

Research Article

This article is published by Jozac Publishers in the *African Social Science and Humanities Journal (ASSHJ)*. Volume 5, Issue 4, 2024.

ISSN: 2709-1309 (Print)
2709-1317 (Online)

This article is distributed under a Creative Commons [Attribution \(CC BY-NC-SA\) International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/).

Article detail

Received: 11 July 2024

Accepted: 06 September 2024

Published: 24 September 2024

Conflict of Interest: The author/s declared no conflict of interest.



The theme of “Contradiction” in Riffian-Amazigh proverbs

Najib El Mahraoui^{1*}, Mohamed Marouane², Ahmadou Bouylmani³

^{1,2&3}English Department, Chouaib Doukkali University (Language, Culture and Translation), El Jadida, Morocco, najibovesiempre@hotmail.com^{1*}, marouane.ma@gmail.com², ahmadoub@gmail.com³



<https://dx.doi.org/10.4314/asshj.v5i4.1>

*Corresponding author: najibovesiempre@hotmail.com

Abstract: The present study seeks to shed light on the theme of contradiction in Riffian-Amazigh (RA) proverbs. As a North African language, the RA variety has a rich array of proverbs dealing with different topics. With this being said, this paper intends to analyze the Riffian-Amazigh proverbs and underscore the most noteworthy and striking aspects of contradiction exhibited in such oral cultural expressions displaying different aspects of the identity of the Riffian-Amazigh community. The study is based on a mixed methodological approach to data analysis, and other quantitative and qualitative methods. The findings

show that Riffian-Amazigh proverbs are not exceptions to proverbs found in other languages and cultures. Some proverbs are mutually contradictory, and this is the case with most of the proverb pairs. On the other hand, other proverbs are partially contradictory, but they are very few. This reveals nothing more than the complexity of the human nature and the paradoxical way of thinking. The human mind is inextricably complex. Hence, exploring such contradictions will certainly provide us with insights into cultural nuances and the complexities of human linguistic and social behaviour.

Keywords – Contradiction, Culture, Oral expressions, Proverbs, Riffian-Amazigh, Theme

1. INTRODUCTION

Proverbs are vitally crucial to life and language: ‘Without them, the language would be but a skeleton without flesh, a body without soul’ (Rattray, 1916). Needless to say, proverbs are linguistically well-constructed expressions. That is, they display creatively aesthetic language use (poetic language) and they are often heavily loaded with cultural content, ranging from customs, values, traditions, and religion, to lifestyle, and many more as Mieder (2004: 3) puts it by claiming that proverbs contain “wisdom, truth, morals, and traditional views”. On this basis, a researcher in oral expressions should, in addition to possessing the required linguistic competence to understand them, be aware of the other non-linguistic factors such as the proverbs’ social, cultural, and historical contexts, the connotative meanings and the values they try to teach, and the metaphors embedded in such oral traditions and expressions. With such challenges in mind and other complexities confronted while trying to unravel the opposing meanings characterizing such fixed expressions, what are the most frequent and the most striking aspects of contradictions of the Riffian-Amazigh proverbs in question?

As a matter of fact, the cultural specificities being exhibited in the proverbs are what makes a given culture different from another. After all, language and culture are inseparable. Further, beyond their literal meaning, proverbs do convey metaphorical and deeper meanings concerning cultural values, thoughts, and experiences of a certain community as they draw from historical events, environmental contexts (geographical aspects), social and religious beliefs, cultural practices, and customs, among others. Hence, examining and analyzing them in terms of the contradictions they involve will certainly lead us to gain more insights into the thoughts, values, ways of life, and many more of a given community where language and culture come into play. In light of this, let us consider Lotman's statement which summarizes the interrelationship between language and culture, "no language can exist unless it is steeped in the context of culture, and no culture can exist which does not have at its center, the structure of natural language" (Bassnet, 2005: 23).

With that being said, the importance of casting light on the contradictions lies not only in obtaining a thorough understanding and in-depth awareness of the nuances of culture but also in delving into the complexities of the human mind. Said otherwise, such a study allows us to explore the intricacies of culture, i.e. values, ideologies, traditions and customs, arts, worldview, and others in addition to understanding human communication through using proverbial expressions. In this context, Millar (2018: 163-164) states, "Confronting 'contradictory' proverbs trains the mind in how to approach 'contradictory' realities. Life and proverbs are scattered with contradictions, paradoxes, and ambiguities." Similarly, Chomsky (2006: 1) proclaims that "language mirrors human mental processes or shapes the flow and character of thought". Briefly speaking, language is the mirror of the mind. Thus, through analyzing and studying the paradoxical meanings embedded in the proverbs, we are revealing how such paradoxes and contradictions influence communication and also how they account for human behaviour and nature. Therefore, research in such area requires one to be aware of the cultural values and the inherent specificities of the proverbs in question and they also should have a good control of the language wherein the proverbs are given birth to, for language and culture are closely intertwined as referred to before. Identifying culture-specific elements in proverbial expressions and bringing to light their contrasting meanings pose a real challenge for the researcher. Hence, the linguistic as well as cultural nuances should be taken into account.

2. LITERATURE SURVEY

Human beings communicate their experiences in different language forms and expressions to show their happiness and joy at some moments, grimace and grief at others; or else, people, without having the least intention to express themselves, tend to utter some meaningless words. That is, they talk complete gibberish. Leibniz states, "Languages are the best mirror of the human mind" (Zappavigna, 2013: 33). The ways language is used helps to get insights into the mental status. Certainly, factors such as context, culture, emotional status, social background, the addressee, and others determine the way you express yourself. In this vein, Seitel (1969) affirms that "Proverbs in actual use refer to social situations, and it is this social context that in turn gives them meaning" (Mieder, 2004: 8).

Proverbs are known to be flexible and gain their meaning from the situations and contexts wherein they are used. If it happens that a certain proverb is contradictory to another one, it is thanks to its flexibility and situational aspect. In this context, Mieder (2004: 207) states, "After all, it is well known that an anti-proverb can be found for every proverb because this type of wisdom only stems from experience and does not contain a logical system". For example, in English there are a number of proverb pairs exhibiting opposition like "absence make the heart grow fonder" but "out of sight, out of mind", "too many cooks spoil the broth" but "many hands make light work", "birds of a feather flock together" but "opposites attract." or "look before you leap" and "he who hesitates is lost", to cite only a few examples. On the other hand, Riffian-Amazigh also has a rich repertoire of contradictory proverbs such as "aṛu a ṭəṃzi inu! i ṭa-wsar inu" (Start a family when young lest you are left alone when old) and "ẉən y-aw-ən y-awi-ṭ-id" (Having a child is like having a permanent problem). While the first proverb encourages one to have many children when they are young, the second one highlights the difficulty of bringing up children and, by implication, questions and criticizes having them since they are a source of permanent trouble and harm.

All in all, as Millar (2018) puts it, “Apparently contradictory sayings train the mind to confront apparently contradictory situations in life.” Said otherwise, proverbs contradictions reflect life contradictions.

With that being said, a distinction should be made between a paradoxical proverb and contradictory proverbs. Whereas the former entails that a proverb’s interpretation entails paradox within its content as in “for there to be peace there must first be war” or “a man’s house is heaven and hell as well”, the latter is in direct and parallel contradiction to another as illustrated through the abovementioned examples. There is no doubt that adjusting the proverb “If the *shoe* fits, wear it” to the maxim “If the proverb fits, use it” says it all! Given their proverbial wisdom, communicative impact, and rhetorical force in conveying meaning, communicating ideas, expressing certain generalizations, making fun of social problems, and strengthening one’s argument, proverbs are more frequently used among people than other cultural forms of verbal art. They are effective tools for transmitting values, beliefs, and aspects of culture. In this regard, Mieder (2004) stresses that “proverbs are a significant rhetorical force in various modes of communication, from friendly chats, powerful political speeches, and religious sermons to lyrical poetry, best-seller novels, and the influential mass media.”

2.1. Semantic aspects of proverbs: Antonymy

First of all, Crystal (2005: 212) classifies proverbs as “longer lexical units”. Concerning their semantic properties, a number of sense relations characterize proverbs like synonymy and polysemy but the focus here is put on the oppositeness featuring contradictory proverbs, and others, antonymy. Proverbs are antonymous when they convey contrast in their meanings. Let us consider the following pairs of proverbs: “absence makes the heart grow fonder” and “out of sight, out of mind”. On the one hand, the first proverb means that when two people are apart from each other, the feelings of love become stronger. On the other hand, the second proverb stresses that when people don’t see each other or there is a lack of contact, they tend to forget one another, and if there have ever been any feelings of love, they would fade away as time goes by. Let us check the second pair, “you’re never too old to *learn*” but “you can’t teach an old *dog* new tricks.” the former proverb asserts that it is never too late for one to start learning, irrespective of their age, the latter proverb claims that it is quite hard for an old person to learn. Accordingly, each proverb is contradictory to the other. On this basis, it can be claimed that proverbs are context-bound and have meaning only when they are used.

However, let us clarify an important point here as far as lexical relations are concerned. The general lexical rule stated by Kroeger (2018: 110), “If two sentences are contradictory, then one or the other must always be true” is not applicable to contradictory proverbs. So, if we are to adapt such a rule and apply it to contrasting proverbs, we would state, “If two proverbs are contradictory, then both of them must always be true in the context where each one is used”. According to Lyons (1977: 271), “binary opposition is one of the most important principles governing the structure of languages; and the most evident manifestation of this principle, as far as the vocabulary is concerned, is antonymy”. In other words, human beings have a tendency to think in terms of dichotomy and “binary opposition”. For this, it is believed that there is a set of proverbs which have synonyms as well as antonyms.

3. PROBLEM STATEMENT

When analyzing the conflicting meanings in RA proverbs, several problems may arise. First of all, the researcher should, in addition to possessing the required linguistic competence, be aware of other non-linguistic factors such as cultural features and their significance. Knowing that proverbs are deeply rooted in cultural and social contexts is a prerequisite for proper and accurate understanding of such oral expressions. Second, finding and presenting representative data of contradictory proverbs is a real challenge. Third, there are certain proverbs which are polysemous; hence, finding which proverbs are contradictory to one another may indeed pose real problems for the researcher and can also lead to misinterpretations of the contrasting elements within proverbs.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A collection of twenty-two proverbs (eleven pairs of proverbs) is the focus of this study which is based on a mixed methodological approach to data analysis, and many more quantitative and qualitative methods. The quantitative approach will deal with data in numeric form for which tables and charts will be provided for the content analysis. Questions related to quantity and numbers which start, for instance, with “why”, “how” and “what” will be answered. Quantitative method research relies on these types of questions as it seeks to quantify data and generalize results from the sample of data to be analyzed. However, questions related to the qualitative research method which start with “how” and “what” will be answered too.

Concerning data collection, I will rely, to a certain extent, on some reference books which have already dealt with Riffian proverbs in French and Arabic. In this regard, I can refer to Bouylmani 1993, Hamdaoui 2004, Moudian 2004, Azdoud 2012 and Mira 2009, 2014. Besides, being a native speaker of RA will help me choose appropriate and relevant data.

5. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS

5.1. Identifying contradictions in proverbs

It should be borne in mind that the present study cannot possibly bring all instances of contradictory Riffian-Amazigh proverbs to light. Hence, a notable set of representative contradictory proverbs will be analyzed, for the purpose of the study is to draw attention to the phenomenon under study by providing illustrative examples. Thus, proverbs will be presented in pairs, translated, and studied on the basis of topic-based classification (thematic grouping). Further, the format of data analysis will be presented in this way:

- a) proverb transcription (phonetic and morphological structure)
- b) word-for-word translation
- c) literary translation
- d) comment on the meaning of the proverb

In fact, cultural, contextual, and historical allusions will be explicated when necessary to help the TR to understand the content of the original proverb in step (d). Concerning the untranslatable items, detailed explanations are provided in notes and footnotes which will be frequently used since they help to get additional information about the original proverb. Nida (1964) favours the use of footnotes as fulfilling at least two functions: to provide supplementary information and to call attention to the original’s discrepancies. Stories related to the proverbs will also be included when possible. Finally, other near equivalents of the original proverb will be provided in the target language (TL).

5.1.1. Woman

Proverb Pair 1:

- 1
 - a) rqaḍi n dżiraṭ y-arna rqaḍi uzir.
 - b) The-judge/ of/ the-night/ defeated/ the-judge/ of-the-day.
 - c) The judge of the night has conquered the judge of the day
 - d) The proverb implies that a woman can attain her objectives by discussing them with her spouse in private. It is believed that behind closed doors, the crucial decisions are made
- 2
 - a) imanayən anin-ayi nəš ani-x ṭamyat inu.
 - b) the-winners/ defeated-me/ I / defeated-I/ wife/ my
 - c) The winners beat me, and I beat my wife
 - The winners defeated me, and I defeated my wife

d) The proverb is quoted by women when they receive unfair treatment from their husbands. In other words, the oppressors victimize the powerless, and the powerless can also victimize those closest to them.

Contradictory aspect: in contrast to proverb one which highlights that a woman can easily attain her objectives via discussing with her husband in private, proverb four states that women can be victimized by their husbands and, hence, achieve no goal. In this vein, Michael Maduawuchi Uzomah states that patriarchy “involves the arrogation of the power of influence and the concentration of the control of resources in the hands of men at the expense of women”.

5.1.2. Family ties and problems

Proverb Pair 2:

3

- a) uma-š a šək i-ffəz wa(r) š i-syədži
- b) brother-your / going-to/ you/ he-chew / not / you/ he-swallow.
- c) Your brother might chew you but cannot swallow you.
- d) The proverb is said of blood relationships. No matter what the problems are and regardless of how worse the relationship between members of the same family is, at the end of the day kinship relationships are stronger than any misunderstanding that could stand as an obstacle to unity within the family.

4

- a) mani ya t-af-əd taxəşət tə-sn-əd qa din uma-š.
- b) where/will/ you-find-you/ a-loss/ you-know-you/ that/ there-is/ brother-your
- c) Whenever you suffer a loss, remember that it's your kin behind it
- Whenever you suffer a loss, remember that it's your own flesh and blood behind it
- d) The proverb implies that our family tends to cause us more harm than others.

Contradictory aspect: in contradiction to proverb three which highlights the importance of blood relationships over any other consideration, proverb four accentuates that our family might be the source of greater harm.

Proverb Pair 3:

5

- a) ur i-təddz-ən aməsmir ya yuma-s.
- b) Not/ it-hit-it/ a-nail/ only/ brother-its.
- c) It's a nail that can drive another nail in.
- d) The proverb means that those closest to us can do us the most harm, just as a nail hit by a hammer that is in close proximity to us. People we tend to trust are likely the ones that will hurt us deeply. Hence, we should be cautious with those who are closest to us.

6

- a) akəššud ur i-nəžžar uma-s.
- b) Wood/ not/ it-saw/ brother/ its
- c) A stick doesn't cut its own kind.
- d) The proverb means that one shouldn't betray their own flesh and blood. That is, brothers should stick together

Contradictory aspect: proverb five underscores that people closest to us can cause us big harm; on the contrary, proverb six advises us that family members shouldn't betray each other. Similarly, another proverb insists on the unity and solidarity existing among family members, “w-ənni i-dža-n nnə-š a xa-k i-wwət a xa-s tə-wt-əd” (Family members stand up for each other)

Proverb Pair 4:

7

- a) aman i-bbawy-ən ɛammaʃ aḍ ʃfa-n.
- b) water/ that-are-muddy-they/ never/ will / clear.
- c) Dirty water will never resume its original, clear state.
- d) The proverb means that when the relationships between family members or families are rotten due to conflicts, it is hard to bring them to normal again as it is difficult to make muddy water clear again.

8

- a) bbawy-ən waman aḍ i-zḍig-ən.
- b) become-muddy-them/ water/ will/ clear.
- c) Dirty water will resume its original, clear state.
- d) The proverb means that even though relationships between family members or families are rotten after conflicts, they may become restored as time goes by.

Contradictory aspect: these two proverbs show paradoxical attitudes. Proverb seven confirms that it is hard to restore family relations after conflicts, whereas proverb eight ascertains that family ties may be brought to normal again after a misunderstanding.

5.1.3. Stress, tension and vengeance

Proverb Pair 5:

9

- a) ʃʃəmtəṭ ur twi-xrif.
- b) Dupery/ not/ to-be-returned
- c) Deception is never reparable
- d) The proverb means that once someone has been deceived, the damage is irreversible

10

- a) mri wa(r) twi-xrif-ant, iri nəqq-ant.
- b) if/ not/ be-avenged-them/ would/ they-be-deadly
- c) If there were no revenge, blows would be fatal
- d) This proverb has a story behind it. A jackal was once attacked by many dogs and was severely injured, as it was bleeding all over its body. In an attempt to console itself, it proclaimed the above words.
- The proverb implies that revenge provides comfort to those who have been offended and it is only a question of time before they seek retribution. The proverb “revenge does not long remain unavenged” highlights this idea. In short, the desire for revenge keeps the victim going.

Contradictory aspect: on the one hand, proverb nine emphasizes that damage is irreversible, and vengeance is impossible; on the other hand, proverb ten stresses that the possibility of taking revenge gives the victim hope and comfort.

5.1.4. Unity and solidarity

Proverb Pair 6:

11

- a) iʒ ufus wa(r) i-ʃʃit taʃarift.
- b) one/ hand / not/ hit/ applause
- c) One hand cannot clap alone.

d) This proverb means that a single person cannot achieve something on their own. Hence, it requires the cooperation and efforts of all members of the group to accomplish a task

12

a) may t̄ə-wsæ t̄ə-x̄ša.

b) Where/ it-multiplies/ it-is-rotten.

c) When many people get involved in a task, the situation gets worse.

d) The proverb indicates that when there are too many people involved in a task, things tend to go wrong, “too many cooks spoil the broth”. For example, when too many hands are involved in preparing a dish, the outcome will be unsatisfactory. The proverb can also be used to refer to a situation where too many people, friends, families, and others live together in the same house and then end up in problems.

Contradictory aspect: while proverb eleven underscores that one person alone cannot achieve anything, proverb twelve underlines that when too many people are involved in a task, things tend to go wrong. In this regard, there is another proverb which goes against working in a group, “mamiṭa idi t̄ə-k̄ṭa-n i-yan̄žay-ən rəḃda t̄-šəmməd̄” (Too many ladles spoil the pot).

5.1.5. Hypocrisy

Proverb Pair 7:

13

a) aḏ ini-γ a siḏi i wəyḏi x ṭizi inu.

b) will/ say-I/ oh-sir/ to/ a-dog / for / benefit/ my.

c) I will flatter a dog for my own benefit.

d) The proverb is about a hypocrite who pretends to respect someone even if they are beneath their dignity in order to get what they want.

14

a) siwər x uqzin səwžəḏ ṭaməraṭ

b) speak/ of/ the-dog/ get/ a-club (at your hand).

c) Talk of a dog and get a club at your hand.

d) The word ‘aqzin’ (dog) is used here to metaphorically refer to a person in the SL proverb. In Riffian culture, dogs are not very adorable in the sense that people of the Rif do not let their dogs get into their houses nor are they kept as pets. At their best, they build a small shelter for the dog to guard their houses against strangers. The vast majority of dogs do not have shelters. What is more, the dog’s nutrition comes from the remnants of people’s meals which they want to get rid of immediately. Though it is a domestic animal, a dog in Riffian society is not welcome. Taking into account what has been stated above and the negative view people hold of the animal ‘dog’ in Rif, a person who is not welcome is referred to as a dog that deserves punishment with a club (a thick heavy stick). On the other hand, the animal ‘wolf’ is used in English, “talk of the wolf and you see his tail”

The proverb is used to refer to an unwelcome person who arrives immediately after talking about them. According to the Riffian culture, it may also be used to denote that the person being referred to is going to live longer. That is why when a person who is being talked about arrives immediately is said to live longer, “rəma nnəš ḏ azirar” (your lifespan is longer).

Contradictory aspect: in sharp contrast to proverb thirteen which highlights the importance of respecting someone who is disrespectful in order to get what one wants, proverb fourteen affirms that an unwelcome person shouldn’t be respected.

5.1.6. Altruism and generosity

Proverb Pair 8:

15

- a) g rxi^r, aḍ i-ḍwər ḍ anəxxir.
- b) Do/ good/ will-it-become/ spit.
- c) Do good and it will turn into spit.
 - Do good and it will be thrown in your face as spit.
- d) The proverb highlights the ingratitude of people.

16

- a) gg rxi^r ḍi mmi-s m-midn ad y-awi abbi u ya yə-gg-ən rxi^r ḍi mmi-š
- b) Do/ good/ in/ the-child-his/ of-others/ will/ He-bring/ God/ who/ will/ he-do/ good/ in/ child-your
- c) Do good to the children of others and God will bring benefactors for your own children
 - Do unto others as you would have them do unto you
 - Help others and you will find kindness in return
- d) The proverb means that if you do good to people, others will do good to your children.

Contradictory aspect: these two proverbs exhibit conflicting perspectives. Proverb fifteen warns against doing good to others since this may end in the ingratitude of people, whereas proverb sixteen encourages one to do good to others as this may bring some good news in the future like someone doing good to their children.

Proverb Pair 9:

17

- a) gg rxi^r, ttu-t
- b) do/ good/ forget-it
- c) Do good and forget it
- d) The proverb means that one should not expect to be rewarded for one's good actions towards others. If they are not appreciated by ungrateful people, they might be appreciated by others.

18

- a) gg ḍrus n rxi^r, ḥuma aḍ aš ḍ y-εqəḅ ḍrus n žyi^r.
- b) do/ little/ of/ good/ in-order-to/ will/ you/ hither/ it-comes-back/ little/ of/ evil
- c) Do good as little as you can to avoid receiving too much evil.
- d) The proverb means that one should not keep doing good to others because people are not only ungrateful but malicious as well.

Contradictory aspect: in sharp contrast to proverb eighteen which emphasizes that one should do little good because of the ingratitude of people, proverb seventeen insists on doing good. In this vein there is another proverb that encourages doing good to others, “gg rxi^r ḍi ṭmira, wa ṭəssinəḍ mani š ya ndanṭ ṭira” (Do good to others whenever it is possible, for you don't know where destiny will take you later).

5.1.7. Company and sharing

Proverb Pair 10:

19

- a) g nnəyyəṭ a yašriḳ a n-awi iməndi ḍ urum.
- b) have/ good-intentions / oh/ my-partner/ going-to/ we-harvest / barley/ and/ straw

- c) Work honestly and we will get more wheat and straw
d) The proverb means that honesty is a prerequisite for the success of a partnership. Honest partners will achieve satisfactory results.

-Generally speaking, Muslims are guided by religious teachings in their actions, such as the Hadith “ انما العمل بالنيات، ” /?innama al-ʿamalū bi-nniyāt, wa ?innama likulli ?imri?in ma nawā / (actions are based on intentions, and every person will only have what they intended). This means that in work and interactions with others, having honest and pure intentions is crucial to the success of a task or a relationship

20

- a) mri i-dža rxi^r gg^w šrak₂ tifi šark-ən iwɔan anɔər.
b) If / it / it-exists/ good/ in/ sharing (with someone)/ it-would have shared-they/ people/ the- grave.
c) If sharing one’s property is recommendable, we would see two people buried in the same grave.
- If sharing one’s property is recommendable, we would see dead people sharing the same grave.
d) The proverb means that people dislike sharing their properties

Contradictory aspect: these two proverbs present contradictory viewpoints. While proverb nineteen ensures that honesty is a prerequisite for the success of a partnership, proverb twenty rejects having a partnership at all. In this regard, there is another proverb denying partnership, “mri ašrik d ašəḃḃan tiri i-g-it rəbbi akid-s” (If a partner were good, even God would have had one).

5.1.8. Courage

Proverb Pair 11:

21

- a) tišti s uḃurəs ura t-awra.
b) a-shot / by/ stone-in-the-ground/ better-than/ escape.
c) Better bearing a clod’s shot than running away.
d) The proverb means that instead of running and hiding, one ought to stand and fight for their own principles even by means as harmless as a clod of earth which, when thrown, crumbles before hitting the target.

22

- a- t-awra di ttasie tt-ayas-t.
b) escape/ on/ time/ is-courage.
c) Retreating at the right time is a sign of courage
d) The courageous person is not a risk-all; they are rather someone who knows when it is necessary to flee on time. Discretion is the better part of valor. It is said in Riffian culture that, “Imakla d t-awra wa day-s ḃu reiḃ”, which translates literally as “there is no flaw in eating food and in running away”. That is, it’s not a flaw to accept someone’s invitation for food and similarly, it’s not a flaw to run away at the right time when you see there is danger around you.

Contradictory aspect: contrary to proverb twenty-one which suggests that facing danger is better than escaping away, proverb twenty-two advises us to flee away at the right time when there is danger.

5.2. Findings

The current attempt has been made to mainly identify the contradicting aspects exhibited in Riffian-Amazigh proverbs. In other words, one of the main goals set for the study is to bring the contrasts and the contradictions manifested in proverbs into focus. As shown, all proverb pairs tend to express contradictory meanings and, hence,

each proverb of a given pair is in direct contradiction to another proverb of the same pair. The following table clarifies the point more (Pr. stands for “proverb”):

Table 1: Classification of proverb pairs

Pr. pair	Pr. number	Pr. number	Contradictory note
1	(1)	(2)	-woman achieves her goals vs woman faces defeat and unfair treatment
2	(3)	(4)	-blood relationships are stronger vs blood relationships are a source of harm
3	(5)	(6)	-closest relationships cause us harm vs blood ties don't betray each other
4	(7)	(8)	- relationships between family members are never restored vs relationships may become restored
5	(9)	(10)	- deception is irreversible vs revenge is possible
6	(11)	(12)	- one single person achieves no goal vs too many hands make the task go worse
7	(13)	(14)	- hypocritical respect for a personal benefit vs lack of respect for an unwelcome person
8	(15)	(16)	- ungratefulness despite kindness vs kindness, generosity and reciprocity
9	(17)	(18)	- altruism and detachment vs disappointment and withholding good deeds
10	(19)	(20)	- honesty is a key to successful partnership vs reluctance to share
11	(21)	(22)	- courageous stand vs tactical retreat

As mentioned earlier, human beings tend to think in terms of dichotomies and Riffian-Amazigh people are not an exception. There are proverbs which are totally mutually contradictory. This is the case with the majority of the proverb pairs. Let us consider some examples. In pair two for instance, proverb three confirms that kinship relationships are stronger than any misunderstanding but proverb four warns one against blood relationships which might be the source of our pain and insecurity. Both proverbs are in a complete contrast. A similar thing can be said about pair three. Furthermore, proverb seven informs us that defective family relationships are never restored, whereas proverb eight states the opposite. Family relationships may go back to normal as if no conflicts have happened.

On the other hand, there are other proverbs that are partially contradictory, but they are very few in number. For this end, let us take proverb pair one. While proverb one claims that a woman can easily achieve her goals and get what she wants thanks to her sweet words and intelligent communication with her husband, proverb two indicates that a woman is weak and defeated. There is no reference to her being able to achieve goals or not. Moreover, proverb pair eleven juxtaposes a proverb which stresses a courageous stand and another one that highlights tactical and timely retreat. As known, the opposite of courage is cowardice. For this, we would state that the two proverbs of pair eighteen do not exhibit total contrast. For more illustrations, the following table is created:

Table 2: Classification of proverbs in terms of incompatibility

Totally contradictory proverbs	Partially contradictory proverbs
Proverb pair (2)	Proverb pair (1)
Proverb pair (3)	Proverb pair (11)
Proverb pair (4)	
Proverb pair (5)	
Proverb pair (6)	
Proverb pair (7)	
Proverb pair (8)	
Proverb pair (9)	
Proverb pair (10)	

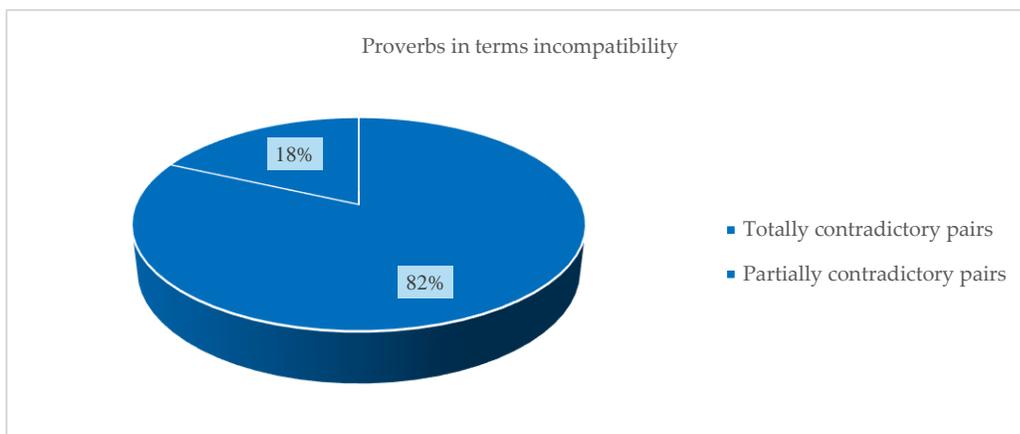


Figure 1: Proverbs in terms incompatibility

On the whole, the study has shown that the contradictions exhibited in the proverbs are oriented by social, cultural and contextual factors. In other words, the contrasting proverbs reflect the values, experiences, beliefs and feelings of the Riffian society. A given proverb is meaningful according to the context wherein it is used. That is why two different contexts will most probably require utilizing two different as well as contradictory proverbs. This is conducive to talking about human mind and behaviour. Due to their mental capacities and properties, human beings can use language and, by implication, proverbs in a loose, free and creative way to express their different and opposite views within certain cultural and social contexts. Noam Chomsky (2006, p.6) referred to this property as “the creative aspect of language use”. In short, contradictory proverbs are the mirror of not only culture but also the complexity of human behaviour.

6. RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS

Analyzing the theme of contradiction in RA proverbs can have several important research implications, affecting various fields such as linguistics, cultural studies, cognitive psychology, and many others. The analysis of contradictions in RA proverbs can provide deeper insights into how rhetorical devices like paradox and irony are used by Rifi people to convey complex and contradictory messages. Furthermore, the study of contradictions in RA

proverbs might bring to light how RA culture handles contradictions in oral tradition in particular, and in daily life in general through revealing diverse worldviews and values. On this basis, cross-cultural understanding will be improved. Finally, deeper insights into the contradictions in proverbs pave the way to understanding the complexity of the human mind and nature, as well as our paradoxical way of thinking.

7. CONTRIBUTIONS TO SCIENTIFIC COMMUNITY AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Most of the reviewed research papers on RA proverbs in particular deal with separate topics such as “the image of women”, “the use of animals”, “reference to cultural, social, historical, and geographical implications” and at some other cases the proverbs are translated into French and Arabic. In this regard, I can refer to Bouylmani 1993, Hamdaoui 2004, Moudian 2004, Azdoud 2012 and Mira 2009, 2014, to mention but a few. On this basis, the present study focuses on an area that has not been adequately explored before.

What motivates me to conduct such a study is a firm conviction that this study will contribute to enriching the repertoire of focused studies in the field of Amazigh-English studies. It may also constitute a significant contribution to the field as it is concerned with surveying cultural as well as social components.

This study aimed to bring to light a consistent analysis of the contrasting meanings exhibited in RA. More specifically, the present paper sought to find some accurate answers to the following questions:

- a. What are the different Moroccan-Riffian cultural and social aspects embedded within the Riffian-Amazigh proverbs in question?
- b. What are the most striking facets of contradiction featured in the RA proverbs?
- c. To what extent do cultural and linguistic awareness of such contradictions help in gaining a better understanding of the complexities of human thought and behaviour?
- d. How do contradictory proverbs express cultural content embedded in the native language?

8. CONCLUSION

This study focuses on identifying contradictory aspects in the Riffian-Amazigh proverbs as its main objective in addition to displaying the various cultural aspects of such verbal expressions. Thus, it has shown that all proverb pairs tend to express contradictory ideas and, hence, each proverb of a given pair is in direct contradiction to another proverb of the same pair in a way or another. To concretize this, we would state that there are proverbs which are totally mutually contradictory and that is the case with the majority of the proverb pairs. On the other hand, there are other proverbs that are partially contradictory, but they are very few in number. Finally, the research has shown that the contradictions exhibited in the proverbs are oriented by social, cultural, and contextual factors. Not to mention, the analysis has demonstrated that the incompatible proverbs reflect the values, experiences, beliefs, and emotions of the Riffian society. Accordingly, proverbs reveal not only layers and intricacies of culture, but also shed light on the complexities of human nature, its paradoxical way of using language in general, and proverbs in particular, and its inconsistent way of thinking and perceiving the world.

9. FUNDING

This research paper received no internal or external funding.

ORCID

Najib El Mahraoui  <https://orcid.org/0009-0008-5872-610X>

Mohamed Marouane  <https://orcid.org/0009-0000-3266-0378>

Ahmadou Bouylmani  <https://orcid.org/0009-0000-7104-595X>

REFERENCES

- Clark, J. M., & Hockey, L. (1979). *Research for nursing*. Leeds: Dobson Publishers.
- Azdoud, D. (2012). *Alf Maṭal Amaziyi wa Maṭala:n [one thousand and two Amazigh proverbs]*. Rabat, Morocco: IRCAM.
- Bassnet, S. (2005). *Translation Studies* (3rd ed.). UK: Routledge.
- Bouylmani, A "les proverbes du Rif" in : Bentolila F. (ed.) (1993) *Proverbes Berbères Bilingue Français-Berbère*. [Berber proverbs bilingual French-Berber]. Paris: L'Harmattan, Awal.
- Chomsky, N. (2006). *Language and Mind*. UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Crystal, D. (2005). *How Language Works*. England: Penguin books.
- Gibbs, R. W. (2001). Proverbial themes we live by. *Poetics*, 29, 167-188.
- Hamdaoui, M. (2004). *Proverbes et Expressions Proverbiales Amazighs (Le Tarifit)*, première Edition [Amazigh proverbs and proverbial expressions (Tarifit) 2nd .ed.] Hilal Impression, Oujda.
- Kroeger, P. R. (2018). *Analyzing Meaning: An Introduction to Semantics and Pragmatics*. Germany: Language science press.
- Lyons, J. (1977). *Semantics* (vol.1). UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Mieder, W. (2004). *Proverbs: A handbook*. USA: Greenwood Press.
- Millar, S. R. (2018). *Open proverbs: Exploring genre and openness in proverbs*. Doctoral dissertation, University of Cambridge, Pembroke College.
- Mira, M. (2009). *الأمثال الشعبية في الريف، الطبعة الأولى* [an excerpt of Proverbs in the Rif Region, 1st .ed]. Oujda, Morocco: Al-Sharq Press.
- Mira, M. (2014). *الأمثال الشعبية في الريف، الطبعة الثانية* [an excerpt of Proverbs in the Rif Region, 2nd .ed]. Oujda, Morocco: Al-Sharq Press.
- Moudian, S. (2004). *Mille et Un Proverbes Rifains [one thousand and one Riffian proverb]*. Rabat, Morocco: Dar Al Qalam.
- Newmark, P. (1988). *A textbook of Translation*. New York: Prentice Hall.
- Nida, E. (1964). *Towards a Science of Translating*. Leiden: E.J. Brill.
- Rattray, R. S. (1916). *Ashanti proverbs: The primitive ethics of a savage people*. Oxford.
- Uzomah, M. M. (2024). Feminimasculinism. *African Social Sciences and Humanities Journal (ASSHJ)*. 5(2), 129-144.
- Zappavigna, M. (2013). *Tacit knowledge and spoken discourse*. London: Bloomsbury