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ANTI-PROVERBS IN SLOVAK MEDIA DISCOURSE: TERMINOLOGICAL BOUNDARIES AND TYPES OF TRANSFORMATION

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Abstract. This article examines anti-proverbs in Slovak media discourse from a phraseological and paremiological perspective. It pursues two aims: first, to define the working boundaries of the anti-proverb in relation to similar anti-paremiological forms, and second, to test whether the structural typology proposed by A. T. Litovkina, H. Hrisztova-Gotthardt, P. Barta, K. Vargha, and W. Mieder can be applied to Slovak material. The theoretical part contrasts the narrower conception associated with W. Mieder, according to which anti-proverbs are parodies, transformations, and variations of already existing proverbs, with the broader conception represented by H. Walter and V. M. Mokienko, which also includes humorous proverb-like innovations. The empirical material consists of approximately 150 Slovak examples excerpted from the Slovak National Corpus, print and digital media, social networks, humour websites, and other online sources. The analysis classifies the material according to dominant transformation mechanisms: addition, ellipsis and allusion, substitution, and blending. The results indicate that substitution and the replacement of the second part of the proverb are especially productive in Slovak media discourse; addition is also well represented, whereas ellipsis is usually dependent on contextual cues and blending is comparatively rare. The article argues that Slovak anti-proverbs function as compact means of humour, topical commentary, social criticism, and media satire, while their identification depends on knowledge of the proverb prototype and on the communicative context.

Keywords: journalism; media linguistics; mass media; Slovak media; media discourse; media texts; anti-proverbs; language means; Slovak language; anti-paremiological units; paremiological units; Slovak phraseology; phraseologisms; paremiology; transformation of proverbs

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АНТИПОСЛОВИЦЫ В СЛОВАЦКОМ МЕДИАДИСКУРСЕ: ТЕРМИНОЛОГИЧЕСКИЕ ГРАНИЦЫ И ТИПЫ ТРАНСФОРМАЦИИ

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Аннотация. В статье рассматриваются антипословицы в словацком медиадискурсе с позиций фразеологии и паремиологии. Исследование преследует две цели: во-первых, определить рабочие границы понятия «антипословица» в его соотношении со сходными антипаремиологическими образованиями; во-вторых, проверить применимость к словацкому материалу структурной типологии, предложенной А. Т. Литовкиной, Х. Христовой-Готтхардт, П. Бартой, К. Варгой и В. Мидером. В теоретической части сопоставляются узкая трактовка, связанная с концепцией В. Мидера, согласно которой антипословицы представляют собой пародии, трансформации и вариации уже существующих пословиц, и широкая трактовка, представленная в работах Х. Вальтера и В. М. Мокиенко и включающая также юмористические инновационные образования, построенные по модели пословицы. Эмпирический материал исследования составляют около 150 словацких примеров, извлеченных из Словацкого национального корпуса, печатных и электронных средств массовой информации, социальных сетей, юмористических сайтов и других интернет-источников. Материал классифицируется в соответствии с доминирующими механизмами трансформации: добавлением, эллипсисом и аллюзией, субституцией и контаминацией. Результаты анализа показывают, что в словацком медиадискурсе особой продуктивностью характеризуются субституция и замена второй части пословицы; достаточно широко представлено также добавление, тогда как эллипсис, как правило, зависит от контекстуальных сигналов, а контаминация встречается сравнительно редко. В статье обосновывается положение о том, что словацкие антипословицы функционируют как лаконичные средства создания юмористического эффекта, актуального комментирования, социальной критики и медиасатиры, при этом их идентификация зависит от знания пословичного прототипа и коммуникативного контекста.

Ключевые слова: журналистика; медиалингвистика; средства массовой информации; словацкие СМИ; медиадискурс; медиатексты; антипословицы; языковые средства; словацкий язык; антипаремии; паремии; фразеология словацкого языка; фразеологизмы; паремиология; трансформация пословиц

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Introduction

This study deals with anti-proverbs in Slovak scholarly and media discourse. The term anti-proverb is motivated by the concept of the proverb, whose position in Slovak scholarship oscillates between phraseology and paremiology. Paroemias, as minor folklore

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forms, have several linguistic properties of phrasemes and are therefore often interpreted as part of paremiological phraseology or of phraseology in the broad sense [Mlacek, Ďurčo 1995]. At the same time, they are also autonomous units of folk verbal art and belong to the object of paremiology and folkloristics. This dual status explains why proverbs, sayings, and their transformations are not always described by the same terminology in Slovak, Czech, Russian, and international scholarship.

The Russian linguistic tradition illustrates this problem clearly. Paroemias are often treated as folkloristic units and are distinguished from phraseological units, although some linguists, including N. M. Shansky, A. V. Kunin, and I. I. Chernyshova, count them as phraseological units [Zhukov 2006: 20]. Shansky argues that supra-word character and reproducibility are the main features distinguishing phraseological units from words and free combinations of words, and therefore there is no reason to exclude stable word combinations with the character of a judgement, that is, proverbs and some "winged expressions", from phraseology [Shansky 1996: 36][1]. In this article, we follow J. Mlacek's view that proverbs and sayings belong to phraseology in the broad sense, while also preserving their specific cultural, folkloric, and semantic layer [Mlacek 1984: 125–126].

The relevance of anti-proverbs is connected with the vitality of proverbial language in contemporary communication. Proverbs are not merely inherited formulae; in media discourse they are often shortened, parodied, updated, or adapted to political, commercial, and humorous contexts. These transformations preserve enough of the prototype to be recognizable, yet they also create a new communicative effect. Anti-proverbs therefore provide valuable material for studying the interaction between tradition and innovation, phraseological stability and creative language play, and collective cultural memory and media humour.

The contribution of the article therefore lies not in presenting a complete dictionary of Slovak anti-proverbs, but in establishing a workable terminological and methodological framework for their further study. The following sections combine theoretical delimitation with an exploratory material-based analysis and show which types of proverbial transformation are the most apparent in Slovak media discourse.

Definitions of Anti-Proverbs and Criticism of the Term

Two main approaches to the definition of anti-proverbs can be distinguished. The first is associated with W. Mieder, who, together with the German folklorist L. Röhrich, is usually regarded as one of the creators of the term. Mieder explains that the term was coined by analogy with words such as anti-hero, anti-fairy tale, and anti-legend [Mieder 2007: 18]. In this narrower approach, anti-proverbs are parodies, transformations, and variations of traditional proverbs. The recipient must therefore know the source proverb in order to recognize the anti-proverbial effect.

A broader definition is represented by H. Walter and V. M. Mokienko. In their dictionary of Russian anti-proverbs, humorous proverbial innovations are also included even when they do not arise directly from an already existing proverb [Walter, Mokienko 2005]. The difference between the two approaches can be shown by examples. Russian *Водка без пива – деньги на ветер* or Slovak *Lepší jeden pohárik ráno, ako celý deň nič* are proverb-like humorous texts, but they are not transformations of identifiable traditional proverbs. Under Mieder's definition they would not be anti-proverbs; under Walter and Mokienko's broader conception they may be included. By contrast, Slovak *Kto druhému jamu kope, ten sa narobí* and *Kto druhému jamu kope, je hrobár* are anti-proverbs in both approaches, because they transform the prototype *Kto druhému jamu kope, sám do nej spadne*.

A. Kozintsev critically compares these conceptions. The broader approach makes the class of anti-proverbs very wide and partly amorphous, while the narrower approach is problematic when the prototype is uncertain or unknown [Kozintsev 2014: 241–242][2]. This difficulty is important for Slovak material as well. Some units clearly transform a well-known proverb; others resemble a proverb only by rhythm, structure, parallelism, or moralizing tone.

The term anti-proverb has also been criticized because the prefix anti- may suggest direct opposition or negation. Some scholars have proposed alternatives such as para-proverb or post-proverb, emphasizing adjacency to, or movement beyond, the traditional proverb. In Slovak phraseology, J. Mlacek's study "Antipríslovie a príbuzné útvary" is especially important. Mlacek points out that some modern proverb-like expressions, for example *Česť práci a robote pokoj*, do not derive directly from proverbs and are therefore difficult to classify as anti-proverbs in the narrow sense [Mlacek 2009]. He also draws attention to related phenomena, including witty fixed replies[3].

Despite these objections, the term anti-proverb is useful if it is defined explicitly. In this article, we use it primarily in Mieder's narrower sense, that is, for humorous, parodic, or otherwise semantically marked transformations of existing proverbs. However, the broader conception is also taken into account, because Slovak media discourse contains many borderline cases whose proverbiality is based on analogy rather than on a single identifiable prototype. The prefix anti- is understood here not as a strict antonymic relation to the proverb, but as a signal of deviation from the conven-

[1] Original Russian wording: «Таким образом, сверхсловность, с одной стороны, и воспроизводимость – с другой, являются теми основными признаками, которыми фразеологические обороты отграничиваются соответственно от слов и свободных сочетаний слов. Поэтому нет оснований выводить устойчивые сочетания слов, имеющие характер суждения (т. е. пословицы, а также некоторые "крылатые выражения"), за пределы фразеологии» [Shansky 1996: 36].

[2] A more detailed critique of these concepts is offered by Alexander Kozintsev in the volume Scala Naturae: Festschrift in Honour of Arvo Krikmann, published in 2014. Kozintsev discusses problematic cases of anti-proverbs and proposes his own classification [Kozintsev 2014].

[3] For a more detailed discussion of humorous fixed replies, see Pallay and Meterc [2019].

tional authority, wisdom, or moral norm encoded in the original proverb.

Material and Method

The analysis addresses three research questions: (1) which structural mechanisms of anti-proverb formation are attested in Slovak media discourse; (2) which mechanisms appear most productive in the available exploratory material; and (3) where the boundary between anti-proverbs and related anti-paremiological forms becomes problematic.

The study is based on an exploratory corpus of approximately 150 Slovak anti-proverbs. The material was collected from three main types of sources: the Slovak National Corpus (SNK), Slovak print and digital media, and online humorous or social-media environments. The Slovak National Corpus, especially the public corpus prim-6.0-public-all, was used for targeted searches of fragments of well-known proverbs[1]. This method is productive when the researcher already knows the expected prototype and can search for its stable components, such as *kto*, *jamu kope*, *bez práce*, or *darovanému koňovi*. Its limitation is that it mostly finds transformations of known proverbs and only rarely detects newly created proverb-like texts.

The second method consisted of directed internet searching. Humour websites, social networks, memes, comments, online discussions, and media headlines proved especially productive. Some examples were excerpted from the Slovak humour website Rehot.sk[2]. These sources are unstable and difficult to delimit, but they are indispensable because anti-proverbs circulate most intensively in precisely such environments. The material was then classified according to the structural typology of anti-proverbial transformation proposed by A. T. Litovkina, H. Hrisztova-Gotthardt, P. Barta, K. Vargha, and W. Mieder [Litovkina et al. 2021: 54–138].

For analytical purposes, each example was linked, where possible, to its proverb prototype and then assigned to a dominant type of transformation. Combined transformations were not forced into a single category when several mechanisms were relevant; instead, the dominant operation is discussed together with secondary operations where necessary. Because the dataset is exploratory rather than statistically balanced, the numerical claims in this article are deliberately limited. The analysis therefore distinguishes relative productivity and attested status instead of presenting a complete frequency distribution.

The qualitative distribution of the main transformation types is summarized in Table 1. The overview is based on the analysed material and is intended as a guide to the interpretation of the examples, not as a substitute for a separately coded quantitative database.

[1] Slovak National Corpus (SNK) – prim-6.0-public-all. Bratislava: Ľ. Štúr Institute of Linguistics, Slovak Academy of Sciences, 2020. URL: https://korpus.sk (mode of access: 26.02.2024).

[2] Unless another source is given, Slovak humorous online examples in this article were excerpted from Rehot.sk. URL: https://www.rehot.sk/ (mode of access: 20.01.2025).

Table. Qualitative overview of transformation types in the Slovak material[3]

Transformation type	*Status in the Slovak material*	*Typical function in media discourse*
Addition	Well represented; ranges from sound addition to added clauses and sentences (23 % from the total studied material – 30 / 130 units)	Commentary, contradiction, literalization, comic re-framing
Ellipsis and allusion	Less frequent; often combined with substitution or contextual cues (8 % from the total studied material – 11 / 130 units)	Activation of a familiar prototype through omission or indirect reference
Substitution	Most productive; includes sounds, words, word order, punctuation, and whole proverb parts (45 % from the total studied material – 59 / 130 units)	Topicalization, parody, semantic reversal, political and social satire
Blending	Marginal in the exploratory corpus; four Slovak examples are discussed (3 % from the total studied material – 4 / 130 units)	Simultaneous activation of two or more proverbial or phraseological frames

[3] Not all the anti-proverbs in the collected material can be characterized as transformations of pre-existing prototypes. Of the 130 units analysed, 79 % are transformations, while 21 % are newly coined units without an identifiable prototype.

Types of Transformation in Slovak Anti-Proverbs

Addition. In the international material analysed by Litovkina et al., addition is one of the basic formal operations [Litovkina et al. 2021: 54–77]. It is also well represented in Slovak. The smallest additions affect phonemes, whereas larger additions function as comments. The Slovak examples suggest that the added material is rarely neutral: it usually introduces a lower stylistic register, a topical reference, or an ironic reinterpretation of the original wisdom.

Addition means that a sound, word, phrase, clause, or sentence is added to the proverb. The added element usually changes the meaning of the original proverb and creates humour through surprise, paronymy, literalization, or contradiction.

One subtype is the addition of a phoneme. The result is often a paronymic transformation in which a small sound change produces a new, comic lexical unit:

*Pred líškou zavri kur**v**ník. (cf. Pred líškou zavri kurník.)*[4]

*Tichá vod**k**a brehy myje. (cf. Tichá voda brehy myje.)*[5]

[4] https://www.rehot.sk/vtip/14340, 22. 2. 2026, aphorism.

[5] https://www.rehot.sk/vtip/14340, 22. 2. 2026, aphorism.

(rehot.sk, 22. 2. 2026, aphorism)

In the first example, the added sound changes *kurník* 'henhouse' into a vulgar and humorous form "kurvník". In the second example, *voda* 'water' is transformed into *vodka*, so the traditional image of *quiet water* is replaced by an alcohol-related joke. Such minimal modifications are efficient because they preserve the acoustic and rhythmic shape of the proverb while shifting its semantic domain.

Addition of two or three phonemes is rarer in the Slovak sample, but the mechanism is the same: the new form remains close enough to the prototype to be recognized, while the added sound material changes the semantic orientation. International examples such as *Let sleeping dogmas lie* from *Let sleeping dogs lie* or Russian *Первый блиндаж комом?* from *Первый блин комом* show how the transformation depends on paronymy and on the reader's ability to reconstruct the source [Litovkina et al. 2021]. In Slovak, similar effects are mostly realized through one-sound changes or through substitution rather than through longer phonemic additions.

Addition of a word or a group of words may comment on the original proverb more explicitly. The added element often weakens the universal validity of the proverb or redirects it to a concrete situation:

Berte si ponaučenie – bez práce nie sú koláče ***a ani príma postava***[1]*. (SNK; cf. Bez práce nie sú koláče.)*

The first example undermines the moral value of work contained in the prototype. The second extends the proverb into the domain of lifestyle, fitness, and self-discipline. The original proverb remains recognizable, but its traditional didactic force is recontextualized.

Addition may also take the form of a whole clause or sentence. This subtype is very frequent because it allows the author to preserve the proverb and then immediately oppose, explain, or ridicule it:

Lož má krátke nohy, ***ale aké sú šikovné****. (cf. Lož má krátke nohy.)*[2]

Kto chodí spávať so sliepkami, ***možno je zoofil.*** *(cf. Chodiť spávať so sliepkami.)*[3]

Stará láska nehrdzavie. ***Iba mozgové závity****. (cf. Stará láska nehrdzavie.)*[4]

In these examples, the added clause or sentence produces a comic reinterpretation of the figurative meaning. The proverb is not simply contradicted; it is pulled into a new pragmatic frame. The author deliberately interprets figurative expressions literally or connects them with taboo, everyday, or absurd contexts.

A special form of addition is the wellerism. It has a typical structure consisting of a proverb or proverbial utterance, a reporting phrase, and a contextualizing addition that changes the meaning of the first part. Litovkina et al. state that the meaning of the proverb is usually distorted when placed into striking juxtaposition with the third part of the wellerism [Litovkina et al. 2021: 62]. Slovak examples include:

Všade dobre, doma najlepšie, ako povedal ten ujo, keď nedostal devízový prísľub. (cf. Všade dobre, doma najlepšie.)[5]

"Poriadok musí byť," povedala babka a kopla hovno pod posteľ. (cf. Poriadok musí byť.)[6]

The second and third parts of the wellerism contextualize the proverb in a situation that contradicts or trivializes the moral seriousness of the prototype. The result is a humorous clash between conventional wisdom and vulgar behaviour or ironic, usually topical comment.

Ellipsis and Allusion. Ellipsis is less frequent in the Slovak material than addition and substitution. This is partly because an omitted element must be recoverable. If the prototype is not highly familiar, the humorous effect may be lost. Elliptic anti-proverbs therefore rely on very common paroemias and on their strong presence in the linguistic memory of speakers.

Ellipsis is the opposite of addition: a component of the proverb is omitted. In anti-proverbs, ellipsis often appears together with substitution, punctuation change, or contextual allusion. The omitted part is usually recoverable because the proverb is familiar to speakers.

One frequent pattern is the omission of the second part of the proverb:

Kto druhému jamu kope? Komu sa nelení? Ako sa do hory volá? (cf. Kto druhému jamu kope, sám do nej spadne; Komu sa nelení, tomu sa zelení; Ako sa do hory volá, tak sa z hory ozýva.)[7]

In this example, only the first halves of three proverbs are used. At the same time, the transformation of declarative structures into questions changes their pragmatic function. The proverb is no longer presented as a completed piece of wisdom; it becomes an index of collective memory and automatic cultural knowledge.

Ellipsis may also affect smaller units. International examples include English *All's well that ends* from *All's well that ends well* and Russian *Там хорошо, где нас!* from *Там хорошо, где нас нет*. In such cases the omitted component changes the moral or pragmatic orientation of the proverb. Slovak data contain fewer clear examples of this type, but the same mechanism can be observed in media headlines that quote only the first segment of a well-known proverb and allow the audience to complete it mentally.

A more radical subtype is allusion, in which the proverb is not quoted directly but is evoked by one of its key images or lexical components. For example:

Ak melieš hubou, netvár sa, že si Boží mlyn. (cf. Božie mlyny melú pomaly, ale isto.)[8]

The anti-proverb relies on the image of divine mills but transfers it to colloquial criticism of excessive

[1] https://blog.sme.sk/hajdoniova/sukromne/ako-to-robia-herecky-v-amerike, 24.5.2005, blog post.

[2] https://www.rehot.sk/vtipy/kratke/najnovsie?stranka=13, 23.2.2026, aphorism.

[3] https://www.rehot.sk/vtip/6388, 24.2.2026, aphorism.

[4] https://www.rehot.sk/vtipy/kratke/najlepsie?stranka=4, 23.2.2026, aphorism.

[5] https://www.juls.savba.sk/ediela/frazeologicka_terminologia/, 1995.

[6] https://www.smiechoty.sk/vtip/13639-poriadok-musi-byt-povedala-babka-a-kopla-hovno-pod/, 2008, aphorism.

[7] Buzassy, Ján (1978), Básne, Bratislava: Slovenský spisovateľ. [in Slovak], poem.

[8] https://www.rehot.sk/vtipy/kratke/najlepsie?stranka=10, 24.3.2026, aphorism.

talking. It is recognizable only if the recipient knows the source proverb. This subtype shows that anti-proverbs are not purely formal transformations; they also depend on cultural and pragmatic competence.

Substitution. Substitution is the central mechanism in the Slovak material. It offers the most efficient compromise between continuity and innovation: the syntactic rhythm and semantic frame of the proverb remain visible, while one component is replaced by a topical, absurd, vulgar, commercial, or politically motivated element. For this reason, substitution is particularly suitable for media headlines, internet memes, slogans, and short humorous comments.

Substitution of a single sound or phoneme may create a paronymic joke:

Bez práce nie sú doláče. (SNK; cf. Bez práce nie sú koláče.)[1]

V zdravom tele zdravý puch. (cf. V zdravom tele zdravý duch.)[2]

In the first example, *koláče* 'cakes' is replaced by *doláče*, a playful form evoking dollars. The moral idea of work is moved into the sphere of money. In the second example, *duch* 'spirit' is replaced by *puch* 'stench', which produces a comic degradation of the classical formula.

Substitution of word order also occurs. It often reverses the logic of the source proverb:

Najprv pláca, potom práca! (SNK; cf. Najprv práca, potom pláca.)[3]

Ja by som skor povedal, ze ***strom nepada daleko od jablka*** *(SNK; cf. Jablko nepadá ďaleko od stromu.)*[4]

Všade doma dobre najlepšie. (cf. Všade dobre, doma najlepšie.)[5]

The first example changes the work ethic of the prototype into a demand for reward before labour. The second and third examples exploit absurd reversal. The recognizable frame of the proverb is preserved, but the semantic relationship between its components is disrupted.

A politically topical example is the internet meme known as "Dankov stĺp" (Fig. 1), which reacts to the publicized incident in which Slovak politician Andrej Danko crashed into a traffic pole in January 2024[6]. The meme transforms the proverb: *Ohýbaj ma, Mamko, pokiaľ som ja Danko. (cf. Ohýbaj ma, mamko, pokiaľ som ja Janko.)*

[1] https://blog.sme.sk/janicik/ekonomika/bez-prace-nie-su-dolace, 2007, blog post.

[2] https://www.rehot.sk/vtip/14340, 5.3.2026, aphorism.

[3] https://www.cas.sk/spravy/domace-spravy/novy-bratislavsky-primator-zaraba-ako-kral-preco-ma-o-2-tisicky-viac-ako-nesrovnal, 21.12.2018, newspaper article.

[4] https://www.aktuality.sk/diskusia/251457/jan-slota-frantisek-miklosko-ci-jozef-behyl-chcu-sediet-v-europskom-parlamente/, 19.4.2014, internet discussion on politics (diacritics omitted in original source).

[5] Šille, Erik, 21.06.2024, art exhibition title.

[6] Facebook post: Zomri official, "Pranostiky – Miloslav/foto Startitup". URL: https://m.facebook.com/zomriofficial/photos/pranostiky-miloslavfoto-startitup/699409092323814/ (mode of access: 24.02.2025).



Fig. 1. Dankov Stĺp (source: https://m.facebook.com/zomriofficial/photos/pranostiky-miloslavfoto-startitup/699409092323814/)

The transformation preserves rhyme and rhythm while connecting the proverb with a current political event. This example confirms that anti-proverbs function as instruments of media commentary and collective satire.

Substitution of several words can transform the entire semantic centre of the proverb while keeping its grammatical pattern. This is visible in examples based on binary structures such as *Aká A, taká B, Bez A nie sú B*, or *Darovanému A na B nepozeraj*. The pattern invites playful replacement of the variable positions.

Darovanému pivu sa na penu nepozeraj. (SNK; cf. Darovanému koňovi na zuby nepozeraj.)[7]

Darovanému koňaku na hviezdičky nepozeraj. (SNK; cf. Darovanému koňovi na zuby nepozeraj.)[8]

Both examples preserve the syntactic skeleton of the proverb but replace the horse-related imagery by alcohol-related imagery. The proverb's moral about accepting gifts without criticism is transferred into a humorous consumer context.

Substitution of one word is especially frequent:

[7] https://my.sme.sk/turiec/c/na-margo-juna, 2009, blog post.

[8] https://blog.sme.sk/rias/zabava/vysypane-z-rukava, 2005, blog post.

17. 8. má meniny Milica – Milica je ľudské! (SNK; cf. Mýliť sa je ľudské.)[1]

Aká matka, taký skrutkovač. (cf. Aká matka, taká Katka.)[2]

Čo na srdci – to na Facebooku. (cf. Čo na srdci, to na jazyku.)[3]

The first example is based on homophony between *mýliť sa* 'to err' and the proper name *Milica*. The second substitutes an expected human name with an object, creating absurdity. The third example replaces the organ of speech by Facebook and thus updates the proverb for social-media communication. It is, strictly speaking, a transformation of a saying rather than a proverb, but it is important for the broader field of anti-paroemiological transformations.

A related example appears on a T-shirt print (Fig. 2): *Milica je Lucke. (cf. Mýliť sa je ľudské.)*[4]

[1] https://blog.sme.sk/gyulai/zabava/tie-najsmiesnejsie-preklepy, 2005, blog post/aphorism.
[2] https://www.rehot.sk/vtip/7792, 17.1.2026, aphorism.
[3] https://medialne.trend.sk/televizia/co-srdci-to-facebooku-bolo-politickej-kariere, 24.7.2014, headline of newspaper article.

[4] T-shirt print "Milica je Lucke". URL: http://www.cocopinda.com/shop/pictures/122-5016.jpg (mode of access: 24.02.2025).



Fig. 2. T-shirt Milica je Lucke (source: http://www.cocopinda.com/shop/pictures/122-5016.jpg)

This example combines homophony and dialectally marked pronunciation. It also plays with the Slovak word *je*, which may mean 'is' or 'eats', thereby multiplying the humorous effect.

Substitution of the first part of a proverb is less frequent. This asymmetry corresponds to the observation that the beginning of a proverb is usually more important for recognition than the end [Litovkina et al. 2021]. If the first part is changed too strongly, the receiver may fail to identify the source. For this reason, Slovak anti-proverbs more often preserve the opening and change the continuation.

Substitution of the second part of the proverb is a very productive pattern. The first part activates the proverb in the recipient's memory, while the second part replaces the expected continuation:

Kto druhému jamu kope, ten sa dosť narobí. (cf. Kto druhému jamu kope, sám do nej spadne.)[5]

Kto druhému jamu kope, je zrejme hrobár. (cf. Kto druhému jamu kope, sám do nej spadne.)[6]

Babka k babce, už sa chlasce… (na mítingu). (cf. Babka k babce, budú kapce.)[7]

This type is effective because the first half of the proverb strongly predicts the second half. The unexpected continuation creates surprise and humour. It is also suitable for games, headlines, slogans, and online jokes, because the audience can complete the prototype mentally and immediately perceive the deviation.

Blending. Blending is rarer in the Slovak corpus, but it is semantically rich. It presupposes that the reader can identify more than one source expression. The humorous effect arises not only from the transformation of one proverb but also from the unexpected contact between two different pieces of conventional wisdom.

Blending, or contamination, combines parts of two or more proverbs or other phraseological units. Litovkina et al. describe it as a transformation in which a part of one proverb is replaced by a part of

[5] https://www.facebook.com/groups/vsetkovtipnezinternetu/posts/1583852995559549/, 4.8.2024, Facebook post.

[6] https://www.rehot.sk/vtip/14722, 5.5.2025, aphorism.
[7] https://www.rehot.sk/vtip/14722, 5.5.2025, aphorism.

another proverb, or another proverb or phraseological unit is added to the original proverb [Litovkina et al. 2021: 121]. In the Slovak material, blending is less frequent than substitution, but it is analytically important because it shows how several proverbial frames can be activated at once.

A simple example combines a proverb with a related saying:

Božie mlyny melú pomaly. Nečudo, veď každý z nás chodí len s troškou do mlyna. (cf. Božie mlyny melú pomaly, ale isto; Chodiť so svojou troškou do mlyna.)[1]

The proverb about divine justice is combined with the phrase *chodiť so svojou troškou do mlyna*. The shared image of the mill enables the humorous connection. The result is not only a formal combination but also a semantic reinterpretation of both units.

Blending may also occur between proverbs that share a lexical component, an image, or a syntactic structure. Shared imagery facilitates the merge because the new text can appear coherent even when it combines different sources. In Slovak, the image of the mill, the gift horse, work and cakes, or the first half of *Kto druhému jamu kope* are especially productive starting points for such transformations.

Another type appears when several proverbs are accumulated in one passage:

Chudobných ľudí tohto sveta neustále ohlupujú myšlienky – kto nepracuje, nech neje, bez práce nie sú koláče či kto do teba kameňom, ty do neho chlebom. No zazobanci, a často i propagátori týchto skvostov, vodu kážu, víno slopú. (SNK)[2]

Here, three proverbs are used in sequence and are followed by a transformed saying: *Vodu káže, víno pije* becomes *vodu kážu, víno slopú*. The passage criticizes the ideological use of traditional wisdom. It is therefore not merely a humorous accumulation of paroemias but a media strategy that exposes the tension between moral discourse and social practice.

Discussion: Methodological Boundaries and Interpretive Problems

The Slovak material shows that anti-proverbs should not be described only as isolated jokes. In media discourse they function as contextualized acts of evaluation: they compress humour, irony, satire, and topical commentary into a formula whose prototype is culturally shared.

The first methodological problem is the collection of material. In Slovak there is no systematic dictionary of anti-proverbs comparable to Walter and Mokienko's dictionary of Russian anti-proverbs. Searching on the Slovak National Corpus is useful, but it primarily finds transformations of known proverb fragments and may miss newly coined proverb-like utterances. Conversely, broad corpus queries often return many irrelevant sentences because common pronominal and syntactic patterns are not specific to proverbs.

The second problem is the identification of the prototype. Some examples have an obvious source, for instance *Kto druhému jamu kope, ten sa dosť narobí*, which clearly presupposes *Kto druhému jamu kope, sám do nej spadne*. Other examples are more ambiguous and may refer to several proverb variants, to a general proverbial schema, or to a wider phraseological pattern. Prototype uncertainty is therefore not an accidental defect of the material but one of the central features of anti-proverb research.

The third problem concerns the boundary between anti-proverbs and broader anti-paremiological forms. Several Slovak examples transform sayings, fixed replies, fairy-tale formulae, slogans, or media clichés rather than proverbs in the strict sense. These examples should not be mixed uncritically with anti-proverbs in Mieder's narrow sense; nevertheless, they are relevant because they reveal the same mechanisms of formulaic stability, semantic deviation, and humorous re-contextualization.

The fourth problem concerns the stability of online sources. Memes, social-media posts, humorous websites, and comments may disappear, be edited, or circulate without clear authorship.

For these reasons, the article adopts a two-level approach: anti-proverbs in the strict sense are understood as transformations of identifiable proverbs, whereas borderline cases are discussed as anti-paremiological transformations. This distinction makes it possible to preserve terminological precision without excluding the dynamic material that is typical of contemporary media discourse.

Conclusion

This article has examined Slovak anti-proverbs as transformations of inherited proverbial material and as active elements of contemporary media discourse. The analysis confirms that anti-proverbs arise from the tension between formulaic stability and creative deviation: the transformed text must remain recognizable as a proverb-based utterance, but it must also introduce an unexpected semantic, pragmatic, or stylistic shift.

The Slovak material broadly supports the structural typology proposed by Litovkina et al. Addition, ellipsis and allusion, substitution, and blending are all attested. Their productivity, however, is uneven. Substitution is the most visible and productive mechanism, especially when one sound, one word, a binary component, or the second part of a proverb is replaced. Addition is also well represented, particularly when an added clause or sentence reinterprets the traditional wisdom of the prototype. Ellipsis depends more strongly on shared cultural knowledge, while blending is marginal in the exploratory corpus but theoretically important because it activates several formulaic frames at once.

The analysis also shows that Slovak anti-proverbs are strongly connected with media pragmatics. They appear in online jokes, comments, memes, headlines, T-shirt inscriptions, literary excerpts, and media. In these contexts they do not function only as humorous deviations from tradition; they also serve as compact

[1] Quotation by Milan Kupecký. URL: https://citaty-slavnych.sk/citaty/296772-milan-kupecky-bozie-mlyny-melu-pomaly-necudo-ved-kazdy-z-nas-c/ (mode of access: 21.01.2025).

[2] Plus 7 dní. Bratislava: Spoločnosť 7 Plus, 2006, vol. 16, no. 26, newspaper article.

forms of social criticism, political satire, self-irony, and commentary on everyday life.

From a theoretical point of view, the narrow definition of the anti-proverb remains the most precise for classification, because it requires an identifiable proverb prototype. At the same time, Slovak media discourse demonstrates that many productive examples stand at the border between anti-proverbs, anti-sayings, anti-paroemias, and transformed phraseological units. A strict classification should therefore be supplemented by an explicit category of borderline anti-paremiological transformations.

Future research should build a larger coded database of Slovak anti-proverbs, distinguish sources and genres more systematically, and compare media examples with spontaneous spoken usage. Such a database would make it possible to verify the qualitative tendencies identified in this study and to prepare a Slovak dictionary of anti-proverbs and related anti-paremiological forms.

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