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Reinterpreted constituents as proper names in Italian proverbs

Komponenty reinterpretowane jako nazwy własne w przysłowiaach włoskich

Abstrakt

Wśród nazw stanowiących komponenty przysłów występują składniki odczytywane jako nazwy własne w wyniku reinterpretacji etymologicznej. Elementy te nabierają znaczenia, co nie jest charakterystyczne dla nazw własnych. Ich semantyka jest uwarunkowana zaistnieniem możliwości dwójakiej interpretacji tych nazw: po pierwsze, odczytania ich jako jednostek należących do klasy nazw własnych, np. antroponimów lub toponimów; po drugie, jako wyrazów o określonym znaczeniu, np. opisujących nazywaną osobę lub określane miejsce. Nie są to prototypowe nazwy własne, wykazują one raczej cechy pseudoonimów. Przysłowia zawierające tego rodzaju składniki są interesujące w perspektywie stylistycznej, ponieważ dzięki grze słów wprowadzają do dyskursu zabarwienie humorystyczne. Celem artykułu jest zanalizowanie zjawiska występowania komponentów reinterpretowanych etymologicznie w paremiach włoskich, zbadanie mechanizmów wykorzystanych do stworzenia możliwości etymologicznej reinterpretacji nazw własnych, wskazanie rodzajów tych składników i ustalenie ich liczby dla korpusu opracowanego na podstawie słownika przysłów zatytułowanego *Dizionario dei proverbi italiani* Carla Lapuciego.

Słowa kluczowe: przysłowie, nazwa własna, nazwa ornamentacyjna, etymologiczna reinterpretacja

Abstract

Among names employed in proverbs, there are constituents which become proper names in the context of a proverb as a result of etymological reinterpretation. Such components acquire a meaning, an effect which is not characteristic of proper names. Their semantic load is conditioned by a possibility of two interpretations of the element in question: first, as a unit belonging to *nomina propria*, e.g. an anthroponym or a toponym; second, as a unit with a particular meaning, for instance, describing the person or the place named. The analysed components are not prototypical proper nouns, but rather pseudo-proper names. Proverbs containing such components are interesting from a stylistic perspective, since thanks to word play, they gain humorous markedness. The aim of the article is to shed light on this phenomenon by discussing Italian proverbs containing the components

in question, analyzing the mechanisms of creating the possibility of etymological reinterpretation of proper names, describing kinds of these constituents and determining the number of reinterpreted components in the proverbs excerpted from a dictionary of Italian proverbs *Dizionario dei proverbi italiani* by Carlo Lapucci.

Key words: proverb, proper name, allusive/ornamental name, etymological reinterpretation

1. Introduction

The adoption of the broad definition of phraseology based on reproducibility as a key criterion allows for analyzing all kinds of polylexemic units that are fixed. Therefore, reproducible language units comprise a variety of stable multiword expressions, from two-word collocations to longer, sentence-like combinations of words (Chlebda 2007: 18). Among the latter phrases, one can distinguish the proverb.

Although the notion of proverb is intuitively known to the vast majority of language users, from a scientific perspective the term itself is rather difficult to define, which results from several factors, including the complex character of the phenomenon and different methodological approaches. For the purpose of the present study, the following definition will be adopted:

A proverb is a short, generally known sentence of the folk which contains wisdom, truth, morals and traditional views in a metaphorical, fixed way and memorable form and which is handed down from generation to generation. (Mieder 1985: 119)

Irrespective of its brevity, the above definition encapsulates the most important features of the proverb (cf. Szpila 2003). Therefore, it sets the criteria for the inclusion of the units for the analysis.

Apart from common names, which are the most frequent constituents of proverbs, many paremia contain *nomina propria* – components deeply rooted in a given culture, rich in connotations and important from a linguistic perspective. Proper names perform different functions: they may be used in a generic sense (e.g. *Every Jack has his Jill*), or – especially in the units classified either as paremia or as sayings – they can be employed in their primary role, i.e. they refer to particular persons or places (e.g. *Cheshire born and Cheshire bred, strong i' th'arm and weak i' th'head*).

Generally speaking, expressions containing proper names constitute a group of units analyzed by scholars both in a monolingual approach, for instance, German (Földes 1984/85) and English (Pierini 2008; Sušinskienė 2009), and cross-linguistically, for example, Polish and French (Zaręba 1996a, 1996b, 1996c), English and Polish (Szerszunowicz 2006a), German

and Hungarian (Földes 1988), German, Russian and Hungarian (Földes 1990), English, Italian and Polish (Szerszunowicz 2008) and German, Russian and Latvian (Migla 2010).

Although onomastic idioms have been analysed thoroughly from various perspectives (Földes 1989), far less scholarly attention has been paid to proper names in proverbs. Among works devoted solely to *nomina propria* in proverb lore, the paper by Pintarić (1996) offers a panoramic view of Polish proverbs with such names. Then, the paper by Nowakowska and Tomczak (2007) is worth mentioning: the scholars discuss surnames as syntactic elements of Polish proverbs. In turn, Kijania-Placek (2016) focuses on indexicals and proper names in proverbs. Furthermore, Timoszuk (2001) investigates the functions of anthroponyms in Russian proverbs, while Gurbisz (1998) offers an analysis of saints' names in Russian proverbs and sayings.

The contrastive perspective has also been adopted by several scholars analysing proverbs: for instance, Gawęda (1998) analyses proper names in Polish and German proverbs. Yet, little research has been done on proverbs containing etymologically reinterpreted constituents (Szerszunowicz 2006b), i.e. elements which both serve as proper names and components that gain meaning as a result of interpretation of their coinage, structure etc.

The general aim of the present study is to discuss the phenomenon of reinterpreted as proper names in proverbs. The specific objectives are threefold: first, to collect a corpus of Italian proverbs with reinterpreted names of various kind; second, to conduct a multiaspectual analysis of the pseudo-proprial components; third, to offer an insight into the specifics of such proverbs, to a great extent conditioned by the presence of the etymologically reinterpreted constituent.

The units selected for the analysis have been excerpted from a dictionary of Italian proverbs *Dizionario dei proverbi italiani* by Lapucci (DDPI) which contains 25,000 proverbs¹. Their inclusion in the dictionary attests their status as well established units in the Italian language. As a result of the excerption, a corpus of 92 proverbs has been compiled for the needs of the present study.

In fact, not all the items attested in this dictionary, i.e. classified as proverbs by Lapucci (DDPI), and containing etymologically reinterpreted

¹ Each proverb excerpted from this dictionary is followed by the *DDPI* abbreviation, the page and the record number in brackets. For the *paremia* quoted from other lexicographic sources, the abbreviation of the dictionary title and the respective page are provided after a given unit. All literal translations of Italian proverbs are proposed by the author.

components strictly meet the criteria of the definition proposed by Mieder (1985) which are widely accepted in works on proverbs². Therefore, the corpus will be analyzed with the distinction between proverbs proper (first-degree corpus), i.e. those which fulfill Mieder's demands concerning proverbiality and items of proverbial character, which are situated in the periphery of proverb lore (second-degree corpus), closer in their character to pragmatic idioms or short forms of folklore (cf. Mieder 2007).

2. Onomastic and pseudo-onomastic constituents of proverbs

From a lexical perspective, proverb constituents can be divided into two groups: appellatives, designating a member of a class, e.g. *stone*, and proper ones which designate a specific entity, e.g. *Henry* (McArthur 1996: 609). Proper names can be classified according to the referent: one can distinguish personal names, place names, names of events, names of institutions, names of vehicles and names of works of art.

Both kinds of components appear in proverbs, with the latter, i.e. proper names, much less frequent than common nouns. Among *nomina propria*, anthroponyms tend to dominate. An example of a proverb with an anthroponymic constituent is *All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy* which contains a common male name. Personal names are followed by toponyms – names of “locality, either natural (as of bodies of water, mountains, plains, and valleys) social (as of cities, counties, provinces, nations, and states)” (Mc Arthur 1996: 704), like *All roads lead to Rome*. Far less frequent are other proper names, such as chrematonyms: *Don't rearrange the deck chairs of the Titanic* (DOMP, p. 36).

The constituents belonging to the class of *nomina propria* comprise both authentic and non-authentic names. In terms of semantics, generally speaking, it can be assumed that:

meaning appears thus to be an optional element of proper name content, which does not seem to be the case with other vocabulary. A proper name may mean but does not have to, while with other vocabulary it always has to carry some meaning. (Berezowski 2001: 88)³

² For example, this dictionary contains a descriptive phrase *È del Piglia* [lit. He is from Takeit] (DDPI, p. 897, no. 1743) which can be classified as an idiom or a proverbial expression.

³ It should be added that various extralinguistic factors, such as literature, popular songs, films, etc., may contribute to the development of connotations (cf. Gajda 2004). Certain associations evoked by proper names can become so familiar to the users of a given language that the connotations may be included in lexicographic works, for instance, in Dutch dictionaries,

Among proper names with semantic contents, one can distinguish those which are etymologically reinterpreted. Actually, the names characterizing the carrier are found among pseudonyms and literary names. Many of them rely on humorous effects, for instance, those containing an exponent of negation: *Not Zola*, *Not Van Dyke* (Cieślíkowa 1998: 138). As for literary genres, such names have been used *inter alia* in epigrams, comedies and children's literature: such names have been common since the 16th c. (Kosyl 1998: 376).

Discussing the use of the names in question in literary works, Kosyl (1998: 376) distinguishes certain trends in creating such names: etymological (using authentic names humorously, by employing both a given name as proper and common), semantic (names characterizing the carrier – there is a relation between the literal meaning motivating the name and the carrier; dominant semantic function), grotesque-ludic (names involved in word play, e.g. phonetic expressiveness, hybridized, neologisms, stylized names, modifications of authentic names, strings of names or surname components; dominant expressive function), pseudo-onomastic (common names or their combinations as proper names).

Pseudo-proper names are also used as components of fixed expressions, like proverbs and idioms. The meaning of the name is deduced from the reinterpretation of its elements, for instance, *Lady Luck is a jealous / cruel / fickle / hard mistress* (DOMP, p. 136). The constituents in question introduce humour in the proverb by employing word play, thus performing the ludic function, which is conditioned by the etymological reinterpretation of a proper name.

3. Italian proverbs containing constituents reinterpreted as proper names

3.1. General characteristics of the corpus of proverbs with constituents reinterpreted as proper names

The research corpus contains 92 units included in the dictionary of proverbs compiled by Lapucci (DDPI) which, as already mentioned in the introductory part, includes 25,000 units. In total, the paremia contain

the names “*Johnny* and *Anita* (in Belgium *Marina*) show up as common nouns meaning fashion-sensitive, lower class youngsters from what we call the *patatageneratie* (couch-potato-generation)” (Schutz 2002: 639). Additionally, it is worth observing that in a given culture, some proper names develop evaluative connotations, for example, the lexicographic description of the idiom *Buggins' turn* mentions that this surname is “an invented name which to English ears is both undistinguished and slightly comic” (ODEI, p. 81).

117 components reinterpreted as proper names, which amounts to 86 after excluding variant forms and items repeated in an identical form in different proverbs.

As already mentioned, the primary subcorpus is composed of the units that fully meet the criteria of proverbiality proposed by Mieder. It comprises 86 proverbs, while the secondary one – 6 units partially complying with the scholar's definition. It can be assumed that the proverbs from both subcorpora are of low frequency, since less sizeable dictionaries, like *Dizionario dei proverbi* (DDP) with 10,000 units, or *Dizionario dei proverbi italiani e dialettali* (DDPIED) which contains 6,000 proverbs and 10,000 dialectal variants, tend to omit the vast majority of them.

The secondary subcorpus contains similes like *far come Padre Comoda, che pisciava da cavallo* [lit. to do like Father Convenient who was pissing from horseback] (DDPI, p. 259, no. 1880), pragmatic idioms, for instance *Vieni da Durazzo?* [lit. Are you from Stupidville?] (DDPI, p. 469, no. 1645), and short forms of folklore: – *Pigrizia, lo vuoi il brodo / la minestra?* / – *Sì. / – Portami il piatto. / – Non lo / la voglio* [lit. – Laziness, do you want broth / soup? / – Yes. / – Bring me the plate. / – I don't want it] (DDPI, p. 899, no. 1778).

Several proverbs have developed variants, for example: *Donato è morto e Cortesia è sempre in agonia* [lit. Given died and Politeness is always in agony] / *Donato è morto e Cortesia sta male* [lit. Given is dead and Politeness is not well] (DDPI, p. 342, nos. 795, 796,), *San Donato ammazzò san Giusto* [lit. Saint Given killed Saint Just] / *San Donato ruppe le braccia a san Giusto* [Saint Given broke Saint Just's arms] (DDPI, p. 966, nos. 107, 108).

The analysed proverbs included in both subcorpora employ the means typical of proverb lore, like rhyme and rhythm, as exemplified by the following units: *Quando arriva il don Quattrino anche il vescovo s'inchina* [lit. When Mr Penny arrives, even the bishop bows] (DDPI, p. 363, no. 1197), *Il sor Donato è sempre ben arrivato* [lit. Mr Given is always welcome] (DDPI, p. 342, no. 799), *Frate Accetta a se stesso non da retta* [lit. Brother Accept does not take himself seriously] (DDPI, p. 934, no. 2488).

Among the techniques implemented in the analysed proverbs, alliteration is also observed: it enhances their stylistic potential and facilitates memorizing them. To illustrate the use of this mechanism, several proverbs can be given, for instance: *Avere Avuto faceva il povero* [lit. Would Have was poor] (DDPI, p. 92, no. 1650), *Avessi e Avrei uno morì impiccato e l'altro affogò* [lit. Would Have Had and Would Have one died hanged and the other drowned] (DDPI, p. 92, no. 1647).

An interesting example of alliteration is observed in the proverb *Garbino morì e Garbaccio restò* [lit. Kindness dies and Unkindness remains] (DDPI, p. 483, no. 197). It contains two names derived from the word *garbo* 'politeness', one with the suffix *-ino*, a diminutive, thus an element carrying a positive markedness, the other ending with *-accio*, adding a negative evaluation to the newly coined word.

In terms of stylistic value, attention should be paid to the enumeration of reinterpreted constituents observed in such proverbs as: *Avessi, Potessi e Fossi erano tre coglioni e giravano il mondo* (DDPI, p. 92, no. 1646) [lit. If I would have, If I would be able and If I would be were three idiots that were going round the world], *Dottor Acqua, Dottor Dieta e Dottor Quiete hanno ridato salute ai moribondi* (DDPI, p. 320, no. 332) [lit. Doctor Water, Doctor Diet and Doctor Peace have given health to dying].

3.2. Kinds of pseudo-proper names created as a result of constituent reinterpretation

In the Italian corpus collected for the analysis, anthroponyms and toponyms are used most frequently as constituents of proverbs. Among these components, the reinterpreted names constitute a special group: various elements are used in the function of either personal names or place names. The former dominate in the corpus, since there are as many as 87 names used in the function of pseudo-anthroponyms, among which pseudo-hagonyms (31) constitute an important group, with only 5 names used as pseudo-toponyms. It should be added that the units with pseudo-toponymic components are closer to proverbial expressions or idiomatic phrases than to prototypical proverbs. Yet, as the focal issue of the analysis is the reinterpretation of a component as a proper name, they will be discussed to provide a true and fair view of the compiled corpus.

The analysed pseudo-anthroponymic constituents include first names, for instance, *Donato fu impiccato e il boia è ancora vivo* [lit. Given was hanged and the hangman is still alive] (DDPI, p. 342, no. 794). First names can be accompanied by surnames, as in the proverb *Giovanni Comodino la faceva a letto per non alzarsi* [lit. Johnny Convenient pissed in his bed so as not to get up] (DDPI, p. 259, no. 1881).

In several proverbs, pseudo-personal names are accompanied by titles or forms of formal address: *Il sor Ducato comprò la corda del boia* [lit. Mister Ducat bought the rope from the hangman] (DDPI, p. 363, no. 1193), *Quando arriva Don Quattrino anche il vescovo s'inchina* [lit. When Don

Penny arrives, the bishop also bows] (DDPI, p. 363, no. 1197). The forms preceding names comprise the following lay and religious forms of address, titles etc.: *Abate, Don, Dottor, Frate / Fra' / Frae, Madonna, Mastro, Padre, Ser / Sor* and *Sora, Suor / Suora*. Anthroponyms tend to be used in the singular form, with only several examples of the plural: *frati Piglia, frati Dai, Barberi, Corneri, Giusti*.

Among the constituents in question, there are also pseudo-hagyonyms, i.e. names of imaginary saints: apart from already mentioned saints' names, the proverbs refer to, *inter alia, San Donato – San Donato è benvenuto in ogni casa* [lit. Saint Given is welcome in every house] (DDPI, p. 342, no. 798) and *Santa Spera – Chi pregò santa Spera aspetta ancora il miracolo* [lit. Who prayed to Saint Hope is still waiting for a miracle] (DPPI, p. 1046, no. 286). In one example, the component *beato* 'blessed' appears: *Il Beato Dioaiuti non ha mai fatto un miracolo* [lit. Blessed Godhelpyou has never made a miracle] (DPPI, p. 1046, no. 288)⁴.

The analysed corpus also contains constituents meant to be interpreted as pseudo-toponyms: names of a city, town or village. In two cases, they are authentic names, *Civitavecchia* and *Passignano*, whose components gain literal meanings in the context of the proverb, thus becoming reinterpreted urbonyms. Other examples include creatively coined names reinterpreted by activating the meanings of all their elements, as it is the case with the pseudo-toponym *Valdirposo* [lit. *val(e)* 'valley' + *di* 'exponent of the genitive case' + *riposo* 'relax'], which resembles real names coined according to the pattern *Val di* + noun, for instance, *Val di Sole, Val di Chaiana, Val di Fiemme* etc.

In the analysed proverbs, invented male names dominate, with only 7 female one. To some extent, it can be explained by the common generic use of male terms in various forms of discourse. In several cases, it may be assumed that the newly coined names are clearly neither male or female, for instance, *Nontifidare* or *Boccaunta*. The analysis of the distribution of components allows for determining the most common ones, with the highest frequency for: *Donato* – 13 occurrences, *Dato, Ducato, Giusto* – 3. The distribution of 8 names derived from different verb forms is as follows: the names that stem from the verb *avere* – 4: *Avrei, Avesse, Avessi, Avere avuto; essere* – 2: *Fossi, Fosse; potere* – 2: *Potesse, Potessi*.

⁴The proverb *San Musone – Lunedì è san Musone* [lit. Monday is Saint Longface] (DDPI, p. 616, no. 1063) is somatically motivated: making a long face is associated with being sad. It verbalises the cultural knowledge on Monday as the first of weekdays immediately following the weekend shared by many nations.

Table 1. Kinds of Italian proverb constituents reinterpreted as proper names

Reinterpreted constituents			
Kind	Type	No	Example
Pseudo-personal names	Name	31	<i>Sicuro</i>
	-----	--	-----
	Surname	4	<i>Comoda</i>
	First name + surname	1	<i>Giovanni Comodino</i>
	<i>Abate</i> + name	1	<i>Abate Arrivabene</i>
	<i>Don</i> + name	2	<i>Don Quattrino</i>
	<i>Fra'</i> / <i>Frae</i> / <i>Frate</i> + name	5	<i>Fra' Vittuperio, Frate Accetta</i>
	-----	--	-----
	<i>Frati</i> + name	2	<i>Frati Piglia</i>
	<i>Mastro</i> + name	1	<i>Mastro Furia</i>
	<i>Padre</i> + name	2	<i>Padre Modesto</i>
Pseudo-hagyonyms	<i>Ser</i> / <i>Sor</i> + name	5	<i>Ser Apuntino, sor Donato</i>
	-----	--	-----
	<i>Sora</i> + name	1	<i>Sora Speranza</i>
	<i>Suora</i> / <i>Suor</i> + name	2	<i>Suor Onesta</i>
	<i>Il</i> + name	3	<i>Il Se</i>
Pseudo-toponyms	<i>Beato</i> + name	1	<i>Beato Dioaiuti</i>
	<i>Madonna</i> + name	1	<i>Madonna Onesta</i>
	<i>San</i> / <i>Sant'</i> + name	14	<i>San Fosse, Sant'Agio</i>
	-----	--	-----
	<i>Santa</i> + name	3	<i>Santa Spera</i>
Pseudo-toponyms	City / town / village name	6	<i>Civitavecchia</i>

Source: Own research.

It is worth adding that some names have variants, which can be illustrated by the followings pairs of constituents exhibiting various differences concerning: ortography: *Bocca Unta* / *Boccaunta*, *Nontifidare* / *Non-ti-fidare*; semantics: *Gambacorta* [lit. Shortleg] / *Gambastrorta* [lit. Twistedleg]; morphology: *Preciso* (base) / *Precisiono* (derivative); *Spera* (back derivative) / *Speranza* (base), or region of origin: *Lasciافare* (standard) / *Lassafà* (Roman), *Piglia* (standard) / *Pigghia* (Genova).

3.3. Number of reinterpreted constituents in a proverb

Another aspect is the number of etymologically reinterpreted constituents in a proverb. The vast majority of proverbs contain only one name, for example: *Fra' Modesto non fu mai priore* [lit. Brother Modest has never been a prior] (DDPI, p. 706, no. 1617), *Quando il sor Ducato bussa,*

qualunque porta s'apre [lit. When Mister Ducat knocks, all doors open] (DDPI, p. 363, no. 1196), *San Paganino fa festa anche il venerdì* [lit. Saint Payday makes a celebration even on Friday] (DDPI, p. 818, no. 122)⁵. The number of proverbs containing more than one name gives a total of 21, as shown in Diagram 1, in which the number refers to the quantity of reinterpreted names in a proverb.

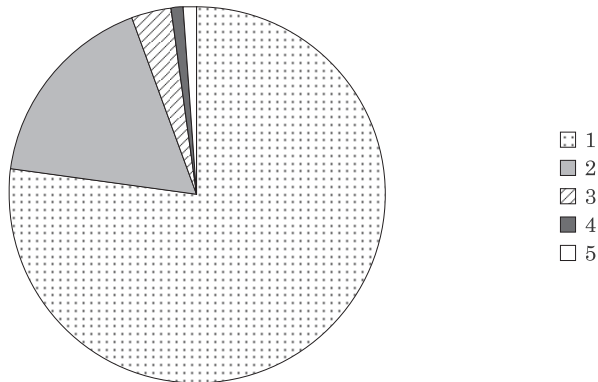


Diagram 1. The number of constituents reinterpreted as proper names in Italian proverbs
Source: Own research.

As shown above, there are 16 proverbs containing two reinterpreted names, for instance: *San Donato ammazzò san Giusto* [lit. Saint Given killed Saint Just] (DDPI, p. 966, no. 107), *Ci sono più frati Piglia che frati Dai* [lit. There are more brothers Take than brother Give] (DDPI, p. 897, no. 1742), *Si sposò Badile e prese Zappa* [lit. Shovel got married and took Hoe] (DDPI, p. 1127, no. 1976), *San Donato rompe le braccia a san Giusto* [lit. Saint Given breaks Saint Just's arms] (DDPI, p. 966, no. 108). In some of them, using two names is a means of contrasting two attitudes, qualities, manners etc., as in the following units: *Fidati era un buon uomo, (ma) Nontifidare era migliore* [lit. Trust was a good man, but Don'ttrust was (a) better (one)] (DDP, p. 422, no. 743)⁶.

The proverbs which contain three components have already been discussed. In the corpus, there are only three of them: apart from those already mentioned, this group includes the proverb *Il Se, il Forse e il*

⁵ Italian: *pagare* 'to pay', *la paga* 'wage, pay', *-ino* – suffix used to form deminutives.

⁶ Two proverbs contain a first name and a surname: *Giovanni Comodino la faceva a letto per non alzarsi* [lit. Johnny Convenient has pissed in bed so as not to get up] (DDPI, p. 259, no. 1881) – a diminutive authentic name with a reinterpreted surname, *Avere Avuto faceva il povero* [lit. Would have was poor] (DDPI, p. 92, no. 1650) – the compound form of a verb can be decoded as a name and a surname, so both constituents are reinterpreted.

Ma son tre coglioni da Adamo in qua [lit. If, Maybe and But were three assholes from Adam till today] (DPPI, p. 1069, no. 796).

One proverb has as many as four reinterpreted constituents which are reinterpreted in the unit: *Sant'Avesse, San Potesse, san Sarebbe e san Fosse son quattro santi che non hanno fatto mai miracoli* [lit. Saint Ifihad, Saint Ificould, Saint Ifiwouldbe and Saint Ifiwas are four saints who have never made miracles] (DDPI, p. 92, no. 1649).

In the analyzed set of expressions, there is only one example of a unit in which more than four etymologically reinterpreted proper names are included. The word play is based on the twofold interpretation of the names of orders or religious movements – each of them can either refer to a name from the domain of religion or can be decoded as an adjective describing a man. The husbands are compared to brothers from several convents: *I mariti sono come i frati: o sono Benedettini, o sono Flagellanti, o sono Predicatori, o sono Scalzi, o sono Umiliati* [lit. Husbands are like brothers: they are either Blessed, or Flagellants, or Preachers, or Barefoot, or Humiliated] (DDPI, p. 661, no. 781)⁷.

3.4. Mechanisms employed to reinterpret a proverb constituent as a proper name

In the written form, the names in question are capitalized, according to the rules of Italian orthography. If the proverb is produced orally, as already mentioned, the immediate context indicates that a given name should be treated as a proper name.

Such components are created in several ways. For instance, a common name is used in the function of a proper name. The mechanism is observed in the proverb *Bene, Buono e Magari eran tre idioti e facevan lunari* [lit. Well, Good and Maybe were three idiots who made almanacks] (DDPI, p. 116–117, no. 339), in which two adverbs and one adjective are capitalised to indicate their proprial character. This technique of coining etymologically reinterpreted names is also implemented in many units, for instance: *Sicuro cadde dal da un ponte* [lit. Sure fell off the bridge] (DDPI, p. 1094, no. 1277), *San Piuttosto cambia le carte al tavolo* [lit. Saint Rather changes the cards at the table] (DDPI, p. 907, no. 1937).

⁷ The words derive from the names of the following religious orders or movements: *Ordine di San Benedetto* – Order of Saint Benedict, *I Flagellanti* – Flagellants; *Ordine dei Frati Predicatori* – The Order of Preachers, also known as the Dominican Order; *Ordine dei Carmelitani Scalzi* – Discalced Carmelites or Barefoot Carmelites (the words *scalzi* and *discalced* or *barefoot* appear also in the names of other orders); *Gli Umiliati* – The Humiliati.

As already mentioned, the constituent, is to be interpreted within the proverb as a new word, since in this environment it is used in a creative way with a view to activating its new meaning. In order to achieve this effect, the words meant to be interpreted names are used in the sentence position in which they would naturally appear as names. Furthermore, the terms like *Frate* and *San / Sant'* implicate the use of a proper name. Some structures employed in the analysed proverbs are also associated by language users with *nomina propria*, for instance, *essere di* is often followed by a place name indicating somebody's origin.

The other one is creating a neologic compound, i.e. writing several words as one and capitalising the newly coined name. Different parts of speech can be reinterpreted in this way as illustrated in Table 1. Such names are composed of two or more lexical items which can be read as a name, with simultaneously decoded combined meaning of all its components.

To illustrate this phenomenon, the proverb *San Nonlosapevo lo pregano tutti* [lit. All pray to Saint I did not know] (DDPI, p. 541, no. 20) can be analyzed. It contains the name of an imaginary saint *Nonlosapevo* derived from the sentence-like phrase *Non lo sapevo* which means 'I did not know (that)'. Other examples include such paremia as: *Chi mangia, beve, dorme a caca bene sta meglio dell'Abate Arrivabene* [lit. Who eats, drinks and defecates properly is better than Abbot Getwell] (DDPI, p. 132, no. 637), *Bocca Unta / Boccaunta non disse mai male di nessuno* [lit. Greasy Mouth / Greasymouth did not speak ill of anybody] (DDPI, p. 133, no. 671).

In the analyzed proverbs, grammatical forms of various verbs are used as pseudo-personal names. Several units contain forms of the verbs *essere* 'to be', *avere* 'to have' and *potere* 'can', as it is the case with the paremia *Avessi, Potessi e Fossi erano tre coglioni e giravano il mondo* [lit. If I had, If I could and If I was were assholes which were travelling around the world] (DDPI, p. 92, no. 1646) and *Sant'Avesse, San Potesse, san Sarebbe e san Fosse son quattro santi che non hanno fatto mai miracoli* [lit. Saint If I had, Saint If I could, Saint If I would be and Saint If I was are four saints who have never made miracles] (DDPI, p. 92, no. 1649)⁸.

Furthermore, as already mentioned in 3.2, the literal meaning of a part of the reinterpreted authentic name is activated: for instance, the name *Civitavecchia* used in the proverb *Si è imbarcata per Civitavecchia* [lit. She has boarded for Civitavecchia] (DDPI, p. 691, no. 1311) contains the element *vecchia* 'old'. There are also semantic associations resulting

⁸ In the proverbs, the conjunctive (Italian *congiuntivo*) forms of verbs *avere*, *potere* and *essere* are used.

Table 2. Distribution and specification of reinterpreted proverb constituents used as proper names

Technique	Etymologically reinterpreted proverb components used as				
	pseudo-anthroponyms			pseudo-toponyms	
Capitalised lexemes	Part of speech	No	Example	No	Example
	Nouns	29	<i>Furia</i>	4	<i>Durazzo</i>
	Verbs	28	<i>Avrei</i>	0	–
	Adjectives	4	<i>Buono</i>	1	<i>Storta</i>
	Adverbs	5	<i>Bene</i>	0	–
	Conjunctions	3	<i>Però</i>	0	–
Neologic compounds	Structure	No	Example	No	Example
	Noun + Adj.	4	<i>Boccaunta</i>	0	–
	Polylexemic verb form	1	<i>Nontifidare</i>	0	–
	Verb + Verb	1	<i>Lasciafare</i>	0	–
	Verb + Adv.	1	<i>Arrivabene</i>	0	–
	Noun + Verb + Pronoun	4	<i>Dioaiuti</i>	0	–
	Noun + Prep. + Noun	0	–	1	<i>Valdiriposo</i>

Source: Own research.

Table 3. Verbs and their forms as reinterpreted constituents of Italian proverbs

Verb form	Reinterpreted proverb constituent	
	No	Examples
Present tense / Imperative (presente / imperativo) ^a	4	<i>Spera, Nega, Mangia, Acceta</i>
Imperfect conjunctive (congiuntivo imperfetto)	6	<i>Avessi, Potessi, Fossi, Avesse, Potesse, Fosse</i>
Present conditional (condizionale presente)	2	<i>Avrei, Sarebbe</i>
Past infinitive (infinito passato)	1	<i>Avere avuto</i>
Imperative (imperativo)	3	<i>Fidati, Nontifidare / Non-ti-fidare</i>
Past participle (participio passato)	12	<i>Dato, Donato</i>

^a Identical forms.

Source: Own research.

from phonetic similarity, as observed in the proverb containing the place name *Passignano*: *Ormai è badessa a Passignano* [lit. She is already Mother Superior in Passignano] (DDPI, p. 691, no. 1312) – the derivative of the verb *passare* meaning ‘to pass’ alludes to somebody’s advanced age, i.e. the number of years that have passed⁹.

⁹ Civitavecchia is a town in the region of Lazio in the central Italy. The name itself means ‘ancient town’. Passignano sul Trasimeno is a municipality in the province of Perugia in the region of Umbria, also situated in the central part of Italy.

Another example of the use of authentic names is observed in the aforementioned proverb concerning the inhabitants of Venice which contains surnames. As stated by Lapucci (DDPI, p. 1234, no. 385), *Corner(o)* is a popular name in the city of Venice. Due to the similarity to the word *cornuto* ‘horned, betrayed’, this lexeme as well as the other two, i.e. *barbaro* ‘barbarian’ and *giusto* ‘just’, describe well defined categories of persons.

It is worth noting that in several proverbs the reinterpreted name is used together with the name of a real one, mainly, *Sant’Antonio fa tanti miracoli, san Mangia il doppio* [lit. Saint Antonio makes many miracles, saint Eat – a double] (DDPI, p. 1046, no. 285), *Donato morì sull’Alpe* [lit. Given died in the Alps] (DDPI, p. 342, no. 793). Since well known authentic names are used, their presence and the utterance structure suggest that the pseudo-onym is also of proprial character¹⁰.

In one proverb, the employment of a lexical item as a pseudo-toponym is conditioned by paronymy, i.e. phonetic similarity of both elements: *però* and *Perù*. The word *però* is capitalized, so that it would resemble a proper name, which in this context is a place name: *La donna del Però la mattina dice sì e la sera (dice) no* [lit. The woman from However in the morning says yes and in the evening (says) no] (DDPI, p. 1093, no. 1261).

4. Conclusion

Italian proverbs containing etymologically reinterpreted components constitute a group which may not be important from a quantitative perspective, but it definitely deserves attention in terms of a qualitative study, especially with a focus on their stylistic value. The analysis of the proverbs shows that constituents reinterpreted as anthroponyms dominate over those performing the function of toponyms, with no other kinds of onomastic constituents represented in the research corpus. The domination can be explained by the adoption of the anthropocentric perspective, in which man is the centre.

The vast majority of names are non-authentic, with several real names used as reinterpreted components. Such use of lexis attests language users’ creativity which results from a natural need to participate in entertainment in the broad sense of the term. The coinage is similar to the processes implemented in literature when ornamental names are

¹⁰ See also the first example in footnote 6.

created to inform the reader about the character's personality, manners or behaviour.

Furthermore, it would be worth analyzing proverbs containing etymologically reinterpreted constituents from a cross-linguistic perspective, so that various languages could be studied with a view to comparing the status of such *paremia* from a broader perspective.

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