

TRANSLATION OF PHRASEMES. EQUIVALENCE AND NON-EQUIVALENCE

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Abstract: Most of the set phrases with equivalent meaning and internal form in Russian and Serbian are found in Russian and Serbian as cognates. Thus, national specificity is phenomenologically embodied in a considerable number of set phrases with partially or totally different internal forms, as well as in the existence of set *phrases without equivalent* in other languages. Criteria on the base of which they are evaluated are as follows: 1) morphological structure of the phraseme; 2) lexical-stylistic structure of the phraseme; 3) functional structure of the phraseme (real or potential equivalence with a word); 4) specific manner of representing the reality (expressive image on the base of which the idiom is formed).

Keywords: equivalence, phraseme, numeral, internal form

1. Introduction

The study we intend to conduct is related to set phrases in Russian and Romanian that have in their structure a lexeme with numeric value. A problem that often occurs during a research in the field of comparative linguistics with a subject like ours is defining the notion of *equivalence* and choosing the criteria on the base of which identity or difference can be established between two compared units. In translation studies, for example, equivalence is defined as translation and translation, according to most of the definitions, representing an equivalence. Thus, interlingual translation is defined as replacement of the elements of a language with equivalent elements from another language or as replacement of a text from a language with an equivalent text from another language (cf. Dejica 2010a, Fjodorov 1968, Komissarov, 1980, Recker 1950, Švejcer 1971). Therefore, translation can be defined as the process of “*reproducing* in the receptor language the closest natural equivalent of the source-language message” (Nida 1969, 12). Furthermore, translation implies the replacement of a text representation from a language by a text representation from a second language equivalent with the first one. Moreover, equivalence is realized by substituting lexical signs from a language with lexical signs from another language.

In opposition translation studies, studies belonging to compared linguistics (contrastive or confruntative), the notion of equivalence does not have an operational character, but it is rather understood as a premise of the research because two structures are studied that are supposed to be equivalent either from the point of view of their meaning, or from the point of view of their function (morphological, syntactical, stylistic etc.)

From a strictly linguistic perspective, equivalence, a key-concept in the theory of translation, is partially synonymic with the notion of correspondence, notion mainly used in the field of contrastive linguistics. Contrastive linguistics compares linguistic systems of two languages and contrastively describes the differences and the resemblances between the analyzed structures. It is obvious that there are different levels and grades

of resemblance between the linguistic subjects taken into consideration in both translation and comparative linguistics studies.

2. Our study

The Russian linguist V. H. Komissarov (1973) specifies five types of equivalence: at the level of lexical units, at the level of collocations, at the level of information, at the level of situational contexts and at the level of communication purpose.

Apart from these types of equivalence, we can take into account the phraseological equivalence whose place is somewhere between the lexical and collocational equivalence.

The qualifier *equivalent phraseme* will be given in our study to a phraseological unit from a language that conveys the same semantic content that another phraseological unit from a different language has. In the case in which source language contains a phraseme that has an identic meaning, identic functionality, identic internal form and at least similar stylistic effects, we can talk about a *total equivalence*. As examples, one can consider the following set phrases:

- (1) Rus. *ухватиться двумя руками* – Srb. *ухватити обема рукама* [to grab something with both hands]; Rus. *в первую очередь* – Srb. *у првом реду* [*firstly*, literally *in the first row*]

A *partial equivalence* is established in the case in which it is not possible to find an adequate equivalent in the target language for the phraseological unit from the source language, but it is possible to translate it by a phraseme with a more general or specific meaning or with a different level of expressivity or style. Whenever a phraseological unit from the source language does not have an equivalent in the target language, its absence is named *phraseological lacuna* or *phraseological unit without equivalent*.

Phraseological units without equivalents in other languages represent a special issue with profound theoretical and practical implications. Some linguists claim that the essential feature of phraseological units is their untranslatability, others state an opposite opinion, i.e. each phraseological unit can be translated into another language. Most often, by untranslatability is not understood the incapacity of conveying the denotative content of a phraseological unit from a language into another, but the fact that in the TL does not exist a phrase with a similar meaning and a similar internal form at the same time. For example, in the Russian language there exists such a phraseme,

- (2) Rus. *на троих*

which belongs to the informal register and is used mainly by men and has the meaning of "buying/drinking a bottle (of vodka) for three." In phraseological dictionaries such phraseological units are usually firstly explained and then partial equivalents are provided. For example, the following phrasemes are partial equivalent:

- (3) Rus. *один в поле не воин* [*one man, no man*, literally *one man in the field does not make a war*] – Srb. *један али сам* [*one man, no man*, literally *one is aluminium*]

In such cases, the illusion of translatability is created by the need that the translator feels to render both the concept and the structure in which it is expressed. For example,

sometimes a phraseme which contains a number that is an archaism is matched into Romanian with other phrasemes:

- (4) Rus. *тьма тьмущая* [*like sand on the sea-shore*] – Rom. *câtă frunză și iarbă* [*literally how much leaves and grass*]

Congruency between internal forms of the phrasemes leave the impression of perfect identity of the meaning that they convey, whereas differences in structure is a factor that damages the semantic similitude.

Phraseological units or set phrases are used to account for the richness of expressivity in many cases. On the one hand, there are cases of *total linguistic equivalence*, calques or adaptations. Furthermore, there exists the case of global semantic correspondence in which variation of connotations is possible due to the representations, language levels or stylistic procedures used. On the other hand, there are cases of phraseological lacunas, problem solved by means of explanatory periphrasis, i.e. free explanation.

2.1. Results

Examples brought from Russian and Serbian dictionaries of phrasemes confirm the fact that more than a half of the phrasemes taken into account display meaning and internal form equivalences, that is *total phraseological equivalence*. The huge number of identical phrasemes proves the high level of similarity between the phraseologies of the two languages. Besides, if we also take into account phraseological units with partially different internal forms – *partial phraseological equivalences*, the similitude between the phraseology of the two languages becomes obvious.

Analysis that we conducted shows that the majority of the phrasemes with numeric constituents coincide between the two languages from the point of view of their content, as well as from the point of view of their structure. This fact is due to the semantic motivation of the real number, to historical relations and to the common origin the two languages have. As examples of total (absolute) equivalences between two phrasemes from Russian and Serbian one can take into account the following:

- (5) Rus. *сидеть в четырех стенах* – Srb. *седети између четири зида* [*to spend all or almost all of one's time in one's home or a certain building, literally to sit within four walls*]; Rus. *как дважды два четыре* – Srb. *као два и два четири* [*as clear (simple) as twice two makes four, literally as twice two makes four*]; Rus. *на один зуб* – Srb. *на један зуб* [*very little, literally for one tooth*]; Rus. *вторая натура* – Srb. *друга природа* [*second nature*]

The differences between the internal form of the compared idioms are determined by national traditions and influenced by extra linguistic factors (historical, social, psychological etc.). Phrasemes that are identical from the point of view of content may differ from the point of view of their form because of specific national-cultural connotations. There are two types of phraseological units with numeric constituents which are different from the point of view of their form.

- a) partial equivalencies – with another number

Rus. *за тридевять земель* [*very far away, literally after three-nine lands*] – Srb. *преко седам/девет брда* [*literally, after seven/nine mountains*]; Rus. *до седьмого колена* [*(way back) to the seventh generation*] – Srb. *до деветог колена* [*(way back) to the ninth generation*]

b) Analogical equivalencies – phrasemes with different structure and whose internal form is based on different figures of style.

- (6) Rus. *пятая спица в колеснице* [*minor cog in the machine, literally the fifth spoke of a wheel*] – Srb. *девете пећи жарило* [*far degree of kinship, literally the ninth burning furnace*]

Among the phrasemes that exist in a language the most interesting are phrasemes without equivalent due to the fact that they generate greater problems during the processes of translation and learning a new language. Additionally, they draw the attention of researchers and even of simple users of the language on the national specificity of the languages. Such phrasemes are the following:

- (7) Rus. *сорок сороков* [*countless, literally forty forties*]; Rus. *не из робкого десятка* [*not the timid type, literally not from the timid ten*]; Rus. *не из храброго десятка* [*not the bravest of men (women), literally not from the brave ten*]; Rus. *комбинация из трех пальцев* [*fig as a gesture, literally combination of three fingers*]; Rus. *без пяти минут* [*<an inch> of becoming a, literally without five minutes*]; Rus. *бить в одну точку* [*hammering away at the same thing (point), literally to beat towards a point*]; Srb. *увео у девет* [*to get thinner, literally introduced in nine*]; Srb. *није дочуван треће ноћи* [*unintelligent, literally not defended in the third night*].

The majority of the phrasemes belonging to both languages are characterized by correlative expressive valences, if they have the same meaning. A fact that proves that there are *similarities* between the conceptions of the world Russians and Serbians have and that a partial symmetry exists between the stylistic constructions of the two languages. Consequently, it is more legitimate to talk about *differentiations* instead of *differences* when talking about the researched phrasemes. The existing *differentiations* can easily be explained by historical and geographical causes, by Russian and Serbian people's particularities of lifestyle and customs, and by their national features.

Russian *phrasemes with numeric constituents* underline some features of the world conception that Russian people have, such as abstract thinking, detachment from worldly things, moderation.

Serbian *phrasemes* reveal an opposite world, a world of practical thinking, filling of the bound with land, nature, realia of the lifestyle, and nature esthetics. Others features of this world are as follows: closely bound with real life, some restrictions in what concerns familial life, household spirit, cheerfulness and vivacity.

One can notice some *differences* between the Russian and Serbian mentioned *phraseological units* from the point of view of expressive potential. Serbian *phrasemes with numeric constituents* usually denote place. Their content is closer to the objects of the material world. Among their constituents are often found dialectal or Turkish words. This is owing to the common life different cultural communities lived at the cross border between Asia and Europe and to the history that left eloquent traces of old cultures and different civilizations on the Serbian ground.

The mentioned corresponds and similarities in the phraseological systems of the two languages can also be explained by the consonance between the behavioral and thinking patterns specific to the Slavic spirit. An evidence that proves this is the fact that

a great amount of the equivalent phrasemes that exist in Russian and Serbian exist in other languages from the same family as well.

The resemblances in what concerns the content and the possibilities of translation allow us to distinguish four groups of equivalencies of Russian phrasemes in Serbian:

- a. *Total (absolute) equivalences* – contain the same numeral and have the same expressivity
- b. *Partial equivalencies* – have the same expressivity but contain another numeral
- c. *Analogous equivalencies* – with different structures and expressivity
- d. *Phrasemes without equivalent* – are found only in one of the compared languages and they are translated by calque or description.

The conducted analysis demonstrates that idioms with numerals coincide in most cases from the point of view of the content, as well as of the expressivity. This happens due to the same level of determination that the semantic of the real number has in the two cultures, as well as due to the historical and cultural relations. Hence, national specificity phenomenologically embodies a considerable number of set phrases with total or partial equivalent internal forms and in *phrasemes without equivalent* in another language. The criteria on the base of which national specificity is evaluated are as follows: 1) morphological structure of the phraseme; 2) lexical and stylistic structure; 3) functional structure (real or potential equivalence with a single word); 4) specific way to represent the reality (expressive image on which the idiom is based). In what follows we will try to apply these criteria to an abundant corpus of phraseme from the two languages¹.

2.1.1. Equivalencies and non-equivalencies in morphological structure of the phrasemes

A numeral, aside from morphological features of the category, has, as a lexical unit, an especial function from the point of view of the content, a fact that delimitates it from the other parts of speech. The special place that it has in the language is a result of the fact that its numeric meaning, regardless of the expressivity, symbolically becomes international in combinations of the numeric notations. Every combination is a different numeric notion which cannot have synonymic relations with any other numeral.

When combined with a noun, the numeral forms along with it a syntactic unit, a single part of speech. However, when they are part of a phraseme, numerals look different. Only a limited part of the cardinal and ordinal numerals can establish a phraseological relation, and these are mostly simple numerals. Cardinal and ordinal numerals have the most frequent occurrence, while collective numerals are found less frequent in phrasemes.

A feature of the phrasemes is that, not only one or two of its components may interchange, but its entire lexical structure may also variate. Phrasemes with numerals

may present various types of structural variation: quantitative, syntactic, morphological and phonetic.

From a quantitative point of view, the most representative are:

- Variation of components (occurs to the majority of phrasemes). Components that can change belong to different parts of speech: noun, numeral, verb, preposition, conjunction.

In what concerns the numeric component, there are a few types of variation as follows:

- Variation of determined cardinal numbers. Examples as follows:

- (8) Rus. *в двух/трех/пяти/десяти/шагах* [at two/three/five/ten steps from]; Rus. *на три/два аршина/метра под землей/в землю видеть* [never miss a trick/a thing, literally to see at three/two forearms (literally arshins)/meters under the ground/in the ground]; Rus. *в сто/десять/тысячу раз/крат* [hundred/thousand times]; Rus. *драть/содрать/спустить три/две/семь шкур-ы* [to skin (flay) someone alive or to take the food out of someone's mouth, literally to take/gather/bleed three/two/seven skins]; Srb. *два/три корака* [two/three steps]; Srb. *рећи две/три* [two/three words, literally, two/three discourses]; Srb. *пала/спала књига на два/три слова* [there are a few people left to do that, literally fall/slip the book into two/three letters]

In Serbian numerals *два* [two, masculine gender], *две* [two, feminine gender] and *три* [three] are often interchangeable. Entering the structure of a phraseme, numerals lose their "exactly quantity". Consequently, the variation of the numeral is possible within a phraseme.

Both determined and undetermined cardinal numerals may change:

- (9) Rus. *в двух/пяти/десяти/несколько шагах* [at two/five/ten/a few steps]; Srb. *прећи у другу/треће руке* [to change the owner, literally move to other/third hand]

- morphological variation of noun cases, of verb tenses:

- (10) Rus. *с пятого на десятое/пятое через десятое* [(jump/skip) from one point/thing to another, literally from the fifth to the tenth/fifth through tenth]; Rus. *в третьем лице/от третьего лица* [(to speak) in the third person]; Rus. *между двух огней/двумя огнями* [between two fires]; Rus. *одним миром мазаны/мазанные* [tared with the same brush, literally tared with the same chrism]; Rus. *одного поля ягоды-а/одного куста ягоды* [birds of a feather, literally fruits from the same field/fruits from the same bush]; Rus. *на одном дыхании/одним дыханием* [in one breath]

- or of prepositions and conjunctions:

- (11) Srb. *из/под прее руке* [at first hand literally of / under the right arm]

We must underline the variation of aspectual and temporal forms, as well as the variation of prepositions that are a part of some Serbian phrasemes in opposition with variation of cases in nouns that are part of the Russian phrasemes, opposition that is due to the difference between the structure and system of the two languages. The

existence of a qualifier (*прва ласта*) is a specific feature of the variation of the Serbian Phrasemes structure.

Interchangeable quantitative, morphological, syntactic, morphemic or phonetic constituents are in a relationship of semantic identity. Interchangeable constituents are used in identical syntactic, lexical and semantic collocations.

The comparison of the numeric constituent's variations reveals both common and differential features. Quantitative variation is an example of a differential feature:

(12) *в двух (трех, пяти, десяти) шагах* [at two/three/five/ten steps from]; *два (три) коракa* [two/three steps].

Considering the common origin of the two analyzed languages, it is normal that there exist total and partial phraseological equivalencies. Total equivalencies are characterized by the identity of the conveyed meaning, of the lexical constituents and of the grammatical structure, as well as the identity of the style or register they belong to. In the case of partial equivalencies, there is an identity in what concern the meaning and the style, while lexical constituents and grammatical structure can change. Examples are as follows:

- Total equivalencies

(13) *Сrb. у један глас* – *Rus. в один голос* [in/with one voice]; *Сrb. један корак до чега/од чега* – *Rus. один шаг от чего/до чего* [a step away from]; *Сrb. знати/познавати кога/шта као својих пет прстију* – *Rus. знать как свои пять пальцев* [know smb., smth. like the back of one's hand, literally like someone's five fingers]; *једном речи/речју* – *Rus. одним словом* [in a word].

- Partial equivalencies

(14) *Сrb. као два и два четири* [(as clear) as twice two makes four, literally as two plus two makes four] – *Rus. как дважды два четыре* [(as clear) as twice two makes four]; *Сrb. штап са два краја* [double-edged sword, literally a stick with two ends] – *Сrb. палка о двух концах* [literally a stick with two ends]; *Сrb. једним ударцем убити две мухе/два зеца* [killed two birds with one stone, literally to kill two flies/hares with a hit] – *Rus. убить двух зайцев* [literally two hares with a hit]; *Сrb. бити/налазити се/наћи се између две ватре* [to be / reside in / be found between two fires] – *Rus. между двух огней* [to be between two fires]

Interesting from this point of view are the phrasemes with two or three variants also, as the relations of equivalence are established in a different way. For example:

(15) *Сrb. стајати једном ногом у гробу* [to stand with one foot in the grave] has a total equivalent in Russian, *стоять одной ногой в могиле*, while for another variant of this phraseme, *бити једном ногом у гробу* [to be with one foot in the grave] the Russian equivalent *стоять одной ногой в могиле* is partial;

(16) *Сrb. на све четири стране* has an Russian total equivalent, *на все четыре стороны*, while his variant *на све четири стране света* is only partial equivalent of the Russian phraseme *на все четыре стороны*.

Identical realities or similar experiences have suggested to men different observations and conclusions. One of the fields that provided the phraseology with *equivalent phrasemes* in different languages is mathematics, associated with precision

and evident truths unanimously accepted. Addition or multiplication of *two with two* is perceived in almost all Slavic languages as a synonym of the simple and absolute truth.

Knowledge of phraseological equivalencies has a significant role in translation as this is the most proper way to translate the phraseological meaning from one language into another.

2.1.2. Differences and similarities in semantic and stylistic structure of the phrasemes

Russian and Serbian phrasemes with numerals are divided in a few semantic-grammatical classes (categories), although hard to be delimited by their functionality:

- Determinative (provide a feature)
 - (17) Srb. *друга природа* [*second hand, literally other nature*] – Rus. *второго сорта* [*second hand, literally second type*]; Srb. *бити раван нули* – Rus. *абсолютный ноль* [*unworthy, literally absolute zero*];
- Qualitative-circumstantial
 - (18) Srb. *у један глас* – Rus. *в один голос* [*with one voice*]; Srb. *у један мах* – Rus. *в одну минуту* [*in a minute*]; Srb. *једном ногом* - Rus. *одной ногой* [*in a foot*];
- Procedural
 - (19) Srb. *играти/свирати прву виолину* – Rus. *играть первую скрипку* [*to be the top man, literally to play the first violin*]; Srb. *обема рукама* – Rus. *схватиться обеими руками* [*to jump at the chance (the opportunity), literally to grab with two hands*];
- Objectual
 - (20) Srb. *друга младост* [*second youth, literally another youth*] – Rus. *вторая молодость* [*second youth*]; Srb. *прва ласта* – Rus. *первая ласточка* [*the first swallow*];
- Quantitative
 - (21) Srb. *реч две* [*few words, literally two words*] – Rus. *два/одно/несколько слов* [*one/two/a few words*]
- Modal
 - (22) Srb. *Бог један зна* – Rus. *один бог знает* [*God knows, literally Only God knows*]
- Reactional
 - (23) Srb. *с једне стране, с друге стране* – Rus. *с одной стороны, с другой стороны* [*on the one side, on the other side*]

From the point of view of the semantic structure, the most encountered meaning is the one of grade (tall, equivalence, reduced, initial and zero, considering occurrence), grade which expresses quantitative value and is in relation with different categorical groups or categorical individuals sems, so that analyzed units can denote a large array of phenomena.

Phrasemes with numerals reflect man's interior and exterior features

- (24) Rus. *от горшка два вершка* [*knee-high to a grasshopper, literally two inches from a roof*]; *два сапога пара* [*two shoes make a pair*],

his behavior

(25) Rus. *в/за один присест* [at (in) one sitting]; Rus. *играть первую скрипку* [to be the top man, literally to play the first violin],

Physical actions

(26) Rus. *сгибаться/согнуться в три погибели* [to double up],

Fillings

(27) Rus. *на седьмом небе* [in seventh heaven]; *один черт* [to be the same damned thing, literally, the same devil],

Events and phenomena characterization,

(28) Rus. *первая ласточка* [the first swallow],

Space

(29) Rus. *один шаг* [one step],

Time

(30) Rus. *в два счета* [in two seconds, literally by two shots] etc.

Adjectival constituent of the phrasemes with numeric constituents is most of the time *первый* [the first],

(31) Rus. *первый попавшийся* [the first that comes to hand]

and it usually characterizes a person from the point of view of the quality. It is associated with the meaning of "the most important" in the following phrasemes:

(32) Rus. *выходить/выйти на первый план* [to come to the fore, literally to come on the first plane]; Rus. *первый номер* [number one]; Rus. *играть первые роли* [leading man, literally to play the first roles]; Rus. *играть первую скрипку* [to be the top man, literally to play the first violin]; Rus. *первый человек* [the top man, literally the first man]; Srb. *бити у првом плану* [to come to the fore, literally to be on the first plane]; Srb. *прва виолина* [the most important, literally the first violin], Srb. *свирату прве гусле* [to be the top man, literally to play the first violin], Srb. *водити прву реч* [to get the upper hand, literally to have the first word].

Furthermore, adjectival constituent *первый* is also matched with the meaning of "the best" both in Russian

(33) *первого класса* [first-class]; *первый сорт* [first-rate]; *по первому разряду (классу)* [of first category (class)]

and Serbian

(34) *бити првога реда* [first category], *прве класе* [first class].

Moreover, it can be a numeral in Russian phrasemes such as

(35) *из первых рук* [at first hand]

or Serbian, such as

(36) *из прве руке* [at first hand].

In a similar way, the meaning of "the most important thing that has to be firstly done" is conveyed by the following phrasemes:

- (37) Rus. *первым делом* [first thing]; *в первую очередь* [in the first place]; *на первый случай* [to start with, literally at the first case], *на первых порах* [in the first instance, literally in the beginning times]; *в первое время* [at first, literally first time] and Srb. *у први трен* [at first, literally first time]; *у првом реду* [in the first place]; *у првом трену* [at first, literally first time].

Systemic relations of synonymy, antinomy and polysemy, which have different features when applied to phraseology, may be found both within a language and by the time of comparison of two or more different languages. The phenomenon of phrasemes variation and synonymy from a language to another is also found respectively in Russian

- (38) *одного поля ягоды; с одного куста ягоды; одного дуба желуди; одним миром мазаны; одним лыком шиты* [tarred with the same brush, literally fruits from the same field; fruits from the same bush; acorns of the same oak; tarred with the same chrism; sewed with the same thread]

and Serbian phraseology

- (39) *бити једна крв и млеко; бити једно тело и једна душа; пухати/духати у један дудук; пухати у један рог; [tarred with the same brush, literally to be one blood and milk; to be one body and one soul; to blow up in a duduk; to blow into a trumpet] девете пећи жарило [far degree of kinship]; шимширова грана са девете горе [far degree of kinship].*

Interlinguistic and intralinguistic antonym are also of a great interest. In antonimical relations are the following phrasemes:

- (40) Rus. *из первых уст узнать, услышать что* [To hear from the horsed mouth, literally to hear from the first mouth] ≠ *узнать, услышать что из вторых уст/из третьих уст* [to hear through the grapevine, literally to hear from the second/third mouth] – Srb. *чуту из првих/других/трећих уста* [literally to hear fro the first/second/third mouth].

Antonymic constituents in this case are *первый – второй* [first – second] and *први – други* [first – another]. This opposition is partially subordinated to the antonymic pair *the first – the last* (rus. *первый – последний*, srb. *први – последњи*).

Due to the complexity of semantic structures, the two languages' analyzed structures are defined as constituents at the intersection between the semantic field of quality and quantity, containing a homonymic element that may be adjectival

- (41) Rus. *одного поля ягода* [tarred with the same bush, literally fruits from the same field], intensive

- (42) Rus. *за семью замками* [under lock and key, literally under lock for family], spatial

- (43) Rus. *за тридевять земель* [at the other end of the world, literally beyond three times nine lands],

or temporal

- (44) Rus. *сто лет* [hundred years].

The interpretation of the number and of the quality related to an individual subject shows that in phrasemes with numeral constituents the quantity can be measured. Numeral participated more actively than a noun in the formation of a qualitative meaning. Numeric quantifiers in many cases do not express a calculation, but play the role of a catalyzer of the different meanings, being an emotive expression of the idea of quantity or order, having as a homonym

an undefined pronoun

(45) Rus. *в один прекрасный-ое-ую день/утро/ночь* [*in a wonderful day/morning/night*]

or adjective

(46) Rus. *номер один* [*number one*]

This fact is confirmed by the possibility that cardinal and ordinal numbers have to be interchanged with words that have the meaning of undefined quantity, as in the following example:

(47) Rus. *в двух, трех, нескольких шагах* [*at two, three, some steps (from)*].

Correlation between qualitative and quantitative appreciations conveyed by the meaning of the phrasemes with numeral constituents also determines their emotional and expressive character. Most of the idioms from the two languages are negative assessments, as the following example shows:

(48) Rus. *свести/сводить к нулю* – Srб. *свести на нулю* [*nullify*].

2.1.3. Differences and similarities in functional structure of the phrasemes

Equivalence of the phrasemes with a single word manifests not only a lexical and semantic level, but at the functional level as well, a fact that represents a fundamental criterion in delimitation and identification of the phraseological units. There are cases when there exists absolute synonymy between a phraseme and a word within a language. Thus, we can easily convey the meaning of a phraseological unit through a word, as shown in the following examples:

(49) Rus. *семь пятниц на неделе* [*rain before seven, clear <fine> before eleven, literally seven Fridays in a week*] – *ненадежный/изменчивый* [*changeable*]; *из одного и того же теста* [*cut from the same cloth, literally from the same dough*] – *сходный* [*similar*]; *из другого теста* [*cut from a different cloth, literally from another dough*] – *отличительный* [*different*]; *пятое колесо в телеге* [*fifth wheel, literally the fifth wheel in a cart*] – *лишний* [*unnecessary*]; *не из робкого десятка* [*not of the timid sort, literally not from the timid ten*] – *смелый* [*brave*]; *не из храброго десятка* [*not the bravest of men, literally not from the brave ten*] – *трусливый* [*coward*]; *как две капли воды* [*as like as two peas, literally as two drops of water*] – *похожий* [*alike*]; *несть числа* [*more than one sand count*] – *много* [*many*]; *по первое число* [*(to get it) good, literally for the first number*] – *по всей строгости* [*harshly*]; *задним числом* [*with hindsight, literally after the date*] – *позднее* [*later*]; *тьма тьмушая* [*swarms and swarms, literally the dark dark*] – *очень много* [*countless*]; *мало каши ел/съел* [*wet behind the ears, literally little porridge ate*] – *неопытный* [*unexperienced*]; *ставить все на одну карту* [*to put all eggs in a basket, literally to put all on a card*] – *рисковать* [*to risk*];

(50) Srб. *бити раван нули* – *безвредан, у један глас* [*with one voice*] – *сложно* [*together*]; *сврату прве гусле* [*the top man, literally playing the first fiddle*] – *најглавнију* [*the most important*]; *завадио би два ока у главу* [*literally to quarrel to the two eyes in his head*] – *сплеткариту* [*to gossip*]; *држати оба краја батине* [*literally to hold both ends*]

of a beating] – *владати* [rule]; *као два и два четири* [as clear (simple) as twice two makes four, literally as twice two makes four] – *сигурно/поуздано* [clear]; *два три корака* [at two, three steps (from)] – *близу* [close]; *бити на три ћошка* [literally to be in three corners] – *нерасположен* [listless]; *као да три дана није јео* [literally as if not have eaten for three days] – *гладан* [hungry]; *дићи све четири (увис)* [literally to blow all four (upward)] – *лењствовати* [to waste time]; *бити пети точак у кола* [to be the fifth wheel] – *излишан* [redundant]; *преко седам/девет брда* [very far away, literally, after seven/nine mountains] – *далеко* [far away]; *девете пете звекевало* [unworthy] – *безвредан* [unharmfull], *бити девети/пети/седми у плугу* [to be the fifth wheel, literally to be the ninth/fifth/seventh on a plough] – *сувишан* [redundant]; *бити на седмом/деветом небу* [to be in the seventh heaven, literally to be in the seventh/ninth sky] – *пресрећан* [happy]; *изгледати као девето чудо* [literally to look like the ninth wonder] – *необичан/чудноват* [strange/curious]; *знати сто ђавола* [literally to know what the devil knows] – *сналажљив/вешт/префрпан* [resourcefull/informed]; *једном у сто година* [literally once in a hundred years] – *ретко* [rare].

However, in both cases set phrases have more expressivity due to their specific structure which we usually call internal form.

2.1.4. Differences and similarities in what concerns the specific representation of the reality (internal form)

On the one hand, phraseological units represent a way to get acquainted with a people, with their history and with the creative power of a language. On the other hand, they are useful in determining the behavioural models and thinking patterns of a people.

Hence, phraseological units reflect a specific and expressive way in which the people live their lives, their interests, concerns and customs, their historic and spiritual evolution, their ethic and aesthetic systems of values. They also reflect the particular way in which different people understand and represent the reality in expressive linguistic patterns. Differences at the socio-cultural level are more visible in phrasemes than in words because of the fact that they record images, more complex representations, although they are apparently abstract. Numbers evoke acts, characters, and legendary situations and bear the mark of the authority that the reference to the community's patrimony gives them. Either the phraseme undertakes the symbol in totality, or it retains only its numeral (possibly along with an abstract noun), the number functions as a symbol and carries the all memory of an exterior context.

National variety of the internal form of the phrasemes belonging to the two languages puts a mark on the mentality and on the national character of the language personality.

Comparative research of phraseological units from a linguistic and cultural point of view not only facilitates the assimilation of a different linguistic code, but it is also closely bound to the realization of intercultural dialogue among the representatives of different cultural communities. The aim of this dialogue is to create an atmosphere of tolerance and to contribute to the discovering of new horizons in human knowledge about world, as well as about the way in which he influences it.

Most of the ways in which the numbers are used today in phrasemes, although unexplainable for the modern speaker, are vestiges of old symbolic significations. Phrasemes in which they appear are vectors that carry concepts and rites from the past, a past well ciphered and preserved in the language.

(51) For example, Serbian use the *није трећу ноћ дочуван* [literally it was not supervised in the third night] to name a stupid person. This phraseme has his origin in the Serbian folk legend about the three Goddess that decide the new-born's fate.

Sometimes, although customs disappear from a culture, they remain ingrained in the phraseology of a language.

Phraseological units without equivalent contribute to the phraseological thesaurus of the world. Their translation by calque or explication does not convey their national and cultural specific. Such phrasemes are the following:

- (52) Rus. *с первого абуза* [from outset, literally from the first dross], *не из робкого десятка* [not the timid type, literally not from the timid ten], *не из храброго десятка* [not the bravest of men (women), literally not from the brave ten], *комбинация из трех пальцев* [fig as a gesture, literally combination of three fingers], *без пяти минут* [<an inch> of becoming a, literally without five minutes], *сорок сороков* [countless, literally forty forties], *сорок одно с кисточкой* [a salutation used in greeting, literally forty one with a brush], *сообразить на троих* [split a bottle (of vodka) three ways, literally to figure out for three] etc.

Russian phrasemes without equivalent in other languages are often a sign of the collectivity/communal sense of this Slavic people. Russian philosophers use for this concept the term *sobornost'* [collective spirit, crowd]. This concept is found the following Russian phrasemes:

- (53) *не имей сто рублей, а имей сто друзей* [they are rich who have true friends, literally have a hundred of friends instead of a hundred rubles]; *один в поле не воин* [one man, no man, literally one man in the field is not a warrior]; *с миру по нитке – голому рубашка* [(get) a little bit from everybody, literally a thread from eachone to make a shirt from the naked one]; *на миру и смерть красна* [company in distress makes (the) trouble less, literally among people even death is beautiful].

National and cultural semantic have a great importance in any language due to the fact that linguistic significations reflect the particularities of a community and of its lifestyle and customs and deliver them from generation to generation. National and cultural semantic manifests itself at all levels of the language, including words, phraseological units and aphorisms. One can even assert that it is a product of the history and the fact that the richer the history is, the more alive and full of content the linguistic units are. It is well know that phraseological units necessitate great effort from the people who learn Russian and Serbian as foreign languages in order to be assimilated. This is due to the very fact that they contain the national and cultural signification well-known to the native speakers but unknown to the foreigners.

2.2. Conclusions

Set phrases are lexical units that do not convey a meaning that is the sum of the meanings their constituents have, but they convey a new meaning, which is often surprising. Therefore, set phrases represent an unmistakable feature of any language that help us to discover the national specificity of every language. Moreover, they carry information about the vision the people have of the world. As Dejica (2010b) states, they “are considered language- and culture specific and therefore constitute possible translation problems” (2010b: 258). In order to render their meaning into another language during translation, it is necessary to find in the target language equivalent phrasemes, word for word translation of these lexical units leading to hilarious or even absurd results. Thus, their translation represents a real touchstone, but the difficulty in understanding the general frame that defines the national specificity can be overwhelmed by bilingual and bicultural competencies.

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ⁱ For more details regarding *equivalencies and nonequivalencies in the structure of Russian and Serbian Phraseological units*, see Mața, 2009:105 and further.