

Title of Article:

The Comparative study of Kurdish and Bosnian Proverbs

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Abstract:

Having been derived from the oral literature, proverbs are short, rhythmic and popular sentences which contain wisdom, truth, moral and traditional views in a fixed and metaphoric form. Every nation's oral literature has a rich collection of proverbs which have been accepted by both scientists and common people as the valuable abstracts of life experiences. One can often understand the nations' magnificence of thought and the quality of social genuineness along with their literary talent through studying the proverbs. The purpose of the current research is to compare the proverbs of Kurdish and Bosnian languages to find similarities and the reasons of these similarities and differences. The results show that the similarities and differences of these languages' proverbs are due to similarities and differences in ideas, religions, beliefs, life experiences, social and cultural issues and so on.

Key Words: comparative, study, Proverbs, Kurdish, Bosnian

1. Introduction:

Proverbs are philosophical sayings of a group of people handed over from one generation to the other. This is why they are otherwise “wise saying” of the ancestors. (Adekeye, 2010) On the other hand, these short and rhythmic sentences encapsulate a society’s values and beliefs. They really do reflect beliefs and express traditionally truth based on common sense or the practical experience of humanity. Having been alliterative, they are usually metaphorical while giving advice and uplift. They have been originated from different disciplines such as religion, sociology, business and etc. They are simple and concrete sayings which are popularly known and revered and as Polette says it is a wise saying that can often be applied to many situations. (Polette, 2013)

Benefiting from particularly good phrasing and describing basic rules of conduct, proverbs are replete with reasons and advice. Religions with their overwhelming impact on societies and cultures have had a valuable role in the creation of proverbs in the far past. In this regard, religious books such as bible and Koran along with other divine prescriptions include many proverbs which have been respected by their followers and believers as fixed collections of human being’s guidelines.

Since proverbs belong to the literature, just like other parts of literatures, they can be borrowed and adapted to the target languages through communication. Similar proverbs in languages spoken in neighboring countries may prove this claim. Also there are proverbs which are used out of the limitation of a territory.

The study of proverbs has attracted many scientists from different schools, motivating them write many books about proverbs and different issues related to this interesting subject. Most of the scientists have a historical view to the importance of the proverbs. Generally the aim of the studies have been the relationship of the proverbs of one language with those of other languages, finding the origins of the proverbs, and finally suggesting the time and place of the composition or creation of individual proverbs. Sometimes there are many stories about the roots and origins of a particular proverb rising from disagreement over the origins of some proverbs.

The impact of sociology sciences in 20th century changed the literal and historical study of proverbs since the influential role of the common people in making proverbs created opportunities for anthropologists to be added to the area of studying proverbs as well.

On the other hand the definition of the word “proverb” has had a particular in the previous studies creating a space for many scientists to define the word, i.e. proverb, in their personal views. There is a necessity for a comprehensive definition by which we can separate proverbs from other similar sayings which are often considered to be proverbs while they are not. A thorough review of the definitions of proverbs in different approaches in 20th century can easily illustrate the problem. This paper goes around answering two questions regarding the proverbs which are:

A: What are the areas of the similarities and differences of Kurdish and Bosnian proverbs?

B: How can the existence of similar proverbs in the mentioned languages help to the understanding of literature contents and as a result communications among the speakers of these two languages?

2. Literature Review:

Recently the comparative study of proverbs have attracted many scientists and researchers who are interested to know more about the culture, beliefs and ideas of different people of the world. There are some who have followed the studies mainly for finding the roots and origins of the proverbs. Among various studies in this field I have pointed to some of the papers and books which are more related to the current study.

Ebrahim Nazari Teimori (2006) has compiled the dictionary of the proverbs and colloquial idioms by which the English and Persian proverbs and idioms are compared. The book contains more than 12000 English proverbs and idioms with their Persian meanings or equivalents. There are also some tests to assess the understanding of the proverbs or idioms at the final pages of the book. The main reason of the study is to find similarities and differences among the proverbs of the mentioned languages.

Another comparative study of the Persian proverbs belongs to Manoocheher Adnani and Hedyeh Adnani (2005). These authors have compared the proverbs of English, Persian and French languages. These authors have written both the proverbs and their meanings along with their preferred uses. They have tried to trace some similarities of the cultures and beliefs.

The other comparative study of Persian and English proverbs belongs to Nesa Nabifar, (Nabifar, 2013) who analyzed Persian and English proverbs from a cognitive linguistic approach to investigate the type of metaphors and metonymy used in them. The results showed that the proverbs in both languages had the same functions while having the same structures and meaning.

In an article which was presented in Kirikkala University, Turkey, by Bayez Enayati (Enayati, 2012) (the author of the current paper), the Kurdish, Persian and English proverbs were compared. The results showed that most of the similarities and differences were due to social, political, religious similarities or differences.

We can also point to the dictionary of German proverbs with English and Persian equivalents which was prepared by Yones Vahdati Helan (1998). In this valuable book, the author has written a German proverb with one or more English and Persian equivalents. He has pointed to some Persian poems composed by the most influential poets of Iran, by which the meaning of the proverbs is learned better.

The range of studies regarding the comparison of the proverbs of different nations is too wide to be summarized in the current paper, so I prefer to go to the next part of the paper which is about the comparative study of Kurdish and Bosnian proverbs in order to define the similarities and differences of the proverbs of these languages and possible reasons of these varieties. We also pay attention to the importance of these similarities in Understanding the contents of the language and literatures of these two languages.

3. The comparative study of Bosnian and Kurdish proverbs:

Both Bosnian and Kurdish languages benefit from lots of interesting proverbs in different subjects and fields. The proverbs summarize the results of the experiences of Bosnian and Kurdish people's ancestors in short, rhythmic and popular sentences. The comparative study of the proverbs of these two languages can help the speakers of these languages get awareness of each other's ideas and thought. Different Bosnian and Kurdish proverbs regarding a similar matter are compared in the following divisions:

3.1. Good ethics:

Ethics, sometimes known as philosophical ethics, ethical theory, moral theory, and moral philosophy, is a branch of philosophy that involves systematizing, defending and recommending concepts of right and wrong conduct, often addressing disputes of moral diversity. Although there are differences in some ideas and beliefs, in fact good ethics, especially good behaviors toward other people in the society have the same importance among different nations of the world. The following Bosnian and Kurdish proverbs reflect the same idea:

Bosnian proverb: Good behavior is the wing and the feather of human being. (Asadi, 2011)

Kurdish proverb: A good behavior is never lost. (Fatahi Ghazi, 1996)

The similar meaning is conveyed from the above proverbs by which both nations (Kurds & Bosnians) admire virtues. It is obvious that common ethics have been commented almost similar in most cultures and societies. In this regard Randy Cohen says, "Be Good is a book to refer to again and again." (Cohen, 2012)

3. 2. Courage and fear:

Courage is not the absence of fear, but it s the triumph over it. Aristotle believed courage to be the most important quality in a man. In fact it is the first of human virtues because it makes all others possible. Kurdish and Bosnian proverbs have the same idea regarding fear and courage but in different words:

Bosnian proverb: A brave man seldom is hurt in the back. (Asadi, 2011)

Kurdish proverb: He, who fears, never gets rid off. (Fatahi Ghazi, 1996)

The same idea has been used in the above proverbs where as both proverbs emphasize being courageous and avoiding fear in some situations. According to an Indian proverb, "A man of courage never wants weapon."(Madan,2004)

3. 3. Lending properties:

It is a humanistic duty to assist others in require in our daily activities. There are also some situations in which it is hard to give up our properties just because others have an urgent need to it. Bosnian and Kurdish proverbs reflect this idea at the same way but again in other words:

Bosnian proverb: During the battle you can not lend your sword to anyone. (Asadi, 2011)

Kurdish proverb: Until the house requires, specifying anything to the mosque is a taboo. (Fatahi Ghazi, 1996)

Both proverbs focus on keeping the properties we need, but they reflect the idea in different elements. English people also believe that we should keep our necessary properties safe and in access.

English proverb: **Lend** never that thing though needest most.(Gratian, 1998)

3. 4. Purchase:

Kurdish and Bosnian people are often cautious while purchasing things. The proverbs of these nations reflect the same belief regarding patience while purchasing. Both peoples think that it is advisable to think carefully and then act. The following proverbs focus on careful business in order to avoid being sorry after purchasing goods:

Bosnian proverb: Measure thrice, cut once. (Asadi, 2011)

Kurdish proverb: Measure one hundred times, cut once. (Fatahi Ghazi, 1996)

These proverbs have the same meaning while having similar elements in their structure. They show the same results of the experiences of the speakers of the studied languages i.e. Bosnian & Kurdish. The Bosnian proverbs is similar to Serbian proverbs, too:

Serbian Proverbs: Three times measure, one time cut.(Hawkesworth, 1998)

3. 5. Evil people:

Both Bosnian and Kurdish people believe that there is a strong tie between evil people. The proverbs of these nations show the same idea in different words according to the image of objects and animals in the literature of languages:

Bosnian proverb: A crow doesn't pick out another crow's eyes. (Asadi, 2011)

Kurdish proverbs: A dog doesn't tear another dog's skin. (Fatahi Ghazi, 1996)

The same idea and belief are shown in different words, but it doesn't result in making the sentences complicated. A short glance at these proverb an also the similar proverbs of other languages lead to understand the idea easily since just the names of things and

objects and sometimes peoples (thieves in the similar English proverb) are different. The following English proverb.

3.6. Trading with relatives:

Both Bosnian and Kurdish people believe that it's not a good idea to trade with relatives because if any problem arises, the relationship tie is torn up. The following proverbs reflect the results of many years of experiences of such events, so it is advisable to take into consideration the potential consequences of different kinds of bargains with relatives, especially close ones.

Kurdish proverb: Never trade with relatives. (Fatahi Ghazi, 1996)

Bosnian proverb: Drink and eat with relatives but do not trade with them. (Asadi, 2011)

There are lots of interesting sayings about trading with relatives. In his book under the title "Unraveling the Rag Trade" Jan Rath (2002) believes that hiring relatives is not a good thing.

3.7. Using other people as tools:

Using an allegoric metaphor, the proverbs do not hesitate to judge and criticize different situations which are created out of order. The following proverbs define the reasons some unexpected situations where there is a tooling use of the people:

Kurdish proverb: I call you 'my uncle' in order to hunt sparrows for me. (Fatahi Ghazi, 1996)

Bosnian proverb: When the ass was invited to the wedding feast he said, 'They need more wood and water.' (Asadi, 2011)

The above proverbs focus on using people just as tools. Although it is unfair to abuse the people of our society, but unfortunately there are many people who are ready to scarify anybody in order to get success in their programs and aims. Here come the proverbs with their main role in making us aware of the undesirable consequences of being used as a tool in an abusing way. It is why we often hear that proverbs give lights to our live's path similar to the famous proverb of the Bosnian people which is 'The existence of proverbs in dialogues is like the existence of a light in the darkness.'

3.8. Losing power:

According to the abstract of our ancestors' experiences, when the power diminishes, even the weakest enemies can defeat us and cause problems for us.

Kurdish proverb: When the lion gets old, the fox mocks him. (Fatahi Ghazi, 1996)

Bosnian proverb: The lion which is in the chain is attacked by rabbits. (Asadi, 2011)

Yes, that's right. Actually the power rules and the obedience of the rabbits from the lion's order is just because of his power and when the power is ended, there will be no obedience left.

There are so many things that we can learn from simple and pithy statements called "proverbs", because they are the results of struggling of the people during the history of mankind. Proverbs are the final results of the experiences that were repeated for many times until they were accepted by the majority of the people, so they are the wisdom of common, not an accidental quote of an individual without being examined by the judgments of the members of the societies.

3.9. Lack of Courage:

Kurdish and Bosnian people believe that someone who threatens too much to frighten his enemies, in fact he doesn't have enough courage to do anything about it.

Kurdish proverb: Just barking! (Fatahi Ghazi, 1996)

Bosnian proverb: The dog that barks, doesn't bite. (Asadi, 2011)

The Kurdish proverb means the threatening is not serious and it is quite similar to the Bosnian proverb which resembles threatening to the barking of the dogs.

3.10. Resemblance to parents:

Children often resemble their parents both in appearance and personality. This feature is shown in the proverbs of Bosnian and Kurdish people by which one can get to this idea that the speakers of these languages have a lot of similar beliefs and ideas to share.

Kurdish proverb: The plant grows out of its root. (Fatahi Ghazi, 1996)

Bosnian proverb: A splinter doesn't land far from the trunk. (Asadi, 2011)

Children often show some of the inherited characteristics such as personality features like selfishness, humility, patience, and so on along with some appearance features such as height, weight, beauty and ... and just as Adam Johnstone mentions in his biology book 'We all inherit characteristics from our parents; eye color, blood group, a particular shape of nose, Bosnian and Kurdish proverbs teach have been teaching these pieces of knowledge for a long time i.e. from the era of oral literature up to now.

The similar English Proverb is: "The apple doesn't fall far from the tree. (Wahdati Helan,1998)

Regarding the similar English proverb, Wolfgang Mieder believes the above English proverb is rarely used to refer to the relationship of mother and son, probably because the physiognomic and physical similarities between them might not be as striking as between to males. (Mieder,2004)

3.11. Certain possessions:

According to the lessons of Kurdish and Bosnian proverbs we should not rely too much on unknown conditions since we are not quite sure what will happen.

Kurdish proverb: Eight in the hand is better than nine out of reach. (Fatahi Ghazi, 1996)

Bosnian proverb: A sparrow in the hand is better than a pigeon on the branch. (Asadi, 2011)

The English proverb similar to the above ones is: “A bird in hand is worth two in the bush.” (Wahdati Helan,1998) The Modern English proverb which focuses on certain possessions goes one step further saying that, “ even half a bird in hand is worth two in the bush.”(Whiting, 1989)

3.12. The value of youth:

Welcoming the opportunities is suggested by the proverbs of Kurdish and Bosnian languages. The following proverbs of the mentioned languages emphasize understanding the importance of youth. When one is young, it's time to equip him with knowledge, ethics and everything which is required to help him to be a great man.

Kurdish proverb: If the tree isn't bent when it is green, it can never be bent when it is dry. (Fatahi Ghazi, 1996)

Bosnian proverb: Iron is worked when it's still hot. (Asadi, 2011)

The Bosnian proverb also emphasizes the importance of youth and the available opportunities people have during the time they are active and energetic.

Similarly the English proverb “You're only young once” means that young people should take the opportunity to do all the things they will be unable to do when they're older.(Mansor, 2007)

4. Discussion:

The literature of both Bosnian and Kurdish languages benefit from a comprehensive collection of wise sayings or proverbs by which the results of many years of experiences of the old ancestors are clearly illustrated. The comparative study of the proverbs of Kurdish and Bosnian languages helps us to classify them(the proverbs) in three groups due to the similarities and differences and also the existence of the proverbs in one of the these two languages:

4.1. Proverbs which have similar words and the same meanings:

Kurdish proverb: He, who gets up earlier, becomes the governor of the city. (Fatahi Ghazi, 1996)

Bosnian proverb: One who gets up early is doubly lucky. (Asadi, 2011)

Or:

Kurdish proverb: Just barking! (Fatahi Ghazi, 1996)

Bosnian proverb: The dog that barks, doesn't bite. (Asadi, 2011)

4.2. Proverbs which share the same meaning but have different words:

Bosnian proverb: A crow doesn't pick out another crow's eyes. (Asadi, 2011)

Kurdish proverbs: A dog doesn't tear another dog's skin. (Fatahi Ghazi, 1996)

Or:

Kurdish proverb: The plant grows out of its root. (Fatahi Ghazi, 1996)

Bosnian proverb: A splinter doesn't land far from the trunk. (Asadi, 2011)

4.3. Proverbs which exist in one of the two languages but not in the other:

Bosnian proverb: There's the bush where the rabbit squats! (Asadi, 2011)

Kurdish proverb: ?

Kurdish proverb: The sea isn't polluted by the dog's mouth. (Fatahi Ghazi, 1996)

Bosnian proverb: ?

5. Conclusion:

Proverbs have been used throughout the history from preliterate times till today for effective oral and written communication and there are no signs that proverbs have lost their usefulness in modern technological societies. Proverbs belong to the traditional verbal folklore genres and the wisdom of proverbs has been guidance for people worldwide in their social interaction throughout the ages. Proverbs are concise, easy to remember and useful in every situation in life due to their content of everyday experiences. (Mieder, 2004)

Kurdish and Bosnian languages share both similar and different proverbs. The similarities of the proverbs of these two languages results from similarity and resemblance in intellectual, cultural, regional, social, and economic issues and also similarities in job experiences. The existence of similar objects, fruits and animals in the environment where the speakers of these languages have lived can be a reason for some of the similarities among the proverbs of the mentioned languages. Fruits like pear, apple,

and etc along with animals such as dogs, cats, lions and so on are seen in the proverbs of both languages.

On the other hand differences in proverbs are because of differences in tribal beliefs, social interests, job experiences and geographical conditions. A word such as 'Greek' is seen in Bosnian proverbs but not in Kurdish equivalents because the ancestors of Bosnian people had had more contact with European terms in the past. Similarly city names such as 'Banah' is seen in Kurdish proverbs but not in the proverbs of other languages since Kurdish people have often traveled there for trade and business.

The existence of similar proverbs in the studied languages helps the people of these Nations to understand each other easily and have a close relationship while broadening the ground for cultural communication.

Using the experiences of Kurdish people by the Bosnians and vice versa can increase the range of commonly accepted wisdom while helping them to compare and evaluate their literature and at the same time enrich the collections of their wise reasons and pieces of advice by which they can apply enough evidences to daily dialogues and speech and as Yousefi believes, proverbs are considered as part of folklore or public literature and one of important cultural treasures. Hence, discussing and studying proverbs can make us familiar with cultural aspects, value and norms of the owners of those proverbs. (Yousefi, 2012)

6. Suggestions:

Through comparing different elements of literature of different languages, one can get awareness of enough reasons to judge appropriately about the respected ideas of the speakers of these languages. Comparing the proverbs, similes, allegories and ...of the world languages can lead to admire and appreciate the speakers while helping the researchers to get more optimistic about the potential beliefs of the old ancestors of those speakers. It also helps to revive the literatures of many languages which are endangered.

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