The popular Sicilian proverbs in use today

Rossana SIDOTI
University of Messina (Italy)[1]
rsidoti@unime.it

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Abstract

This article contains the results of a fieldwork: the collection of popular proverbs and other paremias still used today and remembered by some informants of the Sicilian city of Messina from the paremiographical technique of the questionnaire. The material provided through surveys allows to analyze the results concerning the frequency of use of paremias by the informants, determine which is the paremiological competence of the respondents and which paremias they use most frequently (the active paremiological competence). In addition, it contributes to the conservation of the intangible heritage of an Italian region highly stratified from a cultural and linguistic point of view and also to the geoparemiological research in Italy, in particular, to those that are being carried out in other Sicilian varieties, like the Salvatore Trovato studies. In addition, it provides important material with which to establish the Sicilian paremiological minimum, thanks to the study of Sicilian paremiology from a geographical and linguistic perspective, which makes it possible to document the Sicilian popular proverbs from a synchronic perspective.

Keywords:
Paremiology.
Geoparemiology.
Paremia.
Sicilian.

Resumen

Título: «El refranero hoy en Sicilia».
Este artículo contiene los resultados de un trabajo de campo: la recopilación de refranes y otras paremias empleadas todavía hoy y recordadas por algunos informantes de la ciudad siciliana de Messina a partir de la técnica paremiográfica de la encuesta. El material aportado mediante encuestas permite analizar los resultados relativos a la frecuencia de uso de las paremias por parte de los Informants, determinar cuál es la competencia paremiológica de los encuestados y qué paremias utilizan con más frecuencia (competencia paremiológica activa). Por otra parte, contribuye a la conservación del patrimonio inmaterial de una región italiana muy estratificada desde el punto de vista cultural y lingüístico y a las investigaciones geoparemiológicas en Italia, concretamente, a las que se están llevando a cabo en las demás variantes del siciliano, como los estudios de Salvatore Trovato. Además, aporta un material importante para conocer el mínimo paremiológico siciliano, gracias al estudio de la paremiología siciliana desde una perspectiva geográfico-lingüística, lo que permite documentar los refranes sicilianos desde una perspectiva sincrónica.

Palabras clave:
Paremiología.
Geoparemiología.
Paremia.
Siciliano.

Résumé

Titre : « Les proverbes aujourd'hui en Sicile ».
Cet article présente les résultats d'un travail de terrain : le recueil de proverbes et autres parémies employées encore aujourd'hui et retenues par des informateurs de la ville sicilienne de Messina. Ce matériau linguistique permet d'analyser la fréquence d'utilisation des parémies chez les informateurs, d'établir leur compétence parémiologique et de savoir quelles parémies sont les plus utilisées (compétence parémiologique active). Ce matériau contribue non seulement à la conservation du patrimoine immatériel d'une région italienne très stratifiée du point de vue culturel et linguistique, mais aussi à la re-

Mots-clés:
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Geoparémiologie.
Parémie.
Sicilien.

[1] External member of the Research Group UCM 930235 *Fraseología y paremiología* (PAREFRAS, included in the Campus of International Excellence, CEI Moncloa, Cultural Heritage Cluster).

cherche geoparémiologique menée en Italie, en particulier les recherches sur les autres variantes du sicilien, comme celles menées par Salvatore Trovato. Par ailleurs, ce matériau apporte des données importantes pour connaître le minimum parémiologique sicilien, grâce à l'étude de la parémiologie sicilienne dans une perspective synchronique.

INTRODUCTION

As part of the section "El refranero hoy", this study provides the results that have been achieved from a fieldwork on Sicilian paremias carried out in the city of Messina between 2018 and 2019 by the paremiographical technique of the survey. Some students enrolled in the Degree in Foreign Languages, Literatures and Linguistic Mediation Techniques (Department of Ancient and Modern Civilizations, University of Messina) and some informants from previous generations have undergone this survey and their participation has enabled to collect a total of 612 paremias, including their variants.

1. APPLICATION OF THE GEOGRAPHICAL AND LINGUISTIC APPROACH FOR THE SELECTION OF CORPUS PAREMIAS

For the collection of paremias we have adopted a geographical and linguistic approach, in accordance with Salvatore Trovato's theories[2] (University of Catania), who highlights the importance and usefulness of the geoparemiological research in such a culturally and linguistically stratified area as Sicily. This approach has allowed us to obtain valid scientific results to establish the paremiological minimum of the Messinese variety[3]. Since it would be extremely complex to cover the nine Sicilian provinces, we have considered convenient to work with informants from Messina or with informants who have lived for many years, at least since childhood, in this city.

2. PAREMIOLOGICAL MATERIAL COLLECTED: THE SURVEY

The application of the paremiographical techniques used by Julia Sevilla Muñoz and the members of the Research Group of the Complutense University of Madrid *Fraseología y Paremiología* (PAREFRAS), together with the result of an accurate reflection on the theoretical-methodological foundations of empirical paremiology[4], has allowed to collect paremiographical material in order to obtain the paremiological minimum in the city of Messina. For the survey, we have taken into

[2] "La notevole stratificazione culturale e linguistica della Sicilia impone che la paremiologia siciliana –un campo ancora tutto da dissodare, nonostante le raccolte esistenti– venga studiata in un progetto di geografia linguistica" (Trovato 1997: 612).

[3] The Russian paremiologist Grigori Permiakov (1970, 1982, 1985) defines the paremiological minimum as the set of fixed sententious statements most known by all or, at least, by a significant majority of speakers from a specific socio-cultural community. Permiakov considers that the Russian paremiological minimum comprises 300 paremias. According to Olga Tarnovska (2005: 199), the paremiological minimum would be "el número de paremias que necesariamente entra en la competencia lingüística pasiva y activa del hablante nativo".

[4] See No 1 of the series "Mínimo paremiológico" (*Biblioteca fraseológica y paremiológica*), in which some of the results obtained through the development of several research projects financed by the Spanish Government are diffused: *El mínimo paremiológico* (HUM2005-03899, 2005-2008), financed by the Spanish Ministry of Education and Science, *Ampliación del mínimo paremiológico* (FFI2008-02681/FILO, 2008-2011), financed by the Spanish Ministry of Science and Innovation. https://cvc.cervantes.es/lengua/biblioteca_fraseologica/m1_zurdo/default.htm [consulted: 27/4/2019].

account the model provided by Marina García Yelo[5] (2009) who follows the line of research line marked by Julia Sevilla Muñoz in the section directed by the same "El Refranero hoy"[6] in the journal *Paremia*, in order to differentiate between the passive and active competence of the informants.

Respondents had to indicate the Sicilian paremies that came to their mind differentiating between those they employ (active competence) and those they remember and learnt by listening to their family or friends (passive competence)[7]. Since the paremies do not always come to mind immediately, we decided that, for the collection of our corpus, the respondents had to have several days in which to write their paremies on the questionnaire sheet. In addition they had to indicate their personal data (date and place of birth and sex), and the data of the persons who transmitted to the informants the passive paremiological knowledge (family members, friends, acquaintances) and the degree of relationship.

As many of the respondents who had been submitted to the questionnaire could find difficulties when writing in Sicilian because they ignored the conventions that regulate the writing, we asked them to write down the paremies in their way of pronouncing them which, as the Sicilians know, is something that you learn only by listening to the others speak. This form of transmission does not ensure that a certain word has been pronounced correctly, because the pronunciation rules are not categorical, unlike the Italian and French ones, that, once learned, do not encounter problems related to their pronunciation. Regarding the graphical representation of the corpus paremies in the Messinese variety, we used the graphic signs provided in the fifth volume of the *Vocabolario siciliano* coordinated by Salvatore Trovato (see Piccitto 1977-2002).

3. THE RESPONDENTS

The respondents who participated in the questionnaire, 72 in total, are people of different ages and sex, so they are part of three age groups that correspond to three generations: children, parents and grandparents. Fiftyseven students born between 1981 and 2000 enrolled in Languages, Foreign Literatures and Linguistic Mediation Techniques of the Department of Ancient and Modern Civilizations of the University of Messina, during the academic year 2018-19, are part of the first group. Eight informants born between 1960 and 1980 are part of the second one and seven, born between 1940 and 1959 of the third one. The "age" factor is important to determine the informants's paremiological competence, which paremias are more frequently used (active paremiological competence), if there are significant differences in the paremiological minimum of the

[5] Based on the survey model developed by Garcia Yelo (2009), the respondents, 31 Belgian students enrolled in the Faculty of Philosophy and Literature at the Catholic University of Louvain (Belgium), have to list down the popular paremias which are familiar to them and which they normally use. Also, at the same time, they have to conduct small surveys in their immediate environment –family and friends– on the paremias they know and use. This paremiological transmission chain has allowed to obtain a greater number of respondents, as they are part of three different generations (grandparents, parents and children). This survey model is very interesting, because, in addition to determining the most used paremias for the total number of users, it allows to establish the average of paremias collected by each generation, like the paremias belonging to the speakers's active competence depending on the generation, and to determine also the paremiological category of those paremias which are part of the active competence of the informants.

[6] The section "El Refranero hoy" offers valuable material for scholars of popular paremias in a time where there is a loss of paremiological competence on the part of the younger generation.

[7] The passive paremiological competence is the ability of people to recognize the paremias when they are used in oral speeches or in written texts, or "la capacidad de recuperarlas de la memoria" (J. Sevilla Muñoz and Zurdo Ruiz-Ayúcar 2016: 19).

three-generations and, finally, what paremias are falling or have fallen into disuse. Most of the informants are all from the city of Messina or the province (four from Spadafora, nine from Barcellona Pozzo di Gotto, two from S. Agata di Militello, one from Saponara, four from Patti, five from Milazzo and one from Acquedolci), although some come from other Sicilian cities or provinces, or, even, from other countries: one from San Gregorio (province of Catania), one from the Aeolian island of Lipari, one from Milan (Lombardy), one from Naples (Campania) and one from Bacău (Romania).

3.1 Informants list

In this section we include in bold the number of the informants who participated in the questionnaire and who are part of the three above mentioned groups. For each informant will be indicated the date and place of birth, the sex and the family relationship (father, mother, uncle, aunt, grandfather, grandmother, friend, etc.) which is established between the informant and the people who transmitted their paremiological knowledge.

1. **Informant 1 (2000, Messina)**
   - Informant 1.1 (1970, Messina, father)
2. **Informant 2 (2000, Messina)**
   - Informant 2.1 (1967, Messina, father)
3. **Informant 3 (2000, Messina)**
   - Informant 3.1 (1966, Messina, mother)
4. **Informant 4 (2000, Messina)**
   - Informant 4.1 (1960, S. Agata di Militello, prov. of Messina, grandmother)
5. **Informant 5 (2000, Messina)**
   - Informant 5.1 (1970, Messina, mother)
   - Informant 5.2 (1947, Messina, grandmother)
6. **Informant 6 (2000, Messina)**
7. **Informant 7 (2000, San Salvador, El Salvador, Central America)**
   - Informant 7.1 (1929, Messina, grandmother)
   - Informant 7.2 (1997, Messina, friend)
8. **Informant 8 (2000, Saponara, prov. of Messina)**
9. **Informant 9 (1999, Naples, Campania)**
   - Informant 9.1 (1998, Messina, friend)
   - Informant 9.2 (1966, Messina, mother)
   - Informant 9.3 (1965, Messina, father)
   - Informant 9.4 (1939, Messina, grandmother)
10. **Informant 10 (1999, Messina)**
    - Informant 10.1 (1929, Messina, grandfather)
11. **Informant 11 (1999, Messina)**
    - Informant 11.1 (1972, Tortorici, prov. of Messina, mother)
    - Informant 11.2 (1964, Tortorici, prov. of Messina, father)
    - Informant 11.3 (1944, Tortorici, prov. of Messina, grandmother)

12. **Informant 12 (1999, Patti, prov. of Messina)**
    - Informant 12.1 (1998, Patti, prov. of Messina, friend)
    - Informant 12.2 (1971, Patti, prov. of Messina, aunt)
    - Informant 12.3 (1939, Patti, prov. of Messina, grandfather)
13. **Informant 13 (1999, Messina)**
14. **Informant 14 (1999, Messina)**
15. **Informant 15 (1999, Messina)**
    - Informant 15.1 (1941, Messina, grandfather)
    - Informant 15.2 (1936, Messina, grandmother)
16. **Informant 16 (1999, Messina)**
    - Informant 16.1 (1968, Messina, mother)
    - Informant 16.2 (1947, Messina, grandmother)
    - Informant 16.3 (1935, Messina, grandfather)
    - Informant 16.4 (1934, Messina, grandmother)
17. **Informant 17 (1999, Messina)**
    - Informant 17.1 (1939, Messina, grandmother)
    - Informant 17.2 (1967, Messina, mother)
18. **Informant 18 (1999, Messina)**
    - Informant 18.1 (1978, Messina, mother)
    - Informant 18.2 (1972, Messina, father)
    - Informant 18.3 (1938, Messina, grandmother)
19. **Informant 19 (1999, Messina)**
    - Informant 19.1 (1934, Messina, grandmother)
20. **Informant 20 (1999, Messina)**
    - Informant 20.1 (1946, Messina, grandmother)
21. **Informant 21 (1999, San Gregorio, prov. of Catania)**
    - Informant 21.1 (1957, Messina, mother)
    - Informant 21.2 (1956, Messina, father)
    - Informant 21.3 (1954, Messina, uncle)
    - Informant 21.4 (1922, Messina, grandmother)
22. **Informant 22 (1999, Messina)**
    - Informant 22.1 (1934, Messina, grandmother)
23. **Informant 23 (1999, Messina)**
24. **Informant 24 (1999, Messina)**
    - Informant 24.1 (1937, Messina, grandmother)
25. **Informant 25 (1999, Messina)**
    - Informant 25.1 (1971, Messina, mother)
    - Informant 25.2 (1952, Messina, grandmother)
26. **Informant 26 (1999, Messina)**
    - Informant 26.1 (1948, Messina, grandmother)

27. **Informant 27 (1998, Messina)**
    - Informant 27.1 (1964, Messina, mother)
    - Informant 27.2 (1964, Messina, father)
    - Informant 27.3 (1938, Messina, grandmother)
    - Informant 27.4 (1920, Messina, grandfather)
28. **Informant 28 (1998, Lipari, Eolian island)**
    - Informant 28.1 (1969, Messina, father)
    - Informant 28.1 (1944, Lipari, Eolian island, grandmother)
29. **Informant 29 (1998, Messina)**
    - Informant 29.1 (1964, Messina, father)
30. **Informant 30 (1998, Messina)**
31. **Informant 31 (1998, Messina)**
    - Informant 31.1 (1937, Messina, grandmother)
    - Informant 31.2 (1934, Messina, grandfather)
32. **Informant 32 (1998, Messina)**
    - Informant 32.1 (1968, Messina, father)
    - Informant 32.2 (1968, Messina, mother)
33. **Informant 33 (1998, Messina)**
    - Informant 33.1 (1996, Messina, friend)
    - Informant 33.2 (1991, Messina, brother)
    - Informant 33.3 (1969, Messina, aunt)
    - Informant 33.4 (1966, Messina, father)
    - Informant 33.5 (1948, Messina, grandmother)
34. **Informant 34 (1998, Milano, reg. Lombardia)**
    - Informant 34.1 (1965, Messina, grandfather)
35. **Informant 35 (1998, Messina)**
    - Informant 35.1 (1958, Messina, friend)
    - Informant 35.2 (1938, Messina, grandmother)
36. **Informant 36 (1998, Messina)**
    - Informant 36.1 (1931, Messina, grandmother)
37. **Informant 37 (1998, Messina)**
    - Informant 37.1 (1999, Messina, friend)
    - Informant 37.2 (1997, Messina, friend)
    - Informant 37.3 (1994, Messina, boyfriend.)
    - Informant 37.4 (1994, Messina, friend)
    - Informant 37.5 (1992, Messina, friend)
    - Informant 37.6 (1966, Messina, mother)
    - Informant 37.7 (1960, Messina, father-in-law)
    - Informant 37.8 (1960, Messina, mother-in-law)
    - Informant 37.9 (1942, Messina, grandmother)

38. **Informant 38 (1998, Barcellona P. Gotto, prov. of Messina)**
    - Informant 38.1 (1965, Barcellona P. Gotto, prov. of Messina, aunt)
    - Informant 38.2 (1943, Barcellona P. Gotto, prov. of Messina, grandmother)
    - Informant 38.3 (1934, Barcellona P. Gotto, prov. of Messina, grandfather)
39. **Informant 39 (1997, Milazzo, prov. of Messina)**
40. **Informant 40 (1997, Messina)**
    - Informant 40.1 (1965, Messina, mother)
41. **Informant 41 (1997, Messina)**
42. **Informant 42 (1997, Messina)**
43. **Informant 43 (1997, Messina)**
44. **Informant 44 (1997, Messina)**
    - Informant 44.1 (1930, Messina, grandmother)
    - Informant 44.2 (1929, Messina, grandfather)
    - Informant 44.3 (1929, Messina, grandfather)
    - Informant 44.4 (1961, Messina, mother)
    - Informant 44.5 (1959, Messina, father)
45. **Informant 45 (1997, Bacău, Romania)**
    - Informant 45.1 (1997, Terme Vigliatore, prov. of Messina, friend)
    - Informant 45.2 (1947, Terme Vigliatore, prov. of Messina, grandmother)
46. **Informant 46 (1996, Messina)**
    - Informant 46.1 (1940, Messina, grandmother)
47. **Informant 47 (1996, Messina)**
48. **Informant 48 (1996, Messina)**
    - Informant 48.1 (1972, Messina, mother)
    - Informant 48.2 (1941, Messina, grandmother)
49. **Informant 49 (1996, Messina)**
    - Informant 49.1 (1936, Messina, grandfather)
50. **Informant 50 (1996, Sant'Agata di Militello, prov. of Messina)**
51. **Informant 51 (1995, Messina)**
52. **Informant 52 (1995, Messina)**
    - Informant 52.1 (1945, Roccella, prov. of Messina)
53. **Informant 53 (1995, Messina)**
54. **Informant 54 (1993, Milazzo, prov. of Messina)**
    - Informant 54.1 (1993, Milazzo, prov. of Messina, friend)
    - Informant 54.2 (1962, Milazzo, prov. of Messina, aunt)
    - Informant 54.3 (1967, Milazzo, prov. of Messina, mother)
55. **Informant 55 (1993, Messina)**
    - Informant 55.1 (1914, Messina, grandfather)
56. **Informant 56 (1992, Acquedolci, prov. of Messina)**
57. **Informant 57 (1992, Barcellona Pozzo di Gotto, prov. of Messina)**
    - Informant 57.1 (1988, Barcellona Pozzo di Gotto, prov. of Messina, sister)

- Informant 57.2 (1967, Barcellona Pozzo di Gotto, prov. of Messina, mother)

58. **Informant 58 (1980, Messina)**
59. **Informant 59 (1980, Messina)**
60. **Informant 60 (1977, Messina)**
    - Informant 60.1 (1950, Spadafora, prov. of Messina, mother)
    - Informant 60.2 (1952, Messina, mother-in-law)
    - Informant 60.3 (1943, Barcellona, Pozzo di Gotto, prov. of Messina, father)
    - Informant 60.4 (1927, Spadafora, prov. of Messina, grandmother)
    - Informant 60.5 (1919, Spadafora, prov. of Messina, grandfather)
61. **Informant 61 (1976, Messina)**
62. **Informant 62 (1976, Messina)**
63. **Informant 63 (1971, Messina)**
64. **Informant 64 (1969, Messina)**
65. **Informant 65 (1962, Messina)**
66. **Informant 66 (1958, Messina)**
67. **Informant 67 (1957, Messina)**
68. **Informant 68 (1956, Messina)**
69. **Informant 69 (1952, Messina)**
70. **Informant 70 (1952, Messina)**
71. **Informant 71 (1943, Barcellona Pozzo di Gotto, prov. of Messina)**
72. **Informant 72 (1940, Spadafora, prov. of Messina)**

4. PAREMIOGRAPHIC MATERIAL COLLECTED IN MESSINA

We have collected 642 paremias[8] and, although most of them are *refranes*[9], they belong to several categories:

- *Proverbios*[10] [Proverbs]: "Sulu 'a motti è sicura" [eng. lit. tr.[11] : Only death is certain];
- *Refranes morales* [Moral proverbs]: «Cu' si cucca chî carụ̀itti 'a matina su/si sụ̀i bagnatu» [eng. lit. tr.: Who sleeps with children, gets up wet in the morning];
- *Refranes temporales y meteorológicos* [Temporal and meteorological proverbs]: "Aprili: non livari e non mèntiri" [eng. lit. tr.: In april, don't take anything off and don't put anything on];
- *Refranes geográficos* [Geographic proverbs] and/or *dictados tópicos*: "A Missina c'è sempri stoccu, ventu e malanovi" [eng. lit. tr.: In Messina there is stockfish, wind and misfortune];
- *Refranes económicos* [Economic proverbs]: "'A famigghja ti 'nnigghja" [eng. lit. tr.: The family makes you poor];

[8] We have not taken into consideration the locutions and the routine formulas, because they are not part of the paremiological categories. To classify the categories of the paremiological universe which integrate our corpus, we have resorted to the classification of paremias of J. Sevilla (1993), re-examined and updated in collaboration with Crida (2013). See also J. Sevilla and Cantera (2002=2008: 25-28).

[9] According to J. Sevilla and Crida (2013: 111) the *refrán* is a paremia of unknown origin and popular use like the proverbial phrases, the proverbial locutions and the dialogisms.

[10] According to J. Sevilla and Crida (2013: 109) the *proverbio* is a paremia of known origin and cult use.

[11] Abbreviation of English literal translation.

- *Refranes supersticiosos* [Superstitious proverbs]: "'A-mmìdia fa pi setti fatturi" [eng. lit. tr.: Envy can be seven times stronger than an evil eye];
- *Refranes médicos* [Medical proverbs]: "Cu' mància patati nun mori mai" [eng. lit. tr.: Who eats potatoes never dies];
- *Refranes del calendario* [Calendar proverbs]: "Santa Lucìa è 'u jornu cchjù cuttu chi ci sìa" [eng. lit. tr.: Saint Lucia is the shortest day that exists];
- *Refranes laborales* [Labor Proverbs]: "Cani, latri e buttani, quannu vecchji mòrunu 'i fami" [eng. lit. tr.: Dogs, thieves and whores, will starve when they're old];
- *Frases proverbiales* [Proverbial phrases]: "Ogni cani è liùni ntâ so caśa" [eng. lit. tr.: Every dog is a lion in its house];
- *Locuciones proverbiales* [Proverbial locutions]: "Tira a peṭra e-mmùccia 'a manu" [eng. lit. tr.: Throws the stone and hides his hands];
- *Dialogismos* [Dialogisms]: "Ci dissi 'u sùrici â nuci: 'dammi tempu ca ti pèrciu'" [eng. lit. tr.: The mouse said to the nut: 'Give me time and I'll put a small hole in you'].

The highest number of collected paremias corresponds to the category of the *refranes* (508), followed by the proverbial phrases (59), the proverbial locutions (29), the dialogisms (11) and the proverbs [*proverbios*] (5).

As for the popular proverbs of the corpus, the majority are formed by two members ("'A jaḍḍina fa l'ovu e ô jaḍḍu ci brùcia 'u culu» [eng. lit. tr.: The hen lays the egg and the cock's ass burns]; "'A liṅġua 'un avi ossa, ma rumpi l'ossa" [eng. lit. tr.: The tongue has no bones but breaks bones]), three members or four members ("Cu' cància 'a vecchja pâ nova sapi chiḍḍu chi lassa, ma non sapi chiḍḍu chi/ca ṭrova" [eng. lit. tr.: Who changes the old for the new knows what he leaves but doesn't know what he finds]; "Cu' non voli stari in cumpagnìa, o è sbirru, o cunnutu, o è spìa" [eng. lit. tr.: Who doesn't want to be in company, is either a cop, a cuckold, or a spy]; "Cu' avi 'u pani non avi 'i denti, e cu' avi 'i denti non avi 'u pani" [eng. lit. tr.: Who has bread doesn't have teeth, and who has teeth, doesn't have bread]).

It should be emphasized that some elements contribute to accentuating the two member structure typical of the popular proverbs:

- the rhyme ("A sanari e sanareḍḍu si inchji 'u carušeḍḍu" [eng. lit. tr.: Cents after cents fills the piggy bank], "Chiḍḍu chi fa pî so denti, non fa pî so parenti" [eng. lit. tr.: What he does for his teeth, he doesn't do it for his relatives]),

- the lexical repetitions ("Cu' sìmina bonu, bonu ricogghji" [eng. lit. tr.: Who sows well, harvests well], "Cu' pigghja biḍḍizzi, pigghja conna" [eng. lit. tr.: Who chooses beauty, is a cuckold]),

- the lexical oppositions ("Carni cruda e pisci cottu" [eng. lit. tr.: Raw meat and cooked fish]),

- the deletion of a verb or other lexical elements ("Amuri amuri, no broru 'i cìciri" [eng. lit. tr.: Love is love and not chickpeas broth], "Parenti: focu ardenti" [eng. lit. tr.: Parents: burning fire]).

There is a predominance of popular proverbs that begin with "Cu" [Who] as the subject: "Cu' avi liṅġua arriva a Roma", "Cu' avi 'u pani non avi 'i denti, e cu' avi 'i denti non avi 'u pani", "Cu' beḍḍa voli appariri/pariri 'na picca avi a suffriri", "Cu' bonu sìmina megghju arricogghji", "Cu' campa pava, e cu' mori è cunnutu", "Cu' cància 'a vecchja pâ nova sapi chiḍḍu chi lassa, ma non sapi chiḍḍu chi/ca ṭrova", "Cu' ciànci p'amuri non senti duluri", "Cu' cunta metti 'a-ggiùnta", "Cu' dâ robba 'i l'àuṭri si vesti prestu si spogghja", etc.

5. SURVEY RESULTS

5.1. Paremiological competence of respondents

The analysis of the paremiographic material has provided extremely valuable data on the competence of the respondents. From the total number of paremias per generation, we observe that the average of paremias for each person concerning the informants of the first group is of 7,82; furthermore, the average number of paremias per person relative to the informants of the second group, a much smaller group than the first, is higher (9,87). The informants of the third group, very close in number to the second group, have a higher average per person (12,2) in comparison with the second and first groups.

Age groups	No. of informants	Total number of paremias (active and passive competence)	Average per person
1981-2000 Children	57	447	7,82
1960-1980 Parents	8	79	9,87
1940-1960 Grandparents	7	86	12,2

Table 1. Average of paremias per person (active and passive competence) per generation.

If we analyze only the active competence of the informants, we see, in the first group, a much lower average of paremias per person (4,5) compared to the previous average which included the active and passive competence of the informants of the same group (7,82). It follows that less than half of the paremias provided by the informants of this group are not in use anymore.

Regarding the active competence of the second group, there is an average of paremias per person of 8,12, 1,75 less compared to the average of the second group which included active and passive competence per person (9,87). It means that this generation uses paremias more frequently than the one of children.

In the third group, it is observed that the average number of paremias per person does not vary in respect to the previous average (12,2), because its members have only active competence. Although it seems highly unlikely that the informants of the latter group manage to collect all the paremiological heritage transmitted by their relatives, because nobody can completely possess it, the results obtained show that older people know and use more paremias compared to previous generations. This shows the progressive intergenerational loss of paremiological competence.

Age groups	No. of informants	No. of paremias (active competence)	Average per person
1981-2000 Children	57	262	4,5
1960-1980 Parents	8	65	8,12
1940-1959 Grandparents	7	86	12,2

Table 2. Average of paremias per person (active competences) per generation.

5.2. The Paremiological minimum

5.2.1 The most frequent corpus paremias per number of informants

Of all the paremias collected in the corpus, twenty-one stand out for being the most frequent and most used, including the counting of variants. The table below shows the paremiological category of the paremia[12] together with its frequency in the corpus and the percentage of informants who use it.

Paremia	Type of paremia	Frequency of occurrence	Percentage of informants
1) Aceḍḍu ntâ jàggia o canta pi 'nvìdia /pi-mmìdia o canta pi-rràggia (inf. 15.2, 17, 18, 25, 33.3, 38, 46) / L'aceḍḍu ntâ jàggia o canta pi 'nvìdia o canta pi-rràggia (inf. 20.1, 31.2, 37.6, 49) / Aceḍḍu ntâ jàggia non canta p'amuri, ma pi-rràggia (inf. 23, 44.3) / 'U jaḍḍu ntâ jàggia o canta pi 'nvìdia o canta pi-rràggia (inf. 14, 6) / Aceḍḍu ntâ jàggia canta pi 'nvìdia o pi-rràggia (inf. 65) / Aceḍḍu ntâ jàggia non canta pi 'nvìdia, ma canta pi-rràggia (inf. 60) /'U 'ceḍḍu ntâ jàggia canta pi stizza, o pi-rràggia (inf. 57) [eng. lit. tr.: The bird in a cage sings out of envy or anger][13]	R	18 times	25%
2) Cu' cància 'a vecchja pâ nova sapi chiḍḍu chi lassa ma non sapi chiḍḍu chi ṭrova (inf. 9, 17, 29, 32, 48) / Cu' lassa 'a vecchja pâ nova sapi chiḍḍu chi/ca lassa, ma non sapi chiḍḍu chi/ca ṭrova (inf. 33, 44.4, 47, 59) / Quannu canci 'u vecchju pû novu sai chiḍḍu chi peddi, ma non sai chiḍḍu chi ṭrovi (inf. 15, 19) / Cu' cància 'a vecchja câ nova cchjù tinta 'a ṭrova (inf. 45.2, 57) / Cu' cància 'a vecchja pâ nova sapi chiḍḍu chi lassa e nun sapi chiḍḍu chi ṭrova (inf. 24) / Cu' lassa 'a scupa vecchja pi chiḍḍa nova sapi chiḍḍu chi lassa, ma non sapi chiḍḍu chi ṭrova (inf. 16) /Quannu canci 'u vecchju cu novu sai chiḍḍu chi peddi, ma non chiḍḍu chi ṭrovi (inf. 18) / Cu' lassa 'a vecchja vìa pâ nova pèggiu ṭrova (inf. 27.3) / Cu' lassa 'a vecchja pâ nova sapi chi pigghja, ma nun sapi chi ṭrova (inf. 49) [eng. lit. tr.: Who changes the old for the new knows what he leaves but not what he finds]	R	18 times	25%
3) Non si pìgghjunu si non si rassumígghjunu (inf. 16.1, 26, 37.4, 39) / Nuḍḍu si pigghja, si non si rassumigghja (inf. 1.1, 13, 46, 49) / Non si pìgghjunu si non s'assumìgghjunu (inf. 27.2, 33, 35, 54) / Nuḍḍu si pigghja, si non s' assumigghja (inf. 60.4) [eng. lit. tr.: They don't choose each other if they do not resemble each other]	R	13 times	18%

[12] R= *refrán* [proverbs of unknown origin and popular use]; P= *proverbio* [proverbs of known origin and cult use]; LP= *locución proverbial* [proverbial locution]; FP= *frase proverbial* [proverbial phrase]; D= *dialogismo* [dialogisms].

[13] We have done an English literal translation of the Sicilian paremiological variant most frequently used.

Paremia	Type of paremia	Frequency of occurrence	Percentage of informants
4) Cu' mància fa muḍḍichji (inf. 21.1, 24.1, 31, 33, 34.1, 37.7, 44.3, 52, 55, 57, 60.3) [eng. lit. tr.: Who eat makes crumbs]	R	11 times	15,2%
5) Tira a peṭra e-mmùccia 'a manu (inf. 9, 12.2, 15, 16.4, 17, 18, 19, 35, 37.4, 52, 57) [eng. lit. tr.: Throws the stone and hides his hands]	LP	11 times	13,8%
6) Cu' spatti avi 'a megghju patti (inf. 2.1, 7.2, 17, 21.3, 24, 30, 33.3, 37.4, 44.4, 60) [eng. lit. tr.: Who divides takes the best part]	R	10 times	13,8%
7) Non/No' ghjabbu/ghjabba e non/no' maravigghja (inf. 9, 15, 16, 17, 18, 26, 31, 40.1, 68) [eng. lit. tr.: Don't be surprised or amazed]	R	9 times	13,8%
8) Amici e parenti non 'ccattari e non vìnniri nenti (inf. 32, 37.4, 54) / Cu amici e parenti non 'ccattari e non vìnniri nenti (inf. 30, 50, 57) / 'Ṭra amici e parenti 'un vìnniri e 'ccattari nenti (inf. 59) / 'Ṭra amici e parenti non 'ccattari e vìnniri nenti (inf. 60) / Cu amici e cu parenti non ci 'ccattari e vìnniri nenti (inf. 34.1) [eng. lit. tr.: With friends and family, don't buy or sell anything]	R	9 times	12,5%
9) (tu) Voi/Vu''a butti chjina e 'a mugghjeri 'mbriàca (inf. 15.2, 16, 17.2, 11.2, 29.1) / 'A butti chjina e 'a mugghjeri 'mbriàca (inf. 15, 18) / Non si po aviri 'a butti chjina e 'a mugghjeri 'mbriàca (inf. 13) / Vuliri 'a butti chjina e 'a mugghjeri 'mbriàca (inf. 35) [eng. lit. tr.: You want the barrel full and your wife drunk]	LP	9 times	12,5%
10) Bon tempu e malu tempu non dura sempri un tempu (inf. 9, 16.3, 17.1, 18.2, 58) / Bon tempu e malu tempu non dura tuttu 'u tempu (inf. 13, 45, 59) / Bon tempu o malu tempu sempri un tempu 'un po durari (inf. 28.1) [eng. lit. tr.: Good weather and bad weather doesn't always last a long time])	R	9 times	12,5%
11) 'U rispettu è-mmiśuratu, cu' lu/ cû porta /potta l'avi purtatu/puttatu (inf. 26, 29, 33, 49.1, 32, 37.4, 59, 66) / 'U rispettu è-mmiśuratu, cu' tû potta l'avi puttatu (inf. 42) [eng. lit. tr.: Respect is measured, who gives it, receives it]	R	9 times	12,5%

Paremia	Type of paremia	Frequency of occurrence	Percentage of informants
12) Fa beni e scodditillu/scordatillu, fa mali e pènzici (inf. 58, 26.1, 60.4, 63) / Fai beni e scodditillu, fai mali e pènzici (inf. 13, 45, 33.2) / Fa bene e scòdditi, fa male e pènzici (inf. 37.4, 38.2) [eng. lit. tr.: Do good and forget it, do harm and think about it]	R	9 times	2,5%
13) Megghju l'ovu oggi c''a jaḍḍina dumani (inf. 24.1, 26, 27.1, 41, 46, 51, 55) / Megghju 'n ovu oggi c''a jaḍḍina dumani (inf. 68) [eng. lit. tr.: Better an egg today than a hen tomorrow]	R	8 times	11%
14) Occhji non vidi, cori non doli (inf. 9.4, 15.2, 17.1, 20, 26, 37.4, 46) / Occhju ca non viri, cori chi non doli (inf. 27.4) [eng. lit. tr.: Eyes don't see, heart doesn't ache]	R	8 times	11%
15) Cu' beḍḍa voli appariri/pariri 'na picca avi a suffriri (inf. 9, 15, 17, 57) / Cu' beḍḍa voli appariri tanti guài avi a patiri (inf. 33, 59) / Cu' beḍḍa voli pariri in silenziu avi a suffriri (inf. 18) [eng. lit. tr.: Who wants to look nice, must suffer a litte]	R	7 times	9,7%
16) Cu' nasci tunnu non po-mmòriri quaḍṛatu (inf. 29, 37.4, 57) /Cu' nasci tunnu/tundu non mori quaḍṛatu (inf. 24, 60) / Cu' nasci tunnu non po mòriri pisci spata (inf. 37.4) / Si uno nasci tunnu non po-m mòriri quaḍṛatu (inf. 41) [eng. lit. tr.: Who is born round can't die square]	R	7 times	9,7%
17) 'A liṅġua 'un avi ossa, ma rumpi l'ossa (inf. 26.1, 31, 37.9, 57) /'A liṅġua non avi ossa e-rrumpi l'ossa (inf. 50) / 'A liṅġua non avi ossu e-rrumpi l'ossa (inf. 62) [eng. lit. tr.: The tongue has no bones but breaks bones]	R	6 times	8,3%
18) Cu' avi liṅġua arriva a Roma (inf. 23, 44.2, 46, 55.1) / Cu' avi liṅġua va a Roma (inf. 31) [eng. lit. tr.: Who has a tongue goes to Rome]	R	6 times	8,3%
19) Cu' avi 'u pani non avi 'i denti, e cu' avi 'i denti non avi 'u pani (inf. 4, 56, 57) / 'U Signuri (ci) dugna/duna 'u pani a cu' non avi denti (inf. 37.4, 60) / 'U Signuri duna 'u pani a cu' non sapi rùdiri (inf. 11.3) [eng. lit. tr.: Who has bread doesn't have teeth, and who has teeth, doesn't have bread]	R	6 times	8,3%

Paremia	Type of paremia	Frequency of occurrence	Percentage of informants
20) Quannu 'u diàvulu/ riàvulu t'allìscia, voli l'ànima (inf. 24, 33, 51) / Quannu 'u diàulu/diávulu t'accarizza, voli l'ànima (inf. 13, 40, 59) [eng. lit. tr.: When the devil caresses you he wants your soul]	R	6 times	8,3%
21) Rutta pi rutta, rumpèmula tutta (inf. 29, 42, 54, 60) / Junnata rutta, pèddila (tutta) (inf. 38, 57) [eng. lit. tr.: Once broken, break it all]	R	6 times	8,3%

Table 3. Most common corpus of paremias by number of informants.

Most corpus paremias belong to the category of popular proverbs, a fact that is also corroborated in the paremias that form part of the paremiological minimum of the Sicilian variety of Messina; since nineteen paremias are popular proverbs and only two, proverbial locutions. As stated by Marina García Yelo (2009: 232), this numerous presence is due to the fact that

> poseen ciertas características que facilitan su memorización y, por lo tanto, su permanencia en el universo sapiencial de los hablantes de una misma lengua. Dichas características mnemotécnicas como el bimembrismo, la rima, el ritmo y cierta brevedad hacen de los refranes unas estructuras fijas, unos moldes que permanecen fosilizados en la competencia activo-pasiva de los hablantes.

The most used paremias by the three generations are popular proverbs of general application (*refranes de alcance general*)[14], because they deal with universal themes that can be used in many situations and concern essentially the emotional and moral life of individuals in their relationship with other members of society. In particular, they criticize people who are capable of pretending happiness when they hide, on the contrary, a feeling of anger or envy; they recall to caution, because they advise not to risk what you have or know for something that is supposedly better; they imply that any act we perform in life will have its consequences and effects; they criticize those who flatter us in presence and offend us behind; they invite us not to be surprised at anything since in life everything can happen. They also recommend never to mix family and monetary matters, since this is often a cause for dispute; they serve as comfort for those who have suffered a misfortune, hoping that it will not be lasting; they recommend treating others as we would like them to treat us and they invite us to act honestly. They say, among other things, that nothing is achieved without sacrifice; they warn that words can cause harm; they invite us to ask when we have doubts about something; they imply that people who really need something don't always get it in respect of those who, despite not needing anything, have everything and, finally, they reproach the hypocrites and, generally, those who conceal their harmful intention through good appearances.

Among the most used paremias there aren't any popular proverbs of restricted application (*refranes de alcance reducido*) if we consider that the proverb with the geographical reference "Cu' avi liṅgua arriva a Roma" [Who has a tongue goes to Rome] is used outside the geographical borders where it was created and that the meteorological proverb "Bon tempu e malu tempu non dura tuttu 'u tempu" [Good weather and bad weather don't last forever] has adapted to new contexts outside meteorology.

[14] We apply the classification of J. Sevilla and Cantera (2002=2008: 25-28), based on the thematic-semantic criterion according to which there are proverbs whose application is restricted (*refranes de alcance reducido*) and proverbs whose application is general (*refranes de alcance general*).

CONCLUSIONS

The collection of popular paremias allows to establish what is preserved from the paremiological heritage of the Sicilian variety of Messina, reflects the paremiological competence of the speakers of this city and makes it possible to verify that the use of paremias depends on the factor "age", since, as the age of the informants rises, their paremiological competence increases. Regarding the type of paremiological (active and passive) competence of the respondents, there is a loss of active competence in the younger group that uses only half of the paremias registered in the corpus, with respect to the intermediate age group whose active competence is superior to that of the children's group and with respect to the older group of informants that knows and uses a greater number of paremias than the previous generations.

A total of 612 paremias have been collected, belonging to different paremiological categories: proverbs, proverbial phrases, proverbial locutions, dialogisms and proverbs. In the absence of an exhaustive categorization of Italian paremias, we have based ourselves on Julia Sevilla's studies (1993, 2008), re-examined and updated in collaboration with Carlos Crida (2013), making it possible to categorize the sententious statement.

The frequency of use of some variants has made it possible to determine those which are mostly fixed in use with respect to others, whose frequency of occurrence is lower. It also allows us to affirm that many of the collected paremias still survive today, especially, in variant, which generally affects the lexical component, a question that we will deal with in another study.

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