

The Meanings of Idiomatic Expressions with the Names of Animals in Russian Language

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Abstract—Idiomatic Expressions can enrich the speech and make the speech becomes more interesting. The ability to apply the idiomatic expressions shows that the person has an advance level of the language comprehension and fluency. This happens since the structures and the meanings of the idiomatic expressions do not follow the conventional patterns of the language. Metaphors connected to culture are very thick in idioms. For this reasons, the teachers and the students need to examine more deeply the morphosyntax and the semantics to make sure the precision in the interpretations of idioms. This paper discusses the idioms in Russian language, more specifically connected to the names of animals connected to the myth and legend of Russian and Slavic using the morphosyntax and the semantics. In the results, the Russian culture will be revealed through the idioms. The source for the idioms is the book titled “A book of Russian Idioms illustrated” written by M.I. Dubrovin and illustrated by V.I. Tillman (1980).

Keywords— *idioms; Russian language; metaphors; morphosyntax; semantics*

I. INTRODUCTION

Idiomatic Expressions are language expressions which have different meanings from the literal meanings of the words spoken (Guralnik, 1982 in Bromley, 1984). This fact can raise confusion or a possibility of misunderstanding to whom who do not have good comprehension of the idiomatic expressions. The main factor that can make the hearer of the speeches (idiomatic expressions) is the thick cultural components behind the expressions. Therefore, a good comprehension of culture where the expressions exist is valuable in order to understand it. Metaphor as a part of a culture will also be inherent in the meanings of the idiomatic expressions (Davies, 1983). The teachers and the students need to pay attention to the structures and the meanings of the expressions. This is the reasons why the idiomatic expressions are discussed in this paper in order to find out about the real meanings with the culture components behind them.

The Russian idioms are taken for this paper for some reasons (Dubrovin, 1980, p. 3). Firstly, Russian language is highly idiomatic. Secondly, the idioms can be parted from the language since it is the indirect expressions in the Russian language. Thirdly, the richness of the Russian language is added immensely from the idioms.

The idiomatic expressions discussed in this paper is focused on the idioms connected to the names of animals in Russian language. The animal names are considered since animals are the living cratures that are very close to human life. This happens since animals are needed in human life as food and company. This facts make animals are found easily in legends and myths. There are seven animals as parts of the idioms in this paper. They are: Bear, Cat, Dog, Pig, Sheep, Fish and Hare. These seven animals are mentioned in the myth and legend of Russian and Slavic (Dixon-Kennedy, 1998). The source of the idioms is a book titled “A book of Russian Idioms illustrated” (Dubrovin, 1980).

The idomatic expressions will be analyzed using the semantics and the morphosyntax. Semantics will be applied to analyzed the meanings. The metaphors are also taken into account. The morphology and the syntax will be applied to analyzed the stuctures. The semantic and morphosyntax are used to compare the literal and semantic meanings to find out the real meanings of the idioms.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Morphology and syntax are the parts of the Russian grammars. Morphology is for learning the parts of speech (lexically and gramatically), the gramatical meanings, the word formation, and the gramatical categories (Popov, 1986, p. 168). Nouns are one of parts of speech and also the main sources of the data in this paper. Nouns are characterized in three features (Kuznecova, 2009, pp. 145-146). Firstly, it is the semantic feature which concerns about the general meaning of the object. Secondly, it is the morphological feature which concerns about genders, numbers, cases and also animate and inanimate. Thirdly, it is the syntactical feature which concerns about the role of the nouns in the sentence. There are three genders in Russian language, namely мужской род (mužkoj rod) ‘masculine’, женский род (ženskij rod) ‘feminine’, and средний род (srednij rod) ‘neutral’ (Savko, 2005, p. 180). There are six case types in Russian language, namely именительный падеж (imenitel’nyj padež) ‘nominative case’, родительный падеж (roditel’nyj padež) ‘genitive case’, дательный падеж (datel’nyj padež) ‘dative case’, винительный

падеж (vinitel'nyj padež) 'accusative case', творительный падеж (tvoritel'nyj padež) 'instrumental case', and предложный падеж (predložnyj padež) 'prepositional case' (Savko, 2005, p.187). There are two categories of number in Russian language, namely единственное число (edinstvennoe čislo) 'singular' and множественное число 'plural' (Savko, 2005, p. 156). Syntax is for learning the sentences and frases (Popov, 1986: 268). Subjects and predicate are the primary members in a sentence while attributes, objects and other information are the secondary (Popov, 1986, pp. 296-326). The frases are a unity of words that has relations in attributive, objective and adverbial (Popov, 1986, p. 269).

Idioms and metaphors are very connected. Idioms are peculiar expressions (Kuznetsov, 2000, p. 375) and Idioms in Russian language are emotional expressions that are very specific for Russians and cannot be found in other Languages (Wierzbicka, 1998). Metaphors are expressions or words that is used in figurative forms for showing characters, especially for the similarity of colours, volumes, forms and purposes (Kuznecova, 2009, pp. 119-120). Both idioms and metaphors are very cultural based since languages are applied and languages are one of the signs in culture (Kuznecova, 2009, p. 4).

Semantics is for learning signs (Krongauz, 2005, p. 14). The signs are learned to figure out the meanings. The signs can be found in languages in the forms of words or sentences. The words and sentences can be in the forms of expressions. One of the language expressions is idioms.

III. METHOD

The descriptive-analytical method was used in this paper. The occuring data will be collected, processed and analyzed in order to describe the phenomenon (Sugiyono, 2008: 105). There are seven idioms with seven names of animals connected to the myth and legend of Russian and Slavic in them. The names are Bear, Cat, Dog, Pig, Sheep, Fish and Hare. The idioms are analyzed in terms of morphosyntax and semantics and the conclusion is drawn based on the analysis.

IV. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The data source in this paper is a book titled "A book of Russian Idioms illustrated" (Dubrovin, 1980).

1. Bear

The Bear is a central actor in a Russian legend together with a small girl Mashen'ka (Dixon-Kennedy, 1998, p. 185) and very famous as a children folklore as Masha and the Bear (Bulatov, 1978). Медведь (medved') is bear in Russian language (Kutnetsov, 2000, p. 528). This animal is a symbol and metaphor connected strongly to Russia and it's culture (Ryabov and Lazari, 2012: 11). Bear has a big body and it symbolizes a great and frightening strength (Vojtsekhovska in Ryabov and Lazari, 2012, p. 11). However, in the animation film titled "Маша и Медведь" (Masha i Medved') 'Masha and Bear', Mishka as the bear is also a character that is not only strong but also tender since Mishka loves musics and is able to play musical instruments (Sofiah, 2016, p. 401-410). In Soviet era, the name of Red Bear is very attached to Russia. One of idioms using the word bear is медведь на ухо наступил (Medved' na uxo nastupil) (Dubrovin, 1980, p. 159). For it's structure, медведь (medved') 'bear' in the idiom is a subject or an agent, masculine, single, and nominatif. The literal meaning is 'A bear stepped on someone's ear'. This literal meaning leads to connotation of deaf since the ear is stepped on by a bear that has strong and big body meaning that there will not any sounds can be heard. Since the bear is also related to the musics as the caracter in the film animation, the deaf is including the tone-deaf. Therefore the idiom can be related to a person who is tone-deaf.

2. Cat

Кот (kot) and кошка (koshka) is cat in Russian language (Kutnetsov, 2000, p. 463-464). The different is that кот (kot) is for all cats (generics) while кошка (koshka) is for cats as pets. In a Russian legend, there is a talking cat named Kot Bayun (Dixon-Kennedy, 1998, p. 156). Since cats are familiar as pets, they can stand for domesticity but also represent cruelty based on their hunting habits, liberty based on facts that it is not easy to catch them and evil in Celtic world that using them in ritual sacrifices (Fontana, 1994, p. 85). One of idioms using the word cat is чёрная кошка пробежала (chornaja koska probezhala) (Dubrovin, 1980, p. 326). The literal meaning is 'a black cat has run between them'. Кошка (koshka) in the idiom is a subject or an agent, feminine, single, and nominative. The word чёрная (chornaja) 'black' is a symbol of death, sorrow and the underworld (Fontana, 1994, p. 67). It means that black represents negative situations. Since the word кошка (koshka) 'cat (as a pet)' used in the idiom, indicates that it is conected to domestic. Therefore the meaning of the idiom is for persons who has close relations or in one family since it is connected to the domestic term; and there is something is not good bettween them since there is the word black for the cat who has run between them.

3. Dog

Собака (sobaka) is dog in Russian language (Kutnetsov, 2000, p. 1224). Most Russian and Slavic legend and myth have dogs as companies of hunters or as guards (Dixon-Kennedy, 1998). As companies of hunters, the dogs must have sharp senses to help the hunters. this facts applied to the dogs as the symbols of loyalty, watchfullness, courage and the skill of hunt (Fontana, 1994, p. 84). Having the skill of hunt indicates that the dogs are intelligent since in hunting, the dogs has to master at he skill of tracing, chasing, running in the high speed, cornering the prey, and having the strong body and will to do all of these acts. In shorts, the dogs are the masters of different skills. One of idioms using the word собака (sobaka) 'dog' is собаку съел на чём-либо (sobaku s'el na chom-libo) '(someone) has eaten the dog at something' (Dubrovin, 1980, p. 287). For it's structure in this idiom, the word собака (sobaka) 'dog' is the object and feminine. Therefore the form becomes собакы (sobaku) since it is in the accusative case. The literal meaning that someone has eaten a dog at something indicates that he has all the characters of a dog inside him that are very intelligent and master of something meaning that he has a great skill or experience that can make him knows something thoroughly.

4. Pig

Свинья (svin'ja) is pig in Russian language (Kutnetsov, 2000, p. 1160). In Slav belief, Kremara is the patron spirit of adults pig (Dixon-Kennedy, 1998, p. 157). Having recognizing a spirit special for pigs means that in Slav culture (and Russian is also part of Slavs), pigs have a special position and very close to people's life. The pigs are also a symbol of greed, gluttony and unclean (Fontana, 1994, p. 93) since in the reality, the pigs always eat a lot of food greedily and they really like wallow in mud that can make them very dirty. One of idioms using the word свинья (svin'ja) 'pig' is подложить свинью (podlozhit' svin'ju) 'to lay a pig (near someone)'. In this idiom, the word свинья (svin'ja) 'pig' is the object and feminine. Therefore the form becomes свинью (svin'yu) since it is in the accusative case. The literal meaning of the idiom is that a pig has been laid (near someone) indicates that there is a dirty thing or trick has been done to someone since the word свинью (svin'ju) in the idiom referring to the symbol or character of pig which is dirty.

5. Sheep

Баран (baran) is sheep in Russian language (Kutnetsov, 2000, p. 59). Most Russian and Slavic legend and myth have sheep as part of farmed animals or cattles and there is a patron spirit for sheep that is Kurwaichin, a brother of Kremara (Dixon-Kennedy, 1998). These facts indicate that sheep is domestically and close to people's life. The sheep also symbolize blindness and stupidity (Fontana, 1994, p. 91) since in reality, there is always a shepherd to lead the herd of sheep to make sure that the herd will not get lost and still in groups. One of idioms using the word баран (baran) 'sheep' is смотреть как баран на новые ворота (smotret' kak baran na novye vorota) 'to look at (someone or something) like a sheep at a new gate'. the word баран (baran) 'sheep' in this idiom is nominative and also part of the subject of the sentence. The literal meaning indicates that the way it looks at someone or something is in the 'sheep' way. It means that someone or something is looked with no clue or lost; or someone looks at someone else or something rather stupid.

6. Fish

Рыба (ryba) is fish in Russian language (Kutnetsov, 2000, p. 1135). There is a special patron saint of fisherman whose name is Saint Andrews (Dixon-Kennedy, 1998, p. 12). This fact indicates that fisherman as the fish catcher is very close to the Russian and Slav communities meaning that the fish existence is also very obvious. The fish also symbolize the fecundity and of the life-giving properties of water (Fontana, 1994, p. 88). Since fish live in the water, they swim and they have fin to help them do that. Although most of the time they live in the water, they still need air and sunlight therefore they also swim to the surface of the water to get the air and the light. There is also a consideration need to be taken for Russian case that is mostly in winter, the water in Russia is frozen or the surface of the water becomes ice or solid that can hinder the fish to get the air and the light. One of the idioms using the word рыба (ryba) 'fish' is биться как рыба об лёд (bit'sja kak ryba ob lod) 'to beat against the ice like a fish'. The word рыба (ryba) 'fish' in this idiom is nominative and also part of the subject of the sentence. The literal meaning indicates that the fish try to break the ice although it will be hard for fish to break the ice since they do not have instrument in their body to do the breaking the solid water. However, there is also reality that fish will keep trying to break the ice in order to have the air although they have to struggle desperately since it is not easy for them. This leads to the meaning of the idiom which is to struggle desperately.

7. Hare

Заяц (zajast) is hare in Russian language (Kutnetsov, 2000, p. 359). Most of the legend and myth in Russian and Slav take the hare as the target of hunting (Dixon-Kennedy, 1998). This indicates that the hare can be taken as the hunting objects. The hare symbolizes love, fertility, speed, magic, and some culture associate it to the moon (Fontana, 1994, p. 94). Hares are bigger and run faster than rabbits. Therefore, it is more difficult to catch hares than rabbits because of their speed although it is easier to find and target them since their bigger size make them difficult to hide. One of the idioms using the word заяц (zajast) 'hare' is убить двух зайцев (ubit' dvux zajtsev) 'to kill two hares'. The word заяц (zajast) 'hare' in this idiom is in accusative case for animate in plural. In order to figure out the meaning of the idiom, we need to recheck the previous information written for this animal. It is already mentioned that hares are target or object of hunting. In hunting, it is very common that a hunter use one special means or a weapon. This leads to two meanings for the idioms. Firstly, since the hares are the object of the hunting so to kill two hares can be referred to achieve two objects at the same time. Secondly, since the hares are also results in the hunting with the hunter's weapon, this idiom can be referred to attain two results with one means.

V. CONCLUSION

Idioms are complex expressions and mostly connected to things close to the real life and animals included in it. They can not be directly accepted as the literal meanings since they are cultural based. The cultural based of idioms compel us to learn them not only the structure but also the semantic evidences. The semantic evidences are related strongly to metaphors of the communities where the idiomatic expressions are spoken or written. This is a challenge for the teachers and the students to teach and learn the idioms since the meaning can not be derived only from the literal and structural meaning. This is also applied for the Russian idioms with the names of animals. The cultural relations between the Russian people and the animals need to be considered in order to understand the meaning of the idioms.

The meaning of the idioms with the names of animals connected to the legends and myths of Russian and Slavic communities reflects the human characters and activities. The human characters and activities that are presented in the idioms using the animals as symbols. Those animal symbols will be taken based on the culture of the communities. In this case, the communities are the Russian and Slavic.

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