

CULTURALLY SPECIFIC FEATURES OF BELARUSIAN AND ENGLISH PHRASEOLOGY

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Belarusian and English phraseological units having been compared in the article, specific cultural features contained in their semantic structure are considered and analyzed by the author.

Culture-based approach to language teaching and learning having become an essential part of modern linguistic education, it helps students acquire basic facts, norms and values of another national culture. This approach is particularly relevant in the practice of teaching and learning foreign languages. Specific features of the national culture and history are reflected and preserved in “the national and cultural semantics” of the language [1, p. 41], which is most clearly manifested in the nominative units of the language such as words, phraseological units and linguistic aphorisms (proverbs, sayings and winged expressions). A significant part of the language idioms is associated with various historical facts, realities of life, ancient beliefs, customs and rituals of the native speakers.

Phraseology is one of the most expressive language subsystems. It retains not only obsolete words, archaic forms and syntactic constructions, but it's also characterized by a high capacity for “cultural accumulation”. High linguistic and cultural importance of phraseology makes the study of national and cultural peculiarities of phraseological units very relevant.

Cultural background information contained in phraseological units can be observed in three ways. On the one hand, both Belarusian and English idioms reflect the national culture by their overall idiomatic meaning. Compare:

– the Belarusian phraseological unit *на валовай скуры не спішаць (чаго)* (literally “one cannot write it all on the whole cowhide”) meaning ‘very much, a lot of’ [4, p. 232] originated through comparison with the old manuscripts written on

parchment. Long ago, before the invention of paper, people wrote on a specially treated animal skin, most often it was the cowhide;

– in the English phraseological unit *baker's dozen* meaning ‘Devil's Dozen or thirteen’ [2, p. 40] an ancient English custom is mentioned: the bakers, who feared punishment for underweight gave merchants thirteen loaves of bread instead of twelve, the thirteenth one being to the benefit of the merchants.

On the other hand, some Belarusian and English phraseological units reflect the national culture by the meanings of their lexical components. First of all they are the names of culture-bound phenomena of material and intellectual culture, the names of flora and fauna, people's names, geographical names, as well as specific features of the native speakers' world outlook, their social behavior. Compare:

– the Belarusian phraseological unit *і ў коле і ў мяле* (literally “both in the wheel and in the hemp softener”) meaning ‘in a variety of situations’ [4, p. 180], where *the wheel* is ‘the mill wheel’ and *the hemp softener* is a tool to crumple flax or hemp;

– the English phraseological unit *Hobson's choice* meaning ‘no choice’ [3, p. 251], where *Hobson* is a liveryman in Cambridge (16th century), who obliged his visitors to take only the horse nearest to the exit.

Certain lexical components of phraseological units can't be translated with one word, you need a phrase or even a sentence to explain such phenomena or objects. They compose non-equivalent vocabulary of a language. As a part of an idiom such a word makes it a phraseological gap. And even if both languages have the names for a phenomenon or an object they may have different connotations since each culture has its own system of values, it often leading to intercultural misunderstandings. Compare:

– in the Belarusian phraseological unit *за дзедам шведам* (literally “following grandfather the Swede”) meaning ‘long ago’ [4, p. 134] Swedish invaders are mentioned. They went through Belarusian lands twice (1655, 1706–1708);

– the English phraseological units with negative connotations *Dutch bargain* meaning ‘a bargain with one-sided advantage’ [3, p. 264], *Dutch (cold) comfort* meaning ‘poor consolation’ [2, c. 95], *Dutch courage* meaning ‘drunken bravery’ [2, p. 131], *Dutch defence* meaning ‘pretended defence’, *Dutch feast* meaning ‘the feast, where the host is the first to become drunken’ [3, c. 264], where the ironic use of the word *Dutch* goes back to the Anglo-Dutch competition in the seas and in the wars in the 17th century.

Finally, some Belarusian and English phraseological units reflect the national culture by their prototypal basis, since their origin and retention in the language is associated with certain customs and traditions of native speakers, the unique features of their everyday life and intellectual culture, as well as the historical events that took place on the territory of a particular country. Compare:

– the Belarusian phraseological unit *дым каромыслам* (literally “much smoke like shoulder-yoke”) meaning ‘there is a lot of excitement or noise, fuss or mess’ [4, p. 125]. The origin of this idiom is associated with the earlier peasants’ everyday life, who lived in the so called “smoky houses” that were heated by a stove without a chimney. Smoke escaped through a special window or through the door. If everything was quiet in the house and the weather was good outside, the smoke was coming out in a smooth flow. But if the noise, fuss, mess or bustle started the rising skein of the fire-smoke bulged into the room like an arch;

– the English phraseological unit *to be born within the sound of Bow bells* meaning ‘to be born in London’ [2, p. 48] reminds that in the center of London there is St. Mary-le-Bow’s Church which is famous for its toll (bell sound).

Thus, numerous cultural peculiarities of a nation as well as its unique linguistic world-image are reflected, accumulated and transmitted from generation to generation in culturally specific semantics of idioms. Phraseological units of a foreign language being compared with those of a native language enables to eliminate the interfering influence of the mother tongue and to activate cultural competence of students. Interlingual analysis promotes not only better understanding of a foreign language and culture, but also enriches and deepens the ethnic awareness of the native language features. Belarusian and English phraseological units contain rich cultural background information and retain the nation’s social experience. Their lexicographic representation in special dictionaries being one of the urgent problems of modern linguistics, these dictionaries are to explain culturally specific component of the Belarusian phraseological units in comparison with a certain language, for example, with the English idioms and vice versa.

Літаратура

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