

The semantic peculiarities of phraseological units, “human character” as a means of estimation

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Abstract: The article is devoted to the research of phraseological units in the English language. The notion “disposition” in psychology and language was considered and systematized. The research of fundamental scientific material on the theme of subject was studied. The semantic peculiarities of phraseological units, which determine human disposition, were specified. The evaluative connotations in the semantics of phraseological units, which determine human disposition, were specified and analyzed. The positive and negative evaluative connotations inside separated semantic meaning of phraseological units, which human disposition, were considered.

Key words: Phraseological units; Psycho-emotional state; Disposition; Semantics; Evaluative connotations; English language

1. Introduction

1.1. Problem statement in the general form and its connection with important scientific and practical tasks

The human character as an important psychological phenomenon of displays of the individual relation to the objective reality is realized in the form of different forms of behavior. In language the human character is reflected with the help of lexical and phraseological means. The phraseological units as the universal units of language represent the part of verbalized conceptual system of language. The anthropological component is widely represented in phraseology in the form of stable word-combinations, which determine the human state, describe its behavior and actions, contain characteristics of peculiarities of temperament and etc. The human character is connected with varied means of interaction with different people, relations to them and himself, psychological and emotional human state. The features of character are connected with moral and antisocial aspects, internal state of a human, in

connection with which it is possible to speak such displays as force and weakness, mildness and severity, devotion and betrayal and others as forms of human character expression. The phraseological units, defining character are reflection of the language picture of the English people world. The stimuli for formation of the human behavior features serve as internal and external factors, which determine evaluative connotations in the meaning of a phraseological unit.

1.2. Formation of the aims of article

The aim of this study conduction is the study of semantic peculiarities of phraseological units, defining “Human Character” as a means of expression of the evaluative connotations.

1.3. Analysis of the basic publications and studies

The developments of many scientists are devoted to the study of phraseological units: A. I. Alekhina considers idioms of modern English language (Alekhina, 1980), M. F. Alefrienko studies the problem of phraseological level of language (Alefrienko, 1984), P. G. Erchenko studies the

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classification of the phraseological units (Erchenko, 1994), G. Ya. Yashchenko studies the problem of functional unit of lexico-phraseological minimum of English language (Yashchenko] and etc.

Phraseological units, defining "Human Character" were considered in the works: N. F. Grozyan studies ideographic and axiological aspects of phraseological microsystem of "Human Behaviour" (Grozyan, 2003), N. I. Lesnyak studies the stable word-expressions for designation of the characteristics of human properties and qualities (Lisnyak, 2011), T. V. Polishchuk studies the peculiarities of functioning and translation of the phraseological units, defining the human character in the process of professional translation execution (Polishchuk, 2013), L. N. Pechenikova considers the phraseological units, used for determination of the human psychic state, selected by way of entire sample from the literary texts of the Ukrainian literature of XX century (Pechenikova, 2013) and etc.

2. Separation of the parts of the general problem unsolved earlier, to which the article is devoted

In spite of the numerous studies of phraseological units, the issue about ways of expression of human character with the help of stable expressions is rationale. The display of human character is one of the most important human psychological areas, so the phraseological units, defining character, describe the human qualities, his interrelations with society. The features of character contain evaluative connotations, fixed in their semantics. In each language there exist stable expressions, which serve as indispensable part of the culture. In the vocabulary of English language the phraseological units are represented, which meaning touches different aspects of human life: daily life, natural phenomena, emotional states and etc. The human and its emotional-psychological area represent the biggest interest for studying the semantics of phraseological units. The character as a structure of personality is one of the most actual problems in the study of displays of the emotional-psychological area in phraseology.

3. The statement of basic material of study along with full substantiation of the obtained scientific results

Within the frameworks of our study we'll consider the determination of character in the psychological and linguistic literature. In the "Dictionary of Psychology" (online-version) the character is understood as substructure of the personal peculiarities of a human that is formed by the aggregate of individual and specific features, peculiar to the forms of human behavior (Katchalov, 2013). The word "character" is represented by the following meanings: 1) determination of objects and phenomena, to which the originality is peculiar; 2) determination of the psychic (internal) human state;

3) determination of the moral-ethic part of the relations.

In the "Explanatory Dictionary of the Russian Language" S. I. Ozhegov the character is determined as 1) aggregate of psychic and spiritual human properties, which are found in his behavior; 2) the distinguished property, peculiarity, and quality of something" (Ozhegov, 2013).

The human character has a big quantity of displays, which touch the human behavior, emotional state and qualities and etc. The human character features are represented in the phraseological system of English language. The semantic model of a phraseological unit, defining the human character, includes the object (human) and his characteristics (qualities and behavioral peculiarities), for example: *to have one's head screwed on right/the right way* means *a mad person or a person, who lost common sense*.

The phraseological units, defining the human character contains the evaluation of qualities, behavior, actions and etc. The following qualitative and behavioral aspects in the "Human character" structure are subjected to evaluation as: light-mindedness, courage, kindness, demand, boasting, cunning, cowardice, impatience, observation, selfishness, greediness and etc. We classify the phraseological units, defining the human character into the phraseological units with positive evaluative connotation and phraseological units with negative evaluative connotations.

The positive evaluation in the semantics of phraseological units is connected with human actions, which are differed by morality, mutual assistance, compassion and etc., i.e. the human character qualities, which are distinguished by the moral indicators, for example: *devotion* from "full with love and loyalty to someone or something"; *obedience* from "adject. Obedient, submissive, pliable; used in expressions, which determine polite-humble relation to someone"; *honesty* from "adject. honest – penetrated by sincerity and frankness, conscientious; one who deserves respect, irreproachable" (Ozhegov, 2013) and etc. The negative evaluative connotations in the phraseological units reflect the negative features of human character. They are connected with actions, which are judged as such ones, which contradict to the morality, social order and criteria of mutual relation between people. For example, *impudence* from "adject. impudent – defiantly shameless, impudent"; *greediness* from "1) adject. Greedy – one who aspires to gains, miserly; persistent in aspiration to satisfy his desire that expresses this tendency; too penchant for something; 2) miserliness, self-interest; 3) extreme aspiration to satisfy his desire; *rage* – "evil, irritatingly-hostile feeling, mood; aspiration to do actively, fight, combat mood, hostility" (Ozhegov, 2013) and etc.

Thus, the evaluative connotations are the means of expression of the national-cultural phraseological picture of the world. We separated the following positive and negative evaluative connotations in the

phraseological units, which determine human character:

Phraseological units with positive evaluative connotations:

- Observance, acumen: *astounding card/sharp as a needle, as clever as a cartload of monkeys, as clever as a wagonload of monkeys;*
- Reasonableness: *as bright as a button, as sober as a judge, to keep one's head, man of iron, sharp as a needle/smart as pain, sober as a judge;*
- Calmness: *as cool as a cucumber, as hard as a flint, as calm as a millpond, as cold as charity, as cold as a stone, as cold as ice, as cool as a cucumber;*
- Naivety: *as innocent as a babe unborn, as pure as a lily, as pure as snow, as pure as (the) driven snow;*
- Kindness: *as good as gold, to have a heart, man of heart, as clear as crystal, as mild as a dove, as mild as a lamb, as mild as milk, as mild as May;*
- Devotion: *as true as steel, true as flint, true as the needle to the pole;*
- Obedience: *as harmless as a dove, an absolute angel, as meek as a lamb, as patient as an ox, as patient as Job, as quiet as a mouse, as still as a mouse;*
- Honesty: *as honest as a day, open-minded, as honest as the day is long, as honest a man as ever lived, as honest a man as ever broke bread;*
- Courage: *man of courage, man of action, man of horseback, as bold as a lion, as brave as a lion; as hard as a stone, as hard as iron, as hard as nails;*
- Politeness: *bland as oil;*
- Diligence: *hard as a beaver, as busy as a bee, as busy as a beaver;*
- Gaiety: *as cheerful as a lark, as happy, as happy as a king, as happy as a lark, as happy as the day is long, as happy as a sand boy, as happy as a dog with two tails, as happy as a clam at high tide, as merry as a cricket;*
- Reliability: *as safe as houses, as safe as the Bank of England;*
- Restraint: *to be strait-laced, not to turn a hair, to keep one's hair on, to keep one's shirt on, to keep oneself in the check, to keep a grip on oneself, to get hot under the collar, to up the wall, to hit the roof, to flip one's lid, to blow a fuse, to quarrel with one's shadow.*

Phraseological units with negative evaluative connotations; these phraseological units, which reflect vices and negative sides of the human actions:

- Light-mindedness: *put smth. out of one's head; have a head like a sieve, wooden-headed; go out of one's head, have a cylinder missing; two heads are better than one, to have rocks in one's head;*
- Boasting: *be full of hot air;*
- Cunning: *sly boots/sly as a fox;*

- Cowardice: *be afraid of one's shadow/yellow dog, as weak as water, to be afraid of one's shadow, as scared as a rabbit;*

- Impatience: *ants in one's pants/slippery as an ell, as hot as pepper, as mad as a hatter, ants in one's pants, as tough as old boots, as crazy as a loon, as crazy as a coot, as crazy as a bedbug;*

- Selfishness: *be full of one/whip the cat;*

- Greediness: *to be full of oneself;*

- Impudence: *as bold as brass;*

- Dishonesty: *as crooked as a dog's hind leg, to hay it on with a trowel, a wolf in sheep's cloth, man of straw;*

- Restraint: *as gruff as a bear;*

- Rage: *as mad as a hornet, as mad as a wet hen, as mad as a hornet;*

- Awkwardness: *a bull in a china shop;*

- Unreliability: *as changeable as the weather, as changeable as a weathercock, as changeable as the moon.*

The peculiar place in human character description belongs to the phraseological units, which contain zoonym (animal names). The comparison to any animals is built on the associative characteristics of habits of this animal. For example, comparison with trickery of monkey – *as tricky as monkey*; fox cunning – *old fox*; butterfly light – *light as a butterfly*; goose stupidity – *as silly/stupid as a goose*; snake intelligence and wisdom – *as wise as a serpent* and etc. The phraseological units with zoonym components can be expressed:

- Positive evaluation: *take the bull by horns* (confidence, activity, and purposefulness), *gentle as lamb* (kindness);

- Negative human character evaluation: *proud as a peacock* (proud (from pride)); *a dumb bunny* (stupidity), *sly as a fox* (cunning), *as stubborn as a mule* (stubbornness), *as gruff as a bear* (awkwardness), *as awkward as a cow on roller skates* (clumsiness), *as mad as a March hare* (madness).

As it is seen from the stated examples the negative evaluative connotations prevail in the phraseological units with zoonym component, defining the human character.

The phraseological units, defining the human character, can have connotations inside the positive or negative meaning of expression. For example, the positive connotation *relation to people* is represented by the following meanings: "assistance/mutual assistance", "justice", "peacefulness", "hospitality" and etc., and the negative connotation of *rage* is represented by the net evaluative meanings: "state", "scandal" and "dispute" and etc. (Table 1, 2):

Table 1: The evaluative connotations of phraseological units, defining "relation to people" as display of human character

Evaluative connotations	Phraseological unit
Assistance/Mutual assistance	to be in somebody's corner; to be at the back of somebody; to go all the way with somebody; to pull the rug out from under somebody;
Justice	to see somebody in the same light;
Peacefulness	to make good bed fellows; to go all the way with somebody; to have a soft spot for;
Hospitality	To make smb. free of one's house, to throw open the door to, to be "at home" to people; to treat somebody like a lord; to keep a good table/house; to keep open house/table.
Self-sacrifice	Fling/throw oneself into the breach; pull/snatch smb. out of the fire;

Openness	a good mixer; as open as the day
Obsequiousness	be lavish/loud in one's praise(s); plaster smb. with praise; dance attendance on smb.; sing smb's praises; curry favour with smb.; say ditto to smb.;
Trust	a sheep among wolves; a babe in the wood(s);
Neglect	to leave somebody in the cold; to make a stranger of somebody; to turn a cold shoulder on somebody; to turn a blind eye to somebody; to give somebody the back; to pass somebody by on the other side; to cut somebody dead;
Mockeries, scorns	to look down one's nose at somebody; to think small beer of others; to make fish of one and flesh of another;
Persistence	to trip over yourself; to use all muscles; to follow to the letter; to move the mountains; clockwork precision.

Table 2: Evaluative connotations of phraseological units, defining "rage" as display of the human character

Evaluative connotations	Phraseological unit
State	to be in a fume; to have steam coming out of one's ears; to bite the carpet; to blow off steam; to lead with one's chin; to throw one's weight around; to rattle one's cage; to add fuel to the fire
Scandal	to kick up a row/dust; to raise the roof; to make a stink; to wake snakes; to take the law into one's own hands; to make mincemeat of somebody; to eat somebody alive; to wipe the floor with somebody; to put one's foot on another's neck;
Dispute	to give somebody the (rough) edge of one's to give somebody a bit of one's mind; to give somebody a rap on the knuckles; to haul somebody over the coals; to throw something in one's teeth/throat/face; to throw something in somebody's dish; to come down on somebody like a ton of bricks; to go bald-headed at; to drive to the wall; to fall upon somebody hammer and tongs
Cruelty	trigger-happy; blood from/out of a stone/turnip;
Irritation	get one's back (or dander) up;
Impudence	as bold as brass; a cool beggar/card/customer/fish/hand

Some evaluative connotations in the phraseological units are connected with mythology, cinema and literary heroes, biblical characters and etc. For example, the phraseological unit *Devil's advocate* acquired popularity after publication of the mystical drama of Taylor Hackford with the same meaning «Devil's advocate». The phraseological unit means "a human, who protects the mistaken deed or wrong state of things", "fervent debaters", "prejudiced critic, who fundamentally take the party of opposition" (English-Russian Economic Dictionary, 2013). Nevertheless, the phraseological unit entered into daily usage after appearance of the film, and this expressed was used in the Latin language yet – *Advocatus diaboli*. The meaning of this expression was connected with the process of canonization that provided dispute between "God's advocate" – a human, who protected dignities of the future saint and "Devil's advocate" – a human, who denied the right for holiness, speaking about shortages of canonized person (Online encyclopedia dslov.ru, 2013).

The positive connotation in the meaning of human character as a dreamer, fighter for justice is represented in the meaning of phraseological unit *the knight of the Rueful Countenance*. This phraseological unit was borrowed from the novel "Don Quixote" – the knight of sad image (Informative portal, 2013) that meant a human dreamer, whose ideas were finished by misfortunes. However, the phraseological unit has positive and negative connotation, as the conceptions of the "knight of sad image" are considered to be generous.

The phraseological unit, describing the character of a human, who lost himself in life, and then

repented, lies in the biblical parable about *Prodigal son*. The evaluation in the content of phraseological units is determined by the national cultural traditions of people, their outlook, history and traditions.

4. Conclusions of study and perspectives of further development in this direction

Summarizing the above-mentioned we can conclude that in the meaning of phraseological units the evaluative connotations, formed under the effect of external and internal factors (history of language development, cultural and traditions of nation, habits and etc.) are fixed. The phraseological units, defining the human character enter into the phraseology system of English language. The character serves as a display of psycho-emotional state of a human, so these phraseological units can be called universal. We separated positive and negative connotation in the semantics of phraseological units, defining the character. The positive connotations include the following meanings in the semantics of phraseological units as observance, acumen; reasonableness, shrewdness, calmness; naivety; kindness; devotion; obedience; honesty; courage; politeness; diligence; gaiety; reliability; restraint; the negative connotations: light-mindedness; boating; cunning; cowardice; impatience; selfishness; greediness; impudence; dishonesty; detachment; rage; awkwardness; unreliability.

The further interest for research is represented by the study of semantic-structural peculiarities of phraseological units, defining "Human Character".

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