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NATIONAL-CULTURAL SPECIFICITY OF BIBLICAL IDIOMS

Abstract. The article investigates the representation features of idioms of biblical origin on the material of various languages. Idioms of biblical origin are regarded as linguocultural and nationally specific units, reflecting the peculiarities of mentality and religious worldview of a particular linguistic culture. The article reveals a number of extralinguistic factors that determine both the universal and specific features of idioms of biblical origin representation in various languages. The factors contributing to the universality of idioms of biblical origin include: 1) the commonality of Christian culture; 2) the influence of the Greek and Latin languages on subsequent translations of the Bible used nowadays. The followings are singled out as extralinguistic factors that determine the specificity of idioms of biblical origin in various languages: 1) the emergence time and dissemination scope of biblical translations; 2) confessional affiliation of a certain ethnic group; 3) peculiarities of national perception of the world and cultural values of a particular linguistic culture; 4) the socio-political system of a particular era or country; 5) mass-media factors. The national-cultural specificity of idioms of biblical origin is manifested in their non-equivalence in a particular language, the quantitative divergence of idioms of biblical origin included into a particular language from a single source, differences in the semantic capacity and meaning of idioms of biblical origin used in each of the languages, the emphasis on certain images and cognitive features activated in idioms of biblical origin, in existence of a set of borrowed idioms of biblical origin from different languages. It should be noted that even universal idioms of biblical origin functioning in different languages can be nationally specific due to the differences in the activated semantic features and figurative components of idioms.

Keywords: biblical idioms; national-cultural specifics; biblical; extralinguistic factors; semantic; linguocultural; differences.

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НАЦИОНАЛЬНО-КУЛЬТУРНАЯ СПЕЦИФИКА БИБЛЕИЗМОВ

Аннотация. В статье исследуются особенности репрезентации библеизмов на материале различных языков. Библеизмы рассматриваются как лингвокультурные и национально-специфичные единицы, отражающие особенности народного и религиозного мировоззрения определенной лингвокультуры. В статье выявлен ряд экстралингвистических факторов, обуславливающих как универсальную представленность библеизмов в различных языках, так и их специфичность. К факторам, способствующим универсальности библеизмов, относятся: 1) общность христианской культуры; 2) влияние греческого и латинского языков на последующие переводы Библии, используемых в настоящем времени. В качестве экстралингвистических факторов, детерминирующих специфику библеизмов в различных языках, выделены следующие: 1) время появления библейских переводов и диапазон их распространения; 2) конфессиональная принадлежность определенного этноса; 3) национальное мировосприятие и культурные ценности той или иной лингвокультуры; 4) общественно-политический строй определенной эпохи или страны; 5) масс-медийные факторы. Национально-культурная специфика библеизмов проявляется в безэквивалентности в одном из языков, количественном расхождении вошедших в тот или иной язык библеизмов из единого источника, различиях семантической ёмкости библеизмов, используемых в каждом из языков, акцентировании определенных образов и когнитивных признаков, в использовании набора заимствованных из первоисточников библеизмов. Следует отметить, что даже универсальные библеизмы, функционирующие в различных языках, могут быть национально специфичными за счёт различий актуализируемых семантических признаков и образных компонентов в составе библеизма.

Ключевые слова: библеизмы; национально-культурная специфика; библейский; экстралингвистические факторы; семантика; лингвокультурный; дифференциальный.

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The study of language cannot be complete without taking into account religious factors, since it is considered to be one of the basic pillars that shape the worldview and perception of different language and culture representatives. The awareness of the close-knit relations of language, culture and religion has resulted in the emergence of a new interdisciplinary linguistic trend – Theolinguistics that studies the interrelationship between language and culture, linguistic aspects of religious language as well as manifestations of religious factors reflected in language units (Alston 2005, Crystal 2018, Heather 2000, Wierzbicka 2020, Scott 2017, Gadomskiy, 2018, Galieva, 2018; 2022 etc.). Due to this fact, the notion of a religious world picture (RWP) has begun to be actively used in modern linguistics. RWP is defined as a “cognitive structure that has absorbed a set of spiritual and moral values, based on religious doctrine, that historically shaped the cultural worldview and national identity of the people” (Bugaeva 2010: 15). RWP is a special form of worldview, that along with the national world picture, formulates and determines a specific form of world perception, the moral consciousness peculiar to a particular nation, its spiritual and national discernment over the surrounding reality. As we assume, of special interest is the characteristic feature of RWP that conditions it to be formed under the influence of not only religious dogmas, but also with the interference of the national world picture. Being verbalized by means of language, the RWP becomes the cultural heritage of the nation, an integral part of its conceptual and linguistic world pictures, since it influences both the national worldview and the entire language system, an important component of which is phraseology (linguistic discipline dealing with idioms).

Phraseology, as N.F. Alefirenko asserts is “the greatest treasure and eternal value of any language. Being a national treasury, reasonably, it is widely believed to store centuries-old human experience derived from labor and spiritual activity, its history, moral values, religious views and beliefs ”(Alefirenko, Semenenko 2009: 9). As is known, the Bible played a significant role in the formation of the phraseology of European languages, it is wholly due to the fact that Bible in European culture is considered to be not only a sacred religious book, but also an integral part of the cultural and everyday life of European languages’ representatives. In this regard, as E.M. Vereshchagin states, “Bible is not an ordinary book: its plots, parables, proverbs, aphorisms, key words, its spirituality influenced European culture so deeply that... European, including Russian, culture is definitely biblical culture” (Vereschagin 1993: 424). The same opinion is shared by a number of other leading scientists in the field of phraseology (Kunin 1972, Gak 1997, Onoprienko 1997, Klyukina 2003, Betekhtina 1995, Dubrovina, 2010, Prickett 1986, Ashurova, Galieva 2019, etc.). The process of phraseologization of biblical phrases has been facilitated by “the richness and aesthetic value of the corresponding text fragments. Laconic form and expressive richness of idioms of biblical origin provide an opportunity for their reinterpretation and further enrichment” (Korneeva 2009: 3).

The material of the research includes biblical idioms//phraseological units extracted from the idioms dictionaries, as well as Internet sources related to the topic. The selection criterion for the examples serves the presence of a religious component dating back to the texts of the Bible (Adam, Eve, etc.) and etymological notes (*biblical, relig.*).

As the analysis of the linguistic material has shown, many biblical idioms being universal and international are represented in most languages spoken by Christians:

Alpha and Omega (English) – *альфа и омега* (Russian) – *das Alpha und das Omega* (German) – *L'alpha et omega* (French) – *Alfa y Omega* (Spanish);

Prodigal son (English) – *блудный сын* (Russian) – *der verlorene Sohn* (German) – *enfant prodigue* (French) – *hijo pródigo* (Spanish);

Sodom and Gomorrah (English) – *Содом и гоморра* (Russian) – *Sodom und Gomorrha* (German) – *Sodome et Gomorrhe* (French) – *Sodoma y Gomorra* (Spanish);

Wash ones' hands (English) – *умыть руки* (Russian) – *siene Hände in Unschuld waschen* (German) – *s'en laver les mains* (French) – *lavarse las manos* (Spanish);

The brand of Cain (English) – *Каинова печать* (Russian) – *das Kainzeichen tragen* (German) – *le signe de Caïn* (French);

Noah's Arch (English) – *Ноев ковчег* (Russian) – *Arche Noah* (German) – *arche de Moe* (French);

Belshazzar's feast (English) – *Валтасаров нуп* (Russian) – *le festin de Baltasar* (French) – *el festin de Baltasar* (Spanish);

Forbidden fruit (English) – *запретный плод* (Russian) – *verbotene Frucht* (German) – *le fruit defend* (French) – *fruto prohibido* (Spanish);

In our opinion, the universal representation of many biblical idioms can be explained by the followings:

- similarities of the biblical legends, plots and parables (for example, about the creation of the world, about the Fall, etc.), images and symbols (images of Cain, Solomon, Joseph, Jesus, Magdalene, Judas, the good Samaritan, etc.), religious rites and rituals (anointing, baptising, etc.), proverbs and aphorisms (the book of Ecclesiastes, proverbs, psalms), which altogether reflect the global Christian culture and its basic values.

- the influence of the Greek and Latin languages, on the basis of which the modern Bible was originally created. As is known, the Hebrew Torah or the Old Testament, was first translated into Greek (Septuagint), in which the New Testament was also created. After Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire, both parts of the Bible were translated into Latin and were entitled the Vulgate. Due to the spread of Christianity in a number of European countries, the Bible began to be translated into other European languages, taking into account the semantic, stylistic, contextual-semantic features of the mother language and preserving, as far as possible, the elements of the figurative and metaphorical elements of the original sources.

The assumption can be illustrated by the example of the biblical idiom “*to wash one's hands*”. This biblical idiom exists in many European languages (*wash ones' hands* (English) – *siene Hände*

in *Unschuld waschen* (German) – *s'en laver les mains* (French) – *lavarse las manos* (Spanish). This biblical idiom etymologically is referred to the ancient oriental ritual of washing hands to relieve oneself of responsibility for something or to demonstrate refusal to participate in something. The one who washed his hands publicly announced “My hands are clean.” This ritual is narrated in the Old Testament [Deuteronomy 21: 6-7]. However, the biblical idiom widespread use goes to the Gospel of Matthew, which tells about the death of Christ. Pontius Pilate, who did not want the death of Jesus Christ and at the same time could not influence the crowd that demanded his death. Then, he publicly washed his hands and said “I am innocent of this blood,” he said. “It is your responsibility!”, thus placing all responsibility for the death of Christ on the crowd (Matthew 27: 24). At present, the biblical idiom is used in the same sense, but with a negative assessment.

However, as the analysis of linguistic material has shown, even universal biblical idioms existing in different languages can be nationally specific. These specifics are manifested in differences in peripheral semantic meanings, in the accentuation of certain cognitive features and figurative components in biblical idioms. To illustrate, let's take the Gospel parable about Magdalene, that is represented by biblical idioms in language system of Russian (*кающаяся Магдалена*), English (*a repentant Magdalene*), French (*pleurer comme une Madeleine*), Spanish (*llorar como una Magdalena*). It should be noted that in semantics of Russian and English biblical idioms about Magdalene the semantic meaning of “repentance” is emphasized, while in French and Spanish semantic meaning of “bitter cry” is emphasized. The same is applied to the biblical idiom “*the prodigal son*”. In Russian the semantic meaning of sinfulness comes to the fore, while in English and French the semantic meaning of squander (*prodigal son* (English), *le fils prodigue* (French)), in German the meaning of “rejection from the family” (*der verlorene Sohn* – lit. lost son) are emphasized.

It should be noted that in this research we adhere to the idea that despite predominantly universal nature of biblical idioms, their selection in each language occurs under the influence of extralinguistic factors, such as:

1) the emergence time and dissemination scope of biblical translations. For example, in English, the King James Version (KJV) Bible, the translation of which was carried out on the basis of Greek texts, has been of special significance for the vocabulary development, in German – translations by Martin Luther in the 16th century, by Martin Buber and Franz Rosenzweig in the first half of XX century, in Russian, the translation of the Bible into Old Church Slavonic by Cyril and Methodius in the second half of the 9th century, and then in 1876 the synodic translation of the Bible into modern Russian also played an important role in penetrating biblical idioms into language systems of these languages.

2) confessional affiliation of a certain ethnic group. As is known, Christianity consists of several confessions, the main of which are Catholicism, Protestantism, Orthodoxy. Theological disagreements, hermeneutic problems that determine the peculiarities of the interpretation of the Bible by the representatives of these confessions influenced on Bible translation too, and, consequently, on the selection of biblical idioms in each language.

3) peculiarities of national perception of the world and cultural values of a particular linguistic culture. Each nation characterized by its own worldview, traditions and customs gives preference to certain biblical plots, images, symbols and characters, in accordance with their own cultural dominants that are the most relevant for them. For example, the image of Lazarus in Russian, or the image of Jesus in Spanish.

4) the socio-political system of a particular era or country. For example, the periods of the Renaissance and the Reformation prompted a deep study, reinterpretation of the Bible and the emergence of numerous translations and interpretations of the Bible in a number of European countries (Germany, England, Italy, Spain, etc.), which in its turn contributed to the spread and penetration of various biblical idioms into literature and the broad masses of people. As an example of a destructive influence we can provide the period of Soviet atheistic ideology in the countries of the former USSR, when many biblical idioms turned into archaisms or were forgotten as such.

5) mess-media factors. At present, the widespread use of existing biblical idioms and various quotes from biblical legends and stories in the titles and content of newspaper and magazine articles, films and programs on religious topics, fragments of advertisements also contribute to the penetration and dissemination of biblical idioms in various languages.

The above-mentioned factors impacted on the interpretation of the Biblical plots, and as a result in each language certain images were accentuated. The national-cultural component of biblical idioms manifests itself in the presence of non-equivalent biblical idioms inherent to one particular language and culture; in the variation of semantic meanings (sometimes even contradictory) attached to biblical idioms in the minds of speakers of different languages; in the quantitative divergence of biblical idioms having one source of origin in each of the languages.

As a result, each language reveals a peculiar set of biblical idioms that do not have equivalents in another language:

English: *Adam's ale* (water), *drive like Jehu* (rush like crazy); *David and Jonathan* (inseparable friends); *to suffer fools gladly* (to be tolerant of fools), *the son of Adam* (man), to entertain the angel unawares (to receive a guest without knowing his high status), *to fall on stony ground* (to be ineffectual, fruitless), *fall among thieves* (run into trouble), *noise of many waters* (an abundance of conflicting opinions);

Russian: *злота дня* (topical issues, hot news), *святым духом питаться* (to be fed by holy spirit, lack of food), *сотворить себе кумира* (make an idol of smb.), *что-л. от лукавого* (from the evil), *аредовы веки* (since Adam), *бесплодная смоковница* (the barren woman, fruitless), *всякой твари по паре* (every creature in pairs), *до второго пришествия* (until the second coming), *жить Вальтасаром* (live as Belshazzar), *книжники и фарисеи* (the scribes and Pharisees), *петь Лазаря* (to beg, exaggerated complains), *внести свою лепту* (to contribute), *власть придерживающие* (those in power), *запутаться в собственных сетях* (get entangled in someone's own nets);

German: *den Uriasbrief geben* (sending a letter containing a death sentence to its bearer), *Das schwarze Schaf* – (black sheep); *die Rotte Korah* (noisy gang, pack, gang), *dem Reinen ist alles*

rein (to the clean person everything is clean), *Binden und lösen* (*knit and allow*), *in Sack und Asche gehen* (indulge in sorrow);

French: *les amis de Job* (false friends), *faire son (le) Joseph* (to pretend to be modest), *pleurer comme une Madeleine* (to cry with bitter tears), *la rosée du ciel* (heavenly rose), *traverse du desert* (crossing the deserts = period of difficulty and oblivion preceding triumph), *sortir par la ner* (to cause disgust).

Spanish: *estar pasando un calvario* (to go through torment), *ser mas falso que Judas* (to be deceitful like Judas), *meter il dedo en la llaga* (to poke a finger in the wound), *creerse la reina de Saba* (proud as the Queen of Sheba), *pasar las de Caín* (walk the path of Cain), *abrazo de Judas* (embrace of Judas).

Let us illustrate the above said on the example of the gospel parable about the fig tree to which Jesus came up in order to pick the fruit, but realizing that it did not have fruit, he cursed it and it dried up [Bible, Matthew 21:19]. This parable is reflected only in the Russian language in the expression “бесплодная смоковница” (barren fig tree) used in meanings: 1) a barren woman; 2) useless person. In German and Spanish, unlike English and Russian, there is biblical idiom “*den Uriasbrief geben*” (German), “*carta de Uriás*” (Spanish) which stands for “sending a letter with someone containing a death sentence to its submitter”. This biblical idiom reflects the Old Testament legend of David and Uriah, according to which David sent a letter with Uriah containing his death sentence.

Another feature of biblical idioms is that despite the common sources (for example, the biblical legend of Job), each language is characterized by a peculiar set of biblical idioms functioning in language. Thus, from the book of Job, the following biblical idioms came into use both in English and Russian: *as poor as Job* – нищий как Иов; *the Lord gave and the Lord has taken* – Господь дал, Господь и взял; *to lie down with kings and counselors* – опочить с царями и советниками; *to grope in the darkness* – ходить во тьме. However, the biblical idioms included into English from this book, are more semantically diverse and capacious in comparison with Russian that causes quantitative discrepancy and existence of a number of non-equivalent biblical idioms, such as: *as patient as Job*, *Job's comforter*, *Job's news*, *Job's post*, *as the sparks fly upward*. Another example that illustrates our idea is the Old Testament story about Belshazzar's feast (the book of Daniel). According to the biblical legend, at the sumptuous feast of King Belshazzar, a hand appeared on the wall of the hall, tracing and predicting the imminent fall of Belshazzar, subsequently on the same night Belshazzar was killed and his kingdom passed to the Philistines. In the Russian language, on the basis of this plot, the following idioms appeared “Валтасаров пир (Belshazzar's feast), “письмена на стене” (writing on the wall)” (a bad omen, prediction of trouble, unhappy death), while in English, in addition to the equivalent of Russian biblical idiom “the writing / handwriting on the wall”, there are a number of other idioms that go back to this plot: *finger on the wall*, *the moving finger*, *the Babilonian finger*, *the handwriting from the sky*, *to read / see / interpret the writing on the wall*. In the Russian language, there is also a set of biblical idioms related to the image of Lazarus (*беден как Лазарь* (poor as Lazarus), Лазаря

петь (to sing Lazarus = to beg, exaggerate complain), прикидываться Лазарем (pretend to be Lazarus, pretend to be poor). In English, there is only the idiom “to rise like Lazarus”, which emphasizes the main feature related to the plot “resurrection from the dead”.

Thus, the quantitative discrepancy and non-equivalence of biblical idioms in studied languages indicate differences in semantic range of national-cultural significance of biblical idioms that have a single source in various linguocultures, which is also evidence of the national and cultural markedness of linguistic units of religious origin. The same opinion is shared by a number of researchers who explain the absence of biblical idioms in one of the languages by two factors – subjective and objective. The subjective factor presupposes an arbitrary selection of particular phenomena, i.e. the same phenomenon or image is interpreted differently in the phraseology of different languages or is not reflected at all (Gak 1966: 283-284). The objective factor, according to the researchers, is caused by extralinguistic, historical-cultural, and linguistic factors (Gak 1997, Betekhtina 1995, Kaminskaya 2004).

Many biblical idioms equivalent in terms of denotative meaning are often characterized by different, sometimes contradictory semantic meanings and interpretations in the studied languages. For example, the denotative aspect of biblical idioms “*manna from heaven* – *манна небесная* – *el mana celestial*” has the same semantic content and is associated with the food that God sent to the Israelites during their wanderings in the wilderness. In English, there are two more variants of this biblical idiom: *manna in the wilderness*, *manna in desert*. Very often biblical idiom “manna from heaven” is used figuratively in the meaning: “something of value that a person receives unexpectedly, any sudden and unexpected gift/help”, which is the same in both English and Russian. However, in English and Spanish, this biblical idiom has an additional meaning: “any spiritual or divine nourishment / food”, which is the opposite to the meaning of Russian biblical idiom, which means “lack of food, starvation”.

Another feature of biblical idioms is that some of them function up to this day in the language in which they first appeared. For example, in the English language, due to the great influence of the Latin and French languages, there are a number of biblical idioms that entered English in unchanged form: *Fiat Lux* (let there be light), *Sancta sanctorum* (holy of holies), *Agnus Dei* (the lamb of God), *Nunc dimittis* (now letting go), *Consummatum est* (finished), *Quo Vadis* (where are you going). In the Russian language, many biblical idioms are still used in the Church Slavonic language: *ничтоже сумняшеся, во человецех благоволение, питаться акридами, сим победиши, темна вода в облацех, притча во языцех, ныне отпускающи, гробы повапленные, сосуд скудельный, кимвал бряцающий*, etc.

Thus, on the basis of the analysis of biblical idioms, it can be concluded that in each language:

- both equivalent and non-equivalent biblical idioms are distinguished;
- despite the common origins, in each linguoculture under the influence of extralinguistic factors, occurs specific selection of biblical idioms that reflect the peculiarities of the worldview of a particular nation;

- biblical idioms equivalent in terms of denotative attribution may differ in terms of semantic content and receive different linguocultural interpretations;
- in each language there is a set of borrowed biblical idioms that function in unchanged form.

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