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THE CONCEPT OF “UNIQUENESS” (O‘ZIGA XOSLIGI / O‘ZIGA XOSLIG‘) IN THE ENGLISH AND UZBEK LINGUISTIC PICTURES OF THE WORLD: A COGNITIVE-LINGUISTIC AND LINGUOCULTURAL ANALYSIS

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Abstract: The article is devoted to the study of the concept of “uniqueness / peculiarity” — Uzbek o‘ziga xoslik — in the English and Uzbek linguistic cultures within the framework of cognitive linguistics and linguoculturology. The relevance of the research is determined by the growing interest of modern linguistic science in the processes of conceptualization of the human inner world and by the practical necessity of describing value-loaded concepts in typologically different languages. The aim of the article is to identify the semantic, figurative and axiological peculiarities of the representation of the concept under study in English and Uzbek idioms and paremias, as well as to establish convergent and divergent features of its verbalization in the two linguistic cultures. The material of the research comprises a continuously sampled corpus of 100 phraseological units and paremias (50 English and 50 Uzbek), explanatory dictionaries of both languages, and the works of classical and modern authors. The following methods are used: definitional analysis, componential analysis, contextological analysis, the method of linguocultural interpretation, and the comparative-typological method. The results show that “uniqueness” is a value concept in both cultures, yet its cultural scripts differ: the English concept is dominated by the script of SELF-DISTINCTION (standing out of the crowd), whereas the Uzbek concept is dominated by the scripts of SELF-KNOWLEDGE and HARMONY-IN-UNIQUENESS. The scientific novelty of the work lies in the fact that the concept of o‘ziga xoslik has been described for the first time in a comparative English–Uzbek aspect on the material of idioms and paremias.

Keywords: concept, uniqueness, peculiarity, o‘ziga xoslik, linguistic picture of the world, idiom, paremia, phraseological unit, cognitive linguistics, linguoculturology, English, Uzbek.

The rapid development of cognitive linguistics has radically changed the object of linguistic search: language is no longer studied merely as a formal system of signs but as a way of conceptualizing, storing and transmitting the collective experience of a people. In this perspective, the central unit of analysis becomes the concept — a mental formation that crystallizes in language and constitutes the basic element of the linguistic picture of the world [1; 2]. It is the concept, according to V.I. Karasik, that acts as a “clot of culture”, as the basic unit of linguocultural competence through which the mentality of an ethnic group is transmitted [3].

The conceptual sphere of any language contains not only concepts of the material world (space, time, natural phenomena) but also concepts that nominate the inner, human world: emotions, moral qualities, intellectual activities, states and characteristics of a person. Among them, a special place belongs to the concept of “uniqueness” (Uzbek o‘ziga xoslik) — the idea that

every person, thing, people or phenomenon has its own inimitable, non-recurring essence that distinguishes it from everything else. In the epoch of globalization, when cultural and linguistic homogenization becomes a real threat, the study of how different peoples verbalize the idea of uniqueness acquires not only theoretical but also practical significance.

In English the idea of uniqueness is expressed by a whole group of lexemes — unique, distinctive, peculiar, singular, one of a kind — which testify to the high degree of lexicalization of this notion in the language. In Uzbek the central designation is the phrase o‘ziga xos, literally “having one’s own peculiarity”, built on the model o‘zi-ga xos, i.e. on the category of possession of an individual feature. This formal difference already at the lexical level suggests a possible typological divergence of the cultural scripts associated with the concept.

The term “concept” came into Russian-language linguistics from logic, where it designated a unit of thought, and received its linguistic reinterpretation in the works of Yu.S. Stepanov, who introduced the opposition of “concepts-constants” and “concepts-values” and defined the concept as the basic unit of culture in the mental world of a person [1]. Stepanov distinguishes three types of concepts: (1) concepts of the everyday world, forming a semiotic system within a people or language community; (2) concepts-scientific theories, which include a scientific theory of the object; (3) concepts-perceptions, which are reconstructed only on the basis of numerous examples. The concept of “uniqueness” belongs primarily to the first type — it belongs to the everyday, naive picture of the world and is fixed in folklore, phraseology and everyday speech.

G. Piama considers the concept as a mental unit of culture, a unit of collective consciousness, which is embodied in language and on the basis of which the specific conceptualization of the world by a given linguistic community is carried out [2]. In this understanding, the concept unites the rational, the emotional and the figurative: it is simultaneously a “unit of thought”, a “unit of the picture of the world” and a “unit of culture”. V.I. Karasik specifies that the concept is a complex formation that exists at three levels — the level of individual consciousness, the level of collective consciousness and the level of culture, where it is fixed in texts [3].

N.N. Boldyrev, developing the cognitive direction, proposes to distinguish the conceptual basis of language and to study concepts as meanings, interpretations and evaluations through which a linguistic personality interprets the world [5]. S.G. Vorkachev, analyzing the concept “happiness” in Russian linguistic consciousness, showed that every concept has a semantic core and an axiological periphery, and that the full description of a concept requires the study of its emotional-evaluative component [7]. These provisions are methodologically important for our research, since “uniqueness” is a clearly value-loaded concept.

The linguocultural approach treats the concept as a unit of collective knowledge that functions as a form of existence of culture in the consciousness of the individual [4]. G.N. Slyshkin built a typology of ways of representing linguocultural concepts in language: in a word, in a phraseological unit, in a paremia, in a text and in a symbol [6]. This typology determines the choice of the material of our analysis: we concentrate on two modes of representation — the idiom and the paremia — which, according to Slyshkin, are the most compact and the most culturally saturated.

Western cognitive science, represented by G. Lakoff, M. Johnson [10] and Z. Kövecses [11; 12], interprets concepts through metaphorical and metonymic models, showing that abstract

notions are understood through more concrete domains of experience. A. Wierzbicka, in her theory of cultural keywords, demonstrated that words unique to a language are the key to the culture of its speakers [9]. J.W. Underhill proposed to distinguish linguistic worldview (the system encoded in the language) and cultural worldview (the ideology of a people), and stressed that each language offers its own "grid" for viewing the world [8]. In paremiology, the semantic studies of N.R. Norrick [28] and the theoretical developments of G.L. Permyakov [29] and W. Mieder [27] have shown that proverbs are the most stable and most culture-dependent genre of folk speech, which makes paremias an ideal material for conceptological research.

Thus, integrating the Russian (Stepanov, Karasik, Piama, Maslova, Boldyrev) and the Western (Lakoff, Kövecses, Wierzbicka, Underhill) traditions, we shall understand the concept of "uniqueness" as a value concept of the everyday type, possessing a definite semantic core, an axiological periphery and a rich figurative representation in phraseology and paremiology.

In explanatory dictionaries of English, uniqueness is defined as "the quality of being unique", unique being "being the only one of its kind; unlike anything else" [13; 14]. The Latin-derived lexeme unique goes back to Latin unicus "single, sole", while distinctive (from distinguere "to distinguish") and peculiar (from peculiaris "of private property", from peculium "private property") add the shades "serving to distinguish" and "belonging particularly to some person or thing". The etymological layer of the English vocabulary thus reveals two semantic motifs inside the concept: (1) numerical uniqueness (one of a kind) and (2) distinctive peculiarity (possession of a distinguishing feature).

In the Uzbek language the concept is verbalized primarily by the descriptive word-combination o'ziga xos, built according to the model of a predicative attribute with the reflexive-possessive pronoun o'z- "one's own" and the adjective xos "inherent, peculiar" [19]. The same morphological scheme produces o'ziga yarasha "befitting him/her", o'ziga mos "corresponding to him/her", o'zicha "in one's own way". The Uzbek system therefore grammaticalizes the idea of uniqueness as a property of belonging to a subject: uniqueness is presented not as abstract singularity but as the possession of an inherent individual feature. Other Uzbek equivalents — yagona "only, single, unique", benazir "incomparable, peerless", g'ayrioddiy "unusual, extraordinary", takrorlanmas "unrepeatable" — belong predominantly to the literary register and, unlike English, have a bookish, poetic colouring [19; 21; 22].

The componential analysis allows us to distinguish the following semantic components of the concept under study: [+singularity] (absence of full analogues), [+distinctiveness] (presence of distinguishing features), [+inherence] (belonging to the object itself), [+axiological load] (evaluation, as a rule positive, though capable of irony). The proportion of these components differs in the two languages: in English the component [+singularity] dominates, in Uzbek — the component [+inherence], i.e. "having one's own feature". This preliminary conclusion is confirmed by the analysis of the phraseological representation of the concept.

From the axiological point of view, uniqueness in both linguistic cultures is evaluated positively: to be unique means to be valuable. However, the measure of the positive evaluation is culturally conditioned. In the Anglo-Saxon cultural tradition uniqueness is a component of the value of individualism: a unique person stands out from the crowd, does not imitate others, follows his or her own path. In the Uzbek tradition, influenced by the ethics of self-knowledge developed

in the classical literature (the aphorism ascribed to Alisher Navoi: "He who wishes to know himself should compare himself with ten of his equals"), uniqueness is considered in close connection with self-knowledge and with the recognition of the uniqueness of every other person, which is expressed in the respectful pluralism of folk wisdom.

The analysis of the English material shows that the concept of uniqueness is one of the most phraseologically saturated concepts of the English language. The following thematic groups can be distinguished.

1. Numerical uniqueness: one of a kind — "a unique person or thing"; one in a million — "an extremely rare and valuable person"; the only one of its kind. These units directly nominate the semantic component [+singularity] and are used as high praise.

2. Distinctiveness through comparison with others: cut from a different cloth — "made of different material, i.e. essentially different"; a breed apart — "a type of person quite different from the ordinary"; not cut out for the same pattern; in a class of one's own — "unequalled"; a hard act to follow — "an achievement that is difficult to equal". In these units uniqueness is construed through the spatial image of separation from the mass.

3. Nonconformity and independence: to stand out from the crowd; to march to the beat of a different drummer — the unit goes back to H.D. Thoreau's words in "Walden": "If a man does not keep pace with his companions, perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer" (1854); to be a law unto oneself — "to behave independently of established rules"; to go against the grain. This group is the most numerous and culturally the most significant: it shows that in the English linguistic consciousness uniqueness is inseparable from independence and even with deviation from the norm, which receives a positive evaluation.

4. Bookish-Latin nominations: sui generis (Latin "of its own kind") and rara avis (Latin "rare bird", from Juvenal's satire "rara avis in terris, nigroque simillima cygno" — "a rare bird on earth, and very like a black swan"). The presence of Latin units testifies to the long written tradition of reflecting on uniqueness in European culture.

In English paremias the concept is represented by the following stable formulas: So many men, so many minds (going back to Terence's "quot homines, tot sententiae", Phormio, 161 B.C.) — "as many people, so many opinions"; Variety is the spice of life (W. Cowper, "The Task", 1785) — diversity makes life interesting; It takes all sorts to make a world — the world is interesting precisely because people are different; Different strokes for different folks; No two people are alike; Every man to his taste. The paremiological material confirms the idiom material: uniqueness is conceived as the natural diversity of people, and this diversity is axiologically positive.

The English material thus verbalizes the cultural script of SELF-DISTINCTION: a person is unique when he or she differs from the surrounding mass, and this difference is a value in itself.

In the Uzbek language the representation of the concept of o'ziga xoslik is characterized by the dominance of paremias over pure idioms, which is connected with the oral, wisdom-oriented character of the Uzbek linguistic culture.

The central paremiological unit is the proverb Bir qo'lning besh barmog'i bir-biriga teng emas (literally: "The five fingers of one hand are not equal to one another"). The image of the fingers of one's own hand — the most intimate and the most similar objects — is used to assert the universal inequality and, consequently, the uniqueness of every person. It is significant that the

uniqueness of people is proved through the body of a single individual: the unity of the human body does not abolish the distinctiveness of its parts. The same image exists in Russian and other Turkic languages, which indicates the areal character of the metaphor, while the frequency and the didactic use of the unit in Uzbek culture are strikingly high.

The second important group of Uzbek paremias asserts the uniqueness of peoples and their ways of life: Har elning o‘z tili, o‘z o‘rp-odati bor — “Every people has its own language and its own customs”. In this proverb language itself is presented as the marker of the uniqueness of a people, which directly correlates with modern linguocultural ideas about language as the genetic code of culture [4].

The third group is connected with the ethics of self-knowledge and of non-imitation. Alisher Navoi in “Mahbub ul-qulub” (“The Beloved of Hearts”) enumerates twelve human defects (o‘n ikki ayb), and the first of them he defines as “striving to be like another, imitation of the other” (begonaga o‘xshamoqchi bo‘lish) [23]. In the Uzbek cultural tradition, therefore, the loss of uniqueness — being like somebody else — is not a neutral act but the first and fundamental moral defect. This finds its direct continuation in folk speech: the verb o‘xshamoqchi bo‘lmoq in the meaning “to imitate, to ape” always carries a negative evaluative component.

The fourth group includes descriptive phraseological combinations built on the reflexive-possessive model: o‘z yo‘lida yurmoq — “to follow one’s own path”, o‘z so‘zida turmoq — “to stand by one’s word”, o‘ziga xos uslub — “a style of one’s own”. Although formally these are free word-combinations, in actual speech they are constantly used as ready-made evaluative formulas, which allows researchers to regard them as phraseological units in the process of formation.

The fifth group is represented by the literary register: the lexemes yagona, benazir, takrorlanmas, g‘ayrioddiy. In the classical ghazals of Navoi benazir is the standard epithet of the beloved, in which the motif of the uniqueness of the person merges with the Sufi motif of the uniqueness of the Creator. The unity of earthly and sacred uniqueness in one lexeme shows the deep axiologization of the concept in the Uzbek linguistic culture.

The Uzbek material thus verbalizes the cultural scripts of SELF-KNOWLEDGE and HARMONY-IN-UNIQUENESS: a person is unique as the bearer of an inherent feature (o‘ziga xoslik); the uniqueness of people is a natural diversity (the proverb about the fingers); the imitation of another is a moral defect (Navoi’s twelve defects); and the uniqueness of peoples is fixed by their languages and customs.

The comparative analysis of the English and Uzbek material reveals both convergent (universal) and divergent (culture-specific) features.

Convergent features. First, in both linguistic cultures uniqueness is conceptualized through images of comparison and measurement: the English one in a million uses the image of counting, the Uzbek barmoq proverb — the image of comparing parts of the body. Both metaphors go back to the universal embodied experience [10]. Secondly, in both cultures uniqueness has a positive axiological sign, and in both there exist means of ironic inversion (English odd, queer; Uzbek o‘ziga qarasang... constructions). Thirdly, in both languages the concept is most densely represented in the paremiological fund, i.e. in the most archaic and most stable layer of the vocabulary [27; 28; 29].

Divergent features. (1) Dominant semantic component: in English — [+singularity, +distinction from the mass] (unique, one of a kind, stand out from the crowd); in Uzbek — [+inherence, +possession of an individual feature] (o‘ziga xos, o‘ziga yarasha). (2) Relation to the community: the English idioms of the third group (march to the beat of a different drummer, a law unto oneself) positively evaluate deviation from the collective norm, whereas the Uzbek tradition evaluates negatively the imitation of another and positively — the knowledge of oneself within the community. (3) Morphological device: English uses a developed synonymic row of bookish lexemes of Latin origin; Uzbek uses the productive reflexive-possessive model o‘z-... which grammaticalizes belonging. (4) Genre preferences: in English, idioms and Latinisms are stylistically neutral and actively used in everyday speech and journalism; in Uzbek the pure lexemes yagona, benazir have a high, poetic register, and the neutral expression of the concept is carried by paremias and descriptive combinations. (5) Cultural scenario: English — SELF-DISTINCTION (“be different”); Uzbek — SELF-KNOWLEDGE and HARMONY-IN-UNIQUENESS (“know yourself and respect the uniqueness of the other”).

These divergences can be explained by the typological difference of the cultural codes: the Anglo-Saxon tradition of individualism, going back to the Reformation and to the philosophy of personal autonomy, and the Central Asian tradition, in which the ethics of self-knowledge developed in the literature of the Timurid epoch (Navoi) is combined with the collectivist values of the mahalla and of the extended family [8; 9].

The research is conducted on the material of a continuously sampled corpus of 100 units (50 English and 50 Uzbek idioms and paremias). The selection was made from authoritative phraseological and explanatory dictionaries of both languages [13; 14; 16; 17; 18; 19; 20; 22] with the involvement of literary texts (Thoreau, Cowper; Navoi) and dialectal collections.

The definitional analysis (Kukharenko [15]) was applied to the dictionary definitions of unique, distinctive, peculiar, o‘ziga xos, yagona, benazir, in order to establish the semantic components of the concept. The componential analysis allowed us to single out the components [+singularity], [+distinctiveness], [+inherence] and [+axiological load] and to compare their proportion in the two languages. The contextological analysis of the usage of the units in literary and folklore texts made it possible to determine their stylistic register and evaluation. The linguocultural interpretation [5; 6] served to establish the cultural scripts encoded in the units. Finally, the comparative-typological method was used to contrast the English and Uzbek representations. As a pilot psycholinguistic verification, a survey of 30 bilingual respondents (students of the faculty of foreign philology) was conducted, in which the informants were asked to give the first associations to the stimulus words unique and o‘ziga xos; the associative fields obtained (English: special, different, rare, best; Uzbek: o‘ziga yarasha, qadr, bilim, el) confirm the dominance of the respective cultural scripts.

The conducted analysis allows us to draw the following conclusions. First, “uniqueness” (o‘ziga xoslik) is a value concept of the everyday type in both linguistic cultures; its semantic core consists of the components [+singularity] and [+distinctiveness], and its axiological periphery is positive. Secondly, the concept is most densely represented in paremias and descriptive phraseological combinations, which corresponds to the typology of concept representation proposed by G.N. Slyshkin [6]. Thirdly, the cultural scripts of the concept differ: the English script

of SELF-DISTINCTION presupposes a positive evaluation of deviation from the mass, while the Uzbek scripts of SELF-KNOWLEDGE and HARMONY-IN-UNIQUENESS presuppose a positive evaluation of the knowledge of one's own nature and of the respectful recognition of the uniqueness of other people and peoples.

The results have an applied significance for translation studies, lexicography and intercultural communication: in translating English idioms of uniqueness into Uzbek, preference should be given not to the bookish lexemes yagona, benazir but to descriptive combinations of the o'ziga xos model and to paremial equivalents (e.g., to stand out from the crowd — to'dadan ajralib turmoq, literally "to stand apart from the herd", which preserves the metaphor of the mass). The developed approach can also be transferred to the analysis of other value concepts of the inner world of man (kindness, courage, learning), which is particularly relevant for dissertation research in the field of cognitive linguistics.

The article has presented a comparative cognitive-linguistic and linguocultural description of the concept of "uniqueness" (o'ziga xoslik) in the English and Uzbek linguistic pictures of the world. It has been established that, despite the universal character of the concept itself, its verbalization is nationally specific: the English language grammaticalizes and lexicalizes singularity and distinction from the mass, whereas the Uzbek language grammaticalizes inherence — the possession of an individual feature — and develops an ethics of self-knowledge in which the imitation of another is the first moral defect. The prospects of the research are seen in the expansion of the corpus at the expense of Russian material (which is essential for triadic comparison within the framework of the dissertation research), in the involvement of psycholinguistic methods of associative experiment and in the study of the concept on the material of modern media discourse.

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