Subject matter: Paroemia as Means of Reflecting a People’s Culture.

Author: Natalia R. Bredikhina, 5th year student, Institute of Translatology and Multilanguage Studies.

Supervisor of the project: A. F. Artyomova, Professor of the Chair of Theory and Practice of Translation and Interpretation.

ABSTRACT

Nothing defines a culture as distinctly as its language, and the element of language that best encapsulates a society’s values and beliefs is its proverbs. A proverb is a short, generally known sentence of the folk which contains wisdom, truth, morals, and traditional views in a metaphorical, fixed and memorizable form and which is handed down from generation to generation (Mieder). Proverbs are short and pithy sayings that express some traditionally held truth. They are usually metaphorical and often, for the sake of memorability, alliterative. And, as so many proverbs offer advice and uplift, many of them are religious in origin. Many proverbs have been absorbed into English having been known earlier in other languages. In our paper we tried to show that the cultural values of specific language community are reflected (to varying degree) in their proverbs. We have arrived to the conclusion that the proverbs of a particular culture reflect the values of that specific culture, at least to some degree. However, a number of scholars argue that such claims are not valid, that proverbs should not be trusted as a simplistic guide to cultural values, Mieder once observed “proverbs come and go, that is, antiquated proverbs with messages and images we no longer relate to are dropped from our proverb repertoire, while new proverbs are created to reflect the mores and values of our time”, so old proverbs still in circulation might reflect past values of a culture more than its current values. There are many examples where cultural values have been explained and illustrated by proverbs. Some scholars have adopted a cautious approach, acknowledging at least a genuine, though limited, link between cultural values and proverbs: “The cultural portrait painted by proverbs may be fragmented, contradictory, or otherwise at variance with reality ... but must be regarded not as accurate renderings but rather as tantalizing shadows of the culture which spawned them.” The paper also deals with the general theory of proverb translation and contains a research based on the analysis of English and Spanish proverbs that have no equivalents in other languages due to ethno-cultural peculiarities. Some examples are given along with detailed etymological explanations and possible variants of their translation into Russian.