

**Liisa Granbom-Herranen**

University of Turku

Finland

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8376-6746>

## **A Regional Newspaper as a Repository for Proverbial Expressions – Proverbs Included in SMS Messages**

**Abstract.** The article participates on the discussion how reproducible language units, in this case proverbs and proverbial sentences, could be detected in a corpus of speech in written form. 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. The corpus in question consists about 70,000 unedited text-messages sent to be published as short letters to the editor and aimed at the readers of the daily Finnish regional newspaper. These messages include more than 7000 expressions that are connected with proverbs. Although the paper examines Finnish proverbs and uses Finnish examples, many of the processes and challenges are the same, no matter which language or culture is being examined.

**Key words:** *everyday practices, proverb, proverbial utterance, text message, vernacular*

### **1. Introduction**

This article focuses on proverbs in contemporary use based on my dissertation “Proverbs in SMS messages: Archaic and modern communication” (Granbom-Herranen 2018). The aim of the research has been to highlight one of the ways proverbs are used and interpreted in everyday communication using colloquial written language. To reach the goal of the research I decided to look at SMS messages in which the language is nearer to vernacular than literal expression. The article participates on the discussion how proverbs and proverbial sentences, could be detected when the basic material consists of written speech used in daily life and includes old and new language

units, i.e. contemporarily used proverbs which might be traditional or modern ones, Bible quotations or references to them. The focus is on proverbs as a part of contemporary colloquial written language in everyday use and context while the emphasis mainly is in folkloristic paremiology. The earlier oral tradition has found a place in the written vernacular. SMS messages are opinions in some special occasions and in them proverbs are used in a new context.

### 1.1. Concept of proverb

Today paremiology knows and uses various definitions for a proverb. This is because of the fact that the concept proverb has never been defined in a perfect way. The only current consensus focuses on the relative brevity of proverbs and on the traditionality or familiarity of proverbs. (Dundes 1994: 44; Mieder 2004: 2–3; Taylor 1981). However, “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” (Honko 1989: 14). By using a loose definition of the proverb, this article leans primarily on the emic concept (see Headland 1990), but the etic concept also comes into play because the other kinds of utterances of various short-form genres which might, in the reader’s eyes, also represent proverbs are not considered here (see Granbom-Herranen 2016b, 2018).

The Finnish proverb displays the most commonly named characteristics of the proverb. It is a relatively short and fairly independent statement in a more or less stable form. It is or has been relatively familiar to the general public in a particular time and place and, in this case, most often in Finnish. If a proverb does not fulfil the demand of *familiarity*, it can hardly become generally used (*frequency*) (Mieder 1994: 298; Grzybek 1987: 73). Nowadays, the concept of proverb is in the Finnish context also most often used to mean *proverb and proverbial expression* both in language used in everyday occasions and the language of researchers.

In Finnish proverbs have been and still are used in vernacular language. These days, the native Finnish-speaking population of Finland can read and write Finnish.<sup>1</sup> This has changed the position of proverbs in Finnish language.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> A long time the Bible in Finnish was a source for oral tradition. As long as people were not capable of reading Bible it was used in church services.

<sup>2</sup> Finnish proverbs are not and have not been used only in the Finnish language. They also exist in Swedish (nowadays Finland Swedish) and in Finland other languages with a special

The concept of *contemporarily used proverb* includes proverbs used nowadays, i.e. traditional proverbs, modern proverbs and Bible quotations as well as references to them. The expression *traditional proverb* in this article means an utterance that in Finland is commonly accepted to be an old proverb. Their ground forms are to be found in publications based on collections before the 1950s in Finland.<sup>3</sup> For example the proverb *Se koira älähtää, johon kalikka kalahtaa* [That dog yelps, which is hit by a stick<sup>4</sup>] occurred many times in SMS messages.

- (1) *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-]

Modern proverbs are proverbs collected after 1950s or they are so new that they could be called potential proverbs, i.e. expressions that might become settled in Finnish language some day in future and so get the status of proverb. They are a part of modern tradition. The most important feature for distinguishing a proverb from a phrase is that a proverb is a statement (Granbom-Herranen 2013a). Many of proverbs transmitted from other cultural areas and languages are in Finnish modern proverbs even if they in the original language represents traditional proverbs.

- (2) *Kel onni on se onnen kätkeköön sillä se on hyvää itsetuntoa. Toki ollaan kaikki onnesta sykkyyrällä puolestane. – hengessä mukana olevat. (SSS, sent 18.7.2008)*

He/she who has much happiness does well to hide because it means having good self-awareness. Certainly we all are thrilled to bits on behalf for you. – we are there in spirit.

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status based on Finnish laws. They are Sámi (nowadays Northern Sámi, Skólt Sámi and Inar Sámi) and Romany. Proverbs might also exist in Finnish and Finland Swedish sign languages which also have a special status based on Finnish laws. In 2017, more than 130 languages were spoken in Finland (Räsänen 2017).

<sup>3</sup> Due to the historic-geographic method (also known as the Finnish method), Finnish proverbs have been collected and they are well mapped. Most of the ground forms of traditional Finnish proverbs before the 1950s are included in the published collections edited by Kuusi (1990/1953; the oldest collections made before the great fire of Turku in 1828), Nirvi and Hakulinen (1953/1948; collected in the 1930s) and Laukkanen and 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*).

<sup>4</sup> In this connection the noun stick means actually a piece of firewood which has not been split.

Some of the modern proverbs has first been in literal for like is the beginning of a poem by the Finnish author Eino Leino. Nowadays, it is a proverb and people often do not know its origin. Some of them has first been in literal for like this *Kell' onni on, se onnen kätkeköön* [He/she who has much happiness does well to hide it] is the beginning of the poem *Laulu onnesta* [Song of happiness'], which was published for the first time in 1900, in a collection entitled *Hiihtäjän virsiä* [Hymns of a skier] (Leino 1978). Nowadays, it is a proverb and people often do not know its origin.

The theoretically most unsafe part of these are potential proverbs, expressions that are used but nobody knows if they will survive, like the former ski-jumper Matti Nykänen's *Elämä on laiffii* [Life is life] or [Live is life].<sup>5</sup> This was not used in SMS messages but it is widely known and used in Finland.

Some of Bible quotations and proverbs included in the Bible have become traditional Finnish proverbs. They are often easy to recognize because most of the Finnish Lutheran population still learns their Bible and Catechism in confirmation classes organized by the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland.

- (3) *Salossa 200 äänellä ei tullut lautakuntapaikkaa. – sitä niittää, mitä kylvää. SSS, sent 16.12.2008*

[The place in a municipal board in Salo was not achieved with 200 votes – one reaps what one sows]

In Galatians 6:7 [*Kirje galatalaisille*]:

*“Älkää pettäkö itseänne! Jumala ei salli itseään pilkattavan. Mitä ihminen kylvää, sitä hän myös niittää.” (Raamattu).*

[“Be not tricked; God is not made sport of: for whatever seed a man puts in, that will he get back as grain.” (*The Bible*)]

The ground form is *Mitä ihminen kylvää, sitä hän niittää* [What a person sows, he will reap] but nowadays more often in form *Sitä saa, mitä tilaa* [One gets what he or she orders].<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Since the end of his career as one of the most famous sportsmen in the world, Nykänen has become famous for the expressions he has used in interviews (see G-H 2013b, 2016a).

<sup>6</sup> As a proverb in English “You get what you order”. Finnish-language proverbs often use passive.

- (4) *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]

Today, the same meaning is communicated in the proverb *Sitä saa, mitä tilaa* [lit. One gets what one orders]. The modern proverb might be a new way to use a proverb with updated concepts: *niittää* (reap) has become *tilata* (order).

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 (Granbom-Herranen 2014b: 378).

## 1.2. Some words about Finnish newspapers

Many sources are self-evident materials for some disciplines, whereas for others, they are completely unused. I needed contemporarily used proverbs in their everyday context and in written vernacular. The point is that the context creates the frame for the use and interpretation of proverbs. The newspaper with the opinion column was a way to get the proverbs in their actual context of use.<sup>7</sup> If asked it is few people who remember proverbs or the context they were used.

In comparison with the opportunity to read, write and publish newspapers in one's native language elsewhere in Europe, Finnish newspapers in Finnish are a relatively new phenomenon. Prior to the 20th century, the main spoken language of Finland was Finnish, but it was rarely the written language. At the same time, the proverbs in Finnish were mostly used in speech, as part of the language of the underprivileged majority. Proverbs had an important role as informal knowledge compared to written information. The first newspaper published in Finland was *Åbo Tidningar* [Newspaper in Turku] in 1771 during the Swedish era, and it was published in Swedish. Today, the oldest newspaper in Finland, having been published since 1824, is *Åbo Underrättelser* [Notices in Turku], a newspaper in Swedish.

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<sup>7</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.

The newspaper this article focuses on is a regional daily paper “Salon Seudun Sanomat”<sup>8</sup> [Newspaper of Salo district]. It was established in 1919, and it has always been published in Finnish. In 2009, the daily circulation of the newspaper was about 20,000, which means about 50,000 readers. The newspaper is targeted at the general public most often the paper version is received via subscription, which in Finland is the most common way to receive the daily papers (G-H 2017).

### 1.3. Theoretical background and the concept of contemporarily used proverb

Regarding the use of proverbs, the article is based on Briggs’s (1988) concept of *proverb performance*. To use a proverb is a small performance which has a target bound to the situation and words used. The use of a proverb or the proverb itself adds value to a speech event. Moreover, it appears obvious that context adds something to what is said and understood. A performance is always interaction between the sender of some message (the speaker or writer using proverbs) and the audience (a real or assumed one). A proverb as a performance might be handled as what Badiou (2009) calls “an event” (or the proverb paves the way for an event); it has the power to change the significance of the entire occasion. The successful proverb performance sums up the kernel of the performance. Proverbs are shared tradition, meaning the performer and the audience have to share some common knowledge about the past in order to be able to connect the message to the activity.<sup>9</sup> In a newspaper every proverb performance is somehow an interactive and communicative occasion produced by the performer (writer) and the audience (reader) together even if the feedback does not happen immediately.

The significance of a proverb has several starting points: language is an instrument of communication but also linked to a thought (Vygotsky 1967), a proverb gets its significance by way of context (Frege 2000)<sup>10</sup> and the use of the proverb is a violating element, marking a kind of pause in the dis-

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<sup>8</sup> Later abbreviated as SSS.

<sup>9</sup> However, there are always listeners and readers who are incapable of understanding and/or interpreting proverbs and even less the references to proverbs (Granbom-Herranen 2008: 184; Ferretti et al. 2007).

<sup>10</sup> The principle of Frege’s principle of contextuality states that the meaning of an expression is always bound to the context in which it is used (Rott 2000: 627).

course and bringing in new aspects (Grice 1975, 1989).<sup>11</sup> The use of proverbs is part of communicative speech that is supposed to follow Grice's cooperative principle and its categories of quantity, quality, relevance and manner. So for the search and identification, I used Paul H. Grice's cooperative principle, proceeding from the assumption that all proverbial expressions act against one or more of its categories.<sup>12</sup> The first three categories could be called what-is-said categories while the fourth, the category of manner, is related not to "what is said but how what is said is to be said" (Grice 1989: 27).

Proverbs function as Badiou's (2009) event: they make a full stop in communication or are elements possibly changing the direction of the sequence of actions. This is congruent with Grice's (1975, 1989) idea that the use of a proverb is an acting element, marking a pause in the discourse and introducing new aspects. The way we recognize proverbs in speech or text uses the same techniques as when recognizing metaphors (G-H 2011: 49–52).

#### 1.4. Grice's maxims and acts against them

The main message with Grice's cooperative principle is the demand to make a "conversational contribution such as it is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged" (Grice 1989: 26). This is the basic requirement for understandable and meaningful talk exchange also when proverbs are used in speech. Grice names three features connected to successful communication. First, the 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 most important aspect of speech, Grice (1975, 45–46; 1987: 27) argues, is to try to keep oneself truthful. The category of quality tells us not to say anything we believe to be false or for which we lack adequate evidence: most important is to attempt to keep oneself true when speaking. When a speaker lies or tells something that cannot be true he or she acts against this category.

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<sup>11</sup> Grice (1989: 30, 33) makes a distinction between different actions that work against maxims. I prefer to use "to act against" instead of the terms Grice uses. (See more Granbom-Herranen 2013a; 2014a).

<sup>12</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). Grice's maxims and their violations have also been seen as a possibility in folkloristic research focusing on humour (Krikmann 2004: 88–95).

- (5) *Mies! Normaalin miehen viriiliä seksuaalista halua. Tarkkaile vaimoasi. Käy vieraisissa, ehkä kaipaa "vihreää ruohoa" aidan toisella puolella. – petetty nainen (SSS, sent 8.9.2006)*<sup>13</sup>

[Man! That is just red-blooded desire of a normal man. Keep an eye on your wife. She plays away, 'might hunger for "greener grass" on the other side of the fence. – betrayed woman]<sup>14</sup>

Actually not a person hungers for grass as cows, horses and other animals do. The sentence is referring to the proverb *Ruoho on vihreämpää aidan toisella puolen* [The grass is always greener on the other side of the fence] and the writer says something that is not true to awake the reader to see the main point of her message. She knows because her husband (if we trust that the pseudonym is telling the truth) has betrayed her with somebody who wanted a new or better company.

The category of quantity states that a contribution should be as informative as required for the current purpose, but should not be more informative than is required; quantity is related to how much information is provided. The contribution should be as informative as required for the current purpose but the information should not be more informative than required.

Acts against Grice's category of quantity relate to how much information is given. To say too much or too little constitutes violence against the category of quantity.

- (6) *Ukki-41. Opintotuella ei osteta autoa, joten ne joilla on, ajavat vanhempien rahoilla. Kaikilla ei mahdollista vanhempien avokätiseen tukeen – pappa betala (SSS, sent 2.9.2006)*

[Grandpa-41. Cars cannot be paid with the study grant. So those who have a car get money from parents. Everybody does not have the possibility to get the generous support from parents – dad pays]

The expression *pappa betala* hardly gives any information at all and can be understood as a meaningless short sentence. However, when it is used with a pause the utterance emphasizes something and thus acts against the maxim demanding quantitatively enough information. The Finnish modern proverb

<sup>13</sup> 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. The translations into English are literal translations because using equivalents would mean too much interpretation.

<sup>14</sup> English translations in all examples are literally translated and proverb parallels are not used.



is *Pappa betalar*, although the language here is Finland-Swedish (*Isä mak-saa* in Finnish). In Finnish the proverb always occurs in Finland-Swedish, the translation is never used. This SMS message refers to the discourse that deals with the student stipend provided by the state in Finland.<sup>15</sup>

Relevance requires the speech act to be relevant. However, the difficulty is that relevance is an invariable, comprehensive concept. Violence against the category of relevance is linked to events and utterances like in the next example.

- (7) *Moni kakku päältä kaunis. Autot ruostuvat muovikuorien alla. Mistä nykyisten muoviu-  
autojen korin kunnan voi tietää? – Sepi (SSS, sent 23.12.2006)*

[Many cakes look good. Cars rust away under the plastic cover. How is it possible to know the conditions of body in modern plastic cars? – Sepi]

The proverb in the message is sent when the quality of used cars was topical. The context clarifies the connection. The meaning of the sentence still remains unclear if the reader does not know that the proverb continues with “but”, which stresses the opposite quality of the object. The cited proverb refers to the proverb *Moni kakku päältä kaunis, vaan on sillkoa sisältä* [Many a cake looks good but the inside is pure bark bread]. Acting against the category of relevance is linked to activities and utterances used in a speech context.

The category of manner relates to well-aimed speech. This category tells the speaker to avoid obscurity and ambiguity of expression, as well as to be brief and orderly. To give hints one after another and talk without saying anything directly acts against this category. That occurs when a speaker does not voice his or her own opinion but offers only hints. For example, shortened proverbs acts as hints. To get the message the reader must recognize and know the proverb.

- (8) *Uhkasakon uhalla pitäisi myös uhrit vaatia saapumaan oikeuden istuntoon uhrit suo-  
rastaan pakenee – Silmä silmästä (SSS, sent 2.9.2006)*

[The victims ought to be demanded to be present at a court session on pain of the penalty payment. The victims are nothing less than escaping. – An eye for an eye]

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<sup>15</sup> Swedish was the official language of Finland until the country’s independence. However, in 1863 it became possible to use Finnish in official matters focusing on Finland. The proverb refers to the Finland Swedish population and to their prominent position in, for example, Finland’s economic, political and cultural life throughout the country’s history. Among Swedish-speaking Finns the standard of living has long been higher – and in many cases still is – than among Finnish-speaking Finns (see Granbom-Herranen 2014a).

Proverb *Silmä silmästä ja hammas hampaasta* [An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth] is known as the Code of Hammurabi and it is also to be found in Bible in various texts. Actually it does not become clear if the threat in proverb is directed towards the accused person or the victim.

All this can stay unfulfilled in speech (or in speech like writing), or the speaker can act against them consciously or subconsciously. The use of proverbs is a part of communicative speech that is supposed to follow Grice's cooperative principle.

## 2. Methodology and Materials

### 2.1. Methodology

The central research method is contemporary content analysis, which is understood to be a cluster of methods connected with conclusions based on theoretical analyses.<sup>16</sup> Content analysis is commonly used with existing text material, such as texts in newspapers, and it differs from discourse analysis that also concentrates on communication in written form. Proverbs are taken from the ground forms of proverbial expressions. The *ground form of a proverb* is a form that might be called the proverb proper behind an utterance.<sup>17</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. 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. If an expression is very frequent, it could be on its way to becoming a proverb. 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.

Every research involves an ethical relationship with the research phenomena, a positive contact with the artefacts and the unknown participants. However, the ethical issues in this project are primarily involved with the archiving and further use of the collected materials. The proverbs published

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<sup>16</sup> The whole research process and the implementation of the method, see Granbom-Herranen 2018: 69–81. Content analysis as a process of research (G-H 2018: 72, Figure 7) presents the whole process in table form.

<sup>17</sup> See also Kuusi (1983: 16–17) normal form ("*normaalimuoto*"), Honko (1998) "mental text" and Krikmann (2009b: 64) "a normal shape of a proverb".

in the newspaper are already public. The policy of the newspaper 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. All the published material exists in the SSS archive, whereas the unpublished SMS messages exist in the form of data.

## 2.2. Materials

The research material for these articles consists of proverbs and references to them. They have appeared in SMS messages which have been sent to be published as short letters to the editor and aimed at the readers of the daily regional newspaper. The corpus in its entirety consists of about 70,000 unedited SMS messages (that is messages sent by 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 newspaper. These messages include more than 7000 expressions that are proverbs, potential proverbs, Bible quotations or references to them. Originally one message could be up to 160 characters long.

I have read *Salon Seudun Sanomat* daily for a number of decades, so the newspaper was familiar to me. Proverbs in the newspaper were approached from the reader's point of view, which in practice means I had read the opinion column daily the way all newspaper readers do. SSS has given the material in the form of data, that is, as unedited files so the material includes both published and unpublished messages.

## 3. Reflections

Even if there were 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. When a proverb settles down within a new cultural context, both the form and meaning is renewed. Using proverbs as parts of opinions confirms the active role of proverbs. Table 1 presents the summary of the final material. Most of the proverbs were mentioned or referred to only once, during the years 2006–2010.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> This is in line with Krikmann (1997, 2009a, 2017b). About reasons for this, see Krikmann 2017a.

**Table 1. Description of the final material**

Traditional proverb or Bible quotation	350
Reference to a traditional proverb or Bible quotation	1,400
Modern proverb, potential modern proverb	2,500
Reference to a modern proverb	3,000
Total: more than 7,000 expressions	

Note: Totals are approximate.

Source: own research.

The phenomenon in question is proverbs used in early 21st century Finland and the challenge is how to detect them in some everyday context. Contemporarily used proverbs might be traditional or modern ones as well as those based on the Bible. They can also be references to these since the proverbs have to be known in order for references to them to be possible. The material is a wide sample that says something about proverbs used in SMS messages sent to the regional newspaper as letters to the editor between 2006 and 2010 while the SMS messages as opinions either initiate or participate in a continuing discourse.

The use of a proverb 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. The internal idea is private but the delivered idea is public. 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.

#### **4. Conclusions**

The use of a proverb acts against one or more of the categories included in Grice's cooperative principle and makes an utterance to differ from the ongoing discourse Grice's cooperative principle can be used when trying to detect unspecified proverbs in wide materials. Especially when in everyday use, a proverb is alive as long as it is referred to so we have to look at the proverbs, shortened proverbs, or references and allusions to them.

Grice's cooperative principle and particularly acts against it might help us to recognize proverbs in vernacular language (oral and written), although it does not solve the problem of reference. Meaningful speech understood as a wholeness of meaningful utterances, for example proverbs, surely points to meaningful references that make interpretation possible; although the interpretation or the understood meaning is hardly the same for everybody – not even for the parties in the talk exchange. Additional challenges emerge when we reach the changes that have occurred in the boundary between oral tradition and written culture. In Finnish, written colloquial language has become increasingly similar to spoken language, in particular in texts that speech like writing is used (e.g. e-mails, text messages and Internet).

In the new context, proverbs are not always similar to their predecessors, because modern proverbs use modern colloquial language. Even though proverbs may not always appear with the same form and meaning as they did in the past, they continue to be used in a range of contexts. During the last century in Finland, mass media has also had an impact on vocabulary, special expressions and so forth. 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.

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 would be a safer choice since almost everyone can be expected to recognise them.

Proverbs are a part of the vernacular that people are familiar with. For many, proverbs represent something familiar, domestic and old-fashioned while also reflecting a modern Finnish way of thinking. Using proverbs, therefore, is an acceptable way to generate interest. Use of proverbs and the media share a common history and maybe also a common future. As a phenomenon, Finnish proverbs seem to have a status that promotes their continued use in the context of modern urban society, new technology and mass media.

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. The proverbs may not always appear with the same form and meaning as they did in the past, but they are used.

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## **Eine regionale Zeitung als Aufbewahrungsort für sprichwörtliche Ausdrücke – Sprichwörter in SMS-Nachrichten**

### **Zusammenfassung**

Der Beitrag konzentriert sich auf Sprichwörter im alltäglichen Gebrauch Finnlands des frühen 21. Jahrhunderts sowie die Frage, wie diese im alltäglichen Kontext wahrgenommen werden können. Zeitgenössisch verwendete Sprichwörter können traditionelle wie auch moderne und biblische sein. Auch können sie Verweise auf diese sein, da Sprichwörter bekannt sein müssen, damit Verweise auf sie möglich sind. Das gesamte Material besteht aus etwa 70,000 unveröffentlichten SMS, eingekauft zwischen 2006 und 2010, um als Zuschriften, gerichtet an die Leser der Zeitung,



veröffentlicht zu werden. Diese Kurzmitteilungen enthalten mehr als 7,000 Wendungen, in Form von Sprichwörtern, möglichen Sprichwörtern, Bibelziten oder Verweisen auf sie.

Sprichwörter sind ein Teil der Umgangssprache mit der die Menschen vertraut sind. Für viele stellen sie etwas vertrautes, heimisches und traditionsverbundenes dar, während sie zugleich auch eine moderne finnische Denkweise zum Ausdruck bringen. Die Verwendung eines Sprichworts verstößt gegen eine oder mehrere Kategorien, die in Grice' Kooperationsprinzip beinhaltet sind, und führt dazu, dass sich eine Äußerung vom laufenden Diskurs unterscheidet. Grice' Kooperationsprinzip kann dazu verwendet werden, um nicht spezifizierte Sprichwörter in unterschiedlichen Materialien aufzuspüren. Da ein Sprichwort im alltäglichen Gebrauch lebendig ist, solange auf es verwiesen wird, müssen wir uns die Sprichwörter, die verkürzten Sprichwörter oder Verweise und Anspielungen auf sie ansehen. Grice' Kooperationsprinzip hingegen könnte uns helfen, Sprichwörter in der Umgangssprache (mündlich und schriftlich) wahrzunehmen, wenngleich es auch das Verweisproblem nicht löst. Ausdrucksstarke Sprache, verstanden als Gesamtheit aussagekräftiger Äußerungen, wie zum Beispiel Sprichwörter, verweist sicherlich auf aussagekräftige Verweise, die eine Interpretation zulassen; wenngleich auch die Interpretation oder die verstandene Bedeutung kaum für alle gleich ist – nicht einmal für die Parteien im Gesprächsaustausch.

