

Symbolic and Idiomatic Study of a Linguistic World View

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Abstract. The article deals with the analysis of the correlation of such notions as a nation, national world view, linguistic mapping of the world, lexicon. A special attention is paid to the linguistic means with the help of which a national community can understand and express the surrounding world, its culture, traditions, values, beliefs, and fantasy. It is pointed out that a very important role in the process of the cognition of the world is played by idioms and phraseological units that preserve and encode national experience, world view, and culture.

Keywords: *cognition, nation, culture, verbalization, linguistic world view, phraseological unit.*

Formation of a research problem and its significance.

Linguistic encoding of the world depends on the national mindset that influences and defines it. A special role in this process is played by established expressions, idioms, proverbs and sayings. It is important to point out that idiomatic expressions of any language establish a special linguistic layer in which such notions as world view, national culture, traditions and beliefs, fantasy and history are reflected.

The research is targeted at the analysis of idioms and phraseological units of the English language and their significance in the linguistic mapping of the world, preservation and reflection of the English national values and beliefs.

Analysis of the research into this problem. The question of the correlation of such notions as a nation, national world view, linguistic mapping of the world, lexicon, phraseological units was studied by many scholars, such as B. Azhniuk, M. Kovshova, V. Mokienko, P. Florensky, O. Kornilov, V. Maslova, O. Potebnia, G. Lakoff and M. Johnsen, R. Fergusson, T. Cherdantseva and is still of a great interest as their semantics help to understand a national culture in its broad sense.

The goal and the specific tasks of the article. The main tasks of the article are to analyse and describe the meaning of set expressions and phraseological units in the context of a national culture, cognitive activities of language speakers and cross-cultural communication.

Statement regarding the basic material of the research and the justification of the results obtained.

While studying a national culture it is possible to determine certain specific features that play a very important role in the formation of the national character and national mindset. Such features are called cultural ethnic dominants. These dominants determine national characteristics of behavior, worldview and perception and are reflected in the national lexicon [6, p. 138].

A national language performs an important ethnogenic function, as language is an important element of the ethnocultural attitude. A language can be considered as having received a special cognitive ethnic "vaccine" and the very process of studying a language, which every person from an ethnic community goes through, every language speaker has a cognitive orientation that preserves and transmits national traditions. A language forms a specific worldview and defines not only a system of values but also certain patterns of behaviour of a subject of the culture [16].

Language functions as the main condition of a person's

cognitive activity. Cognitive linguists (M. Minsky, C. J. Fillmore) studied the connection between language and thought and the problem of the linguistic interpretation of the world. They came to the conclusion that a language is not just a means to the perception of the world and expression of thoughts, but is an instrument of social cooperation.

A symbolic figurative basis of a language system is formed by idioms, phraseological units and set expressions – fixed constructions and word combinations, peculiar to a national language. These are what determine and reflect a national cultural mindset. There are several factors that define the cultural significance of the studies of phraseological units.

Firstly, phraseology appears to be the most stable structure of the linguistic world, it takes part in the conceptualization of the world and functions as a potential resource of the development of the conceptual sphere of a culture. Idiomatic expressions of any language are the most valuable linguistic legacy in which a national worldview, national culture, traditions, customs and beliefs, fantasy and history are reflected [14, p. 67].

Secondly, a figurative symbolic and metaphorical world represents a national culture of the language speakers. An analysis of phraseological units enables scholars to keep track of the development of a society from the origin of its traditions and customs to the achievements of science and technology, and helps to compare the evolution of various ethnic communities.

Thirdly, the studies of psychologically specific features in the context of a national phraseology have their practical significance. Cross-cultural communication involves the knowledge of history and culture of other nations, the study of their customs and traditions, mentalities and worldviews. A comparative and contrastive analysis of phraseological units has become a critical question because of the increasing tension and conflicts in the area of cross-cultural dialogues.

A phraseology of a language functions as a historically stable linguocultural phenomenon that represents a temperament of a nation and reflects its national uniqueness. That is why a national worldview is represented in the phraseological units in general and in the proverbs and sayings in particular. "A phraseological system of a language is a mirror with the help of which a linguocultural community identifies its national consciousness" [6, p. 200].

A basic structural element of language is a phraseme – a nationally specific linguocultural sign that carries hid-

den knowledge about the material and spiritual culture of a nation. A specific feature of phraseology is its ability to convey national spiritual experience, categorize phenomena and verbalize the behavioral peculiarities of a subject of the culture. Due to its metaphorical character and special associative logic phraseological units can form mental cultural images. As a result, a linguocultural analysis of the phraseological layer of a language makes it possible to conceptualize a national outlook and discover a cultural specificity of the grounds of a concept [13, p. 149].

Phraseological units demonstrate essentialness for a person and his life experiences in the world while conserving cultural experience, preserving national uniqueness, while reflecting the cultural values of language speakers. Phraseological units are characterized by a semantic cognitive wholeness and provide an access to the cognitive structures and mechanisms of language categorization.

Phraseological units is a general name for the semantically stable word combinations that are used in the course of communication and are characterized by a phraseological meaning and a fixed lexico-grammatical structure. Phraseological units are also considered to be relatively stable, reproductive, and expressive combinations of lexemes that are combined by the integral meaning [5, p. 143].

National phraseology in the context of linguocultural studies is viewed as a specific text of a culture that appears as a result of the reflection of reality. Phraseology represents a cultural uniqueness and mental peculiarity of the subject of culture. Semantics of phraseology, as a specific text of culture, is characterized by motivation, high pragmatic value, component stability, idiomaticity and nomination [7, p. 96].

In the semantic context, the meaningful fields of a phraseological unit are manifested in the processes of perception and understanding. The semantics of a phraseological unit is an essential element in the formation of the linguistic map of the word and has cultural dependence. In the linguocultural approach a phraseological unit is a way for the accumulation of a word perception, a means of concentration of social experience and transmission of spiritual values of a language community [2, p. 273].

The phraseology of a national language is interpreted as a bank of a cultural thesaurus, which gives an opportunity to understand the culture of a nation, its ethical traditions, and attitude towards other nations, material and spiritual values. The means of the realization of the phraseological fund of a language are language units (a word, a word combination, a phraseological unit, a sentence) that represent a national concept [3, p. 380].

A figurative symbolic landscape of phraseological concepts is best reflected in proverbs, sayings, sententia, aphorisms, authentic fiction etc. A national conceptual sphere is characterized by its historical nature and constant changes. At the same time, the composition of created national concepts remains relatively stable. A national symbolism and national conceptual sphere complete the creation of a national map of the world, which includes the understanding of a national history, a way of living and national character.

A national cultural conceptsphere of a nation is also represented by metaphors which illustrate and convey national mental concepts and world perception. According to American linguists G. Lakoff and M. Johnsen, metaphorization is a cooperation of two fields of knowledge – a source and a purpose. During the process of metaphorization the purpose relates to the source. The process is called a *metaphorical mapping* or *cognitive reflection*. This cognitive operation is widely used in communication because the objects of a purpose are interpreted in terms of a source. In such a way some features of the source are reflected in the purpose and are represented on the semantic level of a sentence [4, p. 134]. An extralinguistic activity is conceptualized with the help of metaphorization.

Mentality and culture reveal themselves in the phraseological units in the course of their semantic analysis with the consideration of their etymological and linguocultural aspects. It is important to point out that phraseological units function as special verbal signs that bear a cultural memory while phraseology itself combines cultures of the past and present and expresses the spirit of a nation.

At the end of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th century there appeared a new approach in the studies of national languages – an anthropological one that completed an existing semiological paradigm. An anthropological linguistic paradigm included such notions as human activity, mindset and a spiritual world .

In the context of these tendencies phraseology acquired national cultural characteristics. As a result, scholars started to pay attention to new complex analysis while traditional theoretical linguistic studies were concentrated on the semantic aspects of phraseological units. At the same time lexicographers, while compiling dictionaries, gave not only the historical etymological information but tried to reveal national cultural details of phraseology [8, p. 182].

National cultural interpretation of phraseological units is also done in the fields of folklore and national wisdom. In the system of phraseological units scholars point out meaningful units which preserve national experience, a historical worldview, and analyze the concepts that reflect cultural and universal descriptions of the real world [5, p. 27].

In the linguocultural studies the main role in the semantic descriptions of phraseological units belongs to the cultural semantics which is completed by the cultural information of four types: a) cultural semes that include exotic lexis and socially marked realia; b) cultural concepts; c) cultural background; d) cultural connotations that involve the interpretation of a language sign on the basis of the associations with stereotypes and prototypes of a national language [11].

All types of information undergo a cultural interpretation and acquire cultural meanings that are preserved in the consciousness of a language speaker. Phraseological units preserve and convey the cultural knowledge that is expressed via cultural connotation in the meaning of a language unit.

The symbolic and figurative scope of phraseological units goes back to mythology, folklore, proverbs and sayings, and riddles. It is the folklore that serves as a foundation for a nation's cultural identity and spiritual experience. In the images of the national folklore the under-

standing of good and evil, truth and lie, happiness and grief are conceptualized.

Phraseological units come into being and function in the field of the synergy of language and culture, are influenced by a national culture and therefore are cultural signs. Phraseological units perform the function of a word nomination and add a specific cultural colouring to the meaning of a language construction. It is important to point out that phraseological units go through a certain circle in culture – from the culturally caused appearance to the actualization of their meanings in the course of cultural interpretations [5, p. 34].

The process of the perception and understanding phraseological units is realized with the help of various intellectual operations: a) evocation of primary meanings in the memory (from the past of a culture); b) recollection of knowledge and visualization that are connected with a phraseological unit and are necessary for its usage; c) association of a phraseological unit with symbols, stereotypes etc.

The above-mentioned operations take place in various spheres of consciousness, for example, at the mythological, scientific, cognitive, and cultural levels. A mythological sphere shows a connection between a phraseological image and the sources of culture. Such universal concepts as HAPPINESS-GRIEF, LIFE-DEATH, LIGHT-DARKNESS are realized by a system of binary oppositions. A scientific cognitive sphere depends on a cultural competence of language speakers. A cultural sphere functions as a basis for the cultural connotation of phraseological units. Various assumptions, statements, stereotypes, and symbols that actively exist in the consciousness of a person are expressed with this help. All these spheres are interpreted as one process of the perception and understanding the semantics of a phraseological unit.

Language speakers have cultural and language competencies, which are why an image of a phraseological unit, in the course in its perception and interpretation, obtains various cultural meanings that are defined by a general cultural competence (context). While perceiving the world, a person develops certain cultural meanings for the interpretation of which different codes are used. In their turn, encoded meanings form a system of a cultural code and a world map that reveal a worldview of a social community. A cultural code is the totality of images and assumptions that reflect the map of the world of a language speaker. Cultural codes make it possible to perceive reality in different ways [12, p. 86]. In order to express various meanings a cultural code may be conceptual or topical, universal and specific for a national language. The inner form of a phraseological unit is formed by special semantic means, the bases of which are images and symbols. With the help of phraseological images in which basic concepts of a culture are implemented it is possible to observe the national consciousness of a nation. A phraseological image functions as a medium: it evokes cultural meanings in a person's memory. A phraseological image consists of realia that already have cultural meanings and phenomena, objects, actions, and rituals of a national culture form its basis.

It is important to point out that rather often components of a phraseological unit are names of cultural realia and express not only the processes reflected in a national cul-

ture but convey symbolic meanings. For example, a great number of symbols in a national phraseology are related to the category of food, as catering is an essential part of life of any nation. In order to understand a national cultural specificity of phraseology we can compare the notion of *bread* in the British and Ukrainian maps of the world. British proverbs such as: *Bread is the staff of life* [15, p. 71], *All griefs with bread are less* [15, p. 72], *The best smell is bread, the best savour salt, the best love that of children* [15, p. 72] illustrate the importance of bread in the life of the speakers of English.

Linguocultural studies make it possible to investigate the manifestations of a national mentality in the linguistic map of the world, analyze the interdependence of mentality and language, and define a national specificity of the linguistic map of the world.

British mentality is characterized by rationalism and pragmatism, individualism and anthropocentrism, personal freedom, importance of material values. It is important to point out that mental specificity is expressed not only in the national phraseology because a conceptual sphere of language speakers is an indicator of a national outlook as well.

Phraseological units are interpreted as a text of a culture in its anthropological perspective and have a special ontological status. Their meaningful components are analyzed in the social and individual consciousness not only for the understanding and perception of the world but for its evaluation as well. Comparative studies of the phraseology of various cultures enable scholars to see the specificity of national psychological worlds, linguistic worldviews, peculiar features of national thinking and types of cultural historical traditions.

A good part of phraseological units of the English language demonstrate the relationships between ethnic communities of Great Britain: between the English, Scots, and Irish. For example, the relationships between the English and Irish have been rather complicated. Thus some negative aspects of their relationships, skepticism or arrogance are reflected in such phraseological units as *Irish apricots* (potatoes), *Irish dinner* (no dinner), *Irish spoon* (a shovel), *Irish evidence* (untrue evidence), *Irish bull* (illogical sequence) [10, p. 107-108] etc.

Phraseological units are unique material, which illustrates specific features of the psychological outlook of the language speakers. Phraseology influences the formation of the world map of language speakers and helps to trace the interdependence of the cultural background knowledge of a person and a choice of certain phraseological constructions in a particular communicative situation.

Within the frames of a national linguistic system phraseological units can be differentiated according to their sphere of usage or thematic classification. O. Potebnia pointed out that in the phraseological studies it was necessary to take into consideration the thematic reference of the phraseological units [9]. They also reflect national cultural preferences, priorities, values and beliefs that were formed historically. As evidence, we can give some examples from the life of the main social layers of Great Britain:

- rural way of life and work: *when the cows come home* (never), *like geese on common* (to walk freely), *to plough a lonely furrow* (to be lonely), *welcome as*

snow in harvest (not welcomed at all), *to put one's shoulder to the wheel* (to get down to work);
 – industrial way of life and work: *to go at in hammers and tongs* (to start working very enthusiastically), *to sharpen one's tools* (to prepare), *to have many irons in the fire* (to have too many things to do), *dyed in the wool* (real; passionate), *to use steam-hammer to crack nuts* (to make unnecessary efforts), *busman's holiday* (work on a day off);
 – city life: *Lombard Street to a China* (not similar at all), *to win one's latchkey* (to grow up), *like a lamp-lighter* (very quickly);
 – life of wealthy people, aristocracy: *silver-fork school* (writers who describe the life of the upper-class society),

to a Queen's taste (perfectly), *a kid-glove affair* (an official reception), *corruption of blood* (depriving a title and an inheritance right), *as easy as kiss my hand* (very simple), *to run before the hounds* (be ahead of time) etc. [1, p. 92]. As a result, phraseological units not only carry their own meanings but also convey cultural semantics.

Conclusions and prospects for further research. A language fixes national experience and conceptualizes the world with the help of various verbal units including phraseological units, myths, riddles and fairytales. In this context phraseological units are the keys to the recognition of a national cultural outlook and worldview and a code to understanding the spiritual uniqueness of a cultural system.

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Символическое и идиоматическое изучение лингвистической картины мира

О. А. Рогач

Аннотация. Статья посвящена анализу корреляции таких понятий, как нация, национальная картина мира, лингвистическая презентация мира, лексикон. Особое внимание посвящено языковым средствам, при помощи которых национальное сообщество может понять и выразить окружающий мир, свою культуру и традиции, ценности, верования и представления. Указано на то, что очень важную роль в познании мира играют идиомы и фразеологические единицы, которые сохраняют и кодируют национальный опыт, мировоззрение и культуру.

Ключевые слова: когниция, нация, культура, вербализация, лингвистическая картина мира, фразеологические единицы.