

# PHRASEOLOGICAL UNITS OF ENGLISH AND RUSSIAN LANGUAGES: GENESIS AND FUNCTIONING CLUES

Leysan S. Gaibova<sup>1</sup>  
Fanuza H. Tarasov<sup>2</sup>  
Elena V. Varlamova<sup>3</sup>  
Anita Naciscione<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1,2</sup> Kazan Federal University

<sup>3</sup>Kazan Federal University, Tel: 8-927-035-85-35

Email: el-var@mail.ru

<sup>4</sup>Latvian Academy of Culture

## Abstract

The article deals with the problem of phraseological conceptualization as a process of cognition and rethinking of socio-cultural meanings with the help of fixed language forms. Synchronous and diachronic analysis allow to trace the changes occurring in the semantic field of Russian and English phraseological units. The paper considers the concept of motivation of phraseological units and its connection with the internal form of phraseological meaning. The processes of transformation of phraseological units that occur during the historical development of society are instantiated. The influence of gender and age criteria on the estimated connotation of phraseological images is demonstrated. It is concluded that phraseological units are special linguistic units that can be compared with a living organism undergoing certain stages. Three stages of the life cycle of phraseological units have been identified: occurrence due to the influence of extralinguistic and linguistic factors, flourishing at which there is widespread use in speech (it is possible to expand the scope), and obsolescence, that is, phraseological units completely cease to be used in modern speech due to loss of understanding those phraseological images with the help of which these phraseological units used to be conceptualized. Practical significance consists in the fact that the results of the study can be used as the basis for further study by linguists of the historical origin of phraseological units, as well as internal and external factors that contribute to occurrence and fixation of phraseological units in speech.

**Keywords:** phraseological conceptualization, motivation, indirect naming, phraseological image, synchronous analysis, diachronic analysis.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Research in the field of phraseology is of great importance for creating a view of the linguistic culture of any people. Phraseological units expose the real nature of the soul of the people, their true-life mentality, not clouded by artificial transformations of the conscious efforts of the human mind. The main component of phraseological units is

the cultural connotation, which contains a deep meaning and is revealed through conceptualization, that is, the process of rethinking the surrounding reality.

The study aims to identify the features of phraseological conceptualization when forming a fragment of the linguistic world image in Russian and English. In the course of our research, we analyzed phraseological units formed in different historical epochs and used today, archaic phraseological units and neo-phrases. To study the language material, a combination of two methods of phraseological analysis is used: diachronic and synchronic.

This paper considers phraseological units as a living organism that undergoes various phases of its development: occurrence, flourishing, obsolescence. These phases are exemplified by the phrases selected from the phraseological fund of the Russian and English languages. As a result of the study, we have revealed internal and external factors that play an important role in the emergence of phraseological units. It can be concluded on the basis on the Russian and English phraseological units being considered that the emergence of new phraseological units and the extension of their field of application can be predicted with a high degree of probability by analyzing the existing socio-political, cultural and economic conditions at this stage of the development of society. The analysis of lexical material provides an opportunity to enlarge understanding of the relationship between universal and ethno-cultural components of the way of thinking.

The importance of phraseological units is manifested not only in the fact that their use enriches the language, but also in the fact that thanks to them, valuable information about historical events and customs of different peoples can be derived. Of interest is the study of the historical semantics of phraseological units in English and Russian which enables to penetrate the very depths of the semantic sources of set linguistic expressions since their original specific meanings are not always recognized by speakers of both languages.

The results of the study can contribute to further developments in the field of the phraseological world image in relation to the temporal and spatial aspects. The content of the article allows scholars to raise new questions that remain unresolved and require further studying: what criteria determine the longest life of phraseological units, why some phraseological units, despite their ancient origin, continue to be used in modern speech, while later phraseological units can only be preserved in phraseological sources and not used by native speakers.

## 2.METHODS

The study of phraseological units in Russian and English is based on the analysis of their semantic field. The degree of semantic cohesion of elements is determined by the method of application which is based on the method of overlapping a phraseological unit with a set phrase of similar composition, if any, and correlating the general semantics of phraseology with the system of meanings of the words of free use. The method of application establishes the semantic integrity of the phraseological unit, at the same time “contrasting and simultaneously combining the direct (literal) and metaphorical (figurative) meaningful plans of a particular language unit” take place (Zhukov, 2011).

The most effective method in the study of indirect naming of phraseological units is the method of semantic reconstruction, which helps to identify the original meaning of

the studied language unit (Allan & Robinson, 2011). This method makes it possible to trace changes in the semantic field of phraseological units that occur under the influence of extralinguistic and linguistic factors. At the same time, the cultural connotation of phraseological units is reconstructed.

### 3.RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Phraseological units are conceptualized in most cases through figurative associations during mental process of a community. According to most linguists: N.F. Alefirenko, D.O. Dobrovolsky, A.V. Kunin, A. M. Melerovich and others, - the phraseological meaning is an integral, indestructible structure in which the meanings of the individual components have complete or relative semantic ambiguity (Chen, 2019). The specificity of the semantics of phraseological units is determined by the fact that the surrounding reality is rethought through the “meaning of the phraseological prototype”, the components of which make an unequal contribution to the formation of a new integral meaning of phraseological abstraction. The meaning of a phraseological unit is formed in such a way that the signs of the language express their asymmetric essence, i.e. in addition to the main meaning, there is another meaning associated with it (Priego Sánchez & Pinto, 2019). “The problem of forming the phraseological meaning is the problem of phraseological naming, which is considered to be an indirect nomination” (Hnatiuk, 2017). Indirect nomination serves as an expressive means of the phraseological system of the language which can be expressed in the form of intense action.

For example, the English idiom “to be (live) in clover” has a conceptual similar image “Live high” (have a sufficiency). The reason that clover has the metaphorical meaning of “sufficiency and wealth” lies in the fact that livestock fed by clover will gain weight quickly and feel good. In addition, clover has the valuable property of enriching the soil with nitrogen, which makes it fertile. Thus, there is a rethinking of the surrounding reality by the subject, that is, the process of transition of the primary nomination to the indirect one.

The internal form of phraseological units is divided into “living” and “dead” form. The “living” form is transparent, recognizable in modern speech, for example, “hard nut”. The “dead” form of phraseological units is such that the historical semantics of the components is not determined by the linguistic consciousness of our time (Saliyeva et al., 2015). For example, in phraseology “остаться с носом” (lit. stay with the nose) / “to be left looking a fool” its component “нос” (nose) in modern perception can be associated as part of the face, although this is not true. Previously, “нос” (nose) was used to mean bribes, offerings that petitioners gave to officials to solve personal problems, and if they refused to comply with their request, they had to take these gifts back, that is, they were left with their “nose”.

When comparing the internal form of the phraseological unit with its semantics, there may be no common basis between them, which is characteristic of phraseological units with obsolete components formed from legends, myths, and traditions. The phraseological units of various origins used in modern speech can sometimes be used erroneously, because the speaker does not have an associated perception of the image that motivates the real meaning. If in the internal form of phraseological unit there have been found no signs that motivate the meaning of the phraseological unit, then it is impossible to answer why we say so, why we use this phraseological unit to express this

thought. The precise meaning of phraseological unit should be correctly interpreted using etymological sources that will help to identify the motivational factor that determines the semantics of phraseological unit and the correct use of set expressions in language.

A review of the phraseological fund of both Russian and English shows that phraseological units are sustained units that go through a certain life cycle: they emerge, actively used in speech, and then go out of use. The formation of phraseological neologisms is an inevitable and continuous process, caused by the need for emotional and expressive conceptualizing by the subject of the linguistic society of new objects of the surrounding world. The dominant feature of phraseological neologisms is their historicity, while the phraseological image is a projection of not a specific subject, but the whole situation in which the subject appears in reality.

Thus, the mechanism of genesis of phraseological neologisms remains the same, only phraseological images that arise during the evolution of modern society become new (Pavlovna et al., 2015). For example, the phraseological neologism “дойти на автопилоте” (lit. to get on autopilot) / “in a drunken stupor” means an action that is not controlled by the human mind, performed in a state of intoxication. The emergence of this phraseological unit is based on the association of an uncontrolled action with automatic control of the aircraft, in the mode of “autopilot”.

It is interesting to note that at the stage of flourishing, the phraseological image can expand its scope in length of time. Having emerged in a certain narrow area, it becomes so widely used in society that it is extended to other spheres of human activity. For example, the phraseological unit: “получить от ворот поворот” (lit. get a send from the gate) / “to get the gate” is interpreted in the Russian language dictionary of 1960 as a refusal to relationship by marriage, that is, it was originally used only in a narrow semantic field (Dictionary of Modern Russian Literary Language, 1960). The phraseological dictionary of 2008 points out that this expression has become appropriate to use in all cases of “categorical refusal, negative answer to the request, offer” (Phraseological Dictionary of the Russian Literary Language, 2008).

Phraseological unit as a combination of linguistic signs only creates a certain idea which is inevitably corrected from a personal perspective. It is important to note the fact that in some phraseological units the rethinking of the same phraseological image can occur in different ways and even lead to the opposite evaluative connotation depending on gender or age. For example, the phraseological unit “воздушный замок” (lit. air castle) / “a pipe dream” is perceived by the child as something fabulous, magical, that is, has a positive connotation. And in the understanding of an adult, this phraseological unit has an opposite evaluation, being associated with empty dreams, chimerical dreams.

The very concept of phraseological image is not constant throughout the time period of development of a cultural society. Along with active phraseological units, often reproduced in speech, there are irrelevant units that are rarely used in the language and are nearly extinct. The processes of semantic and component changes of phraseological units are inevitable, as a result of which they become archaic.

An example of the extinction of a phraseological unit is the one that appeared in the second half of the 19th century, mentioned by N. Nekrasov in his poem “Emblem of the Century” - “«кружиться как поповка»” (lit. spinning like a popovka) meaning the absence of any progress, results, “marking time”. The emergence of phraseology is associated with the construction, at the initiative of Admiral N. Popov, of circular armadillos, popularly called “popovkas,” intended for constant cruising along the Black

Sea coast in limited sections of the water area with the aim of protecting it. Currently, this phraseological unit is out of use.

Let us give an example of phraseological archaism which was used for a short period of time: “Saturday night special”, literally translated as “special dish of Saturday evening” (Cambridge international dictionary of idioms, 1998). It is interesting to note that the connotational meaning of this phraseological unit is that this special dish meant a small pistol, which was often taken out of the pocket of bandits on Saturday evenings during fights in bars. As external factors entailing a restriction on the use of the gun in conflict situations in bars change, the use of this phraseology is no longer necessary.

As we have mentioned earlier, the emergence of phraseological units under the influence of extralinguistic factors is observed in our time (Davletbayeva et al., 2016). Let us cite such a phenomenon as “Brexit” as an example, affecting the interests of world-class political circles, around which tempestuous debate is still underway in Britain. The statement of the British Prime Minister Theresa May on this phenomenon: “Brexit means Brexit”, which can be interpreted as “If you are leaving, leave”, was instantly picked up by the public and acquired a pronounced sarcastic character, due to the fact that the process of the country’s exit from the EU is too dragged on due to the deliberate actions on the part of the very government. Now, Theresa May’s expression is frequently used in the media. The above reasons suggest believing that this statement has acquired the status of a new phraseological unit. Based on our research, we consider it possible to assume that the phraseological unit “Brexit means Brexit” is still at an early stage of its life cycle and can subsequently go into its flourishing and significantly extend its scope.

#### 4.SUMMARY

Thy analytical work derives the conclusions that phraseological units being set linguistic units have not been present in the language throughout the entire period of development of society. Under the influence of extralinguistic and linguistic factors, phraseological units go through a certain life cycle. This cycle includes several stages: occurrence, flourishing and obsolescence. At the stage of occurrence, the applicable scope of phraseological units is limited to only one in which it initially appeared under certain conditions. At the stage of flourishing, there is an extension of the semantic field of phraseology, the use of a set linguistic unit goes beyond the usual scope. At the stage of obsolescence, phraseological units completely cease to be used in modern speech, which is primarily due to imperception of those phraseological images which previously helped to conceptualize these phraseological units. Phraseological units go through their life cycle in accordance with certain laws. Because the whole complex of internal and external factors, such as cultural-economic, socio-political, natural-climatic and others, is in a state of constant dynamics, all stages of the development of phraseological units, being directly dependent on these factors, also undergo constant transformation.

#### 5.CONCLUSIONS

The appearance of new modifications of linguistic images in the modern world is a testament to the dynamism of the process of phraseological conceptualization, which is realized through figurative associations and cultural concepts in the minds of native speakers (Garipova et al., 2018). During this process, the very phraseological units play



the role of mental stereotypes, i.e. become carriers of cultural stock phrases, thereby revealing the specific features of a linguistic community. The very concept of phraseological meaning is complex, and it cannot be represented as a result of the mechanical addition of its constituent parts. The semantic structure of phraseological units is considered as a combination of interacting elements included in a single microsystem. Phraseological units have a special potential that allows to consider them as linguistic phenomena of a specialized type of conceptualization of the surrounding reality. The phraseological world image is formed based on emotive-evaluative features of the worldview of a society. The question of the nature of the relation between the length of the life cycle of phraseological units and the change in the internal and external factors of the real world remains open.

## 6.ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The work is performed according to the Russian Government Program of Competitive Growth of Kazan Federal University.

## REFERENCES

1. Zhukov, A. V. (2011). The Method of Application and Classification of Proverbs and Sayings. *Problems of History, Philology and Culture*, 3(33), 210-213
2. Allan, K., & Robinson, J. A. (Eds.). (2011). *Current methods in historical semantics* (Vol. 73). Walter de Gruyter.
3. Chen, A. C. H. (2019). Assessing Phraseological Development in Word Sequences of Variable Lengths in Second Language Texts Using Directional Association Measures. *Language Learning*, 69(2), 440-477.
4. Priego Sánchez, B., & Pinto, D. (2019). An unsupervised method for automatic validation of verbal phraseological units. *Journal of Intelligent & Fuzzy Systems*, (Preprint), 1-7.
5. Hnatiuk, L. (2017). The Functional and Pragmatic Peculiarities of the Anthropocentric Phraseological Units in Different Languages and Cultural Environments (on the Descriptive Material of Ukrainian, Russian, Polish, English). *Studies About Languages*, (30), 18-28.
6. Saliyeva, R. N., Guriyanov, I. O., & Tulusina, Y. A. (2015). Contextual use of phraseological units with transparent inner form in the English and Russian languages and the use of statistical programmes in their study. *Journal of Language and Literature*.
7. Pavlovna, S. N., Arsentyeva, E. F., & Safina, R. A. (2015). Expanded metaphor and double actualization of phraseological units in advertising texts. *Journal of Language and Literature*, 6(1), 282-286.
8. *Dictionary of Modern Russian Literary Language*. (1960). M.; L. 10, 128 p.
9. *Phraseological Dictionary of the Russian Literary Language*. (2008). M.: Astrel, AST. Fedorov A.I., 828 p.
10. *Cambridge international dictionary of idioms*. (1998). University Press, 604 p.

11. Davletbayeva, D., Arsenteva, E., Ayupova, R., & Arsentyeva, Y. (2016). Contextual Use Of Phraseological Euphemisms: Component Addition. *Modern Journal Of Language Teaching Methods*, 159-163.

12. Garipova, E., Mordvinova, A. R., Sadykova, A. G., & Schamiloglu, U. (2018). Transformation Of French Canadian's Discourse On The Lexical Level In Conditions Of Bilingualism. *MODERN JOURNAL OF LANGUAGE TEACHING METHODS*, 8(10), 373-377.