieberman, G. F. (1984). *3,500 good quotes for speakers*. Wellingborough: Thorsons.

T. Litovkina, A. (2005). *Old proverbs cannot die: They just fade into paroDY: Anglo-American anti-proverbs*. Habilitation thesis. Budapest: ELTE. (manuscript)

T. Litovkina, A. (2006). A good pun is hard to find: Punning in Anglo-American anti-proverbs. In R. Benczes & Sz. Csábi (Eds.), *The metaphors of sixty: Papers presented on the occasion of the 60th birthday of Zoltán Kövecses* (260–270). Budapest: Department of American Studies, School of English and American Studies, Eötvös Loránd University.

T. Litovkina, A. (2009a). The pun is mightier than the sword: types of punning in Anglo-American anti-proverbs. In K. McKenna (Ed.), *The proverbial 'Pied Piper': A Festschrift volume of essays in honor of Wolfgang Mieder on the occasion of his sixty-fifth Birthday* (pp. 141–154). New York: Peter Lang.

T. Litovkina, A. (2009b). Paronomasia, homonymy and homophony in Anglo-American anti-proverbs. In: R. J. B Soares, & O. Outi (Eds.), *2 Colóquio Interdisciplinar sobre Provérbios – Actas – 2nd Interdisciplinary Colloquium on Proverbs – Proceedings* (275–288). Tavira.

T. Litovkina, A. (2011a). Where there's a will there's a lawyer's bill: Lawyers in Anglo-American anti-proverbs. *Acta Juridica Hungarica, 52*(1), pp. 82–96.

T. Litovkina, A. (2011b). Sexuality in Anglo-American anti-proverbs. In M. Dynel (Ed.), *The pragmatics of humour across discourse domain, pragmatics and beyond* (pp. 191–213). Amsterdam & Philadelphia: John Benjamins. https://doi.org/10.1075/pbns.210.13lit

T. Litovkina, A. (2013). Politicians in Anglo-American anti-proverbs. In E. Grodzki, Sh. Rehman, C. Calma, & K. Colombo (Eds.), *International issues from wars to robots* (95–109). Ronkomkona: Linus Publications.

T. Litovkina, A. (2016). *"Do you serve lawyers and politicians here?": Stereotyped lawyers and politicians in Anglo-American jokes and anti-proverbs*. Komárno: J. Selye University Faculty of Education.

T. Litovkina, A. (2017). "Make love, not war … Get married and do both": Negative aspects of marriage in anti-proverbs and wellerisms. *The European Journal of Humour Research, 5*(4), pp. 112–135. https://doi.org/10.7592/EJHR2017.5.4.litovkina

T. Litovkina, A. (2018a). *Women through anti-proverbs*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.

T. Litovkina, A. (2018b). Positive and negative sides of divorce as reflected in Anglo-American anti-proverbs. *Вестник Карагандинского Университета. Серия Филология, 4*(92), pp. 29–33.

T. Litovkina, A. (2024a). Metaphors of love before and after marriage in proverbs and anti-proverbs. In S. Belkhir (Ed.), *Proverbs within cognitive linguistics: State of the art.* Amsterdam & Philadelphia: John Benjamins, pp. 88–111.

T. Litovkina, A. (2024b). Main mechanisms of proverb variation in Anglo-American anti-proverbs about children. *Journal of Siberian Federal University. Humanities & Social Sciences,* 17(5). pp. 870–881.

T. Litovkina, A. (2025a). Humor devices used in Anglo-American anti-proverbs about money. *Journal of Siberian Federal University. Humanities & Social Sciences,* 18(1), pp. 81–95.

T. Litovkina, A. (2025b). Towards a linguistic analysis of substitution in Anglo-American anti-proverbs about money. *Proverbium: Yearbook of International Proverb Scholarship,* 42, pp. 267–293.

T. Litovkina, A. (2025c). "Money Is not the Root of All Evil – no Money Is". Do (Anti-)Proverbs Always Tell the Truth? (using the Example of Addition). *Linguistische Treffen in Wrocław,* 27(I), pp. 183–195. https://doi.org/10.23817/lingtreff.27-11.

T. Litovkina, A. (2025d). Addition in Anglo-American Anti-Proverbs about Money. *Yearbook of Phraseology* (in press)

T. Litovkina, A., Hrisztova-Gotthardt, H., Barta, P., Vargha, K., & Mieder, W. (2021). *Anti-proverbs in five languages: Structural features and verbal humor devices.* Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.

T. Litovkina, A. & Mieder, W. (2006). *Old proverbs never die, they just diversify: A collection of anti-proverbs*. Burlington: The University of Vermont / Veszprém: The Pannonian University of Veszprém.

T. Litovkina, A. & Mieder, W. (2019). *Marriage seen through proverbs and anti-proverbs.* Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Loomis, C. G. (1949). Traditional American wordplay: The epigram and perverted proverbs. *Western Folklore, 8*, pp. 348–357.

Lubran, A. (1985). *An abecedeum of second thoughts*. Margate, Kent: Narbulla Agency (without page numbers).

Margo, E. H. (1982). Missqprints [sic]. *Verbatum: The Language Quarterly* (3), 16.

McKenzie, E.C. (1980). *Mac's giant book of quips & quotes*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House.

McLellan,V. (1996). *The complete practical proverbs & wacky wit*. Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers.

Metcalf, F. (1993). *The Penguin dictionary of jokes, wisecracks, quips and quotes.* London: Viking.

Mieder, W. (1982). Sexual content of German wellerisms. *Maledicta*, 6, pp. 215–223.

Mieder, W. (1985). Popular views of the proverb. *Proverbium: Yearbook of International Proverb Scholarship, 2*, pp. 109–143.

Mieder, W. (1986). *The Prentice Hall encyclopedia of world proverbs: A treasury of wit and wisdom through the ages.* New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.

Mieder, W. (1989). *American proverbs: A study of texts and contexts.* New York: Peter Lang.

Mieder, W., & Bryan, B. (1994). "As Sam Weller said, when finding himself on the stage": Wellerisms in dramatizations of Charles Dickens' *Pickwick Papers*. *Proverbium: Yearbook of International Proverb Scholarship, 11*, pp. 57–76.

Mieder, W., Kingsbury, S. A., & Harder, K. B. (Eds.), (1992). *A dictionary of American proverbs*. New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Mieder, W., & Kingsbury, S. A. (Eds.), (1994). *A dictionary of wellerisms.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Mieder, W., & Tóthné Litovkina, A. (1999). *Twisted wisdom: Modern anti-proverbs*. Burlington: The University of Vermont.

Nacib, Y. (2009). *Proverbes et dictons kabyles*. Alger: Enag.

Norrick, N. R. (1991). 'One is none': Remarks on repetition in proverbs. *Proverbium: Yearbook of International Proverb Scholarship, 8*, pp. 121–128.

Plummer, S. & Ashforth P. (1997). *It's a purrfect day*. Chichester, West Sussex: Summersdale Publishers (without page numbers).

Prochnow, H. V. (1955). *Speaker's handbook of epigrams and witticisms*. Blackpool: A. Thomas & CO.

Rees, N. (1980). *Graffiti 2*. London: Unwin Paperbacks.

Rees, N. (1981). *Graffiti 3*. London: Unwin Paperbacks.

Roberts, D. (1996). *The way it is*. London: 20 Queens Gate Terrace (without page numbers).

Safian, L. A. (1967). *The book of updated proverbs*. New York: Abelard-Schuman.

Tóthné Litovkina, A. (1994). The most powerful markers of proverbiality. Perception of proverbiality and familiarity with them among 40 Americans. *Semiotische Berichte, 1–4*, 327–353.

Tóthné Litovkina, A. (1996). A few aspects of a semiotic approach to proverbs, with special reference to two important American publications. *Semiotica*, *3*(4), pp. 307–380.

Tóthné Litovkina, A. (1998). An analysis of popular American proverbs and their use in language teaching. In W. Heissig & R. Schott (Eds.), *Die heutige bedeutung oraler traditionen – Ihre archivierung, publikation und index-erschließung* [*The present-day importance of oral traditions: their preservation, publication and indexing*] (pp. 131–158). Opladen: Wetdeutscher Verlag.

Williams, F.C. (2002). *Wellerisms in Ireland*. Burlington: The University of Vermont.

Wurdz, G. (1904). *The Foolish dictionary*. Boston, Massachusetts: The Robinson, Luce Company.