THE PARTICULAR AND THE GENERAL IN IDIOMS/PHRASEOLOGISMS

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Abstract

The research with the title The particular and the general in idioms/phraseologisms starts with the assumption that the study of idioms, of phraseologisms in general is not a linguistic problem but one that is concerned with the forms of culture as well, on the second hand. What link is there between language and culture in general and between language and phrasology, in special? We have highlighted this aspect through the concepts of "homogeneity", the "continuity of cultural experience", of "the behavioural models" and of institutions. The research also values the concepts of "general" and "particular" in phraseology, concepts based on which a distinction can be made between idioms and idiomatic expression. The conclusion of the study is that the cultural patterns remain the sublte invariables of the linguistic "variables" which are called in general idioms by "linguistics".

Keywords: idioms; idiomatic expressions; cultural patterns; general; particular in phraseology

0. The study of idioms, of phraseologisms is not a problem of linguistics, but one of culture. The idioms are an integral part of a culture, of a socio-human and historical context. They are inseparable of the domain of religion, of the archaic codes of laws, of the metaphysics of a nation. The cultural dimension represents the most valuable way of communication. The phraseologisms talk about the realities that define the different stages of culture of a nation, of another group of languages. Linguistics, the philosophy of a language has diverse objectives. We can identify and analyze common elements of culture, but the traits as well which differentiate a culture from another culture. The translatability or intraslatability of idiomatic expressions is before all a problem of culture and only then a problem of language. If the differences between two languages can be regulated through linguistic conventions, the differences between two cultures/mentalities cannot be regulated artificially.

1. The homogeneity of idioms/phraseologisms can be given by the continuity of cultural expressions, from one nation to another, by the capability to adapt to other's traditions/behavioural model. The idiom *Oeil pour œil, dent pour dent ; Ro. Ochi pentru ochi, dinte pentru dinte* (eye for eye, tooth for tooth) concentrates the Talion Law, a law of reciprocity, appeared around year 1730 B.C. in Hammurabi's law book, the first book of law invented by King Hammurabi, King of Babylon. In order to ease judging social cases, one of the 282 laws is the following: "A tooth for a tooth, a bruise for a bruise, a foot for a foot, a hand for a hand, a bone for a bone, an eye for and eye." In the Old Testament, after the Jews set their camp at Mount Sinai, Moses

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pronounced besides a series of commnads, this Talion Law: "If people are fighting and hit a pregnant woman and she gives birth prematurely[e] but there is no serious injury, the offender must be fined whatever the woman's husband demands and the court allows. But if there is serious injury, you are to take life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, bruise for bruise" (Exodus 21, 22-25). The law is reuttered again in Leviticus and Deuteronomy: "The judges must make a thorough investigation, and if the witness proves to be a liar, giving false testimony against a fellow Israelite, then do to the false witness as that witness intended to do to the other party. You must purge the evil from among you. The rest of the people will hear of this and be afraid, and never again will such an evil thing be done among you. Show no pity: life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot" (Deuteronomy 19, 18-21). Under the influence of Jesus Christ's teaching, Christianism abolished the Talion Law, this being replaced with Christian forgiveness: "I tell you:" "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you" (Matthew 5, 38-44).

1.1. We can see that the translatability of the expression introduces another problem, not just a linguistic one, as the juditial origins are evident, while the concept of the Old Testament ensures the keeping of not only the senses. *Eye for eye, tooth for tooth* concentrates: a common behavioural attitude, repeatable for different forms of culture; this is the essence of the moral behaviour of long historical periods, the common note of communities manifesting it as law of existence and of social or religious development. It is a behaviour reflected on the level of consciouness through the idioms that developed something from the sententious character of proverbs. It is not accidental that the Dictionnaire de L'Académie française specifies: "On dit proverbialement, *OEil pour oeil, dent pour dent,* pour signifier La peine du talion" (Dictionnaire de L'Académie française, 5th Edition, 1798: p. 180) The *sentence-idioms* are part of the stable, translatable and homogeneous junctions both as a meaning and as lexical structure and are maintained in all languages regarding their structure: Germ.: Auge um Auge, Zahn um Zahn; En. An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth; Bg. Око за око, зъб за зъб; Ru. Око за око, зуб за зуб; Sp. Ojo por ojo, diente por diente; It. Occhio per occhio, dente per dente; Gr. Οφθαλμόν αντί οφθαλμού και οδόντα αντί οδόντος; Hu. Szemet szemért, fogat fogért; Swedish: Oega foer oega, tand foer tand. The identification of expressions based on the criteria of "adaptation ability" to other's traditions / behavioural model presupposes a good knowledge of the source culture. The meaning of words entering the components of this type of expressions does not differ from the matrix from Hammurabi's law book. The joinings which concentrate general values are not mental paraphrases at their origin. The idiom *OEil pour oeil, dent pour dent* is a type of "denotative equivalence" (S. Fiedler 2007; 118) in the languages considered, through which they share general

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values and/or common ecyclopedical ones. *Eye for eye and tooth for tooth* had a denotative sense in the text of the law, it maintained the idea of a sentence in the *Old Testament* as well. The lay posterity, the modern linguistic codes value only the expressive, stylistic dimension of phraseologisms. The joins are adapted formally to the requirements of the languages. Based on this type of "linguistic equivalence" (Bassnet 2002: 33) a high degree of homogeneity is maintained on the linguistic level, between the idiom of the source language and the idiom in the target language. In the idioms of axiomatical value we can find the memory of oriental, Indo-European practices and/or ones belonging to the Middle Ages, the memory of a form of culture, the memory of a certain religious behaviour. We use the expression: "The play has been played". The Latin model is famous: "Acta est fabula!" the usage of which is linked to a representation in the ancient theatre. The *sentence idioms* do not belong to some linguistic system, but also to cultural codes. The fact does not remain without consequences on the study of language: the idiomatic expressions, such as (the selection is aleatory) Ro. "Vodă da şi hâncu ba", Ro. "a umbla de dorul lelii / de frunza frăsinelului" puts the problem of intraductibility, of the structural semantic differences within the linguistic systems; the non-idiomatic expressions are translatable; the idiomatic expressions confer the conceptual model particular and specific values; the non-idiomatic expressions have general and/or specialized values (jurifical, scientific etc.); idiomatic expressions always have a metaphorical model; the conceptual model of non-idiomatic expressions is not *ad fontes* metaphorical, the structural elements are based on denominative value. "Total eqiuivalence" or "partial equivalence" (in traductology) depends on two aspects: on the conceptual, metaphorical model on the one hand, on the denotative value on the other; on the particular and/or general incidence of the model in the source language. The meanings of the words *eye, tooth* overlap in case we have in mind the Romanic, Germanic, Slavic languages. It is an overlap possible due to the monosemantic characted of the *eye* and *tooth* lexemes. That is the origin of lexical and semantic similarities. The ingormation of the expression is of a cultural nature. Under the stylistic aspect "Eye for eye and tooth for tooth" does not have a high index of expressivity, fact that excludes it from the category of idioms, the dominance of which is the pronounced expressivity (compared strictly under the aspect of stylistic effects with: Ro. "a vedea (pe cineva) Sfântul" ('to be unlucky'), "a tăia frunze la câini" ('to do something unnecessary'), "se face luntre şi punte" ('to try everything')etc.) The expression does not put the problem of discrepancy between "cultures" even if typologically we speak about a lay code of laws and a Christian religious code, given the general, human, social and cultural contexts.

2. The idiomatic expressions confer the conceptual model of the eyes particular and specific values of one language to another. Two are the examples we refer to. The first one is "Avoir bon pied, bon œil", (to have an air of health). In the Middel Ages the variant "bon oeil" was used, which means honesty, frankness. Later

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on, in the XVIth and XVIIth centuries the term "to go on a good foot" was born where "foot" symbolizes the idea of a quick and healthy march. In the XVIIth century the variant "bon pied bon œil" was born in which "bon pied" symbolizes stability and rapidity, while "bon oil" sight and visual acuteness. The idiomatic expression "voir bon pied, bon œil" signifies the fact that a given person is in good health. Given the fact that the idiom seems not to put problems, we read the following in the Dictionnaire de l'Académie (1694): "On dit au figuré "bon pied bon oeil" pour avertir un homme de prendre garde à lui. Et, que "il faut avoir bon pied bon oeil avec quelqu'un", pour dire, que "il faut être extrêmement alerte pour s'empêcher d'en être surpris".With the exception of the Italian language (Sicily) where a quasi-eqiovalent variant is used ("Avìri l'òcchiu vìvu") organized based on the same somatic matrix, in the other Indo-European languages it does not include the metaphorical model of "the eyes". In the Romanian language the recent idiom appeared "A fi în formă" ('to be in shape'). The equivalent used in Holland "Van zessen klaar zijn" (*Les expressions françaises décortiquées*) expresses the idea of vivacity based on conceptual model specific to the Dutch tradition. Concentrating its representations on the zoomorphical sphere - "Van zessen klaar zijn" circulated with the meaning "a good health" through the image of "4 legs and two eyes of a good horse". The benefic part of the mythical and folcloric horse is strongly marked, the peculiarity of the Dutch culture being individualized through their own patterns. In the Spanish language the association of the ennunciation "Estar más sano que una manzana" with the idea of vivacity has been made in the sphere of the symbols offered by the vegetal kingdom, present in all of Western Europe. The *apple* is a symbol of plenary life, of health. The expression has exceeded the negative representation of the first Christians in the *Holy Scripture*, the apple is the fruit "of knowledge and sin" as well as that of the Graeko-Latin mentality. [In the Greek tradition the Apple of Discord, given by Paris to Aphrodite represented the pretext of the Trojan war. In the Latin language "malus" means "apple" but also "bad"].

2.1. The second idiomatic expression is the French *À l'œil*. In the first part of the XIXth century *À l'œil* circulated in France with the meaning of "credit" in the domain of commercial relations. Duneton (1990) considered that the meaning of "credit" "on credit" has circulated a ling time parallel to the acception of "free". A merchant did not accepted to credit someone he did not know. If appearances made a good impression, at first sight, the newcomer gained the trust of the merchant. In researching the meaning of "credit" the expression has, the French sourses appealed to an old practice of merchants, in which in order to account for the debts of the clients they used wooden sticks they marked with a knife with a /v/ shape for every debt. The poor recieved bread based on the quantum of their credits. This sign was compared later on with two eyes. Here one should look for (Duneton 1990) the meaning of 'credit', 'for credit' of the expression *À l'œil*. After the alphabetization of the population the wooden stick for the credits disappeared, being replaced by a

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natural stone board. Out of the significance of credit the French linguistic sourses retain the development of other idiomatic expressions, such as: "avoir une ardoise chez quelqu'un"', "faire (ouvrir) un œil à quelqu`un" (with the meaning of opening a credit), "fermer (crever) l`œil à quelqu`un" (to refuse someone a credit). The last two are not used in conteporary French language. The conceptual model of the *eye* used in expressions with the meaning of "free/credit" cannot be found in idiomatic expressions of other Romance languages, only by chance: It. *A ufo* / A sbafo; Sp. *Ir de gorra/ Por la cara, por el morro*;). In the Romanian language we have the expression "Pe ochi frumoşi" (for the nice eyes, meaning 'free, for nothing'), a linguistic calque from the Slavic languages: Sk. *Pre pekné oci* (on line Slovakian - Romanian dictionary), Pl. *Na ładne oczy/ Na piękne oczy* (on line Polish-Romanian dictionary).

In this complex domain of phraseology culture remains one of the subtle invariants of linguistic "variables" we call idioms through the need to know our own human species; the need of a nation / a socio-historical group to establish intercultural relations; the need of the human being to understand phenomena through their own cultural and religious matrix. If in the language we cannot speak about equivalence nor about perfect synonymy, we canot speak abot a symmetry of languages, especially the conceptual models, the cultural patters etc. remain on the other hand the secondary dimensions, able to descifre the causes (even if only partially!).

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