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Time for Equal Opportunities”

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«Пословицы и поговорки разных стран как отражение национально-культурных сходств и различий»

« Proverbs and sayings of different countries, and how they reflect national and cultural similarities and differences »

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Theses

1. Introduction. Proverbs and sayings in our life.
2. Russian and English proverbs and sayings:
 - a) Proverbs and sayings that have a similar lexical description and meaning in both languages.
 - b) Proverbs and sayings with the same meaning, but different lexical reproduction.
 - c) English proverbs that have no equivalents in the Russian language.
3. American proverbs and sayings.
4. Chinese proverbs and sayings.
5. Summing up.

Russian children meet Russian proverbs and sayings at elementary school, learn them throughout their studies at schools, colleges and higher educational institutions and use them on an appropriate occasion. When we study English, we meet English sayings and proverbs sometimes being surprised by their similarity or difference from the Russian ones. So, in our essay we bravely open this Pandora box full of ideas, senses and emotions representing the people's wisdom and experience compressed into a sentence or a phrase. As far as not everyone can state exactly in what way sayings and proverbs differ and what the meaning of these sayings are, we try to figure the issue out.

A proverb is an ethnic expression with an underlying idea. Some Russian and English proverbs have the same meaning, and well-known lexis and sentence structures are used. Let's consider a Russian proverb "*You can't easily pull a fish out of a pond.*" It means you should apply efforts to achieve some good result. In English it sounds like "*He who would search for pearls must dive for them*". On the other hand, proverbs and sayings can reflect the speaker's attitude towards other people and situations. For example, the Russian proverb "*Not every day is Shrovetide for a cat, there will be Lent*" ("*Every day is not Sunday*" in English) means that not all goals can be achieved the same easily, and the proverb warns you that you should be ready to work hard in the future.

Proverbs and sayings have different goals. A proverb is aimed at teaching norms and morals, while saying characterizes situations and people. A proverb is mostly a complete sentence. A saying can be a sentence fragment: "*To do someone a bear's service*" (in Russian) – "*To bestow a doubtful blessing*" (in English).

Proverbs and sayings have been inseparable from folklore from long ago. People think that sayings once were part of proverbs. Vladimir Dahl, a Russian-language lexicographer, in his manuscript "*Explanatory Dictionary of the Living Great Russian Language*", called a saying a flower, and a proverb a berry. They both lived in oral folk art, were propagated and carried valuable information.

Dahl counted 179 thematic groups of proverbs: for example, about friendship, about happiness, about love, etc. In general, born mainly from observations of nature and daily life, they can be used for all the variety of aspects of life: *“Like father, like son”*, *“A day feeds a year”*, *“Business before pleasure”*, *“Better late than never”*, *“It’s never too late to learn”*. Some sayings and proverbs were born among artisans. Surely you know the expression *“A cobbler without shoes”* or *“He works best who knows his trade”*. All these sayings and proverbs are actual until now, as folk wisdom lives for centuries, and do not lose their relevance. They still teach the younger generation only the best: kindness, patience, and hard work.

In our opinion, Russian and English proverbs and sayings can be divided into 3 groups. The first group includes proverbs and sayings that have similar lexical description and meaning in both languages: *“A friend is known in trouble”* (Russian) – *“A friend in need is a friend indeed”* (English), *“One head is good, and two are better”* (Russian) – *“Two heads are better than one”* (English), *“My house is my fortress”* (Russian) – *“My house is my castle”* (English).

The second group includes proverbs with the same meaning but different lexical reproduction: *“You can't chop wood without making the chips fly”* (Russian) – *“You can't make an omelette without breaking eggs”* (English) means that if you want to achieve something, be ready to some losses. On hearing the English proverb *“No man is an island”* a Russian person can probably remember the saying *“One soldier doesn't make a battle”*.

Sometimes to understand and translate an English saying it is necessary to know English mentality a bit. For example, the saying *“A little too late is much too late”* means that it is fatally late. To know this, you should be acquainted with the English style of communication, mild, unobtrusive, where you will never hear “I think” but “I believe”, where there are no orders “Do this or that” but mild recommendations “It is much better to do so, isn't it?” which you

should obey. And if your English friend says, “I am not sure if...”, it means that he is definitely sure that not.

The third group of English proverbs includes expressions that have no equivalents in Russian, for example, it can be difficult for a Russian learner to understand the English proverb “*If you can't be good, be careful*” as the multiple-meaning word “good” and the absence of an object in a sentence can confuse us. If one thinks that the word “person” is absent in the proverb, the Internet dictionary gives him its support and explains the proverb the following way: If you can't stop yourself from behaving improperly, try to limit the degree of risk or danger involved. We should guess what is missed, supposing the object “*at something*” is missed here. We know that it's correctly to say, “I am good at mathematics”, “I am good at literature”. In such a case the proverb means “*If you can't do your job well, be careful*”. We can observe further contraction of the proverb. “No good”, says the woman-pilot in a falling plane in “Goldfinger”, one of the films of the James Bond series, and this means that she failed to do her job well, and nothing good would come out of the situation.

Let's examine one more saying used in Russian – “To leave without saying goodbye” – “Leave as Englishmen do”. There is no such a saying in English, moreover, in English it sounds like “*To take a French leave*”. The saying appeared during the Seven Year's War to describe French soldiers deserted from the army, then the French transferred the same meaning to Englishmen and in this form it consolidated its position in the Russian language. We claim that translation of the sayings and proverbs of such kind from Russian into English and vice versa is difficult and needs thorough examination.

The sayings in the oral speech are like puns, and even a pun in a pun. Let's study the example said in Russian in a childish manner: “You call me nasty names but transfer them to yourself”. Once it was translated into English as “*It takes one to know one*”. This means that someone has bad personality qualities in himself if he could easily recognize them in other people. If translated back into Russian again it could be “A fishman sees another from

afar”. Thus, we have gone away from the initial meaning. It would be much better to translate the saying in the same childish manner as “I’m a rubber, you’re glue, whatever you say bounces off me and sticks to you”.

Besides, there are also such English proverbs and sayings the countertype of which we failed to find in Russian, even if we understand their meaning, for example, “*You have to kiss a lot of toads before you find a handsome prince*”. It’s clear that it means that you will do a lot of attempts before you succeed. These words of flowery resemble the proverb mentioned above “*He who would search for pearls must dive for them*” and the like, but in our opinion they are much more expressive.

Now a few more words about American sayings and proverbs. When the American continent was settled, the British brought their proverbs and sayings with them that exist and are still used in America. However, new values of life such as money, success, well-being appeared and characterize this layer of oral folk art. Let’s look through some of them. “*Money talks*” means that money decides everything. “*Money does not grow on trees*” means that money is difficult to earn. Americans say “*Fool and his money soon parted*” when someone makes purchases without consideration.

An American proverb “*A woman’s work is never done*” means that a woman nearly always works in some way. The phrase especially refers to tasks traditionally associated with women, such as housework and childcare. It has the meaning that women’s affairs (as opposed to men’s) last indefinitely. The origin of the expression is a subject of debate among linguists. Some linguists believe that the proverb originated in America of the 19th century, and maybe it was the period when the process of women’s emancipation emerged. Other points of view also exist.

We also want to take a quick look at Chinese proverbs for the purpose of comparing the Oriental wisdom implied in sayings and proverbs with Russian and Western World’s ones. Chinese sayings are very poetic in their own way, beautiful, sometimes they have references to ancient history: “*In the eyes of a*

lover, Xi Shi appears.” Xi Shi was one of the four women who were renowned for their beauty in ancient China. This is one of the most famous Chinese sayings about love. In English, we know it as “*love is blind*” or “*beauty is in the eyes of the beholder*”.

Chinese proverb “*Three unskilled cobblers are better than one Zhuge Liang*” has an English equivalent: “*Two heads are better than one.*” Zhuge Liang (Kongming) was a famous strategist in ancient China and recognized as very intelligent and accomplished one. In this saying, his name is used to say that even this wise man is less wise than three unskilled men.

The most beautiful saying “*Nine days to catch the moon*” means “*To pluck the moon from heaven*”.

Chinese proverbs and sayings are amazing, and a mythical creature dragon is present in many of them. In fact, Chinese dragons are seen as lucky and good ones – quite different from dragons in most Western stories. For example, the proverb “*The strong dragon is hard to suppress the ground snake*” means “Be careful with strangers and in strange places”; the saying “*Paint a dragon and dot the eye*” in Russian is “*Cherry on the cake*” which means a desirable feature perceived as the finishing touch to something that is already pleasant, inviting, or worth having. The saying “*Mixed fish and dragons*” can be translated as “*motley mixture*”. “*Lord Ye loves dragons*” refers to someone who pretends to like something that he really fears.

Proverbs and sayings of different countries are very interesting to study. They were popular before and so are now, they entered the everyday life of any person. In our essay, we compared Russian proverbs and sayings with British, American, and Chinese ones. Many proverbs and sayings mean the same thing, they mark the situation in the same or similar way, but there are those that use different approaches, words, and symbols thus reflecting national and cultural particularities. There are also such proverbs and sayings that are difficult or impossible to be transferred into other languages. We can conclude that proverbs

and sayings of all languages are individual, colorful, poetic and instructive in their own way, but in any case they may have special differences or similarities.

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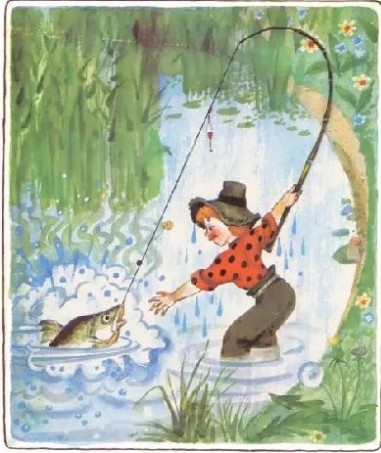
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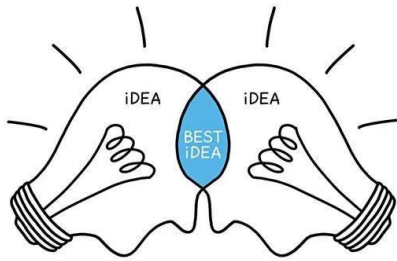
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Appendix



“You can’t easily pull a fish out of a pond.”



“Two heads are better than one”



“A friend in need is a friend indeed”



“You have to kiss a lot of toads before you find a handsome prince”



“Money talks”



"To pluck the moon from heaven"



"The strong dragon is hard to suppress the ground snake"