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LINGUISTIC AND CULTURAL BASIS OF THE PHRASEOLOGICAL UNITS DENOTING THE NOTION “PRESENT” IN ENGLISH AND UKRAINIAN LANGUAGES

The article presents a survey of phraseological units denoting the notion “Present” in English and Ukrainian languages. The research is conducted with the aim to single out linguistic and cultural peculiarities of their perception and interpretation in order to prevent misunderstandings in the process of intercultural communication.

Key words: linguistic and cultural analysis, ethnolinguistics, phraseological unit, idiomatic expression, present.

У статті представлено дослідження фразеологічних одиниць на позначення поняття “Подарунок” в англійській та українській мовах. Науково-дослідна робота здійснена з метою виокремлення лінгвокраїнознавчих особливостей сприйняття та тлумачення ФО для того, щоб уникнути непорозуміння в процесі здійснення міжкультурної комунікації.

Ключові слова: лінгвокраїнознавчий аналіз, етнолінгвістика, фразеологізм, подарунок.

В статье представлено исследование фразеологических единиц на обозначение понятия “Подарок” в английском и украинском языках. Научно-исследовательская работа осуществлена с целью выделения лингвострановедческих особенностей восприятия и толкования ФЕ для того, чтобы избежать недоразумений в процессе осуществления межкультурной коммуникации.

Ключевые слова: лингвострановедческий анализ, этнолингвистика, фразеологизм, подарок.

It is commonly assumed in linguistics that investigation of phraseological units (PU) is the most exciting field of study in every language. Recent works of linguists show that PUs directly reflect the experience generated throughout the centuries, as well as peculiarities of culture, social customs, rituals, and cultural wealth. If at the beginning the core interest of linguists was centered on the structure and functions of idioms, later on their attention was refocused on the linguistic and cultural characteristics of their existence. Linguistic and cultural analysis, which was the case study by Yurii Prohorov and Volodymyr Vorobiov, and is the main approach in presented research work, is aimed at facilitation of intercultural communication and enrichment of ethnolinguistic knowledge [2, p. 27]. Linguistic and cultural analysis can help not only to reveal a new meaning of the word, but also to get priceless knowledge, which is preserved and passed from generation to generation, the knowledge of culture, traditions, and beliefs.

In order to trace the semantics of word “present” in English and Ukrainian languages, we examined The World Book Dictionary, Oxford Advanced Learner’s dictionary, and Thesaurus of Ukrainian language edited by Busel V. In the languages investigated, there are at least 2 words that can be used to refer to the act, thing or process of giving something. In the English language, they are *gift* and *present* and in Ukrainian *дар* and *подарунок* [1, p. 284, 810]. We interpret these terms as something that you present to somebody in order to be grateful, because of the admiration, or just for some special occasion. It should be mentioned in this connection that words *gift* and *дар* have a wider range of meanings, in particular, a special aptitude, ability, power, or talent. The structure of the semantic, and linguistic and cultural field “Present” can be illustrated in the next way:

1. Name of the field – “**present**” or “**gift**” (**gift**, Middle English – *gift*, *geft*. The word is perhaps rather Scandinavian than English. A.S. – *gift*, *gyft*, rare in the singular, but common in the plural [11, p. 233]. **Present**, Middle English *presenten*, Old French *presenter*, Latin *prasentare* – to give, offer, exhibit [11, p. 465]); intention of the field – any material or immaterial objects that are presented from one person to the other, mainly for some special occasion or with the aim to express one’s gratitude.

2. Extension of the field (consists of the things to which it applies): centre – *present*, *donation*, *favour*, *grant*, *largesse*, *bounty*; specialized semantic classes – *benefaction*, *offering*, *honorarium*, *contribution*, *give-away*, *premium*, *bonus*, *prize*; periphery – *alms*, *hand-out*, *dole*, *charity*, *benefit*, *tip*, *gratuity*, *baksheesh* or *backsheesh*, *pourboire*, *cumshaw* [7; 8].

3. Category relations:

- Synonymy and variability: *present*, *gift*, *grant*, *bounty*, *boon*, *award*, *donation*, *gratuity*, *largesse*, *subsidy*, *endowment*, *subvention*, *prize*, *trophy*;

- antonymy: *sale*, *auction*, *vending*, *transferring*, *trading*, *exchanging*, *marketing*, *dealing*, *merchandising*, *handling*, *stocking*;

- derivatives: *presenter*, *presentation*, *presented*, *gifted*, *granted*, *donate*, *donator*, *donatory* [7; 8].

All of the phraseological units signifying the notion “Present” found in specialized dictionaries have been divided into five logical groups. The group which doesn’t have an analogue in Ukrainian, but is present in English is phraseological units which mean the return of the present.

The first group to present is the group of phraseological units denoting the bribe. The example to follow is *gifts break through stone walls*, which can be interpreted as bribery succeeds where force can’t [10, p. 49]. Obviously, the word “present” acquires a new and different connotation, and it is not positive. Norms of morality are compared to stone walls, which appear to be an insurmountable obstacle, but after all fall under the pressure of “presents”. In Ukrainian language PU, *не ходи до воєводи з носом, а ходи до нього з приносом* has emerged on the basis of an ancient folk proverb, in which “з носом” meant with the present, that is to say “with the bribe”. If one decides to go to the commander of the army he should take not only a regular bribe (“ніс”), but an extra bribe (“принос”). We can deduce that sometimes it can happen that it won’t be enough to present a regular bribe, so one will have to return home “з носом”, which means fruitlessly, without reaching the aim [5, p. 36].

Idiomatic expressions of the mythological nature constitute another group. The brightest example which found place in every known language is *Pandora's box* – a valuable gift that becomes a curse [10, p. 390]. Something which seems at first to hold the promise of benefits to all, but is later seen as the source of unmanageable problems. *Мідацеві домук / дар Мідаца* [4, p. 215] is another idiom which belongs to this group and is present in both languages investigated. The PU *Мідацеві домук / дар Мідаца* is interpreted as unexpected unpleasantness caused by greediness. It should be mentioned in this connection that the English variant of the same PU (*have/with*) *the Midas touch* means to have a talent of a successful businessman; flair for making money. We can conclude that in English the meaning of the PU is rather positive, while in Ukrainian language, the accent is put on the addiction of a person to have a craze for money.

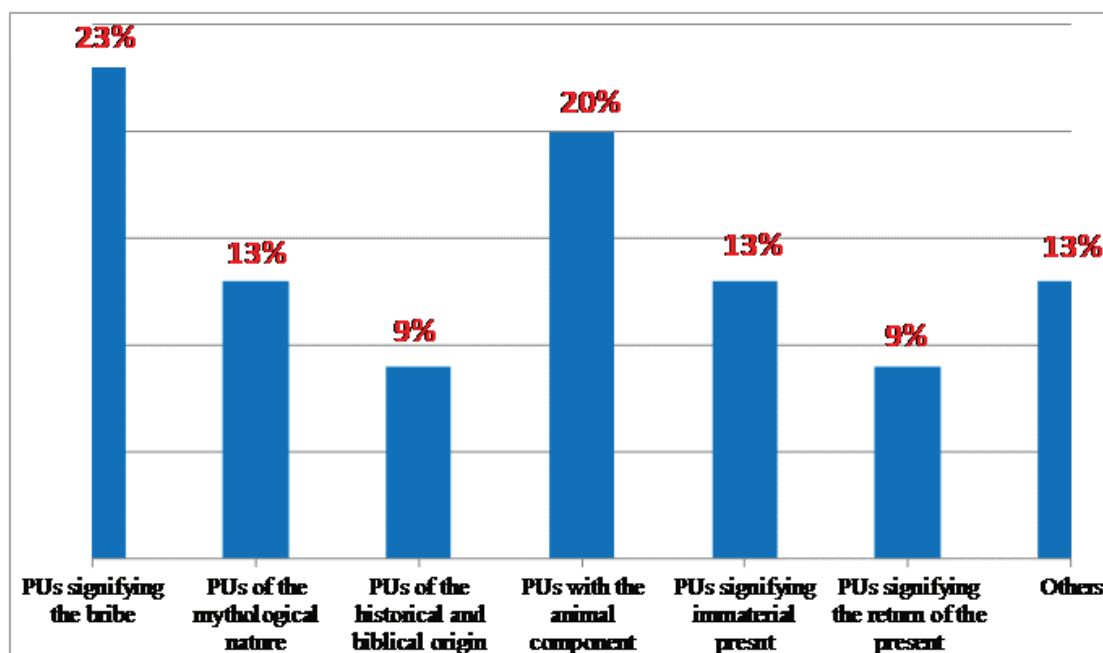
Phraseological units of historical and biblical nature is the next group distinguished. Idiom *white elephant* is interpreted as burdensome possession. The king of Siam presented one of these to the countries he wished to ruin. The cost of keeping the animal in the style expected to reduce the subject to beggary [9, p. 102]. In Ukrainian language the next examples can be cited. *Дари волхвів*, that became a proverb, is used while talking about unexpected stylish presents or a pleasant surprise. “*Волхви*” are sages which were sent by Herod the Great to tell about the newly-born Jesus Christ. After they found the baby boy they bowed and presented him gold, frankincense and myrrh. It is believed that “*волхви*” possess mystical powers, particularly, the ability to predict the future [3, p. 87].

There is as well a group of idioms with animal component. The example to prove: *keep your ain fish-guts for your ain seamaws* which means to keep your own gifts or leavings for your own poor relatives, friends, or countrymen, rather than to others [10, p.79]. *Гроші на ку-ку (перше зозулине ку-ку), на зозульку, про зозульку* which exists in Ukrainian language, originally meant money for happiness, which later on started to be associated with secret gift or even bribe. Symbolism of the cuckoo in the world mythology is contradictory. S. Kylymnyk insisted that cuckoo is a many-valued symbol in Ukrainian folklore. That is why it became a part of so many proverbs, fairytales, and stories [6, p. 81-82].

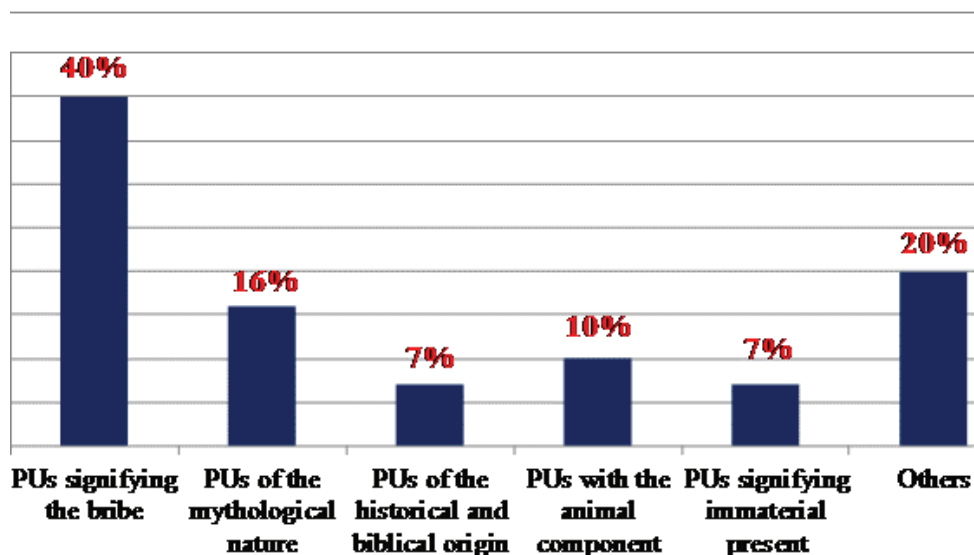
The last but not least is the group of phraseological units denoting immaterial present. *Every blade of grass gets its own drop of dew* [10, p. 227] is used to refer to everyone who has a gift from above. Interestingly that talent here is compared to the drop of dew, which makes PU even more emotional and expressive. *Have something on the ball* [10, p. 456] means have a certain gift, talent or skill. Moreover, phrase “*on the ball*” is used to describe a person that is alert and quick to respond to new ideas and methods. It can be deduced that some specific skills or talents become apparent in tricky and crucial situations. *Дар мови (слова)* is used to refer to a silver-tongued person and is interpreted as the ability of a person to express the ideas and emotions clearly. Another idiom *дар Божий* is used to denote the talent which a person receives as the present from the God [6, p. 499].

The last group present only in the English language joins together phraseological units which mean the return of the present. For instance, *to give a thing and take a thing is to wear the devil's gold ring* [10, p. 254]. Originally, it was said in reproach to those who ask back a gift. This phraseological unit is widespread among the schoolchildren who give presents under the promise “no backers”. Another example *O'Neill's gift and his two eyes looking after it* [10, p. 283] is said when someone reminds you of a favour or present they have granted you. It is worth pointing out that anthroponym “*O'Neill's gift*” is introduced in the form of metonymy (the small part of the object is used to denote the whole object: eyes – person).

Having described phraseological units denoting the notion “Present” in English and Ukrainian languages we must conclude in general that there is a tight connection between language and culture. National concepts were embodied in numerous phraseological units and in the synonymous rows of lexical units denoting the notion “Present”. Linguistic and cultural field “Present” counts 55 phraseological expressions in both languages investigated (pic. 1 and 2).



(picture 1)



(picture 2)

Frequently, idiomatic expressions were united on the basis of their meanings, rarely, on the basis of their core components. The most widely represented groups of PUs in English and Ukrainian are idioms denoting the bribe (23% vs 40%) (рис. 1, 2). All of the phraseological units were characterized from the point of view of linguistic and cultural studies and ethnolinguistics.

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