The studying of Russian phraseological units and paroemias in English speaking audience

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1. Introduction

This article is dedicated to the problem of understanding Russian phraseological units and paroemias by foreign learners, knowing English language. During the process of studying any foreign language students meet with the problem of understanding not only grammatical and lexical material, but also definite language phenomenons which have the feature to inscribe and to transfer information connected with the history of studying language, its traditions and customs, way of nation’s thinking, culture and other facts. As the result of an analysis of such phenomenons comes up an interest to a nationally – cultural side of language semantics.

It is known, that source of nationally - cultural semantics is in stable phrases – phraseological units and aphorisms (paroemias, proverbs and bywords), which get a double meaning while the process of forming one separate nation: interactive – way of speaking and informative – the source of different information, necessary for society’s development and life. That is why phraseological units have a capacity to transfer information, pawned by ancestors of one nation, from one generation to another and implement the function of preserving a definite cultural and genetic code inside the language and consequently inside cultural memory of an ethnos.

Each language is a reflection of mentality, culture and history of a nation. These life aspects, proper to an enormous number of world nations, are extremely shown in paroemias (proverbs and bywords). A great Russian writer, ethnographer and folklorist, V. I. Dal wrote about them in a such way: “… the color of nation’s mind, of an original form, this is the living nation’s truth, a regulation by itself, which cannot be judged by anyone” (Dal, 1984). From the point of view of another Russian linguist and a historian of literature and arts F. I. Buslaev the proverbs and regarded as “art pieces of an own word, expressing the mode of life of the nation, its sound sense and moral interests” (Buslaev, 2015: 17). In our article, the proverb is being understood as “a short folk saying with an edifying sense, having a worldly wisdom in it” (Ozhegov, 1981: 503).

During the process on an analysis of proverbs, we can deduce that they have two main functions: firstly, they fill up the speech with expression and emotionality and, secondly, they play the role of a transfer of life wisdom and knowledge from an old generation to a young one, which are much needed in an everyday life. To our opinion, the language base of all world nations has phases full of wisdom, which due to their capacity, retain unchanged in their meaning and functionality for long.

2. Method

2.1 Comparison of Russian and English cultures

As the objects of comparison, we consider it expedient to take two linguistic cultures – Russian and English. The choice of the studying of this topic was not picked up accidently. From one side, many foreign cadets from Africa, Asia and Middle East, studying in the Military
University of the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation, speak not only the language of their little tribes and races, but also English language being main for them. In this case, the teacher should have some knowledge about the culture and traditions of the learners for realization of an effective communication. From another side, the mode of life of different folks, who speak different languages, is reflected in Russian and English culture. The existence of two man languages, uniting Russian and English cultures – Russian and English – is a good bit of a help for a deep analysis, because these languages have an old history and as the result have a deep layer of nation’s wisdom, which is being kept inside the paroemias of these languages.

The relevance of our study is caused by a such fact, that during the process of a comparative analysis of Russian and English phraseological units and paroemias from a semantical point of view it is possible to find some similarities and differences in definite features and traits, typical for one or another language, including the national originality of the units, being also under the study. The determination of definite characteristics promotes the deeper understanding of the specific features of another culture’s representatives and, as the result, a successful cultural interaction between Russian and English spokespersons.

3. Results

3.1. Observing phraseological units

Starting from observing the phraseological units, it is important to say, that the explanation of the difference between free and bound collocations is an essential condition for that. So, the fund of free collocations form the words, which have saved their individual lexical meaning: during the process of usage in a concrete communicative situation such collocations are being constructed for purpose, when their components can be changed by the lexemes of one category. For example: *good-fellowship*, *bed-fellowship*, *woman-fellowship*; *to defend one’s country*, *to defend a post*, *to defend a dissertation*, *to defend oneself from a criminal*. In this way, these collocations have such components, which while using can be changed and switched, and this process will not affect their ability to keep their meaning as inside a concrete collocation, as separately from it.

The composition of bound collocations comprises the words, which lose their ability to operate undependably, being out of such constructions. That is to say, the entire inseparable collocation is being formed, where switching the components or changing its form is impossible. Specifically, the phraseological unit does not have a direct meaning of words inside of it, but another, which is peculiar only for a concrete collocation.

It should be noted that while working on studying of phraseological units in English speaking audience the teacher of Russian as foreign language needs to pay attention to the fact of similarity of bound collocations in different languages, which promotes better understanding and digestion of Russian lexis.

This kind of collocations, like the words, operates in a complete form and is not being reconstructed in a speech: they are not separated and are being interpreted as full units. Because of that, the collocation should be fixed in a full form while memorizing. Separate words, being inside bound collocation, lose their first lexical meaning and compose a new meaningful construction, having a synonymic meaning of the word.

For example, at the lesson of Russian as foreign language to learners with the First Certificate level can be offered to complete the task directed to understanding the phrases from
the poem of Russian poet A. T. Tvardovsky “Vasili Tyorkin: A Book About A Soldier” as a variant for analyzing of phraseological units (http://www.sovlit.net/tyorkin/wounded.html).

Tell, from which lexemes the collocation “ashen-faced” is formed? How do you think, which people can have this description? Why?

Ashen-faced, he lies unmoving,
Doesn’t even blink an eye.
In the nick of time they found him,
Hauled him in, drove him away.

Having the definition found, the learners can make up their own examples with the same phraseological unit from their language. Here is also is important to mention that there is an antonymic variant to a such lexeme: ashen-faced – dead, sick, ruddy-faced – alive, healthy. From the mentioned above, it is needed to say, that for phraseological unit’s uprising the definite situation should exist, where the words lose their lexical meaning in a full gage or partly.

Phraseological units help to make the speech more beautiful, not only richer, brighter and diverse overall, but also more accurate in definite situations, when it is necessary to provide the listener with a definite sense, to make the phrase more concrete for understanding. Therefore, for example, a phraseological unit at the top of one's lungs sounds much brighter than calm down or get free. Using this expression in a speech, the learner can both show his high level of operating with the language and express the grade of his thoughts’ depth.

3.2 Components of phraseological units

The components, forming the semantics of phraseological units, are divided at logically-dedicated and connotative. By the degree of importance they can be distributed into a) the component of indirect or figurative meaning; b) the component of direct or objective meaning, forming the basis of the meaning; c) the component on a nationally-ethnic meaning; d) the component of an emotional meaning.

A main meaning of a phraseological unit – figurative – is a required component, which is proper to a complete phraseological unit and does not go out from the combination of words’ meaning, forming it. Figurative meaning of the phraseological unit should be interpreted in the translation. For example, in a Russian proverb Saved ahead is saved by God it is told that it is easier to avoid any danger for a careful person than for that who acts thoughtlessly. A direct translation of this phraseological unit It is better to be safe than sorry will sound like It is better to be careful (save yourself) than to be sorry. Although, if an English speaking learner translates a Russian variant in a direct way not leaning on an English version, in case of knowing a synonymous row to care – to save he will be able to understand a main meaning of a phraseological unit and understand the closeness of the meanings in both Russian and English variants. Interestingly, that there are other variants of this proverb in English language: God helps those who help themselves that in Russian translation will sound absolutely alike and Caution is the parent of safety where in a Russian variant the word parent is switched to mother, that can bring some difficulties to learners while the process of comparison with a Russian variant, but during the construction of a synonymous row caution – security – safety the sense can be finally found.

Thus, making up the comparative analysis of figurative meaning of Russian and learners’ own phraseological units and aphorisms, can improve the process of a language material learning.
The base of phraseological unit’s direct meaning can be formed by a definite image, associated with a definite form of behavior or person’s way of life. For example, a proverb in English *As cool a cucumber* in Russian variant will be interpreted *as calm as a boa*. This fact of different interpretation tells about different understanding and perception of a term *calmness* in Russian and English cultures. In addition, an English phraseological unit *Hungry as a hunter* in Russian will sound like *Hungry as a wolf*. The difference between words *hunter* and *wolf* directs at opposite understanding of a sense of a word *hungry*: in Russian variant, a wolf is associated with the word *hunger* in a first row, because wolf is a dangerous vermin, constantly being in search for food and as a result being always hungry. Also, an image of a wolf appears because of a connection with geographical location of our country, where the biggest part of a territory is taken by pine and leafy forests, which are the wolves’ habitat. In an English variant of a proverb, the word *hunter* directs at association of hunger from a point of view of a person, having passion to get off the feeling of hunger with a help of searching food in wild conditions. The culture of hunting in English world outlook takes an important place from ancient times, so using exactly this lexeme in structure of this phraseological unit is explainable.

Understanding the difference and similarity between the figures, which make up the base of own phraseological units, foreign learners can faster and more effectively fixate in memory Russian phraseological units and aphorisms while studying. Meanwhile, it is important to take into consideration the fact of a probability in cases of a big difference between original figures, which give a direct meaning.

As an example, it is possible to point at the difference in parallel of a Russian proverb *The root of education is bitter, but its fruit is sweet* and English *The roots of education are bitter, but the fruit is sweet*. Here we can persuade that understanding of that concrete variant in Russian will not be difficult because of a direct translation, which is definitely seen by using the same lexemes, keeping their meaning in both languages.

Observing the proverb in a Russian variant *The learning is a light, but non-learning is a darkness*, we can ensure that an English variant *Learning is the eye of the mind*, differs from a Russian variant by a quantity of figures and its connotations: in a Russian variant the meaning of a proverb opens by separation of two opposite images of light and darkness in a combination with learning and non-learning, whiles in an English variant there is only one image of learning in a combination with a phrase *the eye of the mind*. In this case, the learners have a possibility to memorize a Russian equivalent of a proverb with a help of dividing the images, forming its sense, being similar to an English variant.

The component of a nationally-ethnic meaning, often included into a structure of phraseological constructions, can help with understanding of the place of its origin. Thus, a Russian aphorism *Moscow was not at once* corresponds an English variant *Rome was not built in a day*. Having only names of the cities as an aspect of difference, the learners can define the meaning of this proverb unmistakably and memorize it without difficulties.

A big amount of phraseological units has a feature of expressing of an emotional attitude to what is being described in them: acceptance or judgment, advice or warning. Quite often, a phraseological combination presents by itself a completed sentence with a statement, edification or conclusion. The proverbs and aphorisms can be examples of such combinations. If a phraseological combination does not have an element of edification or has an element of understatement, it will be a proverb or an aphorism. Another source of phraseological combinations is a professional speech (Ryzhov, Ryzhova, 2004). For example, a Russian
phraseological unit *To kill two hares* tells about a successful ending of a business. The same meaning will have an English variant *To kill two birds with one stone*.

It is clear, that many phraseological units have such features as imagery and expression, which let an oral or written communication have active and alive character: phraseological units and aphorisms are able “liven up” a monotonous saying of a speaker, turn listener’s mind to participation in a discussion. In addition, phraseological combinations make a written text more attractive for reading. In view of that, the stable phrases are often used by authors in belles-lettres, journalism and oral speech.

Meanwhile, working in English speaking audience the teacher should pay learners’ attention to the fact, that in a process of pronouncing of phraseological units in Russian it is not necessary to say them fully, because the vocabulary of an adult native speaker consists of a big amount of well-known phraseological units which are needed for usage in everyday oral speaking: if in a process of communication a Russian man hears the phrase *the apple doesn't fall…*, he will not have difficulties with understanding the ending of the phrase and defining the meaning, placed in a saying. At the same time, the learner should take into the consideration an opposite situation, when while speaking a Russian native speaker can tell an aphorism without a full completing, what can cause a misunderstanding from a foreigner’s side in case of poor knowledge of Russian language.

However, there are such phraseological units in Russian language, which can bring some difficulties in understanding even for native speakers because of having archaisms and their forms in their structure. For example, *twiddle one’s fingers, to be made of something, put one’s foot in it*. If in a process of communication such constructions are used, it can bring even a bigger difficulty for a foreigner, having a weak background knowledge. In this case, it is advised to use the method of lingua-geographical comment, which was first explained by the authors of a book “Language and culture: Lingua-geography in teaching of Russian as foreign” E.M. Vereshagin and V.G. Kostomarov. Following their definition, “the comment which has a goal to explain out-lingual cases, can be named differently – real, historico-literary, domestic, social, textual. As long as it reduces to a lingua-geographical semantization, this king of a comment should be properly named as a lingua-geographical” (Vereshagin, Kostomarov, 1990: 135).

4. Discussion

4.1 Division of paroemias by values and concepts

While studying paroemias at the lessons of Russian as foreign language at Waystage and Threshold Levels English speaking foreign learners often pay attention to existence of similar concepts of language in Russian and their own languages. As the examples, some Russian paroemias were being analyzed, which show an attitude of a person to basic values, typical for any nation: family, motherland, work /service/ profession, education, friendship, vices and virtues. After that, the learners were finding the same proverbs by the meaning in their language and made a comparison.

The peculiarities of paroemiac units of Russian and English languages are shortness, rhythmic order, and wideness of a topic and also an ability to give a deeper culturally caused characteristics of both different sides of person’s life and occurrences of the surrounding world: an earthy living wisdom and a moral personality of a simple person are exactly put in paroemias (Krylova, 2014: 146).
There are many proverbs about motherland and home in Russian and English languages. A tremulant attitude to homeland, which is presented as the best place in the world, is observed in Russian paroemias. Foreign learners also love their homelands, which are always remembered: *There is no place like home, Dry bread at home is better than roast meat abroad, East or West home is best.*

The concept *family* is closely connected with a concept *home*. In Russian culture family is being understood as a one organism, implying living in a peace, love and agreement, support, protection, passing priceless experience from adults to youngsters, what is shown in proverbs: *Every mother thinks her own gosling a swan, Choose your wife on Saturday, not on Sunday, A good Jack makes a good Jill.*

In English culture, a family is considered to be an example of strong, stable and traditional relation. The countries, enculurated to English world view through a language, origin or a territory of living lean on English values, which are characterized by a high morality in complex with worship of ancient traditions and foundations. In spite of a modern western approach to life, spread because of globalization, which influences hardly a way of people’s life living in civilized and developed countries, a unique, stable and even old-fashioned attitude to an understanding of a concept family and family traditions is still as strong as before in an English speaking society and tends to support of a strong and a harmonious family.

Since the family life involves by itself not only a friendly cooperation between spouses, but also a process of upbringing and educating children, what is hard and long peculiar work by itself, and a terms *education* and *work* are connected with a concept family too. The matches between the questions about upbringing and educating children in Russian and English cultures are also noted: it is often met, that upbringing of a young generation is long and laborious process, success of which depends on a start of upbringing. Russian and English proverbs have identical variants in both languages: *Live and learn, Learning is the eye of the mind, Learn – sharpen the mind.* Such similarities in a direct translation tell about a connection between Russian and English culture in a question of upbringing and education, because the last one has always played a big role in life for Russian and English speaking nations, what makes the process of these aspects’ understanding easier and clearer through analysis of Russian proverbs for English speaking learners.

After a brief observation of terms *education* and *upbringing* through an analysis of proverbs it is advisable to turn to the term work in these units. An attitude to work in notion of a Russian and English person also has similarities and it is equal to a serious business, which does not tolerate with a rush and demands skills, experience and knowledge for its realization: *Business before pleasure, Score twice before you cut once, No sweet without some sweat.* While translation of English and Russian variants of these proverbs learners can also find connection between Russian and their outlooks.

Talking about a concept *work* in different cultures, it is impossible to leave the term *profession*, because the first is inseparably connected with the second, being depended on each other. Citing an instance Russian proverbs about professions and taking into consideration a specialization of learners (military economists, journalists and jurists), the teacher motivates an audience to not only compare Russian and English proverbs about profession, but also think about its role in their life and professional activity:
1) Read the proverbs about different professions. In which cases of speaking can you use them?

2) What analogs can you find in Russian language? Make the examples. Tell in which situations they can be used.

1. *The words of an officer go along with his actions.*
2. *Officer – is the paragon of virtue.*
3. *A good marksman may miss.*
4. *The good workman does a good job.*
5. *It is better to do something than nothing at all.*

After reading, the students can meet with a such thing, that abovementioned proverbs have a specific relation to a definite kind of work in a concrete culture. That case can bring some difficulties in searching for an analog in a needed language and it is possible either to find a direct translation for understanding the meaning of words or find a variant that is similar by sense but antonymic by a content.

Further, it is logically to step to observing of the proverbs reflecting the character of a person, his vices and virtues. A big amount of both Russian and English paroemias of this semantical group has the topic of censure, derision of laziness, foolishness and ignorance: *It is not the gay coat that makes the gentleman, Modesty adorns the person, A fool may throw a stone into a well which a hundred wise men cannot pull out.*

It is also possible to meet a similarity in opening of such a terms as kindness, sympathy and bravery: *Nothing venture, nothing have, Fortune favours the brave, Two heads are better than one, United we stand, divided we fall.*

Doubtless, that a term friendship and partnership have a big importance in any person’s life, especially for the learners with a military specialization because cooperation and solidarity stand at the heart of their profession. In fact, there are many proverbs about friendship in a paroemialogical base of Russian and English variants.

For a majority of people friendship plays a bigger role than a material worth, what is supported by examples of Russian and English proverbs: *Friendship, the older it grows, the stronger it is, A friend in court is better than a penny in purse.*

In addition, the idea that friendship should be saved and appreciated and support of a friend is the most valuable thing in a hard moment is also being observed in a process of proverb analysis: *A friend in need is a friend indeed.* In English culture the searching for a friendship is taken as a difficult task and finding it as a big luck: *Prosperity makes friends but adversity tries them.*

It is important to note, that while a comparison of Russian and English paroemias, the learners often meet with a problem of a bad orientation in this topic: they need a collective discussion of the meaning of some proverbs and a further self work when doing they need advice and help from an older generation with finding a sense of some proverbs.

The significance of the results, got while the process of a comparative analysis of Russian and English phraseological units and paroemias, is shown in that during finding similarities and differences in them promotes English speaking learners not only a better understanding of the
specific things about studying language, its culture and nation, but also helps to build a stronger relation between the inhabitants of a country and learners of a studying language.

5. Conclusion

The substance of above mentioned information reduces to that in a process of working with English speaking learners the teacher of Russian as foreign should take into consideration the fact that while studying such a difficult and extensive partition of linguistics as phraseology much attention should be paid to knowledge of learners in history, language and culture of their own country. The mechanism of working comprises analysis of background knowledge, comparison them with knowledge about another country and language with a following digestion of linguistic units. Undoubtedly, as a result of successful learning of Russian phraseology, foreign learners will be able to enrich their vocabulary that let them not only reflect their thought in a saying more concrete, beautify it, add accuracy and imagery, but also will promote a more thoughtful dipping into a culture of a studying language.

Issuing from abovementioned material, we concluded that exactly the fact of transmission of wisdom from one generation to another through paroemias place a big role in formation of each person. It proves that a younger generation needs help of an older one, caring a living experience. The majority of young people from a modern generation actually do not have proverbs in their vocabulary or uses them very seldom. English speaking learners from Africa, Asia and Middle East while working with Russian proverbs made examples well known English idioms. Certainly, this is explained by that foreign learners speak in English mainly and a local language of their folks or territory of their living is used too rarely and by an older generation: the more educative person is and the more he works or studies with a usage of English language, the faster he forgets his local language and drifts away from it and becomes forgetful of wisdom and experience, passing through many generations for many ages on end.

Finally, it is important to note, that while comparing of main concepts and terms, reflected in Russian and English outlooks, despite the fact of some differences between English speaking countries of Africa and Russia in their location, climate conditions, history and traditions, understanding and sense of such aspects as friendship, work and family coincides in a majority of times.

In summary, the dialogue of cultures plays an important role in building a global interactive relation. This dialogue can be caused by different actions, as verbal as nonverbal. The way of construction of this dialogue through a linguistic work makes this process more interesting for a researcher and, as the result, motivates him to search for another methods to make the others think about the topic of a global relation in a deeper way.

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