PROVERBS AS PART OF PHRASEOLOGY

Arina SLIUSARENCO

CZU: 81`373.7:82-84=111=161.1 arina.sl19@yandex.ru

Este un lucru bine cunoscut că proverbele dispun de un potenţial amplu, capabil să suscite interesul cititorilor, să declanşeze discuţii active ce ţin de analiza locului acestora în cadrul vocabularului, precum şi limitele acestei categorii lexicale, ce reprezintă una dintre cele mai mari controverse în lingvistica contemporană. Scopul prezentului articol este de a pune în evidenţă valoarea expresivă şi importanţa culturală a proverbelor atât în limba engleză, cât şi în limba rusă.

In the study of language and linguistics, the terms "phraseological units" and "set-expressions" are mostly used as interchangeable ones. They refer to fixed or semi-fixed combinations of words that have a specific meaning that cannot be deduced from the individual words alone. They include idioms, collocations and other types of fixed-expressions. Additionally, communicative phraseological units are represented by proverbs (*An hour in the morning is worth two in the evening* [1]*; Never say never* [idem.]) and sayings. Sayings, unlike proverbs, are not considered to be evaluative and didactic: *That's another pair of shoes! It's a small world* [idem.].

Some linguists (N.N. Amosova, J. Casares) do not include proverbs and sayings into their classifications. Others (I.V. Arnold, A.V. Koonin, V.V. Vinogradov) do, on the grounds that

1) like in phraseological units their components are never changed
2) phraseological units are often formed on the basis of proverbs and sayings (*A drowning man will clutch at a straw → to clutch at a straw*) [2, p.170].

However, though proverbs are viewed as the part of phraseology, they have some distinctive features from set-expression.

The first distinctive feature that strikes one is the obvious structural dissimilarity. On the one hand, set-expressions as phraseological units are a kind of ready-made blocks, which fit into the structure of a sentence performing a certain syntactical function, more or less as words do. Proverbs, on the other hand, if viewed in their structural aspect, are sentences, and so cannot be used in the way in which set-expressions are used in the above examples.

If one compares proverbs and set-expressions from the semantic aspect, the difference seems to become even more obvious. Proverbs could be best compared with minute fables for, like the latter, they sum up the collective experience of the community. They moralize (*Hell is paved with good intentions* [2, p.106]), give advice (*Don't judge a tree by its bark* [2, p.96]), give warning (*If you sing before breakfast, you will*

cry before night [1]), admonish (*Liars should have good memories* [1]), criticize (*Everyone calls his own geese swans* [3]).

No set-expression ever does any of these things. They do not stand for whole statements as proverbs do but rather for a single concept. Their function in speech is purely nominative, i.e. they denote an object, an act, etc. The function of proverbs in speech, though, is communicative, i.e. they impart certain information. The idiomaticity of the set-expressions consists in the fact that they are reproduced as ready-made word formations (e.g. *to find fault with somebody - придираться к кому-либо; to show one's hand - раскрыть свои намерения*) [3].

Discussing in her book "*In other words*" the difficulties of rendering idioms and fixed expressions, Mona Baker suggests "*unlike idioms, fixed expressions and proverbs often have fairly transparent meanings. The meaning of 'as a matter of fact' can easily be deduced from the meanings of the words, which constitute it… But in spite of its transparency, the meaning of a fixed expression or proverb is somewhat more than the sum meanings of its words; the expression has to be taken as one unit to establish meaning*" [4, p.67].

Moreover, as regards the set-expressions, they, unlike the proverbs, may be similar in a way with word combinations and this similarity may be *full* or *partial*. A *partial similarity* means the use of the same word as a component not only of a word combination, but also of a phraseological unit. A *full similarity* implies that the word combination is used either as a free one or as a phraseological unit. For example:

1. *To go to the country- поехать в деревню*
2. *to go to the country -распустить парламент и назначить новые выборы;*
3. *to sit on the fence- сидеть на заборе*
4. *to sit on the fence -занимать выжидательную позицию*

The question of whether or not proverbs should be regarded as a subtype of phraseological units and studied together with the phraseology of a language is a controversial one. Professor A. V. Koonin includes proverbs in his classification of phraseological units and labels them communicative phraseological units. From his point of view, one of the main criteria of a phraseological unit is its stability. If the quotient of phraseological stability in a word-group is not below the minimum, it means that we are dealing with a phraseological unit. The structural type — that is, whether the unit is a combination of words or a sentence — is irrelevant. Thus, there does not seem to exist any rigid or permanent borderline between proverbs and phraseological units as the latter rather frequently originate from the former.

So, the phraseological unit "*the last straw*" originated from the proverb *"It is the last straw that breaks the camel's back"* [2, p.169], the phraseological unit "*birds of a feather*" from the proverb "*Birds of a feather flock together*" [2, p.31].

What is more, some of the proverbs are easily transformed into phraseological units. For example, "*Don't put all your eggs in one basket*" [5, p.519] – '*to put all one's eggs in one basket*" [idem.]; "*Don't cast pearls before swine*" – "*to cast pearls before swine*" [1]. The same situation is observed when considering such Russian

proverb as «*У каждого свой царь в голове*», from which derives the phraseological expression *«без царя в голове»* [6, p.2189].

Summing it up, the comparative analysis between proverbs and set-expressions has brought to light and thus solidified some specific characteristics of the former, contributing to a more extended and better understanding of the proverbs as such. While both proverbs and set-expressions are types of phraseological units, proverbs focus on conveying general truths and cultural wisdom, while set-expressions encompass a broader range of idiomatic expressions used in specific contexts. Proverbs are often deeply rooted in culture, carry a moral or ethical dimension, whereas set-expressions are more context-dependent, and serve various pragmatic functions in everyday communication. It is worth noting that different scholars or researchers may use slightly different terminology or categorizations within the field of phraseology, but the general concept of phraseological units or set expressions remains consistent.

References:

1. https://dic.academic.ru/ [accessed 11.02.2023]
2. БУКОВСКАЯ, М. В., ВЯЛЬЦЕВА, С. И. *Словарь Употребительных Английских пословиц*. Москва. © Издательство «РУССКИЙ ЯЗЫК». 1985, 228 с.
3. https://www.multitran.com/ [accessed 16.05.2023]
4. BAKER, Mona. *In Other Words: A Coursebook on Translation*. London and New York: Routledge. 1992, p.332. Available at: https://archive.org/ [accessed 15.04.2023]
5. SMITH, William George. *The Oxford Dictionary of English Proverbs.* Oxford University Press, Amen House E.C. 4. 1949, p. 644. Available at: https://archive.org/ [accessed 17.03.2023]
6. ОЖЕГОВ, С. И. *Толковый Словарь Русского Языка: около 20 000 слов и выражений*. Москва. 2007, 2314 стр. Доступно на https://books.google.com/ [accessed 10.03.2023]

Recomandat
Svetlana CORCODEL, *lector univ., master în Studii Europene*