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ON CULTURAL CONNOTATIONS OF AZERBAIJANI AND ENGLISH IDIOMS

SUMMARY

This paper is focused on idioms with cultural connotations both in Azerbaijani and English languages. Idioms are formed in a particular historical period and passed from generation to generation, embedded with unique cultural connotations, such as historical development, religious belief, custom & habits, fables and mythologies, literary works, etc. The author tries to find out cultural values idioms contain.

Key words: idiom, culture, origin, reflection.

1.Introduction

The relation between language and culture is deeply rooted. The language points to the culture of a particular social group. Learning a language, therefore, is not only learning the alphabet, the grammar rules or the arrangement of words, but it is also learning the behavior of the society and its cultural customs. Ter-Minasova S. T. states that “language is a treasure trove of the culture. Cultural values are maintained and preserved in vocabulary, grammar rules, idioms, proverbs, folklore, literature, science, and in written and oral discourse”[4].

Idioms are ready-made, non-motivated units that have figurative meaning. Both in English and Azerbaijani

languages idioms reflect unique cultural elements such as history, religion, lifestyle, customs and traditions, national features etc. So, to understand idioms you have to know the culture that is behind them, or at least their origin. As we can see, the use of idioms brings cultural aspects to the language. When learning new language, idioms help you understand the culture behind the words.

According to the semantic features idioms in Azerbaijani and English languages can be divided into several groups. One of these groups is colour related idioms.

2. Cultural Connotations of colour related idioms in Azerbaijani and English languages

Colours play an important role in human's life. A single colour can have many various meanings in different cultures. For ex. In Asia orange is life affirming colour, while in the USA it's a colour of road hazards, traffic delays and fast food restaurants. It makes sense, that colors often appear in various language expressions and are used to convey non literal meanings. In this term study of the colour related idioms has a great importance, because they are a source of information about the culture and mentality of people.

2.1. Colour related idioms reflecting history of the nations

Historical Development has great influence on language. During the long development, the traces of historical culture were left over in the idioms both in Azerbaijani and English languages. For instance:

Qara qəpik (literally translated as black coin) means very little money. Till the 9th century money in Azerbaijan is made from metals (gold, silver and copper). Copper coins worthed less than others and over time they turned black. So, when someone mean to say " I dont have money", they say "Qara qəpiyim də qalmayıb".

The thin red line as a ready-made unit means unequal fight. The origin of this idioms dates from Crimean War. In this incident British troop consisting of 500 soldiers fought against Russian forces in number 1200 cavaliers. The British troop has red uniform and made a thin line to defend Balaclava. And now any unequal fight can be named “the thin red line”.

2.1. Colour related idioms reflecting religious beliefs

Religion has played an important role in all peoples' life. Azerbaijan is an overwhelmingly Muslim country. Islam arrived in Azerbaijan with Arabs in the seventh century. There are number of idioms that come from the Holy Book Quran and Hadiths (are the record of the words, actions, and the silent approval, of the Islamic prophet Muhammad). For instance:

Ağ qaradan seçə bilməmək means can not be able to differentiate black from white or good from bad. This idioms takes its origin from Holy Book Quran. In the 187th verce of Bagara surah: “...God has ordained for you, and eat and drink until the white streak of dawn can be distinguished from the black streak. Then complete the fast until nightfall...”. Muslims fast during Ramadan. They are prohibited from eating or drinking from dawn sunset . In ancient times there was not time device, so it is considered time to begin fasting when a person standing outside can tell a white thread from a black thread.

The Christian culture has ruled Europe for nearly two thousand years. Britain has been a Christian country ever since St. Augustus and his monks converted the English to Christianity in the 7th century. They believe in God and the Bible and there are lots of Bible origin idioms in English language. Most of them are used figuratively. For instance:

A whited sepulcher now denote a person who is inwardly evil but outwardly professes to be virtuous. In Bible hypocrite person is compared with whited sepulcher (tomb) which outwardly appear beautiful, but inwardly are full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness.

2.3. Colour related idiom reflecting mythologies and fables

Myths and fables are generally associated with cultural identity. Nearly all of the civilizations have their own mythologies.

Alni ağ olmaq (to have a white forehead) means to innocent, guiltless person. The origin of this phrase comes from folk etymology. There was a severe punishment and harsh torture for crimes in ancient times. Criminals were burned with hot branded iron. It made a permanent scar on their forehead. So it was easy to recognize criminals from the first sight and people who did not have such a scar on their forehead were law-abiding.

Qara keşiş (black monk) denotes a person who tries to separate couples. The origin of this idiom comes from Azerbaijanian epic love story that dates back nearly thousand years. Kerem was in love with Aslı, whose father was a monk. Her father was called “Qara”. Their differing religious views pose an obstacle for these two lovers. However, Aslı’s father deceive Kerem and gave him a cursed shirt as a gift. Kerem bursts into flames from the fire in his heart. Aslı is also set on fire when she tries to pat down Kerem’s ashes and joins her love in the afterlife. After it, any person who tries to separate lover has been called “Qara keşiş”.

Green fingers means a person who is good at making plants grow. This phrase also comes from folk etymology. King IV Edward who lived in XV century and reigned England loved plants very much. Many servants were hired to take care of his plants. When the king wanted to evaluate their work he just looked at their hands. The greener their hand, the better their work.

2.4 Idioms Reflecting Literary Works

Many idioms either coined or popularized by Azerbaijani and English authors. For instance, M.Fizuli, Q.Tabrizi, I.Nasimi, A.Hagverdiyev, N.Vazirov from Azerbaijan

literature and W.Shakespeare, G.Chaucer, J.Milton, W. Scott etc. from English literature are great mastes who used idioms in their work.

Qırmızı yaş tökmək (to cry with bloody tears). The idiom originates from M.Fizuli, the great Azerbaijani poet and writer who lived in XV-XVI centery. The meaning of this idiom is to cry because your heart is fill with grief and broken. The author used the great effect to describe heartbreak.

Yellow leaf means the latter years of life, old age. This phrase comes from Shakespeare's "Macbeth". He compares Macbeth's life to a withered yellow leaf. Shakespeare was one of the greatest writers in the western world. He is a master of the English language, with a large vocabulary of 16000 English words. A lot of words, phrases, or names of characters inhis works became popular idioms, which are used widely in everyday life until now.

2.5 Colour Related Idioms Reflecting National Features

Sarı sim (yellow string) means sensetive point of smt/ smb. Yellow string is the most fragile string of the "tar". Tar is the national musical instrument of Azerbaijan. In 2012, the craftsmanship and performance art of the tar was added to the UNESCO's List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

Qırmızı don (red dress) means dress for special occasions, wedding dress. Red colour express love, good luck, happiness in Azerbaijani culture. Brides in Azerbaijan used to have red dress in their wedding and in other special occasions.

Qara gözlərinə bağışlamaq (to forgive for sake of smb's black eyes).This idiom express physical appearence of Azerbaijani people. They generally have dark brown to black eye and hair colour. So this phrase is not comman for other nations like English.

As we know, cattle breeding plays an inportant role in English agriculture. And this affects on their phraseology too.

There are lots of idioms related with sheep, shepherd's life etc. For instance:

A red sky in the morning is shepherd's the warning means the mood shepherds depend on weather.

Black sheep means disgrace of family.

3. Conclusion

Nowadays cultural globalization is as important as economic one. According to the examples above, we know cultural value performs a dominant role in better understanding the idioms. Both English and Azerbaijani languages have a number of idioms. Idiom is a mirror of culture and clearly reflects cultural characteristics of a nation. Sometimes it is rather hard for language learners who do not belong to the source culture to understand idioms, let alone the appreciation of them. So it is significant to learn idiom's cultural connotation such as geography, history, religion, customs, sports & entertainments, fables & mythologies, literary works, etc. because they are parts of subcultures.. Cultural factors, cultural mentalities and characteristics of idioms should be considered during the process of learning foreign languages.

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РЕЗЮМЕ

Данная статья посвящена идиомам с культурными коннотациями на английском и азербайджанском языках. Идиомы сформировались в определенный исторический эпохе и передавались из поколения в поколение с уникальными культурными коннотациями, такие как историческое развитие, религиозные верования, обычаи, привычки, басни и мифологии, литературные произведения и др. Автор пытается выяснить, культурные ценности содержащиеся в идиомах.

Ключевые слова: идиома, культура, происхождения, отражение.