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## COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF SUPERSTITIONS IN BRITISH AND BELARUSIAN CULTURES

**И. Захарова**

*«The most beautiful experience we can have is the mysterious.  
It is the fundamental emotion that stands at the cradle of true art and  
true science.»*

*Albert Einstein, The World as I See It, 1931*

We may think that we live in a sophisticated age, but even in the XXI century many customs and superstitions still exist. Some of them are really widespread throughout the world. And I suppose it is really very interesting to learn how much people living in Britain and Belarus are superstitious, if there are any variations from country to country, if current world events have made people more superstitious.

Are black cats lucky? What should you do if you spill salt? And why is touching wood a good idea? I often ask myself these questions. The more times I do it the better I realize that superstition is a pretty slippery concept, and we need to examine what we mean by it. The simple statement that a superstition is an irrational belief is quite adequate for most purposes, as long as we don't enquire too closely into the meaning of the word 'irrational'. But not every irrational belief gets labelled as superstition. One of the key characteristics of superstition is a belief in the existence of luck, as a real force in life, and that luck can be predicted by signs, and can be controlled or influenced by particular actions or words. Other key elements include a belief in fate, which again can be predicted and a belief in fate, which again can only be described as magic – the idea that people can be harmed or protected by spells, charms, amulets, curses, witchcraft, and so on.

Few people can claim to be completely free of superstition. The main reason for the decline of superstition in modern times is that many of former

uncertainties have declined. Childhood diseases still exist, and parents still have worries, but nothing compared with a century ago. Changes in everyday technology have brought almost instant death to many beliefs. The light-bulb provide little scope for superstition, or romance, whereas the candle and the open fire had plenty.

It could be argued that superstitious impulses in society are dead nowadays.

They are simply resurfacing in the guise of alternative medicines, unofficial pick-and-mix religions, astrology, conspiracy theories, and new-age cults and gurus of various kinds.

Superstition has been deeply influential in history. But even in this modern age, some people have strange beliefs. The main reasons for this are quite simple. Although superstitions have evolved over a very long time, people just seemed in the past and seem today to need something, or someone, to blame if their life goes drastically wrong. For example, if someone has some unexpected bad news it can be more acceptable for them to put the blame on the ladder they walked under earlier that morning, rather than face a difficulty as their own responsibility. Moreover, there appear to be more superstitions about avoiding bad luck than there are about creating good luck. Perhaps this is because people like to think that if something good happens it is due to their own hard work or because they deserve it, whereas when something bad happens people don't like to blame themselves. But one major area where most of us can claim to be less prone to irrational thinking than our descendants is in the matter of witchcraft. However badly things are going, however ill we may feel, few would think that the cause was our neighbour's spite or the spells of a witch. In this area at least, people nowadays have more sense.

Nevertheless, there are still lots of various strange and interesting beliefs around the world. They change from country to country. For sure there are lots of common and even more uncommon superstitions in different countries. Living in a different country means experiencing a different way of life. The cultures of all countries are unique, which means that people who have grown up in different places will have different ways of behaving, different ways of thinking and different ways of expressing themselves. Let's compare the superstitious world of Belarus and Britain.

Many superstitions are connected with animals. The most widespread superstitions in both countries include the same animals: cats, dogs, magpies, la-

Do you believe that certain magical words, or spells, can have real effects?

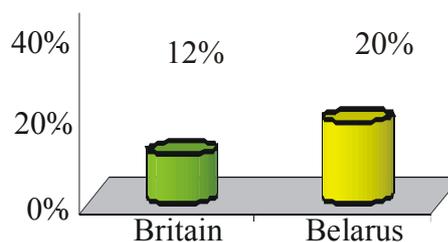


Fig.1

dybirds, spiders. For example, black cats are perhaps the most favourite animals in superstitions. In both countries they are said to predict the weather – if a cat sneezes then rain is on its way. In Britain if a cat is sitting with its back against a fire, a storm is on its way. In our country it is also believed that if a cat is washing its face, expect guests soon. Finally in both countries – if a cat is sharpening its claws on a table leg, that is a sign of change in the weather, usually for the better. In Belarus if a black cat crosses your path, it's bad luck (as it is in most places). People will often avoid crossing the place where it crossed, or will at least wait for someone else to cross it first. But that is not the truth in Britain. The British Isles are probably the only country in the world where it is lucky to meet a black cat. Black cats are featured on many good luck greetings cards and birthday cards in Britain. Now compare:

Black cat crossing your path is GOOD luck

Black cat crossing your path is BAD luck

Superstitions about ladybirds are the same in both countries. They are considered lucky if one comes and sits on your hand. If you count the numbers of spots on its back you will see how many lucky months you have to come. To make the ladybird fly away, so that you can make your wish, you have to say:

In Britain: «Ladybird, ladybird fly away home,

Your house is on fire and your children are gone!».

In Belarus: «Ladybird, ladybird fly to the sky,

There are your children eating sweets,

Waiting for their mother to join them on time».

Tradition says that the ladybird will take off because it understands our language. As these verses are usually said by children, I can say that, perhaps, they both reflect children's dependence on their mothers and the necessity of her support on the bad days and on the good ones.

It is believed in Britain that if a bird enters a house it is an omen of death to one who lives there. In some areas it is believed that to avoid ill luck any bird caught must be immediately killed otherwise the person who caught it will die. The same we can notice in Belarus. Here birds that land on a windowsill should be chased away. If they tap on the window, or fly into it, it is considered a very bad omen (often of death). Any house on which the swallow builds its nest is due for good luck, and in particular protection from fire and storm. When they fly low it is a signal for rainy weather. It is common in Belarus as well as in Britain.

Even widespread superstitions change from country to country. For instance, when people break a mirror in our country or in Britain they do or think something special. But in Britain it means that it will give you seven years of misfortune. Are there any ways of making up for this bad luck then?

Yes – if you very carefully pick up all the broken pieces and throw them into a river of stream, then the bad luck will be «washed away». Breaking a mirror is not considered bad luck in Belarus, but looking at one's reflection in a broken mirrors is. But in Belarus, mirrors are not associated only with bad luck. People say if you forget something at home and have to go back for it, you'll have bad luck, but if you look in a mirror when you go back, you'll have good luck. All in all, I would be careful with a broken mirror. Even if it doesn't bring you bad or good luck, you need to be careful because you can cut yourself.

Some beliefs have the same meaning but include different objects. Like, for example, it is considered bad luck to put keys or an empty bottle on the kitchen table in Belarus, while in Britain shoes that are put on the table mean the same. In our country a group of two or more people should not walk on either side of a tree. They should all keep to one side or the other to avoid conflict whereas in Britain two women shouldn't pour from the same tea-pot. A four-leaf clover means good luck in Britain and in Belarus it is a lilac with even amount of petals. That a four-leaf clover means good luck is a common belief. Legends claim that the four-leaf clover was the only thing Eve was able to bring with her when she was expelled from paradise. Cattle are thought to graze best and grow fattest when feeding in a field of clover.

For sure there are several superstitions that are practically equal but only have some peculiarities. For instance, if you spill salt, it's bad luck and is said to bring conflict in both countries, but no one will throw salt over their left shoulder to avoid bad luck in Belarus. If you step on a crack, it's bad luck. This one isn't very common, and Belarusians who do avoid cracks don't do it in an effort to save their mothers' backs. And at last in both countries people cross their fingers what is

Unhappy about breaking mirror

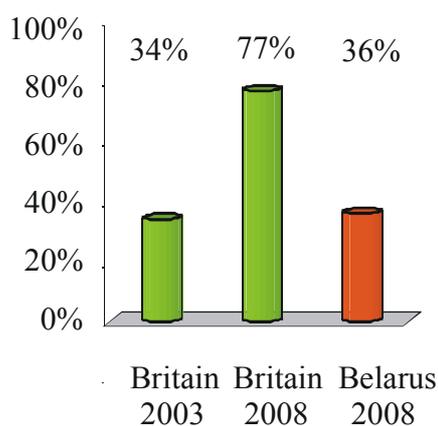


Fig. 2

Crossing fingers

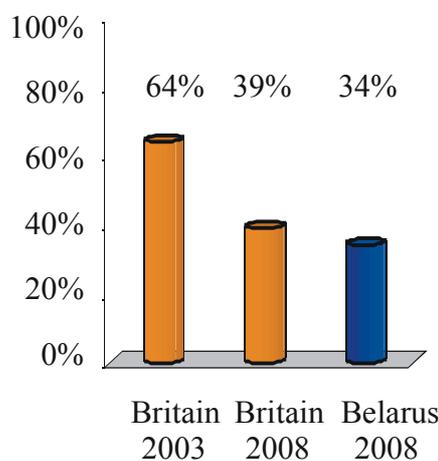


Fig. 3

Unhappy about spilling salt

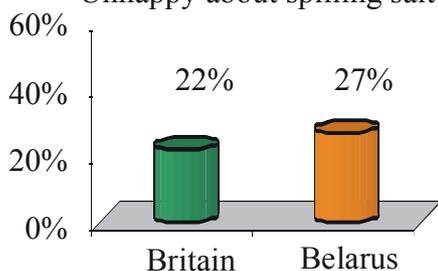


Fig. 4

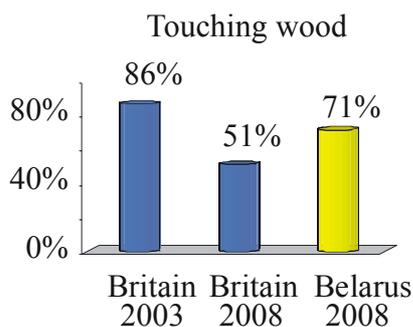


Fig. 5

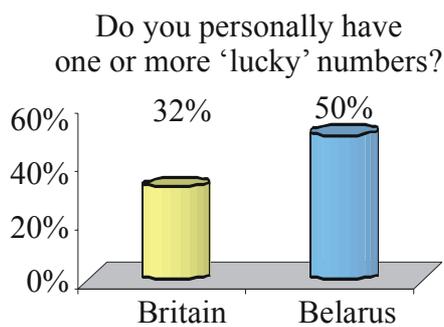


Fig. 6

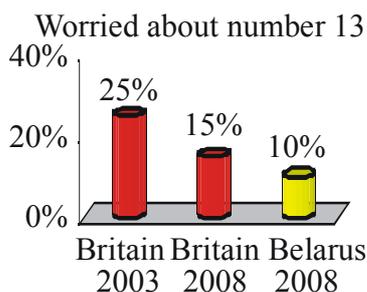


Fig. 7

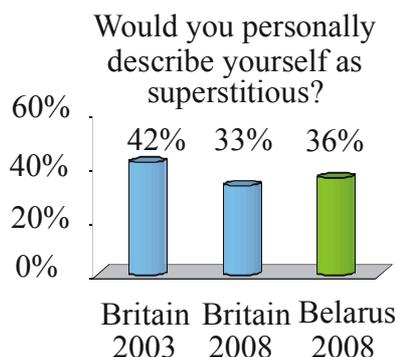


Fig. 8

believed to help in difficult situations and to bring good luck. Knocking on wood is practiced in Belarus as well

as in Britain. However Belarusians tend to add a symbolic three spits over one's left shoulder (or simply with the head turned to the left), and Belarusians will well. Traditionally

often knock three times as one was spitting on the devil (who is always on the left).

What would you use a horseshoe for? Probably to shoe a horse. Nevertheless, the horseshoe is possibly the most common good-luck symbol in use today in both countries. If you take a closer look you might just find that some people still put them on or above their front door, and you will also find many greeting cards with horseshoes on. Horseshoes were originally made of iron, and iron was supposed to give protection against witches, fairies and devils. If you find a horseshoe consider yourself a very lucky person especially nowadays when they are so hard to find.

Finally, numbers. Some people really have lucky numbers which are believed to bring favourable outcomes.

Таблица 1

| Lucky Numbers |          |         |          |
|---------------|----------|---------|----------|
| Britain       |          | Belarus |          |
|               | Total, % |         | Total, % |
| 7             | 38       | 7       | 21       |
| 3             | 16       | 3       | 17       |
| 5             | 11       | 13      | 10       |
| 4             | 11       | 4       | 4        |
| 8             | 9        | 5       | 4        |
| 9             | 9        | 14      | 3        |

As we can see 7 is the luckiest number both in Britain and in Belarus. The number seven has some superstition connected to it. It took God seven days to create the world, and any association with the number is lucky. The seventh son of the seventh son is the luckiest of men, and when people talk about the «seven year itch» they mean that every seven years a person's personality undergoes a complete change.

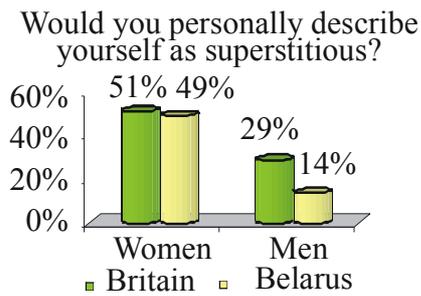


Fig. 9

irrational fear. Actually in our country number 13 is not considered a bad number. On the contrary, some people regard it as their lucky one.

Belarusians lack some of the superstitions that are found commonplace in Britain and it is reversed for Britain. Most Belarusians are not concerned with opening umbrellas indoors or walking under ladders what is believed to bring bad luck in Britain. Most British don't ever sit for some minute in silence before leaving for a long journey or even for a couple of days what is said to make your journey a successful and happy one.

As we can see practically the same amount of people in Belarus and in Britain regard themselves as superstitious. At some categories we are more superstitious, at others we are less. And as usual women are more superstitious in both countries. One possible explanation is that on average women feel they have less control over their lives, compared to men. This comparison also indicates that in the year 2003 level of superstitious behaviour in Britain was higher than in 2008. That happened largely because all of us address to the supernatural during the years of uncertainty or the time of political, social or economic instability. People who like historical comparisons recall that when Rome was in Decline, superstitions were widespread, and that something of the same sort is happening today in our world. They point to the popularity of astrology, and it is really true that even sober newspapers carry astrology columns and fashion magazines count them among their most popular features. At the beginning of the XXI century one of the most serious problem in our society was and still is terrorism. Several terrorism acts occurred in Britain in the 1990s and between the years 2000–2003. This caused the feeling of inevitability. There is still the threat of new terrorism incidents today. However people feel a little bit more safe nowadays as several terrorism acts have been revealed what gives some hope. Whereas the situation in Belarus, at least our internal political situation, is more or less stable.

Even in the XXI century people are superstitious. Although we are much less superstitious than we were 100 or even 50 years ago, the new millennium introduces new threats, uncertainty and the only hope is the supernatural.

Moreover, people just don't want to be ruled only by science and modern technologies. There are few people in the world who approach life in a completely rational way. Each person carries around their own little bag of tricks that seems to serve them well over time. Though our superstitious beliefs can provide us with comfort during difficult times and provide inspiration, it is how we interact with others and apply our inspirations to achieve our goals.

## **ЛИНГВИСТИЧЕСКИЕ ОСОБЕННОСТИ ПЕРЕВОДА НЕМЕЦКОГО РЕКЛАМНОГО СЛОГАНА. АНГЛО-АМЕРИКАНИЗМЫ В НЕМЕЦКОЙ РЕКЛАМЕ**

**Л. С. Иваничева**

Реклама играет множество ролей: и учителя, и проповедника, и диктатора. Она в значительной степени определяет наш образ и стиль жизни. Именно поэтому серьезный немецкий журнал SPIEGEL еще несколько лет назад определил ее как «пятую власть» вслед за СМИ, которая считается «четвертой» [1, с.24]. Сегодня, сформировать цивилизованный рынок возможно только с развитой рекламой. Из дилетантского торгового предложения реклама превращается в изоциренный механизм воздействия на потребителя. Современные средства массовой информации дали толчок распространению международной рекламной деятельности. Поэтому перевод рекламы сделался не только необходимым, но и повседневным явлением жизни мирового сообщества. При этом знание теоретических основ процесса являются обязательным условием. Перевод рекламного текста, в отличие от перевода художественной литературы, в которой переводчик обязан передать художественно-эстетические достоинства оригинала, несколько отличается по форме, языковым средствам, а также ярко выраженной коммуникативной направленностью.

В работе рассматривались 3 аспекта: лингвистические особенности перевода немецкого рекламного слогана, переводческие трансформации и англо – американизмы в немецкой рекламе.

### **1. ЛИНГВИСТИЧЕСКИЕ ОСОБЕННОСТИ НЕМЕЦКОГО РЕКЛАМНОГО СЛОГАНА**

Слоган – короткий лозунг или девиз, отражающий уникальное качество товара, обслуживания, направление деятельности фирмы чаще в прямой, иносказательной или абстрактной форме. В своей книге Феофанов дает следующее определение рекламного слогана: «Слоган – это спрессованная до формулы суть рекламной концепции, доведенная до лингвистического совершенства запоминающаяся мысль» [2, с.35]. **Основное назначение слогана** в рекламном материале – привлечь внимание и