PASAULIO VAIZDAS BŪDVARDINIUOSE VAIZDINGUOSE PALYGINIMUOSE

«LANGUAGE PICTURE OF THE WORLD IN ADJECTIVAL FIGURATIVE COMPARISONS»

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LANGUAGE PICTURE OF THE WORLD
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The article is devoted to the analysis of figurative comparisons of the modern Belarusian language as communicative units that reflect national-cultural language specificity. The semantic peculiarities of comparative constructions in the modern Belarusian language are being analyzed with emphasis on the entire nature of the figurative comparison and motivation of the figurative meaning. The article examines semantic peculiarities of the word that correlates with the object of comparison within the frameworks of the comparative construction with the subsequent differentiation of mythological archetypical and mythological stereotypic meanings. The possibility of implementation of the mentioned types of meanings for words of various lexical-thematic groups is being analyzed. The factors influencing a choice of an object of comparison in the course of speech are being discovered. The article also deals with the stylistic peculiarities of figurative comparisons, types of comparisons on the basis of the degree of their stability, as well as with the dependence between the type of meaning that is actualized by an object of the comparison and the possibility of inclusion of the entire comparative construction into a definite class.

KEY WORDS: adjectival figurative comparisons, occasional comparisons, stable comparisons, phraseological comparisons, mythological archetypical meaning, mythological stereotypic meaning, language picture of the world, cultural connotation.

The purposes of the present article is to consider the representation of the language picture of the world in adjectival figurative comparisons with the following structure: *tertium comparationis* or the basis of comparison (expressed with an adjective) + *comparative conjunction + comparatum* or the object of comparison (expressed by a noun).

A vast majority of scientists agree that comparisons show the national-cultural specificity of the world view and together with other means of the language par-
ticipate in verbalizing the cultural code (Конюшкевич 2000, Маслова 2001, Зяневіч 1999, etc.). The ideoethnic peculiarity of the picture of the world is revealed primarily via a choice of the object of comparison (*comparatum*). For example, in the Belarus language there are the following adjectival figurative comparisons: *глухі, як пень / як цецярук / як апенька* (deaf as a stub / as a black grouse / as a honey agaric) // compare with English: *deaf as an adder / as a post / as a stone*. And, on the contrary, the same object is viewed

by the representatives of different cultures as connected with different attributes. For example, in the Belarusian language: *мець рукі, як граблі* (*to have hands, as a rake = to be clumsy*) // compare with English: *thin as a rake*; *жывучы, як кот (спрытны, як кот) – hardy as a cat (dexterous as a cat)* // compare with English: *melancholy as a cat*. As one can see, the representatives of different lingua-cultural *communities* view the same objects differently, though it is empirically obvious that there are no essential distinctions between the Belarusian and English black grouses, honey agarics, adders and stones. Accordingly, a set of semantic attributes that are put into the basis of the above mentioned corresponding notions (*signification*), and a class of objects that can be related to this notion (*denotation*), will be identical for the Belarusians and the English, for the Poles and the French, for the Italians and for the Germans.

In this case the distinctions stay behind the borders of notional (*denotative-significative*) contents of the language sign. They arise not as a result of cognition of existing objective qualities of an object by the representatives of the lingua-cultural community, but on the contrary, they are a result of discrepancy of basically subjective views of the given object which due to certain cultural-historical (geographical, territorial, social) conditions have received the individual status and have become acquisitions of collective language consciousness (see Глазунова 2000). Therefore, probably, the English cat looks so melancholic and sad, and the Belarusian one is so dexterous and hardy. It is obvious that such qualities are peculiar to the cat not objectively as to the representative of fauna but exist in

the consciousness of speakers of specific lingua-cultural communities.

Such culturally determined ideas about objects of the surrounding reality (both material and ideal), that are fixed in language through lexical-semantic associations, have been recently defined in numerous linguistic researches as "**cultural connotation**" (Телия 1996, Маслова 2001).

Modern linguistics still has an unresolved dispute about the place of connotative attributes in the semantic structure of a word, a question connected with the optional character of these attributes (not all words have corresponding connotation) and with ambiguity of the term **connotation** itself. According to the integrated conception of the lexical meaning, connotative semes are included into the semantic structure of a word (Телия 1996), getting the status of additional senses and remaining on its periphery in case the word is used in a direct nominative meaning. In case of the metaphorical usage of the word, the semes are being actualized and moved to the centre of a core and become differential ones. Denotative-significative semantic core remains "transparent" that causes correct understanding of a word in a figurative meaning.

As Maslova notices, the mechanism of connotation occurrences is connected with strengthening separate aspects of the meaning: "Usually separate attributes, the image of which arises in the internal connotative word form, are singled out of the denotation" (1996, c. 55). In our opinion, it can explain, for example, such a word usage as *bear* in relation to a physically strong person (*Russian bear* – A. Karelin, the well-known sportsman) or *giraffe* in relation to a tall

person. At the same time, it cannot explain the usage of a word *bear* in relation to a clumsy person. In this case, the denotative component of the word *bear* includes, more likely, opposite attributes: 'big', 'predatory', 'capable of fast moving'. At the same time, when we saying *He is a real bear* in relation to a clumsy, awkward person, the Belarusian or Russian language speakers, certainly, do not mean a real bear as well as the English language speakers do not mean a real bear when saying *He is a real bear* concerning a fat or impolite person. The major role belongs to social-cultural stereotypes formed over generations. It, in turn, explains the fact that the correct understanding of the statement by the representatives of the same cultural-language community does not presuppose the reference to primary denotative attributes of the noun *bear*.

This fact can be interpreted with a help of the **bilateral name conception** that has been offered by Gudkov (1999). The researcher allocates separate group of names that have got the name of bilateral as they possess different and rather distant from each other meanings – an **ordinary** one and a **mythological** one – each of which exists and develops under its own laws. Relations between these meanings could be characterized as the relation of an additional distribution: the structure of an "ordinary" meaning includes all objective characteristics of a defined object while the mythological meaning represents a set of conventional characteristics that make up the national-original view of the world. The ordinary meaning can be realized only in nominative usage of the word while in case of the mythological meaning the word can be used only in a predicative function,

as the second component of a comparison or a metaphor. And, finally, the word that has been used in the ordinary meaning, acts as a general nomination while its usage in the mythological meaning relates a bilateral name to a class of individual names. When we say *He is clumsy as a bear* we mean an absolutely concrete bear as it is well-known to any representative of the cultural-language community through folklore with awkwardness as its basic characteristic.

Allocation of two meanings – ordinary and mythological, having their own spheres of realization each, can solve the contradiction mentioned above and explain the absence of obvious motivation in the following examples: *clumsy as a bear* or *silly as a black grouse,* etc. It should be mentioned, however, that the term "mythological meaning" in the conception offered by Gudkov has a conventional value. On the one hand, the structure of the "mythological" meanings includes the meanings based on ancient images that were reflected in myths and folklore (a bear – clumsy, a wolf – hungry, an ant – hardworking, etc.). As it is known, the mythological consciousness perceives the world integrally indivisible; the allocation of objects occurs according to a single attribute that often cannot be interpreted from the point of view of modern logics and thus is casual and insignificant from the point of view of modern language speakers. Nevertheless, we use such images in our daily communication actively and with a great deal of satisfaction as far as their understanding among the representatives of one cultural-language community does not demand huge efforts, that can be explained by their traditional character that has evolved as a result of numerous transfer

from one generation to another generation. Language images that date back directly to mythological thinking exist in the national cognitive space in the form of archetypes that, according to Maslova, are considered to be genetically fixed ancient representations and social-cultural ideas transferred to the sphere of collective subconscious (2001, с. 93).

At the same time mythological meanings, according to Gudkov, include meanings based on the **nationally determined minimized ideas** (NDMI). Such ideas are formed by means of reduction of complex dialectical vision of the object: "From a set of characteristics […] only defined ones are allocated and fixed, others are rejected as insignificant" (1999, с. 77). Rejection (or elimination) of characteristics occurs according to unique and individual for each cultural-language community algorithm of minimization. It must be underlined that NDMI conception correlates with the conception of cognitive stereotype in understanding of Walter Lippmann who introduced this term as the schematic "world picture" determined by culture and the comprehensive stereotype theory thoroughly elaborated by Wlodzimerz Wysoczanski (2006, pp. 84–87).

Thus, mythological meanings can be divided into two types: the ones based on ancient views (archetypes) and the ones generated on the basis of the minimized standardized ideas about surrounding objects (stereotypes). Differences between mythological **archetypical** and mythological **stereotypic** meanings are not however limited to the way of their occurrence. Unlike archetypes which remain invariable in time and are transferred genetically from

generation to generation, stereotypes undergo certain changes and are acquired in the course of socialization, in other words, we can speak about stereotypes only in relation to a definite time interval, a certain epoch.

As one can see, association of archetypical and stereotypic mythological meanings is possible only on the grounds that they both display an originality of a national picture of the world, unique vision of the world that is fixed in language of a certain cultural-language community.

Acting as the second element of comparison, words can realize one of the types of mythological meanings. In addition to this, there is a certain correlation between a type of meaning and a type of a comparative construction. As a rule, in the basis of phraseological comparisons there is an archetypical image: *няўклюдны, як мядзведзь* (clumsy as a bear)*; глухі, як пень* (deaf as a stub)*; галодны, як воўк* (hungry as a wolf)*; прыгожая, як лялька* (beautiful as a doll)*; страшны, як чорт* (ugly as devil), etc. The ancient origin of an image proves to be true when the objects of comparison (comparatum) are expressed by the names of animals and names of folklore characters.

In turn, stereotypic visions are realized in the meaning of the second element of stable comparisons when the total number of which considerably exceeds the number of phraseological comparisons. Compare: *clumsy, as a bear* (archetypical mythological meaning)// *healthy, as a bear; strong, as a bear; hairy, as a bear; shaggy, as a bear* (stereotypic mythological meanings). It must be noted that in case of metaphorical usage out of the context (*He is a real bear!*) the meaning that is actualized is the

archetypical meaning in case of its realization in the stereotypic meaning demands the expanded context or the clear basis of comparison.

The existence of several (or even a number of) images in the consciousness of speakers for expressing the same attribute is caused by a number of reasons, one of which is the coexistence of both earlier and later (in relation to the time of their occurrence) associations. It is known that from the point of view of ancient vision "quality was identified with a subject and was tautologically equivalent to it" (Фрейденберг 1998, c. 253). This feature of mythological thinking is expressively traced in folklore, in particular, in fairy tales where objects and phenomena are called usually on the basis of one attribute, and animals possess a consistency of character and the qualities fixed to them. Thus, the attribute in the basis of an ancient image, as a rule, is not included into the conceptual contents of the corresponding concept and that is why from the point of view of rational and logical thinking of a modern person, it sometimes seems to be unmotivated (awkwardness for a bear, cunning for a fox, etc.) Though adjectival comparisons *хітры, як ліса* (*cunning as a fox*)*; нязграбны, як мядзведзь* (*clumsy as a bear*) have entered the language system as stable complexes.

As a result of historical change of complex mythological thinking, a conceptual complete complex "the subject (the universal carrier) = the attribute" appears to be shattered; the attribute "is drawn off" from a subject. Probably, at the initial stage of allocation of an abstract category of an attribute, this subject – the universal carrier of an attribute – was a unique object of

comparison while a quality was carried onto another phenomenon. However, to confirm such entirely logical opinion, deep etymological and cultural research is required, that, in turn, should become a subject of a separate studying.

Ancient associative ideas, as a rule, have a utility character and do not exceed the bounds of day-to-day subject-matter activity. Only those subjects and phenomena of a material world, which were accessible to direct perception of the person and surrounded him in a daily life, the species of local flora and fauna and mythological beings could become objects of comparison. Thus, parities between the universal carrier and an attribute display specific national-cultural traditions of this or that language collective. For example, while translating into the English language, a common combination in the Russian and Belarusian languages such as *голодный, как волк (рус.) / галодны, як воўк (бел.)* (*hungry as a wolf*) is transformed into an adjectival comparison with a different universal carrier of an image *hungry as a bear*. Awkwardness, that is traditionally associated in Russian and Belarusian consciousness with a bear, in the Korean language is connected with a caterpillar; in the Vietnamese language picture of the world, the bear is identified with impudence; a donkey – with patience; the image of a pig is connected with foolishness, the image of a dog – with impudence, the image of a hen – with diligence (see Мамонтов 1984). In different language pictures of the world, the image of the mouse has unequal semantic contents. In the Belarusian language, there is a combination *ціхі, як мыш* (*silent as a mouse*), in Korean – *talkative as a mouse*, in German – *resourceful as a mouse*. It must be

said that in the Oriental symbolical system, animals rarely have negative characteristics. In case of necessity the speakers use inanimate objects: *silly as a stone* (the European variant: *silly as a donkey*). (For more additional information see Глазунова 2000).

What are the reasons for choosing this or that object for comparison? What does this choice depend on? Certainly, both attention and memory of an individual possess a selective orientation, therefore, the person marks and remembers subjects which are either allocated from the set (by size, colour, form, etc.) or are of a certain informative or utilitarian interest for a person. Besides, the choice of an object for comparison is done under the influence of a subjective-emotional factor. So, for example, adjectival comparisons *непрыгожы, як мая доля (as ugly as my life); тоўсты, як Чарлі (*бульдог*) (as fat as my Charly (a bulldog)* are vivid examples of occasional individual-creative comparisons (free adjectival comparisons) and are formed, as a rule, in the course of speech and are a result entirely creative act of speech. There is an opinion that free adjectival comparisons are limited by nothing, except for conformity to the general logical conditions of comparison (i.e. presence of the common attribute among objects which are compared) (see Огольцев 1978). However it must be said that the adequate perception of individual manifestation of an attribute (in this case ugly and fat) is possible only in case there is the general background of the sender and the addressee. In a vice versa case (i.e. in case of absence of a wider social context), the main aim of the comparison – an adequate transfer of the perception of an individual attribute – appears to be inaccessible.

The basic source of formation of an image is background knowledge of modern representatives of the language and cultural community. Sometimes the correlation of an attribute and a subject can be absolutely unexpected and unusual, being based on complex associations (*худы, як страус – as thin as an ostrich* – where, apparently, a long neck of a bird is meant); typical of the mass media methods of display of actual events (*здаровы, як лад жыцця* (*as healthy as the way of life*)*; нездаровы, як бомж* (*as sickly as a vagabond*). As a rule, such comparisons are not characterized by high degree of reproducibility that can be explained by the fact that the attributed explicated is considered to be characteristic for a subject only by a limited number of people while the vast majority of the cultural-language community does not recognize it as such.

The totally different degree of reproducibility is seen when the connection between an object and a quality is thought as constant and is fixed in the collective consciousness of speakers. As a result of the constant actualization (especially by mass media), such an object can become a basis for formation of a stable comparison. Such tendency can be traced in the following adjectival comparatives: *прыгожы, як Брэд Піт* (*as handsome as Bred Pitt*); *непрыгожы, як Квазімода* (*as ugly as Quasimodo*)*; тоўсты, як барэц сумо* (*as fat as a sumo wrestler*)*; зграбны, як топ-мадэль* (*as graceful as a top-model*)*; высокі, як баскетбаліст* (*as tall as a basketball player*). Such adjectival comparisons – stable and reproduced – can potentially in due course become neophraseological units, and then a part of the phraseological

corpus of the language. Nevertheless, the presence of proper names in the structure of the comparison can become a restriction reason for their universalization.

Free comparatives with bright figurative structure which promotes object memorizing have larger potential for transition into the status of stable. The listed factors create the precondition for a wide use of such adjectival comparisons in live speech, and, as it is known, "the defining factor for comparison inclusion in the category of stable is prevalence in speech practice of native speakers" (Огольцев 1978, c. 77). Thus, as Kanjushkevich notices, "it is difficult enough to mark a definite border between stable comparison as a unit of language and speech comparison [free], as the subjects that are being compared, belong to extralinguistic reality. A basis, according to which the comparandum and the comparatum [accordingly, an object which is compared, and an object to which the comparison is made] are connected with associative connections is objective as well: in spite of the fact that a fat person is compared to a barrel (stable comparison) by one person, to a hippopotamus by another, or to a bookcase (the last two comparisons are not stable), each of the comparata represents this person adequately to his/her constitution, but the choice of the comparatum is still predictable but nevertheless subjective" (Конюшкевич 2000, c. 21).

In order to sum up, it should be noted that figurative comparative constructions in a different way realize their basic purpose – to express the vision of an individual attribute of a subject or a phenomenon. To achieve this purpose, the object chosen for the comparison should correspond to three basic criteria: universality (prevalence among all members of the given language collective); general availability (ample opportunities of use); obviousness (bright figurative structure). As an additional (fourth) criterion, it is possible to allocate the actuality of an image used for comparison that, first of all, is relevant for the earliest and the latest comparative constructions. Objects that are used, for example, in such adjectival comparisons, as *тоўсты, як цэбар / мянтуз*; *худы, як ражон / мыш з царквы* (*thick as a tub / an eelpout; thin as a spit / a church mouse*), gradually disappear according to the actuality degree in the picture of the world of the modern Belarusian person and are replaced by later formed ones: *худы, як мадэль / вобла; тоўсты, як бегемот / барэц сумо* (*slender as a model / a roach; fat as a hippopotamus / sumo wrestler*). Because the designated realities are not usual, routine in day-to-day reality, the connection between an object and an attribute appears to be inexpressive, that interferes adequate transfer of perception of an individual attribute of the subject that does not destroy, however, the sense of the statement (due to the language experience and traditions, cultural competence).

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JĘZYKOWY OBRAZ ŚWIATA W PRZYMIOTNIKOWYCH PORÓWNANIACH OBRAZOWYCH

Streszczenie

W artykule omówiono porównania obrazowe we współczesnym języku białoruskim jako jednostki komunikacyjne odzwierciedlające narodowo-kulturową specyfikę językową. Analizie poddano właściwości semantyczne konstrukcji porównawczych we współczesnym języku białoruskim, z uwzględnieniem natury porównania obrazowego i zasadności znaczenia obrazowego. Wydzielono semantyczne właściwości wyrazu nazywającego obiekt porównania w składzie konstrukcji porównawczej, w związku z czym dokonano zróżnicowania znaczeń mitologiczno-archetypowych i mitologiczno-stereotypowych. Analizą objęto także możliwość realizacji danych typów znaczeń wyrazów zaliczanych do różnych grup leksykalno-tematycznych. Ujawniono czynniki wpływające na wybór wyrazu – obiektu porównania w mowie. Wymieniono właściwości stylistyczne porównań obrazowych, wydzielono klasy porównań w zależności od stopnia stałości, ujawniono zależność między typem znaczenia aktualizowanego za pomocą słowa – obiektem porównania a możliwością włączenia konstrukcji porównawczej w całości do określonej klasy.

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PASAULIO VAIZDAS BŪDVARDINIUOSE VAIZDINGUOSE PALYGINIMUOSE

Santrauka

Straipsnyje analizuojami šiuolaikinės baltarusių kalbos vaizdingieji būdvardiniai palyginimai, kurie suvokiami kaip komunikaciniai vienetai, atspindintys nacionalinius ir kultūrinius kalbos ypatumus. Šiuolaikinės baltarusių kalbos lyginamųjų konstrukcijų semantiniai ypatumai nagrinėjami pabrėžiant vaizdingą palyginimo prigimtį ir motyvaciją. Straipsnyje aptariami tokie semantiniai žodžio ypatumai, kurie koreliuoja su palyginimo objektu lyginamosios konstrukcijos ribose, išskiriant mitologines archetipines ir mitologines stereotipines reikšmes. Taip pat svarstoma galimybė pritaikyti minėtus reikšmių tipus įvairių leksinių teminių grupių žodžiams. Atskleidžiami veiksniai, nuo kurių priklauso palyginimo objekto pasirinkimas kalboje. Straipsnyje aptariami ir vaizdingų palyginimų stilistiniai ypatumai, palyginimų rūšys, kurios skirstomos pagal stabilumo laipsnį. Taip pat svarstoma, nuo ko priklauso, kokį reikšmės tipą realizuoja palyginimo objektas ir kokia yra galimybė įtraukti visą lyginamąją konstrukciją į apibrėžtą klasę.