

Proverbs are Language Symbols that Carry Linguistic and Cultural Information

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Abstract:

Proverbs and other clichés are considered as a fragment of the linguistic picture of the world. The specificity of a linguistic symbol as a cultural phenomenon that can have personal or collective cultural significance is described. Examples of proverbs are analyzed as linguistic symbols that carry linguistic and cultural information in various contextual situations.

Keywords: picture of the world, linguistic mentality, proverbial mentality, symbol, linguistic symbol, culturally significant information.

Proverbs are considered as one of the main “codes” of culture, as “the language of an everyday culture that has been formed over centuries,” passed down from generation to generation and reflecting all the categories and attitudes of the life philosophy of the native speaker people [1]. Proverbs are “the autobiography of the people”, “the mirror of culture” [2]. By studying the proverbs of a particular people, you can learn a lot about the people themselves and their culture.

Each language has a special picture of the world, and the linguistic personality is obliged to organize the content of the utterance in accordance with this picture. The concept of a picture of the world (including a linguistic one) is based on the study of a person’s ideas about the world. Representatives of cognitive linguistics rightly argue that our conceptual system, displayed in the form of a linguistic picture of the world, depends on physical and cultural experience and is directly related to it [3]. Although there is no unambiguous definition in modern domestic linguistic science, proverbs can be generally defined as an anonymous saying of a didactic nature that is stable in language and reproduced in speech, including proverbs, sayings and idiomatic expressions [4].

G.L. Permyakov defines a proverb as a folk saying expressed in a sentence (for example, proverbs, sayings, signs) or a short chain of sentences (for example, fables, “one-shot” anecdotes, riddles). Thus, the researcher does not include phraseological units among the paremiological units. He also writes that phraseological units are in many ways similar to proverbs and sayings, not only because

both of them belong to linguistic clichés, but also for a number of other characteristics. These features include: external syntactic form, the presence of three plans, the presence of figurative or direct motivation of general meaning, etc. [5].

Despite the fact that proverbs, sayings and phraseological units belong to various kinds of linguistic clichés (stable verbal combinations), all of them, reflecting in their semantics the long process of development of the culture of the people, record and transmit cultural attitudes and stereotypes from generation to generation.

Phraseology, like paremiology, is a fragment of the linguistic picture of the world. Phraseological units are always directed at the subject, i.e. arise not so much in order to describe the world, but in order to interpret it, evaluate it and express a subjective attitude towards it [3]. The nature of the meaning of phraseological units is closely related to the background knowledge of the native speaker, the practical experience of the individual, and the cultural and historical traditions of the people speaking a given language. Phraseological units attribute attributes to objects that are associated with the picture of the world, imply a whole descriptive situation (text), and evaluate it. With their semantics, phraseological units are aimed at characterizing a person and his activities [5].

The linguistic picture of the world reflects the cognitive, cultural and social characteristics of the native speaker people, as well as the geographical conditions of their residence. This reflection is determined by the mentality of the people [4]. The concept of mentality does not have a clear definition. Some scientists equate mentality with a picture of the world. The most generalized, from the point of view of E.V. Ivanova, is the definition of I.T. Dubov, according to which mentality is “an integral characteristic of people living in a particular culture, which allows us to describe the uniqueness of these people’s vision of the world around them and explain the specifics of their response to it” [2]. Mentality forms a picture of the world, and also manifests itself in the linguistic picture of the world, which indicates the existence of a linguistic mentality [5].

The fact that proverbs and sayings contain knowledge about the world and about people in this world allows scientists to talk about the proverbial idea of the world. So, E.V. Ivanova in her book “The World in English and Russian Proverbs” writes about the existence of the proverbial picture of the world as “a separate fragment, part of the linguistic picture of the world,” as well as the existence of a proverbial mentality (mentality manifested in the proverbial picture of the world). The proverbial mentality is not the mentality of the proverb, but the mentality of the people, or more precisely, of certain social groups of the people, reflected in the proverbial fund [4].

The worldview of a people and its understanding of the world are objectified in language in a system of images, standards, stereotypes, mythologies, symbols, etc. characteristic of it. The phraseological composition of the language plays a special role in this, because the figurative content of its units embodies a cultural-national worldview. The culturally significant meaning of the image itself is revealed by a literal reading of phraseological units or proverbs [1].

Along with nationally specific features, the mentality of the people includes interethnic and universal, universal features. Thus, not all paremiologically units have a cultural and national flavor, some do not show a connection with the culture and mentality of the people, and have a universal, universal significance. For example, “to throw dust into someone’s eyes” and “to throw dust into someone’s eyes.” Differences between Russian and English phraseological units D.O. Dobrovolsky explains it by the discrepancy between the mechanisms of secondary nomination, and not by connection with cultural specifics [3].

One of the sources of cultural and national interpretation of phraseological units by V.N. Telia names word-symbols or words and phrases that receive a symbolic reading. The role of a linguistic symbol lies in changing the meaning of the linguistic essence to a symbolic function. In this case, the phrase associatively “replaces” some idea [5].

Some researchers consider a symbol to be part of a metaphor, pointing out that symbols can have both personal significance and shared cultural meaning. A symbol is a phenomenon of the culture of a people. Domestic science primarily emphasizes the social significance of the symbol, i.e. its inclusion in the social context - its traditionality, conventionality, understandability [1].

The specificity of a linguistic symbol lies in the motivation of the linguistic sign, which is not associated with the transfer of meaning, as is typical for tropes, but with the picture of the world, background knowledge, and pragmatics in the broad sense of the word.

Most symbols are nationally specific. However, there is symbolism that is understandable to many peoples, for example, a book symbolizes knowledge, a palm tree - victory and triumph, an ox - patience and strength, a dog - devotion, a lion - greatness.

In language, symbols are expressed in words or phrases. V.N. Telia believes that there is a complementary relationship between metaphor and linguistic symbol. Metaphor conveys the similarity of two denotations based on common semes (traits and functions of denotations), creates an image, most often emotional. The symbol, on the contrary, does not contain an evaluation; it only indicates the replacement of one name with another, not only on a figurative, but also on a rational basis [3].

Individual elements of phraseological units, proverbs and sayings become symbols. For example, in phraseological units, wipe your nose, pinch your nose, even if your nose bleeds, as well as in the proverb of the curious Varvara at the market, their nose was torn off - a symbol of a vulnerable spot in a person.

In the context of the problem under study, the semantics of the adjective proverbial is of particular interest in its connection with proverbs, sayings and phraseological units.

According to English dictionaries, this adjective has the following meanings: 1. related to proverbs: the ~ style of proverbs; ~ wisdom of proverbs/sayings/; 2. proverbial; well known: the ~ London fog the famous London fogs; his meanness was ~ he was known for his stinginess, his stinginess became a proverb [4].

But the term proverbial, being a lexeme of broad semantics, can correlate not only with proverbs, sayings and phraseological units, but also with individual lexemes, provided that these lexemes convey culturally significant information.

Proverbs, sayings and phraseological units, marked as proverbial, are often used as figurative but stereotypical linguistic means with which ordinary consciousness by association characterizes various situations of everyday life. Their use simplifies the process of communication, "saving the energy of communicants" [3], which serves as confirmation of the existence of corresponding stereotypical, culturally determined information in the minds of representatives of a certain ethnic group.

Let's consider the use of the proverbial lexeme in various contextual situations:

Chiang Mai restaurants are numerous and cover a broad range of food. <.. .>
There are also a number of American-styled steak houses and dinners and the
proverbial British fish and chips (Chiangmai restaurant)

This example describes a restaurant that, in addition to Thai cuisine, also serves American food and British cuisine - fish and chips. The lexeme proverbial indicates that fish and chips is a very popular and favorite dish of the British, which may not be known to people from other countries who are not familiar with the culture and cuisine of Britain. Fish and chips are one of the symbols of Britain, along with five o'clock tea, London fog, etc.

But the cast has gone to great length to achieve the film's «Russian-ness». Authenticity has been the proverbial bee in their bonnet: Menshikov had to learn all of his French lines phonetically (Heartthrob for a New Millennium)

Here the lexeme proverbial marks the phraseological unit bee in one's bonnet - an obsession, which in this example is achieving the authenticity of the film. The bee in this phraseological unit is a symbol of something intrusive, annoying, something that is difficult to get rid of.

But like the proverbial fish that rots from the head, so do the industries that suffer from poor products and management of their respective market leaders (Life Journal).

In this example, the word proverbial represents the proverb fish begins to rot from the head (fish begins to stink at the head - the fish rots from the head), but somewhat transformed by the author for certain purposes. This proverb means that some businesses suffer due to poor management.

We guarantee you the maximum comfort and the proverbial heat of the Mediterranean people! (Noto Sicily B&B).

In this example we are talking about the ardor and temperament of people living in Mediterranean countries. The lexeme proverbial in this case indicates that this fact is generally known. And, indeed, there is an opinion that the inhabitants of Italy, Spain and other Mediterranean countries are very emotional.

Hunger is the best sauce. You cannot eat you cake and have it. The proof of the pudding is in the eating.

Using the example of English proverbs, which reflect the characteristics of national cuisine, one can clearly trace the presence of cultural elements sauce, pudding, cake, which are quite common traditional culinary ingredients in English culture, which is manifested in proverbs and sayings and is firmly established in the linguistic consciousness of native speakers.

Analysis of these examples shows that the proverbial lexeme, regardless of whether it represents proverbs, sayings, phraseological units or individual lexemes, always indicates the cultural significance of the objects that it marks. On the one hand, lexemes and phraseological units, marked, with the word, proverbial, can have cultural and national specificity, that is, be characteristic of a given people, such as, for example, the English dish fish and chips, which is one of the symbols of British culture, or phraseological unit bee in one's bonnet. But, on the other hand, they can be universal, well-known, like the emotionality and temperament of the inhabitants of the Mediterranean or the proverb fish begins to stink at the head - the fish rots from the head, which is also known to the bearers of Russian and Uzbek culture and is actively used by them. The character of a people and the characteristics of its language are interconnected. Language lives in the individual and stores what can be called intellectual-spiritual genes that pass from generation to generation. These features of the national mentality are reflected in proverbs and sayings.

In conclusion, I would like to note that in the process of reconstructing the constants of linguistic consciousness, which are archived in proverbs and sayings, the path from the plane of meaning to the plane of content turns out to be productive. Concepts can be presented figuratively, as the core of a situation, but the situation itself can be encrypted, coded. In order to understand and solve it, it is necessary, first of all, to understand the significance of this situation. This process, as a rule, occurs quite quickly among native speakers. As for representatives of another culture, it is obvious that in order to understand an encrypted situation, knowledge of cultural codes is necessary, which require special study.

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