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The Semantic Structure of English Phraseological Units with Proper Nouns

Rakhmanova Makhfuza Saparaliyevna

*O'zbekiston Davlat Jahon Tillari Universiteti, katta o'qituvchi
makhfuza.77@mail.ru*

Baxtiyorova Maftunaxon Toxirjon qizi

O'zbekiston Davlat Jahon Tillari Universiteti, 2-kurs magistranti

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ABSTRACT

The semantic structure of English phraseological units with proper nouns is discussed in this article. The author presents phraseological units that name the personal characteristics, quantitative terms and the names of character traits. The phraseological units with male proper nouns and female proper nouns are given with some examples.

KEYWORDS: Phraseological units, proper nouns, characters traits, female proper nouns, male proper nouns.

Phraseology (from Greek φράσις phrasis, "way of speaking" and -λογία -logia, "study of") is a scholarly approach to language which developed in the twentieth century.[1] It took its start when Charles Bally's[2] notion of locutions phraseologiques entered Russian lexicology and lexicography in the 1930s and 1940s and was subsequently developed in the former Soviet Union and other Eastern European countries. From the late 1960s on it established itself in (East) German linguistics but was also sporadically approached in English linguistics. The earliest English adaptations of phraseology are by Weinreich (1969)[3] within the approach of transformational grammar, Arnold (1973),[4] and Lipka (1992 [1974]).[5] In Great Britain as well as other Western European countries, phraseology has steadily been developed over the last twenty years. The activities of the European Society of Phraseology (EUOPHRAS) and the European Association for Lexicography (EURALEX) with their regular conventions and publications attest to the prolific European interest in phraseology. European scholarship in phraseology is more active than in North America. Bibliographies of recent studies on English and general phraseology are included in Welte (1990)[6] and specially collected in Cowie & Howarth (1996)[7] whose bibliography is reproduced and continued on the internet and provides a rich source of the most recent publications in the field.

The basic units of analysis in phraseology are often referred to as phrasemes or phraseological units. Phraseological units are (according to Prof. Kunin A.V.)[citation needed] stable word-groups with partially or fully transferred meanings ("to kick the bucket", "Greek gift", "drink till all's blue", "drunk as a fiddler (drunk

as a lord, as a boiled owl)", "as mad as a hatter (as a march hare)"). According to Rosemarie Gläser, a phraseological unit is a lexicalized, reproducible billexemic or polylexemic word group in common use, which has relative syntactic and semantic stability, may be idiomatized, may carry connotations, and may have an emphatic or intensifying function in a text.[8]

The phraseological units with a proper name component are based on the following sources: the history and traditions of Britain and the United States, literary sources, including the Bible, ancient mythology (the latter phraseological units have acquired international status). Moreover, most phraseological units with proper names have historical and cultural roots, which is important for our study.

The studied units fall into two groups: phraseological units with male proper names and phraseological units with female proper names. It is noteworthy that "male" phraseological units quantitatively exceed "female" phraseological units by five times.

This indicator once again means that throughout the history of Britain, as well as of all mankind, the leading roles in society were assigned to men [Khidesheli 2008].

Further, it will be natural to trace what qualities of men and women are described in phraseological units, and then compare them and identify asymmetries in gender indicators, if any.

So, phraseological units with male names can denote: physical characteristics (1), mental abilities (2) and personal properties of a man (3).

(1) As loud as Tom of Lincoln - "loud as Tom of Lincoln" (big cathedral bell)

(2) A Daniel come to judgment - "wise man"

(3) Bold as Beauchamp - "brave, bold, brave like Beauchamp" (Duke of Werwick)

PhUs with male names denoting physical characteristics are narrowly represented quantitatively and reflect only two concepts: "strength" and "age".

The phraseological units that convey the mental abilities of a man are quantitatively represented more widely than the previous group, however, they do not differ in a large repertoire of the qualities described. Basically, the meanings of such units can be reduced to two concepts: "wisdom, the presence of a deep mind" (1) and "stupidity, limited mental abilities" (2).

(1) A Daniel come to judgment - "a wise man"

(2) A proper Charlie "round, stuffed fool"

As for phraseological units that name the personal characteristics of a man, this group is the largest both in quantitative terms and in terms of the names of character traits, which are indicated by such units. Let's name the character traits that are discussed in phraseological units and illustrate them with examples:

1. Severity, cruelty: The Duke of Exeter's daughter - "the brainchild of the Duke of Exeter", a rack (the invention of this instrument of torture is attributed to the Duke of Exeter in the reign of Henry VI).
2. Courage, braveness: (as) game as Ned Kelly - "brave to recklessness" (Edward Kelly is a famous Australian robber who lived in the second half of the 19th century and was distinguished by extraordinary courage).

3. Cheerfulness: A Mark Tapley - "Mark Tapley", a person who does not lose heart under any circumstances (named after a character in Ch. Dickens' novel "Martin Chuzzlewit").
4. Patience: (as) Patient as Job - "patient like Job, possessing angelic patience."
5. Mediocrity: Joe Bloggs / Joe Doakes - colloquial. "an ordinary, ordinary person; average American."
6. Complacency, self-confidence: Jack in office - "arrogant, self-important person, bureaucrat, bureaucrat."
7. Infantilism, frivolity:
8. A Peter Pan - 1) "a person who retains childish spontaneity"; 2) despises. "infantile person".
9. Laziness: Lazy Laurence - "a lazy person, a lazy person."
10. Fashionable/lack of taste: Flash Harry is a "gaudily dressed braggart".
11. Distrust, suspicion: A doubting Thomas - "Thomas the unbeliever."
12. Adherence to established rules: According to Hoyle - coll. "according to Hoyle", according to all the rules (E. Hoyle - the author of the book "Instruction in the game of whist", 1742, widely known in his time).
13. Daydreaming: Johnny-Head-in-(the)-Air - "a person who is in the clouds is not of this world."

Among the phraseological units denoting the personal properties of a man, there are also phraseological units representing men in terms of their moral and ethical qualities:

- a) fidelity, devotion: Damon and Pythias - "Damon and Pafias, bosom and inseparable friends."
- b) betrayal: back of both sides - "one who serves both yours and ours."
- c) curiosity: A Paul Pry - "a man sticking his nose into other people's affairs" (Paul Pry is the main character of the comedy of the same name by J. Poole)moral weakness, impotence: Jack-hold-my-staff - "servile servant."

Let us now turn to phraseological units with a component - a female proper name. Although such examples are significantly inferior in quantitative terms to the group with male names, they also fell apart into phraseological units that convey the mental abilities, personal characteristics and moral and ethical qualities of a woman.

Among the phraseological units denoting the mental characteristics of a woman, two concepts are distinguished: "wisdom" cf. Cassandra warnings - "Cassandra's prophecy"; warnings that are ignored but come true.

"nonsense", cf.: Dumb Dora - Amer. jarg. "Stupid girl, fool"

The personal characteristics of a woman are represented by the following concepts, reflecting character traits:

1. Capriciousness: Pretty Fanny's way - "whims, quirks, extravagant antics", which are treated condescendingly (the expression was created by the Irish poet T. Parnell (1679 - 1718)).
2. Tenderness: Cardellia's gift - "quiet, gentle female voice" (similar to the voice of Cordelia - the heroine of Shakespeare's tragedy "King Lear").
3. Ordinary, inconspicuous: Ioan's as good as my lady in the dark - all people seem the same in the dark, in the dark all cats are gray.

4. Defenselessness, inability to defend themselves: Jane Crow - Amer. jarg. "discrimination against women".
5. Malice, cruelty: A bloody Mary - "Bloody Mary" (a cocktail of vodka and tomato juice with ice (according to the color of the cocktail); the original nickname of Queen Mary Tudor, which was given to her by Protestants for cruel persecution).

Phraseological units reflecting the moral and ethical qualities of a woman:

1. Devotion: Sister Ann is a "faithful, devoted friend" (a character from the fairy tale of the French writer of the 18th century C. Perrault "Bluebeard". Anna was waiting for her brothers on the tower to save her sister - the wife of Bluebeard).
2. Conservatism: Aunt Tobby / Aunt Monasima - Amer. jarg. "Aunt Tabby" (nickname for a conservative woman)

The number of phraseological units with female proper names is small, they are five times less than phraseological units with male names, it is noteworthy that here, as in the case of male names, the description of mental characteristics is presented narrowly, the number of such examples is reduced to units.

The complete absence of units describing the external data of a woman is also paradoxical.

However, the corpus of phraseological units is extensive, speaking about the personal characteristics of a woman, her moral and ethical properties. This fully coincides with our conclusions on the corpus of examples with male names.

Maliciousness, stupidity, mediocrity, conservatism, capriciousness, defenselessness - all these are negative traits inherent in a woman based on phraseological units and considered by society as a manifestation of her weakness [Khidesheli, 2008].

Based on the derived patterns, it is possible to list the positive qualities of a woman that are valued in the Anglo-Saxon culture. It is wisdom, devotion, tenderness.

Among the idioms with the names of women, as well as in the corpus of examples with male names, there is a quantitative predominance in the direction of naming negative signs, i.e. units with a negative connotation predominate.

It seems relevant to define common concepts in terms of masculinity and femininity. These are the concepts of wisdom, devotion, as well as the concepts of cruelty, stupidity and mediocrity that have a negative connotation.

Analyzing phraseological units with proper names. There is a process of dissolution of the name in the general meaning of the phraseological unit. It is often impossible to determine the share of her participation in the formation of an idiom. In many cases, the proper name loses its literal meaning, and the phraseological unit is based on the character's facial feature.

The fact that in the composition of phraseological units a proper name is filled with semantic content, which is based on the sign of a certain person, certainly contradicts the nature of a proper name.

The connection with the original denotation of the proper name in the composition of phraseological units has been lost and can only be found by etymological analysis. Therefore, proper names in phraseological units can be considered as such conditionally [Groshko 2006: 11].

However, despite some vagueness of the proper name in the composition of phraseological units, using the example of such units, it became possible to trace the stereotypical ideas of the people about masculinity and femininity. And often a proper name is the bearer of these ideas.

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