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**SEMANTICS AND PRAGMATICS OF CULTURAL WORDS  
IN THE PROCESS OF DECODING THE ELEMENTS  
OF NATIONAL LANGUAGE PICTURES**

**[Лазарев В.А., Ласкова М.В., Петренко А.Д. Семантические  
и прагматические особенности слов-реалий в процессе декодирования  
элементов национальной языковой картины]**

The article intends to investigate the problems of cultural words interpretation using different approaches undertaken by Russian and foreign linguists and summarizing assumed results. Communicative intentions cannot be mapped onto word strings in a one-to-one fashion, as the Encoding/Decoding paradigm portrays the process. Rather, speakers must select from a variety of potential alternative formulations the ones that most felicitously express the meanings they want to convey

**Key words:** cultural words, creativity elaboration, pragmatics of Proper names, charactonym, national language picture

Modern approach to the linguistic reference in cross-cultural communication is connected with the point that a language is considered to be the ground of national cultural thinking and outlook. Recent researchers in Russian and American behaviour revealed the following results: Russian apologizing is deeper of expressing compassion when American one means shouldering responsibility for

offence, Americans are more open to strangers than Russians, friends are normally estimated as intimate for Russians but familiars for Americans, Russians choose positive politeness more than negative what mainly differ from Americans and etc. The US communication has definite features: providing explicit, full and even exhaustive information is the duty of an organization to its public. So in Germany one finds it in between: “Why didn’t you inform us half a year before? – ‘But you didn’t ask” (as in the case when you asked for a phone number and received a prompt answer, but when trying later to make a phone call you learn you lack a code that operates that given phone).

A great number of the investigations performed in this very field has been devoted to the issues that influence creativity elaboration. As it was proved by researchers in many cases creative thinking abilities are triggered by numerous characteristics such as social values, beliefs, traditions, economic and political challenges, etc. Studying linguistic phenomena as cultural-historical ones, linguo-country studying has become the science that aimed at national uniqueness in the word meaning, paying attention to the cultural component, which makes the word as realia (either connotative or denotative) or refers it to the background knowledge.

Many notions regarded as widely spread subjects contain national cultural semantic component what make them nationally marked. For instance, Yorkshire pudding, Idaho potatoes, French bread, Swiss chocolate, Grabben Gallen pie, Irish coffee, антоновские яблоки, тульские пряники, вологодское масло). Besides mentioned above notions it’s worth mentioning realias marked by ideological emphasis (for example, “freedom”, “democracy”, “propaganda”– different attitude within the terms of various political regimes as well as свобода совести, свобода слова, свобода печати). Special view is given to proper names which can be characterized as pragmatically meaningful. In the realm of Proper names, Russians are known for having a lot of nicknames not only to childrens in English Tommy, Teddy but to grown-ups without distinction to age or gender and in the variety of contexts (Lu’ dochka, Voloden’ka) to extremely important attitude of closeness and intimacy to highlight solidarity politeness by minimizing social distance.

Allusive proper names can cause multiple mistakes against the background interpretation. Among them there are mythological allusions used in fabulous stories, reaching back into dim past which consist mainly of gods and heroes with their

values and vices, births and deaths, defeats, love stories and intrigues. For instance, Stephen Dedalus's very name – the hero of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* by James Joyce embraces the concept of flight. Stephen's namesake *deadalus* is a figure from Greek mythology, a craftsman who designed the famous Labyrinth of Crete for King Minos. The King decided to keep *Deadalus* and imprisoned his son on the island. But *Deadalus* designed feathers as set of wings to escape with his son successfully but but *Icarus* as it's known flew too high and the heat of the sun melted the wax fixing the feathers what triggered the death of the hero. We are facing difficulties with historical allusion names.

Not only in Literature but also in advertisement, tourist business and other spheres historical proper names are often resorted causing serious problems for interpreting. Historical events and figures produce a great effect upon themes, images and symbols. The problems identified in interpreting of meaning of cultural words (*realias*) to the target language can be summarized by the following way:

- the notion presented by the source language does not exist in the target language in its full observation :

- *Nadryv* – *Надрыв* – mean as mental break, used in the context, when a person feels awkward emotionally unhealthy condition, it can also be used if you want to talk about the inner tension of somebody who is about to break.

- *Nutro* – *Нутро* – means the guts or the insides, something that governs your inner being, that can be crude and raw and towards the outside, but also something that you feel inside. It's your core and your being connected to your physical being in a very tangible way

- *Zamutit'* – *Замутить* – literally means to stir something up, to muddle. Can be used to indicate getting with a boy or a girl or to organize something.

As far as languages lacking like-for-like English equivalents go, Russian is as rich as any. It is a real *matrioshka* (матрёшка) language, formed by wrapping prefixes and suffixes around a small but solid core. Unpacking the meaning of these nesting-doll nouns and verbs is – like much of Russian – satisfyingly logical (although try telling that to a learner who's grappling with irregular genitive plurals).

*Propit'* (пропить) – meaning 'to squander on drink' – combines the verb 'to drink' with the prefix *pro-*, often added to root words in order to indicate loss or failure (just look at *proigrat'*, or проиграть: 'to lose a game'). In some contexts we might translate *propit'* as 'drink away' – for example, *on propil zarplatu* (он пропил

зарплату) becomes 'he drank away his salary'. In English we can drink away our money, our savings, or our fortune (and perhaps even all three), but our language doesn't afford us the same flexibility – or economy – as *propit'*. In two words – *propil kvartiru* (пропил квартиру, *lit. drank away the flat*) – a Russian speaker can explain that his acquaintance 'sold his flat and spent his profit on alcohol'.

It is unfortunate that some of Russian's most interesting words are also its most depressing. *Toska* (тоска) is melancholy, anguish, boredom, ennui, yearning, and nostalgia in two short syllables: it's the pits. *Toska* makes the cut because although it has multiple possible translations, there is no one English word that manages to convey this sense of pining, misery, and gut-wrenching sorrow. In Russian literature and philosophy, *toska* is a loaded noun that is often used to describe the Russian condition – although if you're planning an extended trip to Yakutsk, you're perhaps more likely to use it in the phrase *toska po rodine* (тоска по родине), or *homesickness*.

Considering these two brief examples, it's easy to see how inferences stemming from so-called 'untranslatable' words could be damaging to a culture's reputation. Happily, there's much more to Russian than *toska* and *propit'* – and the mere existence of these words says very little about the frequency with which Russian speakers are likely to drown their sorrows around the kitchen table. Many of the technical words used in Spanish when talking about bullfighting have no equivalent in English, simply because bullfighting isn't as culturally significant in English speaking countries. These terms can be explained but not directly translated. The tradition of transliterating (or transcribing in the same alphabet) proper names in literature may be explained by the wish to keep the nominal function simple, to transmit the nationality of the character, and to avoid excessive expressive coloring which can give the name a nuance of a nickname. At the same time if a personal name characterizes its bearer, the expressive-and-stylistic function may dominate the nominal one.

One of the signs of a characteronym is its **common stem**. A **common stem** is a part of a name or an entire name that resembles in its form an "ordinary" word: Smith (smith – a worker in metal), Sawders (sawder – flattery, blarney), Hennie (henny – hen-like). If this common stem characterizes (conveys attributes to) the bearer of the name, the stem becomes a significant (= meaningful) element of the name and this name may be called a charactonym. The implicit motivator

characterizes a person on the basis of a broader context. An example of a charactonym with an implicit motivator can be the family name of Grimes from *Decline and Fall* by E. Waugh. The school teacher, Captain Grimes, who symbolizes moral degradation, hard drinking, and ill breeding, is given the family name with a stem *grime* – "a surface of thick black dirt." He is always drunk because he lost his leg when he "was run over by a tram in Stoke-on-Trent." This character is not given a clearly and compactly expressed characteristic by any specific word or pun with his name, but from a broader context you can size him up and compare him with dirt that is impossible to get rid of.

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