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CURSES AS A UKRAINIAN CULTURAL TRADITION

Curses constitute a significant part of cultural life of the Ukrainian people. This study aims to analyze curses as a Ukrainian cultural tradition and trace their roots. The author suggests that all curses can be divided at least in three groups: curses which are closely associated with the country's culture, traditions, customs, history, mythology, superstitions and religion; curses that have no specific cultural root; "tricky" curses used for playful purposes. Almost all curses are context-dependent. The article argues that the major sociocultural functions of curses are pedagogical or didactic, therapeutic and regulative. It is also shown that nowadays curses continue to be used in all spheres of life.

Keywords: curses, the Ukrainian language, culture, traditions, customs.

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Злопожелания как украинская культурная традиция

Злопожелания составляют определенную часть фольклорного наследия украинского народа. Целью данного исследования является анализ проклятий как украинской культурной традиции и выявление их истоков. Автор предполагает, что все проклятия можно разделить как минимум на три группы: вербальные формулы, которые очень тесно связаны с культурой, традициями, обычаями, историей, мифологией, суевериями и религией украинцев; проклятия, которые не имеют ярко выраженного культурного корня; "шуточные" проклятия, которые употребляются в речи для достижения юмористической цели. Значение того или иного проклятия зависит от контекста. В статье утверждается, что основные социокультурные функции проклятий – это педагогическая, или дидактическая, терапевтическая и регулятивная. Также показано, что в настоящее время проклятия продолжают активно использоваться во всех сферах жизни.

Ключевые слова: проклятия, украинский язык, культура, традиции, обычаи.

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Ліхі побажання як українська культурна традиція

Прокльони – частина фольклорної спадщини українського народу. Метою даного дослідження є аналіз прокльонів як української культурної традиції та виявлення їх витоків. Автор припускає, що всі прокльони можна розділити як мінімум на три групи: вербальні формули, які дуже тісно пов'язані з культурою, традиціями, звичаями, історією, мифологією, забобонами і релігією українців; прокльони, які не мають яскраво вираженого культурного коріння; "жартівливі" прокльони, які вживаються у мові для досягнення гумористичної мети. Значення прокльонів залежить від контексту. У статті стверджується, що основні соціокультурні функції прокльонів – це педагогічна, або дидактична, терапевтична і регулятивна. Також показано, що й сьогодні прокльони продовжують активно використовувати в усіх сферах життя.

Ключові слова: прокльони, українська мова, культура, традиції, звичаї.

The relationship between culture and language has been a subject of great interest among linguists for a long time. The first to argue that it is not possible to understand language without knowledge of culture was E. Sapir [8, 207]. Further his idea was developed by B. Whorf and is known as the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis stating that the way people think is strongly affected by their native languages [5]. D. Hymes proposed "ethnography of communication" to describe a new approach to understanding language in use which allowed researchers to connect linguistic forms with cultural practices. The scholar argues that "speakers of a language in particular communities are able to communicate with each other in a manner which is not only correct but also appropriate to the socio-cultural context" [3, 125]. More recent studies by Duranti [2], Saville-Troike [9], Schepher-Hughes [10] have established a base for sociologists, ethnographers, linguists to explore the relationships between culture, thought, and language. In particular, Saville-Troike argues that one of the best means by which to gain understanding of one's own "ways of speaking" is to compare and contrast these ways with others, a process that can reveal that many of the communicative practices assumed to be "natural" or "logical" are in fact as culturally unique and conventional as the language code itself [9, 3]. In this study, Ukrainian curse utterances will be discussed as a cultural phenomenon to provide useful data for cross-cultural research. We believe that this study will make a valuable contribution to the discussion of how the language operates in culture.

The subject of curses does generate the scholarly interest within philosophy, psychology, neurology, linguistics but none of them can present a whole picture to explain why people curse and what factors underlie this phenomenon. In particular, Timothy Jay believes that "contemporary theories ignore the emotional intensification that curse words produce in language, as well as the issues involved in cursing" [4, 18]. In his book, the author employs a Neuro-Psycho-Social Theory of cursing that "integrates three broad aspects of human behavior: neurological control, psychological restraints, and socio-cultural restrictions" as "an act of cursing cannot be understood without considering simultaneously all three of the dimensions underlying human behavior" [4, 19]. J. Culpeper and E. Semino focus on the particular use of verbs relating to verbal activities in witchcraft narratives in the Early Modern English period and attempt to account for the difference between that specialized use of curses and the use that prevails today. The researchers suggest that a proper analysis can be achieved by taking the social and contexts into consideration [1]. According to L. Pavlovska, who compares the use of blessings and curses in different languages in semantic and pragmatic aspects, "pragmatics of verbal formulas of wishes in the structure of ritual discourse is formed within a particular ethno-cultural community as sustainable speech patterns characterized by a special internal form, associated with stereotypical discourse communicative-pragmatic situation" [13, 106]. Cursing and swearing have also been undergone to medical analysis. Thus, R. Stephens and C. Umland argue that, for many people, swearing (cursing) provides readily available and effective relief from pain. However, overuse of swearing in everyday situations lessens its effectiveness as a short-term intervention to reduce pain [11]. The current study aims to analyze cursing as a Ukrainian cultural tradition. The questions to answer are:

- What are the roots of cursing tradition?
- Which classifications of curses can be presented?
- What are the functions of curses in the Ukrainian cultural context?

Curses are considered a rich source to observe the cultural traditions reflected in the Ukrainian language. Cursing mostly exists in spoken language and is accompanied by body movements and pitch of voice; it also appears in conversations in stories, novels and other narratives. For the purposes of the current study all the cursing units have been selected from the collection of Ukrainian proverbs compiled by M. Nomys [14].

Cursing is an expression of hatred or lost self-control that violently injures the target. According to different dictionaries, there is a plenty of definitions for curses. For example, Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English defines them as follows: 1. a swear word or words that you say because you are very angry; 2. a word or sentence used to ask God or a magical power to do something bad to someone or something; 3. something that causes trouble, harm etc. [6]. Based on Merriam Webster Dictionary, this word means: 1. a prayer or invocation for harm or injury to come upon one; 2. something that is cursed or accursed; 3. evil or misfortune that comes as if in response to imprecation or as retribution; 4. a cause of great harm or misfortune [7].

Cursing as a tradition goes back to ancient times. It has been practiced by a great many cultures. For example, in ancient India, Persia, Egypt, Africa and Europe there was a tradition of cursing by using an effigy, which is an image or representation of the victim who is intended to be destroyed. Waxed effigies were common; also, effigies could be made of clay, wood or stuffed cloth. As the effigy is destroyed, the victim is destroyed, too. The ancient Slavs were cosmocentric and revered nature. People believed that their life depended on nature and used the word to subordinate nature to their needs. "The word for our ancestors had a magical power. With its help, people believed to achieve a lucky hunting, to cause rain, to avert the storm, hail and drought, to protect family from evil and misfortune" [12, 204]. Let us consider the following examples:

"Молодик-молодик! в тебе роги золоті; твоїм рогам не стоять, моїм зубам не болить!" [14, 49].

"Морозе, морозе, иди куті исти!" [14, 54].

As we can see people addressed forces of nature and natural phenomena to achieve their goals. When casting a curse the caster also appeals to nature or some supernatural forces to help him to punish the enemy.

Originally the aim for curses to be cast was for protection of homes, treasures and sacred places. They were usually used when the curser had no other means against the person harming him. Curses ranged in their power and effect, from incidental curses to curses that followed a bloodline for generations. Some curses could be easily cast by accident or by simply directing bad intentions; the others required elaborate rituals and much power to cast. An important factor in the effectiveness of a curse was the caster's belief that curses were inevitably fulfilled.

Since ancient times, the Ukrainian people were famous for their good manners, dignity, and courtesy, it is not in our tradition to use rude or offensive words. People were taught to be careful about words they say. Rudeness didn't comply with the social norms and etiquette of the Ukrainians. These laws were established as the essential boundaries of socially accepted behaviour and reflected in folklore. To get this idea, compare the following proverbs:

"Мовчи, язичку, будеш в плотичку" [14, 90].

"Помовчи, язичку, кашки дам" [14, 90].

"Держи язик за зубами" [14, 90].

"Мовчи, глуха, менше гріха" [14, 90].

"Хто мовчить, то лиха ся збуде" [14, 91].

"Млин меле, мука буде; язик меле, біда буде" [14, 91].

"Що собі не мило, и людям не зич" [14, 138].

That is why curses were uttered only when other means didn't work.

In our study, curses can be classified into the following groups:

- curses which are closely associated with the country's culture, traditions, customs, history, mythology, superstitions and religion;

- curses that have no specific cultural root – universal curses that are understood by both native and non-native speakers;

- "tricky" curses used for playful purposes.

The first group is represented by the curses that are meaningful for the Ukrainian speaker and cannot be explained without the same cultural background. Through these curses, the curser appeals to God, forces of nature, mythological creatures and asks them to cause some trouble to a hearer. They do not have full equivalents in other languages; most of them are highly metaphorical and idiomatic.

1) "Щоб ти зозулі не чув!" [14, 77].

2) "Щоб тебе Чорний бог убив!" [14, 193].

3) "Хай тебе візьмуть ті, що купами трусять!" [14, 193].

4) "Бодай тебе той знав був, що трясє очеретами!" [14, 193].

5) "Щоб ти скрізь сонце пройшов!" [14, 191].

6) "Щоб не дїждав ні Петра, ні Павла, ні дрібних святків!" [14, 194].

7) "Бодай тебе не минула Вересоцька гребля!" [14, 191].

8) "Щоб на тебе причина вдарила!" [14, 192].

9) "Бодай тебе грець вимивав!" [14, 192].

10) "О, щоб твою кість викидало з того світа!" [14, 195].

The second group is represented by the Ukrainian curses that are universal and have no specific cultural root for them. People whose cultural backgrounds vary from each other can easily understand them. Issues of death, misfortune, destruction can be seen in almost all curses.

Some examples are given below.

1) "Щоб тобі на світі добра не було!" [14, 191].

2) "Щоб тебе Біг покарав!" [14, 191].

3) "Нужда б тя побила!" [14, 191].

4) "Щоб тебе не минули катівські руки!" [14, 191].

5) "Бодай же кінець ваш був нудний та гіркий [14, 191].

6) "Щоб ти лопнув!" [14, 194].

7) "Сто бісів твої матері!" [14, 194].

8) "Нехай твій батько казицця!" [14, 193].

9) "Чорт би вбив твого батька!" [14, 193].

10) "Най го злидні побьють!" [14, 191].

The third group includes "tricky" curses. Some Ukrainian curses are not necessarily abusive or aggressive. They can be humorous and playful. These tricky expressions reflect the witty thinking of people when using language. In such utterances, "the curser" wishes either good or harmless things. In most of them the addressee's mother or father is mentioned.

Let us consider the following examples:

1) "Щоб тебе добра година знала!" [14, 175].

2) "А щоб тебе муха вбрикнула!" [14, 175].

3) "А щоб тобі копа літ!" [14, 175].

- 4) "А, матері твоїй – индик печений!" [14, 176].
- 5) "А, матері твоїй книш!" [14, 176].
- 6) "Матері твоїй – сто карбованців!" [14, 176].
- 7) "Батькові твоєму – добро!" [14, 176].
- 8) "А щоб ти під вінцем стала!" [14, 176].
- 9) "А, батькові твоєму жито родило!" [14, 176].
- 10) "Батьку твоєму хліб житній!" [14, 176].

We suggest that the major sociocultural functions of curses are pedagogical or didactic, therapeutic (help to manage conflict and release emotions) and regulative. Ukrainian curses signal moral values and exhort common behavior; they are based people's experience and social values. As a communicative strategy curses serve a plenty of social functions: to argue, to moralize, to criticise, to instruct, to advise, to warn, and to teach. Curses can perform different functions and depend on the context and the communicative setting they are said. Nowadays curses are not dead, they haven't lost their popularity and continue to be used in every domain of life as an effective tool of expressing various intentions. They make the language more vivid and powerful and enrich our communication. In this function, curses are used as a developed tradition to demonstrate such negative emotional responses as anger, rage, irritation, indignation, etc.

Most Ukrainian curses are very creative and employ figurative language to enlarge their effect. To prove this statement one can read an extract from M.Fishbein's poem "Prokliony":

Хай стануть подвір'я й квітучі долини
Смердючими купами жовтої глини.
І ваші фортеці, і ваші оселі
Нехай захлинуться в болотній пустелі.
Хай висохне море, хай висохнуть ріки,
Хай сонце, мов свічка, погасне навіки.
Хай овид розтане, хай згарище чорне,
Шурхочучи, ваші дороги огорне.
Хай злива покине цей обшир назавше,
Хай вітер сконає, на землю упавши [15].

As this example shows in the Ukrainian culture people tend to curse by all that is highly valued in their sociocultural system of values.

In conclusion, curses constitute a significant part of cultural life of the Ukrainian people. They can be divided at least in three groups: curses which are closely associated with the country's culture, traditions, customs, history, mythology, superstitions and religion; curses that have no specific cultural root; "tricky" curses used for playful purposes. Almost all curses are context-dependent. The major functions serve to argue, to moralize, to criticise, to instruct, to advise, to warn, and to teach. Nowadays curses haven't lost their well-established popularity and continue to be used in all spheres of life. We believe that further research in this area will contribute to better understanding the relationship between the Ukrainian language and the way the Ukrainians think.

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П.О.КУЛИШ ПРО МІЖКОНФЕСІЙНІ СТОСУНКИ

У статті на основі дослідження наукових праць П. Куліша висвітлюються міжконфесійні проблеми, що дало змогу автору дійти таких висновків: релігійні чинники стали підґрунтям всіх конфліктів, які мали місце в історії польського і українського народів XIV-XVII ст. Зокрема, політика польських королів, здача своїх позицій православної церкви після падіння Царгорода, тобто Візантії, гальмування розвитку православної церкви в Україні низьким рівнем освіти, падіння в руїну руської церкви. П.Куліш показує роль і місце братських шкіл в Україні у справі розгортання захисту української культури та освіти, у протистоянні ідеології домініканських та єзуїтських шкіл.

Ключові слова: міжконфесійні стосунки, православне віросповідання, католицизм, Брестська унія, релігійне поневолення, культура, освіта, Магдебурзьке право, братські школи, православна метрополія.

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П. А. Кулиш о межконфессиональных отношениях

В статье на основе исследования научных трудов П. Кулиша освещаются межконфессиональные проблемы, что позволяет сделать следующие выводы: религиозные факторы стали основой всех конфликтов, которые имели место в истории польского и украинского народов XIV-XVII вв. В частности, политика польских королей, сдача своих позиций православной церковью после падения Царьграда, т.е. Византии, торможение развития православной церкви в Украине низким уровнем образования, падения в руину русской церкви. П. Кулиш показывает роль и место братских школ в Украине в деле развертывания защиты украинской культуры и образования, в противостоянии идеологии доминиканских и иезуитских школ.

Ключевые слова: межконфессиональные отношения, православное вероисповедание, католицизм, Брестская уния, религиозное порабощение, культура, образование, Магдебургское право, братские школы, православная метрополія.

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P.Kulish on Interfaith relations

The article is based on a study of scientific papers Kulish highlights interfaith issues, which enables to reach the following conclusions: that religious factors as the basis of all the conflicts that have occurred in the history of Polish and Ukrainian peoples XIV-XVII centuries. Particular policy of the Polish kings, surrender their positions Orthodox Church after the fall of Constantinople, Byzantium ie, inhibition of the Orthodox Church in Ukraine, low education, fall into ruin