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Research article

Functions of aphoristic units in the Russian language

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Abstract. In modern Russian studies, much attention has been paid to the study of proverbs and catch phrases as the main varieties of language aphorisms (aphoristic units). In this regard, it is relevant to determine their own linguistic characteristics, including functional ones. The aim of the study is to establish and describe the obligatory and optional functions of proverbs and catch phrases as aphoristic units, to establish unique functions of language aphorisms in speech and text. The material of the study includes the most popular proverbs and catch phrases among the units of the paremiological minimum and the basic paremiology used in written speech. The main method in the research is the descriptive method based on functional modelling of language units with the help of contextual and stylistic analysis. It was found that all the basic functions of the language (basic and derivatives) are inherent in proverbs and catch phrases as aphoristic units. The obligatory functions of language aphorisms are communicative, cognitive, nominative and cumulative ones; the optional functions are emotive, metalinguistic, phatic, voluntative, empirical, axiological, referential, aesthetic, and ritual ones; the unique functions are universalizing and style-forming ones. The unique functions of aphoristic units determine each other, are completely and diversely used in fiction, journalistic and scientific-philosophical texts.

Keywords: Russian language, aphoristic unit, proverb, catch phrase, function, language, text

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Introduction

A linguistic aphorism, according to the definition by E.M. Vereshchagin and V.G. Kostomarov, which has now become classical in Russian language studies, is “a phrase which is known to all and is therefore not created anew in



speech, but is retrieved from memory” (Vereshchagin, Kostomarov 1990: 71). The mass reproduction of linguistic aphorisms in speech allows to consider them as “structural elements of speech, or (it is the same thing) elements of language” (Vereshchagin, Kostomarov, 1990: 72). At the same time, linguistic aphorisms are not a part of phraseology, as they have vivid differences first of all in the semantic aspect. Linguistic aphorisms are opposed to phraseology on the simple and obvious ground that “phraseology acts as signs of concepts, and therefore it is meaningfully equivalent to words; aphorisms are signs of situations or relations between things, and semantically they are equivalent to sentences” (Vereshchagin, Kostomarov, 1990: 74).

The most typical representatives of linguistic aphorisms are proverbs and winged expressions (Vereshchagin, Kostomarov, 1990: 71), which in modern linguistics are qualified as classes of “aphoristic units” (Ivanov, 2016: 93–114) and are studied along with unprecedented aphorisms within aphoristics as a separate linguistic discipline (Korolkova, 2005; Ivanov, 2016, 2018). At the same time, proverbs and winged expressions of the Russian language (and other languages) are traditionally described as independent sets of stable units within two more contemporary disciplines – linguistic paremiology (Lomakina, 2015; Bredis, Lomakina, 2020; Ivanov, Lomakina, 2021; Bredis et al., 2019; Kotova, 2019; Mokienko, 2019; Sergienko, 2019; Bredis et al., 2020; Lomakina, 2021a) and wingology, or “eptology” (Shulezhkova, 2002; Dyadechko, 2006; Tepljakova, 2007; Shulezhkova, Makarova, 2016; Lomakina, Mokienko, 2019; Tepljakova, 2020), respectively.

Nowadays, it is common in Russian language studies to differentiate only three functions of linguistic aphorisms – nominative, cumulative and directive, which were first outlined and described in the framework of the linguistic countrystudying theory of aphorism (Vereshchagin, Kostomarov, 1990: 75–78). At the same time, when treating proverbs and winged expressions separately, researchers distinguish a much greater number and variety of their functions.

So, G.L. Permyakov in his widely known monograph “From Proverbs to Fairy Tale (Notes on the General Theory of Clichés)” (Permyakov, 1970) identified seven functions of proverbs as a type of clichéd texts in the oral colloquial speech – “modeling, instructive, prognostic, magic, negative-communicative, entertaining, ornamental” (Permyakov, 1970: 88–89). L.B. Savenkova identifies seven more functions of proverbs – cumulative, qualitative, nominative (Savenkova, 2002: 29–30, 75, 85–88), as well as characterizing, evaluating, recommending (advice) and edifying (Savenkova, 2002: 58, 172).

The functions of winged expressions are differentiated qualitatively and quantitatively by various researchers. For example, N.S. Ashukin and M.G. Ashukin dis-

tinguish two functions – “figurative, nominative”.¹ And V.P. Berkov distinguishes four – “generalizing, nominative, figurative, aesthetic.”² At the same time, the latter (except nominative) are further qualified by him as “types of information conveyed by winged words,”³ and only three are defined as “functions” proper – “argumentative, polemical, humorous.”⁴ S.G. Shulezhkova adds eight more functions – “ideological, appealing, argumentative, characterizing, contact-establishing, humorous, headlining, compositional” – to the four functions of winged words, which were earlier distinguished by V.P. Berkov (Shulezhkova, 2002: 245–254). Apart from the twelve mentioned functions of winged words, V.M. Mokienko and K.P. Sidorenko single out three new ones – “intertextual, text-forming, emotional.”⁵

As we see, in modern Russian language studies there is no unified view on the functions of linguistic aphorisms, in particular proverbs and winged expressions. The majority of the distinguished functions of linguistic aphorisms are specialized, often defined ad hoc. Many functions are not linguistic at all (they cannot be adequately described in terms of linguistics) and represent language aphorisms as a subject of rhetoric, poetics and folklore studies. Many researchers note the functional isomorphism of linguistic aphorisms, phraseological units and words (Permyakov, 1975: 250; Vereshchagin, Kostomarov, 1990: 73; Tepliakova, 2012: 151), although the real connection between functions of lexical and phraseological units to functions of linguistic aphorisms has not been specifically studied.

In this connection, it is relevant to identify and describe the functions of proverbs and winged expressions as aphoristic units, first, in the aspect of main (basic and private) functions of language/speech, which are realized at lexical and syntactic levels of the language system (Slyusareva, 1998), and second, in terms of their identity/uniqueness to the functions of other varieties of set expressions (primarily, phraseological units).

The aim of the research is to identify the main (basic and private) functions of language and speech, performed by aphoristic units (proverbs and winged

¹ Ashukin, N.S., & Ashukina, M.G. (1987). *Winged words: Literary quotations. Figurative expressions* (pp. 4–5). 4th ed. Moscow: Literatura Publ. (In Russ.)

² Berkov, V.P. (1980). *Russian-Norwegian dictionary of winged words* (pp. 12–13). Moscow: Russky Yazyk Publ. (In Russ.)

³ Berkov, V.P., Mokienko, V.M., & Shulezhkova, S.G. (2000). *The big dictionary of winged words of the Russian language* (pp. 11–12). Moscow: Russkiye Slovarei Publ., Astrel Publ., AST Publ. (In Russ.)

⁴ Ibid. (pp. 9–10).

⁵ Mokienko, V.M., & Sidorenko, K.P. (1999). *Dictionary of winged expressions of Pushkin* (pp. 21–30). Saint Petersburg: St. Petersburg State University Publ., Folio-Press. (In Russ.)

expressions), to differentiate functions in terms of obligatory/unobligatory manifestation, generality/specificity in relation to the functions of other set expressions, to establish unique functional properties of language aphorisms.

Methods and materials

The main method of research was the descriptive method based on functional modeling of linguistic units with methods of contextual and stylistic analysis. The material for the study included selected active Russian proverbs and winged expressions (1500 units), widely used in written literary speech⁶, included in the paremiological minimum and the main paremiological fund (Permyakov, 1988: 143–169; Ivanov, 2002: 21–40, 85–138; Kotova, 2003: 125–143, 193–228; Ivanov, 2007; Kotova, Sergienko, 2021), where the main properties (including functional characteristics) of aphoristic units of the Russian language are represented with the greatest completeness.

The main source of quotations from journalistic and fictional texts, illustrating certain functions of aphoristic units, was the National Corpus of the Russian language (main corpus,⁷ newspaper corpus,⁸ poetic corpus⁹). In total, over 43,000 usages of the previously selected 1,500 active Russian proverbs and aphoristic expressions were retrieved by means of search queries (in the form of phrases). The National Corpus of the Russian language showed an average of more than 28 usages for each of the linguistic aphorisms. It gives grounds to consider the results of the sample representative enough to analyze the functional properties of the aphoristic units.

Results

As a result of the study, it was found that language aphorisms (proverbs and winged expressions) are characteristic of all the basic functions of language and speech. This indicates not the isomorphism, but the fundamental identity of the functional characteristics of words, phrases and language aphorisms, which once again confirms the position about the proper linguistic nature of proverbs and eponyms.

⁶ See: Zhukov, V.P. (1991). *Dictionary of Russian proverbs and sayings*. 4th ed. Moscow: Russky Yazyk Publ. (In Russ.); Mokienko, V.M., & Zykova, E.I. (2006). *Let's speak correctly! Winged words in the modern Russian language*. Moscow: Academia Publ. (In Russ.)

⁷ National Corpus of the Russian Language (new version). Main Corpus. (In Russ.) Retrieved November 30, 2021, from <https://ruscorpora.ru/new/search-main.html>

⁸ National Corpus of the Russian Language (new version). Newspaper Corpus. (In Russ.) Retrieved November 30, 2021, from <https://ruscorpora.ru/new/search-paper.html>

⁹ National Corpus of the Russian Language (new version). Poetic Corpus. (In Russ.) Retrieved November 30, 2021, from <https://ruscorpora.ru/new/search-poetic.html>

Four functions are obligatory for the aphoristic units – communicative, cognitive, nominative, cumulative. Another nine functions are facultative for linguistic aphorisms, because they are limited to certain conditions of their realization and/or inherent to certain groups of units – emotive, metalanguage, phatic, volutative, cognitive, axiological, referential, aesthetic, ritual.

There are two unique functions of aphoristic units: universalizing and style-forming. The unique functions of linguistic aphorisms determine each other and are characterized by the most complete and diverse realization in fiction, journalistic and scientific-philosophical texts.

Discussion

The analysis of Russian active proverbs and winged expressions showed that language aphorisms perform all the main (basic) functions of language – communicative, cognitive, emotional (emotive), metalanguage, as well as special functions (derived from basic) – phatic (contact-establishing), conative (assimilative), volutative (regulatory), cognitive, cumulative (storage and transfer of information), axiological (evaluative), nominative, referential, poetic (aesthetic), ritual (magical), etc. (Slyusareva, 1998). In this respect, linguistic aphorisms do not functionally differ from other structural units of language (words and phrases), and they are differentiated by the degree of restriction and the conditions of realization of each inherent function.

The main (basic) and derivative (special) functions of language in relation to aphoristic units are realized as obligatory and optional.

Obligatory functions of linguistic aphorisms

Proverbs and winged expressions have four obligatory functions, which are performed by all language aphorisms without external restriction in the process of their use in speech-intellectual activity.

The communicative function is inherent for all proverbs and winged expressions as units, which exist and are realized only in verbal communication and are used to construct and transmit verbal messages. In this sense, linguistic aphorisms differ, on the one hand, from non-aphoristic set phrases and, on the other hand, from lexical or phraseological units only by their original role and place in speech, manifested in particular varieties of communicative function, as well as in the specificity of using proverbs and winged expressions in the communication structure. For example, the conative function, being a special variety of communicative function (as a function of the impact of speech on the addressee), is realized for linguistic aphorisms mainly as argumentative one, e.g.: “*Well, my dear, don’t hope for the truth! Without one incident here, you would cry with your truth for*

the rest of your life. And that is how you say: don't be born clever, but be born happy... that, my dear, is more correct" (A.N. Ostrovsky, "Truth is Good, and Happiness is Better"),¹⁰ etc.

The cognitive function is manifested in the fact that proverbs and winged expressions (as well as words and phrases) fully participate with their content in the thought processes as a component of speech-thought activity. Linguistic aphorisms do not only serve as verbal means of formulating and expressing thought (as words and phraseological expressions do), but also play a special role in cognitive activity, since they are a means and method of "universal generalization of reality" (Ivanov, 2018: 151). Thus, the notion that life will end in death is formed on an empirical basis (as a result of observations of life and death of other living beings) and is realized in the linguistic consciousness in the form of a universal pattern 'death as the end of physical existence will befall every person,' expressed in a number of proverbs, whose internal form (and general meaning) may vary quite significantly, but they are united in the consciousness of speakers into one group in accordance with their common purpose to serve cognitive and verbal means of expressing this universal rule: *Without death you will not die; Everybody will die, when death comes; There is no guarantee for death; Before death you will not die; If death came to the grandmother, do not point to the grandfather; Death does not look into eyes; You do not need to seek for death, death will find you; Death is not behind the mountains, but behind shoulders; Death will come and find you everywhere; Death will find the reason; Death does not understand ranks, etc.*

The nominative function is manifested in the fact that proverbs and winged expressions, as well as other structural language units (words and phraseological units), directly relate to non-verbal reality (surrounding or mental), so they are means of nominating relevant fragments of the real or imaginary world.

It should be noted that nominativity, which is peculiar primarily to lexical and phraseological units, is specific in its manifestation and plays a different role in linguistic aphorisms. The signifier of a linguistic aphorism, according to a widely known definition, "is a typical situation, i.e. a set of circumstances, signs, evaluations, provisions, but at a certain level of abstraction – abstraction from minor and immaterial characteristics" (Vereshchagin, Kostomarov, 1990: 75).

However, the nominative function is not obvious for units with a syntactic structure of a sentence, so it requires a special argumentation.

¹⁰ National Corpus of the Russian Language (new version). Main Corpus. (In Russ.) Retrieved November 17, 2021, from <https://ruscorpora.ru/new/search-main.html>

Due to nominative function of proverbs and winged expressions, they (both as linguistic signs and as phrase texts) along with lexical and phraseological units are used in the consciousness of native speakers to categorize the surrounding reality (resp. to differentiate the general idea of the world into epistemologically significant fragments). “The classifying, nominative function of language at the aphoristic level manifests itself in singling out, isolating and naming typical situations” (Vereshchagin, Kostomarov, 1990: 75). There is also another opinion that language aphorisms reflect such specific fragments of reality as “principles of connections between non-unique realities and/or their properties (i.e. principles of reality)” (Ivanov, 2016: 115). In this sense, linguistic aphorisms are a unique verbal means denoting special fragments of virtual and/or mental reality, which cannot be directly denoted in speech by any other linguistic units. The totality of ideas about universal rules forms in the mass consciousness “aphoristic picture of the world” as a part of the linguistic picture of the world of a given nation. The aphoristic picture of the world is reflected only in linguistic aphorisms as units of a separate subsystem of language – “aphoristics,” which together with vocabulary and phraseology forms a group of “nominative language units” whose classifying function is “inseparably connected with their nominative function” (Vereshchagin, Kostomarov, 1990: 81).

A formal indicator of the realized nominative function of linguistic aphorisms is the possibility of using them in speech in combination with the words *it is called* (Savenkova, 2002: 85), and *it can also be called, we will call it* as verbal markers of nominating corresponding universal rules, e.g: “*Looked at the guiltily silent Zabelin: – I will try it all the same. And, barely nodding, she went on, to the waiting room. – It’s called – ‘**The rich also cry!**’*” (S.A. Danilyuk, “Rublevaya Zone”);¹¹ “*Another acquaintance caught herself returning home after a marital, god forbid, adultery, takes like a wreck to scrub the floors. **Adultery strengthens marriages** – is that what they call it, I think?” (“Ekspert: Veshch’,” December 22, 2003);¹² “*There is a place for deeds in a peaceful life, so **it is called**. It is unlikely that Storozhev himself is capable of such a feat, at least, he would not do it on purpose, but from the outside he understands*” (A.I. Slapovsky, “The Big Book of Changes”),¹³ etc.*

It should be noted that the nominative function is regularly marked when using not only usual (linguistic), but also occasional (individual) aphorisms. This fact once again convincingly confirms the nominative nature of aphoristic semantics,

¹¹ National Corpus of the Russian Language (new version). Main Corpus. (In Russ.) Retrieved November 17, 2021, from <https://ruscorpora.ru/new/search-main.html>

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

including the figurative motivation of meaning. “The generalizing content of proverbs (like any aphorisms whose figurative meaning is generated in a particular incident) has a substantive rather than a functional nature” (Ivanov, 2016: 117), e.g.: “*They were once again sent to shoot stray animals. And as always, the elder is Danilov. Brr-r-r... It’s called: if you like shooting, you also like digging graves. That’s right – dig it yourself. Otherwise, there’s too much romance around the executioner’s work. But stray dogs, of course, it is too much*” (O.I. Divov, “Culling”)¹⁴ (where the occasional aphorism is derived from the proverb: “*If you love to ride, you should love to drive a sledge*);” “*Here is the famous beginning of the Sermon on the Mount: ‘I have not come to break the laws, but to obey them;’ and here is the end: ‘You heard the ancients say: „Hate your enemy,” and I say, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you and persecute you.’ Isn’t it great? And all together it’s called ‘earth and heaven would sooner perish than one iota of the law be lost.’ Well, what iota is there? Everything has gone*” (Yu. Dombrovsky, “The Faculty of Useless Knowledge”),¹⁵ etc.

The cumulative function is inherent in proverbs and winged expressions to the same extent as in words and phrases – structural units of language, which are used not only to convey information, but also to preserve it. The cumulative function of proverbs was first noticed by Russian paremiologists and folklorists back in the nineteenth century – I.M. Snegiryov, V.I. Dal, F.I. Buslaev (Savenkova, 2002: 29–30). Linguistic aphorisms are a unique means of storing knowledge obtained on the basis of collective experience (and verified by it) about universal laws of reality as a necessary part of human consciousness, the totality of which is an organic component of the national language picture of the world – the “aphoristic picture of the world.” The basis of the national aphoristic picture of the world is a “proverbial picture of the world” (Ivanova, 2002; Danilenko, 2017).

The cumulative function of language may also manifest itself in proverbs and winged expressions in the fact that their lexical and phraseological components may also (both independently and as part of the general content of language aphorisms) act as a means of storing knowledge about the surrounding reality and verbal expression of certain fragments of the language picture of the world, including national and cultural. Besides, the meaning of proverbs and winged expressions as integral signs and phrase texts can be connected (through their lexical components) through associative relations both with other language units and with representations not expressed in the language, on the basis of which “background

¹⁴ National Corpus of the Russian Language (new version). Main Corpus. (In Russ.) Retrieved November 17, 2021, from <https://ruscorpora.ru/new/search-main.html>

¹⁵ Ibid.

semantics” or “aphoristic background” is formed in the content of language aphorisms (Vereshchagin, Kostomarov, 1990: 74). This background semantics together with the lexical and phraseological background forms the national-cultural semantics of the language and part of the national picture of the world. The background (national-cultural) semantics of linguistic aphorisms is a specific object of linguocultural study of language, since it is a set of not only empirical (tested by life experience), but also theoretical (abstract) representations of universal laws of reality.

It should be noted that cognitive and cumulative functions of linguistic aphorisms are often combined within the framework of one function – cognitive, which is typical for scientific, philosophical and literary aspects of the empirical understanding of the aphorism (Ivanov, 2016: 47–54). In the linguistic sense, the cognitive function in relation to linguistic aphorisms is facultative.

Optional functions of linguistic aphorisms

All other basic and specific functions of language (except communicative, cognitive, nominative, and cumulative) are optional for proverbs and winged expressions as aphoristic units (i.e. are inherent for certain groups of language aphorisms or are limited to certain conditions of their realization).

Emotional (emotive) function is inherent for linguistic aphorisms depending on the corresponding intention of the speech addressee, the emotional tone of the context or the whole message (text), e.g: “*You will have money now, I know, but still, let me donate at least a little for the common cause! I can’t do anything else, I can only give money! Look, I’ll put a ten-rouble bill on the table! Do you accept? Nezhdanov said nothing and did not move. – Silence is a sign of agreement! – Palkin cheerfully exclaimed*” (I.S. Turgenev, “Virgin Soil”);¹⁶ “*And who of women of any age would skip classes and discussions, if even their title sounds like music: ‘Several minutes for beauty,’ ‘Let us grow old without growing old,’ ‘Physical training cures’*” (“Izvestiya,” March 26, 1984),¹⁷ etc.

The meta-linguistic function is realized when a proverb or winged expression explains or comments on the content of a previously expressed thought, e.g: “*The poor and the weak are all of us, and benevolent professionals are bribe-takers in the civil service. Nikita Mikhalkov, a man with tremendous life experience and connections, once spoke in a television program. He said: ‘Nothing gets done just like that...’ In other words, if you won’t smear, you won’t go*” (“Sovershenno

¹⁶ National Corpus of the Russian Language (new version). Main Corpus. (In Russ.) Retrieved November 17, 2021, from <https://ruscorpora.ru/new/search-main.html>

¹⁷ Berkov, V.P., Mokienko, V.M., & Shulezhkova, S.G. (2008). *Big dictionary of winged words and expressions of the Russian language* (vol. 1, p. 567). 2nd ed. Magnitogorsk : Magnitogorsk State University; Greifswald : E.M.A.-Universität. (In Russ.)

Secretno,” September 1, 2003);¹⁸ “*This is absolutely fair. I can only add that it is necessary to have strategy of fight, it is necessary to say in popular words that everyone should know his maneuver*” (“Literaturnaya Gazeta,” June 19, 1987)¹⁹ (paraphrasing a winged expression of A.V. Suvorov “*Every warrior should understand his maneuver*”), etc.

The phatic (contact-establishing) function is inherent for linguistic aphorisms with the “truism” semantics (Ivanov, 2016: 123), which in their direct meaning do not contain any useful information and are used to maintain or establish interpersonal contact. It should be noted that linguistic aphorisms of any semantic type can also be used as “by the way” phrases in the phatic function, e.g: “*I don’t have time to do anything in a day || – Yes, a man has two hands || you can’t do everything...*” (Recorded oral speech, 2016); “*As the teacher had already opened the class register and the conversation was threatening to dry up, the fat man (khohol) Nechiporenko decided to ‘throw some wood on the fire:’ I would explain that stupid Polosukhin that he does not understand what he is saying, Alexan Vanych, if I were you. The bank director is a very respectable person, but a wrestler in a circus... – Nechiporenko, – said the teacher, wagging his pencil at him. – That is irrelevant. Sit down and keep quiet. – Kartashevich, who was sitting on the back bench, a boy with a very small head, decided that he, too, needed to delay a few minutes by talking... He strained and in the silence said: – Silence is a sign of agreement. – What? – the teacher was astonished. – I said: silence is a sign of agreement. – Well, what is it? – Nothing. – Why did you say that? – You, Alexan Vanych, told Nechiporenko to ‘keep quiet.’ So, I said: ‘silence is a sign of agreement’ – Most welcome*” (A.T. Averchenko, “Indian Cunning”),²⁰ etc.

The voluntative (regulative) function is characteristic primarily of proverbs and winged expressions with didactic content, but at the same time it is characteristic of language aphorisms with “directive semantics” (Ivanov, 2016: 120–122), as their grammatical organization includes imperative forms and constructions, e.g: “*I’m talking about your beautiful Dusya. – What about Dusya? – with a challenge replied Sutyurin. – You bet, – said Nikolai, ‘I’m telling you as a friend, Sergei: leave her! She’s not right for you, and there’s no point... Chop a tree for*

¹⁸ National Corpus of the Russian Language (new version). Main Corpus. (In Russ.) Retrieved November 17, 2021, from <https://ruscorpora.ru/new/search-main.html>

¹⁹ Berkov, V.P., Mokienko, V.M., & Shulezhkova, S.G. (2008). *Big dictionary of winged words and expressions of the Russian language* (vol. 1, p. 470). 2nd ed. Magnitogorsk : Magnitogorsk State University; Greifswald : E.M.A.-Universität. (In Russ.)

²⁰ National Corpus of the Russian Language (new version). Main Corpus. (In Russ.) Retrieved November 17, 2021, from <https://ruscorpora.ru/new/search-main.html>

yourself” (A.N. Rybakov, “Ekaterina Voronina”);²¹ “*If you don’t praise yourself, no one will either. Let’s say compliments to each other? Let’s do it! Producer, director, actors accepted congratulations and shared their impressions of the work done*” (“Novaya Gazeta,” November 11, 2016),²² etc.

The cognitive function is inherent for all proverbs and winged expressions, except for those which are “truisms” by their semantics (Ivanov, 2016: 123), but it is realized in speech only when language aphorisms are used directly as a tutorial, advice, means of knowledge transfer, collective experience (which is usually marked in the context with appropriate speech formulas – *it has long been known, people say, folk wisdom teaches, proverbs advise, as the name of the proverb says* etc.), e.g.: “*It has long been known that beauty requires sacrifice. And Windows Vista users will have to make such a sacrifice in the form of additional resources of their computer*” (“Nauka i Zhizn’,” 2007);²³ “*Yes, he who has an unclean conscience is wretched*” – *this Pushkin’s winged phrase is known, probably, to everyone. A genius can be trusted in everything, but let us ask ourselves: why is a man with a guilty conscience worthy of pity and not contempt? Yes, because that is the nature of conscience: it judges itself and punishes more severely than human judgment*” (“Pravda,” November 24, 1983),²⁴ etc.

The axiological (evaluative) function is realized, firstly, within the language aphorisms themselves as phrasal texts, where evaluative vocabulary is used (e.g: *Everything is for the best in this best of worlds; Bad is the soldier who does not hope to become a general; Truth is good and happiness is better; It is good where we are not; A bad peace is better than a good quarrel*, etc.), and secondly, through expressing social, moral, cultural values in those language aphorisms, which in their content reflect the axiological dominants of a given national world picture, e.g: “*I did not want to offend you, but I do not intend to continue acquaintance either. – Young man, – said Kotzebue with sudden impudence, switching to Russian, – in your good Russian language there is a proverb: ‘Love cannot be forced,’ and another: ‘Don’t put your neck into a noose before your father. You will have to get acquainted with me, even if you do not want to’*” (A.K. Vino-

²¹ Zhukov, V.P. (1991). *Dictionary of Russian proverbs and sayings* (p. 275). 4th ed. Moscow : Russky Yazyk Publ. (In Russ.)

²² National Corpus of the Russian Language (new version). Newspaper Corpus. (In Russ.) Retrieved November 23, 2021, from <https://ruscorpora.ru/new/search-paper.html>

²³ National Corpus of the Russian Language (new version). Main Corpus. (In Russ.) Retrieved November 17, 2021, from <https://ruscorpora.ru/new/search-main.html>

²⁴ Berkov, V.P., Mokienko, V.M., & Shulezhkova, S.G. (2008). *Big dictionary of winged words and expressions of the Russian language* (vol. 1, p. 286). 2nd ed. Magnitogorsk : Magnitogorsk State University; Greifswald : E.M.A.-Universität. (In Russ.)

gradov, “Tale of Turgenev Brothers”),²⁵ etc. At the same time, proverbs are considered to be one of the most productive verbal means of “conceptualizing universal values” (Lomakina, 2021b).

It should be noted that many proverbs and winged expressions, which are axiologically neutral units, are deprived of the function of evaluation, e.g: *Eating and scratching wants but a beginning; Long farewells mean unnecessary tears; With a dead body you can even prop up the fence; Death will find a reason*, etc. In this connection, in our opinion, it is a mistake to believe that every linguistic aphorism (first of all, proverbs) must necessarily reflect one or another national or universal value in the linguistic picture of the world. Rather, proverbs are attributed such a reflection due to the traditionally axiocentric nature of the subject-thematic grouping of some widely known collections of Russian proverbs, such as those by V.I. Dal and others (that is why the same proverb can be described as a means of expressing different, and often opposite values).

The referential function is characteristic for linguistic aphorisms, which are always used in speech in relation to specific people, objects, qualities, phenomena, actions. Such units (referential) form a separate semantic class of aphoristic units. Thus, the proverb *At least a piece of wool from a black sheep*, but it is not used in speech as a non-referential one, it is always related to the person or object, which is (called, implied) *a black sheep* and/or to the object, which is defined as *a piece of wool*.

The referential function is also realized in linguistic aphorisms in a factual sense, which is a particular manifestation of their generalized universal content, e.g.: *“In vain did we tease him the other day on the master. These heads do not know the measure: either he keeps silent, even if you beat him, or he makes a mess and you are going to have a hard time with them. There is a proverb about them: ‘If you make a fool to pray, he will smash his forehead’”* (A.N. Ostrovsky, “Every Day Is Not Sunday”),²⁶ etc. It should be noted that the use of linguistic aphorisms in one of the referential (factual) meanings may be accompanied or determined by their transformation in speech, e.g.: *“Phew, **the crow is out of place, and the falcon is in place**, she muttered. – You, however, consider yourself a falcon and Mademoiselle Yulia a crow! – Vikhrov remarked to her. – She spat back. – **Falcon from the spot, and the crow to the spot**”* (A.F. Pisemsky, “People of the Forties”)²⁷ (where key lexical components in the proverb “*Falcon from the spot, and the crow to the spot*” are inverted), etc.

²⁵ National Corpus of the Russian Language (new version). Main Corpus. (In Russ.) Retrieved November 17, 2021, from <https://ruscorpora.ru/new/search-main.html>

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

The poetic (aesthetic) function is realized, firstly, in those aphoristic units, which are “the result of not only thought, but also of artistic activity” (Ivanov, 2016: 56); secondly, in the use of linguistic aphorisms for decorating speech, making it more expressive; thirdly, in the use of linguistic aphorisms in speech for the sake of its very use (reproducing them not as set expressions, but as a phrase text – of folklore, if it is a proverb, or of literature, if it is a winged phrase); fourthly, in the use of a language aphorism for a certain artistic purpose (in the artistic language). These poetic functions can be combined in various ways, e.g.: “*There is an old Russian proverb: ‘Everyone goes crazy in his own way.’ I have had a reputation as a geek since my youth, because I have this weakness*” (G.M. Markov, “Salt of the Earth”²⁸ (where the proverb is used to decorate speech as a folklore text to characterize a literary hero), etc.

When language aphorisms are used in their poetic (aesthetic) function, they are often paraphrased, including for aesthetic purposes (to “improve” the verbal form, increase its expressiveness, as well as for language game, etc.). All “anti-proverbs” and “anti-citations” as parodies, or humorous paraphrases of linguistic aphorisms (Walter, Mokienko, 2005; Ivanov, 2016: 36–45) are, first of all, the result of the poetic (aesthetic) function of language.

The ritual (magical) function, as a rule, is inherent for linguistic aphorisms – folk superstitious signs (*Ants in the house predict happiness; Do not whistle in the house or you whistle all the money; You cannot take the garbage out after sunset; Knock on a tree three times in order not to jinx*, etc.), although sporadically this function can also be performed (due to the intention of the speech addressee) by the proverbs whose inner form reflects the mythological picture of the world, such as: “*‘I would say a word, but the wolf is not far off,’ said Gavriila Afanasyevich, frowning, ‘and I confess, I do not like assemblies either: you might run into a drunkard, or they will laugh at you when you are drunk’*” (A.S. Pushkin, “The Moor of Peter the Great”)²⁹ (where the proverb reflects the ancient popular belief that one should not use direct nominations of a *wolf* or a *bear*, otherwise you will call them, cause their appearance in trouble), etc.

Obligatory and facultative functions of aphoristic units can be combined in a wide and diverse way, so that linguistic aphorisms are practically not limited in their use as a means of thinking and speech. At the same time, the realization of the obligatory and optional functions in their various combinations has unequal productivity in proverbs and winged expressions of different semantic types.

²⁸ Zhukov, V.P. (1991). *Dictionary of Russian proverbs and sayings* (p. 79). 4th ed. Moscow : Russky Yazyk Publ. (In Russ.)

²⁹ National Corpus of the Russian Language (new version). Main Corpus. (In Russ.) Retrieved November 17, 2021, from <https://ruscorpora.ru/new/search-main.html>

Unique functions of linguistic aphorisms

The study showed that the functions of linguistic aphorisms can be the same as of other types of set expressions (inherent for both linguistic aphorisms and other varieties of set expressions, phrasal texts) or unique (inherent only for linguistic aphorisms). General functions of linguistic aphorisms are intertextual, text-forming, figurative, conceptual, etc. (they are also characteristic of phraseological units, various kinds of speech formulas, text clichés, etc.). There are only two unique functions of linguistic aphorisms – universalizing and style-forming, which are not characteristic of other super word set expressions (although they can be manifested through various combinations of individual lexico-semantic, grammatical and stylistic means of language).

The universalizing function manifests in speech the property of a universal generalization of reality in the semantics of the aphorism. The property is opposed to the factual generalization (Ivanov, 2016: 115). Thus, “we can call aphoristic in the strict sense only those generalized statements that cannot register sets of objects, i.e. are universal in the degree of generalization of reality (it is impossible to say “*Teachers must be patient,*” referring only to some certain number of teachers)” (Ivanov, 2018: 151). Linguistic aphorisms are primarily intended in speech to express a generalized and universalizing content, the universalization of reality.

No other linguistic units, except linguistic aphorisms, are able to perform the universalizing function directly. This function marks their substantive quality – “aphoristicity,” which is manifested in the semantic opposition of aphorisms and all other phrases with factual content in the text even when the aphorism does not have any meaning, e.g: “*A man can be mistaken, too. But do you know what the difference is between a man’s mistake and a woman’s mistake? Don’t you know? A man may say, for example, that two times two is not four, but five or three and a half; a woman will say that two times two is a stearin candle*” (I.S. Turgenev, “Rudin”)³⁰.

The style-forming function manifests such an obligatory feature of linguistic aphorisms as discursive autonomy – the ability to be used in a text in a semantically and structurally (resp. grammatically) independent position (Teslenko, Ivanov, 2021), which, if aphoristic units are widely used, determines the intermittent, the so-called “discontinuous” character of speech.

The style-forming function directly correlates with the universalizing function of linguistic aphorisms, i.e. on the one hand, it reveals it, and on the other hand, it is conditioned by it in cases of non-unique use of proverbs and winged

³⁰ National Corpus of the Russian Language (new version). Main Corpus. (In Russ.) Retrieved November 17, 2021, from <https://ruscorpora.ru/new/search-main.html>

expressions in speech. The style-forming function is fully realized as a result of combining linguistic aphorisms with occasional (individual) aphoristic units, which may quantitatively prevail in the text. Linguistic aphorisms, as a rule, occupy the meaningfully and compositionally dominant position in the text. This is particularly evident in the example of winged expressions, which dominate even in the authorial context of their textual source, e.g.: “[Pepel:] *No one here is worse than you... In vain you say... [Klesch:] Not worse! **They live without honour and without conscience...** [Pepel (indifferently):] *And where are they – honour and conscience? **You cannot wear neither honour nor conscience on your feet instead of boots...** Only those who have power and strength need honour and conscience...* [Bubnov (entering):] *Oooh... I am cold!* [Pepel:] *Bubnov! Do you have a conscience?* [Bubnov:] *What? Conscience?* [Pepel:] *Well, yes!* [Bubnov:] *Conscience? What for? I'm not rich...* [Pepel:] *That's what I say: rich people need honour and conscience, yes! And Klesch scolds us, he says, we have no conscience...*” (M. Gorky, “At the Bottom”).³¹*

The two unique functions of aphoristic units are most fully and diversely realized in fiction, journalistic and scientific-philosophical texts. Universalizing and style-forming functions of linguistic aphorisms can be realized in the language of a separate work (cycle of works) and in the language of one author (in different works to a greater or lesser extent).

An example of the unique functions of aphoristic units in a single text is one of F.I. Tyutchev's poems, e.g.: “*Don't reason, don't bother!.. Madness seeks, foolishness judges; Heal your daytime wounds with sleep, And tomorrow there will be what it should be. In life, be able to endure everything: Sorrow, joy, and anxiety. What is there to wish for? What is there to be sad about? The day is over – and thank God!*” (F.I. Tyutchev, “Don't Reason...”).³² In the poem, lyrical and conceptual aphorisms (*Don't reason; Don't bother*), occasional aphoristic units (*Madness seeks, foolishness judges*), paraphrased proverbs (*And tomorrow there will be what it should be – Let it be what it should be; The day is over – and thank God! ← The day has passed, and thank God*), winged Latin expressions (*Heal your daytime wounds with sleep ← Time heals wounds* from the Latin *Tempus vulnera sanat*), recurrent phrases (*In life, be able to endure everything ← Everything can be endured/We will endure everything/We can endure everything*).

The realization of the unique functions of aphoristic units within the framework of certain fragments of a certain text is characterized, as a rule, by consecu-

³¹ National Corpus of the Russian Language (new version). Main Corpus. (In Russ.) Retrieved November 17, 2021, from <https://ruscorpora.ru/new/search-main.html>

³² National Corpus of the Russian Language (new version). Poetic Corpus. (In Russ.) Retrieved October 8, 2021, from <https://ruscorpora.ru/new/search-poetic.html>

tive “stringing” in the context of one aphorism to another, and the connection between them is marked both substantively (a common theme or problem, logical interdetermination) and structurally (various lexical, grammatical, expressive means), e.g: “*Turgenev often did not spare himself in his conversations, forgetting the old rule of world wisdom: ‘Don’t speak bad of yourself, your „friends” will take care of it’ – and the Spanish proverb: ‘God save me from my friends, but I will deal with my enemies myself’*” (A.F. Kony, “Turgenev’s Funeral”) (where the main structural means of connection between aphoristic units are lexical repetition and syntactic parallelism). Or, “*After all, one would believe that there is one step from the pathetic to the ridiculous. Napoleon is right, but Derzhavin was no less right when he said: Whatever springs you make up, To become wise, – You cannot wear guises for ages, And the truth must be revealed. Yes! who is created as Paul de Kock, will not become Schiller!..*” (V.G. Belinsky, about the book “The Guesthouse. Notes of the Deceased Goryanov,” published by his friend N.P. Malov”) (where aphoristic units are linked by a common theme of reasoning).

Individualization of aphoristic units in the text in their unique functions may generate such a stylistic phenomenon as “aphoristic style” (Rozanova, 1982; Ivanov, 2016: 134–137), which deserves a special study in Russian.

Conclusion

The considered material allows to assert that Russian aphoristic units (proverbs and winged expressions) perform all basic and derivative (specific) functions of language/speech, which are realized either as obligatory (communicative, cognitive, nominative and cumulative) or optional (all others). Particular functions of language can acquire specification when language aphorisms are used (for example, conative function is realized as argumentative, etc.).

Specific functions of linguistic aphorisms are differentiated into two nonequal groups – common with similar units (characteristic of both linguistic aphorisms and other set phrases, clichéd single-phrase texts) and unique (peculiar only to linguistic aphorisms). There are only two unique functions of linguistic aphorisms – universalizing and style-forming.

The universalizing function manifests such a semantic property of linguistic aphorisms as the universal nature of reality generalization in contrast to the factual generalization. In turn, the style-forming function of proverbs and winged expressions is not only directly correlated with the universalizing function, but also conditioned by it in the non-unique use of language aphorisms in a given text.

The prospects of the study are in identifying the specifics of implementing the functions of linguistic aphorisms, as well as features of the aphoristic style in Russian fiction, different types of discourse (journalistic, philosophical, popular

science, oral public speech, etc.) in descriptive and comparative aspects in order to create a functional model of proverbs and winged expressions as aphoristic units in the Russian language.

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Функции афористических единиц в русском языке

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Аннотация. В современной русистике все больше внимания уделяется изучению пословиц и крылатых выражений как основных разновидностей языковых афоризмов (афористических единиц). В этой связи актуально определение их собственно лингвистических характеристик, в том числе функциональных. Цель исследования – выявить и описать облигаторные и факультативные функции пословиц и крылатых выражений как афористических единиц, установить уникальные функции языковых афоризмов в речи и тексте. Материалом для исследования послужили наиболее активные русские пословицы и крылатые выражения из числа единиц паремиологического минимума, основного паремиологического фонда, широко употребляемые в письменной литературной речи. Основным стал описательный метод на основе функционального моделирования языковых единиц с использованием приемов контекстуального и стилистического анализа. Установлено, что пословицам и крылатым выражениям как афористическим единицам присущи все основные функции языка, базовые и производные. Облигаторными функциями языковых афоризмов являются коммуникативная, когнитивная, номинативная, кумулятивная; факультативными – эмотивная, метаязыковая, фатическая, волюнтаривная, познавательная, аксиологическая, референциальная, эстетическая и ритуальная; уникальными – универсализирующая и стилеобразующая. Уникальные функции афористических единиц детерминируют друг друга, характеризуются наиболее полной и разнообразной реализацией в произведениях художественной литературы, а также в публицистических и научно-философских текстах.

Ключевые слова: русский язык, афористическая единица, пословица, крылатое выражение, функция, язык, текст

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