



Turun yliopisto  
University of Turku



# PROVERBS IN SMS MESSAGES: ARCHAIC AND MODERN COMMUNICATION

Liisa Granbom-Herranen



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## **ABSTRACT**

This theory-oriented dissertation focuses on proverbs in contemporary use. The aim is to highlight one of the ways proverbs are used and interpreted in everyday communication using colloquial written language. The empirical material and the argumentation are linked to theoretical models, thereby forming a basis for the conclusions. By using and illustrating the model based on possible worlds semantics, the study also addresses the challenge of why proverbs receive various interpretations.

Proverbs are understood as significant units and parts of communication in the vernacular while language is understood to structure reality. On the one hand, this research produces basic information, and the possibility to observe proverbs and proverbial expressions in everyday use. On the other, it contributes to the discourse among paremiologists dealing with the substance of proverbs in everyday life and within the frames of folkloristics. Moreover, the dissertation offers some methodological and theoretical solutions for paremiological research.

The research material consists of about 70,000 original SMS messages (i.e. text messages sent using Short Message Service) sent between 2006 and 2010 to be published as short letters to the editor and aimed at the readers of the daily Finnish regional newspaper *Salon Seudun Sanomat*. These messages include more than 7,000 expressions that are proverbs, potential proverbs, Bible quotations or references to them. The central research method is contemporary content analysis. Context creates the frame for the use and interpretation of proverbs.

Within folklore, proverbs have been regarded as a part of the speech of older people. However, in the new urban tradition proverbs are neither passing from generation to generation nor are they taught at school. Instead, transmission takes place in written form and often within one generation only. Anyhow, the earlier oral tradition has found a place in the colloquial written language. In SMS messages, proverbs are used in a new context, with traditional proverbs occurring alongside the modern ones. Old proverbs are recognisable much more reliably than modern or future ones.

The study confirms that proverbs remain a part of contemporary Finnish communication and everyday language, although the context of use has changed over the period which Finnish proverbs have been collected (i.e. over two centuries). Most traditional proverbs still contain agrarian terms and are relatively permanent expressions, but nowadays they are often used in a new context and with a new meaning. Although the dissertation examines Finnish proverbs and uses Finnish examples, the processes and challenges are the same, no matter which language or culture is being examined. Many of the observations can be generalised to the field of paremiology as a whole.

**Key words:** colloquial written language, everyday life, interpretation, meaning, newspapers, paremiography, paremiology, possible worlds semantics, proverb, proverbial speech, proverbial utterance, SMS message, text message, vernacular

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## TIIVISTELMÄ

Teoriapainotteisessa väitöskirjassa tarkastelen sananlaskuja nykyisessä kontekstissa. Tavoitteena on todentaa yksi tavoista, jolla sananlaskut ovat kirjoitetun puhekielen osana asettuneet nykyiseen viestintään. Empiirinen aineisto ja päättely yhdistyvät teoreettisissa malleissa muodostaen johtopäätösten perustan. Tutkimus kohtaa sananlaskujen tulkinnallisen monimuotoisuuden selittämisen haasteen tukeutumalla mahdollisten maailmojen semantiikkaan.

Sananlaskuja käsitellään puhekielen merkityksiä siirtävinä lausumina, kun kieli nähdään osana todellisuuden jäsentämisen prosessia. Yhtäältä tutkimus tuottaa perustietoa tarkasteltaessa sananlaskuja ja sananlaskunkaltaisia ilmaisuja arkikäytössä. Toisaalta tutkimus osallistuu folkloristisen sananlaskututkimuksen puitteissa käytävään keskusteluun sananlaskusta nykypäivän ilmiönä. Lisäksi väitöskirja tarjoaa joitakin metodologisia ja teoreettisia ratkaisuja sananlaskututkimukseen.

Tutkimusaineisto muodostuu noin 70000 alkuperäisestä tekstiviestistä, jotka on vuosina 2006–2010 lähetetty mielipidekirjoituksina julkaistaviksi alueellisessa sanomalehdessä, *Salon Seudun Sanomissa*. Tekstiviestit sisältävät yli 7000 lausumaa, jotka ovat joko sananlaskuja, potentiaalisia sananlaskuja, lainauksia Raamatusta tai viittauksia joihinkin näistä. Keskeinen tutkimusmenetelmä on ymmärrettynä kontekstianalyysi, jossa laadullisen aineiston kvantitatiivinen tarkastelu tukee kvalitatiivista tietoa. Tulkintakehys muodostuu käyttökotekstista.

Perinteen osana on sananlaskuja yleensä pidetty vanhojen ihmisten puheena. Uudessa urbaanissa ympäristössä sananlaskut eivät enää siirry ainoastaan sukupolvelta toiselle eivätkä ne kuulu koulujen opetussuunnitelmaan vaan ne esiintyvät usein kirjoitettuina ja välittyvät tietyn ikäpolven keskuudessa: aiempi suullinen perinne on asettunut puhekieliseen kirjoitukseen. Tekstiviesteissä sananlaskuja käytetään uudessa ympäristössä ja perinteiset sananlaskut esiintyvät yhdessä modernien sananlaskujen kanssa.

Vanhat tunnetut sananlaskut tunnistuvat luotettavammin kuin modernit sananlaskut tai mahdollisesti sananlaskuiksi kehittyvät ilmaisut.

Tutkimus todentaa sananlaskujen olevan edelleenkin osa suomenkielistä puhekieltä ja viestintää, vaikka käyttöympäristö on muuttunut parissa sadassa vuodessa, jolloin pääosa suomalaisista sananlaskuista on tallennettu. Sananlaskut ovat varsin muuttumattomia ilmauksia ja traditionaalisiin sananlaskuihin sisältyy edelleen agraaritalouden termejä, mutta nykyisin sananlaskuja käytetään uudessa ympäristössä ja ne sekä saavat että niille annetaan uusia tulkintoja. Huolimatta siitä, että tutkimus kohdistuu suomalaisiin sananlaskuihin ja esimerkit ovat suomalaisesta käyttöympäristöstä sekä prosessi että haasteet ovat kulttuurista ja kielestä riippumattomia. Monet havainnoista on yleistettävissä koko paremiologian tutkimusalaan.

**Asiasanat:** puhekieli, arkielämä, tulkinta, merkitys, sanomalehdet, sananlaskujen keruu, sananlaskututkimus, paremiografia, paremiologia, mahdollisten maailmojen semantiikka, sananlasku, sananlaskuja käyttävä puhe, sananlaskun kaltainen ilmaisu, tekstiviesti

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation is based on questions and occurrences encountered in everyday life. After defending my doctoral dissertation in education in 2008, which focused on the use of proverbs in pedagogical speech, I was repeatedly asked the question of why I study proverbs that nobody uses anymore. I became curious and, as is well known, curiosity combined with wondering is a good start for research. My journey into the world of paremiology started with the idea of stable proverbs with changing meanings. Regardless of the questions (or maybe because of the questions), most of my study has combined the use and interpretation of proverbs and everyday life. I suppose that in my research I have come across more questions than I have been able to answer. However, one thing was certain: Finnish proverbs make use of everyday colloquial language in the vernacular. The proverbs may not always appear with the same form and meaning as they did in the past, but they are used. I feel fortunate that, at various phases of this study, I have been able to use the knowledge I have gained during my wide-ranging academic studies as well as to take advantage of the life experience I have acquired outside academic life.

Even if Finnish folkloristic studies focusing on proverbs have a long and successful history, paremiology no longer has an essential position at Finnish universities. Actually, in the 21st century the only folkloristic professorship with special knowledge of folkloristic paremiology was at the University of Turku. I feel privileged to have got the opportunity to do my doctoral studies in folkloristics with Professor Pekka Hakamies as my supervisor. I am grateful him for this opportunity. My compliments also to the reviewers of this dissertation, Professor Wolfgang Mieder and senior researcher Anneli Baran-Grzybek for their factual corrections and useful comments as well as the encouraging words. Some of the suggestions I was given resulted in clarifications in the text and in the future I'll remember the other ones as well.

I am greatly indebted to Academician Arvo Krikmann from Tartu and Professor Wolfgang Mieder from Vermont. During these years their support and encouragement has been extremely important for me. I feel sad as Arvo Krikmann passed away before the last phases of this dissertation were done. I owe him a lot, his simplified questions, in particular, helped me to focus on the substantive issues.

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M.C. Matos's presentation in Tavira that gave me the idea to look at text messages as a vernacular written form. I thank Outi Lauhakangas for inviting me to the very first colloquium in Tavira. I am especially grateful to Joanna Szerszunowicz for the opportunity to contribute to articles on the project of intercontinental dialogue on phraseology. My colleagues in the Estonian Literary Museum in Tartu have been indispensable to me - I thank them especially for our cheerful discussions and the possibility to deal with unstructured ideas. At the University of Turku I thank all of the participants in research seminars for folklorists for the possibilities to deepen my knowledge, apart from paremiology, in various areas of folkloristic research. My sincere thanks to all of you in Tartu, Tavira and Turku!

This research would not have been possible without the help of the editorial staff working at *Salon Seudun Sanomat*. I am grateful for the research material that I received from the editorial office. The preliminary work done by the IT support of SSS facilitated the processing of my material.

This dissertation has grown out of the opportunities I have had as a researcher at the University of Jyväskylä, the Finnish Academy and the University of Turku. I am grateful to these institutions for such a chance. My doctoral research became financially possible by grants from the Finnish Cultural Foundation, Varsinais-Suomi Regional Fund. The grant from Juno, the doctoral programme in history, culture and arts studies at University of Turku, gave me the opportunity to concentrate full time on fine-tuning this dissertation. At the University of Turku both the Department of Folkloristics and Juno have supported my participation in conferences as well as language reviews through various grants. The Estonian Literary Museum and the Centre of Excellence in Estonian Studies as well as the Finnish Literary Society gave me the possibility to withdraw from my everyday obligations by letting me use their residences for academic work. I am very grateful for all of the financial opportunities offered to me.

I have also been lucky to have a family - daughters, grandchildren and great-grandchildren - who never questioned why I was doing this. They have just accepted it. Thank you for being with me! My warmest gratitude belongs to my husband, Erkki Herranen, for supporting me in everything I have chosen to do.

Perniö, August 2018

Liisa Granbom-Herranen

## LIST OF ORIGINAL ARTICLES

This dissertation includes the following articles:

ART 1. Granbom-Herranen, Liisa 2016. **The genre of proverb – a relic or very much alive?** In Kaarina Koski & Frog & Ulla Savolainen (eds) *Genre – Text – Interpretation: Multidisciplinary Perspectives on Folklore and Beyond*. Helsinki: SKS, 317–339.

ART 2. Granbom-Herranen, Liisa 2010. **How Do Proverbs Get Their Meanings? The Model of Interpretation Based on a Metaphor Theory.** In *Białostockie Archiwum Językowe* nr. 10: 47–67.

ART 3. Granbom-Herranen, Liisa 2013. **Some theoretical aspects of processes behind the meanings of proverbs and phrases.** In Joanna Szerszunowicz & Boguslaw Nowowiejski & Katsumasa Yagi & Takaaki Kanzak (eds) *Research on Phraseology Across Continents, Vol. 2*. University of Białymstoku Publishing House, 372–388.

ART 4. Granbom-Herranen, Liisa 2014. **SMS-messages – context for traditional and modern proverbs.** In Vida Jesenšek & Dmitrij Dobrovol'skij (eds) *Phraseologie und Kultur / Phraseology and Culture*, Maribor: Filozofska fakulteta, 367–381.

ART 5. Granbom-Herranen, Liisa 2014. **Beyond understanding: How proverbs violate Grice's cooperative principle.** In Anneli Baran & Liisi Laineste & Piret Voolaid (eds) *Scala Naturae. Festschrift in Honour of Arvo Krikmann*. Tartu: ELM Scholarly Press, 107–120.

ART 6. Granbom-Herranen, Liisa 2015. **Proverbial expressions and cultural context in archive materials.** In Joanna Szerszunowicz & Boguslaw Nowowiejski & Katsumasa Yagi & Takaaki Kanzak (eds) *Intercontinental Dialogue on Phraseology* 3. University of Białymstoku Publishing House, 503–518.



## **PART 1: Introductory article**



# 1. PROVERBS IN CONTEMPORARY USE

## 1.1 Introduction

This dissertation focuses on the use of Finnish proverbs<sup>1</sup> at the beginning of the 21st century. Even if the focus is on Finnish proverbs and context, the processes and challenges are the same, no matter which language or culture is being examined. Many of the observations can be generalised to the field of paremiology as a whole. Even though the articles are independent of each other, they are linked together in a chain with the potential to form a foundation for further studies. The main objective of this article-based dissertation is to discuss the phenomenon of *contemporarily used proverbs* from the viewpoint of folkloristic paremiology.<sup>2</sup> The concept of *contemporarily used proverb* includes proverbs that are alive, in other words they are used today, no matter what time they originally are from or if they originate from the Bible.<sup>3</sup> The aim of the dissertation as well as the articles included has been to highlight one of the ways proverbs are used and interpreted in communication that occurs in everyday language. On one level, the research produces basic information on the possibility to observe proverbs and proverbial expressions in everyday use. On another, it contributes to the discourse among paremiologists dealing with the substance of proverbs in everyday life and

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<sup>1</sup> In this dissertation the concept *Finnish proverb* refers to a proverb in the Finnish language. The proverb might be of Finnish origin but it could be also a loan translation into Finnish. These kinds of loan translations have gained currency in various languages. However, the origin of a proverb has not been relevant for this study. Some of the proverbs are modern from the Finnish viewpoint even if in some other languages they are understood to be traditional ones and have been well known decades, sometimes even centuries.

<sup>2</sup> Paremiology is the study of proverbs and proverbial expressions which focuses on the definition, form, structure, style, content, function, meaning and value of proverbs. Paremiography focuses on collecting and classifying proverbs (Mieder 2004, xii). The first article (ART 1) addresses some of the differences in the disciplines that focus on or use paremiology. In folkloristic paremiology, the focus is on the use of proverbs as part of everyday speech; in linguistics, it is on proverbs in literature (Granbom-Herranen 2011, 287, 2013b, 318–319; Grzybek 2012, 137).

<sup>3</sup> This dissertation focuses on proverbs used in the present time. This means the beginning of the 21st century in Finland. To make a difference between the phenomenon and concept, the phenomenon is called *contemporarily used proverbs*. The essential concept I use is *contemporarily used proverb*, which includes those used today no matter if they are old like traditional proverbs and Bible quotations are. If they are not found in Finnish sources before 1950s or 1960s, that makes them modern proverbs in Finnish context. For more on this, see chapter 2.4, which presents examples of today's proverbs.



within the frames of folkloristics. Moreover, the dissertation aims to create further theoretical possibilities for paremiological research.

This theory-oriented dissertation treats proverbs as a part of contemporary colloquial written language in everyday use and context. The dissertation offers insights into the proverbs in vernacular Finnish in everyday life. The articles included are part of academic discourse focusing on one of the ways proverbs are situated in contemporary life (the beginning of the 21st century) and in everyday communication in somewhat traditional written formats such as newspapers while, at the same time, employing electronic media such as SMS messages.<sup>4</sup> Specifically, the study explores proverbs used in a contemporary everyday context in the context of SMS messages sent to be published as short letters to the editor and aimed at the readers of the daily Finnish regional newspaper *Salon Seudun Sanomat* (SSS). In the SMS messages, proverbs are used in a new context and traditional proverbs meet modern ones.<sup>5</sup>

As with any cultural phenomena, studying proverbs means participating in a continuing discourse in the culture. Many Finnish proverbs still use old-fashioned and agrarian language, although nowadays they are often used in a new context with a new meaning. This study identifies some features of contemporarily used proverbs. The study relates to all three dimensions of time – the past, present and future – where the past always moves through the present, which in turn paves the way for the future. The present is a unique creation of traces left by the past. With proverbs, the past has often been mapped and the findings are most frequently known as traditional proverbs. The challenge in collecting and compiling contemporarily used proverbs has been and continues to be finding them. Still, such collections will be sources for future paremiological research and, for this reason, it is worth trying to identify the new proverbs. Despite changes in the culture, proverbs are still used and, thus, still have rhetorical power. This research deals with oral tradition in written form. Proverbs in spoken language are, in many ways, the same as proverbs in the colloquial written form of media language, everyday political rhetoric, mass media or the Internet. Until World War II, Finnish proverbs were primarily in oral use, whereas in many Central European language areas, proverbs have been primarily connected with literature.

The proverbial material explored in the dissertation includes the SMS messages themselves, possible chains of SMS messages, the occasions and events that have taken place and the articles and news in SSS that are referred

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<sup>4</sup> The abbreviation SMS refers to the service system called Short Message Service. Here, the term *SMS message* refers to the text messages sent or received with a mobile phone using the short message service.

<sup>5</sup> For more details, see the section 2 on concepts related to proverbs in the present dissertation.

to in the messages. Their subject matter includes both national and international events, encompassing all the affairs that made people write and send their opinions to the newspaper. The material behind the theory-oriented articles is rather wide, altogether about 70,000 SMS messages (about 60,000 coherent SMS messages), including more than 7,000 expressions that are proverbs, potential proverbs, Bible quotations or references to them.<sup>6</sup> The description of material with some examples is presented in section 2 and section 4. The material consists of both published and unpublished SMS messages sent to the newspaper. The published SMS messages might or might not be edited, since the newspaper has reserved and recorded the right to do so. The research material consists of only unedited SMS messages sent to be published. The examples in the published articles and the introductory article are in their original form, that is, in the form they arrived at the newspaper. The translations into English are literal translations, both in the articles and the introductory part because using equivalents would mean too much interpretation. However, translation from one language to another always involves interpretation (e.g. see Kusch 1988, 106). The spelling is in its original form but, in some cases, spaces between words have been added to make reading easier. The messages have not been edited by the newspaper or by myself but, as Example 1 shows, I have connected the *original SMS messages* received to the *opinion SMS messages*, creating coherent wholes that combine two or more SMS messages into one. (This approach will be further explained in the section on the research method, section 4). Below, they are referred to as SMS messages and the unchanged SMS messages, if referred to, are called the original SMS messages.

### **Example 1. Two original SMS messages combined into one SMS message**

Two original SMS messages:

“06/11/14,07:22:55+08”, “Maaseudun autoilijat saavat ajaa oman onnensa nojalla.alepiluokkaisia teitä paljon.hoidon taso vaihtelee paljon samassa luokassa. Salon seutu kesät talve”

“06/11/14,07:22:57+08”, “t huonossa jamassa verrattuna muihin.p.kaalimaa”

are united into one opinion SMS message:

“Maaseudun autoilijat saavat ajaa oman onnensa nojalla. alepiluokkaisia teitä paljon. hoidon taso vaihtelee paljon samassa luokassa. Salon seutu kesät talvet huonossa jamassa verrattuna muihin. p.kaalimaa” (SSS, sent 14.11.2006)

[Motorists in the countryside have to drive on spec. Many roads are of lower class.<sup>7</sup> The level of the upkeep varies in the same class. The Salo district is, during both summers and winters, in a bad state if compared with others. **g.cabbage-patch**]

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<sup>6</sup> A reference to a proverb is approximately the same as what is meant with the allusive use of a proverb.

<sup>7</sup> In Finland, roads have been classified and the upkeep of roads depends on the class.

The pseudonym “*p.kaalimaa*” [g.cabbage-patch] refers to the proverb *Pukki kaalimaan vartijana* [A goat is the guard of the cabbage patch]. The traditional proverb is formulated as *Ei ole panemista pukkia kaalimaan vahdiksi* (Kuusi 1990) [It is no use to put a goat to guard the cabbage patch].

The dissertation comprises of a set of articles and an introductory article, which form a coherent whole in which the empirical material and the reasoning (especially on the concepts) are linked to theoretical models in order to form the basis of the conclusions. Since this is an article-based dissertation consisting of independent articles that have been written and published at different times and for various readerships, it is unavoidable that some definitions, theories and examples are repeated. Moreover, in the articles, there is some variation in the use of concepts. During the years the articles have been written I have tried to identify, sketch and define the concepts to represent the ideas and phenomena behind them. The dissertation continues with what was started in a preliminary study funded by the Finnish Cultural Foundation’s Varsinais-Suomi Regional Fund concerning the published SMS messages in *Salon Seudun Sanomat* in 2010–2011. The preliminary study confirmed that the number of proverbs in the opinion section of the newspaper is large enough for further study and immersion in the subject.

The reading of a regional newspaper was and still is part of my daily routine. Morning coffee and *Salon Seudun Sanomat* are a fixed part of the daily lives of most people in the Salo district. Finnish newspapers are means of communication and they reach almost all Finns every day. The pages reserved for opinions in the form of letters to the editor differ from other texts in the newspaper in two ways. First, the writers are usually not professional journalists or writers. Second, an opinion is a fairly instant reaction to something and the language used in it is often more similar to vernacular than to pure literary expression. Sending SMS messages is not considered writing, so the expressions in them might not be dignified.<sup>8</sup>

This is just one instance of exploring the trends of globalising conditions: what can we expect will survive when the environment changes but the content of speech does not? Additionally, the study participates in the discourse on meanings in paremiology. As presented in the articles (see ART 1, ART 3, ART 4), the existence of a universal definition of the concept of proverb has been questioned, as has the idea of universal meanings of proverbs. The study adheres to the usual academic ethical practices. The ethical issues in this project are primarily involved with the archiving and further use of the collected materials. The proverbs published in the newspaper are already public.

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<sup>8</sup> Some master’s theses have addressed vernacular Finnish used in SMS messages (e.g. Engblom 2008; Linjama 2010; Pulkkinen 2013; Alm 2016).

The policy of the newspaper *Salon Seudun Sanomat* is to keep SMS messages anonymous. The privacy of informants is secured by using pseudonyms in print and, thus, the material remains anonymous. Only the editorial staff knows the senders' phone numbers and the newspaper has filed the material.<sup>9</sup> All the published material exists in the SSS archive, whereas the unpublished SMS messages exist in the form of data. Research also involves an ethical relationship with the research phenomena, a positive contact with the artefacts and the unknown participants (in this case, SMS messages and their senders) (Denzin & Lincoln 2011, 209).

## **1.2 Structure of the dissertation**

The dissertation has two parts. The first is this introductory article, which consists of six main sections, including a general overview of the themes explored in the articles. Both the paremiographical and paremiological background for articles are included in this introductory part of the dissertation. The second part consists of six published articles that address proverbs primarily from a theoretical viewpoint.

### **(1) Contemporarily used proverbs**

The first section is an introduction to the dissertation and provides information on its background. It includes comments on the way existing knowledge is understood as well as how ethical questions have been taken to account. Additionally, it details the aims of the research, which generally explores how proverbs operate and might be interpreted in contemporary everyday life. In this section, I clarify my position as the researcher in this study as well as the ethical issues of the dissertation. I also present the research questions. Along with focusing on the concepts and their background, I also briefly take up some specific eras in the Finnish history of paremiology.

### **(2) Concepts related to proverbs in this dissertation**

In the second section, the focus is on concepts linked to proverbs in the present dissertation. Both key concepts of proverb and meaning are used in fairly diverse ways in folkloristic paremiology. I focus specifically on the aspects that are covered in the introductory part as well as in the articles in part two. In this section I briefly describe the theoretical framework. The theoretical underpinnings are discussed in the respective articles, but this section offers an overview. I also discuss whether proverbs as folklore objects are seen to follow

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<sup>9</sup> The short opinions are published with pseudonyms but the newspaper has the mobile numbers the messages were sent from, which have to be registered numbers. SMS messages from prepaid connections are not published.

the folklore process. If we assume they do, then what can be said about the life cycle of such folklore products.

### **(3) Mobile phones as a part of the shared life experience**

Section three begins with some words on the context in question. It includes background information on the socio-economic setting as well as on mobile phones and SMS messages as forms of communication. Following this, I describe the material explored. In the articles, the material also becomes clearer, but due to the shortness of the articles, I have not been able to elaborate on the material to a great degree. In this section the material is described in a generalised manner, whereas each of the articles details how the material is specifically used in it. The section also presents some evaluation of the material explored.

### **(4) Research process and implementing the method**

The fourth section focuses on the research process on a practical level. The main method used is *contemporary content analysis*<sup>10</sup> and the section covers its implementation in the dissertation (using both quantitative<sup>11</sup> and qualitative data). One feature of using contemporary content analysis is the sufficient description of research practices. This section includes the process description after the first phases, which are included in the previous sections. As with the material, the method is further explained in the articles in relation to specific empirical data and this section summarises the methods used.

### **(5) The articles: an overview**

In section five, I shortly present the articles that form the second part of the dissertation. The articles also contain some examples of proverb use. These aim to illustrate the material and highlight my argumentation in the articles.

### **(6) Reflections**

In the final section, section six, I bring together the conclusions presented in the articles, present the main results and offer some observations. The possibilities for further study that emerged during this research are also discussed.

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<sup>10</sup> Below, *content analysis* refers to contemporary content analysis.

<sup>11</sup> The quantitative part might also be seen as applying classical content analysis (see Krippendorff 2004, xvii–xx).

### 1.3 Research questions

At the centre of this dissertation are proverbs in everyday life as used by the general public. In a way, the dissertation also comments on the changes in language, although the proverbs are not analysed from a linguistic point of view – which would be the subject of further studies for linguistics. By using the knowledge and theories of the philosophy of language, this dissertation also discusses the changes to the ways in which proverbs are interpreted in the 21st century. As mentioned above, the main aim of the dissertation is to offer some theoretical tools for the recognition of both proverbs and their meanings for paremiological studies. Each article has aims of its own, focusing on some aspect of the whole.

The main questions are as follows: Is it possible to say anything about how proverbs are used and interpreted in modern (this case in Finnish) everyday communication and language? Do the way proverbs and their meanings are understood in contemporary everyday life differ from earlier times? In order to answer these questions, the articles focus on the analysis of some changes both in the concept of proverb and in the concept of *proverb genre* from the perspective of folkloristic paremiology (ART 1);<sup>12</sup> discuss why proverbs can be understood in different ways (ART 2); clarify the phenomena linked to everyday proverbs, focusing on meaning in particular (ART 3); describe the use of proverbs in everyday context (ART 4); discuss Paul H. Grice's cooperative principle and how it can be applied to proverbs (ART 5); and discuss some issues involved in using paremiological data to draw conclusions on proverbs and culture (ART 6). In brief, the dissertation focuses on contemporarily used proverbs as they are used in their context similarly to colloquial language and speech.

The first article (ART 1) argues that there is a need to analyse the proverb genre due to the existence of diverse terms used in paremiology and because the modern proverb tradition has brought about changes in the proverb genre. The model presented in the second article (ART 2) addresses proverbs and their meanings when a proverb is understood as a significant unit. The third article (ART 3) focuses on meaning. In order to clarify the material, I give some examples of SMS messages as short letters in a daily newspaper in the fourth article (ART 4). The fifth article (ART 5) employs Grice's cooperative principle and acting against it. In the last article (ART 6), I discuss the need for source criticism in proverb research.

The results are based on empirical material and the information it produces as well as on theoretical-conceptual observations. In folkloristic paremiology,

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<sup>12</sup> The number refers to the order in which the articles are presented in the dissertation (see the List of original publications).

the central challenge has been exploring the contemporarily used proverbs; i.e. today's proverbs; the way they are used in their contexts. It has been both a folkloristic and paremiological challenge to chart proverbs people have used in their everyday practices in early 21st century Finland. If science and the methods used in research are to be understood as looking for something, it would seem that these efforts go against the idea of academic research. It would be possible only to look for something that is already known to exist. As the leading Finnish philosopher Ilkka Niiniluoto (1994, 41) claims, research is interaction between the researcher and the research object. The aim of research is to obtain some new information of the object. It should also be noted that the academic knowledge of each era is always combined with the era itself and the changing ways of thinking.

Although one of the starting points is that proverbs have been considered to form one of the most stable, fixed and unchanging folklore genres, the working hypothesis is that new times create new meanings for proverbs (see Bruner 1986, 65), even if we do not know what they are. This question comes up especially in the second and fourth articles (ART 2, ART 4).<sup>13</sup> The meaning of the proverbs is, in one way, partly what it was in the early 20th century, but something has changed as well. One of the aims of this research is to clarify the mechanism of this transfer of meaning. In the examples provided the meaning of some proverbs is linked with the actual context. Communication contexts and other circumstances in society are not stable and standardised, because participants change and the times and places are continuously renewed (see also Krikmann 2009a, 17; Honko 2013b, 108).<sup>14</sup> The assumption that proverbs are disappearing or that only older people use them seems not to have changed over the previous century (see Ahlqvist 1929, Hain 1951). Most often, proverbs are used by people who do not consider themselves old, but from the perspective of younger people, proverb use is stereotypically associated with older people (Granbom-Herranen 2004, 44). It has been shown that proverbs are used with new technology, so they do not belong only to older generations.

#### 1.4 Background and aims of the research

This dissertation focuses on illustrating one of the ways in which old and new proverbs are situated within contemporary life and the everyday language of communication in a somewhat traditional written format such as a newspaper while employing electronic media such as mobile phone text messages. The study focuses on proverbs used in an everyday context, dealing with SMS

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<sup>13</sup> See also Granbom-Herranen 2013b, 316; 2015b, 406; 2016a, 55.

<sup>14</sup> *Honko 2013* refers to the collection of Honko's articles that were actually written and published over the course of a few decades but republished in 2013.

messages sent to be published as short letters to the editor and the readers of a daily regional newspaper, *Salon Seudun Sanomat*. In SMS messages, proverbs are used in new contexts and traditional proverbs meet modern ones.

Most of the previous research focusing on contemporarily used proverbs deals with linguistics and philology, but not exclusively. The use and occurrence of proverbs in media texts has previously been analysed from various perspectives (e.g. Lüthi 1970; Mieder 1971, 2008; Piltz 1989; Chlosta *et al.* 1993; Carson Williams 2009). Before the cooperative preliminary study focusing on newspapers in 2012, analyses from the folkloristic and paremiological point of view for the three-country project mainly comprised Estonian media texts (Järv 1999; Krikmann 2005). These paved the way for preliminary studies (Babič 2013; Granbom-Herranen 2013b; Lauhakangas 2013; Voolaid 2013) and, later, a wider study and a joint article (Granbom-Herranen, Babič & Voolaid 2015) as part of the project *Proverbial Expressions in Newspapers: Comparative study in Slovenia, Estonia and Finland*, better known as the *Newspaper Project*<sup>15</sup> among paremiologists.

In Finland, proverbs in SMS messages have not been researched from the viewpoint of folkloristic paremiology. Mobile phones and SMS messages have been a topic in folkloristic studies on the folklore of children and young people (see Lipponen 2008). Today, a number of Finnish daily papers have an opinion column in the form of SMS messages. In the early 21st century, some studies were conducted on SMS messages, mostly from a linguistic point of view. A number of master's theses have focused mostly on language, especially on how it is shortened (e.g. Engblom 2008; Hansson 2009; Linjama 2010; Karilahti 2015) and on the features of this linguistic genre (e.g. Kähkönen 2011; Myntti 2012; Pulkkinen 2013; Alm 2016).<sup>16</sup> Previously, SMS messages have been examined as a context used by youths for fun, but in the current context they are viewed in the use of adults. From the folkloristic perspective, SMS messages have also

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<sup>15</sup> See [http://www.folkloore.ee/rl/fo/koostoo/prov\\_news.htm](http://www.folkloore.ee/rl/fo/koostoo/prov_news.htm) [5.2.2018]. The aim of the two-stage, three-year project was to look at whether and how proverbs and proverbial expressions appear in newspapers in three countries and languages. It began in 2011, during the Fifth Interdisciplinary Colloquium of Proverbs. Initially, more researchers were involved but a group of researchers from three countries (Estonia, Finland and Slovenia) later committed to the project. The project involved perspectives on proverbial utterances in European newspapers. These articles present research carried out by individual researchers within a common framework: newspaper texts from one week in May 2012. The articles were well received by the scholarly community and we were encouraged to analyse a longer period. Thus, the project on the proverbial expressions in newspapers continued with material collected during a period of one month in May 2013.

<sup>16</sup> One doctoral dissertation is in progress (Kasesniemi & Rautiainen 2001, 16), but it has not, to my knowledge, been published.



been studied as a platform for folklore (Lipponen 2008). Most often, publications on SMS messages aimed at the general public are either compendiums on how to communicate correctly with them or humorous manuals on how to use abbreviations or shorten words.<sup>17</sup>

This research is an extensive case study based on hermeneutics and phenomenology. In the articles, the knowledge focused on is the manifest content of SMS messages and proverbs (or references to proverbs) in them. The latent content (if present) refers to interpretations and contextual background information. I do not question the rightness of the proverbs used, nor their form or interpretation. The use of proverbs is part of a users' lifeworld ("*Lebenswelt*", Husserl 1970)<sup>18</sup> and their experience of it. A person's lifeworld has always been formed in interaction between them and the surroundings; a private experience comes true in some space that is shared with the society. A phenomenon and its significance can be reached only through an experience (Husserl 1970; Satulehto 1992, 60). Reality can be interpreted and experienced in various ways, but it remains part of shared reality. In other words, a person has an experience combined with a proverb and the interpretation they have of it as well as the use of the proverb takes place in some interaction with the context. In some other space (time or place) and among other people, the understanding would be different, but this does not make the person's understanding of the proverb and the way it is used in the situation any less worthy than if the proverb were used in its basic meaning or leaning on an assumed standard proverbial interpretation. (See ART 3).

An objective reality shared with all people everywhere and always does not exist. People create their own realities (for more, see Granbom-Herranen 2008, 46–47; applied in ART 3, ART 5). Similarly, knowledge is based on experience and the comprehension of the person in question. All given meanings and interpretations might change and broaden as time passes. The given meanings, when reflected on the surroundings, make up a person's experience and their attitudes towards the current view in society. This idea of reality has guided the choice of research method and approach.

The slowness of the changes both in society and everyday life strengthens the effect of proverbs. As the third article (ART 3) argues, even if the constellation of Finnish proverbs (like in many other languages) is rather permanent, meanings vary from one context to another (see also ART 2). In the case of the SMS material, the oldest group of senders could have been born before World War II, so at the time in question (2006–2010), they were around

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<sup>17</sup> Unlike Finnish, English is an example of a language that is easily shortened (e.g. Shakespeare's "To be or not to be" can be replaced by ".2B/.2B").

<sup>18</sup> Husserl's "*Lebenswelt*" is translated *elämismaailma* in Finnish [lifeworld] (Satulehto 1992, 23).

70 years old. If they adopted proverbs from their grandparents,<sup>19</sup> these would go back to 19th century Finland or even further, to a time when social classes set limits on everyday life and when compulsory public education had yet to be widely established. In the 19th century, the majority of Finns (workers and peasants in the countryside who did not own land as well as labourers in towns) lived in a world of unwritten memory and learned necessary skills through everyday practices. As late as the early 20th century, illiteracy was common in Finland.<sup>20</sup>

Moving further in space (i.e. in time and place – to a new era or cultural area, for example), it is impossible to declare some knowledge right and some wrong. The way people have used proverbs, chosen them to be used for a special occasion and how they have interpreted them is to be accepted as a part of their knowledge. In ordinary life and in everyday use, the interpretation of a proverb is a matter of situational and individual experience. Proverbs are combinations of socio-cultural context, people, emotions and information in various situations. This is different than the use of proverbs in literature. Literary proverbs are taught and learned, an approach that is influenced by school and teachers. With these proverbs, translation and universalism are needed. They become a matter of learning the right and wrong way to use and interpret them (Granbom-Herranen 2011, 289). This is consistent with Lauri Honko's (2013b, 108) considerations of the significance of context. He even suggests that the listener or reader is primarily interested in the meaning or interpretation of a proverb in context, that is, not in the proverb as such but in its use.

A proverb is an artefact, which means that it is not only a question of the product but the whole process behind it. They are not traditional products but a system or process (see Honko 2013c, 32). With a proverb, the beginning of the process is most often unknown. A person may have heard a proverb in childhood, interpreted it in that situation and then put it out of his or her mind. Something that occurs later activates the proverb, which is then used, for example, in an SMS message. With artefacts such as proverbs, the aim is not simply to use the end product; the user of a proverb wants to disseminate the idea encompassed in it. For the user, a proverb as an artefact often has some absolute value. However, it might as well have instrumental value.

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<sup>19</sup> Before World War II, proverbs in Finland were often transferred from grandparents, especially from grandmothers to grandchildren (see Granbom-Herranen 2010b).

<sup>20</sup> The Compulsory Education Act was introduced in 1921, but for decades it did not concern the whole population (see Granbom-Herranen 2008, 26, 39–40, 281). The first law encompassing the possibility of compulsory education for all children was the Basic Education Act 628/1998, with its amendments up to 1136/2010.

When a proverb is interpreted, it becomes an artefact of a particular space, that is to say, of a particular time and place. Whatever the situation, the value is not in the end product (the proverb) but in the process, that is, in the artefact and the innovation when it is used. In fact, most people are interested in proverbs precisely because of this nature of artefacts, not the proverbs as such. People are interested in proverbs as they combine with a situation (see Honko 2013b, 107–108).

### **1.5 Position of the researcher in relation to the background assumptions**

Scientific research is interaction between the researcher and the research object while the aim of the process is to gain new knowledge. However, scientific knowledge is more or less bound to the thought of the time and, in this sense, it is unstable (Niiniluoto 1994, 41). The present makes its own past. The bases that help formulate a picture of the past are already the products of history (Kannisto 1986, 174; Kirkinen 1994, 176; Granbom-Herranen 2008, 47–51). A characteristic of qualitative research is that both the researcher and the object of research, that is, the phenomenon in question, are situated in the same lifeworld. Thus, the history of a society as well as the life-experience guide the process. As another Finnish philosopher Juha Varto (1992, 36) suggests: a precondition of happy qualitative research is to make visible the researcher's pre-understanding of the object, the basic presumptions of the research and the conjectures of the character of the research. The researcher's lifeworld with all the history is, in one way or another, present in the process. A researcher is an interpreter. To report the researcher's position in relation to the background assumptions is not essential to the reporting. For this research the positioning was done as the process started. Next, a brief commentary on my position in relation to the research is presented.<sup>21</sup>

In the first phase, observations of everyday life became part of folkloristic reasoning. In other words, the pre-understanding I had of proverbs was based on my earlier studies and on their use in daily life. What is a proverb today? Are proverbs still used? In time, key questions emerged in several conference papers and articles.

The second phase consists of background assumptions. The first assumption is connected with the ontological itemisation of the research object, that is, knowing what a proverb is or having used proverbs – but this was not enough. Becoming aware of proverbs in contemporary use was a further process. The second assumption is the research interest, the way a researcher

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<sup>21</sup> The original text is in Finnish, Varto (1992). The concepts have been translated by the author.

stands in relation to the research. It includes both the theoretical and practical interest that guides the researcher. Research interest has two aspects. The theoretical interest has helped me find empirical material to combine with the theories. The practical interest has been expressed in looking at proverbs in everyday contexts. For me, theoretical interest means wanting to be able to identify proverbs used in the 21st century. I have not aimed at offering a new definition of the term *proverb* (definitions of proverbs exist in the hundreds already) but to combine it with Grice's cooperative principle. Another theoretical and methodological interest was finding a way to collect proverbs used in daily practices, for example, in the context of mobile phones (SMS messages), which are mostly private. My own observations in my daily routine are behind the practical interest. As mentioned above, while researching proverbs as carriers of meaning, I have often heard the question, in everyday discussions as well as in academic debates, of why study proverbs that nobody uses anymore. Nevertheless, I could see proverbs in daily contexts such as newspapers. I wondered whether proverbs were such unglamorous utterances that they went unnoticed or whether the idea of proverbs was mainly associated with high culture.

The most intriguing part of the research interest is what is called the research profile. According to my scientific attitude, the starting point is how the world is understood and experienced. The goal of science is to make the world understandable. There is no conflict between the individual and unique experiential world and the possibility to generalise research findings since the world of an individual has been shaped by the society as well as in the society. The academic framework in which I have been educated and on which I have wanted to educate myself is rather wide. One reason for this is all the other experiences I have had apart from academic studies. The framework for the present dissertation is guided by folkloristic paremiology while also focusing on an everyday phenomenon. Furthermore, the multidisciplinary aspect of the dissertation also touches upon some parts of the logic and philosophy of language.

My conception of the world is humanistic and it is more or less based on cultural relativism (also in time) in which it is possible to find universal features and possibilities. As a researcher, my conception of the world is not committed to any -ism or ideology – as long as it is remembered that I have grown up in Finland after World War II, that is, in a society where Lutheran and democratic ideas are central. In my experiential world, proverbs have primarily been part of the spoken vernacular in urban surroundings. The theoretical conception of carrying out research that a researcher has developed should also be mentioned. My education and the research processes I have participated in support the possibilities to conduct multidisciplinary research, and to see this as a learning process. It might simply be my multidisciplinary

background that has enabled me and made it essential for me to look at proverbs in a comprehensive and theoretical manner. The conception of knowledge and the characteristics of knowledge which guide my interest are connected with the union of knowledge and the ability to act; in other words, the scientific and creative work when they occur together are seen as academic resources. The third assumption in the second phase has to do with the idea of man. In the dissertation, it is connected with the idea of growing as a person, a process that includes curiosity. The goal of scientific research is to carry out both individual and communal tasks as well as to transfer knowledge and encourage the regeneration of it (see Jarvis 1992; Freire 2005; Kuhn 2012).

The third phase deals with the presumptions of the characteristics of the research object. While writing articles for the dissertation, I had some expectations of the output in the form of theoretical conclusions and their generalisations as well as the usefulness of the research, which is the goal of qualitative research. Although Finnish is a small language, Finnish folkloristic paremiology can produce results to be implemented elsewhere. I found the characteristics of the research object to be in concord with the presumptions included in my pre-understanding; moreover, I see the connection with the presented theories and empirical material as reasonable. As I see it, it is possible to find out or create a scientific technique or method to focus on such research challenges. *Where there's a will, there's a way*, as the proverb says.

## 1.6 Paremiology and critical periods in societies

As proverbs very often are combined with the history of a nation, so Finnish proverbs are combined with the idea of Finnish origin, which has been considered a value on its own. The last article (ART 6) includes an overview of the history of Finnish paremiology and paremiography. The connection between the Finnish language and social capital has been established in the past. In the use of proverbs, social background has been more important than the individual one. Proverbs in Finnish, and especially collections and publications, have always had a connection with changes in Finnish society as well as with worldwide movements.<sup>22</sup>

Proverbs in oral traditions and literary use are also discussed in the first article (ART 1). In the 19th and 20th centuries, proverbs and collecting them constituted a significant part of engendering nationalistic feelings and Finnishness and creating Finland's own national romantic tradition. To know something of the circumstances and to be aware of the ideological eras in Finnish history help us to see the prejudices and presuppositions connected

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<sup>22</sup> See Granbom-Herranen 2012.

with the concept of proverb. Times of structural change in society are critical periods. From the paremiological point of view, critical periods have the tendency to highlight domestic and nationalist phenomena in proverbs (Granbom-Herranen 2017). As already mentioned, the present paves the way to the future, carrying with it traces of the past.

## 2. CONCEPTS RELATED TO PROVERB IN THIS DISSERTATION

Proverbs are a concept<sup>23</sup> or a phenomenon with various faces, as is the concept (or phenomenon) of meaning, which necessitates discussing them in some detail. A proverb can be a phrase in literature or a part of oral tradition or a sentence that might include hidden meanings and, thus, the literal and figurative ways of approaching a proverb are not mutually exclusive.<sup>24</sup> Even if the concept of proverb is seen as a tool, not an end in itself, the concept frames the research. Many attempts have been made to define proverbs both on international and national levels. Numerous definitions have been constructed on contextual, structural and syntactic levels, offered from linguistic, paremiological and folkloristic points of views. The possibilities of defining the proverb seem endless. Yet as noted in the third article (ART 3), the concept of proverb has never been defined conclusively. It has been too difficult a task because there are no particular features that could tell us a sentence is a proverb (Dundes 1994, 44). Wolfgang Mieder suggests it might be best to agree with Archer Taylor (1981, 6), who has stated that “an incommunicable quality tells us this sentence is proverbial and that one is not”. Current consensus focuses on the relative brevity of proverbs and on their traditional nature or familiarity. I concur with Mieder in his agreement with Taylor that “a definitive definition of the genre is an impossibility” (Mieder 2004, 2-3). Nowadays, the term most often refers to *proverb and proverbial expression*, both in emic and etic language, as in *American Folklore* (1996, edited by Jan Harold Brunvand). This definition follows the contemporary international position in paremiology. However, we should keep in mind Honko’s (1989, 14) claim: “It is not always necessary, or even possible, in the dynamic research tradition to define the key concepts exhaustively, for there must always be room for new connections.”

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<sup>23</sup> As mentioned in the first article (ART 1), *concept* is understood to express an idea or abstract principle that is at the conjunction of all the characteristic features of something (see Frege 2000 and more discussion in Diamond 1984).

<sup>24</sup> See also Krikmann 2009b, 58.

## 2.1 The concept of *proverb*

My definition of the concept of proverb has developed through writing the articles and appears in most of them, although it is most closely discussed in the first article (ART 1)<sup>25</sup>, which was published last. The basics of the definitions used are the same but the reader might notice some differences or variations in emphasis. The articles in part two (Part 2, *Original publications*) are not presented in chronological order but rather aim at creating a coherent foundation for further discussion, in which I briefly take up the definition of proverb I have used in various phases in chronological order of writing, that is to say, not by the year when the article has been published but from when the process began.

The first definitions of proverbs I used when writing article number two (ART 2)<sup>26</sup> focused of the functional similarities between proverbs and metaphors,<sup>27</sup> when a metaphor is understood through the model of possible worlds semantics (PWS,<sup>28</sup> Hintikka and Sandu 1994):<sup>29</sup> they both are a part of everyday language and tightly bound with culture. Second, both proverbs and metaphors give the possibility to understand abstract phenomena and this way they contribute to our way of understanding the world. Third, the similarity between proverbs and metaphors enables all kinds of proverbs to be used in all kinds of situations. However, a proverb can be true in both its literal and its figurative meaning. Moreover, proverbs are the language of authority. The fourth article (ART 4)<sup>30</sup> points out that in paremiology and paremiography the definition of the concept of proverb has changed due to all the changes that have occurred in both the use of proverbs and in the context of everyday life. Nowadays, proverbs are not primarily transmitted either orally or from one generation to another, but transmission takes place in written form, often within one generation only – those who are outside the generation are also outsiders to these proverbs. In this article, a Finnish proverb is seen as a short, independent statement that is or has been familiar within the frame of a particular time and place. The proverb is understood to be a short, commonly

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<sup>25</sup> Published in 2016, call for papers 2011.

<sup>26</sup> Published in 2010, call for papers 2008.

<sup>27</sup> The similarity is in how proverbs and metaphors function. I have arrived at applying the model developed by Jaakko Hintikka and Gabriel Sandu (1994), in which the interpretation of a proverb is based on possible-world semantics (PWS). This approach enables both figurative (metaphorical) and literal interpretations (see ART2). See chapter 2.5 for more on the theoretical premises.

<sup>28</sup> Actually in the article Hintikka and Sandu (1994) is used term *possible-worlds semantics* with the abbreviation PWS. In article number two (ART 2) Hintikka and Sandu's model is referred to as PWS-model or possible world semantics.

<sup>29</sup> See also the part on interpretation in chapter 2.4.

<sup>30</sup> Published in 2014, call for papers 2010.



known or used (i.e. familiar to some group) utterance or a reference to a well-known utterance and it contains an autonomous idea.

In the third article (ART 3),<sup>31</sup> both proverbs and phrases are seen as multiform, varying concepts; moreover, a proverb may be a fixed phrase in literature or a part of an oral tradition. The only current consensus focuses on the relative brevity of proverbs and on the traditionalism or familiarity of proverbs. The possibility for variation is larger among proverbs and the most important feature for distinguishing a proverb from a phrase is that a proverb is a statement other than a phrase. However, both proverbs and phrases are signs that connect thinking to emotions and feelings, and are a part of language and tightly bound to everyday culture. Moreover, as the references for interpretations are events, actions and phenomena, a proverb always has a practical role in all environments. Apart from this, I consider the idea that universality of features among languages means universal structures, not universal meanings. In addition, similarity in intention, at a micro level, does not mean similarity in extension, at a macro level. The first article (ART 1) was in process for a long time so it is no surprise that it in the end encapsulates many of the features I used when defining proverb such as the importance of both emic and etic definitions, context being the prerequisite for interpreting the meaning of a proverb and the challenge of recognising new proverbs (see e.g. Krikmann 2009a, 20). The conclusion is that, in paremiology, the only consensus focuses on the brevity of proverbs and some kind of traditionalism in them. There is always something more to be added in order to make sure nothing is left out of the definition.

The fifth article (ART 5)<sup>32</sup> highlights proverbs as a part of the vernacular (i.e. everyday language) used in oral and written forms and can be interpreted on the literal as well as the figurative level. The article relies on three features connected to successful communication. First, participants have some common target with the communication. Second, the contributions of the participants ought to be compatible. Third, the discussion follows an appropriate style. These are expectations that proverbial speech also fulfils. The use of the proverb or the proverb itself lends added value to the speech event. The sixth article (ART 6)<sup>33</sup> focuses on source criticism when the research is based on already existing materials. Thus the definition of proverb stays in the background.

The concept of proverb as well as the definition of a proverb has been described within the context of SMS messages. One of the challenges is the concept of proverb itself.<sup>34</sup> The problem of arriving at a definition is not new or

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<sup>31</sup> Published in 2013, call for papers 2011.

<sup>32</sup> Published in 2014, call for papers 2013.

<sup>33</sup> Published in 2015, call for papers 2013.

<sup>34</sup> See more Frege 2000.

specific to either traditional or modern proverbs. As Mieder claims, the problem of defining a proverb is not new; the need to define it is as old as the interest in it. However, nowadays, studies in folkloristic paremiology are no longer searching for a common, universal and multipurpose definition. Instead, each researcher makes their own definition (Mieder 1993, 18) by using already existing ones. This is also true for the articles in this dissertation. Due to all the changes that have occurred in the use of proverbs and in everyday life, both the meaning and definition of the concept of proverb have changed as well. In addition, it should be stressed that existing definitions do not support research on proverbs in present-day contexts that does not allow for the inclusion of “potentially-to-become-proverbs” (Grzybek 2011; also Krikmann 2017b, 101–102; Lambertini 2017). The definition of a proverb does not encompass the proverbs used today. That is the main reason I have tried to help the recognition of proverbs using Grice’s cooperative principle, or, more exactly, acting against it.<sup>35</sup>

As mentioned above, most traditional Finnish proverbs<sup>36</sup> still use agrarian language, although nowadays they are often used in a new non-agrarian context and with a new meaning. As understood in the dissertation, the used definition of proverb displays the most commonly named and widely accepted characteristics of a proverb. It is a relatively short and fairly independent statement in a more or less stable form and has an autonomous idea that is inside an expression. In addition, the expression is or has been familiar for the general public in a particular time and place and, in this case, most often in Finnish.<sup>37</sup> It can be understood as a generalising expression or it can be understood literally. It is a sentence or a reference to a well-known sentence and it introduces a more or less known idea. The traditional proverb has been and may still be used in the vernacular and this also applies to its modern counterpart. When a proverb is used, the authority of the earlier proverb

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<sup>35</sup> The idea of a proverb acting against something in the context it is used has been brought up previously (see e.g. Krikmann 2009a: 27–28).

<sup>36</sup> The Finnish words *sananlasku* and *sananparsi* both mean “proverb” in English. (See more ART 1).

<sup>37</sup> Finnish proverbs are not and have not been used only in the Finnish language. Finnish proverbs also exist in Swedish (nowadays Finland Swedish), Sámi (nowadays Northern Sámi, Skólt Sámi and Inar Sámi) and Romany. (Proverbs might also exist in Finnish sign language.) In contemporary use, English and mixed-English proverbs exist that are original Finnish proverbs (e.g. *Elämä on laiffii* [Life is life]; for more on this proverb, see Granbom-Herranen 2013b and 2016a). In the future, there will be more mixed-language Finnish proverbs partly originating from the various languages spoken by the second or third generation members of the Finnish population with an international background. (In 2015, more than 135 languages were spoken in Finland.)

speaker may be present.<sup>38</sup> However, the earlier speaker is not always from the distant past. They are somebody who has used the proverb, but this does not necessarily have anything to do with the inventor of the proverb.

Today, proverbs are used in spoken language in much the same way as they are used in the colloquial written language of the media, everyday political rhetoric, mass media and the Internet. Nowadays, the native Finnish-speaking population of Finland are able to both read and write Finnish. This has changed the position of proverbs and may be an explanation for the similarities between the use of proverbs in spoken language and in the written colloquial form. In general, oral and written communication has become increasingly similar in many ways (Granbom-Herranen 2011, 289). When defining what a Finnish proverb<sup>39</sup> is, it is worth noting that many significant changes occurred in the daily lives of Finnish people and in the environment in which proverbs are used between the 19th and 21st centuries. One of the reasons to look at contemporary living conditions from the paremiological point of view is that at the beginning of the 21st century, proverbs in Finnish (as in many other languages) are not primarily transmitted either orally or from one generation to another, but rather in written form. Repetition is an effective way to imprint ideas in written forms of information as well. However, many proverbs in Finnish still use agrarian language and concepts. The starting point for this article is that proverbs are alive as long as they are used or referred to in everyday communication.

Which point of view should be the bedrock for the concepts of proverb and the proverb genre – that of everyday life and the vernacular (*emic*) or of academic research and language (*etic*)? I argue that the basis of the concept is in everyday life. Thus, we should favour *emic* language, the language and its concepts that the proverb speakers use (Granbom-Herranen 2011, 292). New proverbs are created by using old proverbs and old proverbs are thus transformed, sometimes as parodies of the old tradition.<sup>40</sup> A question for scholars is whether proverbs are allowed to change or not, in other words, what is the point with proverbs when we are dealing with a new concept and phenomenon. I suppose the answer is clear for the proverb users since the proverbs and their interpretations change whether we want them to or not. As said, I tend to hold with the *emic* definition and have accepted the view of the proverb users. Sometimes, the concepts of proverb, saying, Bible quotation and so forth are used as synonyms but each tells us something about the proverbial nature of an expression. The method could be called the “empathetic reading”

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<sup>38</sup> The presence of the earlier authority has been verified within pedagogical discourse (see Briggs 1988; Granbom-Herranen 2008).

<sup>39</sup> See the first chapter, foot note one (1).

<sup>40</sup> More about modern proverbs, see e.g. Doyle 2003, Honeck & Welge 2003, Mieder 1993, 2012, Mieder & Litovkina 1999 and Winick 2003.

method (see Vilkkö 1997). In defining what a proverb is, I have accepted the view of the proverb users; they use the concepts of proverb, saying, Bible quotation and so on synonymously. As Maja Bošković-Stulli (1980, 181) writes, regardless of the origin, these expressions have become part of everyday language (Granbom-Herranen 2013b, 318–319). What is meant by the term proverb (*sananlasku*)<sup>41</sup> is clear to Finnish<sup>42</sup> proverb users, even if it is not as clear as Mieder and Shirley Arora have noted in their proverb materials among speakers of English (Arora 1994, 4; Mieder 1993, 36). It is obvious that proverb users cannot always identify proverbs or distinguish between proverbs and other proverbial expressions (see Čermák 2005; Järv 1999). Another question is whether it, in fact, matters if we accept the two different or parallel ways of seeing proverbs: on the one hand, the emic language, that is, the definition known within a group and, on the other, the researchers' etic language (see Headland 1990).

Proverbs live on even if the Finnish concept of proverb (*sananlasku*) does not cover all possible contemporarily used proverbs (*nykypäivän sananlaskut*). The use of proverbs has changed in the past century, as have many things. Collecting, using, modifying and relaying knowledge or information are no longer based so much on speech as was the case in the times when Finns were not expected to be literate. Societies have rules about who is permitted to use proverbs and with whom it is acceptable to use them. Often, a young person using proverbs in speech violates the code of conduct (Barakat 1980, 23, 43–47; Seitel 1994, 123, 134; Obelkevich 1994, 216). At present, a new urbanised proverb tradition is seen in Finland: proverbs are also used in the colloquial written language and among special age groups; those who are outside the group do not use these proverbs in their speech. This might lead to the assumption proverbial tradition is unavoidable going to decline (Krikmann 2009a, 16). However, young people are still careful when using proverbs in replying to older people. Differently from earlier Finnish studies (cf. Kuusi 1954, 7), in this study, the concept of proverb also includes references to proverbs since in order to refer to some proverbs those have to be known. With the material used in this study, I would not have behaved as the senders of the messages expected had I closely held with the etic understanding of proverb.

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<sup>41</sup> Proverb is translated in Finnish both as *sananlasku* and *sananparsii*. *Sananparsii* (proverb) is defined as a widely known expression including *sananlaskut* (proverbs, proverb proper), phrases and witticisms like wellerisms. This kind of division as between *sananparsii* and *sananlasku* is not common in other languages (Virtanen 1988, 224).

<sup>42</sup> Finnish refers here to those Finns who speak Finnish as their first language. As already mentioned and as I have written in the last article (ART6), other languages have also been, are and will be used as the first language among the Finnish population.

When writing the articles, I began with a working definition of proverb. I described proverbs using such key terms as short, commonly known, folk uses, whole sentences. With the SMS messages, however, I made an observation: contemporary language does not always use full sentences. Thus, I decided to use the autonomous idea of an utterance that is inside an expression. As the time for a common, universal and multipurpose definition of the proverb has passed and each researcher makes their own (Mieder 1993, 18), the question of how to recognise a proverb emerges. In the present dissertation, one starting point is that the use of proverbs is part of communicative speech that is supposed to follow Grice's cooperative principles of quantity, quality, relation and manner (Grice 1975, 45–46). This is discussed in detail in the fifth (ART 5) and fourth (ART 4) articles.

## 2.2 Meaning and interpretation of proverbs

During the process of compiling the dissertation, the concept of *meaning* has also evolved as one question or idea led to another. The dissertation might be seen as a continuation of the discussion of meanings in folkloristics that Honko took up in the 1980s in Finland and which Alan Dundes wrote about in the 1960s (see Honko 2013a). The main challenge to folkloristics considering meanings was then – and still is – collecting meanings alongside folklore products. This challenge is discussed in the chapter 4.1 on the research process. I agree with Honko's (2013a, 85) statement "Much of what we say about meaning depends on how we define the concept" because as a phenomenon, meaning can have a range of interpretations. Some definitions of meanings are presented to clarify how it is understood in this dissertation. The second article (ART 2) focuses on meaning from the viewpoint of the connection between metaphor theories and proverbs. In the article, the concept of meaning is, in many ways, a process or the result of a process. Meaning can be an etic interpretation often based on the assumed standard proverbial interpretation (Norrick 1985) or lexical meaning. Meaning might be constructed following either a compositional or contextual principle (Frege see Rott 2000, 627). It can be based on interaction, be given by the proverb user or seen as a process in which the life experience connecting the individual and the utterance creates the meaning of an expression. In the second article (ART 2), the term meaning does not have an exclusive explanation. The way meaning is seen resembles the concept of *real meaning*, which is understood as meanings to be connected with folkloristic communicative products as proverbs (see Honko 2013a, 93).

The basis for the meaning of a proverb is constructed when a proverb is heard for the first time and this later creates the basic meaning on an

individual level as described in the third article (ART 3)<sup>43</sup>. On a general level, the basic meaning of a proverb is often determined by the assumed standard proverbial interpretation (i.e. SPI) (Norrick 1985, 109–117; Silverman-Weinreich 1994, 66; Prahlad 1996, 18), which is explored in three articles (ART 4, ART 5, ART 6). In connection with proverb translations used in literary texts, the first article (ART 1) refers to the need to assume some universalism that could be included in the basic meaning of the proverb (referred to as “ground meaning” in the article). In fact, this basic meaning is the same as the meaning often determined by the assumed SPI used in articles ART 4, ART 5 and ART 6.

Some presumptions always exist about a proverb, such as the basic meaning of its ground form or a hypothetical situation for its proper use. The *ground form of a proverb* (called “basic form” in ART 3) is a form that might be called the proverb proper behind an utterance.<sup>44</sup> The *basic meaning of a proverb* is always a culture-bound assumed standard proverbial interpretation. However, neither the ground forms nor the basic meanings are defined for Finnish proverbs as, for example, they are in Estonian folkloristics (see *Eesti vanasõnad* 1980–1988). The SPI as such presumes at least a kind of universality when interpreting proverbs and is often seen as a correct interpretation involving commonly accepted cultural prejudices (Norrick 1985, 109–117; see also Krikmann 2009a, 15). However, according to Hilary Putnam (1975), universality of features among languages means universal structures, not universal meanings. According to Peter Seitel (1994, 123), meaning is the most essential part of a proverb. With meaning, Seitel does not point to a linguistic translation in itself or to explanations of what the words are supposed to stand for. The meaning of a proverb becomes clear only if thorough information of the social situation is offered with the translation. The situation explains the reason for the use of a proverb and the impact the proverb has on the situation. Furthermore, similarity in intention, at a micro level, does not mean similarity in extensions, that is, at a macro level.

As mentioned at the end of the previous section (section 1), the Finnish language is connected with social capital due to its history and, thus, social background has been more important than the individual one in proverb use. The interpretation of proverbs is found in daily lives, both that of individuals and the society. However, these days, the native Finnish-speaking population in Finland are literate. This has changed the position of proverbs in Finnish and it might be the explanation for the similarities between the use of proverbs in spoken language and in written colloquial language. Oral and written

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<sup>43</sup> In the third article (ART 3) is used concept *basic ground meaning* that is the basic meaning on the individual level.

<sup>44</sup> This is somehow similar to what Kuusi (1983, 16–17) calls normal form (*normaalimuoto*), while Honko (1998) uses the term “mental text” and what Arvo Krikmann (2009b, 64) writes about as “a normal shape of a proverb”.

communication have become increasingly similar and proverbs appear both in colloquial written Finnish and in the oral tradition. It is necessary to know and understand both the language and the cultural context of different eras in order to understand speech and especially proverbs and proverbial expressions. Translations are always interpretations and, thus, the examples in the articles and in this introductory part are in Finnish, while the English versions are literal translations, not equivalents. The language of the SMS messages is similar to the vernacular used in everyday speech more so than the language of the longer texts on the opinion pages.

### 2.3 Introdurers and synonyms for proverbs

It is worth briefly commenting on the concept of proverb in emic and etic definitions, although the challenges in constructing definitions are discussed at length in the first article (ART 1). For example, in the study of proverbs in context, narrators gave about 60 different names for the concept of proverb (Granbom-Herranen 2004, Appendix 6). In the narrative collections of the Archives of the Finnish Literature Society,<sup>45</sup> there are numerous proverbs and proverbial utterances that the narrators themselves do not name as proverbs; they simply refer to them or use them. At the same time, there are many kinds of utterances that the narrators say are proverbs. The SMS message material included more than 20 different words connected with the concept of proverb and functioning as markers with proverbs to emphasise what is coming (see also Hain 1951, Briggs 1988). In the SMS material from 2006–2010, some introdurers occurred. However, the markers were used fewer than 200 times, that is, in less than three per cent of the proverbial expressions used in the SMS messages. The results differ from previous studies on proverbs and newspapers (Babič 2013; Granbom-Herranen 2013b, 2015b; Lauhakangas 2013; Voolaid 2013; Granbom-Herranen *et al.* 2015) and on SMS messages in newspapers (Granbom-Herranen 2011, 2013b, 2014a, 2014b). For example, this SMS material did not include many proverbs with markers different from those found by František Čermák (2005) or Risto Järv (1999). This might be explained by the fact that the majority of proverbs with markers in the newspapers (Granbom-Herranen *et al.* 2015) gleaned from interviews and SMS messages as letters to the editor do not use the rhetoric of interviews.

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<sup>45</sup> Earlier known as the Folklore Archive of the Finnish Literature Society (*Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden seuran kansanrunousarkisto*).

## Example 2

“Ryöstöä. **Vanha totuus:** *Ei se ole hullu, joka pyytää. Se on, joka maksaa...* - *Jäätelökauppias tietää sen*” (SSS, sent 4.5.2007)

[Robbery. **An old truth:** It is not nutty who asks. It is who pays... -Ice cream seller knows it]

In late spring or early summer, ice cream stands appear on streets. Finnish people eat ice cream all year round but eating it outside and from cones is special. The price is also special, but it is worth it! Thus, the expression reveals a well-known fact. The modern version of the proverb says *Ei se ole hullu joka pyytää, vaan se joka maksaa* [It is not nutty who asks but the one who pays]. In the older version, *Ei se hullu ole joka anoo vaan joka antaa* (Kuusi 1990) [It is not nutty who begs but the one who gives], it is a question of begging and giving. The word *anoa* in this context is old-fashioned: today, asking instead of begging is used (*pyytää*). Also, giving (*antaa*) has changed to paying (*maksaa*).

As mentioned above, proverbs encompass proverbs themselves as well as proverbial expressions in this discussion. This is justified by the fact that the people often use concepts such as proverb, saying and Bible quotations synonymously. In SMS messages, writers sometimes use introducers such as *as the proverb says* and they are not always referring to a proverb but to a proverb-like structure. In defining what a proverb is, I accept a sentence to be a proverb if it is labelled as one. However, if a sentence is a proverb (or refers to a proverb), I treat it as a proverb no matter its label.

The use of a proverb by a reference to it, in other words, a proverbial expression as a violating element, introduces new aspects into a discourse. It makes a pause in it. As an event or short performance, the proverb is a fixed part of the situation: something is happening and proverbs might be signalled with a linking phrase or a marker or introducer of proverbs (Čermák 2005). Sometimes, quotation marks function as a marker. In addition, when a speaker points out an utterance (the author uses a proverb or saying to assure readers or listeners), it might be emphasised with words or gestures. In any case, the proverb and the interpretation are associated with the situation.

## Example 3

“Äiti 32v! Ajoopetus pitäisi aloittaa 14v! **Vanha sananlasku sanoo**, minkä nuorena oppii sen vanhana taitaa! Nim eka auto 7v” (SSS, sent 12.5.2010)

[Mum 32 years! Driving lessons should start at the age of 14! **An old proverb says**, what you learn when you are young that you can do when you are old. Pseudonym first car 7 y{ears = as seven years old}]



#### Example 4

*“Laiska töitänsä luettelee. Vai miten se nyt meni??? Yks vaan neuvo.”* (SSS, sent 18.7.2008)

[A lazy person lists his or her work. Or how was it??? **Just a piece of advice.**]

*Laiska töitänsä luettelee* is a traditional proverb, understood as a piece of advice here. This does not rule out that the speaker (author) knows he or she is using a proverb.

The introducer *it is said* comprises about six per cent of the markers:

#### Example 5

*“Ahneella paskanen loppu. Sanotaan. Tai lääkärille kun hakee ilmasta satteenvarjoa, ne kun on tosi halpoja muutenkin!-ei plazassa avajaisis-mä”* (SSS, sent 27.10.2006)

[A greedy person gets a dirty<sup>46</sup> end. **It is said.** Or to a doctor when you are after an umbrella free of charge, as it is, they are really cheap! -not in the opening in plaza-]

Plaza is the name of a shopping centre in Salo. Umbrellas were handed out free of charge when a new shopping centre was opened. They were not fully prepared and chaos resulted: people fell on the escalator and had to seek medical help.

Roughly every seventh introducer emphasised the proverb by using *says somebody* (*sanoo joku*):

#### Example 6

*“Moi! Ei haukkuminen haavaa tee, näin edesmennyt äitini sanoi! Mutta kyllä hämmästyttää, mitä olen tehnyt? Tervehtimisestä tuli kunnon haukkumisryöppy! Tule ‘Moi!’ -Takaisin”* (SSS, sent 16.4.2008)

[Hi! Barking does not make a wound, **so used my late mother to say!** But I am surprised, what have I done? When greeting I got a right barrage of roasting! Come ‘Moi!’ -Back {to me}]

About one in three introducers evoked the Bible. In such instances, the leading authorities are labelled the Bible, God, Jesus, the apostles, the catechism and the Ten Commandments.

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<sup>46</sup> In this connection the adjective dirty means actually full of shit or manure.

### Example 7

*"Ahne juoksee rahan perässä -köyhyys kintereillä, sanotaan Raamatussa. Tulee mieleen AMk ym. -lakko, lakko"* (SSS, sent 20.2.2010)

[A greedy one runs after money -poverty at their heels, **it is said in the Bible**. Just comes to my mind AMk<sup>47</sup> etc. - strike, strike]

In the Bible, Proverbs 28:22 says the same but with more words. The idea is the same: *Pahansuova haluaa kiihkeästi varallisuutta eikä tiedä, että hänet tapaa puute* [He who is ever desiring wealth goes running after money and does not see that need will come on him].

### Example 8

*"Viina ei ole viisasten juoma. Eikä tyhmien! Raamattukin todistaa sen!!-PK"* (SSS, sent 30.12.2006)

[Strong alcohol is not a beverage of the wise ones. Neither of the stupid ones. **Even the Bible proves** that!!-PK]

The ground form of this modern proverb is *Viina on viisasten juoma* [Strong alcohol is a beverage of the wise]. In the Bible, there is nothing about strong alcohol, not in Finnish or in English. However, wine (*viini*) appears in the Bible in various contexts and connotations.

Every seventh introducer referred to a saying (*sanonta*):

### Example 9

*"Tehy. Todistatte juuri että sanonta 'Joukossa tyhmyys tiivistyy' pätee teihin, jätätte jopa lapset hoitamatta. -Äly hoi, älä jätä"* (SSS, sent 18.10.2007)

[Tehy {The Union of Health and Social Care Professionals in Finland}. You just prove that the **saying** 'Stupidity becomes tighter in the crowd' holds good with you, you leave even children untreated. -Hello wit, don't leave]

*Joukossa tyhmyys tiivistyy* [Stupidity becomes denser in the crowd] is a modern proverb (Kuusi 1988).

Every tenth introducer mentioned the word *proverb* (*sananlasku* or *sananparsi*):

### Example 10

*"Rahalla on valtaa, mutta miksi ostaa rakennuksia joita ei voi korjata. Tyhmyydestä sakotetaan, sanoo vanha sananlasku. Nimim. Tarkka euroistaan."* (SSS, sent 17.11.2007)

[Money has power but why buy buildings that cannot be repaired. You'll pay for stupidity, says an old proverb. Pseudonym Careful with euros.]

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<sup>47</sup> AMK = *Ammattikorkeakoulu* = University of Applied Sciences; supposedly the writer mean AKT = *Auto- ja kuljetusalan työntekijäliitto* = Transport Workers' Union. The union organised measures to speed up the collective bargaining. The negotiation resulted with a strike that the union finally organised in March 2010.

The concept of proverb is understood in an emic way:

### Example 11

*“Vaikka tuhat ihmistä uskoisi hölynpölyyn, se on silti hölynpölyä.. Kiinalainen sananlasku”* (SSS, sent 25.7.2009)

[Even if one thousand people believe in nonsense, it is still nonsense.. A **Chinese proverb**]

The next chapter 2.4 presents examples of traditional proverbs, modern proverbs, Bible quotations and references to them. These are contemporarily used proverbs and references to them.

## 2.4 Contemporarily used proverbs in this dissertation

In this introductory article, a *traditional proverb* means an utterance that in Finland is commonly accepted to be an old proverb.<sup>48</sup> *Modern proverbs* are Finnish (i.e. mostly in Finnish language) proverbs that are not included in the aforementioned publications.<sup>49</sup> As mentioned above (chapter 1.1 *Introduction*), *contemporarily used proverbs* include proverbs used today, in other words, traditional proverbs, modern proverbs and Bible quotations as well as references to them (which are not proverbs proper).

### Traditional proverb

Traditional proverbs comprised less than five per cent of the proverbial expressions used in the SMS messages. This differs from their occurrence in, for example, news texts and in the titles of TV programs in newspapers. It is

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<sup>48</sup> Due to the historic-geographic method (also known as the Finnish method), Finnish proverbs were collected up to World War II and they are well mapped. Most of the ground forms of traditional Finnish proverbs before the 1950s are included in three published collections and in an online database. The published collections are edited by Matti Kuusi (1990/1953; the oldest collections made before the great fire of Turku in 1928), Ruben Erik Nirvi and Lauri Hakulinen (1953/1948; collected in the 1930s) and Kari Laukkanen and Pekka Hakamies (1997/1978; collected prior to the end of 1950s). There is also an online corpus including proverbs collected in the 1930s owned by the Institute for the Languages of Finland (KOTUS / *Kotimaisten kielten keskus*). The proverb types, including examples, can be found via the Finnish Literature Society. The concept of the proverb in Finland has primarily been advanced in concordance with the types and structures presented in these publications.

<sup>49</sup> The ground forms of some modern proverbs can be found in the books by Pasi Heikura (2004) and Kuusi (1988). These publications do not contain proverbs from the 21st century.

somewhat surprising since in SMS messages, the use of proverbs might include the expectation that all readers are aware of the basic meaning of traditional proverbs and, thus, they should be understandable (Granbom-Herranen 2013a, 2015b, Granbom-Herranen *et al.* 2015).

### Example 12

“C@ Ikuntatedote 6/06 kisko. Jätteiden lajittelu koskee kaikkia. Ihanko kunnan omia kiinteistöjäkin? Näkis vaan! **Mitä isot edellä sitä pienet perässä.** C `@-kiskolainen” (SSS, sent 16.8.2006)<sup>50</sup>

[C@ Ibulletin of civil parish 6/06 kisko. Sorting of waste involves everyone. Even the property owned by municipality? That I would like to see! **What the big ones do first the same do the little ones after.** C `@- inhabitant in kisko.]

The proverb *Mitä isot edellä sitä pienet perässä* [What the big ones do first, the same do the little ones after] is most often used when pointing to something that has been done or remains to be done. It specifically points out that, especially at home, parents are supposed to be good examples for the children. If children use bad language or do not behave, they have learned it from someone older, most often siblings, friends or parents. This thinking follows the doctrine of three estates combined with the doctrines of the Lutheran church, best known in Finnish as *huoneentaulu*,<sup>51</sup> a regulation for law and order in society and within families. In earlier times, “the big one” meant an adult but, nowadays, it increasingly refers to some group or institution, here an anonymous municipality.

### Reference to a traditional proverb

References to traditional proverbs were used in almost every fifth SMS message, including some proverbial expressions. However, this does not account for even two per cent of all the SMS messages in this material.

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<sup>50</sup> All the examples except the Bible quotations are translations; equivalents have not been used. For Finnish, I have used *Raamattu* [The Bible], the 1933 and 1938 Finnish translations. There is another translation into Finnish from 1992, but adults are still quoting the New and Old Testaments from the 1930s (the first original Finnish translation of the Bible is from 1642, the second significant translation from 1776 and a revision from 1859). Thus, Bible quotations are also identifiable by the old-fashioned language used. For Bible quotations, I have used English translations of the Bible in basic English (*The Bible*).

<sup>51</sup> The word *huoneentaulu* does not appear in English, German or French. It exists in Swedish (*hustavla*) and Estonian (*majatahvel*). The word and *huoneentaulu* itself are connected with the time of the Reformation when the areas of present day Finland and Estonia were part of the Swedish kingdom.

### Example 13

*“Äiti! Se koira älähtää jne. Missä olit itse dokaamassa kun poliisi joutui P:n talolla paimentamaan lastasi. Hoida jälkikasvusi, älä hoidata valtion varoin. -X-”* (SSS, sent 16.2.2007)

[Mum! **That dog yelps etc.** Where were you yourself drinking when police had to be in P’s house to herd your child. Take care of your descendant, don’t do it with means of the state. - X-]

This SMS message is an answer to an earlier one:

*“Jos urheilutalo vuokrataan alaikäisille, syyttäkööt itseään! Ja poliisi ajaa nuoret vähissä vaatteissa -25, huh huh. Kannattaisi antaa puh.vuoro nuorille! -äiti”* (SSS, sent 14.2.2007)

[If the building of the sports association is rented to minors, they are simply to blame themselves! And police chase the youth off dressed only in light clothes - 25 {Celsius}, huh huh. It would be worth giving the floor to the youth! - mum]

The opinion is part of a discussion about a party some minors organised in the building of a sport association in the wintertime. There was a full building of minors, drinking and dancing.<sup>52</sup> In Finland, the police are supposed to be informed if large parties are organised. Because minors cannot be responsible, they are not allowed to organise such parties without adults being present and signing the lease. The combination of minors, drinking and cold weather has proved to be a lethal combination in Finland. The traditional proverb *Se koira älähtää, johon kalikka kalahtaa* [That dog yelps, which is hit by a stick<sup>53</sup>] is one of the most referred to and used proverbs. Still, it accounts for only half a per cent of the proverbial expressions in the material.

### Modern proverb

Modern proverbs were the largest group among the SMS messages. Every third proverbial expression was a modern proverb. Most often, frequency is what makes the difference between a modern proverb and a potential modern proverb. However, in this dissertation, I have not separated those potential proverbs (i.e. utterances that in future might be proverbs) before they actually become proverbs (Grzybek 1987, 40) from modern ones since I think that the tendency (new proverbs are on the rise) is an interesting one.<sup>54</sup> Previous studies dealing with Finnish material (Granbom-Herranen 2013b, 2015b, Granbom-Herranen *et al.* 2015) revealed that most of the modern proverbs were used in opinions in the column of short letters to the editor in the form of SMS messages. It is not a surprise since SMS messages are a form of written

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<sup>52</sup> TS 13.2.2007

<http://www.ts.fi/uutiset/kotimaa/1074180361/Poliisi+selvittelee+Perttelin+rajuja+bileita> [17.7.2007].

<sup>53</sup> In this connection the noun stick means actually a piece of firewood which has not been split.

<sup>54</sup> More in Granbom-Herranen 2016a.

vernacular. The language is not seen as written communication in the same way that a traditional letter to the editor would be seen.

#### Example 14

*“Salossa paljon mukavia ihmisiä. Jyväskylässä paljon mukavia ihmisiä. Vaasassa paljon mukavia ihmisiä jne.- sitä saa mitä tilaa”* (SSS, sent 20.9.2006)

[In Salo exist a lot of nice people. In Jyväskylä a lot of nice people. In Vaasa a lot of nice people etc. - **one gets what he or she orders**<sup>55</sup>]

The proverb is used as the signature of an SMS message and the writer seems to have had enough with complaining about impolite and withdrawn neighbours in Salo. The modern proverb *Sitä saa mitä tilaa* [one gets what he or she orders] was used more than 50 times in the SMS messages, including proverbial expressions and it ranked 12th in frequency. It was also among the 20 most referred to modern proverbs. In Finnish, traditional proverbs are *Sitä kun ihminen kylvää, sitä hän niittää* (Laukkanen & Hakamies 1997) [What you sow, you shall reap] and *Mitä ihminen kylvää, sitä saa niittääkin* (KOTUS) [What you sow, you shall reap].<sup>56</sup> There is also the well-known Bible quotation *Mitä ihminen kylvää, sitä hän myös niittää Gal. 6:7* [for whatever seed a man puts in, that will he get back as grain, Galatians 6:7]. The modern proverb might be a new way to use a proverb with updated concepts: *niittää* (reap) has become *tilata* (order).

#### Reference to modern proverb

References to modern proverbs were the most common way proverbs were used in the SMS messages including proverbial expressions (two out of five of these expressions were in this group). In previous studies, I have not examined references to modern proverbs. Some of the expressions might be a passing fad, while others might become stable or independent expressions, turning into potential modern proverbs.<sup>57</sup> However, this will become clear in time.

#### Example 15

*“Ottakaa toki huomioon,että näistä ‘tupakoimattomista’ ja ‘lopettaneista’ nuorista monet vetäivät surutta pilveä. Pienempi paha? -Jape-”* (SSS, sent 27.8.2010)

[Bear in mind that many of these ‘non-smokers’ and ‘not-anymore-smokers’ among the young people smoke weed without any sorrow. **Lesser evil? -Jape-**”

The expression (question in this case) *Pienempi paha?* [Lesser evil?] refers to the modern proverb *Kahdesta pahasta se pienempi paha* [(it is) the lesser of two evils]. The proverb is used when some problem has only bad or worse solutions. Behind this modern proverb might be the traditional proverb *Paha kahdesta pahasta valita* (KOTUS) [Bad to make a choice between two evils]. However, the modern one makes a comparison that is not included in the traditional proverb.

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<sup>55</sup> As a proverb in English *You get what you order*.

<sup>56</sup> As a proverb in English also *You reap what you sow*.

<sup>57</sup> Even some fixed expression is used or referred often it does not necessarily mean it is or will be a proverb.

### Example 16

*“Nuoret palstalla oli fiksun nuoren miehen ajatuksia kotitöistä. Tino sinusta saisi moni ottaa mallia:) nimim. ei (vanhempienkaan) raha kasva puussa”* (SSS, sent 11.9.2010)

[In the column of youth {in SSS} there were thoughts of a smart young man considering housework. Tino, many could take cue from you:) pseudonym (**not even parents’**) **money grows in a tree.**”<sup>58</sup>]

The SMS message refers to an interview in a column called *Nuoret* [The youth]. It is a column published once a week on Saturdays. On 11 September 2010, two questions discussed in the column were “How much housework do you do?” and “Should you be paid for housework?” Six young people were interviewed, one of them 13-year-old Tino. He says that he does some homework such as washing dishes, cleaning his room and mowing the lawn. He has not asked to be or been paid for the homework. Tino thinks it is as it should be. The modern proverb this SMS message refers to is *Raha ei kasva puussa* [Money does not grow on a tree], meaning that easy money does not exist.

### Bible quotation

Bible quotations<sup>59</sup> formed only about half a per cent of the utterances in the SMS messages, including some proverbial expressions.

### Example 17

*“Silmä on ruumiin lamppu. Ei ole pikkuasia mitä katsot - pornopatet sairastaa”* (SSS, sent 23.5.2008)

[**The eye is the light of the body.** It is not a trifle what you watch - porno-Pauls are ailing]

The quotation *silmä on ruumiin lamppu* [the eye is the light of the body] is from the New Testament, Matthew 6:22 and it is also a proverb. As Christianity and the Lutheran church is still very much present in Finnish society, many times in an unconscious way, Bible quotations are part of everyday life, even if they are not noticed (see ART 3 and ART 6). They might be recognised, as most Finns still learn their Bible and catechism in confirmation classes, but in newspaper texts not all Bible quotations are connected to the Bible, which has also been the case in life stories (Granbom-Herranen 2008, 69–70, 230–235). Since the language of sermons has been Finnish since the time of the Reformation, all of the quotations and proverbs from the Bible have been heard in Finnish and proverbs from the Bible have mostly been part of the oral tradition<sup>60</sup> (Granbom-Herranen 2008, 34; 2009, 9). They are recognised but not much used.

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<sup>58</sup> See the first chapter, foot note one (1).

<sup>59</sup> During many centuries Bible quotations were a part of oral tradition in Finland, see ART 4.

<sup>60</sup> The first school law from 1866 ordered Bible quotations and parts of *Kalevala* (the Finnish national epic) and *Kanteletar* (the collection of Finnish folk poems) to be taught in schools.

## Reference to Bible quotation

References to Bible quotations occur more often than Bible quotations as such but they still form only about three per cent of the utterances in the SMS messages, including some proverbial expressions.

### Example 18

*“Toinen kerta toden sanoo -anova saa, etsivä löytää ja kolkuttavalle avataan. - konkurssin läpi käynyt yrittäjä.”* (SSS, sent 22.1.2008)

[The second time tells the truth **-the one to make a request will get, the one who searches will find and to one who knocks, the door will be opened - bankrupt entrepreneur.**]

The expression *Anova saa, etsivä löytää ja kolkuttavalle avataan* [to make a request will get, the one who searches will find and to one who knocks the door will be opened] refers to *Etsivä löytää, ja kolkuttavalle avataan* [The one who searches will find and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened]. The Finnish version of the quotation is a coherent whole that decidedly has the structure of a proverb. Some Bible quotations are grouped with traditional proverbs, although they are mostly recognised as proverbs that originate from the Bible. In fact, this quotation has become four proverbs: *Pyytäjälle annetaan* [One who asks, will get], *Etsivä löytää* [Who is searching, will find], *Kolkuttavalle avataan* [The door will open for the one who is knocking] and *Pyytävä saa, etsivä löytää ja kolkuttavalle avataan* [One who asks will get, who is searching will find and the door will open for the one who is knocking]. The best known of them is *Etsivä löytää* [Who is searching, will find]. In contemporary use, it has two senses: the first is when seeking a way to a comfortable and balanced life, to what could be called spiritual connection. Often, the proverb has an introducer referring to the Bible.<sup>61</sup> The second connection is when looking for a lost or wanted thing. This is a specific and often humorous way to use the proverb.<sup>62</sup> In this example, it is used in the latter sense.

*Etsivä löytää, ja kolkuttavalle avataan* [The one who searches will find and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened] is a proverb in Finnish. It is a shortened version of a Bible quotation (Luke 11:9–10): *Niinpä minäkin sanon teille: anokaa, niin teille annetaan; etsikää, niin te löydätte; kolkuttakaa, niin teille avataan. Sillä jokainen anova saa, ja etsivä löytää, ja kolkuttavalle avataan.* [And I say to you, make requests and they will be answered; what you are searching for, you will get; when you give the sign, the door will be open to you. For to everyone who makes a request, it will be given; and he who is searching will get his desire; and

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<sup>61</sup> <http://sailanblogi.blogspot.com/2007/01/etsiv-lyt-kolkuttavalle-avataan.html> [28.1.2018]

<http://hahmottelua.blogspot.com/2012/12/etsiva-loytaa-vai-loytaako-sittenkaan.html> [28.1.2018]

<http://www.lily.fi/juttu/etsiva-loytaa-ja-kolkuttavalle-avataan> [28.1.2018]

<sup>62</sup> <http://kotikolmio.blogspot.com/2013/03/etsiva-loytaa-joskus-vahingossakin.html> [28.1.2018]

<http://nannachica.blogspot.com/2013/02/etsiva-loytaa.html> [28.1.2018]



to him who gives the sign, the door will be open]). A traditional Finnish proverb says *Ken mitä etsii, se sitä löytää* (Laukkanen & Hakamies 1997) [What one searches for, it will be found]. It is not clear whether this is connected to the Bible or if it is simply practical advice in the form of a proverb.<sup>63</sup>

It should also be noted that this example begins with a reference to another proverb, *Toinen kerta toden sanoo* [The second time tells the truth], which refers to the traditional proverb *Kolmas kerta toden sanoo* (Laukkanen & Hakamies 1997) [The third time tells the truth].

In conclusion, I want to stress that defining traditional proverbs and modern proverbs is a challenge (see e.g. Doyle *et al.* 2012). It is easier to look for references to the traditional proverb than to one for modern proverbs, because once the ground forms of proverbs are defined, the references to the proverbs can be identified. It is not easy to decide how much a proverb is allowed to change and still be recognised as one. Proverbs are alive as long as they are referred to, but what is the point when the utterance is no longer a proverb?

## 2.5 Theoretical cornerstones

The articles use or refer to some theories on proverbs, language, context, interpretation and performance. When focusing on language, some specific challenges arise, one of which is that language is always defined through language; therefore, all ideas must receive meaning in language before we can use language to define the phenomenon in question (Ricoeur 2005, 149; Frege 2000, 84). In this chapter I present in brief the significant theories included in the articles. The theories focusing on language (Vygotski, Frege, Grice and emic-etic viewpoints) are presented first, theories connected with proverbs interpretation (metaphor theories and reference point) are second and the one related to performance (Briggs and Badiou) are last. At the end of this chapter, I address the life cycle of proverbs in line with how Honko (2013c) and Gerard Rooijackers (1998) have treated the issue.

### Language

The essential points in Lev Vygotsky's (1967) thoughts are the fact that language is not understood only as an instrument of communication but as linked to thought. The connection between language and the conception of the world is reflected in language use. To learn a language is to learn to think the way the language does and to think in a language (Devitt & Sterelny 1987, 116–117). To learn a language is to learn to think.

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<sup>63</sup> See also Krikmann 2009b, 52.

Drawing on Gottlob Frege (1984, 2000), I emphasise the connection to context, where a proverb is seen as gaining its significance from its context. The use of a proverb or the proverb itself adds value to a speech event. The conventional meaning of what is said consists of common knowledge and tacit knowledge in the context of that time and place (Grice 1989, 44-46; Frege 1984, 42). Frege contends that the meaning of an utterance is definable either by the principle of contextuality or by the principle of compositionality (Rott 2000, 627). The principle of contextuality states that the meaning of an expression is always bound to the context in which it is used; the situational or wider context of a sentence gives the meaning to the words. The principle of compositionality requires that the meaning of a sentence rise from the meanings of words and be determined by the meanings of its constituent expressions; the focus is, thus, on words and their interpretation (Harman 1975). Even scholars who work with Frege's theories have been unable to say which principle, contextuality or compositionality, Frege himself preferred (Pelletier 2001).

The use of a proverb is a violating element, marking a pause in the discourse and introducing new aspects (Grice 1975). Taking a critical look at Grice's approach, it can be argued that the way he sees the importance of the speaker is separate from any information on the circumstances of the event as such (Devitt & Sterelny 1987 123-124). The contribution of Grice's cooperative principle would be more substantial if it were possible to determine what the intended meaning given by the speaker was. The listener also has an impression of what was said and what was meant. The difficulty of communication is that the speaker and listeners do not always understand the meaning of what is said in the same way. We could even say that it would be impossible theoretically since both have an individual lifeworld with their own experiences and meanings assigned them. Moreover, the speaker may, for one reason or another, deliberately act against Grice's cooperative principle, for example, if they do not want to be explicit (see Honko 2013b, 112).

These principles (Vygotsky, Frege and Grice) are present in articles two to five (ART 2, ART 3, ART 4, ART 5). Although they all deal with Grice's cooperative principle and with acting against it, it is at the centre of article five (ART 5) more specifically. Along with these theories, the terms *emic* and *etic* from Kenneth Pike and Marvin Harris (see Headland 1990) have been used and discussed in article one (ART 1). The dichotomy of emic and etic in language can be approached in different ways. In short, etic-based definitions are used by the paremiologists and other researchers, whereas emic-based definitions do not actually exist (Granbom-Herranen 2010c, 217, 2016a).<sup>64</sup> The

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<sup>64</sup> Shortly said, etic-based definitions are researcher-centred definitions and emic-based ones user-centred definitions.

difference between them becomes evident in Harris and Pike's focus on etic interpretations and their justification. They are in agreement with Headland's (1990) views on the emic. By using a broad definition of proverb, this analysis relies primarily on the emic concept. However, the etic concept also comes into play because the other types of utterances that represent different short-form genres<sup>65</sup> which might, in the reader's eyes, also be proverbs (in folkloristics) are not treated here (see Granbom-Herranen 2016b).

### **Interpretation**

In everyday life, the interpretation of a proverb is a matter of situational and individual experience. Honko (2013b, 112) claims that memory stores are individual. However, Jaakko Hintikka and Gabriel Sandu's model<sup>66</sup> supports the idea that there is actually no conflict between the individual and unique experiential world and the possibility to generalise research findings since individual worlds have been shaped in the society. This could be the solution to the problem Honko (2013b, 109) identifies when talking about the variation based on different cultural contexts.

Next to the significance of proverbs as such, the articles also discuss their interpretation. This proceeds from the fact that proverbs function much the same way as metaphors do. Interpreting proverbial expressions is commonly based on similarity or continuity that is real, assumed, or associated; meaning is constructed by linking interpretation with context. Discrepancies between paremiological schools in discussing meaning might become tangible in how two entities find each other. The metaphoric feature of utterances such as proverbs and phrases complicates that link further. Articulation is interpreted by the speaker or it is based on conventional meaning. Of the two, the meaning assigned by the speaker precedes conventional meaning (Devitt & Sterelny 1987, 120–121). However, the meaning given by the speaker also has to be placed in a framework. Michael Devitt and Kim Sterelny (1987, 21) address how Grice claims that the predominant feature of language (or expression) is the fact that people say one thing but can actually mean much more.<sup>67</sup> I tend to consider the existence of a social framework and its influence more important than Devitt and Sterelny do when defining the importance of speech.

The best-known and most important models for connecting the abstract and the concrete are metaphor theories: comparison theory (e.g. Fogelin 1988), interaction theory (Black 1981), intention theory (Searle 1981) and the model of

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<sup>65</sup> Also called small-scale folklore (Honko 2013b, 118).

<sup>66</sup> The interpretations and the use of the PWS model and reference point are based on the lectures and seminars Professor Sandu gave at the University of Helsinki (2001–2004), Hintikka and Sandu's joint article (1994) and Anders Engström's dissertation at the University of Copenhagen (1999).

<sup>67</sup> People say more, not something else.

literal interpretation (Davidson 1981). As becomes clear in the second article (ART 2), the similarity or comparison between two things is not a sufficient basis (Fogelin 1988, Black 1981), the speaker's intention is generally not clear (Searle 1981) and the literal interpretation is not enough (Davidson 1981) to understand a proverb. I have arrived at applying the model by Hintikka and Sandu (1994) in which the interpretation of a proverb is based on possible-world semantics (PWS). In many ways, this is similar to what Honko (2013b, 111) calls intended meaning, which is the meaning the proverb user gives, and received meaning, which is what the listener or reader thinks it is. The PWS model illustrates and clarifies why these cannot always be identical. The model also shows why Neal R. Norrick's assumed SPI (1985, 109–117) might stand only for a suggestive interpretation in folkloristic research. There are always people who are incapable of understanding and/or interpreting proverbs, not to mention recognising references to proverbs (Ferretti *et al.* 2007; Granbom-Herranen 2008, 184).

Next, I shortly present the PWS model that can be used to see how the proverbs receive their meanings.<sup>68</sup> The model makes use of the functional similarities of metaphors and proverbs based on the model of metaphor by Jaakko Hintikka and Gabriel Sandu (1994), the interpretation of the proverb is founded on possible worlds semantics (in the space consisting of time and place). The main target with the model is to show how proverbs change their meanings. The model makes use of the functional similarities of proverbs and metaphors. Maybe the most significant factor applying using this model for the interpretation of proverbs is that it makes it possible to interpret them through both the literal and the metaphorical meaning. Another meaningful point is the essentiality of the anchor point of the reference in understanding the expression. When the reference changes or receives a new or different emphasis, the meaning of the expression might change as well. The third point is that it is essential for a metaphorical expression that it is not "like something" but it is a direct statement, it "is something". A proverb as such expresses the matter as a simple statement.

The main concepts in Hintikka and Sandu's PWS model are world line ("the reality"), meaning line ("what is meant"), anchoring of lines and the reference point (see ART 2, ART 3). The actual world is not to the only one in possible worlds semantics. There exists the possibility of various worlds, which means both scenarios or situations, and historical periods (Hintikka & Sandu 1994, 166). Novels and films compose a part of contemporary fairy-tale-reality and they often function as the anchoring point. In folklore, we can see the fairy tales and the anecdotes as various possible worlds. Anyhow, quite

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<sup>68</sup> More about the PWS-model can be found in the articles number two and three (ART 2, ART 3).

often but not always it is the actual world where the meaning line is anchored by the lexical meaning. In anchoring the reference point, the actual world is quite near the world of popular opinion, which may differ from the real one (Hintikka & Sandu 1994, 165–166). In any event, in order to be understood, the relevant aspects of the reference point of the utterance must be familiar to the listener or reader.

Context is the space or universe surrounding an individual, including the life experience of a person and an entire society with its culture. The life experience linking an individual and an utterance creates the meaning of an expression. Meaning, it should be noted, is not necessarily identical for speaker and listener. To understand the meaning of a term, one should understand the extension of that term under the concurrent circumstances and other types of circumstance (Hintikka & Sandu 1994, 152): a contention linked to the idea that no person can know the meaning of a term if all one can know is the actual extension of that term. Interpretation, in short, is possible only if one knows the contexts involved; however, as with terms, that is hardly ever possible. Knowing all contexts is really only a theoretical possibility, even if one presumes the existence of micro-universal or macro-universal and common knowledge. Common knowledge resides instead inside a socio-cultural frame. Common knowledge is related to how a person uses and can use language and thereby conceptualise abstract and concrete phenomena and acts (Granbom-Herranen 2008, 172–173, 201).

The proverb *Annetaan kaikkien kukkien kukkia* [Let all the flowers bloom] has, receives and will receive various interpretations depending on the space (the time and place inside some socio-cultural context).<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> The target of the short explanations of the context is to illuminate the relation between space (time and place) and the interpretation of a proverb. They are based on the general Finnish education in my background.

**Figure 1. The world lines connect the proverbs**

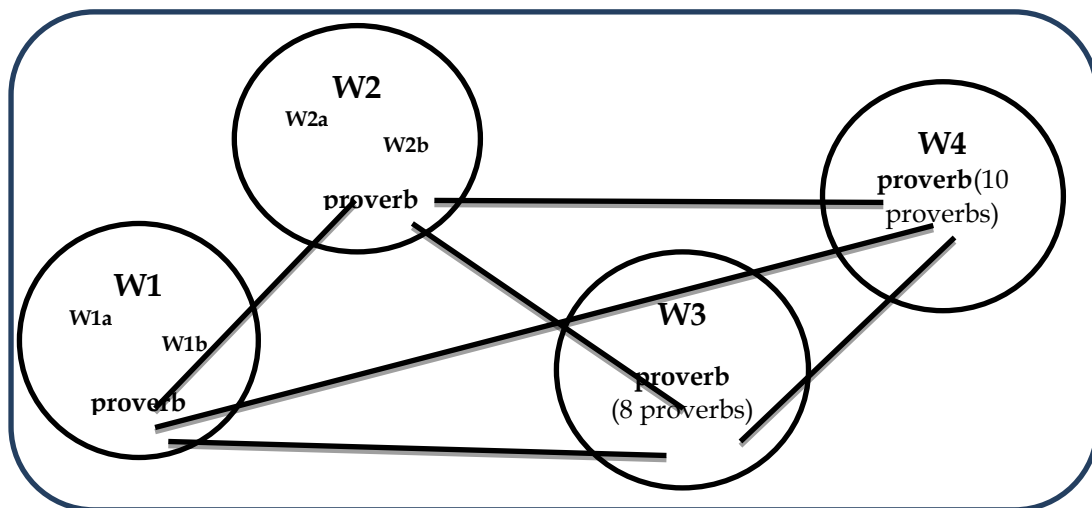


Figure 1 shows how the world lines between worlds W1, W2, W3, and W4 connect the sentences; in other words the ground form of the proverb is always *Annetaan kaikkien kukkien kukkia*.

**World 1 (W1)** represents the People’s Republic of China. The interpretation of the proverb W1 includes two minor worlds: **world 1a (W1a)** and **world 1b (W1b)**, which represent different eras and different political circumstances.

**(W1a)** illustrates the years 1956 and 1957 in the People’s Republic of China.

**(W1b)** represents the People’s Republic of China until the 1970s or 1980s.

**World 2 (W2)** is the time of hippie culture and the same as in W1, W2 contains two worlds, **world 2a and world 2b**

**(W2a)** represents the so-called positive hippie culture.

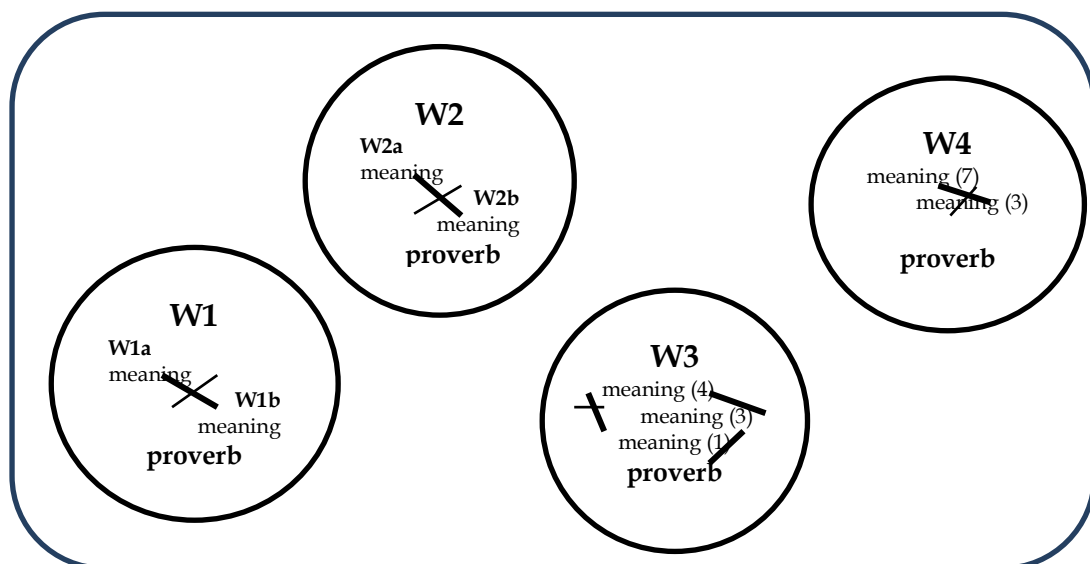
**(W2b)** represents the negative sides of hippie culture.

**World 3 (W3)** is 2006–2010 in Finland, represented by SMS messages in SSS. The used material (70,000 SMS messages) includes eight SMS messages with this proverb.

**World 4 (W4)** is 2010s in Finland. In this world there are a sample of texts in some Finnish newspapers (used also in Granbom-Herranen *et al.* 2015), in total ten proverbs.

The meaning lines anchor to the basic meaning, in other words, what is understood by the proverb. In this case, in worlds W1 and W2 it is relevant to talk about the assumed standard proverbial interpretation (see Norrick 1985), because the contexts are not known, contrary to worlds W3 and W4.

**Figure 2. Inside each of the worlds**



The reference point in **W1a** is the idea of the Hundred Flowers Campaign in China. This was the period people were encouraged to criticise government policies and to take up problems in society. The reference point in **W1b** is the time of the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution when the proverb turned to be the opposite, criticism was not allowed.

The reference point in **W2a** is the idea of what hippiedom’s Flower Power ideal meant: “Make love, not war”;<sup>70</sup> the time for love and meditation.<sup>71</sup> The reference point in **W2b** includes the downsides of hippiedom: bound to countercultural values, sexual revolution, drugs, staying outside society, own laws.<sup>72</sup>

The reference points in **W3** are the interpretation made using the context information in SMS messages that participate in the continuing discourse in the Salo region. Eight SMS messages included this proverb, which received three interpretations. Most often it was tolerance towards other people and

<sup>70</sup> Used in English in Finnish speech as well.

<sup>71</sup> See for example The *Flower Power* photograph by Bernie Boston, taken during "March on The Pentagon", 21 October 1967.  
<https://www.pinterest.com.au/pin/572942383818137137/> [5.1.2018]

<sup>72</sup> One of the latest news considering this time was published in Finnish newspapers on 21 November 2017 when an article in *Helsingin Sanomat* had the headline “Charles Manson edusti hippiajan pimeää puolta” [Charles Manson represented the dark side of the hippiedom] (HS 21.11.2017, page A22) and *Salon Seudun Sanomat* wrote, “Pahamaineinen joukkomurhaaja kuoli” [Notorious mass murder dies] (SSS 21.11.2017, page 17).

habits, as in the next example (Example 19). Once the meaning was connected with flora (Example 20). Three times the meaning combined them both.

### Example 19

*“En minä vaan ole miehiä nähnyt ilman paitaa muualla kuin uimarannalla, ja siellä ei kuulu muille, onko lihava vai laiha! Antaa kaikkien kukkien kukkia! -syysrouva”* (SSS, sent 13.8.2010)

[I have not seen men going without a shirt elsewhere than on the beach and there it is none of other people’s business if you are fat or skinny. **Let all the flowers bloom!** - autumn lady]

### Example 20

*“Miksi kaupunki parturoi ne pienetkin kukkivat nurmikkoalueet. Farmoksen tontin ympäriltä hävisi kaunis valkoapila keto, nyt kynitty nurmikko? - Antaa kukkien kukkia!”* (SSS, sent 31.7.2008)

[Why did the town trim even the smallest flowering green areas. Around the plot of Farmos disappeared the beautiful meadow full of Dutch clovers, now it is only plucked grass? - **Let the flowers bloom**]

The reference points in **W4** are based on the contextual information. The proverb occurred ten times in this sample. Seven times it was connected with tolerance towards other people and habits (example 21), three times with flora.

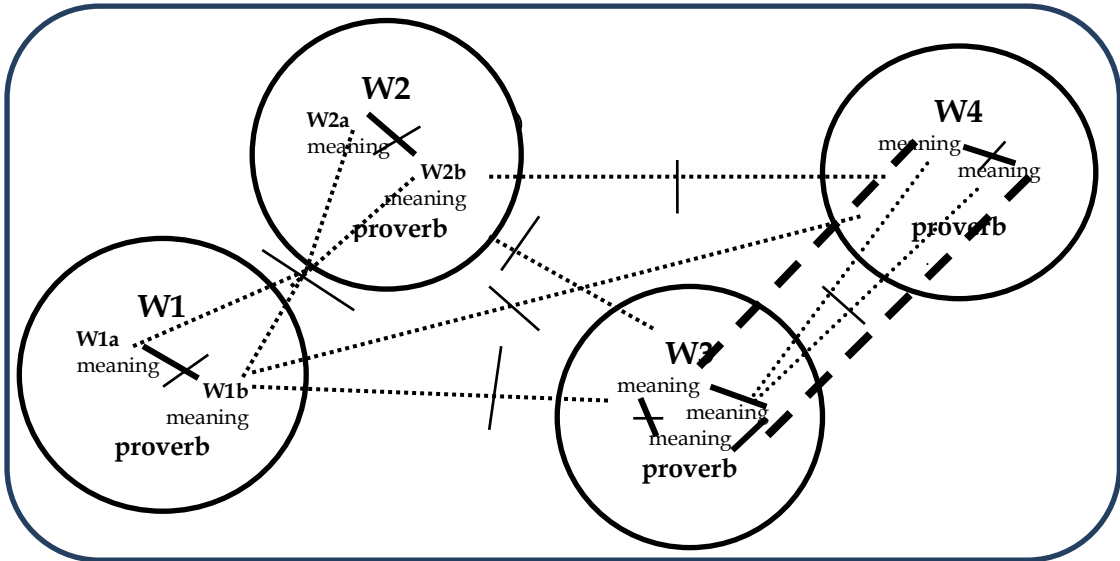
### Example 21

*“Monopoli pois torikahvilan pidosta. Uusille yrittäjille kilpailuttamismahdollisuus. - Annetaan kaikkien kukkien kukkia.”* (SSS, published 22.4.2015)

[Down with the monopoly of marketplace cafes. Give new entrepreneurs the change to compete. - **Let all the flowers bloom**]

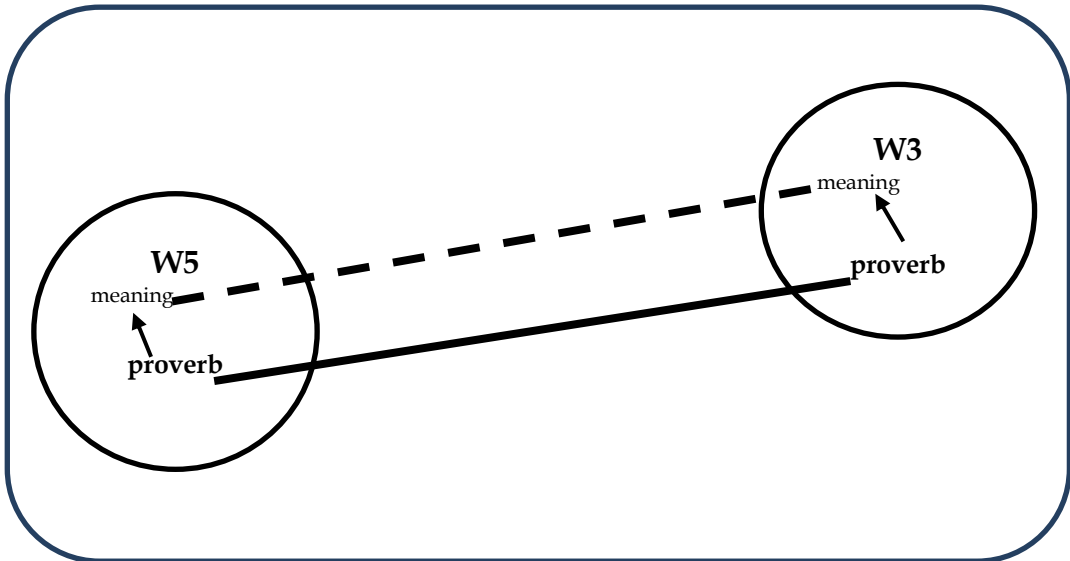


**Figure 3. Between the worlds**



As Figure 3 shows, the referents the proverb receives in W1 and W2 do not parallel with referents in W3 or with those in W4. However, W3 and W4 have some similarities (tolerance towards other people and habits as well flora) with the exception that in W4 the referents are never combined as in W3.

**Figure 4. A proverb receives one interpretation in various worlds**



In Figure 4 the situation differs from the one in the figures above. The ground form of the proverbs says: *Niin metsä vastaa kuin sinne huutaa*. (The forest answers as somebody shouts to it).

W5 is Finland at the beginning of the 20th century. In the life story of a man born in 1914 the proverb "*Huonokii mehtä vastaa niin ku ite huuvat*" is used [Even a bad forest answers as you shout to it] and it is connected with "my parents pointed out that all people ... were in some way all good people." (Granbom-Herranen 2016b, 46)

W3 is the same as in Figure 2: 2006–2010 in Finland, SMS messages in SSS. The used material includes 22 SMS messages with this proverb.

### Example 22

*"Mää ainaski ole hyvi tullu toime Salolaiste kans. Kummottos mettä huutta, simmot se vasta. - Perniöläinen."* (SSS, sent 19.8.2006)<sup>73</sup>

[Anyway, I have gotten along with the townspeople very well. **The way you shout to a forest, that is the way it answers** - a local resident]

In both worlds the proverb always receives the same interpretation: everyone gives and receives at the same level. In various worlds (time and place) or when the reference changes, the meaning of the expression might change as well.<sup>74</sup> However, it is not essential. Nowadays this meaning 'everybody gives and receives at the same level' is connected also with a modern proverb *Sitä saa mitä tilaa* [one gets what he or she orders]. This proverb occurred more than 50 times in the SMS message material.

Hintikka and Sandu's (1994) understanding of possible worlds semantics (PWS) creates a framework to comprehend the process of how utterances are relatively permanent expressions while the meaning of an utterance may change from one context to another. We can reach the intended (or situational) meaning with the PWS-based model developed in my previous research (Granbom-Herranen 2008, 2010a), which is based on the use of metaphor in possible worlds semantics. As part of sensible speech, a proverb as well as a metaphor always have a reference point, so it is clear that all the theories and researchers also address references. In everyday life, it is a situational reference whereas, for example, in literary use, it is often an assumed reference point based on an assumed SPI. The reference is most often chosen by continuity or similarity as well as by causality and descriptive features. The reference point can be based on a part or the whole of the reference object. The lexical meaning

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<sup>73</sup> The language is local dialect, the ground form is *Niin metsä vastaa kuin sinne huutaa*.

<sup>74</sup> The ground form of the proverb has been defined as follows in the previously mentioned collections: *Niinkuin mettäsä huuhutaan, niin korpi kaikaa; Senjälkeen korpi vastaa kuin huijataan (huhutaan); Niin metsä vastaa kuin huuhutaan*. (Kuusi 1990). *Niin korpi vastaa kun sille huuvetää; Miten metsään huutaa, niin se vastaa; Niin mäki vastaa kuin sille huudetaan*. (Laukkanen & Hakamies 1997).

of a proverb no longer functions as the most important reference point since even the terms used in proverbs are not part of the contemporary world. At the same time, films and novels have given proverbs new reference points. However, the use of proverbs is based on the assumption that both the speaker and the listener recognise reference points in the same way. The recognition of the message should happen in the same way, where the speaker and the listener share an understanding of the meaning. This is often a weak point in proverb use: the speaker and listener do not have the same worlds. It means that the words they use have different references and their meanings do not match (see Honko 2013a, 2013b). The articles two to five (ART 2, ART 3, ART 4 and ART 5) discuss references of proverbs, while metaphor theories are described mainly in the second (ART 2) and third (ART 3) article.

### **Performance**

This dissertation is based on the folklorist Charles Briggs's (1988) concept of *proverb performance* combined with Alain Badiou's concept of *event* (Badiou 2009). All the articles, except the last one, use Brigg's concept of *performance*. However, only the first article (ART 1) uses Badiou's event. Briggs explores pedagogical and rhetorical discourse but, combined with SMS messages, it is not pedagogical discourse but guiding discourse instead.<sup>75</sup> Guiding (advising and counselling) speech is speech between unequal people where the listener has (or is expected to have) a lower status. The proverb user tries to convince the audience by employing the authority that a proverb could lend to the message. In a rhetorical sense, the proverb serves more like decoration in the SMS message. The concept of performance includes both the verbal expressions and the behaviour by which a message is conveyed (Bauman 1992, 125). To use a proverb is a small performance, which has an aim linked to the situation and words used (Briggs 1988). A performance is always interaction between the sender of a message (the speaker or writer using proverbs) and the audience (real or assumed). A proverb as a performance or as part of one might be treated as what Badiou (2009) calls an event (or the proverb paves the way for an event). It has, in any case, the power to change the significance of the situation. A successful proverb performance sums up the kernel of the performance. Proverbs are shared tradition, meaning the performer and the audience have to have some common knowledge about the past in order to be able to connect the message to the activity. Additionally, in a newspaper, every proverb performance is an interactive and communicative occasion produced

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<sup>75</sup> Proverbs have many functions. They can be used in various situations and for various reasons. For more about the possible functions of proverbs, see publications by Outi Lauhakangas (2004) and Anders Widbäck (2015). They represent the latest research on proverb functions.

by the performer (writer) and the audience (reader) together, even if the feedback is not immediate.

### **The life cycle of a proverb**

Even if we know something about the background of a proverb, its origin is not known in most cases. Modern proverbs<sup>76</sup>, however, are different. Their origin is not necessarily unknown and they are not always from the distant past. Traditional proverbs might also have origins that were known at some point but have been forgotten in time. Any proverb has been invented by someone who first has the idea of putting it in a statement (Taylor 1931). Today's circumstances have altered the idea of historically anonymous expression: due to fast communication, it is possible to identify the first user of a proverb in many cases. The public is often aware of the origin of an expression that becomes an anonymous sentence, then a cliché or a saying and then a proverb. For example, Finnish traditional proverbs include some that originate in fairly recent poetry.

However, this is not where the life cycle of a proverb begins. In order to live, a proverb has to be used. For Honko and Rooijakkers, the start of the life cycle of a folklore product is in the natural, almost imperceptible past (Honko 2013c, 39). It is a stage characterised by authenticity (Rooijakkers 1998, 183). This stage could be called normal everyday life. When thinking about proverbs as artefacts, they do not actually differ from other folklore products as immaterial artefacts. Today, this stage could include contemporary daily routines connected with proverbs in the vernacular and everyday use.

After these immaterial artefacts, proverbs, have been noticed outside their normal living context, they begin a new life phase. They were noticed since their existence might be endangered or might be considered to be endangered. Artefacts such as proverbs might be threatened with extinction (Rooijakkers 1998, 202). They are collected and documented; they have a status as heritage. Proverb collections are published, giving the impression of a living tradition. However, in this phase, a part of the tradition is committed to archives and museums to await use. This is not an everyday practice but conserving something for the future (see Honko 2013c, 45; Rooijakkers 1998, 181).

In archives and publications, proverbs obtain a new life. Proverbs are taken from books and archives by two types of users: people who want to use them and people who want to study them. Their use has many purposes, from political speeches and advertisements to folklore performances (Honko 2013c, 46–51; Rooijakkers 1998, 181). This refers to their past use but, at the same time, gives new meaning to them. This is the phase where ideologies might step in,

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<sup>76</sup> See chapter 2.4, the definitions used in this dissertation.

the past being a good basis to build national heritage upon. Proverbs are looked up when needed.

This might initiate a new life cycle in which proverbs are seen, heard and used. However, it is not what it was in the beginning. If nothing else has changed, the context has - and context provides a proverb with meaning. Thus, even if the form of a proverb is unchanged, its meaning or interpretation change. And this could be considered a new life cycle.

### 3. MOBILE PHONES AS PART OF THE SHARED LIFE EXPERIENCE

This section begins with an overview of the cultural and socio-economic context that has made SMS messages in the regional newspaper *Salon Seudun Sanomat* such a significant phenomenon. In short, in the last decades, mobile phones and the mobile phone industry were an important part of the shared lifeworld in the Salo district.<sup>77</sup> It is part of the shared local history now. The section 3 also offers an overview of the material, which is treated in greater detail in the articles.

In Finland, wireless communication underwent immense changes in the 1990s and became an increasing presence in everyday routines. The Internet and mobile phones were global phenomena and in Finland, mobile phone communication was immediately adopted in a multitude of settings, from work to leisure. This change in the communication impacted the social constructions (Hoikkala & Roos 2000, 10). In the world of mobile phones, communication is mainly a person-to-person matter (Mäenpää 2000, 147). Moreover, as Tapio Hämeen-Anttila (2002, 73) notes, Nokia has had a significant role in the use of short message service (SMS).

#### 3.1 The Salo district of southern Finland: The home of mobile phones

It is not a coincidence that *Salon Seudun Sanomat* was one of the first newspapers to offer the possibility to send SMS messages as letters to the editor. Many of the newspaper's subscribers were likely among the first in Finland, and the world, to be able and willing to use this feature of the mobile phone. Salo was closely connected with mobile phone manufacturing for 40 years. The juxtaposition of the old agrarian ways of life and the new urban lifestyle is clearest in the new urban areas such as Salo: up to the 2010s, almost everybody and everything was in constant contact with the production of mobile technology since much of Nokia's mobile phone industry, as well as the research and development facilities, were situated in the area. Salo was well-known globally for the large mobile phone factory operated by Nokia. This means that, directly or via subcontractors and due to the need for all manner of services, approximately half of the inhabitants made a living from Nokia. At the same time, the countryside in the Salo region is the most agrarian area in Finland.

The roots of Finnish mobile phone manufacturing are also in Salo, where the manufacturing of radios started in 1928. This evolved into a company

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<sup>77</sup> From the very beginning mobile phone industry has been connected with Finnishness and especially with the Salo district; even the term *kännykkä* includes this idea.

called Salora<sup>78</sup> and later, in the 1960s, it became known as a manufacturer of television sets. In the early 1960s, Salora expanded its business to radiophones. Back then, there were only about 2,500 radiophones in Finland, mostly used by state authorities such as the Defence Forces of Finland, the Police of Finland and the Ministry of the Interior Department for Rescue Services. Still, this did not lead to any contracts with the defence forces, but Salora (which later became a part of Nokia) did sell radiophones to other state authorities. This made it possible for Salora to begin manufacturing and selling radiophones for cars, car phones, in 1971 when the ARP-net was opened (Kettunen & Paukku 2014, 20–21). The next significant step occurred in 1982 when NMT technology was introduced in Finland, first used in the manufacture of car phones. The first model, Mobira Senator, was made in Salo and weighed ten kilos. In 1987, the first *kännykkä*<sup>79</sup> was released. It was the Mobira Cityman, which received the nickname *Gorba*<sup>80</sup> (Kettunen & Paukku 2014, 41–48).

The term *kännykkä* was soon applied to mobile phones in general. In 1994, Nokia introduced the first mobile phone that could easily send SMS messages,

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<sup>78</sup> Salora = Salo+radio

<sup>79</sup> The word *kännykkä* first appeared in an advertisement: “*Kevään kukka on kämmekkä; kevään tuote on kännykkä*” (“The flower of the spring is the *kämmekkä* [Orchis; few species of the orchid family *Orchidaceae* grow in Finland, they are quite rare]; the product of this spring is the *kännykkä*”) (Kettunen & Paukku 2014, 48). The connotations inherent in this idea were extraordinarily smart. The word *kännykkä* is phonetically connected to the word *kämmen*, which means “palm” in English. The mobile phone was comfortable in people’s hands since it fits in the palm. In Finnish, the word has another connotation. The most well-known and common orchis in Finland is *maariankämmekkä* (*Dactylorhiza maculata*). It is commonly known in south-west Finland. The Finnish botanical name *kämmekkä* comes from the fact that tuberous roots, especially those of *maariankämmekkä*, look like a person with their hands clasped in prayer, and it is this feature that has given this botanical family its name in Finnish. Moreover, Maaria is a version of the name Maria and refers to *Neitsyt Maria*, the Virgin Mary in Finnish. It also recalls the *Kalevala*, the Finnish national epic, in which Marjatta ate a lingonberry (*Vaccinium vitis-idaea*) conceived and gave birth to a boy in a stable (a parallel to the Bible).

<sup>80</sup> Mikhail Gorbachev (at that time the Chairman of the Supreme Soviet of the Soviet Union, later the first president of the Soviet Union) visited Finland in 1989 and made a call to Moscow with Mobira Cityman: “*Neuvostoliiton johtaja Mihail Gorbatšov saapui vaimonsa Raisa Gorbatšovan kanssa viralliselle valtiovierailulle Suomeen lokakuussa 1989. Aroovaltaiset vieraat otettiin innokkaasti vastaan ja vierailun aikana koettiin historiallisia hetkiä.*”  
<https://yle.fi/aihe/artikkeli/2012/01/04/gorba-huumaa-ja-kuuluisa-kannykkapuhelu> [8.7.2017]

Nokia 2110.<sup>81</sup> Two years later, in 1996, one in three Finns owned a mobile phone (Kettunen & Paukku 2014, 108, 118; Immonen 2002, 229). In 1988, there were about 140,000 mobile phone subscriptions whereas, by the end of 2008, there were almost 7,000,000 (Tilastokeskus 2009). In 1998, Nokia was the largest manufacturer of mobile phones in the world. Nokia mobile phones also became the objects of jokes and conundrums:<sup>82</sup> “My dad told me I can’t get a new mobile phone until my 3310 breaks. Ach, damn!”, “How do cockroaches survive a nuclear war? They crawl inside a *Nokia 3310*” (Kettunen & Paukku 2014, 147). One joke talks of three professionals – a doctor, a lawyer and a Nokia engineer – who are discussing if it would be better to have a wife or a mistress. The doctor favours stable family relations and is afraid of venereal diseases, so he prefers to have a wife. The lawyer is aware of the legal difficulties involved in marriage, so he prefers to have a mistress. The Nokia engineer thinks for a while and says: “I would take them both. After working all day, I would call my wife and tell her I am going to see my mistress. Then, I would call my mistress and tell her I am going to see my wife. After this, I would go to the laboratory to go on with my work” (*Kännykkävuodet SSS*, 31.12.2015).

Nokia became a global company and in 2000 it was the market leader with about €40 billion in revenue accounting for four per cent of Finland’s gross national product (Kettunen & Paukku 2014, 164–173). By 2012, however, the times had changed in Salo, and Nokia announced the closing of the area’s factory. By 2015, the research and development centre would also be shuttered, bringing an end to Nokia’s 40 years in the region.

In 2008, 5,000 people were employed at the plant.<sup>83</sup> This is more people than lived in many of the municipalities around Salo.<sup>84</sup> In 2010, Nokia accounted for 95% of the town’s corporate tax income, amounting to €60 million, but this dropped to €14 million by 2012.<sup>85</sup> Nokia had been the main

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<sup>81</sup> SMS messages were first created for business managers. By sending an SMS, secretaries could communicate with managers without disturbing the meetings (Immonen 2002, 241).

<sup>82</sup> In Finland, Ulla Lipponen (2008) has studied SMS messages and teenagers’ folklore based on material collected by the Finnish Literature Society.

<sup>83</sup> *Lines go silent in Finnish town of Salo as Microsoft shuts Nokia phone unit* (Reuters, 16.7.2015), <http://uk.reuters.com/article/us-nokia-legacy-idUKKCN0PQ17Z20150716> [8.6.2017]

<sup>84</sup> In early 2010, Salo merged with ten municipalities in the region. Thus, the town of Salo does not refer to the same area as it did before 1.1.2010.

<sup>85</sup> “Nokia layoffs have big impact on small town in Finland. As Nokia shifts its manufacturing operations to Asia, towns in its homeland of Finland are feeling the impact.” (The Verge Apr 6, 2012)



employer in town and the plant's closure led to high unemployment. By the end of the year 2010, Salo no longer produced hardware and became an R&D centre (Kettunen & Paukku 2014, 228).

As Figure 5 shows, the material covers the period from Nokia's good years (2006) to the end of its manufacturing operations (2010). The SMS messages include comments on and signs of all of this. However, this topic is not further discussed here since the focus of the present dissertation is on the proverbs in the SMS messages.

**Figure 5. The lifecycle of Nokia in Salo (SSS, 9.7.2017)<sup>86</sup>**

- 1979 Salora and Nokia join in on radiophone manufacturing and incorporate the joint enterprise Mobira Oy.
- 1984 Nokia buys Salora.
- 1986 The name of the company is changed to Nokia-Mobira.
- 1989 The name is changed to Nokia Mobile Phones. In Salo, orders are coming in and manufacturing takes place in two shifts.
- 1992 A third manufacturing shift is added.
- 1995 A new factory area is ready.
- 1998 Nokia Mobile Phones (Nokia) is the world's largest manufacturer of mobile phones.
- 2003 About 2,100 people are employed in manufacturing in Nokia in Salo.
- 2009 All of the approximately 2,500 employees in manufacturing in Nokia Mobile Phones are laid off.
- 2010 Negotiations on redundancies begins.
- 2011 Nokia announces that it is terminating the manufacture of mobile phones. The research and development centre still has over 1,000 employees in Salo.
- 2012 The factory in Salo closes.
- 2013 Nokia sells its mobile phone business to Microsoft.
- 2015 Microsoft closes the research and development centre.
- 2016 Microsoft eliminates the development and manufacture of mobile phones.

### 3.2 The newspaper *Salon Seudun Sanomat*

Differently from some other language areas (e.g. Lüthi 1970; Mieder 1971, 2008; Piltz 1989; Chlosta *et al.* 1993; Järv 1999; Krikmann 2005; Carson Williams 2009), proverbs and proverbial expressions in newspapers have been studied only rarely in Finland. From a paremiological point of view, proverbs and newspapers were examined in a cooperative project in the 2010s, of which

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<https://www.theverge.com/2012/4/6/2930866/nokia-layoffs-salo-finland> [8.6.2017]

<sup>86</sup> <http://www.eliasokoelmat.fi/en/index.php> [27.5.2017]

Finnish newspapers were a part.<sup>87</sup> Compared to many other European countries, the publication and reading of newspapers in Finnish is a relatively new phenomenon. The first newspaper published in Finland (when it was still part of Sweden) was *Åbo Tidningar* [Newspaper in Turku]<sup>88</sup> in 1771 and it was published in Swedish. Today, the oldest newspaper in Finland, published since 1824, is *Åbo Underrättelser* [Notices in Turku], also in Swedish.<sup>89</sup>

*Salon Seudun Sanomat* [Newspaper of the Salo district] is a regional newspaper. It is targeted at the general public for daily reading and it includes regional, national and international news. The newspaper is published daily except following some public holidays. Established in 1919, it has always been published in Finnish. In 2009, the daily circulation of the newspaper was about 20,000 with about 50,000 readers (Granbom-Herranen 2013b). Most readers live in Salo and the surrounding area. Salo is a coastal town of about 54,500 inhabitants in the prosperous south-west region of Finland.

### 3.3 SMS messages and letters to the editor

An SMS message is a unit normally including up to 160 characters. Its aim is to be concise. However, some SMS messages sent as letters to the editor are composed of two or even three messages. As mentioned above, the first mobile phone that could be easily used to send SMS messages was the Nokia 2110. In Finland, the increase in SMS messages sent from mobile phones has been considerable: 3.1 billion in 2006, 3.2 billion in 2007 and 3.6 billion in 2008. This means that from every mobile phone subscription, over 500 SMS messages were sent in a year (Tilastokeskus 2009, Appendix 9). Although mobile phones had the capability of sending SMS messages already in the 1990s, the idea of using them as part of daily newspapers was a new thing even in 2006. In the first decade of the 21st century, daily communication via computers was not very common in Finland. Most age groups used mobile phones and the possibility to use a mobile phone was no longer linked to a person's occupation or education as it had been in the 1980s. The Nokia mobile phones developed and made in Salo, compared to other manufactures' mobile phones, offered easy use of SMS messaging.

It was in 2006 that *Salon Seudun Sanomat* became one of the first newspapers in Finland to introduce a new column named *Tekstiviestit* [Text messages] on the opinion pages (see figure 6). This might have had to do with the fact that, from the beginning, Nokia phones were designed for SMS messages.

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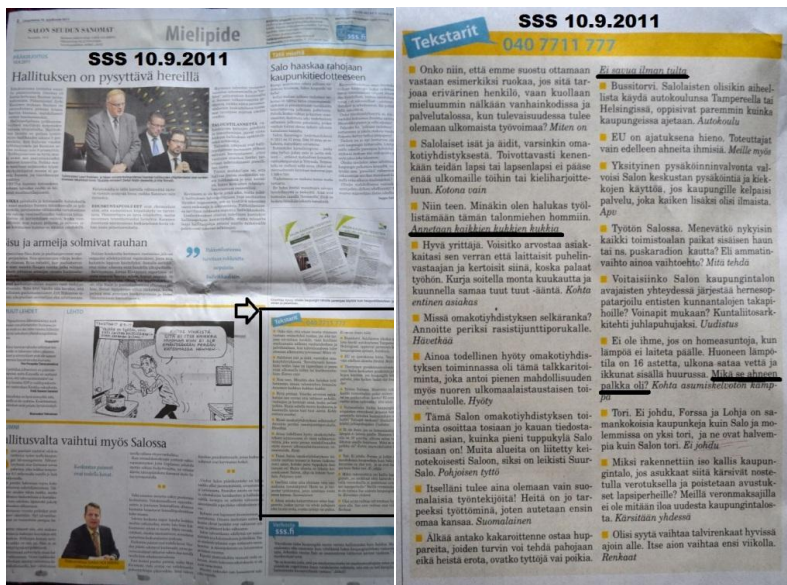
<sup>87</sup> [http://www.folklore.ee/rl/fo/koostoo/prov\\_news.htm](http://www.folklore.ee/rl/fo/koostoo/prov_news.htm) [12.4.2017]

<sup>88</sup> The capital of the Finnish area under Swedish and Russian administration was Turku (Åbo in Swedish) until 1812.

<sup>89</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Turku#Media> [28.8.2016]

Soon, this section became known as *Tekstaripalsta*, *Tekstarit*<sup>90</sup> or locally *Salkkarin tekstari* [Column for Text messages or the column for Text messages in *Salkkari*; SSS is locally known as *Salkkari*]. The name originates from the idea that only short opinions and comments sent as SMS messages would be published in this column. This is also the case today. The column was first published five days a week, but it soon became a fixed and daily part of SSS. In 2006–2010, the column was always on page two, appearing in the same corner (see Figure 3).<sup>91</sup> The column *Tekstarit* contains 25–30 published SMS messages a day, which is approximately a third of the messages the newspaper receives. Weekly, the published SMS messages include a minimum of five proverbs or references to them.<sup>92</sup> Since SSS is a regional newspaper, it can be assumed that the messages are sent by people living or working in the region. Proverbs are transmitted in the form of SMS messages and act as letters to the editor, published in a column designated for opinions.

Figure 6. Page 2 of *Salon Seudun Sanomat* 10.9.2011 (see ART4).



<sup>90</sup> *Tekstiviesti* in vernacular is *Tekstari*.

<sup>91</sup> Since October 2016, SSS has been published in a tabloid format and the *Tekstarit* column is now located in the middle of the paper.

<sup>92</sup> For instance, the daily column published an average of one to four proverbs (or references to them) among the letters to the editor in 2012 (one week in May) and 2013 (the month of May). In 2013, the one-month period included only five days with no proverbs (Granbom-Herranen 2016a, 50). This seems consistent with the material from 2006–2010, in which the SMS messages sent daily had more than four proverbs or references to a proverb on average.

The short letters to the editor or opinion columns in the form of SMS messages are seen as a fairly new text genre, a new phenomenon with a somewhat irrelevant status (Myntti 2012, 17). SMS messages in newspapers are written in a manner that the readers consider suitable and that is viewed as being printable text. In SMS messages, the language used is written colloquial language. Since the messages are written to initiate or continue a discussion, they are part of an exchange. Supposedly, writing a letter to the editor in the form of a short message has made it easier than writing a traditional letter or e-mail (see Heinonen 2008, 69).

An SMS message as a letter to the editor has a structure. It often starts with a greeting and might end with some declarative or argumentative sentence (see Myntti 2012, 32–40). If a published SMS message ends with a proverb as a pseudonym, it is obvious that the answer begins with the proverb used or a reference to it. The material I have used includes all the SMS messages sent to be published, unprocessed and unedited. I do not know which of them have been published, but the SMS messages are all authentic. Usually, the letters to the editor that are sent as answers to a previous text in the opinion columns refer to an earlier text and sometimes have a separate introduction. In SMS messages, this is not possible since the length of the opinion is limited, although it is more than 160 characters now. The SMS message frequently starts with the pseudonym of the user whose text is being referred to or answered to. Thus, it is not easy to understand a single SMS message without knowing what has been discussed in the column before. In the same way, readers are expected to know what has been going on in society and what has been published in the paper. This is another reason to be acquainted with the context. Neither the column of SMS messages nor a single SMS message function as independent agents. They exist only in the context of the newspaper and reflect the actions of the community and society. One independent SMS message with or without a proverb might be difficult to understand or place in a wider context (see Pulkkinen 2013, 7–8). A sample of the opinion column and some SMS messages with proverbs in *SSS* are discussed in the fourth article (ART 4).

### **3.4 Repository of proverbs in contemporary use**

The research material belongs to people's daily routines. It focuses on what people in Finland do: read newspapers, send SMS messages in the vernacular and use proverbs in colloquial language and style. An interest in these phenomena necessitated finding relevant research material. I was – and still am – convinced that the material should lend itself to developing a new approach to the question at hand or to helping achieve some new knowledge

of the phenomenon under examination. Newspapers are not a common source of folklore, but they offer a new possibility to combine the elements I am interested in: daily practices, contemporarily used proverbs in their context and modern means of communication.

In late summer in 2006, SSS published the column *Tekstarit* alongside the column *Mielipide* [Opinion] for the first time. In the first two weeks, the newspaper received almost 700 SMS messages as letters to the editor. Since then, the number has increased and only about one in three, often even less, are published. From the first morning, *Tekstarit* had its permanent place in the newspaper and in the eyes of the readers. For this column, opinions can only be sent as SMS messages. Readers can also write comments on the website of the newspaper, but these are only published online. An e-mail or a letter can be sent for the Opinion column but not for the short opinions *Tekstarit* column.

The material is anonymous for me, and only the editorial staff has the senders' phone numbers. The material has been filed by the staff. SSS has given the material to be used in this research in the form of data, that is, as unedited files (except for the senders' mobile phone numbers, which were removed). However, the phone numbers would not have been useful since they are only connected to the owner of the mobile phone subscription and no one else beyond that could be identified. It is not known who really sent the messages. The signature in the SMS messages are pseudonyms given by the authors. SMS messages are sent anonymously, but only those that are sent from registered mobile phone subscriptions are accepted for publication. This means that SMS messages sent from prepaid mobile phone connections are not published. The Act on the Exercise of Freedom of Expression in Mass Media (13.6.2003/460) gives people the right of anonymous expression, but the media, in this case the newspaper, is responsible for the content of a published message. In short, I do not have the senders' numbers, nor would they be of any use in determining who sent the messages. I have no information on whether they are male or female, young or old, not even what is their first language. However, the focus here is on the folklore products – the expressions of which I know only by what I can read in the text.

#### 4. RESEARCH PROCESS AND THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE METHOD

The aims of the dissertation have been presented in the first section (section 1). Answering them required a methodological approach based on empirical material. This emerged when the articles were written, the fourth of which (ART 4) focuses on empirical material. The central research method is contemporary content analysis. I have used both quantitative and qualitative methods, although the emphasis is on qualitative research. I see content analyses as a cluster of methods connected with the conclusions based on theoretical analyses. In other words, I have implemented the method required by the research or the material in question. A research method is one possible perspective on the phenomenon analysed (Paasonen 2013, 41) or a tool to use when answering research questions. As Varto (1995, 95) has stated, a scientific study does not have any method ready and waiting to be used before the actual study has started. He also points out that a method proves to be adequate when it takes over the material and hypothesis it is meant for (Varto 1992, 5).

The research process is not necessarily known beforehand. In this study, for example, the concept of proverb was developed over time in order to find an inclusive form.<sup>93</sup> The first methodological challenge with the empirical material was finding proverbs in everyday use without asking people for them. When proverbs are requested, most people do not remember any or they simply list them as such and in the form of so-called proper proverbs. The context of use would have to be asked about separately. This would not yield an accurate picture of proverbs in contemporary use. As Honko (2013b, 108–113) says, the context creates the frame for expressions, but often the context has not been available for further research. As illustrated in the second article (ART 2), the referent point can be anchored in various ways; the ways change when moved from one time and place to another. The language gives some frames for thinking but it is the context in which context the language and utterances are used that creates the meanings.<sup>94</sup> The method I use also requires information on the context so the proverbial utterances would not remain what Honko calls empty messages. In content analysis, the research subject belongs

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<sup>93</sup> However, this does not denote that the concept of proverb is now a readymade concept.

<sup>94</sup> David Hume (1924; 1953), when discussing the similarities and differences in human behaviour between various areas at the end of the 18th century, drew the conclusion that, most often, even distinctions in linguistic expressions (in this case proverbs) depend on differences in the living conditions and surroundings. Language influences thinking, but living conditions affect concepts and the expressions of a language.

to a cultural context and the meanings assigned in it (Krippendorff 1989, 403; 2004, xvii). The solution found came in the form of an opinion column in a daily newspaper. The next challenge, from a folkloristic paremiological point of view, was to identify proverbs in context. The context gives us an idea of how the proverb user sees its content and meaning. At the same time, since proverbs are used in the vernacular, they are used as parts of sentences and do not appear in their ground form. The pre-research (2010–2011) showed that proverbs can be found in the SMS messages, texts in which they are assigned meaning and are more than phraseological sentences.

#### 4.1 Research process

In order to differentiate between earlier ways to understand content analysis as a quantitative method and the current use of the method with qualitative materials, Philipp Mayring (2000) uses the term *classical quantitative content analysis* for the former and Klaus Krippendorff (2004, xvii–xx) uses *contemporary content analysis* for the latter. Compared to classical analysis, the contemporary approach offers added value since content analyses is now understood as a complete process that begins with the research plan and ends with the report (see Figure 7). Content analysis is commonly used with existing textual material such as texts in newspapers. It differs from discourse analysis, which also focuses on written communication but considers the contact between the sender and receiver of a message important (Jussila *et al.* 1992). The SMS messages in the opinion column do not form the direct dialogue or communicativeness required by discourse analysis. The cluster comprises similar elements that together function more effectively than the separate parts would, that is, the cluster is more than the sum of the independent parts. Content analysis<sup>95</sup> is a method covering the whole research process, including both analysis and argumentation in relation to the research questions. It establishes a framework enabling the use of appropriate methods. It might be understood as a group of methods acting as a process for handling various phenomena and their manifestations (for more, see Huhtamäki & Parviainen 2013, 246).

Content analysis is most often connected with hermeneutic understanding. For example, Cynthia A. Lietz, Carol L. Lager and Rich Furman (2006, 445) speak of “exploring and understanding”. Pre-comprehension is the starting point for the research process. It takes shape and is renewed during the research process. It expands and becomes knowledge that, in a new stage of

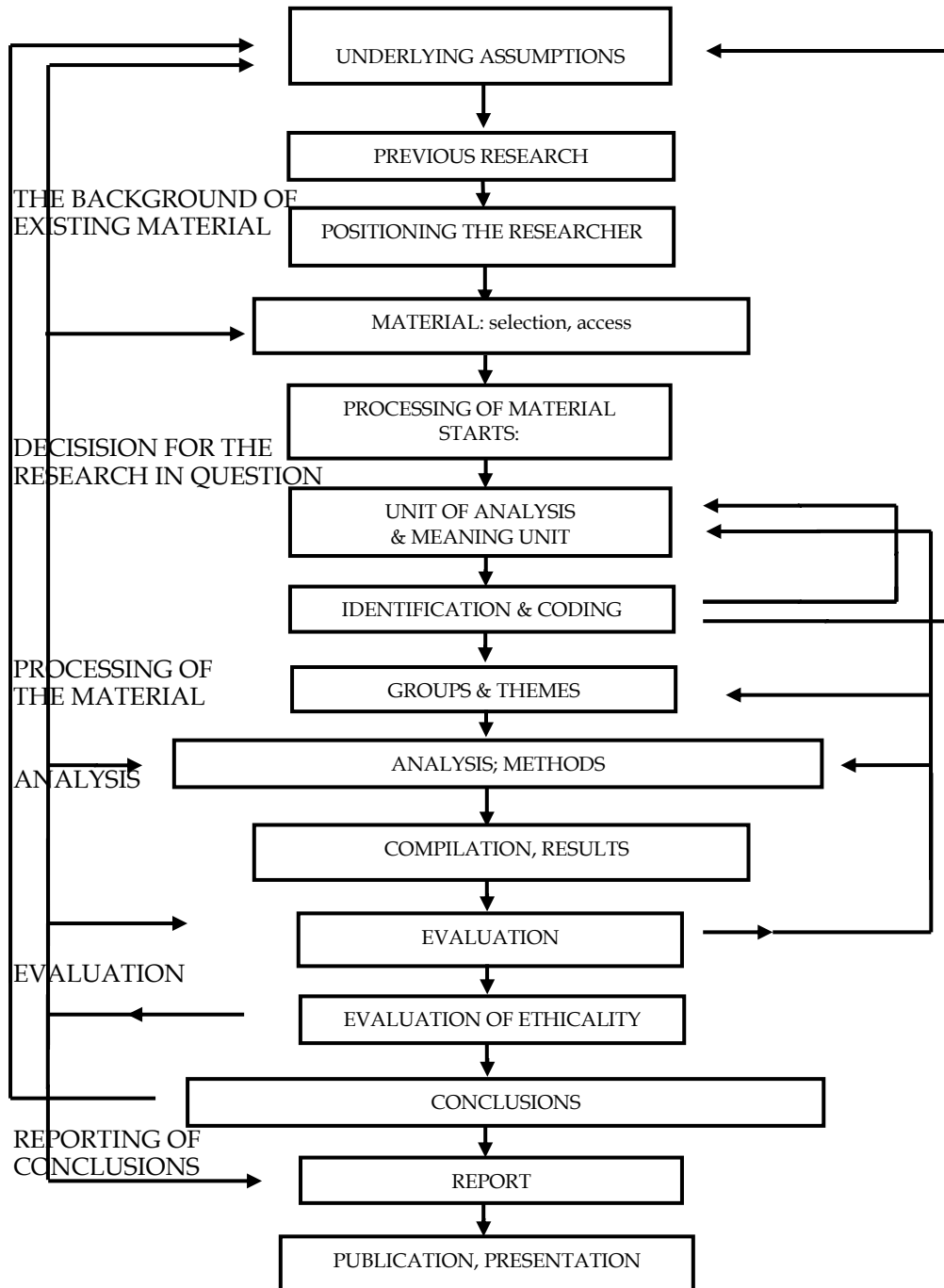
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<sup>95</sup> *Content analysis* refers to contemporary content analysis as mentioned above in the foot note ten (10).

research, will act as new pre-comprehension. The process of the current research was similar. At first, I had ideas and questions. While researching proverbs as meaning carriers, I have often heard people ask why anyone should study proverbs that nobody uses anymore. I started to think about this question, which occurred both in everyday discussions and academic debates. I wondered whether there was a lack of proverbs in contemporary Finnish or was it the means of communication that had changed. Instead of sitting and having face-to-face dialogues, social intercourse has increasingly turned to written means. In the late 20th century, the vernacular became the language used on mobile phones and SMS messages. It has become part of the language used online, especially in social media.



**Figure 7. Content analysis as a process of research**



## 4.2 SMS material

As mentioned in the last article (ART 6), many sources are self-evident materials for some disciplines, whereas for others, they are completely unused. In my previous studies of proverbs in context, I have used life stories in which the material consists of stories about everyday life in Finland before World War II. They are from the Archives of the Finnish Literature Society in Helsinki. The episodes as used in the examples are at the centre of the second article (ART 2). Later, I needed contemporarily used proverbs in everyday use and in written vernacular (see article ART 4). This material consists mainly of SMS messages from *Salon Seudun Sanomat* from 2006–2010 (both published and unpublished messages). In the first, third and fifth articles (ART 1, ART 3, ART 5) the examples consists of both older and contemporary material mainly from these mentioned sources.

In 2010, a pre-study focused on published SMS messages. The text messages column was already being published seven days a week and contained 25–30 messages a day, which was approximately a third of what was sent to the editors. The material consisted of a sample of one calendar year of published SMS messages. During a week, the column featured about three to eight SMS messages that contained some proverbial utterance or a reference to a proverb. This indicated that the amount of proverbs in the SMS messages is large enough for study and confirmed the possibility of using the material. In 2010, I contacted the newspaper for permission to use the material and they offered the material as files. Thus, I do not know which SMS messages were submitted and not published and which were published, so the material has not been selected along these lines. I could use all the letters to the editor sent for publication since the beginning of the column in 15 August 2006 until 1 July 2010. The rest of the SMS messages, until the end of 2010, were sent to me in January 2011. Of the approximately 70,000 SMS messages, about ten per cent, that is to say about 7,000 SMS messages, included a proverb, a reference to a proverb or a potential proverb.<sup>96</sup>

As mentioned, the central research method applied in the dissertation is content analysis in which the focus is on empirical material (as in article ART 4). The process applies the practices of both classical quantitative content analysis and contemporary content analysis in linking to the results of the quantitative analysis in order to find out if the proverbs are the same as they have been. Quantitative results provide information for the qualitative conclusions and help verify the conclusions. Some of the most frequently occurring modern and potential proverbs create ground forms of proverbial

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<sup>96</sup> The material includes almost 2,200 pages (A4, font Tahoma 10, line spacing 1); i.e. one million words or ten million characters.

expressions. The ground form is the proverb proper behind an utterance to which the expression refers.<sup>97</sup>

### 4.3 Processing the material

The process has been divided into fairly small phases. In the first phase in 2006–2010, I familiarised myself with the newspaper as an ordinary subscriber.<sup>98</sup> Proverbs in newspapers were approached from the reader's point of view and, in practice, this means I read them daily the way all readers do. I have read *SSS* daily for decades, so the paper was familiar to me. This was how I noticed the new column and began to observe proverbs in the published SMS messages. The newspaper includes both international and national news as well as regional and local stories. Especially when reading the latter ones, the context of the SMS messages was understandable for me. Already before the column with SMS messages was introduced, I was familiar with the newspaper, its style and manner of handling the news.

This familiarisation reading helped to lay the ground for defining units that were significant for content analyses. Units used in content analysis have various names and there are several ways to implement the method. I use the concepts *unit of analyses* and *research unit*. The unit of analysis consists of a sentence or a part of a sentence that is a proverb, a possible proverb, or a reference to one. It is included in an SMS message in the *Tekstarit* column in *SSS*, a text about life experiences, events and so on, which are manifested in the form of proverbial expression. Whether the unit of analysis is expressed in emic or etic language is a matter of choosing one's approach, that is, deciding whose concepts are used. The research unit is one SMS message. The allusive context includes the SMS message, the possible chain of SMS messages, occasions and events that have taken place as well as articles and news in *SSS*, which are referred to in the message (Norrick 1985; Silverman-Weinreich 1994; Prahlad 1996). The meaning of a proverb links this background to the assumed standard proverbial interpretation (SPI, Norrick 1985, 109–117).<sup>99</sup> The fact that I am familiar with Salo and its surroundings and I have read *SSS* for some decades, has helped me to understand the messages. It has also made easier to connect both the SMS messages and the proverbs to the context.

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<sup>97</sup> See the aforementioned published collections and online database. Table 2 (in the chapter 4.6) presents a summary of the final material.

<sup>98</sup> In Finland, the most common way to get a daily paper is to subscribe to it and have it delivered every morning.

<sup>99</sup> The question of assumed SPI is treated in the first four articles (ART 1, ART 2, ART 3, ART 4).

I have focused on manifest content,<sup>100</sup> which means that, although the reading method has been the so-called emphatic method, I have tried to avoid guessing the connection and meaning of the expressions. In the articles, I have mostly focused on what is said in the proverbial expressions. Sometimes, I have read between the lines and used extended context in order to connect the SMS message with some contextual element. In other words, I have used the latent content, an interpretation of the underlying meaning of the proverbial expression (see Graneheim & Lundman 2004, 106). This was necessary in order to determine whether the roots of an expression were in a traditional proverb or if it was maybe a potential proverb. This is connected with the definition of the ground form and understanding basic meaning. What U. H. Graneheim and B. Lundman mean by latent content is close to Honko's (2013a, 93; 2013b, 117) latent meanings. It is the question of the meanings or references that are, in one way or another, connected to the expression used. To an extent, these become clear when both the micro and macro context are known. The context of a proverb consists of the SMS message it is used in and extends to the possible chain of SMS messages, newspaper texts, events in society and so on.

### **FIRST READING: scanning, connecting SMS messages**

In the phase of reading by scanning, the interest was in the words, sentences, phrases and proverbs that are repeated. As mentioned above, I connected SMS messages belonging together as one SMS message since one opinion could be composed of more than one SMS message. When the column with SMS messages started to be published in *SSS*, one message could be up to 160 characters long. If the SMS message was longer, the phone divided the text and sent it in parts. These parts were possible to be connected following the send dates and times in SMS messages. As Table 1 shows, there were more than 60,000 coherent wholes, SMS messages such as the ones seen in the first section, chapter 1.1, in Example 1. Some of them had arrived two or more times over a short period of time. I removed such repetitions for they were errors in sending. In addition, SMS messages consisting only of numbers were removed. During this phase, I familiarised myself with all the SMS messages. The newspaper forwarded them to me as files, which had been cleaned of all the sending mobile numbers connected with the messages. Under Finnish publishing laws, the newspaper is liable for printed text<sup>101</sup> and, for this reason, SMS messages cannot be sent completely anonymously. This also means that the newspaper does not publish SMS messages sent from prepaid mobile connections. Thus, the material is anonymous. However, the mobile numbers would not have revealed the authors: the number only reveals from which

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<sup>100</sup> See Honko's (1998) concept of extended text.

<sup>101</sup> *Act on the Exercise of Freedom of Expression in Mass Media* (13.6.2003/460).

user interface the message is sent, not the sender, so the age, gender, home area and other identifying information is unattainable.

**Table 1. The number of received SMS messages, sent as letters to the editor** (Note: Totals are approximate.)<sup>102</sup>

Period	Original SMS messages	Opinion SMS messages <sup>103</sup>
15.8–31.12.2006	5,000	4,000
1.1–31.12.2007	14,000	12,000
1.1–31.12.2008	14,000	11,000
1.1–31.12.2009	17,000	14,000
1.1–30.12.2010	19,000	15,000
	Total: 70,000	Total: 60,000

### **SECOND READING: identification and coding**

In this phase, I read all the SMS messages, identifying the units of analyses, that is, the proverbial utterances. I started with existing proverbs, in other words traditional proverbs and Bible quotations. As mentioned above, there are different ways of defining and identifying proverbs. In the following phases, I searched for unnoticed expressions, the ones that I had missed in the first reading. Later, I returned to the original material to search for or check some expressions or parts of words. This was the most demanding phase, taking time<sup>104</sup> and requiring full attention.

I identified and recorded different proverbial expressions, some phrases, songs, aphorisms and folklore products such as riddles and jokes. The context was taken into account to identify the proverbs since their meaning is based on it. For the search and identification, alongside my knowledge of paremiology, I used Grice’s (1975) cooperative principle, proceeding from the assumption that all proverbial expressions act against one or more of its categories (quantity, quality, relevance and manner) in some way. In addition, in discourse, they function as Badiou’s (2009) event might function: as a full stop in communication or as an element possibly changing the direction of the sequence of actions. These criteria have been tested in my earlier studies, summarised in the article focusing on Grice’s cooperative principle (ART 5).

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<sup>102</sup> Since this is not quantitative study, the approximate figures are adequate for this purpose.

<sup>103</sup> As already mentioned, below, the term *SMS message* is used to denote an *opinion SMS message*.

<sup>104</sup> The material consists of SMS messages from a period of 52-and-a-half months. In the first reading, I read one to two months at a time in a day. The second reading was more time-consuming, including the coding process. The third and fourth readings took the same time as the first reading. Although this phase included only the SMS messages that had units of analysis in them, reading and coding was more exacting and demanding.

In this phase I also defined the working concepts from a contemporary point of view, the way they are used in Finnish in the 21st century. The working concept was broad and covered different expressions. I collected all proverbial expressions, including phrases and idioms. The idea was that it would be easier to remove expressions from the material than to add them later. I used the following categories to mark the expressions in the SMS messages: (1) proverb, potential proverb, a Bible quotation; (2) phrase, phrase which might be or might become a proverb, expression which might become a phrase; (3) quotation, song, folklore product; (4) proverb marker. My coding system creates a table in which there are cells for each research unit (i.e. an SMS message), including one or more units of analyses (proverbial expression or a reference to it). Colour codes help visualise the fragments as parts of wholes and to avoid coding mistakes. Interpretation and coding are always the results of the researcher's actions (Krippendorff 1989, 406–407). This is something we have to accept, while remembering that the aim is to gain knowledge of the phenomena in question.

### **THIRD READING: unnoticed expressions, coding**

I reread all of the SMS messages that included one or more units of analysis. The third reading involved repeated identifications and codings of the proverbial utterances in the messages. Some challenges occurred. For example, sometimes I had to go deeper to some word in the expression, as in Example 3. In Finnish, the word *tolkku* [sense]<sup>105</sup> is sometimes dialect, and at other times it refers to the traditional proverb *Tolkku se on kerjätessäkin* [There is sense even in begging] (Laukkanen & Hakamies 1997).

#### **Example 23**

*“Milloin onkaan annettu maanviljeliöille lupa ajaa traktoreilla kevyenliikenteenväylää pitkin niinkuin Perniössä tehdään? Ei tolkkua.”* (SSS, sent 9.5.2010)

[When was it that farmers got permission to drive their tractors on the sidewalk as is done in Perniö? **No sense.**]

### **FOURTH READING: recurrent expressions**

I again read all of the SMS messages that included one or more units of analysis. The fourth reading involved recoding the proverbial utterances. In practice, this meant looking for repeated words, sentences and parts of them. I noticed some high-frequency words, actually word tokens that are parts of

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<sup>105</sup> Another word is *roti*, nowadays understood as order or moral boundary that is not to be exceeded. The original meaning of *roti* refers to a lever that has been used to move stones.

=> *järjestys se olla pitää; joku järjestys; jotain rotia* [Some order is expected, some order, some *roti*] *Kielitoimiston sanakirja*.

words; *sane* in Finnish).<sup>106</sup> When a word token was found, I searched for it in the original material, following the tracks of expressions.<sup>107</sup> Some themes reoccurred, thus they might potentially be on the way to becoming modern proverbs. I focused on repeated questions and independent words such as the sentences *Kuka vastaa* and *Kenen vastuu* [Who is the person in charge]; *Kuka maksaa* [Who pays] and small words or pairs of words appearing repeatedly.

#### 4.4 Tabulation, sorting and grouping

##### FIRST TABULATION: various expressions

I worked with more than 12,000 SMS messages. In this phase, tabulation was done repeatedly. The table compiled included columns for the following: (1) proverb, potential proverb, Bible quotation; (2) phrase, phrase which might be or might become a proverb, expression which might become a phrase; (3) words, pairs of words; (4) proverb marker; (5) might be worth looking at; (6) phrase, quotation, song, folklore product including the abovementioned sentences and most popular words, pairs of words.

##### SECOND TABULATION: encapsulating concepts

As in the previous phase, tabulation included many processes. The table was sorted into coloured cells, that is, I placed expressions in columns. Expressions that were not placed in these groups were omitted. The table had columns for (1) traditional proverb; (2) reference to traditional proverb; (3) modern proverb, potential modern proverb; (4) reference to modern proverb, reference to potential modern proverb; (5) Bible quotation; (6) reference to a Bible quotation; (7) proverb marker.

##### THIRD TABULATION: sorting and grouping

As mentioned above, the Finnish proverb corpus is mostly in paper form, but there are two open access databases as well. Although these include thousands of proverbs, neither is a complete collection of Finnish proverbs from any era.

The website of the Finnish Literature Society (*Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura*)<sup>108</sup>, provides access to the Matti Kuusi international type system of

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<sup>106</sup> In Finnish, the stem of a word inflects for cases; word token (*sane*) see [http://tieteentermipankki.fi/wiki/Language\\_Technology:word-token](http://tieteentermipankki.fi/wiki/Language_Technology:word-token)

<sup>107</sup> This phase paved the way for the article *Nykypäivän sananlaskujen hullu* [A mad person in contemporarily used proverbs] (Granbom-Herranen 2016c) in which I looked for word tokens not only in proverbs but also in all of the SMS messages in order to combine a proverb with the context.

<sup>108</sup> <http://www.finlit.fi/en> [5.1.2018]

proverbs (*Matti Kuusi -kansainvälinen sananlaskuluokitus*).<sup>109</sup> A sample of proverbs is included in this database, forming a type system of proverbs. The database has been compiled by Lauhakangas (2001) and is based on a collection that includes Matti Kuusi's personal card index of proverbs. There are references to standard Finnish texts, international classics and rare works from different parts of the world. As mentioned on the website, in the broadest sense of the word, the term *proverb type* in this type system brings together similar proverb titles from different nations into a global type having a common idea. The database is an overview of proverb types.

The other online corpus *Sananparsikokoelma (KOTUS)*<sup>110</sup> [Proverb collection] belongs to the Institute for the Languages of Finland (*Kotimaisten kielten keskus*). Proverbs include a sample of those collected in the 1930s when university students collected proverbs across the country. The collections were organised by the *Sanakirjasäätiö* [Dictionary Society], which is connected to the Society for the Study of Finnish (*Kotikielen Seura*).<sup>111</sup> The grounds of the organisation are connected with the linguistic situation in Finland in the 19th century. The database has been compiled according to the areas in which the proverbs were collected.

The Institute for the Languages of Finland also has *Vanhan kirjasuomen korpus* [The corpus of old literary Finnish], which is an open access version of one of the first published collections from 1702 by Henricus Florinus.<sup>112</sup> In fact, this is the only Finnish proverb publication that allows us to easily verify whether a proverb is traditional or not. The other comprehensive collections are published only as books. These databases or the already mentioned publications (traditional proverbs: Nirvi & Hakulinen 1953; Kuusi 1990; Laukkanen & Hakamies 1997; modern proverbs: Kuusi 1988; Heikura 2004) say hardly anything about the context in which proverbs are used. However, they include some interpretations of their meaning by the editors.

The need to determine which proverbs are in these publications (and this way are understood to be traditional proverbs) made it necessary to create a private database. It includes more than 50,000 Finnish proverbs collected from the Internet, about 700,000 traditional proverbs from these publications and additional publications as well as more than 500 modern proverbs from printed sources. This made the extensive SMS material manageable.

The first tabulation handled more than 10,000 SMS messages including potential proverbs. In the third tabulation, after removing elements that were

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<sup>109</sup> <http://lauhakan.home.cern.ch/lauhakan/cerp.html> [5.1.2018]

<sup>110</sup> <http://kaino.kotus.fi/korpushaku/sp-haku.xql> [5.1.2018]

<sup>111</sup> <http://www.kotikielenseura.fi/in-english-society-for-the-study-of-finnish> [5.1.2018]

<sup>112</sup> [http://kaino.kotus.fi/korpus/vks/meta/varia/flor1702\\_rdf.xml](http://kaino.kotus.fi/korpus/vks/meta/varia/flor1702_rdf.xml) [5.1.2018]



clearly not proverbs, about 7,500 SMS messages remained. Additional SMS messages were removed later as well.

#### **FOURTH TABULATION: sorting and grouping**

The table had columns for (1) traditional proverb;<sup>113</sup> (2) reference to traditional proverbs; (3) modern proverb, potential modern proverb; (4) reference to modern proverb, reference to potential modern proverb; (5) Bible quotation; (6) reference to a Bible quotation; (7) proverb marker; (8) proverbs in a language other than Finnish.

Many of the unnoticed expressions were included in the first phase since it was not easy to differentiate between what is said and what is meant. Often, the latter was a meaning that could become a proverb. The interpreter of the material might easily conclude that the author, an unknown informant, said something with a proverb.

After the table was once again reworked, some expressions were reclassified. In the end, the material included over 6,300 SMS messages with more than 7,400 proverbs, Bible quotations and references to them.

#### **4.5 Identification of the assumed ground forms of proverbs**

Finnish proverbs proper are neither collected in a single corpus nor listed. In order to find the ground forms of the proverbs in SMS messages and, furthermore, to classify expressions, the existing proper proverbs had to be identified. As mentioned above, the ground form is the proverb proper behind an utterance or the proverb to which an expression refers.<sup>114</sup> Once the ground forms were identified, the references were easy to recognise. However, this study began with references, shortened proverbs and so on which were the starting point in looking for proverbs and their ground forms. Still, some expressions, phrases, aphorisms, and quotations from literature (except the Bible) were omitted.

The sources for the ground forms of traditional proverbs are presented in the chapter 2.4 on contemporarily used proverbs. Modern proverbs are not included in the sources of traditional proverbs. Above, some sources were mentioned. Apart from them, modern expressions have been accepted as potential proverbs even if the frequency is not definite and the distribution is not verified. Some modern proverbs were identified with the help of the

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<sup>113</sup> In the dissertation, the expression *traditional proverb* means an utterance that in Finland is commonly accepted as an old proverb and is included in the three publications (Nirvi & Hakulinen 1953; Kuusi 1990; Laukkanen & Hakamies 1997) and one database (KOTUS).

<sup>114</sup> See the listed published collections and the online database.

Internet: if a complete expression or sentence had hundreds of occurrences, it was considered a modern proverb. On the Internet, a vast number of occurrences can be found for expressions in English or other big languages, but Finnish is mainly used in Finland and Finnish expressions are not used globally. The ground forms of Bible quotations are in the Bible. As mentioned in the second section (section 2), the Bible was first translated into Finnish in 1548 and published in 1642. The language was revised a few times but, in 1933, the Old Testament and, in 1938, the New Testament, were translated using the modern Finnish of the 1930s. The third translation into Finnish was completed in 1992. This most recent translation has not yet become well-known, for the majority of Finns and most Bible quotations and proverbs still use the language from the 1930s translations. Some Bible quotations are also known as traditional Finnish proverbs. Bible quotations can be seen as traditional utterances and, in the Finnish tradition, they are often understood as proverbs. Bible quotations are often easily recognised because most of the Finnish Lutheran population still learns their Bible and catechism in confirmation classes organised by the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland.

#### **4.6 Final material**

Finally the material consisted of traditional proverbs, modern proverbs, Bible quotations and references to them as well as proverb markers. I read and reread the SMS messages. Over time, I began to perceive structures, sentences, concepts and meanings, which were repeated in the messages. This led me to the grouping now used. The material includes proverbial expressions in other languages as well, although their number is not high (only a little more than 150 proverbs).

Next, I will make some comments about contemporarily used proverbs in the material. Chapter 2.4 focusing on contemporarily used proverbs in this dissertation includes some examples of these. The text messages column includes contemporarily used proverbs (i.e. today's proverb, *nykypäivän sananlaskut*), meaning traditional proverbs, modern proverbs, Bible quotations and references to them. On the one hand, in this material nearly all the proverbs were in Finnish, contrary to some previous studies in other languages (e.g. Chlosta *et al.* 1993, 681; Mieder 1971). On the other hand, this material also includes SMS messages written in local dialect. This differs from what David Crystal (2001, 79) has observed in his research focusing on writings in Internet.

As already mentioned, defining the concepts of traditional proverb and modern proverb is challenging. In line with the idea of content analysis, the most important factor is to follow the chosen definition within one study. Even if it might be valid only within the study at hand, it provides information for

further research. The easiest way is to point out references to traditional proverbs because once the ground forms of proverbs are defined, the references become easier to recognise.

### **Traditional proverbs**

Slightly more than every fifth proverbial utterance was a traditional proverb or reference to some traditional proverb. This means that only about one in five proverbs was directly connected to traditional proverbs. This differs from what has been found in studies of entire newspapers as well as, for example, in the titles of TV programmes, where proverbs and references to proverbs are most often connected with traditional proverbs (see Granbom-Herranen 2013b, 2015b, 2016b, 2017; Granbom-Herranen *et al.* 2015).

### **Modern proverbs**

The largest category of the proverbial utterances used today, three of four, consists of modern proverbs or references to them.<sup>115</sup> One explanation might be the unofficial form of this special column, meaning those readers who usually do not write much have an easier time writing with mobile and they use the same everyday language they are familiar with. This is how modern proverbs find their way first to the sections that are most current. *Salon Seudun Sanomat* also has a website which functions as a real-time column for opinions, but the website contained hardly any proverbial utterances. It could be that the readers participating in the discourses in the Salo area online are not the same ones sending SMS messages.

Some modern proverbs appeared with a high frequency, thus they could be viewed as potential future proverbs (Grzybek 2011, Lambertini 2017). Expressions with less of a chance to become proverbs are also included in the material. Many of the modern proverbs are fairly short and in the form of an order or request, such as *hanki elämä* [get a life], *katso peiliin* [look in the mirror], *äly hoi* [hello wit]. The longest of them are, for example, *rajat on rakkautta* [boundaries mean love], *sitä saa mitä tilaa* [one gets what he or she orders]. The references to proverbs could be only one word long, too, as the modern proverb already was a shortened one as in the case of *kokenut* [experienced], which refers to *Kokenut kaiken tietää* [The one who is experienced knows everything]. This is a shortened form of *Kokenut kaikki tietää, vaivainen kaikki kokee* (Kuusi 1990) [The one who is experienced knows everything but a measly one experiences everything]. Without contextual information, however, these

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<sup>115</sup> As mentioned above, even some fixed expression is used or referred often it does not necessarily mean it is or will be a proverb. Moreover, “modern” as a period in Finnish history might differ from the modern era in another society (see Granbom-Herranen *et al.* 2015).

one-word-references would be impossible to identify and depending on the context the same word might refer to some other proverb.

If we look for something, we get it. You get what you ask for. However, one can search only for something that is known to exist and the searcher is able to identify. If all expressions accepted to be a proverb are based on already existing proverbs it means that the interest is only in variants and translations. Even if an expression gets many hits in Internet, it does not mean it is necessarily a proverb. However, the hits verify that the expression or potential proverbial could be a proverb according to its frequency and familiarity. As mentioned above, it is challenging to recognise potential proverbs before they actually are considered to be proverbs. The paradox is that old proverbs are recognisable, but new or future ones are not. One can easily come to the conclusion that there are no new proverbs, as no one can tell which expressions will become established in that way. However, the frequency of modern proverbs is the easiest to challenge because there are no sources focusing on Finnish material to invoke.<sup>116</sup>

### **Bible quotations as proverbs**

As mentioned in chapters 2.4 and 4.5, Christianity as well as the Lutheran church are still very much present in Finnish society and everyday life, even if Finnish people do not view themselves as particularly religious.<sup>117</sup> Thus, the Bible is quoted and quotations are referred to in SMS messages as well. The receiver (reader) of SMS message is expected to recognise proverbs and Bible quotations. Proverbs from the Book of Proverbs, proverb-like references to stories, and Bible verses are all used. Behind some Finnish traditional proverbs there is also a Bible proverb. Clean Bible verses are also used, and sometimes there are only some references to Bible in form of abbreviation such as a number, chapter and verse from the Old or New Testament. Bible quotations in this context might be seen as a Finnish phenomenon. Bible quotations are often understood as traditional proverbs in the Finnish tradition. In this material they accounted for less than four out of a hundred proverbial expressions.

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<sup>116</sup> Unlike Anglo-American proverbs, e.g. Doyle *et al.* 2012.

<sup>117</sup> Finnish society is informed by fairly many Lutheran-based statutes written in both the *Finnish Acts of Parliament* (secular laws) and the *Church Act* (Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland). This practice has been in use since Swedish times from 17th century. On a societal level, this means, for example, the church has a special role in state ceremonies, it has the right to collect taxes, and parishes play a major role in registering births, marriages and deaths. Most graveyards are owned by the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland. Nowadays, about 70% of the population are members of the Lutheran church while more than 80% of youths (age 14–15 years) participate in confirmation classes organised by parishes all over Finland (see more in <http://notes.evl.fi/EVLen.nsf>).

As the constellation of proverbs is seen as relatively permanent and only one third of proverbs are supposed to change in about one hundred years (Kuusi 1994, 117–118), this means that in a Finnish newspaper in the 21st century the paremiological part of colloquial language uses expressions that have connections far into the past.<sup>118</sup> However, this is not the situation in SMS messages as short letters to the editor.

## Conclusion

Most of the proverbs occurred, meaning they were mentioned or referred to only once, during the years 2006–2010.<sup>119</sup> The proverbs occurring most often in this material were not the most often used in the Finnish part of the former cooperative study (Granbom-Herranen *et al.* 2015). Even if the material included many references to one proverb, only very seldom were expressions identical with each other. This is to be understood to mean that in speech nearly everybody uses a proverb in a little bit different form.

Many proverbs have international parallels, but in order to understand them within a specific context, the specific local and global socio-cultural context must be known. When a proverb settles down within a new cultural context, both the form and meaning is renewed (see example 24). Using proverbs as parts of opinions confirms the active role of proverbs, which confirms the hypothesis that proverbs are still a rhetorical element in everyday language used in newspapers, as I concluded in a previous study (Granbom-Herranen *et al.* 2015).

## Example 24

Finnish has the concept of *hyvä veli* (i.e. *hyväveli-järjestelmä*) [good brother, i.e. the good-brother-system]<sup>120</sup> and it is referred to by saying *sulle, mulle* [to you, to me]. This could be a reference to the English proverb “You scratch my back and I’ll scratch yours”. However, *hyvä veli* and *sulle, mulle* have been excluded from this research material. In the identification of modern proverbs I have concentrated primarily on the text and form, not the meaning of the expression. The basic meaning assumed to be the standard proverbial interpretation of proverb is always a conjecture and, for example, with these expressions defining the basic meaning would have required more interpretation than would be appropriate.

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<sup>118</sup> Actually, this was the situation in 1950s. It would be worth seeing how it is today.

<sup>119</sup> This is in line with what Arvo Krikmann has found when he applied George Kingsley Zipf’s statistical law in Estonian proverbs (Krikmann 1997, 2009a, 2017b). There might be various reasons for this, as Krikmann (2017a, 9–11) has pointed out. One of the reasons, Krikmann suggests, is that a proverb might have been so general in everyday use that it has been dismissed.

<sup>120</sup> The equivalent could be the phrase “on the old school tie”.

I started with the approach that something “might be a proverb / might be a phrase”. There were one-word sentences such as *Herätkää* [Wake up] (the word token: *herä*) and *Haloo* [Note], which are blunt remarks. There were also elements that could be called “meanings in expressions” with words (or word tokens), such as *vastuu* [responsibility], *vastata* [be responsible for]. They were often presented in questions *kuka vastaa* [who is responsible]. Another element often repeated was *maksaa* [pay], *kuka maksaa* [who pays]. There was also *järki* [sense, mind, brain, intelligence] in different forms and connections [common sense, come to one’s senses, lost one’s mind, out of one’s mind, insane, mad, out of one’s senses, beside oneself, make sense] and *järkevyys* [sense, point, purpose; there is no point in something, there is a lot of sense in something, there is no sense in something, there is no purpose, no rhyme or reason]. In Finnish, all these were found with the word tokens: *järk*, *järj*, *jark* and *jarj*. (The Finnish letter *ä* was indicated as *a* in some SMS messages.) Some of them were omitted and some were included in the material.

Table 2 contains quantitative information that summarises the proverb use in the SMS messages. It is a short overview of the SMS messages from 2006–2010. The classification reveals frequency, indicating whether an element is common or rare. In this phase, I excluded expressions that were not proverbs even within the framework of the broad definition of proverb, which also includes references to proverbs and potential proverbs. The expressions were searched for via the ground form of the proverbs, that is, the proverb proper behind an utterance. The expressions were linked to the context.<sup>121</sup> If an expression is very frequent, it could be on its way to becoming a proverb.

**Table 2. Description of the final material** (Note: Totals are approximate.)

Traditional proverb	300
Reference to a traditional proverb	1,200
Modern proverb, potential modern proverb	2,500
Reference to a modern proverb	3,000
Bible quotation	50
Reference to a Bible quotation	200
Total: more than 7,000 expressions	

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<sup>121</sup> The context of a proverb in an SMS message consists of the idea of the SMS message, the opinion column (including previous days), the news in the paper (including previous days) and events in the society. These factors are used to determine the reasons for sending the SMS message with a proverb.

## 4.7 Evaluation

Validity means that the description is compatible with the explanations and interpretations attached to it. In quantitative research, validity can also be thought of as result-validity or process-validity (see Koro-Ljungberg 2005, 278). This could be a clear and feasible way of looking at validity when content analysis is used. This approximates what has been called validation. The validation process is made up of the continuity of the historical story, the reflectivity achieved by developing researcher's understanding, the dialectical communicativeness that is needed for the construction of reality and the fact that one of the targets for a research is always to have some realisation for further research (see Heikkinen & Syrjälä 2007; Kuhn 2012). The last of these also includes the expectation that research should add to the continuous discourse on a topic (Koro-Ljungberg 2005). Thus, as a researcher, I have pondered the solutions I have chosen throughout the process, and I have actively considered the coverage of the analysis conducted and estimated the reliability of the data.

At the core of reliability is the ability of the methods used to provide answers that are not coincidental. Krippendorff (2004, 214) talks about three kinds of reliability: stability, reproducibility and accuracy. Other researchers, such as Steve Stemler (2001), name only the first two. Sufficient material, an applicable method and reproducibility are the main criteria in content analysis. All of this does not ensure the generalisability of the results, but it does provide a good basis for it. The demand for generalisation as part of evaluating reliability has been challenged by Mayring (2007). He crystallises his doubts in the question "Ist eine Generalisierung der Forschungsergebnisse überhaupt notwendig oder wichtig?" [Is generalisation of the research necessary or important in the first place?] (Mayring 2007).

The phases *TABULATION sorting and grouping* (chapter 4.4), *IDENTIFICATION OF GROUND FORMS* (chapter 4.5) and *FINAL MATERIAL* (chapter 4.6) (see Figure 3) were carried out repeatedly because when some sentences, unknown from books, were connected with an already known (existing) proverb, the next step was to check the whole in the original material. I sometimes focused on a specific year and month or months to understand the context and identify the ground forms. The ground forms of proverbs are based on the above-mentioned books and the open-access database mentioned in chapter 2.4. The ground form is also the form that is the most common or occurs most often in the card files held by the Archives of the Finnish Literature Society. These are available for everybody. The Archives of the Finnish Literature Society and the Institute for the Languages of Finland include additional proverbs as well as their variations and modifications, but as long as the archives are not fully in a database, the printed publications are

the most comprehensive sources. In instances where there was more than one proverb that was suitable as the ground form, I chose the expression that uses the same words. Since the publications do not give us the ground forms of proverbs, I proceeded from the collections that the books are based on and chose the oldest printed source.

In chapter 1.5, I express my position in relation to the existing knowledge and research. Content analysis as a cluster of methods is a practical frame for analysing context-based information. It also affords a systematic method to crystallise the material and, thus, supports making conclusions (Stemler 2001). When identifying ground forms, I focused on the words used in the SMS messages to avoid using equivalents based on the assumed basic meanings of proverbs. One challenge was to avoid being too understanding while employing the method of “empathetic reading” (see Vilkkio 1997, 185; also Piela 1988, 7–8). This means that I have sincerely tried to understand the author’s point. Another challenge has been to avoid suggesting a proverb, which was often difficult. This involves the sentences that could easily be replaced with a traditional proverb. The final material does not include such expressions.

The researcher is always an interpreter. The conditions for a reliable study are sufficient and usable material as well as the possibility of repeating the process. As far as I can judge, these conditions have been met in this process. However, they do not ensure that the results can be extrapolated. Validity in content analysis is defined by the description of the process and the explanations and interpretations connected with it. Ethicality is the way in which a researcher positions themselves in regards to the existing knowledge. Research is “a reasonable study” (Varto 1992, 14) when both research practices and results are ethically acceptable. Content analysis offers a systematic framework for summarising the material and conducting the analysis (see Stemler 2001).

During the process, the material became saturated, that is to say the material did not yield any further new information for this research. The first conclusions after the pre-study proved to be fairly comprehensive. The conclusions did not need all the information produced in the tabulation and classification phases. At the same time, since the material was being analysed and results could be verified as long as the process was active, it would have been a pity not to process it exhaustively. The contemporarily used proverbs presented in the dissertation are not the most common Finnish proverbs. However, they were the ones most frequently used in the SMS messages sent to the opinion column in the form of SMS messages in the regional Finnish daily newspaper *Salon Seudun Sanomat* in 2006–2010. It can be assumed that the topics discussed connect the SMS messages more than the desire to use proverbs does. The possibility to generalise the results is based on the fact that



there exists one world that presents itself in various ways in individual experiences. There is no contradiction between an individual, unique lifeworld and the possibility to generalise the results since an individual lifeworld has been built within a society. The space created by time and place, the socio-cultural and communal reality, establishes the frame in which individuality is possible (see more in Granbom-Herranen 2008, 46–47). However, it is possible to obtain a view of the commonly expressed reality when these ideas are conjoined and, therefore, an interpretation made by an individual is seldom coincidental since it is guided by impressions the society has accepted (Uljens 1989, 20). Moreover, one person's ideas are not truer, better or more real than another person's. Ideas of reality are not comparable; they simply exist. In the discussion of reliability, I have tried to address the relationship between truth and knowledge. Nevertheless, each definition is unavoidably based on the perspective I have adapted (since any research conducted is linked to the researcher's stance).

In this dissertation, I have employed Grice's cooperative principle as one way to identify new proverbs. The principle is at the centre of the fourth (ART 4) and fifth (ART 5) article. It is assumed that communication is sensible and proverbs as part of communication act against the cooperative principle by creating a pause or interruption in the sensible communication. I consider the SMS messages reasonable speech and so I looked for acts that went against the cooperative principle. When reading the SMS messages, I proceeded like a person who is reading a language that is not their first language and who would like to understand what is being said. Following Grice's cooperative principle yielded not only proverbs (or references to them) that cause a pause in communication, but other expressions that were not the objects of this research and were therefore removed from the final material.

In brief, the sufficient and comprehensive material as well as the possibility to evaluate and repeat the analysis are part of the assessment. Listing the material, dividing the process into phases and describing the classification rules are techniques that add credibility to qualitative research, improve repeatability and simplify evaluation (Mäkelä 1998, 48, 57). This dissertation belongs to the field of folkloristic paremiology. The results contribute to the discourse within the field dealing with the substance of proverbs in everyday life and within the frames of folkloristics. Moreover, the process aims to open some theoretical possibilities for paremiological research. In qualitative research, the applicability of definitions for validity and reliability is arguable. One restriction in content analysis is how the coding system and classification exist in relation to the researcher's idea of knowledge (see Krippendorff 1989, 407). A researcher is always an interpreter and has an active role in the process. In order to make the process as transparent as possible, I have carefully described it.

The working title of the dissertation was *Proverbs in SMS messages: Post-modern communication using agrarian language*. Early on in the process, I was certain that the proverbs use old-fashioned language. This proved partly true. The language in traditional proverbs and Bible quotations is mostly old Finnish and uses archaic words. However, compared to earlier results (see Babič 2013, Granbom-Herranen 2013b; 2015b; Granbom-Herranen *et al.* 2015; Voolaid 2013) it was a surprise that modern proverbs using modern language were most often used in the SMS messages. This might mean that the authors of the SMS messages sent to *Salon Seudun Sanomat* are not relying on a lasting familiarity with proverbs. Rather, they rely on local and contemporary communication.

## 5. THE ARTICLES: AN OVERVIEW

This dissertation presents six articles published in 2010–2016. They have been set on a continuum and are not in the order in which they were written or published. The length of the process from approving an abstract to publishing an article differs. Except for the first article, which is included in a book introducing some perspectives of folklore, language and cultural expression to academic audiences, the other articles are published in academic paremiology-oriented journals or books.

The first article focuses on the proverb genre, followed by articles dealing with some theoretical aspects of the proverb process. The second and third article address theories for the interpretation of proverbs, with a focus on a number of models. The first of these introduces the most common metaphor theories and models with a special focus on the possible worlds semantics as understood by Hintikka and Sandu. The third article continues from where the previous one leaves off. In the next two articles, I present some ideas on how to recognise proverbs in context based on Grice's general principles of communication and cooperation. The first of these (ART 4) is on a more general level whereas the other (ART 5) focuses mainly on the challenge of proverb identification. The last article discusses source criticism when existing material is used in paremiological research. All the articles concern either contemporarily used proverbs (traditional proverbs, Bible quotations and modern proverbs as well as references to them in the present day contexts) or today's proverbs as a phenomenon. One starting point is to consider the substance of proverbs as a phenomenon: what it is and how it should be viewed. Most articles are fairly theoretical, using examples from the empirical material of SMS messages sent for publication in a column for letters to the editor in a regional Finnish newspaper. In the articles, proverbs are seen as part of daily life; they are expressions most often appearing in colloquial language.

In the articles, some parts of chapters are repeated, such as the history of the Finnish language in its written form.<sup>122</sup> The published articles have different target groups. From a global and even European point of view, Finnish is an exotic and unfamiliar language. The concept of proverb is also discussed. As mentioned above, proverbs have been and continue to be defined repeatedly. In time, my understanding of the concept of *a Finnish proverb* has been re-evaluated and renewed. This is visible if the articles are read in chronological order, taking the time for both the call for papers and publishing into account. In spite of the reiteration, the articles supplement each other and form a whole. The third article (ART 3) supplements the second one,

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<sup>122</sup> Finnish in written form refers to vernacular as well as literary language.

(ART 2), in focusing on the theories of proverbs and their interpretations. The fifth article (ART 5) goes deeper into Grice's cooperative principle, supplementing the fourth (ART 4), which combines the cooperative principle and empirical material. In some articles, there is also older material used as a counterpart to the SMS messages.

**ART 1. Granbom-Herranen, Liisa 2016. The genre of proverb - a relic or very much alive? In Kaarina Koski & Frog & Ulla Savolainen (eds) *Genre - Text - Interpretation: Multidisciplinary Perspectives on Folklore and Beyond*. Helsinki: SKS, 317-339.**

The article analyses changes both in the concept of proverb and in defining the genre of proverb, especially from the perspective of folkloristic paremiology. The need to analyse the proverb genre comes, first, from the existence of diverse terms used when discussing proverbs and proverbial expressions in folkloristic paremiology and in paremiology in general. Another reason is that the modern proverb tradition has changed the proverb genre, while the earlier oral tradition has found a place in colloquial written language.

The article is based on the observations from my research focusing on proverbs in life stories and on a study analysing the contemporary use of proverbs. As examples of proverbs in different contexts, it includes both traditional and modern proverbs. The material consisting of life stories is from the Archives of the Finnish Literature Society in Helsinki collection *Perinne elämässäni* [Tradition in my life]<sup>123</sup>, including stories of everyday life in Finland before World War II. The examples of modern proverbs are from newspapers from the early 21st century (*HS*, *SSS*). The empirical material has raised the question of what the concept *proverb* means and what does the proverb genre look like. The proverb genre for today including contemporarily used proverbs should not be simply a matter of introducing new parts to an old system, but rather changing the limits of the genre and, perhaps, identifying new features to look for when approaching the phenomenon from a new point of view. Neither genres nor concepts need to cover everything everywhere.

This article encapsulates many of the central themes of the dissertation such as the importance of both emic and etic definitions, context being the prerequisite for interpreting the meaning of a proverb and the challenge of recognising new proverbs. Genre is an academic tool, the role of which is to offer an interpretive framework.

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<sup>123</sup> In the articles abbreviated as *PE85*.

**ART 2. Granbom-Herranen, Liisa 2010. How Do Proverbs Get Their Meanings? The Model of Interpretation Based on a Metaphor Theory. In *Białostockie Archiwum Językowe* nr. 10: 47–67.**

The article concerns understanding and interpreting proverbs: what does the listener hear and understand? It introduces the most common metaphor theories and models, focusing on the possible worlds semantics in the manner in which it is understood by Hintikka and Sandu (1994). The materials used in the examples are two collections in the Archives of the Finnish Literature Society in Helsinki: *Perinne elämässäni* [Tradition in my life] from 1985 and *Karjalaiset elämäkerrat* [Karelian biographies]<sup>124</sup> from 1983–1984. The life stories involved are of childhood in Finland before World War II.

Proverbs and their meanings rely on the combination of socio-cultural contexts, people, emotions and information in different situations. In order to understand the mechanism behind interpretations, it is important to realise that proverbs are part of everyday language built on people's individual social realities and lifeworld (Devitt & Sterelny 1987, 116–117; Satulehto 1992, 60). There is no disagreement on how a proverb or metaphor is supposed to function: two phenomena, ideas or activities are combined. The difference between the theories is in how these things find each other, that is, how the reference is anchored.

**ART 3. Granbom-Herranen, Liisa 2013. Some theoretical aspects of processes behind the meanings of proverbs and phrases. In Joanna Szerszunowicz & Bogusław Nowowiejski & Katsumasa Yagi & Takaaki Kanzak (eds) *Research on Phraseology Across Continents vol 2*. University of Białymstoku Publishing House, 372–388.**

The article examines the process that makes proverbial utterances meaning-carrying units. It is a more comprehensive look at the subject, offering a wider overview and supplementing the previous article. The examples are drawn from three sources. The oldest material is from the collection *Perinne elämässäni* [Tradition in my life] collected in 1985 by the Archives of the Finnish Literature Society in Helsinki. The examples collected in interviews are from 2000 and the examples of modern proverbs are from newspaper material comprising SMS messages sent as letters to the editor to the regional newspaper *Salon Seudun Sanomat*, 2006–2010.

Proverbs are closely linked to everyday culture. In everyday use, proverbs are utterances that in the vernacular are always combined with simultaneous action. The situational context combines the meaning of an utterance with

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<sup>124</sup> In the articles abbreviated as KE84.

individual experience, while cultural context combines meaning with time and place. As the references of proverbs are events, actions and phenomena, a proverb always has a practical role. The contexts of proverbs have changed over time. Although proverbs are relatively unchanging, their meanings change in everyday speech and in colloquial written language. In everyday life, proverbs and their meanings are not unchanging aspects. The meaning of a proverb alters with changes to its use and the context.

**ART 4. Granbom-Herranen, Liisa 2014. SMS-messages - context for traditional and modern proverbs. In Vida Jesenšek & Dmitrij Dobrovol'skij (eds) *Phraseologie und Kultur / Phraseology and Culture*, Maribor: Filozofska fakulteta, 367–381.**

The article focuses on proverbs used in SMS messages. Its purpose is to examine contemporarily used proverbs in a daily context. The material consists of a set of SMS messages that are short letters to the editor in the regional daily newspaper *Salon Seudun Sanomat*.

In SMS messages, proverbs are used in a new context and traditional proverbs occur alongside modern ones. The article applies Grice's cooperative principle (Grice 1975, 1989) as a practical tool in identifying proverbs. Proverbs in speech are, in many ways, similar to proverbs in the written vernacular. In SMS messages, proverbs are used in a new context and traditional proverbs occur alongside modern ones.

**ART 5. Granbom-Herranen, Liisa 2014. Beyond understanding: How proverbs violate Grice's cooperative principle. In Anneli Baran & Liisi Laineste & Piret Voolaid (eds) *Scala Naturae. Festschrift in Honour of Arvo Krikmann*. Tartu: ELM Scholarly Press, 107–120.**

The article takes Grice's cooperative principle (Grice 1975, 1989) to be a basic requirement for understandable and meaningful dialogue. The article focuses on Grice's cooperative principle, applying it to proverbs. The proverbial material used in the examples is from two sources. The first are written memories, that is, written stories: episodes with traditional proverbs are collected in two books at the Archives of the Finnish Literature Society in Helsinki: *Perinne elämässäni* [Tradition in my life] from 1985 and *Karjalaiset elämäkerrat* [Karelian biographies] from 1983–1984. The second source is a contemporary one: SMS messages intended as short letters to the editor and readers of the daily newspaper *Salon Seudun Sanomat*, submitted for publication in the opinion column.

Acts against the cooperative principle might help recognise proverbs in the vernacular and in everyday life, although this does not solve the problem of

references. The article supplements the previous one, offering deeper insights into identifying proverbs by relying on Grice's cooperative principle.

**ART 6. Granbom-Herranen, Liisa 2015. Proverbial expressions and cultural context in archive materials. In Joanna Szerszunowicz & Boguslaw Nowowiejski & Katsumasa Yagi & Takaaki Kanzak (eds) *Intercontinental Dialogue on Phraseology* 3. University of Białymstoku Publishing House, 503-518.**

The article focuses on questions to be considered when using research data for paremiology, especially when the aim is to draw conclusions on proverbs and culture. Source criticism is an integral part of establishing a realistic picture of the material. Collecting proverbs (or any cultural units) usually means participating in a continuing discourse in the culture in which they are used, as well as in a broader context.

The article begins with an overview of Finnish paremiography in different eras, some turning points and political movements. A great deal of Finnish paremiographical work has been done during critical periods in Finnish history. The motivation to collect proverbs and the work with proverbs has played an important role in Finnish nation-building. One of the challenges when using already existing Finnish material is that the context creates the frame for expressions, but often it is not available.<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> This situation differs from that in Estonian, where recorders have commented on the proverbs they collected (Krikmann 2009a: 21).

## 6. REFLECTIONS

### 6.1 Contemporarily used proverbs

As mentioned in the beginning of the introduction in chapter 1.1, this article-based dissertation focuses on proverbs in everyday use in early 21st century Finland. However, the material does not encompass all of Finland, not even all of the Salo district. The material is a sample that says something about proverbs used in SMS messages sent to the regional newspaper *Salon Seudun Sanomat* as letters to the editor between 2006 and 2010. Most of the authors of the SMS messages are more or less regular readers of the newspaper, as the SMS messages as opinions either initiate or participate in a continuing discourse. However, the theories used in the dissertation could be applied in folkloristic paremiology in general. Generally, this is a case study since it focuses on a small language, Finnish, and constitutes a sample of regional material. Still, the results can also be applied to explore the use of proverbs in other languages. Considering the familiarity and frequency of proverbs, before been collected and archived proverbs might have been widely known for a long time or just for some decades or even only for some years and in a small area. It might have happened that a person or a small group of people, such as a family, moved a proverb from place to place. It might also be that the interest of the proverb collectors might simply have happened to fall on a specific time and area. The possibilities for speculation are endless.

The research focuses on the expressions as such in the opinion column in the regional newspaper; the ethical issues linked to this have been discussed above in the chapter 1.1. However, as the representatives of the newspaper also wished to emphasise, the object of the dissertation was neither to review the authors' opinions nor to monitor the publishing policies of the newspaper. This was a consensual decision with the editorial staff. Some important domestic and regional events occurred between 2006 and 2010: the parliamentary elections held in April 2007; the residents of Salo and its surroundings voting on unification in June 2007; television broadcast changing from analogue to digital in September 2007; Nokia, the biggest employer in the area, beginning negotiations to lay off employees in Salo in 2009; the consolidation of municipalities in January 2010; and the increasingly dire economic situation of Nokia in 2010.<sup>126</sup> These are some of the topics people discussed in the *Tekstarit* column.

The phenomenon in question is contemporarily used proverbs, i.e. proverbs used in early 21st century Finland. Such proverbs might be

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<sup>126</sup> The proportion of proverbs (or references to them) to the SMS messages sent was fairly stable during this period: a little over one in five of the messages sent to be published included a proverb or phrase.



traditional or modern ones as well as those based on the Bible.<sup>127</sup> They can also be references to these since the proverbs have to be known in order for references to them to be possible. Contemporarily used proverbs are also the central focus of the discussion of the theories. The bases of knowledge in this dissertation as well as the idea of knowledge as such appear in section 1 (chapter 1.4 and chapter 1.5) and in chapter 2.5. The material as a whole supports the conclusions presented in the published articles. In order to verify the existence of a proverb, a large amount of text material was required. The entire material was processed even if it was already saturated mid-process. The reason for this process was curiosity and interest in contemporarily used proverbs, not only from the viewpoint of Finnish paremiology but also from the international point of view. Classifying the material creates the possibility of continuing to explore the topic. Processing the material has been a long process. Along with reading, the process included searching for parts of words (tokens), entire words or combinations of words. This was especially necessary with frequent words in order to find out if they were connected to proverb-like expressions or formed potential proverbs. During the years, I have also used the material for papers and articles on topics such as upbringing, education and madness.

The existing definitions of what constitutes a proverb and of the proverb genre do not support the research of proverbs in present-day contexts. The challenge with providing exhaustive definitions is common to both traditional and modern proverbs, that is, to proverbs in contemporary use and to the genres with emic as well as etic definitions. Additionally, the meanings and interpretations of proverbs have changed due to all the changes that have occurred in the use of proverbs and in the everyday living context. Any solutions to these issues applied in the present dissertation are largely limited to the research at hand.

The paucity of modern proverbs is not due to their lack but to the difficulties in finding and defining them. Once they are defined and found, another issue is not knowing which of the contemporarily used expressions will be around decades later. This means that we are searching for potential proverbs before they are actually proverbs. In other words, collecting modern proverbs (i.e. future proverbs) means we are looking for something that might never exist. Traditional proverbs are easily found since paremiologists know what they are looking for, especially when they are doing with their native language. If one sets overly rigid demands on frequency and distribution and considers the anonymity of origin essential, it could be claimed that only

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<sup>127</sup> In the comparison between Estonian, Finnish and Slovenian newspaper material, it was found that proverbs from the Bible or Bible quotations were barely used in Estonian and Slovenian newspapers (Granbom-Herranen *et al.* 2015).

traditional proverbs exist and the genre of modern proverbs does not exist. However, in my opinion, a paremiological study is not only meant to search for something that certainly exists but should lead to new possibilities and challenges. The paradox of proverbs is discussed in the first (ART 1) and last article (ART 6).

Various meanings for proverbs are available. The most fundamental difference from the individual point of view might be seen between the basic meaning and the situational meaning. A contradiction between these two is not guaranteed, but it is probable, as was verified in episodes of life stories from the early 20th century (see Granbom-Herranen 2008). Moreover, due to the changes in language and the concepts in use, the assumed basic meaning of a proverb in present-day circumstances cannot be expected to be the same as it was, for example, in the late 19th and early 20th century when most Finnish traditional proverbs were collected and written down. A sad fact is that there are hardly any notes on how the proverbs were used and how they were understood at the time (see ART 6). The information about the context, the situation the proverb was used in, the sense in which it was used and the manner in which it was understood have generally not been documented. This means that the connection between the archive collections and the social reality of the living folk tradition is rather weak (Honko 1979, 143; Granbom-Herranen 2008, 53). Without contextual information, it is impossible to determine the purpose for which a proverb has been used and how it would have been interpreted. In ordinary life, interpreting a proverb is a matter of situational and individual experience. In the use of proverbs, it is not only understanding the words but also realising the situational circumstances. When a proverb is heard for the first time, a basis for understanding a proverb is established. In everyday language, this also establishes the basic meaning for the proverb to be taken into account whenever it is encountered again in the future.

Folkloristic paremiology as an academic discipline mostly focuses on proverbs and their meanings in speech (or written speech). Linguistic paremiology often uses the basic meaning, that is to say, the meaning used in literature and translation. It should be made clear which of these is in focus in any given instance. I do not believe there exists anything that could be called an international meaning even among paremiologists. It might make sense to view proverbs as having more than one meaning, such as the phrase meaning, situational meaning, historical meaning or something else. This would solve the eternal debate on the right and wrong meanings of proverbs. It could also be argued that all modern proverbs have a special ground form, but what if that is not the case? What if the construction of proverbs today is akin to constructing modules identified by some root-words? Asking these questions proved useful with this material.

The Finnish language has changed. In the 19th century, it was developing, with new words created to replace loanwords. Nowadays, dialects are still used but they are more easily understood all over Finland, unlike the dialects in earlier times which differed greatly from one another. The written Finnish constructed by Michael Agricola was based mainly on the dialect used in Western Finland (i.e. Finland Proper) and was written with German characters. Today, the literary language has been standardised. Sending SMS messages is not considered writing, so expressions in them might not be the most dignified. This raises the question of what kind of speech (or text) forms the context of the proverbs. The vernacular and dialect are also used in the SMS messages as mentioned above in the chapter 1.4 focusing on the background and aims of the research. Apart from everyday use, proverbs belong to formal speech on special occasions such as congratulatory and memorial speech as well as in written form, for example, in obituaries. It could be said that, apart from everyday communication, proverbs are suitable for situational extremes. Another dichotomy in the use of proverbs is connected with the assumed receivers of a speech act. This is an obvious aspect of a newspaper. If the text is directed at local people, proverbs can easily be referred to and various contemporarily used proverbs can be used in the SMS messages that serve as short letters to the editor. However, with a national audience, traditional proverbs (or references to or modifications of them) would be a safer choice since almost everyone can be expected to recognise them (this can be seen in the use of proverbs in the titles of TV programmes).

People's lives have changed, new concepts are needed and old terms are mostly used in expressions such as proverbs and phrases. Speakers may have an idea of the meaning of a proverb even if they do not exactly understand the words. Often, they have heard (or read) the proverb somewhere in a specific context (see ART 2). During the last century in Finland, mass media has also had an impact on vocabulary, special expressions and so forth (first, the newspapers in the late 19th century, then radio, cinema, television and now the Internet). Nowadays, the use of the proverbs in everyday life and the proverbs in written sources (literature) have merged, especially in colloquial written language. At the same time, proverbs from literary sources are used in everyday language.

## **6.2 Conclusion**

Proverbs are artefacts connecting thinking with emotions and feelings. They are part of everyday language and closely linked to culture. With proverbs, it is possible to treat matters that are unknown for the listener. It is also possible to introduce phenomena that are otherwise difficult to reach into a discussion

(for more about the functions of proverbs, see e.g. Lauhakangas 2004 and Widbäck 2015). Both proverbs and metaphors also allow people to treat abstract phenomena and, in this way, they contribute to understanding the world.<sup>128</sup> Proverbs are used as rhetorical tools and this is why the reader meets them often when reading daily newspapers. The use of proverbs most likely comes with the expectation that readers are aware of their basic meanings and, thus, proverbs can be used in published texts. Proverbs might be a kind of culmination in the evolution of various expressions. An aphorism might become a proverb and the same is possible with, for example, poems, songs or utterances as such. Hardly ever is it the other way around, although proverbs can be included in all of them. I do not argue that SMS messages as such or proverbs in SMS messages are a specifically Finnish phenomenon, nor are they a phenomenon limited to Salo. However, SMS messages and mobile phones have been special phenomena in the Salo district. For example, *Salon teatteri* (Salo Theatre) presented a musical called *Tekstari* [Text message]<sup>129</sup> in 2013 which used text messages published in *Salon Seudun Sanomat*. The musical and its songs were a success.

Proverbs always have a purpose, and a proverb performance always has one or more purposes. This is what happens with the SMS messages – both the proverbs used in the SMS messages and the SMS messages themselves have a purpose. A proverb is a conscious performance. The internal idea is private but the delivered idea is public. A phrase such as *jäädä hampaan koloon* [equivalent: have a grudge against somebody; literally: something gets stuck in a gap in one's teeth] can be used in an incorrect way; it is an offence against a phrase and, thus, unacceptable. A proverb in everyday use, however, cannot really be used incorrectly. It can be used in a peculiar way in an unexpected connection but it is not an offensive proverb. This is true in folkloristic paremiology, but it is a different matter with linguists and interpreters. For them, a proverb, in other words, the ground form and the basic meaning of a proverb are matters of right and wrong, they have to be learned. Nevertheless, this is not the everyday context that folkloristics is interested in. Collecting proverbs (paremiography) and researching them (paremiology) are different and, even if they are not always separate, the methodological challenges are different. Finnish proverbs have been researched in folkloristics mainly by using historic-geographic method. Most Finnish research uses contextual information as examples of the proverb type or the function of proverbs. This is not the case only with Finnish proverbs, however. Many paremiological

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<sup>128</sup> However, even if proverbs and metaphors are very much alike in the way we use them and how we interpret them, metaphors do not have the status of the mythical wisdom from ancient times as proverbs do (Granbom-Herranen 2008, 159–162; also see ART 6).

<sup>129</sup> Scriptwriter Arto Lindholm with the team, dramatisation by Arto Lindholm.

studies have been done in linguistics along with some in folkloristics.<sup>130</sup> However, I argue that, in Finnish folkloristics, proverbs have not widely been researched with context as the starting point since there are no tools for this. This leads to a vicious cycle: proverbs are not researched since there are no updated tools and thus no new research appears and no innovative tools are found, created or introduced. As a result, no new methodological approaches become established in folkloristic paremiology. The same happens to other artefacts of minor folklore genres such as riddles and jokes.

The articles as separate elements analyse some changes both in the concept of proverb and changes in defining the proverb genre from the perspective of folkloristic paremiology (ART 1); discuss why proverbs can be understood in different ways (ART 2); clarify the phenomena linked to everyday proverbs, focusing specifically on meaning (ART 3); describe the use of proverbs in everyday contexts (ART 4); discuss Grice's cooperative principle and how it can be applied to proverbs (ART 5); and discuss some questions when using paremiological data to make conclusions about proverbs and culture (ART 6). The fourth and fifth articles (ART4, ART 5) include findings on what is happening to proverbs in contemporary use: (1) Contemporarily used proverbs are combinations and appear in new connections. (2) They are creations and transformations based on traditional and modern proverbs. However, as the articles show, proverbs are still used. In brief, (3) traditional proverbs are searching for new forms as rhetorical changes become increasingly visible. (4) They combine with other proverbs or phrases, sometimes creating a new fixed form of two utterances. (5) In some cases, they occur in extraordinary connections if we look at the basic meanings. (6) Modern proverbs are created by using traditional proverbs and the traditional ones are transformed. (7) Proverbs get new interpretations, (8) they are connected to new phenomena, (9) become shorter and (10) are combined with other types of expressions, but (11) they still survive. In everyday use, a proverb is alive as long as it is referred to. This means that when we look for proverbs in speech and speech-like text, we have to look at the proverbs, shortened proverbs, or references and allusions to them. This leads to more questions. Are proverbs allowed to change? Whose viewpoint should be the basis for the concept – the standpoint of everyday life (emic) or that of academic research (etic)? As I see it, we should remain close to emic language, especially when focusing on everyday use, that is, we should proceed from the concepts that the speakers use. Additional challenges emerge when we reach the changes that have occurred in the boundary between oral tradition and written culture. As a whole, both spoken and written communication have become increasingly similar. Texts that approximate speech are used in, for

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<sup>130</sup> See Mieder 2009.

example, e-mails, text messages and newspapers. Proverbs are alive as long as they are referred to, but what is the point when the utterance is not a proverb anymore?

This is the first dissertation focusing on Finnish folkloristic paremiology as such since 1980s (see Granbom-Herranen 2012). Because the collected material is unique, consisting of about 70,000 text messages and including about 7,000 paremiological units, it might benefit also future research as well. In the future, it could be a new challenge to look more closely at the interpretations of proverbs in two meanings, situational and basic, in order to focus on the stability of an interpretation. The situational meaning could be understood as a special case within the PWS-based model discussed in the articles, especially in the second article (ART2). Another interesting subject is the use of proverbs from the Bible in everyday speech. The connection between the proverbs in the Holy Bible in Finnish and the ones used in everyday speech might be so self-evident that it is not noticed. It has been an under-explored topic.<sup>131</sup> The cooperative project between Finland, Estonia and Slovenia showed that the use of proverbs from the Bible and of Bible quotations in everyday life was a phenomenon particularly connected with Finnish newspapers. The SMS message material also offers an excellent possibility to focus on specific phenomena. The material includes SMS messages both with and without proverbs on various topics over a four-and-a-half-year period in the recent past. As mentioned above, the material has been used for a number of papers and articles, using word tokens occurring either in the text or proverbs.

The aim of the dissertation has been to study how proverbs are used and interpreted in communication that occurs in everyday use. This study produces basic information on contemporarily used proverbs and the possibility to observe proverbs and proverbial expressions in everyday use. Moreover, it contributes to the discourse dealing with the substance of proverbs in everyday life. Additionally, the dissertation as a whole strives to offer some theoretical tools for further paremiological studies to recognise both proverbs and their meanings. In this study proverbs have been identified partly searching for utterances that act against Grice's cooperative principle while their interpretations are connected with actual context and based on possible world semantics. In any case, a need to use some non-folkloristic theories as above mentioned has arose from the empirical material. However, material is not enough how numerous it might be. The central research method is contemporary content analysis which nowadays is most often connected

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<sup>131</sup> In folkloristics, Kuusi (1962) has written about Finnish proverbs from the Bible from the year 1642. Krikmann (1999) has looked at the connection between the Bible and paremiological items in the Estonian oral tradition. Mieder (2004) has addressed the relationship between the common European proverb tradition and the Bible.

with social sciences or educative studies. The empirical material and the argumentation are linked to theoretical models.

Despite many changes in recent decades to Finnish society and lifestyle as well as many changes in life and everyday practices, proverbs still belong to everyday use and communication. In Finnish, written colloquial language has become similar to spoken language. The urban lifestyle has created changes in Finnish proverb tradition. Most traditional Finnish proverbs and Bible quotations still use agrarian language, although today they are often used in a new context with a new meaning. In this context, proverbs are not always similar to their predecessors, as modern proverbs use modern colloquial language. There are some discrepancies and similarities between proverbs in everyday life, proverbs in the media and proverbs in literature. Without any hesitation, Finnish proverbs can be said to appear in contemporarily used Finnish language and they have their place in modern communication. Proverbs are used as tools of colloquial language. They are part of the vernacular that people are familiar with. Proverbs are alive as long as they are used or referred to in everyday communication within a group or between groups. In brief, this dissertation focuses on the contemporarily used proverbs in a context quite similar to the colloquial language and speech of the 21st century.

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KE84 = *Karjalaiset elämäkerrat* [Karelian Biographies] 1983–1984. Archives of the Finnish Literature Society in Helsinki.

PE85 = *Perinne elämässäni -kilpikirjoitus* [Tradition in My Life writing collection] 1985. Archives of the Finnish Literature Society in Helsinki.

SSS = *Salon Seudun Sanomat* [Salo District Newspaper], a regional Finnish daily newspaper.

TS = *Turun Sanomat* [Turku Newspaper], a regional Finnish daily newspaper in Varsinais-Suomi region.

M6 = *The M6 international type system of proverbs including proverb corpus*. <http://lauhakan.home.cern.ch/kan/int/cerpint.html> [on line] see Lauhakangas 2001.

KOTUS = *Sananparsikokoelma* [Proverb corpus] *Kotimaisten kieltenkeskus* [Institute for the languages of Finland]. [http://kaino.kotus.fi/korpus/sp/meta/sp\\_coll\\_rdf.xml](http://kaino.kotus.fi/korpus/sp/meta/sp_coll_rdf.xml) [on line]

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