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SEMANTICAL AND GRAMMATICAL STRUCTURE OF IGBO PROVERBS IN “THINGS FALL APART” AND THEIR TRANSLATION INTO RUSSIAN

A proverb is popularly defined as a brief and popular saying or phrase that gives advice and encompasses a commonplace truth based on true life experiences or common sense. Generally concise in nature, they tend to have an allegorical message behind their appearance. While there are countless definitions of proverbs in literature, as Mieder in his publication plainly put it “We can almost state that there are more definition attempts than there are proverbs”, it is recommended that we establish a definite understanding of the term that would be suitable for further work in this draft [1, p. 15]. In the context of ethnolinguistics, Bartlett Jere Whiting defines proverbs as “expressions native by origin to a certain group of people – testifying in form and phrase (sometimes adorned with alliteration and rhyme), which holds fundamental truth in a homely language. They are venerable, bear antiquity, and possess the ability to stand the test of time” [2, p. 302]. A proverb could be classified as universal or regional depending on the size of area where it is commonly known and used. Let’s take for example popular English proverb *A bird in hand is worth two in the bush* which means that ‘things we already have are more valuable than what we hope to get’. It’s safe to say a native speaker of English would have no problem in comprehending the meaning of such an expression without need for much reflection, whereas an individual who’s not a native but to some extent has a command of the language would have come across it several times. Such a proverb is considered universal. On the other hand, if we take an Igbo proverb occurring in Chinua Achebe’s novel *The sun will shine on those who stand before it shines on those who kneel under them*; though written in simple English, a native speaker might not easily grasp its meaning especially if he did not come from or were not familiar with the Igbo and African culture in general. In this case, proverbs are said to have a local attribute as they are found in one region or dialect of a linguistic tribe.

The ability for proverbs to stand the test of time can be attributed to their common origin as a form of oral literature of a tribe, which, conventionally, passes down from generation to generation. On the level of conceptualization, these proverbs represent a fixed abstract idea or worldview relative to the tribe.

One of the first things a reader might notice in Chinua Achebe’s “Things Fall Apart” is the sheer number of proverbial expressions. Given that all cultures and languages make use of proverbial expressions, one of the conditions that play a major role in their popularity is their frequent use by authors in works of literature. Chinua Achebe, a famous Nigerian writer and pioneer of the African style literature, is one of those authors. Belonging to the Igbo tribe, it’s no surprise that his novel incorporates a vivid projection of the Igbo culture and tradition. He did,

after all, state that the pushing force behind his novel “Things Fall Apart” was the need to break negative Western stereotypes of Africans as barbaric cannibals with no language, culture, or connection to civilization [3]. As his purpose was to communicate with readers across Nigeria, Chinua Achebe sort to use English – the universal language of colonization – which, he believed allowed his book to be read in colonial ruling nations. In “Things Fall Apart”, we are introduced to the Igbo tribe’s ethos through main protagonist Okonkwo and his village Umuofia. Readers observe the internal structure of a Nigerian community that is guarded, and to some extent limited, by its laws and principles. Elders govern over the life of the community and from time to time seek guidance from priests, when it was deemed necessary to know the will of the gods.

The Igbo as a clan are known to use proverbs to clarify an idea; often they are used to add color to their speech and provide an image of some universal truth. This factor is vividly mentioned at the beginning of the novel, stating, *Among the Ibo the art of conversation is regarded very highly, and proverbs are the palm-oil with which words are eaten.* In Igbo – *Ilu bu palm-na mmanu na nke okwu na-eri.* The last statement is in itself a proverb that metaphorically portrays the Igbo mindset. Igbo proverbs carry the tribe’s truth in images that are readily recognizable to the locals, and since the Igbo are an agricultural society, these proverbs often revolve around agricultural products like yams, corn, and palm. Many of these proverbs refer to animals that are native to the region as well, like lizards, birds, kites, and frogs. All these characteristics will be examined as we analyze the general structures of these proverbial expressions.

The semantic and syntactic characteristics that occur frequently in proverbs across languages may be termed proverbial markers [4]. These markers serve as indications that a particular sentence is deviant from the surrounding discourse, in that it exhibits stylistic and structural adornments that are not typically found in a naturally occurring language. For example: *Early to bed and early to rise, makes a man healthy, wealthy and wise* or *Laugh and the world laughs with you, weep and you weep alone.* Furthermore, from a pragmatic perspective, it alerts the listener that the expression is important in some regard, be that in terms of its use, function, or meaning. Scholars have identified a range of characteristics which operate to effect the concept of proverbial style, among which the most important are parallelism, ellipsis, alliteration, rhyme, metaphor, personification, paradox, hyperbole [Ibid]. However, in cases where these markers are lacking, the characteristics of brevity in the form of a grammatical or ungrammatical phrasal unit could also serve as an indicator. Though these markers are completely absent in Chinua Achebe’s novel, there is something to be said in terms of brevity.

When it comes to brevity, the understanding might be quite subjective because there is no specific word-count that is said to be evident only in proverbs. Which is why in this paragraph, the ‘shortness’ of Igbo proverbs was examined by calculating the mean number of words of the collected 21 proverbs occurring in the novel.

The average number of words in the collected proverbs amounted to 14, with only 42 % having less than and/or approximately the average number. This 42 % encompassed generally simple declarative sentences:

(1) *If a child washed his hands he could eat with kings* (Chapter 1) – *Ọ buru na nwatakiri na-asa aka ya, o nwere ike iso ndi eze rie.*

(2) *A man who pays respect to the great paves the way for his own greatness* (Chapter 3) – *Nwoke nke na-akwanyere nnukwu ihe ugwu na-eche uzọ nke idi ukwu ya.*

(3) *A child cannot pay for its mother's milk* (Chapter 19) – *Nwatakiri enweghi ike ikwu ugwo mmiri ara nne ya.*

Some of these short proverbs also take the form of literal statements that do not usually exhibit poetic devices, and in terms of subject matter, have emanated from observances of what would seem as daily life in a rural, agricultural community:

(4) *You can tell a ripe corn by its look* (Chapter 3) – *Nwere ike igwa oka chara acha site n'ile ya anya.*

(5) *When mother-cow is chewing grass, its young ones watch its mouth* (Chapter 8) – *Mgbe nne ehi na-ata ahija, umu ya na-eche onu ya.*

Complex sentences, containing one main clause and at least one subordinate clause, are found in 28% of the whole collected proverbs. These sentences are by their very nature more syntactically dense than the simple sentences discussed above and tend to be 'longer', with a mean word string of 18.8:

(6) *The sun will shine on those who stand before it shines on those who kneel under them* (Chapter 1) – *Anyanwu ga-enwukwasị ndi kwuru oto tupu ya enwukwasị ndi na-egbu ikpere n'ala.*

(7) *Whenever you see a toad jumping in broad daylight, then know that something is after its life* (Chapter 24) – *Mgbe o bula i huru akwa na-awupu n'okpo oku ubochi, marazie na o di ihe na-agafe na ndu ya.*

Finally, it was discovered that 14 % of proverbs were expressed in the form of short tales with animal characters, surpassing the others in length by having the longest range of words (approximately 21). The occurrence of proverbs in the form of short tales could hypothetically be thought of as a result of the native Igbo tribe's dependence on oral literature (i.e. folktales, folksongs, myths, etc.) before the dawn of colonization. Thus, this property remains and exercises itself in various types of creative expressions:

(8) *Eneke the bird says that since men have learnt to shoot without missing, he has learnt to fly without perching* (Chapter 3) – *Eneke nnunu ahụ kwuru na kemgbe umu nwoke muru ka e gbagburu n'enweghi ihe na-efu ha, o mutala ife efe n'emeghi ihe o bula.*

(9) *The lizard that jumped from the high iroko tree to the ground said he would praise himself if no one else did* (Chapter 3) – *Agwo nke si na elu osisikoko siri ike daa n'elu ala kwuru na ya ga-eto onwe ya ma o buru na onweghi onye ozọ.*

There are many discussions revolving around the translation of texts and the criteria that determines its accuracy. When it comes to translating idioms, proverbs, or certain expressions, this becomes a very complex situation for the translator,

being that not all languages have words that are analogical in meaning. Many words used in Igbo proverbs carry traits pertaining to their existence as a tribe as well as certain cultural aspects and their mentality. Which is why in the paragraph we will examine the Russian versions of our selected proverbs and the accuracy with which they were translated.

(1) *Among the Ibo the art of conversation is regarded very highly, and proverbs are the palm-oil with which words are eaten* (Chapter 1) – *У ибо искусство беседы ценилось весьма высоко, и пословицы служили как бы приправой к словам.*

Palm-oil is a common cooking ingredient found in Nigerian cuisine especially in soups. It comes as a thick red oil that not only adds color to food but softens it for better consumption. In the Russian variant, oil was replaced with seasoning. Though both have the similarity as additions to food, they differ in the sense the latter adds taste to food while the former makes it easier for consumption.

(2) *When the moon is shining the cripple becomes hungry for a walk* (Chapter 2) – *При луне даже калеке погулять хочется.*

A more accurate translation might be ‘При луне даже калека жаждет прогуляться’, as *жаждать* better conveys the meaning of the word *hungry*.

(3) *Those whose palm-kernels were cracked for them by a benevolent spirit should not forget to be humble* (Chapter 4) – *Те, кому благожелатели помогли расколоть плоды масличной пальмы, не должны забывать о скромности.*

In this case, *a benevolent spirit* has no correspondence to *благожелатель*, being that the former indicates the actions of a kind, well-meaning supernatural being (or perhaps the Igbo’s understanding of a personal god), while the latter indicates a ‘well-wisher’.

(4) *A child’s fingers are not scalded by a piece of hot yam which its mother puts into its palm* (Chapter 8) – *Мать не затем кладет кусок горячего ямса в руку ребенка, чтобы обжечь ему пальцы.*

Here questions may arise as to why the subject of the proverb was changed from the child’s fingers to the mother’s action, as the word-for-word Russian translation would preferably be ‘Ребенок не обожжет пальцы тем, что дает ему мать, даже горячим ямсом’. Nonetheless, it’s safe to say that the sense of the proverb isn’t lost completely.

(5) *If one finger brought oil it soiled the others* (Chapter 13) – *Один грязный палец может испачкать всю руку.*

In the original proverb, the subject is *oil* which is denoted as a substance that could potentially sully one’s fingers. The Russian version completely discards the subject and lays more emphasis on the result of an already sullied finger on one’s hand.

(6) *As a man danced so the drums were beaten for him* (Chapter 22) – *По пляске и бой барабанов.*

Though the translator uses a grammatical structure completely different from the original, the sense of the proverb to some extent remained.

In order to conduct a proper statistical examination, a table of proverbs occurring in Chinua Achebe's "Things Fall Apart" was created to serve as data for analyzing the structures of Igbo proverbs.

Table of Igbo Proverbs and Their Translations into English and Russian

Igbo Proverbs	English Translation	Russian Translation
N'etiti Ibo nka a na-elebara mkpurita uka anya, ma ilu di iche iche bu mmanu eji eri nri	Among the Ibo the art of conversation is regarded very highly, and proverbs are the palm-oil with which words are eaten	У игбо искусство беседы ценилось весьма высоко, и пословицы служили как бы приправой к словам
Anyanwụ ga-enwukwasi ndi kwurū otō tupu ya enwukwasi ndi na-egbu ikpere n'ala	The sun will shine on those who stand before it shines on those who kneel under them	Солнце освещает сначала тех, кто стоит во весь рост, а потом уже тех, кто стоит на коленях
Ọ burū na nwatakiri na-asa aka ya, o nwere ike iso ndi eze rie	If a child washed his hands, he could eat with kings	Если ребенок омоет себе руки, он достоин вкушать пищу вместе с властелинами
Mgbe onwa na-enwu uguru, agu na-agu ije	When the moon is shining the cripple becomes hungry for a walk	При луне даже калеке погулять хочется
Ka kite perch ma ka egret perch kwa. Ọ burū na onye ozọ asi mba, hapu nku ya agbaji	Let the kite perch and let the egret perch too. If one says no to another, let his wing break	Пусть коршун сядет рядом с белой цаплей. И пусть сломается крыло у того, кто скажет другому «нет»
Nwoke nke na-akwanyere nnukwu ihe ugwu na-eche uzọ nke idi ukwu ya	A man who pays respect to the great paves the way for his own greatness	Тот, кто оказывает уважение великому человеку, прокладывает путь к своему собственному величию
Toad adighi agba oso n'ehihie n'efu	A toad does not run in the daytime for nothing	Жаба днем попусту никуда не поскочит
Nwanyi ochie na-enwe nkuda mmu mgbe e kwuru okwu banyere okpukpo akoro.	An old woman is always uneasy when dry bones are mentioned in a proverb	Не по себе бывает старухе, когда она слышит присловье про кожу да кости
Agwo nke si na elu osisikoko siri ike daa n'elu ala kwuru na ya ga-eto onwe ya ma o buru na onweghi onye ozọ	The lizard that jumped from the high iroko tree to the ground said he would praise himself if no one else did	Ящерица, которая спрыгнула на землю с высокого дерева ироко, сказала, что, если никто другой ее не похвалит, она сама это сделает
Eneke nnuhu ahụ kwuru na kemgbe umu nwoke muru ka e gbagburu n'enweghi ihe nafu ha, o mutala ife efe n'emeghi ihe o bula	Eneke the bird says that since men have learnt to shoot without missing, he has learnt to fly without perching	Птица Энеке говорит, что с тех пор, как люди научились стрелять без промаха, она научилась летать без отдыха

Nwere ike igwa oka chara acha site n'ile ya anya	You can tell a ripe corn by its look	Спелое зерно по виду узна- ешь
N'ile anya n'onu eze, mmadu gha eche na o naghị ara mama ya	Looking at a king's mouth, one would think he never sucked at his mother's breast	Поглядев на рот царя, поду- маешь, что он никогда не со- сал материнскую грудь
Ndi ejiri mmuọ oma jiri gbajiri nkwu maka ha anaghị echezo idi umeala n'obi	Those whose palm-kernels were cracked for them by a benevolent spirit should not forget to be humble	Те, кому благожелатели по- могли расколоть плоды мас- личной пальмы, не должны забывать о скромности
Ndi Ibo nwere ilu na mgbe nwoke kwuru ee ee chi ya kwuru ee	The Ibo people have a proverb that when a man says yes his <i>chi</i> says yes also	Если человек говорит «да», то и его <i>чи</i> не скажет «нет»
Nkata nwantakiri nke nne ya na-etinye na ya n'obu aka adighi ekpochapu mkpisi aka nwatakiri	A child's fingers are not scalded by a piece of hot yam which its mother puts into its palm	Мать не затем кладет кусок горячего ямса в руку ребен- ка, чтобы обжечь ему паль- цы
Mgbe nne ehi na-ata ahija, umu ya na-eche onu ya	When mother-cow is chewing grass, its young ones watch its mouth	Когда корова жует траву, телята смотрят ей в рот
O buru na otu mkpisi aka wetara mmanu o ga-emebi ndi oz	If one finger brought oil, it soiled the others	Один грязный палец может испачкать всю руку
Anumanu na-ete onya ofuma ya n'akuku osisi, nwoke gwara onye ikwu ya ka o pia ya	An animal rubs its itching flank against a tree, a man asks his kinsman to scratch him	Если у зверя чешется бок, он трется им о дерево, чело- век же просит своего близ- кого почесать ему зудящую спину
Nwatakiri enweghi ike ikwu ugwo mmiri ara nne ya	A child cannot pay for its mother's milk	Ребенок не может оплатить матери за молоко, которым она вскормила его
Dika nwoke n'aru egwu dika achipuru ilu ya	As a man danced so the drums were beaten for him	По пляске и бой барабанов
Mgbe o buka i huru akwa na- awupu n'okpo oku ubochi, marazie na o di ihe na-agafe na ndu ya	Whenever you see a toad jumping in broad daylight, then know that something is after its life	Всякий раз, когда ты видишь жабу, скачущую среди бела дня, знай – что-то угрожает ее жизни

In comparison with the universal characteristics of proverbs, it was found that nearly half of those in Chinua's novel occurred as short, concise sayings containing a minimum number of 14 words, but enough to convey a sense to the reader. The other half comprise of either complex sentences, containing one main clause and at least one subordinate clause or short tales with animal characters as references. By means of summary, we can say that most Igbo proverbs come in the form of a sentence structure with little to no proverbial markers. However, upon translation into Russian, we find that in some of them structures were changed or words were either replaced with supposedly similar variants or completely lost in translation.

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ПЕРЕВОДЧЕСКАЯ ИНТЕРПРЕТАЦИЯ ХУДОЖЕСТВЕННОГО ТЕКСТА: НА СТЫКЕ НАУК

В предлагаемой статье будет рассмотрена методика интерпретации текста на стадии, предшествующей его переводу. (Пред)переводческая интерпретация художественного текста – это важный начальный этап работы профессионального переводчика. В отличие от перевода текстов, относящихся к газетно-информационным, документальным или общественно-политическим жанрам, где предваряющий перевод анализ также не менее важен, перевод любого художественного текста отличается рядом специфических особенностей.

Проведем сначала границу между понятиями *анализ* и *интерпретация*. С. В. Козлов в своем исследовании «Анализ и интерпретация как способы постижения образа символа» справедливо подытоживает суть анализа как ментальной детализации внутренней структуры текста: «анализ дифференцирует, разделяет, со- и противопоставляет сематические компоненты словесных образов» [1]. Безусловно, этот процесс далее дополняется синтезом, без которого анализ немислим. Тем не менее указанный автор заключает: «Анализ и синтез создают теоретический конструкт реалии, но не дают понимания этой реалии как холистически целостного “гештальта”. Отсюда вывод: в гуманитаристике “анализ/синтез” должен дополняться характеристикой реалии как “целого” и “единства”, обладающего не только общей суммой значений, но и “индивидуацией” (от лат. *individuitatis* – нераздельность, неделимость) образа. Это доступно лишь особой познавательной способности – интерпретационно-символизирующей» [Там же]. Именно «нераздельность», целостность восприятия художественного текста является главной целью (пред)переводческой интерпретации.