



Sadia Belkhir

Mouloud Mammeri University, Tizi-Ouzou, Algeria

Anna T. Litovkina. *Practice Makes Perfect. Workbook of English and American Proverbs for Students*, Tinta Publishing House, Budapest, 2023.

Proverbs are culture-loaded fixed expressions that belong to the cultural heritage of countries worldwide. Defining proverbs has been problematic to scholars (e.g., Taylor 1931; Mieder 2004; Norrick 2014). It is believed that “not even the most complex definition will be able to identify all proverbs” (Mieder 2004: 4). Proverbs are characterized by metaphoricity and their interpretation has been discussed in an influential theory known as Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) with its model the Great Chain Metaphor (GCM) (Lakoff and Turner 1989). Furthermore, it has been demonstrated that proverb interpretation is dependent on existing metaphorical thinking (Gibbs and Beitel 1995). EFL students’ comprehension of English proverbs has been investigated to highlight the difficulties they face (e.g., Belkhir 2022). The role of proverbs in the teaching of a foreign language has also been discussed (T. Litovkina 2017, 2019). In language education, proverbs can prove very beneficial; their implementation in EFL classrooms can help enhance learners’ intercultural communicative capabilities. EFL students are in need of developing ability in comprehending and using proverbs in naturally produced language. Unfortunately, it seems that “foreign language teachers seldom use proverbs in the classroom” (T. Litovkina 2019: 134). The workbook under review, titled *Practice Makes Perfect. Workbook of English and American Proverbs for Students*, is meant to respond to this need. This book aims to “familiarize the reader with more than 450 proverbs frequently used in American English and British English today” (p. 8).

The book runs to 151 pages and begins with an introduction (pp. 7–9), which informs the reader about the importance of proverbs for the second/foreign language learner. It also provides the organization and aim of the book along with the order and structure of the constitutive units.

The book is divided into three balanced parts, each containing six units ending in a test. That is, three tests are devised to help students evaluate their progress after completing the activities in each unit. Specific themes are assigned to the units, for example, money and love.

The topics discussed within the units in the first part of the workbook comprise the following: unit 1 deals with proverbs about money; unit 2 is concerned with those relating to love; unit 3 treats proverbs about sexual relationship, wedding and marriage; unit 4 discusses proverbs about knowledge, wisdom, folly and ignorance; unit 5 deals with proverbs about appearance and taste, while those of unit 6 are about children and parents.

The units in the second part of the workbook introduce the following themes. The proverbs in unit 7 are about home, family, relatives and surroundings. Unit 8 deals with proverbs about associates and friends. The proverbs in unit 9 relate to medical aspects and weather. Unit 10 explores proverbs about action and consequence. The proverbs within unit 11 discuss reciprocity, whereas those of unit 12 are concerned with optimism, success, hope, pessimism and misfortune.

The units in the third part of the workbook are concerned with the following themes. Unit 13 discusses proverbs about discretion, risk, caution, thrift and prudence. The proverbs in unit 14 deal with necessity and adversity. Unit 15 introduces proverbs about speech and silence, while those of unit 16 discuss proverbs about words and deeds. Unit 17 deals with proverbs about work, and unit 18 explores proverbs about opportunity, procrastination, patience and haste.

At the beginning of each unit, two lists of proverbs are provided. The first list includes familiar proverbs while the second includes less familiar ones. It should be pointed out that in each of the units of the book the first three activities are of similar types. In fact, they all contain such activities as: (i) guessing the meaning of proverbs appearing in some extracts, (ii) matching proverbs to their corresponding definitions, and (iii) filling in gaps with appropriate proverbs. The rest of the activities in the units are different. These include exercises such as: (a) finding out the proverbs that are parodied, (b) selecting from a list of proverbs the ones fitting the mentioned jokes, (c) completing conversations with a relevant proverb, (d) recalling learned proverbs via a number of supplied words, (e) recognizing proverbs from some initial letters that are supplied, (f) summarizing a given fable using an adequate proverb, and so on and so forth.

The book also contains the key (pp. 133–144), i.e., answers to the questions of the activities within the units and tests. The key is helpful, as it allows students to check the accuracy of their answers, thus guaranteeing autonomous learning.

Additionally, the end of the book (pp. 147–151) comprises a proverb-finder index aiming to specify the unit wherein a given proverb is practised. This index is practical, as it allows readers to be directed easily to the proverb that is searched for.

The value of the workbook lies not only in the fact that it makes students practice proverbs in a subtle way, but also in the fact that the meanings of the proverbs are

learnt naturally in context and then applied in relevant concrete situations. Furthermore, the book “is developed and designed for independent learning, in particular, for those who want to improve their intermediate and advanced language skills” (p. 9).

In conclusion, it can be claimed that this workbook provides a very useful resource for students, teachers, and anyone interested in English proverbs for foreign/second language learning purposes. *Practice Makes Perfect. Workbook of English and American Proverbs for Students* is an essential workbook because it aims to highlight the role of proverbs in foreign/second language learning through a combination of useful activities intended for autonomous language education that undoubtedly develops students’ knowledge about English proverbs and thereby raises their communicative capabilities in natural language contexts. By providing a wide range of exercises involving familiar and less familiar English proverbs and how these are involved in different situations of use, the book achieves this aim and supports research into foreign/second language teaching and learning. The workbook reveals the relevance of proverbs to educational linguistics. It will undeniably be a precious contribution to the reading list of EFL/ESL and pedagogical linguistics.

References

- Belkhir, S. (2022). Metaphoric proverbs in EFL learners’ Translation. *Cognitive Linguistic Studies*, 9(1), 110–127. doi.org/10.1075/cogls.00073.bel
- Gibbs, R. W., Jr. & Beitel, D. (1995). What proverb understanding reveals about how people think. *Psychological Bulletin*, 118(1), 133–154.
- Lakoff, G., & Turner, M. (1989). *More than cool reason: A field guide to poetic metaphor*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Mieder, W. (2004). *Proverbs: A handbook*. Westport Connecticut & London: Greenwood Press.
- Norrick, N. R. (2014). Subject area, terminology, proverb definitions, proverb features. In H. Hrisztova-Gotthardt, & M. A. Varga. *Introduction to paremiology: A comprehensive guide to proverb studies* (pp. 7–25). Berlin: De Gruyter Open.
- Taylor, A. (1931). *The proverb*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- T. Litovkina, A. (2017). *Teaching proverbs and anti-Proverbs*, Komarnó: J. Selye University Faculty of Education, 260 pp.
- T. Litovkina, A. (2019). The creative use of proverbs in story-writing in teaching English as a foreign language. In: *11th International Conference of J. Selye University Section on Language – Culture – Intercultural Relationships* 133.