

MORAL VALUES IN THE SEMANTICS OF ENGLISH AND BELARUSIAN PHRASEOLOGICAL UNITS

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Национально-культурная семантика фразеологизмов позволяет сохранять и передавать культурно-значимую информацию последующим поколениям. Сравнительный анализ белорусских и английских фразеологизмов помогает оценить отношение данных народов к таким нравственным ценностям, как трудолюбие и честность.

Developing multilingual communication skills having become one of the essential tasks of training specialists nowadays, culture-oriented approach to teaching languages plays the major part in this process [5, p. 61]. Cultural and historical peculiarities of native speakers' world outlook are accumulated and preserved in the "national-cultural semantics" of the language [1, p. 41], proverbs, sayings, aphorisms and idioms being associated with various specific national realities, beliefs

and rituals. Phraseological units have a very high capacity for “cultural accumulation” or “cultural memory”. They transmit the cultural potential of the people and their knowledge of reality from generation to generation.

Phraseology as a culture-bound phenomenon has been studied since 1990s, national-cultural peculiarities of phraseological units having become a traditional theme for linguistic research. Cross-cultural analysis provides not only better understanding the foreign language phenomena but also helps to comprehend the ethnic characteristics of our native language.

The attitudes of the Belarusians and the British to such moral values as diligence (workfulness) and honesty are considered in the article, phraseological units of the Belarusian language having been compared to English idioms.

The Belarusian people has always shown regard for hard work and believed the labour to be the fundamental principle of life, it being instilled in children since childhood. The ability to work hard is one of the distinguishing features of the Belarusian national character, while the laziness and idleness are considered to be the negative qualities of a person. The Belarusians have always condemned idlers. This attitude is reflected in many Belarusian phraseological units:

– (1) the Belarusian phraseological unit *бібікі біць* meaning ‘to waste time, to twiddle’: [3, p. 50];

– (2) the Belarusian phraseological unit *біць тыльпы* meaning ‘to idle, to dawdle’: [3, p. 51];

– (3) the Belarusian phraseological unit *касіць дугой* (literally “to mow with a neck yoke”) meaning ‘having made no supply of feed for livestock (hay), to beg, to buy, to borrow it’ [3, p. 189] is a punning expression. The component *with a neck yoke* symbolizes the harnessed horse helping to get the hay.

There are also many idioms in English taking a favourable view of diligence and condemning laziness and idleness. For example:

– (4) the English phraseological unit *to sweat blood* meaning ‘to work hard’: *I’ve sweated blood to get him to agree to see me at all.* [6, p. 30];

– (5) the English phraseological unit *to let the grass grow under your feet* meaning ‘be inactive, to sit on one’s hands’: *He certainly doesn’t believe in letting the grass grow under his feet.* [4, p. 132];

– (6) the English phraseological unit *to rest on one’s oars; to lean on one’s oars* meaning ‘to slack one’s work, to stop rowing’: *We can’t afford to rest on our oars.* [4, p. 131];

– (7) the English phraseological unit *to twiddle one’s thumbs* meaning ‘to idle, to twiddle’: *He doesn’t just sit round and twiddle his thumbs* [4, p. 133].

Another important moral value of the Belarusian people is honesty, integrity. Numerous phraseological units in the Belarusian language disapprove thievery, stealage, deceit. For example:

– (8) the Belarusian phraseological unit *ад яйка адліць* (literally “to pour a bit from an egg”) meaning ‘to steal craftily, to pilfer skillfully, even if it seems impossible to do’ [3, p. 36];

– (9) the Belarusian phraseological unit *як Заблоцкі на мыле (зарабіць)* (literally “to win money like Zablotsky on soap”) meaning ‘(to earn, etc.) nothing at all’ [3, p. 427]. The origin of the phrase is associated with a legend about the merchant Zablotsky, who bartered soap abroad. In order not to pay the entrance duty he decided to smuggle this soap and hid it at the bottom of the vessel where it got soaked.

Honesty and integrity are also appreciated in the English phraseology while stealing, cheating and fraud are condemned. For example:

– (10) the English phraseological unit *a straight arrow* meaning ‘an honest, decent person’: *Several friends described him as a straight arrow, who rarely drank and was close to his family.* [4, p. 291; 7, p. 9];

– (11) the English phraseological unit *to play a straight bat* meaning ‘to be honest and simple, to be guided by traditional values’: *He was surprised to find that playing a straight bat was not considered as important among his new colleagues.* [4, p. 291];

– (12) the English phraseological unit *to be above board* meaning ‘to be honest and legal’: *This export has been conducted in an honest and above-board fashion.* [4, p. 292] – the expression is associated with a card game, where everything that happens under the table is likely against the rules [6, p. 31].

The comparative analysis of Belarusian and English phraseological units enables to reveal the similar attitude of the Belarusians and the British to such moral values as hard work and honesty. Some phraseological units (4, 10-12) show regard for these values, others (1-3, 5-9) disapprove their opposites. In terms of quantity the disapproval of negative qualities is more frequent in both languages.

Thus, the culture-based approach to language teaching and learning makes it possible to deepen and expand the richest phraseological content of modern languages. A person studying a foreign language phraseology comes across significant difficulties concerning another culture acquisition. The use of phraseological units without clear understanding of their semantics and etymology radically distorts the meaning of the phrase and in some cases may lead to cross-cultural misunderstanding. The comparative study of national-cultural peculiarities of Belarusian and English phraseological units is a necessary condition for the development of linguistic and culture-oriented content of teaching these languages.

Літаратура

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