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LINGUO-COGNITIVE COMMENTING ON PAREMIAS

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Abstract

The study of proverbs and sayings (paremias) in foreign language teaching is an important objective to enrich the vocabulary of students and to develop the skills in understanding of folklore texts, classical and modern Russian literature, mass media reports. The experience of teaching paremias has revealed the need to develop a deep linguo-cultural commentary associated with linguo-cognitive commenting. To continue the discussion on the use of conceptual analysis techniques in teaching foreign languages, it is suggested to pay attention to the results of cognitive studies of paremias. These studies include conceptual analysis of lexical units included in paremias, analysis of ontological situations and sentences reflecting these situations, analysis of cultural stereotypes and values of an ethnic group, decoding image-structures, pragmatic studies of paremias, description of discursive practices of paremias' functioning. Using the example of the analysis of Russian paremias about work, the author considers application of linguo-cognitive commenting techniques. Linguo-cognitive commenting becomes necessary when the semantic structure of a paremia is not transparent. Accumulation of experience with linguo-cognitive commenting techniques in the future will lead to the development of a specific linguo-cognitive commentary of paremias. The materials of the study can be used in lexicography, to create teaching manuals for students.

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1. Introduction

The study of idioms, paremias (proverbs and sayings) is a complex and relevant problem in foreign language teaching. The understanding of these language units by the students is difficult due to some reasons. These reasons can be reviewed, considering the works of linguists, folklorists and foreign language teachers.

The complexity of the lexical meaning within paremias boundaries can cause the difficulty to understand it. Kotova et al. (2020) note that the lexical elements with ethnical and cultural marking in paremias should have special commentary to make clear the meaning of the paremias.

The ontological situation reflected in paremias is not always understandable due to the cultural and information awareness. If a person does not have a particular historical fact in their background, they can misunderstand the formation of figurative meaning of lexical units. Historical and cultural facts together with idiomatic meaning of the words and word combinations within paremia sentences are explained in the special types of dictionaries (phraseological dictionaries and dictionaries of proverbs and sayings (BSRP, 2010; Felitsyna & Prokhorov, 1988; SRP, 2008; Zhukov, 2000).

Intentional structure of paremias influenced by the discourse frames is also connected with the perception of paremias (Lomakina, 2015). The communicative and pragmatic intentions embedded in paremias usually combine evaluation, didactic sense and pragmatic effect, and can be changed as well depending on the discursive environment (Bredis & Lomakina, 2020).

Paremias can have some shifts in meaning occurring in their modified forms and leading to the possible misunderstanding. Modern media texts and modern fiction use both canonical forms of paremias and their transformations, with the meaning that can be modified (Murashova, 2018).

These difficulties in teaching foreign languages are alleviated through linguo-cultural commentary, which is closely associated with the achievements in the linguo-cultural research and the theory of intercultural communication. The issue on the content of linguo-cultural commentary in dictionaries remains debatable. The authors of dictionaries of idioms, proverbs, and sayings discuss what material, in what quality and quantity should be included in the dictionary entry. The elements to be considered for a dictionary entry are the entry title; variants of the given proverb; literal translation; semantic interpretation; functional and stylistic commentary; cultural and historical reference; information that reflects ethnic and cultural stereotypes; modern transformations of proverbs; illustrative material in Russian; analogues of Russian proverbs in other languages (Nikitina, 2015).

There are ongoing discussions about the use of selected techniques of linguo-cognitive commenting of verbal units as a type of deep linguo-cultural analysis in teaching of a foreign language (Odintsova, 2017).

We suggest paying attention to the results of cognitive studies of paremias, which can accompany linguo-cultural commentary. The possible fields of such cognitive research are the following:

- Describing the specific concepts that are represented in different language units, including paremias, and analyzing the ontological and prototypical situations that are considered as a basis for the generalization of paremia sentences (Babenko, 2017; Popova & Sternin, 2007);

- Conducting the study of Russian ethnical values and Russian national stereotypes (Nichiporchik, 2015);
- Identifying the gestalt structures of Russian paremias that can be a basis for the developing of figurative meaning (Belyaevskaya, 2016; Kovshova, 2016; Teliya, 2016).
- Studying the cognitive and pragmatic intentions in Russian paremias (Alefirenko & Semenenko, 2017; Semenenko, 2011);
- Describing the cognitive-discursive practices of Russian paremias use (Abakumova, 2012).

The data of these studies can be a part of the linguo-cultural analysis, but paremias difficult for perception require a separated linguo-cognitive commentary.

2. Problem Statement

To improve the perception of paremias, it is necessary to introduce linguo-cognitive commenting of paremias into educational practice. These elements can be presented in full or in abbreviated form. Based on Russian proverbs, we can consider how linguo-cognitive commenting on proverbs complements linguo-cultural commentary. In our view, the elements to be considered in this commenting are the following:

- Description of the concept represented by a paremia;
- Description of the ontological situation realized in a paremia;
- Description of values and cultural stereotypes reflected in a paremia;
- Decoding the gestalt structures of a paremia;
- Description of cognitive and pragmatic intentions of a paremia;
- Examples of discourse practices of a paremia.

3. Research Questions

In this study, we aim to answer the following questions: 1) How the hidden metaphors (attributed to image-structures (gestalt-structures) can be expressed in paremias; 2) How one can understand the meaning of paremia through understanding the ontological situation implied in a paremia utterance; 3) How cognitive and pragmatic intentions of a paremia depend on such aspects as ontological situation, image-structures (gestalt-structures), the axiological component, the cognitive discourse practices?

4. Purpose of the Study

Linguo-cognitive commenting of paremias is regarded as a part of the deep linguo-cultural commentary. We consider it is important to justify the necessity of specific linguo-cognitive commenting of paremias with a complex semantic and grammatical structure. Linguo-cognitive commenting together with the linguo-cultural commentary enables to remove the difficulties of perceiving and understanding the paremias.

5. Research Methods

The methodological basis for the analysis of the proverbial proposition is the denotative approach of semantic-syntactic structuring of sentence models. The interpretative analysis is based on considering the semantics of the proverbial proposition in terms of reflecting the processes of interaction between the denotative structures of generative (prototypical) and ontologically possible situations.

The following research methods have been used in the current study:

- methods of the conceptual analysis (of paremia meaning);
- method of cognitive semantic analysis (of paremia meaning);
- method of the propositional analysis (of paremia meaning);
- method of comparative paremiological analysis (of proverbs in different languages);
- contextual method (in analyzing usage of proverbs in modern languages);
- descriptive methods of comparative cultural linguistics and contrastive paremiology.

6. Findings

Linguistic-cognitive commentary becomes necessary when the grammatical and semantic structure of a paremia is not transparent and when the translation has incorrect result. Understanding paremias requires knowledge of cultural and historical context and understanding the ontological situation of the paremia. Students will be able to formulate the correct didactic meaning and to perceive the pragmatic intention of paremias if they understand the values of the Russian ethnos correctly and can decode the images and gestalt structures embedded in Russian paremias.

6.1. Analysis of the metaphor in the proverb *The work is afraid of a master*

The proverb *Дело мастера боится* (BSRP, 2010, p. 248) /lit. *The work is afraid of a master*/ – ‘The job is perfect because it is done by a competent person’. Cf. the American proverb: *Work is afraid of a resolute man* (Am.) (Margulis & Kholodnaya, 2000, p. 58). We can here give the lexicographic interpretation from Russian proverbs dictionaries: ‘A real master (skilled craftsman) knows his craft, he does everything successfully. Used with approval at the sight of a well done job or as a calming reaction to someone's doubt, expressed with uncertainty about the complexity of the task ahead’ (Mokienko, 2012, p. 154; Zhukov, 2000, p. 98). The meanings of the words included in the proverb require additional semantic and cognitive (conceptual) analysis.

Studies of the Russian concept *Work* have shown that the abstract names *труд* (*work*), *дело* (*business, job*) and *работа* (*labour*) denote in Russian paremias a "generalized idea of labour activity" (Markelova, 2004; Savenkova, 2002). In some paremias, the conceptual and semantic features of these words overlap. The word *дело* (*business, job*) represents "a professional work activity which one chooses for oneself and the results of which one owns", but since this work activity can be complex and arduous, the conceptual senses of *дело* (*business, job*) and *труд* (*work*) are combined. The word *master* in Russian paremias about work means "highly qualified worker" cf.: “a competent person; a resolute man; a skilled craftsman; a skilled worker”. Among the Russian and English paremias about work, the idioms stand out

because of the semantic (conceptual) component "correspondence of the work performed to the level of qualification of the worker": **Каков мастер, такова и работа** (BSRP, 2010, p. 518) /lit. **As is the worker (the master), so is the work**/. Cf.: *As is the workman, so is his work (Am.); As is the workman, so is the work (Br.)* (Margulis & Kholodnaya, 2000, p. 58). In this case, *мастер (master)* in Russian paremias about work refers to "a worker who may have high or low qualifications", and this can be judged by the results of his work. Cf.: *The work shows the master* (Adamiya, 2021, p. 37).

The Russian proverb **Дело мастера боится** /lit. **The work is afraid of a master**/ has a variant: **Дело мастера боится, а иной мастер дела боится** /lit. **The work is afraid of a master, and another master is afraid of the work**/ (BSRP, 2010, p. 248). *Дело (work)* and *мастер (master)* are two subjects who may feel fear of each other, these proverbs represent the syntactic construction "to be afraid of someone" rather than possessive constructions: "the master's work"; "the work of the master"; "the work 's master"; "the master of the work". The metaphor, or gestalt-structure, is realized here, where *дело (work)* is understood as 'the person who feels fear'. This fear stems from the fact that the master is doing the work until the end; metaphorically this means that the work is being destroyed and therefore *дело (work)* is afraid of being destroyed. In the second part of the proverb **...а иной мастер дела боится** /lit. **... and another master is afraid of the work**/ the expression 'afraid of work' means that the worker is not confident that he will be able to finish the job to the end and do it efficiently.

Linguo-cognitive commenting helps to explain the semantic and conceptual senses of the words in the proverb, the metaphor (gestalt-structure) expressed by the construction 'work is afraid of a master'.

6.2. The ontological situation and its causes in paremias about work

Understanding the ontological situations, which became prototypical and then generalized, is necessary to identify the internal form of the paremia's proposition. Permyakov (1988) defines paremias as signs of certain situations or certain relations between things. Similar ontological situations reflected in paremias may be due to different reasons. Let us consider this with the help of examples. The proverb **У ленивой пряжи и про себя нет рубахи** (BSRP, 2010, p. 729) /lit. **The lazy spinner woman has no shirt for herself**/ has a clear semantic and syntactic structure and is not difficult to understand. The spinner woman referred to in this proverb is a lazy worker, so she cannot spin enough yarn to weave enough of it for a shirt (a kind of national clothing). The interpretation of the proverb: 'A lazy worker gets a small result, not enough to make himself with what he creates'. However, the situation when a worker does not provide for himself or herself with what he creates may have another reason. This situation is reflected in proverbs existing in Russian, English, German (Adamiya, 2021, p. 95), where the worker (cobbler, tailor, carpenter) is not characterized as lazy, his labour activity, on the contrary, is productive; these results are used by others, but not by himself or his family. Cf. the proverbs: *The cobbler's children usually go unshod (Br.); The cobbler's wife is the worst shod (Br.); The door of the carpenter is loose (Am.); The tailor's wife is worst clad (Br.)* (Margulis & Kholodnaya, 2000, p. 196); *...all cobblers go barefoot* (Lubenskaya, 1997, p. 584); **Сапожник без сапог, портной без порток** (BSRP, 2010, p. 784) /lit. **Shoemaker without boots, tailor without trousers** ./ The dictionary definitions of these paremias indicate that the worker either because of short of time (Margulis & Kholodnaya, 2000, p. 196) or because of

neglecting his talents (Lubenskaya, 1997, p. 584); does not use them for himself and his family (Zhukov, 2000, p. 287).

Thus, the spinner woman has no shirt because of her laziness, and the shoemaker is left without boots because he does something for others and has no opportunity to do it for himself. Linguo-cognitive commenting makes it possible to compare the ontological situations reflected in the paremias, identify the reasons for these situations, avoid mistakes in interpreting the paremias.

6.3. Cognitive-pragmatic recommendations in Russian proverbs about work

Norrick (1985) proposed a definition of the proverb that became the accepted definition: «The proverb is a traditional, conversational, didactic genre with general meaning, a potential free conversational turn, preferably with figurative meaning» (p. 78). Most scholars believe that the proverb has the characteristics of being traditional, didactic, and often metaphorical. A proverb can be defined as "a short commonly used summary of human experience, standardized for typical life situations and expressed in a speech in a complete sustained sentence, most often with figurative meaning" (Bredis, 2019, p. 70).

When teaching Russian paremias (proverbs and sayings), it is important to teach students to identify the didactic meaning of a paremia, which can be expressed explicitly and implicitly, accompanied by evaluative constructions, as well as constructions of irony, sarcasm, and absurdity. The same paremia may express different didactic meanings depending on who is saying the paremia. It may be the author of the speech, who is describing himself, or the speaker, who is describing another person.

The didactic meaning of the proverbs is determined by axiological perceptions. The analysis of the paremias, conducted by Nichiporchik (2015) on the material of the Russian, Belarusian, Italian and German languages, has confirmed that the highest positions in the hierarchy of values in these linguocultures are occupied by family, work, and intelligence. Lomakina and Mokienko (2018) come to the same conclusion.

Semenenko (2011) introduces the concept of cognitive-pragmatic recommendation as the overall pragmatic meaning of paremias. The didactic meaning of the paremias is realized in the recommendations, which can be characterized as cognitive-pragmatic, as they are based on the knowledge, the life experience of the ethnic group, their goal is to influence the members of the ethnic group. Cognitive-pragmatic recommendations are implemented in speech tactics (order, advice, wish, and others).

In Russian proverbs about work, the master gets the highest evaluation, he is praised for the work he has done. In the proverb *Дело мастера боится, а иной мастер дела боится* /lit. *The work is afraid of a master, and another master is afraid of the work*/ (BSRP, 2010, p. 248) presents positive and negative evaluations, using the speech tactic of praise addressed to the real master and the speech tactic of condemnation of the worker who is ironically called a master. Mokienko (2012) points out that the proverb *Дело мастера боится* /lit. *The work is afraid of a master*/ is used as a pep talk when a worker is not confident in his or her abilities (p. 153-154). The implicit cognitive-pragmatic recommendation of this proverb can be formulated as: "Work hard and you'll get results! Be like a master! Be a master!"

The proverb *Каков мастер, такова и работа* /lit. *As is the worker (the master), so is the work*/ states the result achieved, depending on the result, the worker is evaluated and praised or reprimanded. An implicit cognitive-pragmatic recommendation if the work is done poorly: "Work harder!"

The cognitive-pragmatic recommendation in the proverb *У ленивой пряжи и про себя нет рубахи* /lit. *The lazy spinner woman has no shirt for herself*/ is related to the negative evaluation of her work activities: "Work harder, don't be lazy".

The paremia *Сапожник без сапог, портной без порток* /lit. *Shoemaker without boots, tailor without trousers*/ contains a double evaluation. The same worker is recognized as a skilled craftsman, but his attitude to his own needs and those of his family are condemned. The implicit assessment of such a master is: "Work not only for others but also for yourself!" If this paremia is a self-characterization, it is a self-justification of an activity that is censured by the society.

7. Conclusion

There are currently two levels of linguo-cultural commentary. The superficial level corresponds to the synchronic level of a native speaker's perception of a language unit. The deeper level reveals the sign cultural function of the language fact and expands the cultural field of the native speaker. This level is associated with the level of internal form, archetype, cultural code (Kovshova, 2016, pp. 160-161). Linguo-cultural studies, which provide material for commenting at a deeper level, are closely related to cognitive-semantic, cognitive-discursive, and cognitive-pragmatic studies. These studies can be summarized by the term *linguo-cognitive*. They can form the basis for the development of deep linguo-cultural and linguo-cognitive commenting techniques and principles of linguo-cognitive commentary. The techniques of linguo-cultural commentary and linguo-cognitive commenting can be used in lexicography, in dictionaries of idioms, proverbs, and sayings, and for creating teaching manuals for students.

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