

ПРОБЛЕМЫ МЕЖКУЛЬТУРНОЙ КОММУНИКАЦИИ

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CONTRASTIVE ANALYSIS OF LEXICAL MEANS CREATING IMAGES AND CHARACTERS IN ENGLISH AND CHINESE LULLABIES

Lullabies have recently become an object of intensive interdisciplinary studies: psychologists study their therapeutic effect and ability to support mother-infant relationship; cognitive educationalists view lullabies as means of improving mental capability and cognition in language acquisition; folklorists regard lullabies as the important material that is passed down by tradition; linguists may study lyrics of lullabies as a special literary genre, etc.

The major goal of the current linguistic study is revealing the lexical means of the lyrics of the most well-known English and Chinese lullabies creating linguocultural specific images and characters as well as their contrastive study in order to determine cross-language similarities and differences.

To achieve this goal, the following tasks are to be fulfilled:

- 1) to create concordances of lexemes of the most famous English and Chinese lullabies and to analyze them from the cross-language perspective;
- 2) to identify the lexical means of creating the main images and characters of the most famous English and Chinese lullabies and describe their similarities and differences;
- 3) to establish the main linguocultural factors that contribute to the similarities and differences in images and characters of the most famous English and Chinese lullabies.

Lyrics of ten English and ten Chinese most popular (according to the Internet data) lullabies became the material of the study. These lullabies present a vast historical, territorial, and cultural span of memorized and reproducible chunks of texts that influence mentality of the people since their birth.

As for the English lullabies, five of them are of British origin, and five – of North American, namely, the USA. Most of them originally were lullabies going back to the XV–XIX centuries; some originated as nursery rhymes, ballads or Christian church hymns.

The ten selected Chinese lullabies are from different parts of China. Most of them are local dialect folksongs not related to religion, and the date of their origin is unknown.

The results obtained and their discussion.

The quantitative analysis of the vocabulary used in the English lullabies under study shows that their corpus of them is not great: there are only 334 words, on average 33,4 different words per a cradle song, which is quite a good word-stock for a mother's monolog with a baby. However, the lullabies are quite long songs,

the words and sentences with them are usually repeated, which is very good from the educational and psychological points of view, so the total number of words in the ten English cradle songs are 1334, 133,4 words per one lullaby.

As for the Chinese lullabies, the quantitative data there are comparable, even taking into account the language structure differences. There are 1519 Chinese characters in all of them, or 266 unique Chinese characters (or phrases) without repetition, on average 26,6 unique words per a cradle song. (It should be noted that the problem what segment of speech is to be regarded as word is especially difficult in Chinese. Sometimes one single character can denote a concept. Sometimes a concept is presented by two or more characters combined).

The word frequency analysis of the English lullabies (except functional words like articles, auxiliaries, modals, etc. that were excluded from the contrastive analysis as there are no such words in Chinese) reveals the following data. The most frequent words in English lullabies are verbs, then go adjectives and adverbs, and finally nouns. These data are in inverse proportion to the total number of words of different parts of speech in English: the most numerous are nouns and the less numerous is the class of verbs. However, these data correspond to the general frequency of notional words of different parts of speech in English: the most frequently words used in speech are verbs which are the least in number.

This situation with word frequency of the English lullabies is different in the Chinese cradle songs. Though determination of the part-of-speech meaning of the Chinese words is problematic due to their typological characteristics, it turned out that the most frequent words in the Chinese lullabies are entity words, then quality words, and only after that go words denoting action. One more factor that contributes to the high frequency of words denoting entities (nouns) is that Chinese people often prefer to use nouns instead of pronouns.

The vocabulary corpus of the studied English lullabies of 334 lexical units was checked in the list of the first 1000 most frequently used words in the English Web 2021 corpora, and it revealed a surprising fact that only 33 % of the lullaby words were found in this 1.000 most frequent words in modern English. So, they are not made up of the most frequently used words, as one may think. The factors that contribute to this situation may be numerous and related to linguistic and extralinguistic ones. For example, some of the cradle songs, though addressed to the babies, express complex feelings and thoughts of the caregivers, and include less frequent vocabulary, like Hushabye Mountain or Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star. Then, some of the lullabies them include many local dialect words as Suo Gân. And then, some of the words and word combinations went out of fashion and are not frequently used any more, like peace attend thee; now these words perform an expressed poetic function.

The situation concerning the correlation of the most frequent words in the Chinese lullabies and the most frequent words in the Chinese language is similar: not all the words from the cradle songs enter the list of 1,000 most frequently used words in Modern Chinese.

The thematic characteristics of lullaby words in both the languages are similar: they name the concepts HUMAN BEINGS (family members, professions, body parts); ANIMALS; FLORA; NATURE OBJECTS; MAN-MADE OBJECTS (ARTEFACTS); MOTION; EVERY-DAY ACTIVITIES; COMMUNICATION; SIZE; COLOUR; EVALUATION, etc.

However, each of these groups may include different words in English and Chinese lullabies for structural-systemic and linguocultural reasons, and their frequency of usage may also be different.

Thus, the thematic group of words naming MEMBERS OF THE FAMILY is less representative in the English lullabies than in the Chinese ones (no siblings and no members of the extended families are mentioned in the English songs while relatives and siblings are very important for the Chinese culture). But the group of words naming OCCUPATION (traveller, sailor, master etc.) is more representative than the correlated group in the Chinese lullabies.

Both in the English and Chinese lullabies there are many words naming the concept ANIMAL. But this group is more numerous and diverse in the English lullabies (sheep; goat; lamb; horse; bull, etc.) which points to a more dominating position of animal husbandry in the English-speaking countries than in the former China, focusing mainly on growing such field crops as rice and more seldom cotton. Some names of animals are used both in English and Chinese lullabies, like cat, horse, cattle, dog, however, they are more frequently used in English lullabies.

Words describing the lullaby characters, like baby, night, star, moon, cradle, cry, sleep, etc. are universal. And there are also many words that are important for the image creation but are culturally coloured and used only either in the English lullabies (as those related to Christianity: angel, God, holy spirit) or in the Chinese ones (rice, gold yuanbao, steamed bun)

In conclusion, we may say, that though lullabies as a folklore genre is universal, vocabulary analysis of the lyric of the English and Chinese lullabies exhibit their pronounced national differences concerning the list of words describing the main characters, their actions and qualities, the frequency of usage of these words, and their collocations.

These cradle songs English and Chinese babies may listen daily, and thus, by and by, the lullabies contribute to children's education and to construction of their nationally coloured ethnolinguistic worldview.