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ETHNO-LINGUO-CULTURAL SPECIFICITY OF ZOONYMS IN COMPARATIVE PHRASEOLOGICAL UNITS

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Abstract

The development of scientific ideas in the late XX and early XXI centuries fostered the emergence of a new paradigm in science, centered on a man. It determines the modern scientific knowledge paradigm with an anthropocentric view. The interest of linguists in this field is becoming global and more interdisciplinary. Thus, the study of the zoomorphic code of culture takes a pivotal place in understanding nature, people and society. Zoomorphic image-stereotypes, image-symbols, and image-standards in the languages of different structures encourage an emotional reaction and provide a basis for figurative meaning. They reflect the specificity of a collective consciousness of people, being ethno-specific. The zoomorphic code of culture, as a component of the language picture of the world, is fixed in the vocabulary, phraseology, pareimology and, conceptualizing the outer and inner world of the individual, makes it possible to determine universal and national language specificity. The mirror of zoomorphic metaphors and comparisons reflect the spiritual life of a particular people, i.e. moral values, strong-willed decisions, emotional and intellectual actions, features of a character, attitudes to people and things. Overlapping of zoonyms in different languages demonstrate the fact that phraseological units with a zoomorphic component do not fully correspond in the compared cultures. Moreover, it provides evidence on a certain content constant in the languages. The difference in the connotative meaning of zoometaphors show the different ways in which the compared cultures have developed. Each language has its own unique lexical units with figurative meaning, nominating living beings.

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1. Introduction

The 21st century is often called the ethnic Renaissance, as global processes have contributed greatly to the growth of ethnic and national consciousness of peoples. On the one hand, one can observe harmonization and unification, bringing people of the world together, and promoting capital and technology integration; on the hand, there is cultural and national invisibility of people, with the fear to lose the national language, cultural backgrounds, and national identity. As is known, the national beliefs, moral values, stereotypical attitudes, and behavioral practices, being compared with similar communities, give an understanding of an individual cultural and ethnic identity. Thus, comparative linguo-ethnocultural research is a type of critical linguistics. Language generates an interest in the source of the identity and spirituality of every people. The active dialogue of different peoples and the interaction of diverse cultures in the context of world culture have become the main idea of modern scientific activity. With learning a foreign language, an individual gets an idea of a new national culture and understanding of the spiritual life of other people, in particular, its mentality and world perception, which is different from his/her own culture. Thus, to address this problem is a challenging task. “Chaque pays est un système culturel différent, et «apprendre» ce système est encore plus laborieux que l’apprentissage de la langue” (Hall, 1990, p.151). Nevertheless, “different languages do not mean different nominations of the same thing, but it is a different vision of the thing.... Languages provide us with various ways of thinking and perception. (Humboldt, 1985, p. 200). If people want to understand the concept and essence of ethnic human existence, they should go through the experience and world perception of these people, i.e. to understand a different national culture while learning the language. In this paper, a zoonym is considered as a direct mediator between the ethnic culture and its language. Thus, the ethnocultural specificity of zoonyms in phraseological comparisons is viewed from this perspective.

2. Problem Statement

Studying a cultural component has become possible due to the development of linguoculturology as a special field of linguistic research with the immense language potential. Scientific research in the area of phraseology is of particular interest, as phraseological units demonstrate the originality of language, life, and culture, as well as psychology, of any people in its best way. The comparative analysis of phraseological units in a new scientific paradigm includes not only the linguocultural aspect but also the cognitive and culturological analysis. In other words, “cognitive approach to idioms is relevant while dealing with ethnocultural semantics of set expressions” (Vorokova, 2003, p. 3).

Being a complex and multidimensional phenomenon, linguoculturology can be studied from various perspectives. The advancement in linguoculturology makes it possible to provide a comprehensive study of various aspects, including the subject we are addressing today, namely, functioning zoonyms in different cultures. The current research covers Ethno-Circassian, French, English and Russian cultural traditions, as “the functioning of language is regulated not only by linguistic norms and rules but also by the norms and rules of a social and cultural environment” (Vedenina, 2017, p. 17).

Thus, the research approach to zoonyms in this paper is based on the hypothesis that idiomatic units with a zoomorphic component reflect the world perception of certain people.

3. Research Questions

Related to the above-mentioned issues, we focus on the selection of lexical units with the image-bearing components, namely, the image of a person in animorphological units with a specific feature of an animal's behavior, which can be readily metaphorically modeled. Zoomorphic codes of culture make it possible to identify the system of symbols and standards of national culture, manifested in the lexical, phraseological and paremiological units since they contain information about the nationally specific worldview of the people (Guketlova, 2009). These codes appear to be universal. Nevertheless, zoomorphic codes, seeking to preserve universality, are distinguished by nationally specific features. The originality of set expressions is demonstrated by the images of animals, involved in the human world of transformation. They play a symbolic role in the mythological and poetic picture of the world and serve as standard-bearers of personal traits, reflecting the language speakers' experience.

4. Purpose of the Study

The aim of the research is to identify ethnocultural specificity of zoonyms in the comparative perspective. It enables us to consider zoonyms as a means to access mental processes and identify the universal and nationally specific vision of the world through the zoomorphic code of culture in the compared languages.

5. Research Methods

In the paper, we use such methods as functional and semantic, lexicographical, comparative, contrastive, etymological, and cognitive, to provide a deeper understanding of linguistic coding. The functional and semantic, as well as lexicographical methods allow us to get a comprehensive selection of comparative phraseological units. The cognitive analysis makes it possible to describe the internal form of zoonyms in the compared linguocultures.

6. Findings

To reveal the zoomorphic concepts which are most often found in phraseological units, let us address to the language speakers of the compared cultures to represent the picture of the world, associated through a prism of the cultural and empirical practices. When a man has a need for creating images, the language begins to "remodel" the existing meaning of a word. This process reflects the national specificity of reality conceptualization of a particular people, its language and culture. In fact, in its broadest sense, it explains the national and specific vision of the world, i.e. mentality. Indeed, this phenomenon attracts the increasing attention of linguists.

A zoomorphic code of culture, preserving its universality, is characterized by national distinct character. In this regard, it may be helpful to look at a speaker's worldview in a mirror of comparison as it is one of the ancient human activities and powerful means of cognition. "In fact, all cognitive activity of mind is the fixation of differences and similarities" (Maslova, 2001, p. 302).

The interest to phraseological units with a zoomorphic component from various scientific perspectives is determined by the fact that being similar in structure, they demonstrate different semantic cohesion and metaphoric modeling, based on the observation of a person over the behavior, appearance, and habits of animals. Despite the fact that these set expressions are transparent from the structural point of view, their symbolism can give clues to national mentality through selecting the specific figurative means, evaluating human behavior.

The observation of people over different ways of human actions, relations, and attitudes formed the basis for the associations between human behavior and an animal. The conjunction *as* provides actual information about the reality in the communication process. The ontological knowledge of the previous experience is expressed through the comparative conjunction *as* (in the present case, phraseological comparisons with a zoonym). The human behavior is associated with an animal, based on a trait which is generally known. However, there is a question if these associations are based on equivalence or analog. So, the main difficulty in the comparative approach to lexical units with metaphoric meaning is that similarity or comparison can be only found out on connotations, developed in a lexical meaning only in a certain surrounding.

The linguistic analysis has shown that the most frequent comparative phraseological units are set expressions with the way of action.

The analysis of phraseological comparisons with the conjunctions *as*, *like* (E), *comme* (F), *хуэдэу* (Kab.-Circ.), *как* (*as*, *like*) (R.), expressing the way of action demonstrates that there are similarities in the perception of reality by representatives of different linguocultures. It is manifested in the interlanguage structural and semantic equivalents which have the same components, such as *like cats and dogs* (E), *s'entendre (vivre, s'accorder, être) comme un chien et un chat* (F), *хьэмрэ джэдумрэ хуэдэу* (Kab.-Circ.) (Berbekov, Bizhoviev, & Utizhev, 2001), *ладить, (live, be) как кошка с собакой* (R); *to live like cats and dogs* (E), *avancer comme une tortue* (F), *шылъэгу чыцэ хэгъэпицын* (Kab.-Circ.) (Berbekov and et al, 2001) *be as slow as a tortoise* (R); *be as slow as a tortoise* (E). In Kabardino-Circassian language the idea of the slowness is more clearly defined, literally: how a tortoise walks through woodland. (cf. *like a fish in water* (E), *nager comme poisson* (F), *бдзэжьейм хуэдэу нсым есын* (Kab.-Circ.) (Berbekov et al., 2001), *to swim like fish* (R); *die like flies* (E), *tomber to comme des mouches* (F), *бадзэм хуэдэу зэтоллэ* (Kab.-Circ.) (Berbekov et al., 2001), *die as flies* (R); *work as an ox* (E), *travailler comme un boeuf* (F), *вым хуэдэу лэжьээн* (Kab.-Circ.) (Berbekov et al., 2001), *work as an ox* (R). Thus, the coincidence of the phraseological comparisons is determined by the similarity in the perception of the world and metaphoric modeling in English, French, Kabardian, and Russian languages, due to the development of figurative meanings of comparative structures.

The similarities in the perception of the world by different peoples can be found on a generally deeper layer, at the semantic level, when there is a partial coincidence in the component composition of a phraseological comparison, expressing the way of action. At the same time, the structural and semantic equivalents of comparative constructions, having semantic equality, allow lexical, semantic and image differences in their structure, for example: *like putting a saddle on a cow* (E) (lit.: how to saddle a cow), *aller comme un tablier à une vache* (F), (lit.: match like an apron to a cow), *танэ бгырынх цлэнха хуэдэ* (Kab.-Circ.), (lit.: like a calf girded by a belt), *match like a saddle to a cow* (R). So, there is a difference in

the nominative components (*apron – belt – saddle*). Cf.: *chatter like a magpie* (E), *bavarder (babiller, jaser, jacasser) comme un merle* (F), (lit.: crack as a thrush), *къанжэм хуэдэу мэкIакIэ* (Kab.-Circ.) (Berbekov et al., 2001), (lit.: chatter like a magpie), *chatter like a magpie* (R); *to live as a lone wolf* (E) (Oxford Idioms Dictionary for learners of English, 2010), *vivre comme un ours → la vie solitaire, vivre retiré* (F), (lit.: live like a bear, live alone, in isolation), *дыгъэмыххуэ дыгъуужь* (Kab.-Circ.), (lit.: a wolf living on a shady side), *live like recluse* (R); *as blind as a mole rat* (E), *vivre comme une taupe, mener une vie oscétique* (F), (lit.: live as a mole; living alone, in isolation), *щIыIуб нэфым хуэдэу нсэун* (Kab.-Circ.) (Berbekov et al., 2001) (lit.: live as a mole), *live as amole* (R); *eat like a horse* (E), *manger comme un boeuf* (F), (lit.: eat like an ox), *мацIэм хуэдэу ихэн* (Kab.-Circ.) (Berbekov et al., 2001), (lit.: eat like locusts), *eat like a wolf* (R); *to run like the Energizer bunny* (E), (lit.: run around like a scalded cat), *aller (courir) comme un chat maigre* (F), (lit.: go (run) like a scalded cat), *шыклэм мафIэ егъэуауэ жэн* (Cab.-Circ.) (Berbekov et al., 2001)(lit.: like a horse with a singed tail), *like a scalded cat* (R). As may be seen from the examples given, the difference in lexical components does not break the semantic equivalence of phraseological units.

There are comparative constructions which do not have parallels between the compared linguocultures, for example, in English: *as melancholy as a cat*; *as hard as goat's knees* (lit.: strong as knees of a goat; being strong)); *a dog with two tails* (lit.: be pleased); *as the crow flies* (lit.: on the straight, the quickest way); *as wet as a fish*. For example, in French: *arriver comme un chien dans un jeu de quilles* (lit.: come like a dog with a billiard cue in a play); *bâiller comme une huître* (lit.: yawn like an oyster); *bicher comme un pou* (lit.: jump as a louse) rejoice, be glad; *être là comme rat en paille* (lit.: to be as a rat in straw) be in clover; *se tordre comme une baleine* (lit.: play the ape like a whale) laugh out loud. Cf. in Kab.-Circ.: *уи хъэм бажэ къиубыда нэхъей* (lit.: as if your dog has caught a fox) (Berbekov et al., 2001), rejoice, be glad. Cf. in Russian: *scream one's head off* (boohoo). Thus, the research provides evidence on the nationally specific perception of the world. The figurative meaning of a zoonym in the studied languages can demonstrate various connotations for many reasons: language experience, customs, traditions, history, geographical position, climate, and etc. The reality is differently reflected in the images, on which comparison is based. For example, in French, people compare a person not just to fish, but more often specify: “like a whale, like a carp, like a marlin and etc. “The comparative analysis of phraseological units with a zoomorphic component gives an opportunity to identify universal and national specificity in the perception of the world, aiming to describe cultural similarities and differences, as a part of the linguistic picture of the world. Thus, there is a need for the systematic approach to zoonyms in linguistic and cultural communities while dealing with linguocultural issues and the problems of intercultural communication. We claim that the study of the zoomorphic code in phraseological comparisons provides a deeper understanding of the norms of social behavior, values, a person's inner and physical world, being compared with other linguocultures.

7. Conclusion

Thus, zoonyms, regarded as an important component of the language picture of the world, make it possible to identify universal and national specific peculiarities in the vision of the world.

The comparative study of zoonyms in various linguocultures may fundamentally enrich the systematic of zoonyms while identifying the interdependence between cultural trends and language development. Moreover, dealing with related challenges will promote the theory of linguistic conceptualization. In its turn, it will enhance the explanatory power of philological knowledge.

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