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Phraseology as an Object of Linguistic and Cultural Studies

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Abstract: *Phraseology in a narrow sense studies stable combinations, choosing the lexical meaning of a word as the main criterion of analysis. Phraseology in a broad sense is engaged in the study of phraseological units, taking into account their types, structure, semiotic functions.*

Keywords: *phraseological units, anthropocentrism, extralinguistic factors, syntactic constructions, lexico-grammatical composition, semantic structure, linguistic and cultural uniqueness.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Phraseology acquired the status of an independent scientific discipline in the middle of the XX century. The task of phraseologists is to describe the phraseological material of individual languages with an emphasis on their specific features [Арсентьева, 2006: 3].

The word phraseology is formed from the Greek φράσις – concept, expression and λόγος – word, teaching. The first definition of the concept of “phraseology”, according to the linguistic encyclopedic dictionary edited by V.N. Yartseva [Ярцева, 2002], phraseology is a branch of linguistics that studies phraseological units – stable idiomatic phrases. On the other hand, phraseology can also be called the totality of the phraseological units themselves in the composition of the language.

It should be noted that the phraseological system expresses anthropocentrism, namely the semantic orientation towards a person. The analysis of phraseological units reveals the following features: on the one hand, inherent in human society regardless of language affiliation, and on the other hand, features caused exclusively by extralinguistic factors.

According to A.V. Kunin, phraseological units are stable combinations of lexemes with fully or partially figurative meaning [Кунин, 1983: 89].

Phraseology in a narrow sense studies stable combinations, choosing the lexical meaning of a word as the main criterion of analysis. Phraseology in a broad sense deals with the study of phraseological units, taking into account their types, structure, semiotic functions.

Let us pay attention to the fact that, having completely different origins, phraseological units are endowed with a number of properties that cannot be overlooked. T.Z. Cherdantseva draws attention to the following important properties inherent in phraseological units:

- 1) *Variation:* Variants are understood as varieties of the same unit, which, while fully preserving the identity of meaning and image, may have differences in component composition. The following types of variants of phraseological units can be distinguished: phonetic, morphological, lexical, lexico-syntactic, lexico-semantic.
- 2) *Ambiguity:* It occurs when the image is able to evoke different associations depending on the situation reflected in the statement. For example, the phraseology *mettere nel (in) sacco* can mean both “to surpass someone, to wipe someone’s nose” and “to fool, to deceive”;
- 3) *Synonymy:* With synonymy, phraseological units need only a common meaning (a neutral equivalent, an ideogram), while the component composition does not coincide. The general neutral component assumes that phraseological units are capable of denoting the same characteristic or sensation, but in each case they are transmitted in a new perspective. For example, a phraseological unit, the general neutral component of which is “to be in love”: *fare l’occhio di triglia* – “to be in love, to cast languid glances”, *fare l’occhio a pesce morto* – “to be in love, to look with a languid gaze”;
- 4) *Homonymy:* Cases of homonymy within the phraseological system are quite rare. According to S. Bally, homonymy can be observed when a phraseology coincides in form with a free syntagma [Балли, 1955: 191]. For example, *avere le mani lunghe* (literal meaning: “have long arms”, figurative meaning: “have big connections”) [Черданцева, 1982: 145-164].

Linguists define the concept of “phraseological unit” as a universal name for combinations of words related semantically, which differ from other syntactic constructions in that they are reproduced in speech in a fixed ratio of lexico-grammatical composition and semantic structure.

Phraseological units are characterized by the following features:

- Complexity of composition,
- Semantic unity,
- Constancy of composition and impenetrability of structure,
- Reproducibility (regular repetition in speech),
- Stability of grammatical form.

At the morphological level, phraseological units are considered as units that perform the functions of different parts of speech. In accordance with this characteristic, phraseological units are divided into:

- Substantive (perform the functions of a noun);
- Adjectives (perform the functions of an adjective);
- Verbal;
- Adverbial (performing the function of adverbs);
- Interjectional;
- Conjunctional.

In accordance with the lexical level, it is traditionally believed that, according to the semantic feature, phraseological units, according to the classification of V.V. Vinogradov, can be divided into phraseological merges, phraseological unities and phraseological combinations.

Phraseological units include such semantically indivisible units, the meanings of which do not depend on their lexical composition. In other words, phraseological conjunctions are combinations that have lost the motivation of meaning.

Phraseological units are stable combinations, the meanings of which partially retain a literal interpretation. Such unities may have homonymous constructions in the language, used in the direct meaning.

Phraseological combinations include indecomposable turns, one of the components of which has free compatibility, and the other has phraseologically limited meaning.

Modern linguists-phraseology also distinguish grammatical phraseological units into a separate group [Баранов, 2008: 9]. Idioms are phrases and predicative units whose meaning does not correspond to the meaning of their constituent elements.

Collocations are weakly idiomatic phraseological units with the structure of a phrase, in which semantically the main component is used in its direct meaning.

Proverbs are phraseological units that have in their meaning the idea of universality, the semantics of a recommendation or advice and are distinguished by comparative discursive independence.

Sayings are short expressions, mostly of an edifying nature.

Winged expressions are stable phrases of various structures, the source of which is well-known. Winged expressions in most cases have an aphoristic character.

As units of lexical composition, phraseological units have stylistic features. The functional and stylistic component of the connotation indicates that phraseology belongs to a particular style of speech, its prevalence and use [Arsentieva, 1989: 42].

Researchers divide phraseological units into stylistically neutral and stylistically colored ones. Stylistically colored phraseological units are most widespread in the language, since these turns are characteristic mainly of colloquial speech.

Belonging to other functional styles is also represented among the phraseological units:

- Scientific style;
- Official-business style;
- Journalistic style;
- Book style.

As evidenced by the analyzed material, the phraseological meaning differs from the lexical one. Moreover, in most cases, the phraseological meaning is figurative, arising on the basis of nominative meanings of words. It follows from this that the phraseological meaning is characterized by an indirect connection with the subject.

In modern research, linguists pay great attention to the issue of the interaction of language and culture. The function of language is the accumulation and storage of human knowledge about the world.

Observations show that the relationship between language and culture is vividly represented in phraseology, and the study of phraseological foundations of different languages is of great importance in linguistic and sociological science.

According to A.D. Reichstein, the phraseological system as a whole clearly demonstrates the dual anthropocentrism of origin and functioning, i.e. the semantic orientation towards a person of both the constituent lexemes–components, and especially the aggregate phraseological units in their meaning [Райхштейн, 1980: 92]. Therefore, those components of phraseological composition that are the most frequent belong to the socially significant part.

It should be noted that in order to deduce the specifics of the worldview of a particular nation, it is necessary to turn to the comparative method of research, since the identification of similarities and differences in phraseological units of two or more languages allows us to form a distinct representation of linguistic and cultural uniqueness. There is no doubt that the cultural basis of phraseological units is information about traditions, customs, peculiarities of origin and formation of a group of people speaking a particular language.

We share the point of view of F.M. Berezin, who believes that each nation has “its own way of perceiving and reflecting the world”, which consists in their language [Березин, 2003: 293]. It follows from this that the study of phraseological units in the context of the language corpus gives scientists the opportunity to characterize the way of life of the people.

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