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RUSSIAN/ENGLISH PROVERBS: EQUIVALENCE ISSUES AND TRANSLATION PECULIARITIES

A foreign language is mastered via the acquisition and development of phonetic skills and comprehension of the grammatical system of a language. Language lexicon represents a link between the passive theory and active communication. Speech of a person acquiring a foreign language is typically not characterized by brightness, liveliness, and expressiveness. Phraseological units enable a foreign language learner to enliven his speech giving it the necessary stylistic coloring. Study of phraseological units is of a great interest both from the perspectives of the language theory, and translation practice. Moreover, studying and comparison of the phraseological units of two languages shed light on the differences and features of the cultures, people's mentalities, distinctions of the native speakers' thinking processes.

It is a known fact that wisdom and spirit of a people find their revelation in its proverbs, sayings and idioms. Thus, knowledge of proverbs, sayings and idioms of these or those people promotes not only the better language acquisition, but also the deeper understanding of their views and characters [1].

Comparison of proverbs, sayings and idioms of different nations indicates how much in common these people have, which, in turn, promotes their best mutual understanding and rapprochement. Rich historical and cultural experience of people, their perceptions of labor and life in general are reflected in their proverbs, sayings and idioms. The correct and pertinent use of proverbs, sayings and idioms adds unique

originality and special expressiveness to the speech of native speakers and second language learners.

English is infinitely rich in idiomatic expressions, proverbs and sayings which can be constantly encountered in literature, newspapers, movies, radio and television broadcasts as well as in everyday communication of the British, Americans, Canadians, and Australians. The English idiomatic is varied and presents a real challenge for those studying English. Any language known to science typically possesses a range of idioms, set phrases, proverbs and sayings, but with regard to their quantity the English language is unrivalled.

The objective of the present article is to establish the connection between the cultures of the two peoples through their proverbs, sayings and idioms; to investigate proverbs, sayings and idioms having their full equivalents in both languages – Russian and English; to study nonequivalent proverbs and sayings and to establish the reasons for their distinction.

The majority of proverbs, sayings and idioms based on realities of a language are lexically nonequivalent units for the other language. They can hardly coincide, sometimes – only conceptually. Even despite the identity of the conceptual part of the meaning of some proverbs and sayings based on realities, their expressive and tone colouring doesn't allow us to talk about their full semantic equivalence. In other words, some proverbs and sayings are easily translated into Russian (for instance, 'seize the bull by horns' [2] – 'взять быка за рога'); others need an added explanation as they have nothing in common with our Russian realities, though sometimes it is possible to guess what the British mean by using them. Let us take an example of a widespread saying 'between the devil and deep blue sea' which in Russian sounds as 'между двух огней'. In American English 'между двух огней' is literally translated as 'between the devil and by the deep blue sea' and means the same as 'to be between Scylla and Charybdis'. Thus, it does not require any extensive explanation.

Taking all the mentioned above into account, all proverbs, sayings and idioms can fall into three main categories:

1. English proverbs, sayings and idioms which are completely identical to their Russian translations, i.e. their English variant completely coincides with the Russian one. These are **full equivalents** coinciding in meaning, lexical structure, figurativeness, stylistic colouring, grammatical structure, and are based on mythological legends, bible legends and historic facts:

Do the likeliest and God will do the rest – ‘Всяк про себя, а Господь про всех’

Pandora's box – ‘ящик Пандоры’ (источник всяческих бедствий)

In the seventh heaven – ‘на седьмом небе’

Pyrrhic victory – ‘Пиррова победа’

2. English and Russian proverbs, sayings and idioms which have no onomastic elements in the other language, i.e. **partial equivalents**.

Partial equivalents are not characterized by any incompleteness of the meaning conveyance; they contain only lexical or/and grammatical divergences while preserving identical meaning and stylistic colouring. Therefore, with regard to the degree of meaning conveyance adequacy, a partial equivalent can be equal to a full equivalent.

Fix thy pale in Severn be as before. Волк каждый год линяет, да обычаев не меняет.

It's good fish it was caught [3]. Хороша Маша, да не наша.

Every man draws water to his own mill. Всяк Демид для себя норовит.

3. English and Russian proverbs, sayings and idioms which have no equivalents in the other language, i.e. nonequivalent phraseological units.

Молись Афине, да и рукой двигай Before you could say Jack Robinson

Спи в тосках на белых досках. Be Greek to someone

Вот тебе бабушка и Юрьев день. Keep up with the Joneses

Русский человек задним умом крепок. Barbie Doll

It is worth noticing that many English and Russian proverbs and sayings are polysemantic, which makes them difficult to be interpreted and compared. When searching for the Russian equivalent of an English proverb the obligatory criterion must be the coincidence of one of the meanings (as a rule, the main meaning). Nevertheless, it is important to remember that English and Russian sayings and proverbs are often not absolute equivalents as they were developed in various historical conditions and, consequently, they often employed different images for the expression of the same or similar thought, which, in turn, reflected the different social way and life of the two nations.

It should also be noted that in each language there are proverbs and sayings which cannot be perceived literally even if the meaning of each word is known and the grammatical structure is clear. The meaning of such a phrase seems unclear and strange. Attempts to literally translate

such proverbs and sayings can lead to unexpected and often ridiculous results.

Let us take an example of the English phrase ‘to carry coals to Newcastle’ [5] (literally: ‘to carry coal to Newcastle’) which corresponds to the Russian saying ‘to go to Tula with the samovar’ (Newcastle is the center of the English coal industry).

Centuries-old experience of communication of people speaking and writing different languages testifies that a good translator must not only understand the meaning of the text being translated, but be also profoundly aware of the phraseological richness of the languages he uses for the translation.

The English and Russian languages are far from being the same. Even the word order in a sentence is different. In English we can never use two denials within one phrase, while in Russian it is a common thing. There have always been difficulties in translating English proverbs into Russian and vice versa. To take into account all features of this or that language, to translate what is considered to be a part of people’s culture into the other language is a very daunting process. For example: ‘Some have the hap, others stick in the gap’. Its literal translation is ‘Someone has good luck, others get stuck in the gorge’ [6]. For the British the meaning of the proverb is absolutely clear whereas for a Russian person this proverb presents something new and unknown so that its meaning can be misunderstood. This means that in order to make the proverb completely understandable for a Russian, it is necessary to look for its Russian equivalent: ‘Ivan plays a fife, and Maria with hunger dies’ [7].

Being part of the people’s culture, proverbs, sayings and idioms have always remained in use despite any economic or political development, technical progress, etc. At any time proverbs, sayings and idioms reflect an important characteristic feature of a nation and present an interesting object for research. Peculiarities of proverbs, sayings and idioms based on realities with onomastic elements are revealed in the fact that national features of the perception of the world are reflected generally in the meaning of the realities which, in turn, influence the complete meaning of texts. National and cultural originality is revealed in all the realities expressed through a language and can be accurately traced owing to the uniqueness of material and spiritual culture. Proverbs, saying, and idioms are highly informative since due to their huge linguistic and cultural potential they allow a language learner to expand his knowledge of the foreign culture, history, traditions, geography of the nation. Moreover, they demonstrate an absolutely special and unique view of the people on the surrounding reality.

Having analysed 316 proverbs, sayings and idioms we have come to the following conclusions:

1) English and Russian proverbs are often polysemantic, but they have much in common. They are out of time and out of class division, i. e. they are used both by rich people, and people of the lower class;

2) Elements of the English and Russian folklore are pretty difficult for translation into other languages as are realities of the countries do not always coincide;

3) It is possible to find a partial equivalent of an English proverb, saying, and idiom with onomastic elements almost in any language.

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