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THE REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN PROVERBS – A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF MODERN GREEK AND SERBIAN LANGUAGE²

The way language is used can tell us a lot about a culture and the mentality of the people speaking it. Thus, it is very interesting to see which values are rooted in common proverbs in different languages. Having in mind that beliefs and values can be recognized in all forms of linguistic communication (DOMINGUEZ BARAJAS 2010: 50), and that proverbs are based on oral tradition, with a very specific way in which they are being transferred from generation to generation (RASUL 2015: 55), they can tell us a lot about the way a society is influenced by the language it uses and vice versa. Considering the fact that the Greek and the Serbian society are, broadly speaking, built on similar, traditional and patriarchal foundations, a comparative analysis of linguistic features can be very insightful. The present study presents the findings of a corpus analysis of Greek and Serbian proverbs found in different online bases and dictionaries. We investigate the representation of women from the perspective of negative vs. positive representation, as well as the most common associations which accompany them. The results of our study show a greater number of negative connotations, a mostly passive role of a woman and a high similarity between the stereotypes we can identify in the proverbs in both languages.

Keywords: proverbs, gender stereotypes, Modern Greek language, Serbian language

1. Introduction

It is a known fact that the way language is used can tell us a lot about a culture and the mentality of the people speaking it, since it represents not only the basic means of communication and interaction between the members of a certain community, but it also reflects their beliefs, attitudes and ideologies (FILIPOVIĆ 2009: 110). For that reason, it is remarkably interesting to see which values are rooted in common proverbs in different languages.

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2 The findings of this research have been presented at the 11th MA and PhD Philology Candidates Conference, held at the Faculty of Philology, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, from 3-7 October 2022.

Proverbs represent a complex and multi-layered type of artistic folk speech, which is amenable to many different approaches. The types of proverbial discourse, as they condense the experience of the people, transmit a collective experience and a social education, which comes from long-term observation and practice. From this point of view, the notion that proverbs contain so-called “folk wisdom” is justified (VARVOUNIS 1997: 9).

Beliefs and values can be recognized in all forms of linguistic communication (DOMINGUEZ BARAJAS 2010: 50), and since proverbs are being transferred from generation to generation in a very specific way, because they are based on oral tradition determining the form of the traditional cultural system and its continuation (RASUL 2015: 55; VARVOUNIS 1997: 9; STORM 1992: 168), they can tell us a lot about the way society is influenced by the language it uses and vice versa. Considering the fact that the Greek and the Serbian society are, broadly speaking, built on similar, traditional, and patriarchal foundations, a comparative analysis of linguistic features can be very insightful.

2. The power of language and sex/gender stereotypes

We often sort people in certain social categories in the context of our social perception, something that helps us form impressions quickly. These categories also help us guide our new social encounters, based on our past experiences and knowledge. One of the most significant aforementioned categories is the category of sex, which is often reflected in the grammatical structures we use (STAHLBERG, BRAUN et al. 2007: 163).

It should be noted that different problems that societies cope with are mirrored in the language patterns of its members. Lazar (2007: 141; in: DIABAH, APPIAH AMFO 2015: 8), referring to the FCDA³, states that the issues of gender, power and ideology have become more complex in the present times, while proverbs, by their nature, represent more complex and subtle concepts.

In other words, language and, more specifically, language patterns that speakers in a certain community use, do not represent a simple reflection of the existing sex/gender categories. They are almost never being questioned but, on the contrary, they are being supported by some or by most members of the community, perceiving them as the crucial segment of the social unity and cultural and/or ethnic continuity (FILIPOVIĆ 2009:196). This means that sex categories are deeply rooted in the social structure of the language patterns we use.

More precisely, Stahlberg, Braun et al. (2007: 163) notice that the linguistic representation of the sexes is never restricted to male versus female. On the contrary, it is based on asymmetries, evaluations and stereotypes since both male and female members of a certain community that are referred to in a language is “affected by the gender belief system prevalent in the speech community”. Thus, these prevalent linguistic patterns in the speech community contribute to the rooting and survival of the gender belief system.

It is important to stress that the linguistic behavior and the social identity of both men and women may differ according to the rules within a community to which they belong and that can also cause the appearance of stereotypes (HOLMES 1992: 201). Social stereotypes can be connected to the characteristics which are attributed to a target

³ *Feminist critical discourse analysis*. Its main task is to criticize unequal gender relations (DIABAH, APPIAH AMFO, 2015: 8)

group, which means that the speaker, taking pragmatic conditions into account, expresses his attitude regarding the functioning of certain language patterns (ECKERT, MCCONNELL-GINET 1999: 190; ΚΩΣΤΟΥΛΑ-ΜΑΚΡΑΚΗ 2001).

Although the development of gender studies contributed to the reduction of stereotypes, it did not incite their complete disappearance. So, even today we can notice those stereotypes regarding differences in so-called female and male language patterns, as well as regarding attributes assigned to women and men. However, it should be noted that the question of how sexes are portrayed in a language⁴ represents a significant topic of not only linguistic interest, but it also contains sociological and psychological aspects (STAHLBERG, BRAUN et al. 2007: 163).

3. The portrayal of women in proverbs

Proverbs represent a worldwide phenomenon, since they are an essential segment of communication, being “a condensed statement of a collective idea or sentiment relative to a determined category of objects” (DURKHEIM 1933: 170-171). Durkheim (1933: 171) argues that proverbs reflect the collective, traditional view of the community, where individual opinions are not that important. In that way, they can be considered a set of cultural heritage, which is reflective of the communal thought regarding an issue at stake (DIABAH, APPIAH AMFO 2015: 6). It is important to underline that proverbs, since they are carefully couched utterances, serve to emphasize different underlying messages. The utterers of a proverb cannot be considered responsible for its content, as they are not its creators, but they are only interpreting the collective thought. In that way, proverbs can be also used as an acceptable means of communication when it comes to some sensitive cultural “truths” (DIABAH, APPIAH AMFO 2015: 6-7).

Since proverbs reflect the form of the traditional cultural system, they can show the way women are represented and perceived in a certain culture to some extent. For this reason, numerous researchers (STORM 1992; WANG 2012; ANDERSON 2012; DIABAH, APPIAH AMFO 2015) have dealt with the question of proverbs and the representation of gender issues within them.

Storm (1992), in his extensive research about women in Japanese proverbs, noticed that a perusal of the proverbs on women reveals many with negative connotation. More specifically, the author concluded that these proverbs point out women’s undesirable characteristics (e.g., inferiority, stupidity, changeability, ill-nature, talkativeness, weakness) and/or oppressed situation (e.g., wives, mothers-in-law, daughters-in-law-widows, prostitutes, intelligent women, beautiful women). A similar conclusion can be found in a study conducted by Wang (2012). The author, after examining sex discrimination in English and Chinese proverbs, concluded that, in both languages, men hold a superior and stronger position than women, while a gender-biased ideology can be noticed. Andersen (2012: 10), after examining certain Swedish proverbs, states that “the gender conception found in the Swedish proverbs forms a system of gender hegemony that supports masculine superiority and feminine subordination” – men are almost always represented as the choosers

4 Different societies and cultures indicate the relationship between language, gender and sex in different manners. That is why the important role in representation of the sexes has the grammatical structure of languages. See: Stahlberg, Braun et al. (2007).

(an active position) in the “marriage market”, while women are chosen (having a passive position).

By analyzing Akan proverbs in Africa, Diabah and Appiah Amfo (2015: 8-20), noted that proverbs reinforce traditional gender stereotypes and at the same time they present the traditional gender stereotypes positively. More precisely, the authors concluded that the Akan proverbs tend to strengthen the power and authority of men since even the positive portrayal of women implies their submission to a man (e.g., woman as a good cook, woman is loving because she looks up to a man, woman accepts and values the power of men over women etc.). The same attitude towards women is expressed in Korean and Romanian proverbs, which reflect the importance of their expected behavior (i.e., quiet, faithful, skilled, disciplined etc.) and their traditional role, whose ultimate goal is to get married and to become a good wife (BUJA 2015: 221). In other words, these proverbs reinforce the idea that women are entirely dependent of men in society, similarly as in French and Sinhala proverbs, where it is the male superiority that dominates (JAYAWARDENA 2015: 111).

4. Research

It can be noticed that the Greek and Serbian proverbs show remarkable similarities, both in the ideas they express as well as in the images they use (VARVOUNIS 1997). Having that in mind, this study presents the findings of a corpus analysis of Greek and Serbian proverbs. The corpus consisted of numerous proverbs found in different online bases and dictionaries. Our scope is to investigate the representation of women in the aforementioned proverbs, from the perspective of negative vs. positive representation, as well as the most common associations which accompany them.

After the initial selection, a comparative analysis has been made to draw more general conclusions about the similarities and differences of this representation in proverbs in the two languages. More specifically, our corpus was created by gathering numerous proverbs in both languages, which was followed by separating the ones that contain the notion of woman. This resulted in the extraction of 98 Greek and 84 Serbian proverbs.

Previous researches, when investigating proverbs in other languages, have identified certain common concepts, social roles and characteristics acquainted to women, which we can also recognize in analyzed Greek and Serbian proverbs. Some of the most prominent are the following⁵:

5 We chose to present some characteristic examples and not all the analyzed proverbs, to respect the character limit. In the end of every table, we indicate the total number of proverbs that can be included in this category, in both languages. Some proverbs could be included in more than one category.

Table 1: Woman as an important part of the family and the household⁶⁷

Original	Translation
<i>De nije žene, tu nije ni kuće.</i>	<i>Where there is no woman, there is no home.</i>
<i>Ne stoji kuća na zemlji, nego na ženi.</i>	<i>The house is not standing on the ground, but on the woman.</i>
<i>Dobra žena praznu kuću čini da je puna.</i>	<i>A good woman makes an empty house full.</i>
<i>Το θηλυκό πουλί φτιάχνει τη φωλιά.</i>	<i>The female bird makes the nest.</i>
<i>Σπίτι χωρίς γυναίκα, εκκλησιά χωρίς παπά.</i>	<i>A home without a woman is like a church without a priest.</i>
Total number of proverbs that can be included in this category: Serbian: 4, Greek: 3	

Table 2: Woman as a housewife

Original	Translation
<i>Žena muža nosi na licu, a muž ženu na košulji.</i>	<i>A wife wears her husband on her face and a husband wears his wife on his shirt.</i>
<i>Ako sam pereš veš oženi se ili najuri ženu.</i>	<i>If you wash your clothes by yourself, marry or kick out your wife.</i>
<i>Η καλή νοικοκυρά είναι δούλα και κυρά.</i>	<i>A good housewife is both a maid and a landlady.</i>
<i>Η καλή νοικοκυρά με το λάδι ανάφτει στιά.</i>	<i>The good housewife lights the stove with the oil.</i>
<i>Η καλή νοικοκυρά στο χωράφι φαίνεται.</i>	<i>You can tell a good housewife by her work in the field.</i>
TNP: Serbian: 2, Greek: 11	

Table 3: Woman and marriage

Original	Translation
<i>Ženi sina kad 'očeš a udaj 'čer kad možeš!</i>	<i>Marry your son when you want and your daughter when you can!</i>
<i>Vidi majku pa prosi devojku.</i>	<i>See the mother, propose to the daughter.</i>
<i>Δες μάνα και πάρε κόρη.</i>	<i>See the mother, marry the daughter.</i>
<i>Όποιος δεν έχει παντρέψει κόρη και δεν έχει κτίσει σπίτι, δεν ξέρει τι θα πει πρόβλημα.</i>	<i>The one who hasn't married his daughter or built a house does not know what a true problem is.</i>
TNP: Serbian: 4, Greek: 10	

Table 4: Woman vs. man

Original	Translation
<i>Dobra žena poštuje muža, pa da je kao pevac.</i>	<i>A good woman respects her man even if he is like a rooster.</i>
<i>Dragom često opraštaj, sebi nikad.</i>	<i>Frequently forgive your man, but never yourself.</i>
<i>Τον άνδρα η γυναίκα του τον κάνει και βεζίρη και ρεζίλι.</i>	<i>The woman makes her man vizier or embarrassed.</i>

6 Hereinafter TNP

7 All the translations were done by the authors and they are not official. Their sole purpose was to make the proverbs understandable for the readers of this paper.

<i>Ο άντρας μου με κάνει χώμα, κι ο άντρας μου με κάνει εικόνα.</i>	<i>My husband turns me either to dirt either to icon.</i>
TNP: Serbian: 4, Greek: 2	

Table 5: Woman as a temptress

Original	Translation
<i>Ženi je najslađi zalogaj muško srce.</i>	<i>The favorite meal of a woman is a man's heart.</i>
<i>Κεράτωνα τον άντρα σου και μάγια μην του κάνεις.</i>	<i>Cheat on your husband and don't enchant him.</i>
<i>Στάλα τη στάλα το νερό τρυπάει το λιθάρι κι η κόρη με τα νάζια της σφάζει το παλικάρι.</i>	<i>Drop by drop the water makes a hole in the rock and a woman with her affectation butchers the young man.</i>
TNP: Serbian: 1, Greek: 4	

Table 6: Woman as an object of sexual desire

Original	Translation
<i>Istina i žena najlepše su gole.</i>	<i>The truth and the woman are most beautiful when naked.</i>
<i>Telo žene stvoreno je da bude pruženo na dar muškarcu.</i>	<i>The body of the woman was made to be given as a gift to the man.</i>
<i>Αν δεν κουνήσ' η σκύλα την ουρά της, ο σκύλος δεν πάει κοντά της.</i>	<i>If a bitch doesn't shake her tale the dog isn't going to her.</i>
<i>Ντράπου η κόρη, βρέθει γκαστρωμένη.</i>	<i>Pretending she was shy but turned out pregnant.</i>
TNP: Serbian: 4, Greek: 8	

Table 7: Woman and love

Original	Translation
<i>Ništa nije lepše od osmeha zaljubljene žene</i>	<i>There is nothing more beautiful than the smile of a woman in love.</i>
<i>Χωρίς αέρα το πουλί, χωρίς νερό το ψάρι, χωρίς αγάπη δε βαστούν κόρη και παλικάρι.</i>	<i>The bird cannot live without air, the fish without water and the girl and the boy without love.</i>
TNP: Serbian: 1, Greek: 1	

Table 8: Woman as a property

Original	Translation
<i>Žensko je tuđa sreća.</i>	<i>A woman is someone else's happiness.</i>
<i>Teško je čuvati tuđe pare i svoju ženu.</i>	<i>It's hard to keep someone else's money and your own wife.</i>
<i>Ženu, pušku i konja može čovek pokazati, ali u naruč ne davati.</i>	<i>You can show off a woman, a gun and a horse, but never put them in someone else's hands.</i>

<i>Ne daj kobile u najam, niti puštaj ženu na sajam.</i>	<i>Don't rent your mare, or let your woman go to the fair.</i>
<i>Στη γυναίκα σου και στ' άλογό σου μην απολάς ποτέ τα γκέμια.</i>	<i>Never release the reins of your woman and your horse.</i>
<i>Η γυναίκα και το άτι θέλουν άξιο καβαλάρη.</i>	<i>The woman and the horse need a good rider.</i>
TNP: Serbian: 8, Greek: 9	

Table 9: Woman in an oppressed situation (prostitution)

Original	Translation
<i>Lepu ženu i vinograd pored puta ne treba imati.</i>	<i>You should not have a vineyard or a beautiful woman by the road.</i>
<i>Cuti kao kurva.</i>	<i>He/she is silent like a whore.</i>
<i>Γιο πουτάνας να πάρεις, κόρη πουτάνας να μην πάρεις.</i>	<i>Choose a whore's son but not her daughter.</i>
<i>Ο μωρλός άντρας και η πουτάνα γυναίκα δεν γερνάνε ποτέ.</i>	<i>A crazy man and a whore never get old.</i>
TNP: Serbian: 3, Greek: 4	

Table 10: Woman as evil

Original	Translation
<i>Žena je zlo bez kojeg se ne može,</i>	<i>A woman is an evil without which you cannot live.</i>
<i>Da je dobro i đavo bi se ženio.</i>	<i>If it was good, the devil would be married too.</i>
<i>Ispod Mire sto đavola vire.</i>	<i>Under Mira hundred devils are hidden.</i>
<i>Čavka i zla žena što god se više peru, sve su crnije.</i>	<i>The woman and the jackdaw the more they wash themselves the darker they become.</i>
<i>Όμορφη γυναίκα, διάβολος του χωριού.</i>	<i>A beautiful woman is the village's devil.</i>
<i>Κάλλιο να ζεις με το διάολο / δράκο παρά με κακιά γυναίκα.</i>	<i>It is better to live with a devil / dragon than with a bad woman.</i>
<i>Αν ήταν καλή η γυναίκα, θα είχε και ο Θεός μια.</i>	<i>If wives were good, God would have one too.</i>
TNP: Serbian: 7, Greek: 8	

Table 11: Good vs. bad woman

Original	Translation
<i>Dobra žena praznu kuću čini da je puna.</i>	<i>A good woman makes an empty house full.</i>
<i>Sačuvaj me Bože, od rđave zemlje i zle žene.</i>	<i>Protect me, God, from bad land and evil woman.</i>
<i>Najgora žena vredi pedeset groša, a dobra se nikakvim novcima platiti ne može.</i>	<i>The worst woman is worth fifty coins, and no money can pay for a good one.</i>

<i>Όπου δεις κακή γυναίκα δυο βολές τηνε χαιρέτα.</i>	<i>Wherever you see a bad woman, greet her two times.</i>
TNP: Serbian: 6, Greek: 5	

Table 12: Domestic violence

Original	Translation
<i>Gde žena buči tu muž muči.</i>	<i>Where the wife whines, the husband tortures.</i>
<i>Ženu, decu i psa treba biti i hraniti.</i>	<i>The wife, the children and the dog should be beaten and fed.</i>
<i>Lajava žena, često puta bijena.</i>	<i>A big-mouthed woman is often beaten.</i>
<i>Nemoj biti ljuta da ne budeš žuta, već budi dobra da ne budeš modra.</i>	<i>Don't be angry so you don't turn yellow, but be good so you don't turn blue.</i>
<i>Žena i zmija se u glavu udaraju.</i>	<i>The woman and the snake should be struck in the head.</i>
<i>Τη γυναίκα σου χτυπάς, το σπιτάκι σου χαλάς.</i>	<i>If you beat your woman, you break your home.</i>
TNP: Serbian: 7, Greek: 1	

Table 13: The death of a woman

Original	Translation
<i>Dva puta je čovek veseo, jednom kad se ženi, drugi put kad ženu ukopa.</i>	<i>A man is happy twice, once when he gets married, the second time when he buries his wife.</i>
<i>Srećnom žene umiru, a nesrećnom kobile crkavaju.</i>	<i>The lucky man is the one whose wives die and the unlucky the one whose mares die.</i>
TNP: Serbian: 2, Greek: 0	

Table 14: The individuality of a woman

Original	Translation
<i>Nema ništa nenosnije od bogate žene.</i>	<i>There is nothing more unbearable than a rich woman.</i>
<i>Αγέρας και γυναίκα δεν κλειδώνονται.</i>	<i>The wind and the woman cannot be locked.</i>
<i>Γυναίκα χωρίς άντρα, πλοίο χωρίς τιμόνι.</i>	<i>A woman without a man is like a ship without a wheel.</i>
<i>Έχεις γυναίκα με μυαλό, έχεις στο σπίτι θησαυρό.</i>	<i>If you have a smart woman, you have a treasure in your home.</i>
<i>Οι μύλοι κι οι γυναίκες πάντα θέλουν να γυρίζουν.</i>	<i>Mills and women always want to turn (go around).</i>
TNP: Serbian: 3, Greek: 4	

Table 15: *The vices of women*

Original	Translation
<i>Žena pijanica – gotova bludnica.</i>	<i>A drunkard woman is a complete harlot.</i>
<i>Της γυναίκας ο καημός: λούσα, πούτσα και χορός.</i>	<i>The woman is longing for luxury, cock and dance.</i>
<i>Ο χορός και το γαμήσι ειν' τση γυναικός η φύση.</i>	<i>Dancing and fucking are in woman's nature.</i>
TNP: Serbian: 1, Greek: 3	

Table 16: *The physical appearance of women*

Original	Translation
<i>Ženska lepota je njeno oružje.</i>	<i>A woman's beauty is her weapon.</i>
<i>Sačuvaj nas Bože, od brkate žene i ćosava čovjeka.</i>	<i>Save us, God, from a mustachioed woman and a bald man.</i>
<i>Lepe kolo vode, a ružne kuću kuće.</i>	<i>The pretty ones lead the dance, the ugly ones make the home.</i>
<i>Φυλάξου από άνθρωπο σπανό και μαλλιαρή γυναίκα.</i>	<i>Beware of a beardless man and a hairy woman</i>
<i>Πάρε γυναίκα άσκημη, να σε περιγελόνε, πάρε γυναίκα όμορφη για να στην κυνηγόνε.</i>	<i>Get an ugly wife and be laughed at, get a beautiful wife and she will be chased.</i>
<i>Όποιος έχει γυναίκα όμορφη, στη δημοσιά αμπέλι, ποτέ του δεν είναι ήσυχος.</i>	<i>He who has a beautiful wife and a public vineyard is never at peace.</i>
<i>Όμορφη γυναίκα, διάβολος του χωριού.</i>	<i>A beautiful woman is the village's devil.</i>
TNP: Serbian: 5, Greek: 10	

Table 17: *The ageing of women*

Original	Translation
<i>Za nevolju babu vode, kad devojke ne nahode.</i>	<i>They blame the grandmother for trouble when the girls are nowhere to be found.</i>
<i>Μικρή γυναίκα έπαρε, να τη χαρείς μεγάλη.</i>	<i>Take a young wife to enjoy her when she's older.</i>
TNP: Serbian: 4, Greek: 1	

We can also recognize certain characteristics that have been pointed out as the most common for women:

Table 18: *Talkativeness*

Original	Translation
<i>Žensko je oružje jezik.</i>	<i>A woman's weapon is her tongue.</i>
<i>Opasala se jezikom k'o kuja repom.</i>	<i>She girded herself with her tongue like a bitch with her tail.</i>
<i>Žene su da zборе, a ljudi da tvore.</i>	<i>Women are to speak and men to create.</i>

<i>Γυναίκες μαλώνουν, αλήθειες αποκαλύπτονται.</i>	<i>When women argue truths are revealed.</i>
<i>Γυναίσι κρῆσιμον ἡ σιγή φέρει.</i>	<i>Silence is a treasure to women.</i>
TNP: Serbian: 7, Greek: 2	

Table 19: Untrustworthiness

Original	Translation
<i>Ženi, zmiji i mački ne treba verovati ni kada su mrtve.</i>	<i>A woman, a snake and a cat should not be trusted even when they are dead.</i>
<i>Žena će samo onu tajnu sačuvati koju ne zna.</i>	<i>A woman will only keep the secret she doesn't know.</i>
<i>Γυναίκα που δικαιολογείται αυτοκατηγορείται.</i>	<i>A woman who makes excuses takes the blame.</i>
<i>Άκουγε την πρώτη συμβουλή της γυναίκας σου και όχι τη δεύτερη.</i>	<i>Listen to your wife's first advice and not the second one.</i>
TNP: Serbian: 8, Greek: 7	

Table 20: Other undesirable characteristics

Original	Translation
<i>Stubbornness: Lakše je skuvati gvožđe nego savladati ženinu tvrdoglavost.</i>	<i>It is easier to cook iron than to overcome a woman's stubbornness.</i>
<i>Emotionality: Kada žena plače pitaj je šta hoće.</i>	<i>When a woman cries, ask her what she wants.</i>
<i>Stupidity: U žene je duga kosa, a kratka pamet.</i>	<i>Women have long hair and short intellect.</i>
<i>Materialism: Τα πολλά πνίγουν τον άντρα και τα λίγα τη γυναίκα.</i>	<i>Having a lot suffocates the man and having little suffocates the woman.</i>
<i>Temperament: Γυναίκα θυμωμένη, θάλασσα χωρίς περγιάλι.</i>	<i>An angry woman is a sea without a shore.</i>
<i>Weakness: Γυναίκα και γυαλί σπάνε εύκολα.</i>	<i>Women and glass break easily.</i>

5. Discussion

In summarization, we can identify some general points which are similar in proverbs in both languages. We can recognize fewer proverbs with a positive connotation and a higher number of the ones having a negative context. More specifically, the positive adjectives accompanying the nouns signifying a woman were “good” or “clever”. On the other hand, we can notice numerous adjectives carrying a negative meaning, such as “bad” and “evil”. Women are also characterized as talkative, untrustworthy, emotional, cunning, stubborn, weak and sometimes unpredictable, in the sense of needing to be controlled and “tamed”. We can see women usually having the role of a mother, grandmother, wife and housewife, on one hand, and of the evil temptress playing with man’s hearts, on the other. Thus, we can agree with the conclusions of previous researchers (DIABAH, APPIAH AMFO 2015), that even the positive portrayal of women usually implies their submission

to a man.

We can recognize many patriarchal principles as women are expected to be “good wives”. A daughter is often viewed as a burden for the family, as we can notice proverbs expressing the struggle to marry the daughter. An independent woman is viewed as a threat, because we can see that “there’s nothing more unbearable than a rich woman”. Apart from that, a big part of many proverbs is the emphasis on women’s physical appearance. As undesirable physical characteristics of women we can recognize great height, as well as hairiness, in both Serbian and Greek. On the other hand, a women’s beauty is seen as both an advantage and a disadvantage, depending on how attractive she could be to others, while the youth of a woman is presented as an important advantage.

It is interesting to see that, while proverbs in both languages contain notions about the subordinate position of a woman, only in Serbian we can notice proverbs explicitly mentioning their death and the relief it brings to their husbands. Additionally, domestic violence is more frequently mentioned and approved in Serbian proverbs. On the other hand, the notion of the woman as evil is frequently mentioned in both languages, by mentioning the devil, by comparing women to him or by mentioning God and his protection from women. Additionally, Greek proverbs compare women to dragons, to fire and the sea, symbolizing danger.

The Greek proverbs are more commonly mentioning women’s vices, such as drinking or sexual satisfaction, while Serbian proverbs mention women’s body as an object for men’s pleasure. On the other hand, the love of a woman is mentioned only once in each language. Additionally, Serbian proverbs are focusing more on women’s talkativeness, while we have gathered more proverbs in Greek which emphasize the characteristics of a good housewife.

As we noticed, one of the most common comparisons in these proverbs is the one between a woman and a horse in the sense of buying, owning or taming (a woman/a horse). It was also interesting to analyze which kinds of verbs are mostly used in the gathered proverbs about women. We can notice that most of them are transitive verbs, indicating possession or handling, such as: *τρώγομαι* – *to be eaten*, *κάνω* – *to make (somebody)*, *παίρνω* – *to take*, *διαλέγω* – *to choose*, *δανείζω* – *to borrow*, *κλειδώνω* – *to lock*, *έχω* – *to have*, *κρατάω* – *to hold* (in Greek) and *nositi* – *to carry*, *tući* – *to beat*, *imati* – *to have*, *čuvati* – *to keep*, *dati* – *to give*, *pokazati* – *to show*, *puštati* – *to let/ to allow*, *steći* – *to earn*, *savladati* – *to master/ to tame* (in Serbian). Furthermore, the verb “to cheat” is used numerous times in many proverbs.

Additionally, we have found some proverbs that were very similar in both languages, such as:

Vidi majku pa prosi devojku.

Δες μάνα και πάρε κόρη.

Translation: See the mother, propose to the daughter.

Ako ženu tučeš, svoju sreću tučeš.

Τη γυναίκα σου χτυπάς, το σπιτάκι σου χαλάς.

Translation: If you beat your woman, you beat your happiness/ your home.

Sačuvaj nas Bože, od brkate žene i ćosava čovjeka.

Φυλάξου από άνθρωπο σπανό και μαλλιαρή γυναίκα.

Translation: Beware of a beardless/ hairless man and a hairy woman.

Da je dobro i đavo bi se ženio.

Αν ήταν καλή η γυναίκα, θα είχε και ο Θεός μια.

Translation: If it was good, the devil/ the God would be married too.

Apart from the proverbs included in this research, in Greek language we noticed certain local proverbs, mostly characterizing women from different parts of Greece. These proverbs again contain the notion of marriage, for example:

Άμα θες σύντροφο άξο, πάρε νύφη από τη Νάξο.

Translation: If you want a worthy partner, choose a wife from Naxos.

Γυναίκα από τη Μύκονο, μάγια στ' αρχοντικό σου.

Translation: A wife from Mykonos means magic in your home.

Concluding remarks

In conclusion, we can agree with the previously mentioned authors, that, in the analyzed proverbs, men are almost always represented as the choosers while women are chosen (having a passive position). Also, women's individuality is seen as a threat and women's characteristics are approved mostly in situations where they are playing the role of the wife and the good housewife. Additionally, women's vices or sexual freedom are presented as extremely negative. Conclusions about the values which are rooted in common proverbs in both languages can be also drawn from a lexical analysis. Having in mind that both languages, and especially Greek, are lexically rich and possess several words for expressing numerous concepts, the choice of a specific word in a proverb can tell us more about the mentality of the two nations and the traditional and patriarchal values they kept until today. Thus, the specific adjectives used for describing women, as well as the common verbs we have singled out confirm our assumptions about the similarity of the two traditional cultural systems and the stereotypes regarding attributes assigned to women and men. Hence, we believe that it would be interesting and valuable to continue this research in the future by conducting a more thorough lexical analysis.

As far as differences between the two languages are concerned, we would point out the more violent language in the case of the Serbian proverbs. Generally, we can confirm our initial hypothesis about the extremely patriarchal values expressed in proverbs in both languages. However, we would like to mention that certain proverbs analyzed in this research are not so frequently used nowadays in everyday communication, and thus they are gradually losing their significance and strength, which we believe is a good step towards a more gender sensitive discourse. Having in mind that changes in language go hand in hand with changes in a society, we believe that the first step is to recognize and

acknowledge the values that a language is transmitting as well as the effect it can have, a sensibilization that could contribute to a more careful use of proverbs and other forms of language in our daily life, and subsequently to a chance for a higher level of social and gender equality.

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РЕПРЕЗЕНТАЦИЈА ЖЕНА У ПОСЛОВИЦАМА – УПОРЕДНА АНАЛИЗА МОДЕРНОГ ГРЧКОГ И СРПСКОГ ЈЕЗИКА

Резиме

Имајући у виду да нам начин на који се језик користи може много рећи о култури и менталитету људи који њиме говоре, веома је занимљиво испитати које вредности су укорене у пословицама на различитим језицима. Узевши у обзир да се ставови и вредности могу препознати у свим облицима лингвистичке комуникације (DOMINGUEZ BARAJAS 2010: 50), као и да се пословице заснивају на усменој традицији и да се на веома специфичан начин преносе са генерације на генерацију (RASUL 2015: 55) оне нам могу открити много о начину на који је друштво под утицајем језика који користи и обратно. С обзиром на то да су грчко и српско друштво, уопштено говорећи, изграђена на сличним, традиционалним и патријархалним основама, упоредна анализа језичких карактеристика нам може пружити значајан увид у њих. У овом раду се представљају резултати корпусне анализе грчких и српских пословица пронађених у различитим онлајн базама и речницима. Заступљеност жена се испитује из угла негативне насупротив позитивне конотације и бележе се најчешће асоцијације које их прате. Резултати нашег истраживања указују на већи број негативних конотација, најчешће пасивну улогу жене и велику сличност стереотипа у пословицама на оба језика.

Кључне речи: пословице, родни стереотипи, модерни грчки језик, српски језик