

PREPOSITIONS IN ENGLISH PROVERBS

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Proverbs and sayings are handed down from generation to generation, and even now, in the age of modern technology, they are widely used in our everyday life. Lord J. Russell observed poetically that a “proverb is the wit of one, and the wisdom of many” [1, p.25]. Undoubtedly, they represent wise approaches to complicated issues in all spheres of human’s life. Since ancient times people used proverbs and sayings to enrich their speech and simplify the transfer of information. Nowadays proverbs provide us with the imagery and powerful illustrations of the everyday life.

The role of proverbs is very diverse and complex. The presence of prepositions in proverbs and sayings does not greatly affect their construction, but prepositions play an important role in linking the words in a sentence as well as simplifying their meaning. Although the number of prepositions in any language is limited, besides the fact that they don’t refer to things in the world but to the relationships between these things, they play a very important role in the mastering of language in general.

Comparing different proverbs we have found out that the most common preposition used in proverbs is the preposition “in”, for example, “Rome was not built in a day” (“Москва не сразу строилась”), “A friend in need is a friend indeed” (“Друзья познаются в беде”), “A bird in the hand is worse to in the bush” (“Лучше синица в руке, чем журавль в небе”), “A stitch in time saves nine” (“Один стежок, сделанный вовремя, стоит девяти”), “All’s fair in love and war” (“На войне и в любви все средства хороши”) etc [2].

The preposition “without” helps to compare opposite things in order to see the difference between comparable parts of sentences and show the contrast in proverbs. For example: “A man without money is no man at all” (“Человек без денег вовсе не человек”), “We can live without our friends, but not without our neighbours” (“Без брата проживешь, а без соседа не прожить”), “You can’t make bricks without straw” (“Нельзя сделать кирпич без соломы”) etc [2].

However, such prepositions as “at”, “after”, “before”, “with”, “by” are rarely to be found in proverbs. For example: “Eat at pleasure, drink with measure” (“Ешь вволю, пей в меру”), “After rain comes fair weather” (“После дождя наступает хорошая погода”), “Look before you leap” (“Не зная броду, не суйся в воду”), “To kill two birds with one stone” (“Убить двух зайцев одним выстрелом”), “By hook or by crook” (“Всеми правдами и неправдами”) [2].

On the other hand, there are plenty of proverbs used without prepositions, for example, “Keep your friends close and your enemies closer” (“Друга держи близко, а врага ещё ближе”), “Two wrongs don’t make a right” (“Два заблуждения – еще не правда”), “God helps those who help themselves” (“Береженого Бог бережет”) etc [2, p.186].

Moreover, analyzing the proverbs we have also found out that there are a lot of proverbs in the English language that don’t have a literal translation or have a partial literal translation, such as: “Без труда не вынешь и рыбку из пруда” – “He who would catch fish must not mind getting wet” or “A cat in gloves catches no mice”; “No man is an island” – “Человек — не остров” or “Один в поле не воин” etc [3, p. 213].

Proverbs and sayings cover the whole life of a person. You can find different expressions about nature, science, mind, work, knowledge, morality, friends, etc. Wise and rhymed words give us a lot of

information and develop mindfulness. They are easy to remember thanks to the use of understandable words that are connected by simple prepositions.

Thus, all or virtually all cultures possess a repertoire of formulations and use them mainly as rhetorically effective means of transmitting accumulated knowledge and experience. Proverbs are speech entities that can be used in every aspect of discussions such as poetry, wise saying, and contemplative argument as well as daily lives of all cultures to address situations or just in leisurely discourse. Once famous researchers H. Zolfaghari and H. Ameri underlined that a proverb is “a short sentence, which is well-known and at times rhythmic, including advice, sage themes and ethnic experiences, comprising simile, metaphor or irony which is well-known among people for its fluent wording, clarity of expression, simplicity, expansiveness and generality and is used either with or without change” [4].

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