

The Expression of the Concept “Beauty” in the English Proverbs

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Abstract: The concept “beauty” and words related to it are discussed in the present article. Proverbs which express the concept “beauty” are classified according to the object of evaluation. Theoretical content of the article is proved by examples.

Keywords: concept, beauty, category, meaning, frame, refer, national culture, language culture.

Beauty is an aesthetic category that expresses very significant feature of the subject. Beauty can be investigated from different notions and can denote general beauty and personal beauty. For general beauty we can understand the beauty of our planet, the beauty of nature (forests, waterfalls, mountains, etc.). As for personal beauty we understand the beauty that refers to one person. Here we can divide personal beauty into 2 types: beauty of appearance and beauty of inner world. Of course, the second is much more important for a person. In almost all languages there are proverbs which denote this significance. For example, the English proverb says: It’s not the gay coat that makes the gentlemen. Here we can understand that appearance is not so important as person’s inner world, character and intellect, which together create outlook. If person is not so beautiful or handsome, but he / she possesses spiritual beauty, other people respect and love him / her. Spiritual beauty makes this person interesting and outstanding.

In all languages there are special criteria for beauty. Let’s enumerate some of them:

hedonistic: pleasant / unpleasant;

normative: right / wrong;

ethic: decent / indecent or moral / immoral;

psychologic: interesting / dull;

social: familiar / unfamiliar [4].

Every language has its own national parametres for beauty: both inner and external. For example, for Uzbek culture beauty of female is vivid in her black eyes and black brows as for English people blue eyes and golden hair are the symbols of beauty.

Inner world also has its own peculiarities in different languages of the world and it includes national stereotypes, national outlook, mentality, national culture and aesthetics [1].

The concept “beauty” contain many frames such as: fashion, appearance, make-up, pleasant view, etc.

There are many proverbs which refer to the concept “beauty”. First of all, what is proverb? This is a set expression with the structure of sentence and which expresses transferred meaning in short and brief way. Proverbs have national-cultural meaning and their investigation becomes an actual aspect of modern linguistics [3]. The imaginary aspect of proverbs reflects national culture of language native speakers [2]. Proverbs are directly connected nation’s way of living, customs, traditions, holidays and history, geography and sociology.

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Proverbs are registered in special dictionaries which are the completion of folk sayings [5]. Proverbs have poetic features, they are short, imaginary and express transferred metaphoric meaning due to objects and phenomena of the world. They have didactic aim and breeding function. They are popular both in oral speech, literary texts, publicist text, etc.

Proverbs express marks: towards the objects of their semantics. They express marks of person, including beauty. In different languages we can recognize different marks of beauty. Compare the Uzbek proverbs “*Kishining chiroyi yuzida*” and the English proverb “*Beauty is but skin deep*”. The Uzbek proverb denotes that a good person’s face is beautiful as for the English example, it gives meaning that beauty is just beautiful cover and isn’t so important.

Some proverbs, however, denote the magic strength of beauty:

Good fame is better than a good face;

Pretty is as pretty does.

English proverbs which refer to the concept “beauty” can be divided into 3 main groups:

1) proverbs which express high estimation of beauty:

Beauty is a living thing;

Beauty is only skin deep;

None but brave deserve the fair.

2) The second group of proverbs about beauty is divided into 2-3 subgroups:

a) the subjective mark of beauty:

A beetle is a beauty in the eyes of his mother;

Every mother thinks her own gosling a swan;

Beauty lies in lover’s eyes.

b) the advantage of spiritual beauty over beauty of appearance:

Appearances are deceitful;

A fair face may hide a foul heart;

Fair without, foul within;

Many a fine dish has nothing on it;

You can’t judge a tree by its bark;

Velvet paws hide sharp claws;

All is not gold that glitters.

c) the high estimation of beauty and intentions to have it:

Fine feathers make fine birds;

A good face is a letter of recommendation;

True coral needs no painter’s brush.

3) proverbs which give mark to person’s character and actions:

Pretty is as pretty does;

Fair words break no bones;

Fine words better no parsnips.

English people don’t believe in endlessness of beauty:



Beauty is only skin deep.

The words which relate to the concept “beauty” are the following: *beauty, fair, fine, pretty* (mostly for girls), *handsome* (mostly for boys). There are some images of beauty and ugliness: *fine feather, coral, gosling, swan, a beetle, fair lady, velvet, peacock, fine dish, tree’s bark*.

The marks given to beauty can be divided into several groups: a) marks of person’s character; b) marks of surrounded world; c) marks of person’s appearance.

So, in the English language culture beauty is associated with nature and is expressed by images of flora and fauna. In every language culture there are special aspects of evaluating beauty, therefore different marks to it. Being beautiful or ugly can differ in different nations who define the reason why something is beautiful and something is ugly. So, the concept “beauty” as any concept is formed within a definite nation and is considered to relate to it. For example, if beauty in the English language can be depicted in images in pictures, in Moslem world beauty is prohibited to be painted and is associated with spiritual pureness and good nature of a person.

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