

## A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF ENGLISH AND RUSSIAN PROVERBS

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**Rezumat:** *În acest articol sunt abordate proverbele în limba engleză ca parte a frazeologiei și a folclorului. Articolul începe cu o analiză a definițiilor existente ale proverbului urmată de o analizare a proverbelor în plan comparativ privind traducerea proverbelor din limba engleză în limba rusă. Sunt scoase în evidență similaritățile și diferențele dintre proverbele engleze și cele din limba rusă. Articolul finisează cu o clasificare a proverbelor conform traducerii lor și cu o analiză a rezultatelor acestei clasificări.*

**Cuvinte-cheie:** *frazeologie, proverb, comparare, traducere, clasificare, echivalent frazeologic.*

In every culture among the whole variety and richness of the language it is difficult to find a more interesting and investigated topic than proverbs. As we

know proverbs are the reflection of the folk art of every culture, as well as of every language. But what do scientists say about it? According to *Collins English Dictionary*, “a proverb is a short sentence that people often quote which gives advice or tells you something about life.” [1] Meanwhile, W. Mieder defined proverb as “a short, generally known sentence of the folk which contains wisdom, truth, morals, and traditional views in a metaphorical, fixed and memorable form and which is handed down from generation to generation.” [3, p.18] Another good definition was given in the research *Proverbs and Sayings*: “The proverb is a brief saying that presents a truth of some bit of useful wisdom. It is usually based on common sense or practical experience.” [4, p. 2] Consequently, we can state that proverbs are brief sayings based upon useful wisdom and life experience which tend to teach and guide us.

It is hard to imagine teaching and learning any foreign language without elements of folk art, like proverbs, where the wisdom of the people is concisely and vividly expressed. Proverbs are collected in special dictionaries, they acquaint with the life and culture of the people for whom this language is native. At the same time, they prove that different peoples may have the same views and moral values. Namely because of this, we have chosen this topic for our research. We intended to investigate a series of English and Russian proverbs with the purpose to identify the correspondences between them. In other words, we wanted to see if there exist similarities and differences between English and Russian proverbs.

Phraseological units, which include proverbs have been investigated by many scholars, such as: V. I. Dal, Ch. Bally, L. P. Smith, V. V. Vinogradov, A.V. Kunin, L. S. Barhudarov, W. Mieder, P. McPartland and others. Most of them tackled the problem of phraseology within one language. For example, P. McPartland investigated the problem of English phraseology.

Concerning the comparative study of the phraseology of two or more languages, there exist fewer researches. For example, the Russian scholars M. I. Dubrovin and V. S. Modestov investigated the differences and similarities between English and Russian phraseology. W. Meider, an American linguist, studied the proverbs of the Germanic group comparing them. The Russian linguist L. S. Barhudarov examined the correspondences between the English and Russian phraseological units. He singled out three types of correspondences between the phraseological units of these languages [7, p. 74-96]:

- *Full Correspondences*
- *Partial Correspondences*
- *Lack of Correspondence*

It seemed to us interesting to apply namely this classification to our investigation of the English and Russian proverbs. Thus, we have selected 150 English proverbs from the *Oxford Dictionary of Proverbs* and the *Explanatory Dictionary of English Proverbs* by R. Rydout and K. Whitting and translated them into Russian. The selected proverbs were classified according to the mentioned above classification concerning two languages by L. S. Barhudarov.

So, out of 150 proverbs 56 proverbs belong to the first group - **full correspondences**. This makes 37, 40% out of the whole amount of selected proverbs. For example:

- *Every family has a skeleton in the cupboard.* - *У каждой семьи есть скелет в шкафу.*
- *Judge not, that ye be not judged.* - *Не судите, да не судимы будете.*
- *The love of money is the root of all evil.* - *Сребролюбие - корень всех зол.*
- *Man proposes, God disposes.* - *Человек предполагает, а Бог располагает.*

To the second group - **partial correspondences** - belong 45 proverbs which makes 30% out of the whole amount of selected proverbs. For example, the proverb *Never buy a pig in a poke* is translated into Russian like *Не покупай коша в мешке*. In this case, the word *pig* is substituted by the word *cat* in order to keep the meaning of this proverb in Russian. Let us analyze another example: the proverb *Every Jack must have his Jill* which is translated into Russian like *На каждого Ивана найдётся своя Марья*. It is obvious that the proverb was adapted according to the Russian culture. It means that the names *Марья* and *Иван* were used because they are closer to Russian names than *Jack* and *Jill*. But the most vivid example of partial correspondences is the proverb *Out of sight, out of mind* which is translated into Russian like *С глаз долой из сердца вон*. It cannot be translated word for word, therefore the word *mind* is substituted by the word *heart* according to the perception of Russian people of love. It means that the English people consider, that if they see the beloved person they think about him or her, but Russian people have their own opinion about it. They suppose that if they see the beloved person, he or she is going to be always in their heart.

The third group - **lack of correspondences** - consists of 49 proverbs which makes 32, 60% out of all analyzed proverbs. This type includes proverbs which cannot be translated literally. These proverbs correspond to certain Russian proverbs, either they are translated by description, or are translated by one phrase. For example, the proverb *The pot calls the kettle black*, which is literally translated into Russian *Горшок обзывает этот чайник чёрным*, is transferred into Russian by an equivalent proverb *Чья бы корова мычала, а твоя молчала* which has a close meaning to the original proverb. Let us analyze some other examples of this group. For instance, the proverb *If wishes were horses, beggars would ride* cannot be translated into Russian because it wouldn't carry its original meaning. It would be ridiculous and incomprehensible to Russian people. Therefore, it can be translated by an equivalent Russian proverb *Если бы да кабы во рту выросли грибы*. Another example is the proverb *A Jack of all trades is master of none*, literally - *Джек, который берётся за многие ремёсла, хорошо владеет ни одним*. There is no such a proverb in Russian, therefore it is translated by the Russian equivalent proverbs *За двумя зайцами погонишься - ни одного не поймаешь*, or *За всё берётся, да не всё удаётся*.

The results of our classification are presented in the table below for better illustration:

*Classification of the English Proverbs According to Their Translation into Russian*

Group	Number	%
Full Correspondences	56	37,40%
Partial Correspondences	45	30%
Lack of Correspondences	49	32,60%

Analyzing the above-mentioned types of correspondences between English and Russian proverbs we can see that the most numerous type is *the full correspondences* group (37, 40%). The least numerous in terms of the number of matches is *the partial correspondences* group consisting of only 30%. We did not expect such results, because it was expected that the group of lack of correspondences would prevail. This assumption is due to the fact that the analyzed languages belong to different language groups, such as Slavic and Germanic. They are completely different languages, beginning from the type of the alphabet to the grammatical structure. But contrary to expectations, the present research showed that these languages have much more similarities than people could think. Thus, we can conclude that these two languages had accidental impacts upon each other, or it can be because of their ancestor - the Indo-European family of languages.

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