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THE ROLE OF ETHNIC COMPONENT IN THE FORMATION OF PROVERB SEMANTICS

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Abstract

The value of proverbs is in their important knowledge about the national culture. The ratio of national and international components in paremias is interesting. So there is a question: can nationally marked paremias be international? The aim of this work is to conduct a comparative linguocultural analysis of the analogues of proverb *Russian man is wise after the event* (*Русский человек задним умом крепок*) in different structural languages: Polish, Belarusian, Rusyn, Ukrainian, German, French, English, Italian, Latvian, Finnish, Tatar, Bashkir, Chuvash, Turkish, Tajik, and Mongolian. A metaphor less generalized proverb idea, “proverb condensate” (term by E. Seliverstova) is used for comparison. The broad meaning of this proverb is that “people are inconsiderate”. In Russian language this proverb and its variants are nationally marked (*Russian man, Rusak*): *Rusak has strong hindsight mind (after-wit)*. The analysis of proverbs with the semantics “people are inconsiderate” suggests the international character of this basic proverbial idea. Some peoples (Russians, Rusyns, Poles, Germans, Tatars, Chuvash, Turks) form the semantics of paremia using ethnolinguistic markers: Rusyn *Русин повашир умудрый* (lit. *Rusyn becomes smarter afterwards the fair*); Polish *Mądry Polak po szkodzie* (lit. *Polish man becomes smarter after bearing a loss*); Tatar. *Татаракылы — төштән соң* (lit. *Tatar man's mind appears in the afternoon*) etc. According to the analogues of this proverb, carelessness can cause various troubles, and no one is safe from it. This gives reason to claim that the Russian concept of the *hindsight mind (after-wit)* is universal.

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1. Introduction

Proverbs on their level reflect sociocultural experience (being a compact container, some kind of packaging for experience (Bredis, 2019a), as well as people's stereotypical views of the world. Indeed, in terms of functionality, proverbs have much in common with product packaging. Packaging protects the product, and it takes into account the potential buyer, so that he remembers the brand and makes a decision to buy it. If sociocultural experience is to be viewed as such packaged product, then “the proverb also draws the person’s attention, allows the person to easily remember the message, and prompts to follow the values contained in the proverb” (Bredis & Lomakina, 2019, p.75). As Georgios Kouzas rightly notes, proverbs are not a “museum piece” of artistic folk discourse, but have direct relevance to everyday life, and can even be an integral part of commercial advertising (Kouzas, 2019).

The unquestionable value of proverbs in any language is that many of them contain important knowledge about the national culture. Many paremias are nationally marked. Nationally specific components of paremias, carriers of “cultural memory” that may not have analogues in other languages, are called *ethnolinguistic markers* (Lomakina, 2018). Sometimes these nationally specific components can make it difficult to understand paremias. They reflect the national identity, and their interpretation requires a certain linguacultural competence. Such ethnolinguistic markers, in particular, can be ethnonyms – names of peoples and tribes (ibid.). Understanding the meaning of a nationally marked proverb often requires linguistic and cultural competence, so when creating collections of proverbs, it is necessary to provide paremias with as detailed linguistic and cultural commentary as possible (Bredis, Lomakina, & Mokienko, 2019). But at the same time, in practice most of proverbs have semantic analogues and in fact are universals. Along with semantic analogues, there are a number of proverbs that are common to almost all European languages.

2. Problem Statement

The problem of the correlation of national and international components in paremias is relevant in connection with the allocation of cultural and linguistic identity of each nation. According to some researchers, there is a high proportion of international elements in national proverbs. The emphasis in such works is on universal models, common and similar meanings, and how large is the share of international component in national phraseology. For instance, see (Bredis, 2019b; Bredis, 2019c; Mokienko & Nikolaeva, 2008). According to Maria Kovshova, in proverbs it’s important to see the specific. It should be determined whether the specificity of the proverb comes from the characteristics of the language and / or is motivated by the peculiarities of culture (Kovshova, 2019). And we share this opinion.

For the meaning of proverbs, context is very important. The basic meaning of the proverb may vary depending on context. We share the point of view of Liisa Granbom-Herranen, who says that proverbs are looked up when needed. “It’s the context of use that provides a proverb with meaning” (Granbom-Herranen, 2019). Because of the laws of thought, proverbs as signs and models of situations have much in common. At the same time, the national specificity of paremias is “in their figurative structure, in local realities and concepts, and only in them” (Permyakov, 1988, p. 21).

3. Research Questions

Research objectives: 1) determine whether ethnically marked proverbs are always specific to a particular ethnic group; 2) establish the ratio of the national and international component in proverbs with ethnolinguistic markers; 3) determine the ratio of the international component of proverbs and their common origin.

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this work is to determine the ratio of national and international components on the example of comparative linguocultural analysis of analogues of the proverb *Russian man is truly wise after the event* (*Русский мужик задним умом крепок*) in sixteen languages of different language groups. In Russian this proverb is nationally marked, there is an ethnonym *Russian* as ethnolinguistic marker. In the linguacultural aspect, we will consider the analogues of the Russian proverb in Polish, Belarusian, Rusyn, Ukrainian, German, French, Italian, English, Latvian, Finnish, Tatar, Chuvash, Turkish, Bashkir, Tajik and Mongolian languages.

5. Research Methods

We used dictionaries of proverbs of the languages in question and Internet proverb resources as the material for our research. Comparison of proverb analogues is based on their semantics. We share the point of view of Chlebdá (2008) who says that theoretically, or potentially, any proverb of any language should have its equivalent in any language, not necessarily figurative, but mostly logical (Chlebdá, 2008). The absence of an equivalent of one proverb in another language may mean that this equivalent has not yet been found or recorded in sources. Thus, in our understanding, the picture of proverb equivalents is somewhat similar to the table of D. Mendeleev, where empty cells are filled as new elements are found (Bredis, 2019a).

For searching semantic equivalents, we use a metaphorless generalized proverbial idea in its compressed, condensed form, "proverbial condensate" (Seliverstova, 2017).

6. Findings

The use of the ethnonym *Russian* makes the proverb *Russian man is truly wise after the event* nationally specific. The proverb is still popular today. Many native speakers of the Russian language believe that the type of mind described in the proverb is typical only for Russian people. There are variants of this proverb with ethnolinguistic markers (*Russian man, Rusak*): *Rusak has strong hindsight mind; Russian man is sometimes clever in the hindsight*. The metaphorless generalized idea of the proverb *Russian man is truly wise after the event* in a compressed form can be expressed as *people are inconsiderate*.

6.1. Hindsight mind in Western languages

A comparative analysis based on the proverbial condensate showed that a similar semantics is expressed by the Polish proverb — *Mądry Polak po szkodzie* (lit. *Polish man becomes smart after bearing a loss*). The very old existence of this proverb is evidenced by the lines in “Song V” from the “Songs Book II” of the famous Polish poet of the 16th century, Jan Kochanowski (1530-1584), in which this proverb is given:

Cieszmię ten rym: “Polak mądr po szkodzie”:	There is a verse: a Polish man gets smarter after
Lecz jesli prawda i z tego nasz bodzie,	grief,
Nowa przypowieść Polak sobie kupi,	But if we don't come to our senses soon,
Że i przeskoda, i po szkodzie głupi.	So we will make another saying,
	That we can be stupid not only "after" but
	"before".

Another Polish paremia compares Poles with other Europeans in terms of “hindsight mind”, and not in favor of Poles: *Włoch przeskoda, Niemiec w szkodzie, Polak po szkodzie przychodzi k sobie* (lit. *An Italian before trouble, a German while trouble, a Pole after a trouble comes to his senses*). There are other Polish versions of the proverb about the “hindsight mind” without the use of ethnonyms: *Po czasie każdy mądry* (lit. *Some time later everyone is smart*); *Po fakcie i głupi radę znajdzie* (lit. *After the event even the fool will find advice*); *Zamknął stajnię, jak mu konia ukradli* (lit. *Locked the stable after his horse was stolen*). All these proverbs reflect semantics *People are inconsiderate*: only after trouble do they become prudent. Using the image of a fool makes Polish paremia similar to Russian: *In hindsight, the fool is strong*. A number of Polish proverbs with similar semantics say that losses helps person to become prudent: *Co zaszkodziło, to nauczyło* (lit. *What hurts you, teaches you*); *Strata rozumna uczy* (lit. *Loss will teach you*).

In the Belarusian language the semantics is expressed by saying *Пасля бяды кожны разумны* (*After troubles everyone is smart*). There are here no ethnic markers, and the proverbial idea expressed in general form. Everyone can make a mistake because of their carelessness, starting to think only after the trouble happened. There are corresponding Rusyn proverbs in which the ethnonym Rusyn comes to the fore: *Русин по ваішару мудры* (lit. *Rusyn becomes smarter afterwards the fair*), *По ярмарку ў русин мудры* (lit. *After the fair even Rusyn becomes the smart*); *По ваішару прыходзіць рэзум* (lit. *The mind comes after the fair*) (Mokienko & Lomakina, 2016). *Ваішар* (*vashar*) is a *fair* in Rusyn, as well as in Serbian. It is known that in Serbia, the main fairs are so important that they are even included in the Church calendar. For Rusyns, the fair is also an important event. A fair is always full of people, trade, and different entertainments. On the other hand it is also a dangerous event where a person can by something by mistake or sell for a lower price, spend too much money on drinking or someone in the crowd can steal their the money. So, if you get carried away with the fair, you may make a mistake, get into trouble, and repent of your carelessness later. Indirectly, the semantics of the dangers associated with the fair is expressed by a Russian proverb: *Незевай, Фомка, нато и ярмарка* (lit. *Keep your eyes open, Fomka, that's what the fair is for*). Another version of the Rusyn proverb with similar semantics contains two

ethnonyms: *Мудрийляпошкоди, а русинпочаси* (lit. *The Pole becomes smarter after a loss, and Rusyn after some time*). Here the proverb makes a comparison between the Polish men and the Rusyns, in which both have a “hindsight mind”. Another variant of the Rusyn proverb *Неоправивнуть – тупиртихобудь* in certain contexts also contains semantics about the “hindsight mind”. Proverbial expressions of the XVII century with the mention of the ethnonym *Rusyn*, along with the ethnonym *Lyakh*, are indicated in the work of V. Perets “History of Proverbs. Historical and literary notes and materials”(Perets,1898): *Русине, вляху, ивлоху, бытьтобътребавъпрохуилиРусинеиляхуваруйтесягръху*. The author notes the South Russian origin of these expressions, some of which he believes came from Polish written sources. Thus, V. N. Perets refers the expression *Небудеть, якъсвѣтъсвѣтомъ, русинполяковибратом*(lit.*As the world is the world, Rusyn will never be a brother to Pole.*) to Polish origin, because it rhymes in Polish *światom-bratom*. The question whether the proverbial expressions mentioned above are proverbs and what Rusyns they refer to requires a separate study and is not part of the objectives of our study.

Ukrainian proverbs also include a “hindsight mind” idea, but they do not use ethnonyms: *Якби мені той розум, що приходиться після* (lit. *If I had such a mind that comes after the event*); *Коли б той розум наперед, що по тім!* (lit. *If only we could have had that mind before!*); *Якби той розум наперед, що не перззаду*(*ibid.*); *Як загнав на слизьке, то про нідковизгадав* (lit. *Only when stepped on slippery road, remembered about horseshoes*). The last one uses the image of a horseman on ice who forgot to shoe a horse well. And only after getting into trouble, the person remembered what should have been done, but did not do it. Another Ukrainian proverb about the hindsight mind uses the image of bread making: *Шкода перемішувати тісто, вийнявши з печі* (lit. *No need to knead dough, after removing it from the oven*). Firstly, the dough is kneaded, and then bread and pies are baked. This is also a kind of hindsight mind.

The Germans in their proverbs also note that every person can make mistakes, and therefore have to learn from those mistakes: *Aus (Durch) Schaden wird man klug*(lit. *Losses make us smarter*). Negative experience is also an experience, and practical Germans emphasize its importance for a person. There is another rhymed version of this German proverb: *Nach den Schaden, nach der Tat weiß jedermann guter Rat* (lit. *After losses, after the event, everyone knows a good tip*). Like the Polish proverb, the German proverb compares a German with a Frenchman and an Italian not in favor of the German, indicating that the Germans are not particularly prescient: *Der Franzose ist witzig vor der Sach', der Italiener in der Sach', der Deutsche nach der Sach'*(lit. *The Frenchman is smart before the deed, the Italian while the deed, the German after the deed*).

In paremias even French people do not consider themselves prevented against mistakes. The French proverb echoes the German in rhyme: *Après dommage, chacun est sage* (lit. *After losses, everyone is wise*). The Italians are also noted: *Dopo il fatto ognuno è savio*(lit. *Everyone is wise after the event*) or *Del senno di poi ne son piene le fosse*(lit. *With the hindsight mind the pits are full*). Sometimes Italians comfort each other saying: *cosa fatta, capo ha* (*what is done is done*). This phrase can be interpreted as *what has been done cannot be undone or changed*. Dante in the Divine Comedy (Inferno, XXVIII) mentions these words in connection with Mosca dei Lamberti, who pronounced “*Capo ha cosa fatta*”, deciding the fate of Buondelmonti, who was killed near the Old bridge.

The English say: *After-wit is everybody's wit* or *Everybody is wise after the event*. Americans replace the event in paremia with danger: *After the danger everyone is wise*.

Such semantics are found in the Latvian paremia *Pēcpadarītadarbakatrs gudrs* (lit. *Everyone is wise after the deed done*). There is an additional semantic aspect: deed (work) gives a person new experience – this is how this proverb can be interpreted. Other Latvian variants clearly speak of a “hindsight mind”, people's awareness of their own lack of foresight, which led to unpleasant consequences: *Kadnelaimenotikusi, tad visigudri* (lit. *When an accident happened, everyone is smart*); *Kadbļodaapgāzta, tad visigudri* (lit. *When the bowl is turned over, everyone is smart*) and *Pēckaravisiģenerāļigudri* (lit. *After the war, all the generals are smart*).

We see the same semantics in the Finnish proverb *Jälkiviisausparasviisus* (lit. *Belated wisdom is the highest wisdom*). The Finnish “belated wisdom” in this proverb is identical to the Russian “hindsight mind”.

6.2. Hindsight mind in paremias of other nations

We have considered examples of analogs of the Russian proverb about the hindsight mind in Western languages. If we take paremias of other nations, we will also see similar semantics. So, the Tatar proverb says: *Татаракылы – төштәнсоң* (*Tatar man's mind appears in the afternoon*). Another proverb recorded in dictionaries says: lit. *The Tatar mind appears after the event, but the Russian has a mind always under his mustache*. Two ethnonyms: *Tatars* and *Russians* in comparison are used here. It is interesting that some researchers (Karimullin, 1989) believe that this proverb is not about modern Tatars, because it is no good to talk about yourself like this. But the ancestors of the today's Tatars, Bulgars distinguished themselves from the Mongols, known as *Tatars*, and did not mingle with them. That is why a number of modern proverbs actually express the attitude of the Bulgars to the *Mongols (Tatars)*. A. Karimullin gives examples of such proverbs, which in his opinion, are anti-Mongol Bulgarian: *Татаратасынсамар* (lit. *Tatar can sell even his father*); *Татартурәбулса, чабатасынтүргәэлә* (lit. *If Tatar will become a chief, he will hang his sandals in the red corner (put them in the spotlight)*); *Татараткаменә, атасынтанымас* (lit. *the Tartar on a horse, has no father (when Tatar rides the horse, he does not even notice his father)*).

This list also includes the proverb about the “hindsight mind” of the Tatar. Hard to say if it is true. As a rule, it is quite difficult to trace the proverb's origin and history in a separate language. It seems that Tatar proverbs listed above may have a proper Tatar origin, since it is known that all people are different, and proverbs record a variety of experiences, including negative ones. Thus in the Russian language there are phraseological units like *Радикрасногословцанепожалеет и отца* (*He would rather lose a friend than a jest*) or *Изгрязида в князи* (*From rags to riches*). As for the proverb with a Tatar on a horse, there is a one with similar semantics in the Turkish language: *Türkatabinincebeyoldumsanır* (lit. *A Turk on a horse, thinks of himself as a master*). Although on the Internet there are more disapproving Tatar proverbs that may lead the researcher to the idea that they could be talking about the Mongol conquerors. However, this is a very complex question that requires deep study. We study the “hindsight mind” and we see that not only the Tatars, but many other nationalities have this feature. The Bashkirs say: *Акълһуңтөшә, һуңтөшһәлә, мултөшә* (lit. *Mind*

comes late, but if it does, you will have too much of it), means that hindsight mind can not fix your mistake, but this mistake will teach you a lesson. The Turks are no exception. There is no guarantee that a person will never fall into a trap, because it is impossible to predict everything. That's why the Turks say: *Türk'ünaklısonradangelir* (lit. *The mind comes to the Turk after the event*). The semantics of this proverb is identical to the Russian *Rusak has strong hindsight mind*.

The Chuvash proverb, which expresses the semantics *People are inconsiderate*, mentions not only the ethnonym Chuvash, but also the hydronym Volga, the river on the banks of which the Chuvash people live. *ЧăвашăнАмăлтурлăкаçсантинасакилем* (lit. *Chuvash started thinking only when he moved across the Volga*). The Chuvash name of Volga is Атăл. Moving across the Volga means getting new experience. Also crossing a wide river takes time and involves some effort. There are still a number of variants of the Chuvash proverb with similar semantics, in which the Chuvash ethnonym is no longer used, but the Volga hydronym is present, which is also an ethnolinguistic marker: *Амăлтурлăкаçсасăнăçкĕремт* (lit. *If you cross the Volga, you will get smarter*); *Амăлтурлăкаçсасăналăтĕслĕйăçкĕремт* (lit. *When you move across the Volga, you will get fifty new thoughts in your head*), *Амăлтурлăкаçсан тинăçкĕнĕ* (lit. *Only crossing of the Volga, he started thinking*).

The merry Afandi (also known as Nasreddin Afandi, a character in Tajik folklore) also does not always can think a quickly and cannot foresee everything. Sometimes he is wise, and sometimes he appears to be a fool. A Tajik proverb says: *АқлиАфандйбаъдазпешинмедарояд* (lit. *Afandi's mind appears in the afternoon*). Afandi here stands for the whole nation. There is another version of this proverb about the hindsight mind: *Ақлигулом (подабон) баъдазиоммедарояд* (lit. *The mind of a servant (shepherd) comes after dinner*). In Tajik proverbs, as in the Tatar paremia, we see the time of day as an image (afternoon = late; after dinner = very late).

A Mongolian proverb also says: *Өнгөрсөнюмандхүнбүрмэргэн* (lit. *Every person is accurate about what was in the past*). It is interesting because, according to I. Kulganek, in this proverb there is a hidden comparison, since *мэргэн* (*a sharp shooter, smart, prudent*) is also the name of a mythological hero. After the Sun was eaten by evil forces, Mergen (Мэргэн) went in search of them to strike with a well-aimed bow and free the Earth from darkness (Kulganek, 2017).

7. Conclusion

The linguacultural analysis of the proverb's analogues *Russian man is truly wise after the event* shows the international character of the basic proverbial idea, which we express with the proverbial condensate *people are inconsiderate*. Carelessness is one of the universal qualities. It can cause various troubles, and no one is safe from it. This gives reason to claim that the Russian concept of the *hindsight mind* is universal. Some nations (Russians, Poles, Rusyns, Germans, Tatars, Chuvash, Turks) ethnically mark paremias with this semantics, while others generalize, speaking about a person without specifying their nationality, although they mostly mean their countrymen.

We see that paremias with ethnolinguistic markers are nationally specific. However, they can also be international. In related languages, paremias with the semantics in question may have a similar grammatical structure. Some proverbs may use two or more ethnonyms, which are usually given in comparative terms. There are proverbs that have double ethnic markings (ethnonym plus hydronym, as in

Chuvash paremias). Nevertheless, logically and semantically they are analogues of the Russian proverb *Russian man is truly wise after the event*.

Moreover, the international component is not determined by the common origin of proverbs. Of course, there may be borrowings and contact parallels, but the general laws of human thought come to the fore in these proverbs. This is confirmed, in particular, by the fact that similar semantics are observed in different structured languages belonging to different language groups. In general, the semantics of *people are inconsiderate* contained in the ancient Latin proverb *Errare humanum est* (*To err is human*), which leads to such thing as hindsight mind (after-wit).

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