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# Changes in the proverb formula in Finnish Bibles from 1642 to 1992

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**Abstract:** The article studies a subtype of the Finnish generalizing relative clause, referred to as *the proverb formula*. A generalizing relative clause refers to any person who fills the described condition. The proverb formula is used frequently in the Finnish translations of the Bible in the Book of Proverbs. The study examines two aspects that vary in this structure in Finnish editions from 1642 to 1992: the head pronoun of the relative clause and the order of the relative clause and the main clause. In the oldest of the studied translations, the most frequent one variant or the proverb formula begins with the relative clause, and the relative clause head in the main clause is a personal pronoun (*hän*). For the order of the structure, a clear model is found in the source texts of the translation. In later editions, personal pronoun heads were eliminated. Interestingly, they are not replaced with demonstrative heads, which would follow the most frequent proverb formula structure in Finnish vernacular and would also be recommended by grammar guides. Instead, a variant with omission of the head pronoun gains in frequency. Variations within the proverb formula increase when the order with the main clause preceding the relative clause gains in frequency. The preference for omission of the head pronouns is not easily explainable. The article proposes that this variant was a conscious stylistic choice for solemn, biblical language.

**Keywords:** Bible; Finnish; proverbs; relative clause; standardization

## 1 Introduction

Translations of the Bible played a crucial role in the creation of literary Finnish language because Finnish had rarely been written before the Reformation (1517). The first translation of the entire Bible (Biblia 1642) provided a model for all writers of Finnish. As early Finnish texts were religious, research on religious language has been closely tied to research on the development of literary language. Many features that occur in early literary Finnish, such as certain compound word types

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(Vaittinen 2007) and pronoun uses (Kiuru 1990), result from a long tradition of preferring exact translation when translating the Bible. However, sometimes features that were adopted in written language from the source languages were possible in at least certain dialects of Finnish (Kiuru 1990; Vaittinen 2007). These features spread analogically to uses without a clear source (Kiuru 1990). A stylistic separation of religious texts from other texts took place during the nineteenth century, when the debate about developing literary Finnish was lively and the norms of the language were changing rapidly (Mielikäinen 2014). However, even before that, biblical language possessed special features that differed from those of non-biblical literary language.

In this article, the study of a single linguistic feature – a type of generalising relative clause used as a proverb formula – provides insight into the language standardising process. Relative clauses modify noun phrases, and a generalising relative clause refers to any person who fills the described condition. This study tracks the changes in this formula in the period when biblical Finnish as a distinct, consciously chosen style was becoming distinct from the style used in secular texts. Studying the changes in a single clausal format offers a concrete example of how translations of the Bible are affected by various ideals and ideologies, thus representing, on the one hand, the ‘good’ language of each period and, on the other hand, a traditional, archaic form of the language prone to resisting change.

Language standardisation is a process by which a preferred model for a standard is selected from several competing models, and the variety is then codified into written form and used. The standardised variety requires continuous re-evaluation to keep it up-to-date (see, e.g. Haugen 1982). Modern standard Finnish is a compositional language variety; it involves features from many dialects but also aspects that are inherited from translated texts, as well as some artificial features that language developers invented (Herlin 2002; Lauerma 2004; Nordlund 2004). The different principles that resulted in these choices were subjects of heated discussions during the nineteenth century (Lauerma 2004; Nordlund and Pallaskallio 2017: 132–133). Generally, language developers support the standard language ideology, aiming at a uniform variety with little variation (Milroy 2007). In nineteenth-century Finland, some preferred the oldest and most original forms, some strived for symmetrical systems, and some emphasised the importance of studying spoken dialects (Herlin 2002; Nordlund 2004; Nordlund and Pallaskallio 2017: 133).

Tracking a single linguistic structure through different editions of the same text highlights how translators and editors had access to various models of source languages and spoken varieties of Finnish. New ideologies and changes in translation practices affected the way variants were evaluated. When people started to use the Finnish language in new domains, such as scholarly works and

fiction, new registers and styles emerged (Nordlund and Pallaskallio 2017: 132; Paloposki 2004). The Finnish proverb formula exemplifies a feature that altered its shape when the ideals of biblical language changed.

This article examines a certain syntactic structure of a generalising relative clause (1),<sup>1</sup> which I refer to as the *proverb formula*. This proverb formula, which I present thoroughly in Section 3, underwent two major changes. First, the personal pronoun *hän* ('he, she'), used as the head of the relative pronoun, was replaced with the demonstrative pronoun *se* ('it') or was omitted, which I refer to as a *zero head*. Second, the order of the structure preferred in the oldest editions of the Finnish Bible, in which the relative clause precedes the main clause, gives way to variation, and the opposite order gains in frequency.

(1) *Joka toiselle kuoppaa kaivaa, se itse siihen lankeaa.*

REL other-ALL pit-PART digs DEM self it-ILL falls

Proverbs 26:27 (Raamattu 1992)

'Whoever digs a pit will fall into it.' (NIV 2011)

I examine verses following the proverb formula in the Book of Proverbs in six editions of the Finnish Bible, published from 1642 to 1992. I link changes in the proverb formula to changes in translational practices and grammatical norms and ideologies that affected biblical Finnish. Although the power of prescriptive grammar guides on the language of ordinary writers has been questioned (Nevalainen 2014; Nobels and Rutten 2014), I assume that in biblical Finnish, a correlation between the stances expressed in grammar guides and actual usage in Bible translation is possible. Translating Bible and writing grammar guides belonged to an elite interested in developing literary Finnish – the same people who wrote newspaper articles and collected folklore, for example (Laitinen 2004; Lauerma 2004). The relationship between language usage and explicit rules is not necessarily causal in the direction that normative books precede changes in usage; new usage patterns may emerge before normative language guides are published (Vosters et al. 2014). In nineteenth-century Finland, newspaper editors, for instance, did not adopt the innovations presented in grammar guides in a straightforward way (Nordlund and Pallaskallio 2017). It is also worth noting that in Finland until the end of the nineteenth century, the educated class was mainly Swedish speaking, or had at least received their schooling in Swedish, and thus their perception of what 'good' Finnish comprised may have differed from vernacular Finnish.

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<sup>1</sup> The glosses used are: 3SG = third person personal pronoun, ACC = accusative, ADV = adverb, ALL = allative, DEM = demonstrative pronoun, ESS = essive, GEN = genitive, ILL = illative, PART = participle, PCP = participle, PL = plural, POS = possessive suffix, REL = relative pronoun, TRANSL = translatable. The English translations of the Bible verses are from the New International Version (NIV).

I comment on the origin of the proverb formula in the source languages of Finnish translations and examine how the structure used in the Bible relates to corresponding vernacular structures. The research questions are as follows: What are the relative frequencies of the different variants of the proverb formula in different editions of the Finnish Bible? Do the two examined changes (pronoun heads of the relative clauses and the order of the structure) coincide? How is the structure standardised?

In the following section, the data and six Finnish editions of the Bible are introduced. In Section 3, the examined proverb formula is defined and connected to similar structures in other languages, norms that regulate generalising relative clauses in Finnish and proverb structures used in vernacular Finnish. Section 4 provides a quantitative analysis of the different variants of this formula found in the data. In Section 5, other factors, such as stylistic choices, that may affect variation are briefly discussed. Section 6 offers conclusions based on the findings.

## 2 Finnish translations of the Bible from 1642 to 1992

The Bible is exceptional in that it has been translated into more languages than any other book. Translating the Bible is complicated because the original text is old and culturally distant. Most books of the Old Testament were originally written in Hebrew, which often offers multiple interpretations when translated into Indo-European languages (Stolze 2000: 200). Interpreting the original texts has given rise to biblical exegesis, a branch of theology.

Translation approaches can be categorised as *dynamic* (or *functional*) *equivalence* or *formal equivalence*. The former focuses on transporting the message of the original text and producing a fluent, easy-to-read translation, while the latter can be understood as a verbatim translation in which the grammatical structure of the original text is copied to the translation. In practice, a perfect, formal translation is impossible because not all words and structures have direct equivalents in the target language. The principle of formal translation was a central tradition in Bible translation until the twentieth century (Glassman 1981: 48), even though the Lutheran tradition adopted the idea that biblical language should be easy to read (Nummilla 2019: 21).

Translating the Bible to Finnish began as part of the Reformation, which split the sixteenth-century Catholic Church into several Protestant movements.

**Table 1:** Finnish editions of the Bible used for data.

Publication year	Editor(s)
1642	A committee led by Aeschillus Petraeus
1685	Henricus Florinus
1776	Anders Lizelius
1859	A. W. Ingman
1936	A committee with Arvid Genetz, Juhani Aho and Otto Manninen as the language editors
1992	A committee led by Aimo T. Nikolainen

Finland, then part of Sweden, adopted Lutheranism, which held the view that everyone should be able to read the Bible. This led to extensive translation of the Bible to vernaculars (for the spread of Lutheranism to Nordic countries, see Nummila 2019). Mikael Agricola translated the New Testament into Finnish in 1548, but the entire Bible was not published in Finnish until 1642. The publication years of the editions studied in this article and the central persons affecting them are shown in Table 1.

The translation committee of the 1642 edition of the Finnish Bible (*Biblia 1642*) was instructed to follow the original Greek or Hebrew texts as well as to consider the German translation by Martin Luther (*Lutherbibel 1545*). Kela (2007: 28, 33) concludes that the influence of the Hebrew texts on the edition was minor but that it is often impossible to observe whether a feature originates directly from Hebrew or is transmitted through other translations. The revisions in this version were based on existing translations, which may have favoured archaic forms (Kiuru 1993; Rapola 1942). Parts of the Old Testament had already been translated by Agricola and an earlier translation committee, founded in 1602 and led by Bishop Ericus Sorolainen (Puukko 1946: 7, 123–128; Rapola 1963: 11). There is, however, no evidence of the Book of Proverbs having a previous Finnish translation (Kela 2007: 30–32).

In addition to the original texts and *Lutherbibel*, the 1642 translation committee used the Swedish biblical translation (*Gustav II Adolfs bibel 1618*), which used the same text as the previous Swedish version *Gustav Vasas bibel* (1541), with modernised typography. According to Ikola (1992: 52), the Swedish translation significantly influenced the Finnish version. The importance of Luther's German translation as the source text was typical of Lutheran translations of the Bible (Nummila 2019: 21). Because Latin has such a long tradition in the church and was church lingua franca of the time, the early Latin translation of the Bible, *Vulgate* (2007), was another central source for early translations (De Smit 2019: 246). For

example, Sorolainen followed the *Vulgate* text in his translation of the Psalms (Puukko 1946: 119–120).

A revised edition of the Finnish Bible (*Biblia* 1685) was published in 1685 as a smaller version of the book was needed. The editor, Henricus Florinus, aimed to clarify the language and eliminate translation errors. He changed some parts to follow the Hebrew original text more closely (Puukko 1946: 188, 192–198). However, the changes he made were minor (Kiuru 1993: 58; Rapola 1963: 149).

The translation was edited again in 1758 and 1776 by Anders Lizelius. The latter version (*Biblia* 1776) was more thoroughly edited (Puukko 1946: 206–231), with Lizelius updating the style as the orthography and vocabulary of Finnish had changed (Kolehmainen 2014a: 75). Puukko (1946: 216–224) points out that some of Lizelius's changes are based on the original texts. Lizelius was an active writer who published the first Finnish newspaper, among other works. In his secular texts, he took the renewal of language further than in his edition of the Bible (Kolehmainen 2014a: 76). The 1776 edition was accepted by the Church Council for official use and stayed in use until the next official translation was accepted in 1938, a period of more than 160 years (Puukko 1946: 180). New prints of the Bible were made without revising the text, so the biblical style was canonised. Many phrases, idioms and metaphors originating from this edition are found in Finnish culture even today (Kolehmainen 2014a: 76).

In the nineteenth century, many writers wanted to adopt elements from eastern Finnish dialects for literary use, which accelerated the distancing of the language used in newspapers, for example, from the language used in the Bible, which was based on western dialects (Lauerma 2004). Renvall (1830) viewed the stylistic separation as inevitable. Many others, however, agreed that a new biblical translation was needed. In 1852, the Bible Society of Finland published a revised edition<sup>2</sup> with notes on what they believed should be considered in a new official translation. They emphasised that the language of the Bible should be as 'good' as possible, and they supported revisions based on the fact that the Finnish language had changed significantly (Kolehmainen 2014a: 77).

Curator and writer A. W. Ingman's suggestion for a new translation was published in 1859 (*Biblia* 1859). Ingman, an active participant in language debates, was strictly against foreign elements and believed that, with practice, writers would become accustomed to the reform of the language (Laitinen 2004; Nordlund 2004). The church assembly did not accept his Bible translation due to its unconventional language, inspired by the vernacular and the national epic *Kalevala* (Mielikäinen 2014: 36–37; Nuorteva 1992). Ingman's opponent in language debates

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<sup>2</sup> Few copies of this edition remain, and for practical reasons, it has not been examined in this study.

was Professor August Ahlqvist, who preferred the already established biblical style (Nordlund 2004: 294). Ingman continued his work on revising the Bible translation as part of the committee tasked with producing another version, which, however, was again declined by the church assembly (Mielikäinen 2014: 36–37; Nuorteva 1992).

The subsequent committee employed a language consultant. This position was first held by linguist Arvid Genetz, then by novelist Juhani Aho and finally by poet and translator Otto Manninen. Aho's language was considered ideal by his contemporaries (Laitinen 2004). The committee intended to update the language of the Bible to more closely reflect that of contemporary texts. Despite this, they ended up with a conservative result. Aho and Manninen, in particular, wanted to maintain a distinctive biblical style and vocabulary. The translation was already old-fashioned in 1938, when the church assembly accepted it (Mielikäinen 2014: 79–85; Nuorteva 1992: 32).<sup>3</sup> Regarding language, the 1936 edition (Raamattu 1936) was loyal to biblical traditions but also included reforms. Exegetic studies had progressed significantly since the 1776 edition (Biblia 1776), and the historical-critical approach to Bible studies had arrived in Finland (Räsänen 1992). The 1936 translation was based on contemporary scientific sources.

A discussion about the need for a new translation began again in the 1960s. This demand was justified by the progress made in exegetics, with linguistic changes also playing a part. Young people had problems understanding the language of the 1936 edition (Nuorteva 1992), and the formal tradition of biblical translation gave way to a functional translation approach (Suihkonen 1998: 82). Despite this change, many parts of the Bible retained their form even in the 1992 translation (Raamattu 1992) because the public was familiar with certain phrases. Sacred texts are considered untouchable, and when a particular wording becomes canonised, it tends to maintain its form (Suojanen 1975: 230). Some revivalist movements in Finland, even today, adhere to older editions in their resistance to changing biblical texts.

The history of the Finnish Bible translations reflects the difficulty of balancing normative orientations and affective charges connected to biblical language. The translators of the Bible usually agreed that language used should be correct, understandable and 'pure' from foreign influence, representing the prestigious literary language of its time (Rapola 1942). The language should also relay the original content as closely as possible, which may lead to adopting structures from the source language despite the attempts at purism. However, simple and easily understandable language may seem too commonplace for sacred texts. The translation processes described above depict how biblical Finnish resulted from

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<sup>3</sup> The New Testament was published in 1933, and the Old Testament in 1936. I refer to the editions using the publication year.

coincidences that kept the 1776 version (Biblia 1776) in use for such a long time and from conscious choices to allow the biblical style to diverge from secular styles.

Proverbs, the focus of this article, have particular characteristics. As many Bible proverbs are well known and often cited, the public may resist changes in them in particular. Despite the relative stability of proverbs, below, I show that the examined proverb formula underwent considerable changes.

### 3 The proverb formula

#### 3.1 Definition of the examined structure

In standard Finnish, third-person personal pronouns (*hän* in singular, *he* in plural) refer to people, while demonstrative pronouns (*se*, *ne*) are used for other referents. There are, however, some exceptions to this rule: demonstrative pronouns may refer to small children or a group of people, and they must be used in the context of generalising relative clauses (Kielitoimisto 2020, s.v. *se*; Korhonen and Maamies 2015: 248). A generalising relative clause refers to any person who fills a described condition, rather than to a specific individual. In Finnish, generalising relative clauses are frequent in aphorisms, proverbs and instructions.

Before the structure was standardised, personal pronouns often occurred in generalising relative clauses (2). These clauses also occur with no explicit pronoun head, both in old (3) and modern (4) Finnish. In this article, I focus on a certain subtype of generalising relative clause, as shown in the examples.

- (2) *Joca rangaistuxen heittä pois/ hän mene väärin.*  
 REL punishment-GEN throws away 3SG goes wrong  
 Proverbs 10:17 (Biblia 1642)  
 ‘... but whoever ignores correction leads others astray’. (NIV 2011)

- (3) *waan joca lahjoja wiha/ saa elä.*  
 but REL gift-PL.PART hates may live  
 Proverbs 15:27 (Biblia 1642)  
 ‘... but the one who hates bribes will live’. (NIV 2011)

- (4) *Itsensä pettää, joka pahoja hautoo ...*  
 self-PART betrays REL evil-PL-PART hatches  
 Proverbs 12:20 (Raamattu 1992)  
 ‘Deceit is in the hearts of those who plot evil ...’ (NIV 2011)

I describe the examined structure as *joka* [VP], *hän/se*/[O] [VP] or, in opposite order, as *hän/se*/[O] [VP], *joka* [VP]. I only focus on structures involving both the relative pronoun and the head pronoun in the subject position because inflection in cases other than the nominative is likely to create restrictions for the omission of the head pronoun. For comparability, I will leave out the reasonably frequent variations with different orders of the subject pronoun and the verbal phrase or with the elliptic use of a copula verb (such as in example 5).

- (5) *tyhmä se, joka nuhteita vihaa.*  
 stupid DEM REL reprimand-PL-PART hates  
 Proverbs 12:1 (Raamattu 1992)  
 ‘... whoever hates correction is stupid’. (NIV 2011)

I considered only relative clauses beginning with *joka*. Other pronouns (e.g. *ken*, *kuka*) are possible but infrequent in the same function.

The Book of Proverbs has 31 chapters, each of which includes 18–36 verses, totalling 915 verses in the 1992 edition (Raamattu 1992). Often, a verse consists of two paired proverbs, and one or both may be a generalising relative clause. The data in this study include 183 sets of clauses (66% of the generalised relative clauses) that follow the proverb formula defined above in at least one of the studied editions of the Bible.

### 3.2 Models for the formula in other languages

The proverb formula has models in the source languages of early Finnish Bible translations. I have examined the corresponding verses for the studied structure in chapters 1–10 of the Book of Proverbs (27 proverbs) in the Latin *Vulgate* (2007), the Swedish Gustav Vasas bibel (1541) and the German *Lutherbibel* (the 1545 edition).<sup>4</sup> As mentioned in Section 2, scholars agree that these three books functioned as models for Finnish translations of the Bible. Example (6) represents typical source structures.

- (6) a. *Joca suwella coco/ hän on toimellinen ...*  
 REL summer-ADE gathers 3SG is wise  
 Proverbs 10:5 (Biblia 1642)
- b. *qui congregat in messe filius sapiens est* (Vulgate 2007)  
 REL gathers in summer son wise is

<sup>4</sup> Unfortunately, I have not been able to access the original source texts in Greek or Hebrew.

- c. **Then som församlar om sommaren han**  
 DEM REL gathers in summer 3SG  
*är klook/* (Gustav Vasas bibel 1541)  
 is wise
- d. **Wer im Sommer sammelt, der ist klug;** (Lutherbibel 1545)  
 REL in summer gathers DEM is wise  
 ‘He who gathers crops in summer is a prudent son ...’ (NIV 2011)

The order of the clauses in the proverb formula is similar in all the old translations examined; the relative clause usually comes first, and the main clause follows it. The question about the pronouns used in the formula is more difficult. In Latin (2b) and German (2d), the pronouns used as relativisers are interrogative. In Finnish, the demonstrative-based relative pronoun *joka* is used, even though the interrogatives *kuka* and *ken* are also available for this function. In Latin, the head of a relative clause is not marked with a pronoun phrase. Thus, Latin provides a model for the omission of head pronouns and may closely resemble the original text as subject pronouns are often optional in Hebrew (Naudé 1991). Despite this, zero heads are rare in the first Finnish edition of the Book of Proverbs (see Section 4).

Using a personal pronoun seems to connect the Finnish proverb formula to the corresponding structure in Swedish (2c), in which the head is the third-person personal pronoun referring to people, *han* (‘he’). The Swedish proverb formula in Gustav Vasas bibel (1541) (as well as in modern Swedish), however, regularly begins with both the demonstrative pronoun *then* (in modern Swedish, *den* ‘it, the’) preceding the relative pronoun *som*. While this formula also occurs in Finnish (7), it is rare in the Book of Proverbs and thus is not included in the data for this study.

- (7) **se joca julma on/ hän saatta lihans ja werens murhellisexi**  
 DEM REL cruel is 3SG leads flesh-POS and blood- POS sad-TRANSL  
 Proverbs 11:17 (Biblia 1642)  
 ‘... the cruel bring ruin on themselves.’ (NIV 2011)

The translators and editors of the early Finnish Bibles used Latin, Swedish and German translations as sources to support their work. The brief comparison presented above indicates that these languages and the original source text affected the proverb formula. However, the typical structure of the Finnish proverbs was not directly copied from any of the examined languages. The translators and editors aimed at fluent Finnish, and the form they selected for the Finnish proverb formula represented their ideal of the written standard of their time. In the next section, I examine how their ideal relates to the norms in grammar guides.

### 3.3 Relative clauses in Finnish grammar guides

The first grammar books for the Finnish language were published in the seventeenth century. These early guides served the practical function of teaching people who needed to use the Finnish language in their work. They relied to models from Latin since this was pedagogically functional (Vihonen 1978: 39–40). A small circle of educated men in the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries participated in the creation of standard written Finnish. In 1649, Bishop Aeschillus Petraeus, the chair of the translation committee for the 1642 edition of the Finnish Bible (*Biblia 1642*), published the oldest printed grammar book preserved until modern times (Petraeus 1649). To assess whether the ideals in grammar guides relevant to the proverb formula aligned with the language used in Bible translations, I examined all printed guides for Finnish grammar from the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries. Of the more recent books, I concentrated on the few most influential ones.

The descriptions of pronouns in grammar stabilised in the early nineteenth century. *Hän* and *he* were listed as third-person personal pronouns, and *se* with *tuo* ('that') and *tämä* ('this'), along with their plural forms, were defined as demonstrative pronouns. Sometimes, variants from regional vernaculars were mentioned. Some books included many examples, but pronoun use in the examples was simple. In Old Finnish (1549–1810), it was more common to use *hän* to refer to animals and inanimate objects, compared to using *se* for humans, and the logic was not copied from the source languages of the translated texts. The current distribution was established slowly; some personal pronouns referring to animals are still found in the 1936 edition of the Bible (Laitinen 2009: 121).

In addition to the choice between personal and demonstrative pronouns, Finnish has a third option: omitting the pronoun. In Finnish, the subject is marked by an affix on the verb. In early translations of the Bible, double-marking subjects with both a pronoun and an affix was common. Over time, the preference for single-marking became established (Strellman 2005). In contemporary written language, leaving out the pronominal subject is preferred in the first and second person. However, double-marking remains in colloquial varieties of Finnish (Helasvuo 2014).

In the third person, a subject is usually expressed with both a subject pronoun and an affix. The omission of the pronoun is possible in anaphoric references (Hakulinen and Laitinen 2008). The third-person verb form used without a subject pronoun has also developed into an impersonal construction (Laitinen 1995), which forms the link to a nonspecific reference in generalising relative clauses. An early grammar book (Koskinen 1860: 115) suggested the rule of preferring the

omission of the head pronoun in generalising relative clauses, but this did not garner wide support in grammar guides.

The treatment of relative clauses in Finnish grammar books was superficial until the 1950s (Pääkkönen 1990: 2). Rules for generalising relative clauses were given for the first time in Bartholdus Vhael's grammar guide (1733: 50 [58]). He recommended demonstrative heads and equated the Finnish *se joka* with the Latin relative pronoun *qui* and the Swedish *den som*.

During the nineteenth century, several grammar guides for the Finnish language were published. In this period, the idea of a 'national language' arose in Europe, following the ideology of nationalism (e.g. Elspaß 2014: 305). This was also the case in Finland, which had become part of the Russian Empire in 1809. Research on the structure of and variation in the Finnish vernacular advanced. Purism was the dominant ideology among language developers, who wanted to discard foreign influence on the Finnish language (Kolehmainen 2014b: 175; for a definition of purism, see Thomas 1991: 12). As mentioned above, the language developers did not agree on which aspects of language to preserve and where to find new elements; some turned to the origins of the Finnish language, some to spoken varieties and some stressed the importance of a uniform system (Herlin 2002; Laitinen 2004; Lauerma 2004; Nordlund 2004).

Many features of grammar were subject to lively debates, but the description of pronouns changed little. Most examples given of generalising relative clauses represent the types with demonstrative heads or zero heads. Reinhold von Becker's grammar book, cited in example (8), became a model for many other grammar guides (Häkkinen 2000: 176).

- (8) *Joka ei auta lähimmäistänsä hengen hädästä, tekee*  
 REL no help fellow.man-POS life-GEN danger.ELA does  
*kauhean rikoksen.* (Becker 1824: 237)  
 horrible-GEN crime-GEN  
 'Who does not help his fellow man in mortal danger commits a horrible crime'.

A few grammar books (Ahlman 1864: 51; Eurén 1852: 11; Salenius 1885: 68; Tamminen 1884: 33–35) provided examples of generalising relative clauses with the personal pronoun *hän* as the head pronoun alongside variants with demonstrative pronouns or zero heads.

E. N. Setälä, who had a profound impact on the norms of standard Finnish (Häkkinen 1994: 16, 111–112; Kolehmainen 2014b: 116), gave examples of a generalising relative clause with a demonstrative head in his first grammar book (Setälä 1880), but he did not give explicit instructions for its use. The use of the

demonstrative pronoun was explicitly treated in the work of Jännes (1895: 66) and Setälä (1898: 76). Jännes is an alias for Genetz, the first language editor of the translation committee for the 1936 edition of the Finnish Bible, and Setälä was his student. The personal pronoun heads were eliminated from the 1936 edition (see Section 4), but whether this was Genetz's influence remains unclear.

By the early twentieth century, school grammar books and professional descriptions of Finnish grammar had diverged (Kolehmainen 2014b: 117). School books gave simple rules. Concerning relative clauses, they stated that a head should always occur immediately before a relative pronoun (e.g. Kanninen 1910: 38), and a relative pronoun should always have a head (Setälä 1930: 66).<sup>5</sup> As happens with many grammatical descriptions of the Finnish language, when a stance becomes canonical, the arguments behind it are no longer presented (Herlin and Seppänen 2003). The establishment of norms concerning generalising relative clauses as they are today seems to have been complete when Saarimaa (1931: 108) explicitly discouraged using either *hän* or *he* as the head for a relative pronoun. Later guides repeated Saarimaa's instructions (see, e.g. Ikola 1968: 143).

As in example (8), the proverb formula examined is found among example clauses in grammar books as a variant in which the relative clause precedes the main clause (*joka* [VP], *hän/se/[O]* [VP]). This order is the most frequent in editions of the Bible, and some examples in the grammar books may be taken from the Bible.

As with pronoun choice, in later grammar books, the recommended order of the relative clause and the main clause follows examples given by Setälä (1880, 1898). He also stated that with omission of the head and when a relative clause occurs before the main clause, the interrogative pronoun *kuka* should be used instead of *joka*, but his rule was not adopted into use. After Setälä, few rules were given. Itkonen (1985) did not mention the generalising relative clause in his extensive reference book on the norms of standard Finnish. Osmo Ikola's guidebook (1968, 2000), which was a central manual for correct language from the 1960s to the 2010s (with numerous reeditions), mentions only the variant with the demonstrative *se* preceding a relative pronoun but does not discourage using other variants. Ikola also participated in the translation process of the 1992 edition of the Finnish Bible (Raamattu 1992).

The most recent prescriptive grammar guide, *Kielitoimiston kielioppiopas* 'The Language Office grammar guide' (Korhonen and Maamies 2015: 260), returns to Setälä's suggestion that with the omission of the head pronoun, the interrogative pronoun *kuka* should be used as the relativiser. Using *joka* clauses without a head pronoun when the relative clauses precede the main clause is still documented in

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5 Earlier grammar books present examples that do not follow these two rules.

the latest descriptive grammar book (Hakulinen et al. 2004: §1169). *Kielitoimiston sanakirja* ‘The Language Office dictionary’ (Kielitoimisto 2020, s.v. *joka*) also gives examples as special cases of the proverb formula beginning with a relative clause without a head pronoun (9).

- (9) ***Joka*** *anastaa toisen omaisuutta, on tuomittava varkaudesta.*  
 REL steals other-GEN property-PART is judge-PCP theft-ELA  
 (Kielitoimisto 2020, s.v. *joka*)  
 ‘Who steals another person’s property, must be convicted of theft’

The variants beginning with the relative clause *joka* [VP], *se* [VP] and *joka* [VP], [0] [VP] seem to have remained in language use despite prescriptive attempts to prefer the relativiser *kuka* in these structures. The structures have an established position as the proverb formula used in folklore, the solemn style of the Bible and juridical language (the latter represented in example [9]).

### 3.4 Proverbs in folklore collections

Proverbs used in the Finnish vernacular were published in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries by Florinus (1702), Juteini (1817, 1818), and Strahlmann (1816). Collecting proverbs was important to the national ideology and part of creating Finnish identity (Granbom-Herranen 2015). The same people who participated in developing literary Finnish were interested in folklore. Florinus edited the 1685 Bible translation (*Biblia 1685*), and Strahlmann’s list of proverbs was published as part of his grammar book (1816). Christfrid Ganander compiled a collection of more than 2,000 proverbs, but these have only been preserved as example clauses in his manuscript of a Finnish dictionary (dated 1787, published 1997). Materials used in the published editions were often collected earlier, with even Agricola known to draft a proverb collection, and the criteria by which the material was selected are unknown (Granbom-Herranen 2015).

In Florinus’s collection, 39 proverbs correspond to the formula examined in the present article. The head pronoun is systematically the demonstrative *se*; zero heads or personal pronoun heads are not found. Both order variants are present: in 24 proverbs, the relative clause precedes the main clause (10), and in 15, the order is the opposite.

- (10) ***Joca*** *paljon saa/ se enemmän pyytä.* (Florinus 1702)  
 REL plenty gets DEM more asks  
 ‘Who gets plenty asks for more’.

In Strahlmann's list of 67 proverbs (1816: 194), only four proverbs include generalising relative clauses referring to a person. None correspond directly to the proverb formula examined here; they all include interrogative-based relative pronouns (*kuka, ken*) instead of *joka*, perhaps for regional variations (Pääkkönen 1990: 7). All four have a demonstrative head, and the main clause is positioned after the relative clause.

Juteini's two books (1817, 1818) include 39 proverbs that correspond to the examined proverb formula. The majority of them include a demonstrative head, but in three, the head pronoun is missing. An equal share (18 occurrences of each) represents the type *joka* [VP], *se* [VP] and the opposite order *se* [VP], *joka* [VP] (11).

- (11) **Se** *saa valitun vaimon, joka nai jätetyn pijan.*  
 DEM gets elected-GEN wife-GEN REL marries deserted-GEN maid-GEN  
 (Juteini 1818: 65)  
 'He gets an elected wife who marries a deserted maid'.

The edited lists and collections of proverbs represent the editor's perception of the vernacular. As mentioned, the context in which the original material was collected is unclear, and it is not possible to know how the structures were edited.

Later in the 1930s, student associations organised a large collection of vernacular proverbs, *Sananparsikokoelma* (2016, 198, 113 sentences), which is electronically searchable via *Kielipankki* (The Language Bank of Finland). Although this collection represents a newer layer of language, it may also represent less edited language than the collections by Florinus, Strahlmann and Ganander.<sup>6</sup> For this study, I analysed a random sample from this collection that summarises the structures preferred in the 1930s vernacular.

In *Sananparsikokoelma* (2016), the proverb formula occurs frequently. The typical structure includes a demonstrative head. While Florinus (1702) and Juteini (1817, 1818) present both order variants with almost equal importance, *Sananparsikokoelma* (2016) shows a preference for the variant in which the relative clause comes first (*joka* [VP], *se* [VP]; see example 12).

- (12) **Joka** *tyynen makovaa se sateen soutaa.*  
 REL calm-GEN lies DEM rain-GEN ROWS  
 (Sananparsikokoelma 2016, Savo dialects [Eno])  
 'Who lazes [around] in calm weather, he will row in rain'.

Variants with personal pronoun heads or zero heads are present in *Sananparsikokoelma* (2016) but only occasionally. They do not seem to connect in a straightforward way to certain dialects, although occurrences of *hän* heads are found

<sup>6</sup> For example, this collection includes proverbs with offensive word choices.

in both southwestern and southeastern dialects (13), in which the personal pronoun *hän* is more frequent than in other dialects (see, e.g. Vilppula 1989).

- (13) *Joka toiselle kuoppaa kaivaa itte hään siiheen lankiaa.*  
 REL other-ALL pit-PART digs self 3SG it-ILL falls  
 (Sananparsikokoelma 2016, southeastern dialects [Kurkijoki])  
 ‘Who digs a pit will fall into it.’

The proverb above (13) is taken from the Book of Proverbs (see example 1 above). In the Bible, too, it had a personal pronoun head until the 1936 edition.

In this section, I have shown that the different variants of the proverb formula were present not only in biblical language but also in proverb collections meant to represent vernacular Finnish. Based on these brief observations, the vernacular seems to prefer variants with demonstrative heads. However, answering questions about the distribution of the proverb formula variants in vernacular Finnish would require a thorough analysis of data.

## 4 Frequency of the different variants of the proverb formula in the Finnish editions of the Book of Proverbs

### 4.1 Frequency of the proverb formula

I counted the occurrences of the proverb formula presented in Section 3.1 in the different editions of the Finnish Book of Proverbs. The number of occurrences in each edition of the Bible is shown in Table 2.

The figures in Table 2 reveal that in the first four editions from 1642 to 1859, the number of clauses following the proverb formula changes little, even though the editors of each version made changes in the orthography and vocabulary. The

**Table 2:** The occurrences of the proverb formula in different editions of the Finnish Book of Proverbs.

Finnish Bible edition	Number of occurrences
1642	137
1685	136
1776	137
1859	134
1936	84
1992	101

minimal changes indicate that the editions from 1685 to 1776 were not entirely new translations of the Bible; they were based on previous versions, and the editors merely changed parts considered to need revision. Interestingly, Ingman, in his 1859 translation (*Biblia 1859*), which was radical in many other features, kept the proverb formula almost unchanged.

In the new translation of 1936 (*Raamattu 1936*), there is a clear reduction in the number of generalising relative clauses overall. A closer look reveals that the proverb formula was replaced by other structures, such as infinitive constructions (14).

- (14) a. *mutta joka tottelee, hän saa aina puhua.*  
 but REL obeys 3SG may always speak  
*Proverbs 21:28 (Biblia 1859)*
- b. *mutta kuunteleva mies saa aina puhua.* (*Raamattu 1936*)  
 but listening man may always speak  
 ‘... but a careful listener will testify successfully’. (*NIV 2011*)

A possible explanation for this change is the aim of a more exact translation. While verses in the 1859 version (14a) are closer to Luther’s German translation (15a), with both following the proverb formula, verses in the 1936 version (14b) more closely resemble Latin verses (15b). Both, for example, have the noun ‘man’.

The latest translation (15c) reflects a change in translation practice by relating the meaning of the clause to a simple structure.

- (15) a. *aber wer sich sagen läßt, den läßt man auc allezeit wiederum reden.*  
 but REL self say let DEM.ACC lets one also always again talk  
*Proverbs 21:28 (Lutherbibel 1545)*
- b. *vir oboediens loquitur victoriam* (*Vulgate 2007*)  
 man obedient speaks successfully
- c. *tarkkaa todistajaa kuunnellaan aina.* (*Raamattu 1992*)  
 careful-PART witness-PART listen-PASS always  
 ‘... but a careful listener will testify successfully’. (*NIV 2011*)

The preference for infinitive constructions in the 1936 version (*Raamattu 1936*) may also relate to a general preference for economical expressions in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This is seen in grammar guides in the late nineteenth century. For instance, Tamminen’s school grammar (1884) states that relative clauses can be ‘shortened’ by favouring subject nouns and infinitive constructions.

In the 1992 edition (*Raamattu 1992*), the number of occurrences of the proverb formula rose again. Some of the infinitive structures used in the 1936 version (*Raamattu 1936*) return to the proverb formula. Some structures closely resembling the proverb formula, such as corresponding structures in the plural, are changed to

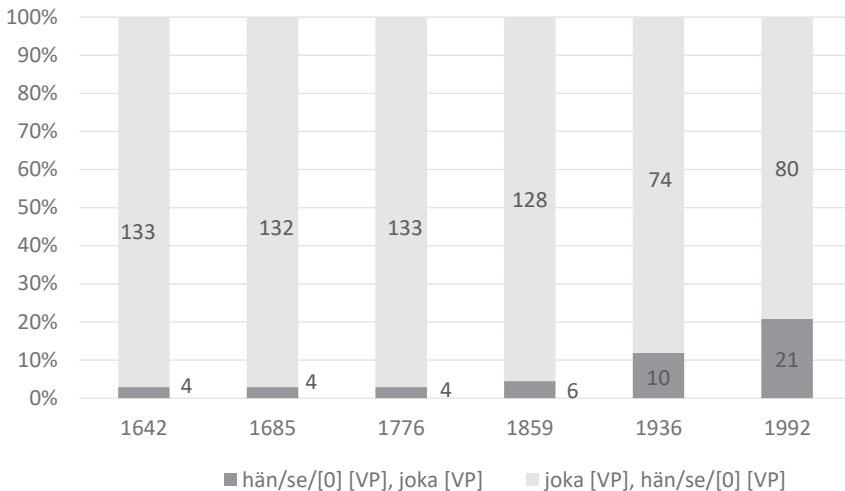
the proverb formula. All of this suggests that the formula was accepted as an established stylistic part of biblical proverbs.

## 4.2 Order of the relative clause and the main clause

Figure 1 shows the share of the variants of the proverb formula in each of the examined editions. The variants are divided according to whether the relative clause is presented before or after the main clause. Each column shows the number of occurrences.

The analysis revealed that in each edition, the most frequent order is the relative clause coming first and the main clause coming after (16). In the oldest editions, the opposite order is rare. As mentioned in Section 3.2, the order of the clauses follows models from the source languages. The proverbs usually maintained their clausal structure across various editions, as seen in example (16), even though the orthography and morphology went through changes from the 1642 to the 1859 editions.

- (16) a. *Joca nuhtettomast waelda/ hän elä murhetoinna.*  
Proverbs 10:9 (Biblia 1642)
- b. *Joca nuhteettomast waelda/ hän elä murhetoinna.*  
(Biblia 1685)



**Figure 1:** The share of the proverb formula variants in editions of the Book of Proverbs according to the order of the main clause and the relative clause.

- c. **Joka** *nuhteettomasti* *vaeltaa*, **hän** *elää* *murheetoinna*.  
(Biblia 1776)
- d. **Joka** *nuhteettomasti* *vaeltaa*, **hän** *elää* *murheetoinna*.  
REL unblemished-ADV wanders 3SG lives carefree-ESS  
(Biblia 1859)
- ‘Whoever walks in integrity walks securely’. (NIV 2011)

In Section 4.1, I discussed the drop in the number of proverb formula occurrences in the 1936 translation. At the same time, the number of variants in which the main clause precedes the relative clause increased slightly.<sup>7</sup> In the latest version of the Finnish Bible (Raamattu 1992), proverb formulas returned to the text, and the share of the main clause first variant grew further. Sometimes, as in example (17), a relative clause first structure is changed to an alternative construction in the 1936 edition (Raamattu 1936) and then back to the proverb formula in the 1992 edition (Raamattu 1992) as the main clause first structure. At the same time, the head changes (see Section 4.3).

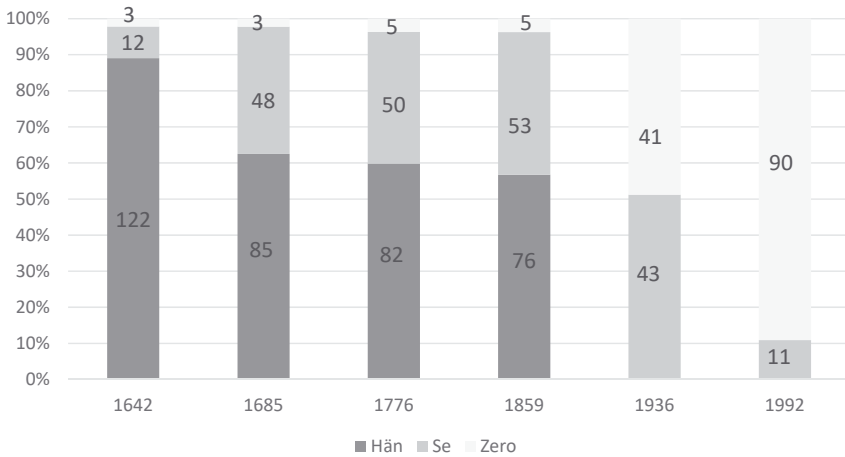
- (17) a. **Joka** *totuuden* *puhuu*, **se** *ilmoittaa* *wanhurskauden* ...  
REL truth-GEN speaks DEM announces righteousness-GEN  
Proverbs 12:17 (Biblia 1859)
- b. *Toden* *puhuja* *lausuu* *oikeuden* ... (Raamattu 1936)  
truth-GEN speaker says right-GEN
- c. *Oikeutta* *auttaa*, **joka** *totta* *puhuu* ...  
justice-PART helps REL truth-PART speaks  
(Raamattu 1992)
- ‘An honest witness tells the truth ...’ (NIV 2011)

As mentioned in Section 3.4, in the Finnish vernacular, both order variants were present, even though the typical variant seemed to take the relative clause first. Some prescriptive grammar guides (see, e.g. Setälä 1880, 1898) disapproved of this variant, suggesting that the interrogative pronoun *kuka* should be used with it, but this did not affect the 1936 and 1992 editions.

### 4.3 Variants of the head pronoun

In the first Finnish translation of the Book of Proverbs, most pronoun heads used in the proverb formula involve the personal pronoun *hän*, while the current norm is to use the demonstrative pronoun *se* (‘it’) as the head pronoun in generalising relative

<sup>7</sup> The difference is statistically significant ( $p = 0.041$ ).



**Figure 2:** The share of the proverb formula variants with different pronoun heads in the editions of the Book of Proverbs.

clauses. In addition to *hän* and *se*, another option is to leave out the head altogether. In contrast to the order of clauses in the formula, there is no direct model in the source languages for the choice of the head pronouns used. Influence from Swedish, however, seems possible. This is not surprising as the Swedish-language impact on Bible translation was profound (Ikola 1992: 52).

The frequency of each option in the examined Bible editions is presented in Figure 2, which illustrates that a reduction in the share of personal pronoun heads was already found in the 1685 translation (*Biblia 1685*).<sup>8</sup> Personal pronouns were changed to demonstratives, and the number of zero heads remained low.

In the 1685 Bible (*Biblia 1685*), the share of demonstrative heads increases without a clear pattern. In some verses in which two proverb formula structures are coordinated, the head pronoun changes in only one of them (18). The possible stylistic choices connected to the structure of the verses are discussed further in Section 5.

- (18) a. *Joca suuns hallidze/ hän saa elä/*  
 REL mouth-POS controls 3SG may live  
*waan joca suuns toimettomast awaja/ hän tule*  
 but REL mouth-POS idle-ADV opens 3SG comes  
*hämmästyxeen.* Proverbs 13:3 (*Biblia 1642*)  
 astonishment-TRANSL

<sup>8</sup> The change between the 1642 and 1685 editions is statistically highly significant ( $p < 0.001$ ).

- b. *Joca suuns hallidze/ hän saa elä/*  
 REL mouth-POS controls 3SG may live  
*waan joca suuns toimettomast awaja/ se tule*  
 but REL mouth-POS idle-ADV opens DEM comes  
*hämmästyxeen.* (Biblia 1685)  
 astonishment-TRANSL  
 ‘Those who guard their lips preserve their lives,  
 but those who speak rashly will come to ruin’. (NIV 2011)

In the 1776 and 1859 translations (Biblia 1776; Biblia 1859), the changes are subtle. The number of *hän* heads declines by a few occurrences, while the numbers of *se* heads and zero heads increase almost respectively. A radical change occurs in the 1936 edition (Raamattu 1936) in which *hän* is eliminated, while the number of zero heads rises to nearly the number of *se* heads.<sup>9</sup>

As mentioned in Section 3.3, the rule for preferring demonstrative heads was established in the late nineteenth century. This preference was expressed by Genetz in his grammar book (Jännes 1895). It is possible that language developers considered *hän* heads to reflect Swedish influence. Preferring *se* to *hän* heads in the proverb formula may have been closer to the Finnish vernacular because, as described in Section 3.4, collections of colloquial proverbs typically represent a proverb formula variant with *se*. Interestingly, as the variants with *hän* heads disappear, they are not simply replaced by *se*. Figure 2 shows that instead of the number of *se* heads, the number of zero heads increased in the 1936 translation (Raamattu 1936) and even more in the 1992 version (Raamattu 1992).<sup>10</sup>

The omission of head pronouns does not seem typical of colloquial proverbs, and prescriptive grammar guides do not show such a uniform preference for zero heads as they do for demonstrative heads. The rule about the omission of head pronouns was open to interpretation for a long period. According to the latest prescriptions (Kielitoimisto 2020, s.v. *joka*), a zero head for the relative pronoun *joka* is allowed in a special construction: the proverb formula.

What could the origin be for the preference to omit head pronouns in the Book of Proverbs? The Latin *Vulgate* provided a model for the proverb formula with a zero head, as mentioned in Section 3.2. Verse (19) had a demonstrative head (*se*) in the 1859 version (19a), but the pronoun was omitted in the 1936 version (19b). *Vulgate* (2007) uses a similar order of clauses and a zero head (19d). In the 1992 version, the order of the relative clause and the relative clause was inverted, and the translation was less verbatim (19c).

<sup>9</sup> The change is statistically highly significant both in *hän* heads and in zero heads ( $p < 0.001$ ).

<sup>10</sup> The difference is statistically highly significant ( $p < 0.001$ ).

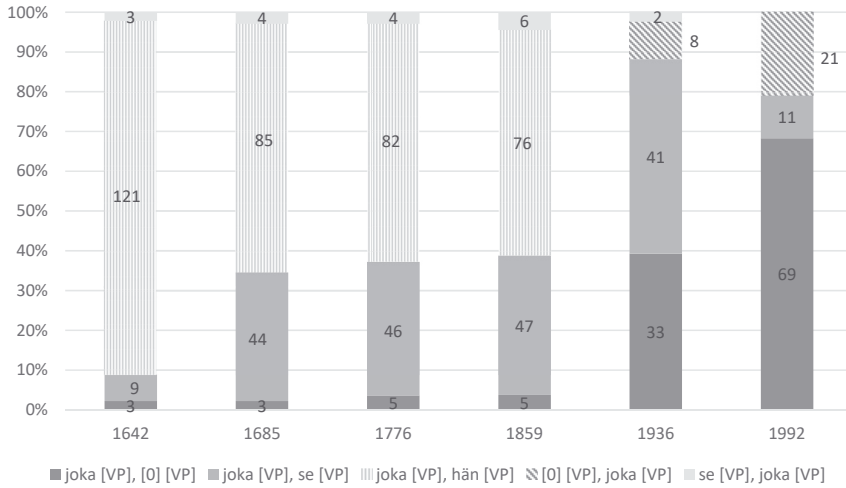
- (19) a. **Joka** *wiljelee peltonsa, se saa leipää yltäisesti.*  
 REL cultivates field-POS DEM gets bread-PART plenty-ADV  
 Proverbs 12:11 (Biblia 1859)
- b. **Joka** *peltonsa viljelee, saa leipää kyllin.*  
 REL field-POS cultivates gets bread-PART plenty-ADV  
 (Raamattu 1936)
- c. *Leivässä pysyy, joka pellollaan pysyy.*  
 bread-INE stays REL field-INE-POS stays  
 (Raamattu 1992)
- d. **qui** *operatur terram suam saturabitur panibus*  
 REL cultivates land his is.satisfied with.bread  
 (Vulgate 2007)  
 ‘Those who work their land will have abundant food’. (NIV 2011)

The connection between the Bible texts in Latin and Finnish is not straightforward. The Finnish editions, both old and new, use the proverb formula in several contexts, while the Latin text represents other kinds of structures. I systematically checked the first 10 chapters of the Book of Proverbs, comparing the Finnish verses to the proverb formula in the Latin *Vulgate* (2007). Six of the 11 Finnish structures with a zero head in the 1936 edition (Raamattu 1936) have a similar structure in the Latin text; the 1992 edition (Raamattu 1992) has five of 10. Only two of these structures are similar in the 1936 and 1992 editions. Thus, explaining the origin of the variant with a zero head requires further study.

#### 4.4 Connection between a pronoun head variant and structure order

I have shown that the following two features in the proverb formula changed in the Finnish editions of the Bible: 1) the order of the main clause and the relative clause and 2) the head pronoun used. These changes have different volumes and time scales. The structural order did not undergo dramatic changes. The variant where the main clause comes first increases in the latest two editions, but the original order (relative clause first) remains dominant. Personal pronouns were replaced by demonstratives in the examined structure by the 1685 edition (Biblia 1685), and in the 1936 edition (Raamattu 1936), personal pronoun heads were eliminated.

The change in head pronouns is more complicated than the change in the structural order. In the latest translation (Raamattu 1992), a zero head became the most frequent head variant. Figure 3 presents the frequency of all combinations of the examined proverb formula in the Finnish editions of the Bible. The variant with



**Figure 3:** Variants of the Finnish proverb formula in the editions of the Book of Proverbs.

a *hän* head and the main clause preceding the relative clause is not presented in this figure as it has only a single occurrence in the data (i.e. in the 1642 edition).

Figure 3 illustrates how in the first complete Finnish Bible (Biblia 1642), the proverb formula usually follows the form of the relative clause coming first and the head as a personal pronoun (*joka* [VP], *hän* [VP]). In the subsequent edition (Biblia 1685), *hän* heads are replaced with *se*, preserving the order in which the relative clause comes first (*joka* [VP], *se* [VP]). The change in the 1936 version (Raamattu 1936) is dramatic: all *joka* [VP], *hän* [VP] structures are eliminated. A structure with a similar order but a zero head (*joka* [VP], [0] [VP]) was rare before 1936 but available. In 1936, it became the second most frequent variant, and, in 1992, the most frequent variant. In the two twentieth-century editions, another variant, a previously unused [0] [VP], *joka* [VP], gains in frequency.

As mentioned in Section 4.2, favouring the omission of head pronouns is surprising because both the Finnish vernacular and the prescriptive grammar guides prefer variants with demonstrative pronoun heads. The suggested rule that without an explicit pronoun head, the interrogative *kuka* should be used as the relativiser was not adopted in the proverb formula. Variants with zero heads seem to become distinct features of the biblical style. I reflect on the reasons for this development in the following sections.

## 5 The context of proverbs

As discussed in Section 4, in the Finnish editions of the Book of Proverbs, several major changes occurred in the frequency of different variants of the proverb formula. I showed links between changes in the variant frequency and shifts in translational ideologies and prescriptive norms. In addition, the effect of the immediate linguistic context of proverbs must be considered. Some features of the proverb formula may have been changed only in a certain context, such as when a proverb occurs in a paired verse in which two similar structures are coordinated.<sup>11</sup>

In this section, I analyse the linguistic context of three major changes more closely. First, I examine in which proverbs Florinus changed a personal pronoun to a demonstrative in the 1685 edition of the Bible (Biblia 1685). Second, I study which proverbs were changed to the variant *joka* [VP], [0] [VP] in the 1936 edition (Raamattu 1936). Third, I consider which ones were changed to the structure that gained popularity most recently, [0] [VP], *joka* [VP], in the 1992 edition (Raamattu 1992).

The personal pronoun *hän* was changed to the demonstrative *se* in 32 proverbs in the 1685 edition of the Bible (Biblia 1685). This number includes nine verses in which both coordinated proverbs are changed. In seven verses, only the latter proverb changes, and in five, only the first. Most of the examined sets of proverbs (25 of 32 examined verses) include no major translational change; rather, only the pronoun is changed. Thus, no clear logic was found; the pronoun does not change in connection to the order of coordinated verses or with a major revision of the verse.

In the 1936 edition (Raamattu 1936), 23 proverbs that in the 1859 edition (Biblia 1859) include either a demonstrative or personal pronoun head were changed to the variant with a zero head (*joka* [VP], [0] [VP]). Among these verses, most frequently (13 out of 23), the proverb changed is the first part of a paired verse. This may indicate that the choice of structure is the result of a rhythmic preference. It is worth noting that of the language editors who participated in the translation process for the 1936 edition (Raamattu 1936), one, Aho, was a novelist and another, Manninen, a poet. However, the tendency found is not systematic; in five verses, the latter proverb is changed, four changed verses are not paired, and in one paired verse, both proverbs are changed.

As shown in Section 4, the variants with zero heads gained in frequency particularly in the 1992 edition (Raamattu 1992), in which 24 proverbs that had demonstrative pronoun heads in the 1936 edition (Raamattu 1936) were changed to

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<sup>11</sup> Negation may also play a role. Few of the proverbs are negative clauses, and they do not seem to form any distinct pattern.

the structure *joka* [VP], [0] [VP]. In most of these cases, the interpretation of the verse also changes slightly. Changes that affect the meaning of the verse occur in six cases. For example, the phrase *painaa mieleensä sanan* ('memorises the word') is changed to *harkiten toimii* ('acts with caution') (Proverbs 16:20). More often, the changes are subtle word choices, such as an archaic variant being changed to a modern one. For example, *virvoittaa* ('revives') is changed to *tarjoaa vettä* ('serves water') (Proverbs 11:25). In 10 verses, the changed proverb is the first of a paired set; in three verses, it is the latter one. Twice, these changes result in a verse that consists of two similar structures, meaning the other proverb had already been changed in the 1936 edition (Raamattu 1936). Another three verses include a change in both paired proverbs.

Another variant with a zero head and the main clause preceding the relative clause ([0] [VP], *joka* [VP]) also gained in frequency in the latest edition. Thirteen proverbs that had either a demonstrative head or a zero head with the opposite order of the clauses were changed to this structure. Again, the meaning of the proverbs is not considerably altered, and there is a slight but non-systematic tendency for the zero variant to be preferred in the first proverb of a paired verse. Five of the 13 changed proverbs occur as the first part of a pair, and three as the latter. In one pair, both proverbs are changed.

## 6 Discussion and conclusions

In this article, I studied a subtype of the Finnish generalising relative clause, which I call the *proverb formula*. I examined two varying aspects of this structure: 1) the form of the head pronoun and 2) the order of the relative clause and the main clause. I tracked the structure in different Finnish editions of the Book of Proverbs, relating its development to the source texts used by the translators, to proverbs collected from the Finnish vernacular and to instructions given in grammar guides regarding generalising relative clauses.

In modern standard Finnish, the preferred structure for a generalising relative clause is a demonstrative pronoun head immediately before the relative clause – a variant that I have not included in the definition of the proverb formula. The variant that dominated the biblical proverbs in the oldest editions comprised a personal pronoun head and a relative clause preceding the main clause. The proverb formula changed as personal pronoun heads were replaced by demonstrative pronouns and the omission of the head. The order of the structure was altered when the variants with the main clause coming first gained in frequency.

These two features of the proverb formula differ in many respects. The order of the structure has clear models in the languages used as the source languages of a

translation. Using a personal pronoun as the head of a relative clause occurs only in Swedish, while German provides a model for using demonstrative heads and Latin for the omission of heads. In Swedish, a corresponding structure uses a demonstrative element before a relative pronoun (*den som*); thus, the oldest variant is not a direct copy of any of the examined source languages.

The editors of the Bible's translations always aimed at clear, correct and understandable language, and the typographical and grammatical choices accepted for the Bible provided a model for other Finnish texts. The editors, who belonged to an elite interested in developing literary Finnish, also wrote grammar books and collected folklore. The language ideologies they had were sometimes conflicting, and the nineteenth century was a period of heated arguments. Renewing or preserving the biblical style was debated, but the change in the proverb formula examined here appears to have occurred relatively smoothly. Personal pronoun heads were eliminated in the 1936 edition (Raamattu 1936) after grammar guides explicitly discouraged their use in generalising relative clauses.

Although sacred texts generally tend to resist change, and proverbs, as frequently quoted phrases, may represent the language that is the least prone to change, the Finnish proverb formula underwent significant changes from the seventeenth century to the present day. The standardisation process requires an audience to adopt the rules in grammar guidebooks. However, the audience may not necessarily follow the rules (Nevalainen 2014; Nobels and Rutten 2014), as has happened with the Finnish proverb formula. The rules about zero heads and the order of the structure do not stabilise in as a straightforward a way as the rule that prefers demonstrative pronoun heads to personal pronoun heads.

Language standardisation often aims to reduce variation (Milroy 2007: 133). However, when separate styles and genres develop, variations increase. In the Finnish translations of the Book of Proverbs from 1642 to 1992, proverb formula variants change when the structures with zero heads and the inverted order of clauses gain in frequency. Interestingly, this development is not simple so that a former variant copied from another language was being replaced by a variant belonging to the target vernacular. This was the tendency when personal pronouns were replaced with demonstratives, but variants with zero heads occurred only occasionally in vernaculars. The preference for the omission of head pronouns is surprising because both grammar guides and vernacular Finnish support a preference for demonstrative pronoun heads. Despite this, the number of zero heads increased in the 1936 edition (Raamattu 1936) and even more in the latest edition (Raamattu 1992), so that in 1992, they formed the majority of proverb formula structures.

One reason for this development may be stylistic preference. The adopted variant resembled the source texts without actually going against the rules of

standard Finnish or vernacular structures, and the language editors found it suitable for the solemn biblical style. The distinctive biblical Finnish language resulted partly from coincidences that kept the 1776 version (*Biblia 1776*) in use for a long time and partly from conscious choices to allow the biblical style to diverge from other literary styles. Particularly in the process of producing the 1936 edition (*Raamattu 1936*), the editors consciously aimed to preserve archaic styles. In the latest edition in 1992 (*Raamattu 1992*), many parts of the Bible translation remained unchanged because the public was used to familiar phrases.

The relationship between prescriptive grammar guides and biblical language is complicated. The established position of a structure in biblical language may even prevent an audience from accepting a rule for biblical language that applies to other forms of language. Occasionally, language developers have suggested that generalising relative clauses with zero head pronouns should include the pronoun *kuka* as the relativiser instead of *joka*, especially when the main clause comes first (Hakulinen et al. 2004: §1169; Kielitoimisto 2020, s.v. *joka*; Korhonen and Maamies 2015: 260). However, this rule was not accepted, even in the latest translation (*Raamattu 1992*), which may be because the structures with *joka* and a zero head already had an established position in the biblical style.

The stylistic and rhythmic choices made in the two latest editions of the Bible would be an interesting target for further study. Another topic requiring further study is the relationship of the proverb formula to other kinds of generalising relative clauses in other genres. This study has added to the research on early literary Finnish by analysing a feature of biblical Finnish that was not a direct relic from older versions or followed a structure copied from source texts. Rather, the development of the proverb formula was the result of complicated and sometimes conflicting agendas.

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