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Comparative language analysis as a possible support for the national character studies

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The issue of national character has been a subject to discussion since the times of 18-19th centuries when first systematical approach to studying the phenomenon appeared. The categories to be taken into consideration when talking about the national character and the term definition still do vary. The reason is partly the main sphere of scientific interest of the researcher. Furthermore the very existence of the national character is being continuously questioned.

Yet the controversy of the subject and skepticism concerning its essence originates most definitely from the common humanities' weak point which is a hardly defined method of studying it and verifying the results [4]. The sources for the information related to national character can also be classified as rather specific. S.G. Ter-Minasova defines the following ones: international jokes, national classical literature, folklore and national language [3]. Thus the consideration of these sources constitutes one of the methods of studying national character. A special emphasis is made on one of the 4 sources of information about national character and cultural studies which is put by S.G. Ter-Minasova apart from others and is perhaps examined more thoroughly. This source is the language regarded as preserving and reflecting the national values and specific national character traits [3]. The author then suggests the idea that the process of studying a language in search of national character can benefit significantly from involving a comparative method into it. The principle of comparison and relativism is also developed in one of the most widely used definitions of national character given by T.G. Stefanenko [2].

Following the steps of the researchers mentioned above the author of this article applied a relevant linguistic material to studying the influence of national character on the style of traditional architecture. The lexical units and materials under analysis were the words "home" in English language and "дом" in Russian and the peculiarities of the definitions given. The dictionaries used were Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary on-line and Большой толковый словарь русского языка под редакцией С.А. Кузнецова on-line [1, 8, 7].

As a result the following observations have been made. The meaning of the lexical units under discussion can be divided into several categories.

The first one deals with the meanings that are the same for both languages:

English: 1. home as a house or apartment; 2. home as the country; 3. home as a place of origin; 4. home as a type of family you come from [6].

Russian: 1. Здание, строение, предназначенное для жилья, для размещения различных учреждений и предприятий. 2. О месте жительства, работы и т.п., ставшем для человека родным, своим. 3. Семья, люди, живущие вместе, одним хозяйством. 4. Род, фамилия; поколение [1, 7].

The next one contains lexical units with the meaning that might portray the peculiarities of national character. In English language the dominating component can be defined as *successfully finishing something*. For example: *home strait, home in on something/somebody, drive your message home, be home and dry, be home free, be/feel at home, press home your advantage* etc. In Russian the most distinctive feature of lexical units with the word “дом” is the component of people’s unity at one place. *Дом* can mean: 1. people living in one house: *The whole home came to participate in the meeting.*; 2. a place housing people united under the similar living conditions, interests etc. *Our motherland is our common home.*; 3. family or a group of people who live and run the household together. *To be homes-acquainted; To live one home with someone (to run the household together).*; *To lose touch with one’s home (turn up at home rarely, be indifferent to the home business)*. 4. an establishment uniting people by the common (professional) interests. *Officers’ home. Culture home* [1, 7].

Turning to the national character studies we come across the assumptions like “An Englishman’s home is the centre of his universe”, “... he values it [home] above all things”, and finally “In truth the English do not often invite you into their homes [preferring to meet in cafés or restaurants]” (Pavlovskaya, 2005, 88-89). Having taken such ideas into consideration the meaning of idioms like *bring something home to somebody – to make someone understand something much more clearly than they did before, especially something unpleasant; come home to somebody – If something comes home to someone, they understand it clearly* appears to be very true to life [6].

Concerning Russian cultural studies we can find an idea that the community has always been the base and premise of its every member existence [2]. The hypothesis that individualism is very untypical of Russians can possibly be justified by the semi-formal Russian expression used to say that one is going crazy – *He все дома у кого-либо* (*One’s all are not at home*), i.d. a person is going mad if not all of the dear ones are at home.

From these results we can conclude that:

- we can verify the culture through the language;
- idioms can give us some knowledge about values, norms and the history of the nation;
- language could be involved into cultural studies as a possible support for the theories about national character;
- a comparative study provides us with a wider field for research;
- the real differences in cultures turn up when it comes to translating the phraseology.

However, the problem of defining methods concerning the national character studies goes far beyond the present research.

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