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ЯЗЫКОЗНАНИЕ, ЛИТЕРАТУРОВЕДЕНИЕ, МЕТОДИКА ПРЕПОДАВАНИЯ ЯЗЫКА И ЛИТЕРАТУРЫ

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THE IRISH NATIONAL CHARACTER AS IT IS©

The Irish say that there`re two categories of people: those who are Irish and those who wish they were Irish. And this statement hardly leaves any doubt as soon as one step on the land of Ireland - the impressions are endless! Some people appreciate most the country`s nearly unspoilt nature and fascinating scenery; others - the fabulous spectacle of rain and sun, `of light and colour that immerses the Emerald Isle in ``forty shades of green``, as an old ballad claims`; some more enjoy `the easy-going way of life, the music and the friendliness of the people or Ireland`s omnipresent signs of history and its rich culture` [15, p. 4], and some just adore it all.

A great number of visitors from all over the world do fall under its spell. And very many say that their first visit to Ireland turned out to be the beginning of a life-long `love affair` with this `Treasure Island`. Among them is the German writer Heinrich Boell, who used to travel much about the country, and in 1957 published his famous `Irish Journal`. Ireland, which was probably not a very popular tourist destination in those days, on the pages of the book appears to be an enigmatic land of mystery, seclusion and simplicity.

Here`re some interesting quotes taken from this `secret guide` to `the Ireland of the past` and arguably of the present also: `<…> on this island <…> live the only people in Europe that never set out to conquer, although they were conquered several times, by Danes, Normans, Englishmen - all they sent out was priests, monks, missionaries <…>` [3, p. 7]; `<…> drink happens here, love, prayer, and cursing. God is passionately loved and no doubt equally passionately hated` [Ibid., p. 14]; `<…> With the Irish <…> what happens is never the worst; on the contrary, what`s worse never happens. With us <…> when something happens our sense of humor and imagination desert us; in Ireland that is just when they come into play` [Ibid., p. 109]; `<…> I only think half all Irishmen are half crazy` [Ibid., p. 37].

Close to the final idea is the conclusion once made by the internationally renowned Austrian neurologist Sigmund Freud (and now often referred to by the Irish themselves with great pride) stating that the Irish are the only race of people for whom psychoanalysis is of no use at all. Generally speaking, the Irish prefer to think that it is so because they simply do not need it, although some sceptics suggest that they are beyond hope. According to Frank McNally, an Irish journalist, `<…> Freud`s inability to make progress with his Irish patients may stem from his failure to understand that there are three parts to the Irish psyche: the conscious, the sub-conscious, and the bit that does things for the craic` [12, p. 19-20]. The latter roughly means `Great Fun` [16, p. 194], `informal entertainment` [17, p. 71], `a mixture of music, drink and talk` [4, p. 46], `an atmosphere - especially of the kind found in a good pub` [12, p. 19], as well as many other unforgettably grand things, personalities and moments.

A plethora of Irish celebrities have also tried to grasp and describe in their own manner the essence of their Motherland and their national character. Tom Kettle portrayed Ireland as `a small but insuppressible island half an hour nearer the sunset than Great Britain` [18, p. 75]. Sir John Pentland Mahaffy believed that in Ireland `the inevitable never happens and the unexpected constantly occurs` [9, p. 376]. `Nobody can betray Ireland: it doesn`t give them the chance - it betrays them first. <…> An Irishman is someone who wishes he was somewhere else. <…> The Irish people do not gladly suffer common sense,` considered Oliver St John Gogarty [18, p. 61-67]. `An Irishman is a human enthymeme: all extremes and no middle,` wrote Sean O`Faolain [Ibid., p. 68]. Austin O`Malley seems to be sure that `an Irishman can be worried by the thought that there`s nothing to worry about` [Ibid., p. 69]. `Other people have a nationality. The Irish have a psychosis,` affirmed Brendan Behan, who quite possibly never doubted that `an Irishman is only at peace when he`s fighting` [Ibid., p. 70, 79]. He also once notoriously declared the following: `It's not that the Irish are cynical. It's rather that they have a wonderful lack of respect for everything and everybody` (http://www.irishslang.co.za). Whereas Alan Bestic eloquently supposed the Irish to be `devious and naïve, aggressive and gentle, turbulent and dreamy, irreverent and religious, happy and sad, kind and bitter, respectful, cruel, softhearted, polite, caustic, hypocritical, frank, lazy, tireless, dogmatic, amenable, narrow and tolerant` [Ibid., p. 77].

The afore-mentioned personal opinions, in a moderately profound way, create an exceedingly subjective verbal picture of Irish people and their unique character formed by the tragic and glorious events with which their history abounds. Some common observations and stereotypes spread widely or narrowly can help to expand the given image of the Irish nation and make it more objective, to some extent.

Like quite a few other people, the Irish are often best defined as what they are not. While the Canadians repeat `we're not Yanks!`, the New Zealanders insistently say `we're not bloody Aussies, mate!`, the Irish intensively declare `we're not bleeding British!` [14, p. 10]. There clearly are some solid grounds for suchlike attitudes. It was grievously noticed by many Irishmen that `<…> the B-word is only applied to them when they`re successful` [12, p. 10]. Brenda Fricker, an Academy Award winning Irish actress, once stated: `When you`re lying drunk at the airport, you`re Irish. When you win an Oscar, you`re British` [18, p. 73]. Thus, as in his book titled `The Xenophobe`s Guide to the Irish` Frank McNally ironically put it: `For some, if their lives have any meaning at all, it is that they`re not British` [12, p. 10], and so it is.

Apart from that, stereotypically, the Irish are known to be freckle-faced red-haired big drinkers with a gift of uttering the most amazing things at a time of crisis or suggesting something wonderful at a time when it`s required. All this is accurate to a certain degree only. It`s also right to say that the Irish are generally more easy-going and relaxed about life than others and they `regard an attachment to punctuality as a personality disorder` [Ibid., p. 63]. Possibly, it goes back to the point that they were never actually an industrialized nation immensely affected by the necessity of discipline. Sometimes, this type of behaviour can be rather irritating, to put it mildly.

To prove it, trying to profess the truth about the Irish in his book, Terry Eagleton gave a warning example: `If an Irish plumber says he`ll fix your drains on Tuesday, it`s quite likely he won`t turn up. He may turn up on Friday, and won`t think the delay worth mentioning. In fact he might get quite indignant if you bring it up. Friday is pretty close to Tuesday after all, even if your kitchen flooded and drowned your kids in the meanwhile` [4, p. 68]. Therefore, it`s recommended to refrain from being overgullible and to hardly ever believe anyone promising to ring, write, come, and so on at least in the nearest future. This, presumably, in some cases slightly offensive approach can be explained by an instance of everyday Irish wisdom - When God made time, He made plenty of it.

God is also responsible for a large number of other primarily positive things, and is considered to be an `astonishingly popular figure in Ireland, second only to Bono, lead singer of the rock group U2` [Ibid., p. 87]. In spite of the fact that the society is fast becoming more secular, the Irish are still famously known to be nearly the most pious people worldwide. One still might doubt the given situation, but, anyway, Terry Eagleton described the following: `If you are sitting on top of a bus and everyone suddenly crosses themselves, it`s because you`re passing a church. Years ago, the stewardesses on Aer Lingus, the Irish airline, had to be ordered to stop crossing themselves when the plane took off. It wasn`t the most reassuring sight for the passengers` [Ibid.]. In their turn, the authors of `The Book of Irish Characters` Colin Murphy and Donal O`Dea exclaim: `Try getting a seat at Sunday mass in Ireland thirty years ago! You wouldn`t have a hope! Standing room only!` [13, p. 42]. Presently, one may still face such a problem on the days of some religious feasts.

In fairness, the Irish are serious but not sanctimonious about their faith. They happily `manage to combine a belief in absolutes with a tolerance for human frailty, which is one of their specialities. The Irish warm to failure more than they do to success, which they tend to begrudge` [4, p. 89]. This assumption is wholeheartedly supported by a character from `Finbar`s Hotel`, arguably one of the most intriguing modern Irish novels: `<…> The loss leader approach. Stands to reason in a small country like Ireland that if you tell somebody you`re doing well, and that you`re happy and well-adjusted and on the way up in the world, they`ll <…> hate you. Success is a big turn-off` [6, p. 93-94]. Bono also shares this point of view: `In Ireland, people <…> have an interesting attitude to success. They look down on it. <…> in America, you look up at the house on the hill, the mansion on the hill and say, ``One day <…> that could be me.`` In Ireland, they look up at the mansion hill and go, ``One day I`m gonna get that bastard,`` <…>` (http://www.u2station.com). And, it should be mentioned, it sounds rather daring.

Suchlike threats may well turn out in the end to be just a vain exaggeration of their real intentions as the Irish are, in fact, prone to boasting and bragging. Though, on the other hand, the meaningful understatement is among their habits as well. Evidently, it`s all somehow connected with their sense of humour, which is often defined as `perverse, dark-edged and latently aggressive` [4, p. 53]. Not infrequently, it gains the form of practical jokes and there are very many intrinsically Irish variations of those. For instance, in order to cheer up a friend or for his birthday surprise one can wallpaper the friend`s car and break its lights, to make the picture complete. The prank is expected to be hilariously appreciated because, otherwise, the worthiness itself of friendship might be questioned and lots of unpleasantries might be heard behind one`s back, and not only.

Normally, such tricks are accepted with laughter or at least with understanding and gratitude - presumably, the Irish always keep in mind the thought that something worse might have definitely happened, but it actually didn`t. Sometimes it does, though. And if one yet `finds` him or herself rid of all the troubles - dead - on the way to, hopefully, Heaven, which is the goal of earthly pilgrimage, still, there`s no reason to be sorely sad, as the Irish know for sure how to make up for the misfortune of no longer being alive - wake. The latter is a sort of party involving praying, keening, drinking, eating, smoking, talking, joking, playing music, singing, and sometimes dancing. Thus, probably, quite a few people would agree with John Broderick, an Irish novelist, believing that `Ireland is a good country to die in. You can always get a good funeral here <…>` [18, p. 76]. Until recently the several-day wakes were common throughout Ireland. Now these events have such a scale mainly in the countryside.

Usually, at a wake, the corpse is laid out on public view in the family home where neighbours are welcome to come to grieve with the relatives and friends as well as to enjoy a little bit of this and that. According to Terry Eagleton, wakes `<…> in the old days could get fairly riotous, given the amount of alcohol that was sunk. You might put a bottle of whiskey in the corpse`s hand, stick a pipe in its mouth, or even, if things got really wild, drag it around the dance floor. This was a sign of friendship to the dead person, rather than of disrespect` [4, p. 170].

Generally speaking, Irish wakes reflect two things: on the one hand, a fear of death (hence, it`s advised to give the corpse a good send-off, lest it should return to haunt those still living); on the other hand, the certainty that life and death are tightly linked with each other (if not inseparable).

Moreover, death is considered an extremely public event in Ireland, where `obituary pages are among the most avidly read in Irish newspapers, and local radio stations routinely broadcast the death notices for their areas, reading them out like a slightly more solemn version of the football results` [12, p. 50]. Death is a part of Irish popular culture, which traditionally is characterised as `<…> rough, knockabout and exuberant <…>`, and which `<…> in the old days could be quite a carnival. On festive occasions, people might engage in nudity, cross-dressing, mock marriages, sexual horseplay` [4, p. 171]. Thus, the Irish can be called real experts in making a festival out of both - death and life.

They say that, possibly, it`s the influence of alcohol that should be blamed, if at all. And truly enough, the Irish universally do have the reputation of being heavy drinkers. In fact, a lot of Irish men and women are teetotal - `one in four Irish people never touch a drink, which makes the statistical achievements of the rest of them all the more impressive` [12, p. 46]. Their selfless liking for strong drink can be explained historically: remaining for centuries a colonized nation the Irish were suffering from low self-esteem. Therefore, drinking `<…> was an escape from the poverty and hopelessness around you. Next to emigration, it was the quickest way out` [4, p. 13]. Nowadays, the situation looks much brighter and a great number of wealthy Irishmen reduce their alcohol intake, while those belonging to the less financially successful class still try to hide from their everyday problems with the help of a drop or two.

Anyway, no matter how much one can afford to drink, the best place to do it is, undoubtedly, the Irish sacred shelter - the pub (drinking at home, by the by, is recognised as a weird habit and is not at all an Irish custom, though there may be some exceptions). Authentic Irish pubs are rather small and intimate. They `date back to medieval taverns, coaching inns and shebeens, illegal drinking dens which flourished under colonial rule` [8, p. 346]. It should be noted that `the archetypal Irish pub is celebrated for its convivial atmosphere, friendly locals, genial bar staff <…>` and the craic [Ibid., p. 346]. The Irish barman is a story apart. That one is `truly legendary in his ability to single-handedly serve hordes of insatiable customers while simultaneously sympathizing with the lone depressed drinker, singing along with the rowdy mob, stopping a bottle fight while making an Irish coffee, writing the entire works of Brendan Behan on the head of a pint of Guinness, giving directions to passing tourists looking for the ancestors and telling a dirty joke <…>` [13, p. 8]. Needless to say, suchlike professionals must be unanimously respected by the rest of society. And in most cases they are.

Irish pubs originally are not meant solely for drinking in. It`s assumed that `the best pubs are those in which drinking is part of socializing, arguing, live music sessions or just taking some time off to reflect <…>. Most Irish pubs welcome children <…>` as well [4, p. 14]. When in a pub, one is highly recommended to comply with `the Code of Good Manners`: `It isn`t really acceptable to refuse the offer of a drink in Ireland, though you don`t have to choose alcohol any more. You must return the favour and buy drinks for those who have treated you. The hospitable Irish frown on anyone who doesn`t pull their social weight` [Ibid., p. 14-15]. So, the Irish stick to the basis of the round system, also observed in some other countries.

Drinking should never be senseless, for sure. It should be meaningful, substantial, purposeful, and preferably `great craic` at the same time. The desired results can be achieved thanks to the usage of some ingenious Irish toasts, which `reflect the humour and wordplay associated with the Irish` [9, p. 377]. Here`re some wonderful examples:

• When we drink, we get drunk. When we get drunk, we fall asleep. When we fall asleep, we commit no sin. When we commit no sin, we go to heaven. So, let`s all get drunk, and go to heaven! [9, p. 378];

• Here`s a toast to your enemies` enemies! [Ibid., p. 378];

• Here`s to our wives and girlfriends: may they never meet! [Ibid., p. 379];

• Here`s to a long life and a merry one. A quick death and an easy one. A pretty girl and an honest one. A cold beer - and another one! [Ibid.].

Indeed, many ways lead to the pub. Many grounds there may be found for a person to stay there undisturbed, and just nurse the drink. If that is the person`s choice - let it be - people will leave one alone. Otherwise, a chance to have a talk is almost promised, as the Irish do talk a lot without knowing why. `It just seems to pour out of them. Maybe it`s something to do with living on a lonely mist-covered island on the western fringe of Europe. Whatever the reason, they just can`t abide silence. It`s a vacuum that must be filled. Some of the reason is political. For much of their history, the ability to talk was the only thing the Irish had` [12, p. 28-29]. It`s true, the Irish talk like other people breathe, and they also crack jokes like other people can`t even dream of:

• A visitor was walking past an Irish farm when he saw the farmer lifting a pig up to an apple tree and holding it while it ate the apples off the branch. `Excuse me,` said the visitor. `If you just shook the tree so that apples fell to the ground, wouldn`t it save time?` `Doesn`t matter, really,` said the Irish farmer. `The pig`s got plenty of time` [1, p. 99].

• The Doctor was amazed after he had examined an Irishman, who had come in complaining of stomach pains. `You`re not going to believe this,` said the doctor, `but you`re pregnant.` `You`re joking!` replied the Irishman, a man in his forties. `What will the neighbours say? I`m not even married!` [Ibid., p. 159].

• Freddy O`Flipper trained hard to become the first Irishman to swim the Irish Sea and the day came when he was ready. Things started off well and Freddy swam hard and strong. Halfway across the sea he was tired but still determined. The determination carried him onwards, but unfortunately with the shore just in view Freddy was exhausted. There was just no way he was going to make it. Disappointed, he turned around and swam home [Ibid., p. 25].

• An Irishman went to see his doctor. `It`s drink that`s made you into the slovenly, drunken, incontinent, rude and violent person that you are.` `Oh thanks, Doc!` said the Irishman, greatly relieved. `And the wife always said it was my fault` [2, p. 20].

Though the Irish are a very talkative nation, they are also known to be a reflective one. There`re very many witty sayings and proverbs, both formed initially in English or translated from Irish, that demonstrate the poetic nature and philosophical mindset of Irish people as well as their mastery of language. Here`s a chance to enjoy just a few:

• Choose your company before you go drinking (http://phoenix.about.com).

• Empty and cold is the house without a woman [9, p. 375].

• It is a lonely washing that has no man`s shirt in it [Ibid.].

• When your hand is in the dog`s mouth, withdraw it gently [http://www.infoplease.com].

No less poetically artistic is the ability of the Irish to compose inspirational verses that fill everyone around with mainly joy, happiness, and hope, commonly known as Irish Blessings. Many traditional blessings `represent wishes for plentiful agricultural rewards, healthy children, and closeness with God` [http://www.wisegeek.com]. Some of them, though, may quite turn into curses in disguise. Anyway, they tend to be distinctively spiritual and are always beautifully worded. Among the most famous are the following:

• May you live as long as you want, and never want as long as you live [10, p. 54].

• May your neighbors respect you, trouble neglect you, the angels protect you, and heaven accept you [Ibid., p. 70].

• May you be poor in misfortune, rich in blessings, slow to make enemies, and quick to make friends. But rich or poor, quick or slow, may you know nothing but happiness from this day forward [Ibid., p. 61].

• May those who love us, love us. And those who don`t love us, may God turn their hearts. And if he doesn`t turn their hearts, may he turn their ankles, so we may know them by their limping [Ibid., p. 83].

It should be noted that the somewhat obscure way of saying things and acting in different circumstances is extremely characteristic of the Irish. There`re many examples proving this fact. Admittedly, Irish people do their best to be helpful. Sometimes, though, it may not seem that way. Asking for directions one may occasionally get frightened hearing back: `Ah, Jaysus! If I wanted to get where you're going, I wouldn`t start from here…`. Still, in the end, one will be provided with the sought for piece of advice as well as with some other handy hints and tips. Or another situation: if one happens to inquire of an Irish person `Is it far from here?`, the reply may be `Just a few minutes` walk`, which will, in fact, extend into half an hour or even more. The reason why the say so is very simple: they just don`t want to upset beforehand, especially if one looks like a person who doesn`t mind a bit of a promenade.

This unusual approach to things spreads even further. At first responding negatively to anything and relenting only after some ardent persuasion is considered to be a sign of good upbringing. The Irish suppose that offers, including those of hospitality, may actually turn out to be not as sincere as they may seem, and, thus, they must be tested. The way it all works is demonstrated by Frank McNally: `In rural parts, this process traditionally begins at the door. A visitor, however familiar, will initially decline the offer of a seat with a phrase such as: ``No - I`m not staying.`` He will then stand in or close to the doorway until at least the third or subsequent offer of a chair, which may have to be pushed across the floor in his direction before he accepts. Once seated, the process begins anew` [12, p. 23]. According to the Irish, the good host must insist, understanding that the refusal is just politeness, and the guest is simply expecting some more encouragement.

Another proof of a polite type of behaviour, as the Irish see it, is the way they cope with some inappropriate treatment or their general dissatisfaction: they complain. But never to the person who may have caused their discontent. They find true listeners elsewhere or, occasionally, end up complaining to themselves. Frank McNally remarks: `The Irish bottle up their grievances rather than deal with them. And when they have enough grievances saved up, they either go mad or they write a book` [Ibid., p. 25]. And, undoubtedly, the Irish are outstandingly good at the latter. There`re four Nobel Prize winners (William Butler Yeats, George Bernard Shaw, Samuel Beckett, Seamus Heaney) as well as the extraordinary literary figures of Oscar Wilde and James Joyce.

There`re also many other probably less renowned but, nevertheless, exceedingly gifted Irish authors working in different genres. `In fact, only the tendency to talk too much keeps the literary surplus at controllable levels. Literary genius is common <…> and critics suggest it`s only talent that`s scarce. At any rate, it`s said that every Irish person has a book inside him or her. Very few can be persuaded to keep it there` continues Frank McNally [Ibid., p. 38]. A great number of scientists (together with many laymen) try to study and comment upon the obvious achievements of the Irish in the sphere of literature. Some suggest that the core lies in the fact that `the language which most of them now write in, English, isn`t their native tongue`, consequently `they sometimes write it with a haunting strangeness`, which ferociously attracts [4, p. 28]. So, either love it or leave it.

One should also act accordingly when dealing with the whole nation of the Irish: admire them or … admire them, because, in fairness, there is no other option. Even cross and angry for a while, one will eventually become the most kindhearted and sympathetic creature as soon as the Irish smile. Their disarming charm is known to be legendary. As Frank McNally writes, it is `<…> one of their most important exports. And although nobody has ever quantified the contribution to the economy, it must be considerable` [12, p. 22]. The Irish do have a very self-contradictory public image in the world. Terry Eagleton honestly describes them as `<…> childlike and devious, genial and aggressive, witty and thick-headed, quick and slow, eloquent and blundering, laid-back and hot-tempered, dreamy and earthy, lying and loyal. So either they`re schizoid, or they defy the laws of logic` [4, p. 11]. But whoever irreproachable is welcome to pluck up the courage and throw a stone at the nation perfectly able to curse the offender in a sophisticatedly latent manner.

If not, one should surrender, and, accumulating all efforts, try to imminently, little by little, get: remarkably vivacious, hospitable, self-conscious, and funny; hardly law-abiding, organized, comprehensible, and responsible; phenomenally good-humoured, impulsive, spontaneous, and inconsistent; splendidly garrulous, emotional, booze-loving, and illogical. One should very gradually start: avoiding the pubs that have really turned themselves into fast food joints where conversation is cruelly killed off by piped music, TV noise, and ghastly hurry; gaining irreverent attitude to life, mixed with huge quantities of love, indulgence, and laughter; concocting legions of tales, producing an extraordinary amount of literature full of puns, riddles, wordplay, and fantasy. One should never forget about: one`s fighting spirit even staying neutral in the times of wars and crises; remaining hopelessly romantic though not quite uninterested in material things; taking pride in the beauty of the landscape turning a blind eye, nevertheless, to environmental pollution and minor catastrophes; cherishing the magnificent cultural and historical heritage even while emigrating in hordes. And, finally, one should endlessly strive: to be the life and soul of the party; to love the music and poetry of unhappiness; to feel never annoyed at any delay; to refrain from speaking well of one another before one stops breathing, and to at least imagine oneself with brown hair and blue eyes, as that is actually the way the typical Irish person looks like.

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ПОНЯТИЕ РЕАЛИИ В СОВРЕМЕННОМ ПЕРЕВОДОВЕДЕНИИ©

Перевод реалий - часть большой и важной проблемы передачи национального и исторического своеобразия, которая восходит, вероятно, к самому зарождению теории перевода как самостоятельной дисциплины. О реалиях, как о показателях колорита, заговорили лишь в начале 50-х годов. Л. Н. Соболев в 1952-м году употребляет термин «реалия» в современном его понимании и даже дает ему достаточно выдержанную дефиницию.