PHRASEOLOGICAL MEANING THROUGH THE TRADITIONAL AND CULTURE-ORIENTED APPROACH

Ludmila RACIULA, MA,
Alecu Russo Balti State University
raciulaludmila@gmail.com

Abstract: This article discusses the issue of phraseological meaning from the cognitive culture-oriented perspective, which is based on two key assumptions. The first is that language and culture are two separate and interacting semiotic systems, while phraseological units are the products of

this interaction. Thus, phraseological meaning is formed as a result of inter-semiotic transposition, i.e. transfer of some conceptual information from nonverbal signs of culture system into the verbal ones of the language system. The second assumption results from the first and stipulates that phraseological meaning is a two-strata structure, the surface stratum and the deep stratum. The deep structure encloses the conceptual foundation based on cultural elements and the surface stratum is its embodiment into language signs.

We have chosen the semantic field of emotions to put in practice the cognitive culture-oriented analysis. Anthropologists have proven that emotions are not simply physiological reactions of human bodies, they are also the result of people's cultural interpretation of extra-linguistic reality. Thus, we shall try to identify the conceptual information that underlies phraseological units depicting human emotions.

Keywords: phraseological meaning, linguocultural approach, cognitive culture-oriented analysis, conceptual metaphor.

1. Introduction: an overview of the traditional approach

The study of phraseology has been an area of linguistic interest since the beginning of the 20th century, when the French linguist Ch. Bally and later the Russian V.V. Vinogradov laid the foundations of phraseology, which contributed to its establishment as an academic discipline in its own right. Linguists worked out to define the notion of phraseological unit, its characteristic features and what distinguishes it from a word combination. Particular attention has been paid to the phraseological meaning and the way it differs from the meaning of a word or a word combination, thus developing the field of phraseological semantics. Despite the evident differences of various phraseological schools[1] with respect to the issue of phraseological meaning, there is a wide agreement on its inherent features.

Summarizing the interpretations of phraseological meaning of such linguistic sources as encyclopedias, linguistic dictionaries and manuals of linguistics (e.g. Phraseology and culture in English, The Encyclopedia of Linguistics, The Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics, (Kunin [10]; Teliya [18]) phraseological (or idiomatic)

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[1] Russian School of Phraseology and East European Phraseological School. The growing interest in this field in Europe has been marked by several symposia on phraseology, which resulted in the foundation of the European Society of Phraseology (EUROPHRAS).

meaning is defined by such features as: 'non-compositionality', 'opacity' (or 'transparency'), and 'motivation'.

By non-compositionality linguists mean that the phraseological meaning, as a meaning of a multiword construction, is not determined by the individual meanings of the constituent parts of the expression[2], e.g. bring home the bacon - 'supply material support', spill the beans – 'reveal information unintentionally or indiscreetly', kick the bucket - ' 'die' (informal), etc.. In the early stages of phraseological research, it was considered that the phraseological meaning is fully opaque and unmotivated therefore, it was characterized by arbitrariness. Thus, according to Kunin, there is no direct connection between the form of the multiword construction and the phraseological meaning [11, p.98-107]. However, recent research has established that opaqueness of phraseological meaning is a gradable feature. Thus, Cowie points out that phraseological meaning ranges from transparent 'free combinations' at one end to opaque idioms at the other, e.g., to go wrong – 'malfunction, make a mistake' and to eat crow – 'to be humiliated by having to admit one's defeats or mistakes' [2, p. 579-585]. Opaqueness is closely related to motivation, the more transparent is the expression, the greater the degree of its motivation. Motivations of phraseological units has become a point of discussion for many specialists in the field. Gibbs emphasizes that the common opinion of the traditional approach to phraseology is that the idiomatic meaning of phraseological units arises from dead metaphors, "mostly from historical circumstances that are opaque to contemporary speakers and have little to do with ordinary human cognition" [6, p. 104]. Mainly such an opinion made it possible to speak of 'figurative' and 'non-figurative' phraseological units.

The inner architecture of the phraseological meaning was studied along with the issues within the interest of traditional framework. It was established that the organization of phraseological meaning is rather intricate and consists of interconnected semantic components. Traditionally, Kunin speaks of three components of the phraseological meaning: signification, denotation and connotation

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[2] However, several linguists (Gibbs and Nayak,1989; Gibbs, Nayak and Cutting, 1989; Gibbs, Nayak, Bolton and Keppel, 1989) argue that it would be a mistake to overgeneralize non-compositionality and apply
it to the whole group of idioms and assume that per se all idioms are non-compositional in nature.

[10]. Veronika Teliya goes further and develops a functional-parametric model of phraseological meaning. The scholar speaks of six inter-related macro-components: descriptive, evaluative, motivational, emotive, stylistic, and grammatical [18, p.18-35]. Kopylenco, Popova [9] Melerovich [15], identify different methods of component-based analysis. Considering the scientific value of the above mentioned works, as well as those of many other linguists, we can say that the study of phraseological meaning in terms of its constituents offered valuable data on its semantic complexity and heterogeneity.

The traditional approach, which was developed in the classical period of phraseology, made a great contribution to the science of phraseology by determining its boundaries, identifying the main features of the phraseological unit, carrying out a systematization of the phraseological fund, taken into account the above mentioned properties[3] and determining the semantic components of the phraseological meaning. As a whole, it contributed to the understanding of the essence of phraseology and to the description of its specifics. However, as Baranov and Dobrovol'skij claim, in traditional works on phraseology, the study of phraseological semantics was confined, to a great extent, to rather general observations [1]. In particular, the traditional approach failed to determine how phraseological meaning is formed, how cultural or sociocultural information is encoded and stored during its creation and then is retrieved by speakers while using phraseologisms in actual communication, as well as how the mechanisms of phraseological processing work [22, p. 256].

2. Linguoculturological approach to phraseological meaning

It should be mentioned that the origins and much of current practice in analyzing phraseology in a culture-oriented perspective belong to the linguoculturological approach, developed in the works of Veronika Teliya and her followers (Kovshova, Krasnych, Beliaevskaya, Zykova, Oparina, etc). This School of Phraseology

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[3] Wolfgang Fleischer (1982) and Harald Burger et.al. (1973, 1982) developed the 'center – periphery' classification of phraseological units, based on the feature of idiomaticity. Although the schemes proposed by these scholars vary to some extent, both of them claim that the most idiomatic phraseological units are placed in the center of the scheme and those with a lesser degree of idiomaticity gradually go to the periphery.

contributed to phraseology such fundamental notions as cultural connotation, cultural codes, cultural-linguistic competence, cultural layers of phraseology and worked out an innovative lexicographic principle of culturological description of phraseologisms.

The linguoculturological approach to phraseology means studying different ways and forms of interaction between culture and language resulting in the formation of phraseologisms as embodiments and transmitters of cultural information from generation to generation. Making the knowledge about the process of this interaction explicit and in this way finding and understanding how cultural information is translated into phraseological meaning is one of the main concerns of the linguoculturological approach to phraseology at present.

In this study, special attention will be paid to what enables phraseologisms to act as a store of cultural knowledge. Proceeding from the notion of "cultural memory" we set out to show that the phraseological meaning is a complex semantic-conceptual formation, which is capable of reflecting different historical modes of world-cognition and, therefore, of retaining the corresponding types of cultural information (such as intertextuality, pre-scientific knowledge about the world, cultural symbols, including objects of material culture and socio-cultural behavioral patterns (D. Dobrovol'skij, E. Piirainen [3, p. 7-35]. Given this, we can speak of cultural memory reflected in phraseological meaning.

According to Lotman, culture is a collective intellect and collective memory, i.e. a supra-individual "mechanism" of keeping and transmitting some messages or some information as well as a "mechanism" of generating new messages or new information. Lotman especially emphasizes the regenerative character of cultural memory, which makes it possible not just to keep cultural information but multiply it by continuous adding new cultural information to the store obtained earlier [14]. Such an approach actually depicts the process of cultural memory in action as a process of storing cultural information layer by layer. We shall apply the same approach to the phraseological meaning and assume that it is composed of the surface and the deep strata. The surface stratum is constituted by the semes forming what is known as "the meaning" of language units, and might be called the actual (phraseological) meaning registered in dictionaries. The peculiarities of the actual meaning stem from the deep stratum which structures the actual semantic set-up. The deep stratum is a conceptual stratum; it is formed by various conceptual

constituents. It is supposed that it is to the deep (conceptual) stratum that the phraseological image belongs. We assume that the process of storing cultural information in phraseologisms is possible due to the conceptual structures, underlying phraseological meaning. Thus, as provided by this approach, the phraseological image is in essence a conceptual formation. Therefore, in research on the problem of phraseological meaning with respect to cultural memory the study of the deep – conceptual – stratum as the stratum of phraseological images comes to the fore.

3. The cognitive approach to phraseological meaning

According to the cognitive approach, phraseological meaning resides in the human cognitive ability to structure the reality conceptually based on human perception of extra linguistic reality. Numerous studies in the field of phraseology provided sufficient evidence that phraseological meaning is conceptually grounded (Langlotz 2006, Moon 1998, Gibbs 1995, etc.). For instance, Gibbs claims that "people's knowledge of the metaphorical links between different source and target domains provides the basis for the appropriate use and interpretation of idioms" [6, p 107]. From the cognitive perspective, we can conclude that conceptual structures, such as metaphors and metonymies that underlie the phraseological meaning, govern the processes of their understanding, application and their behavior in discourse.

Generally speaking, cognitive approach focuses on the cognitive rather than on semantic motivation of phraseological meaning. It attempts to explain the cognitive mechanisms involved in the formation of phraseological units and those involved in their understanding; to reveal the ways in which phraseological units store, accumulate and transmit information that is essential for communication, as well as the mechanisms of their perception.

4. Phraseological meaning in a cognitive culture-oriented perspective

The cognitive culture-oriented theory of phraseological meaning, developed by I. Zykova (2016) is based on a number of cognitive, linguoculturological and semiotic ideas. The key assumption of this theory is that language and culture are two separate and interacting semiotic systems (Eco 1984, Hjelmslev 1973, Jakobson 1971, Степанов 1997, Лотман 2001). Consequently, as claimed by Telija, cultural and language signs, in particular phraseological units, are the products of such an interaction [18]. To

explore the phraseological meaning that appears as a result of this interaction, Zykova takes Jakobson's term of 'inter-semiotic transposition' (1959), which, in his view, is a process of transferring some information from the system of verbal signs into other systems of signs, for example, into music, dance, cinema, painting, etc. Further, she applies it to the analysis of the relations between language and culture. Thus, Zykova states that "the phraseological meaning is formed as a result of inter-semiotic transposition, which is understood as a transfer of some conceptual information from nonverbal signs of culture into verbal, i.e. phraseological signs" [22, p.261]. For inctance, the meaning of the phraseological unit ace in the hole 'a major advantage that one keeps hidden until an ideal time' seems to be formed due to the transfer of particular conceptual contents from the semiotics of card playing (in particular, poker) to the language semiotics; whereas strike (hit) the false note 'do something wrong or inappropriate' from the semiotics of music into the language semantics.

Another key idea of the cognitive culture-oriented analysis of phraseological meaning is the assumption that the meaning is a two-strata structure that includes the surface stratum, mainly the semantic one, and the deep, which is a conceptual stratum[4]. Thus, we can assume that there is a transfer of signs from the semiotic system of culture into that of the language, resulting in the formation of the deep (conceptual) stratum of the phraseological meaning, which underlines the surface (semantic) stratum of the meaning. The deep structure encloses the conceptual foundation based on cultural elements and underlies the phraseological image.

To carry out a cognitive culture-oriented analysis of phraseological meaning we will take the semantic field of emotions. Human beings cannot help having emotions as they are part of the psychosomatic make-up. The sociocultural features of emotions have been studied in cultural anthropology and from this perspective, emotions are not simply physiological phenomena within people, they

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[4] The terms were first introduced by N. Chomsky, referring to syntactic structures. In *The Oxford Dictionary of English Grammar* (2014), Aarts, Chalker, and Weiner point out that, in a looser sense, "deep and surface structure are often used as terms in a simple binary opposition, with the deep structure representing meaning, and the surface structure being the actual sentence we see."

are also the result of people's cultural interpretation of the world they inhabit. Therefore, everyday language of emotion is seen as embodying culture-specific theories, sometimes with a long history.

Following the Theory of Conceptual Metaphor, developed by Lakoff and Johnson, metaphor is central to emotion [12]. The physical manifestations of emotion are blushing, trembling, changes in expression, eye contact or avoidance of it, etc., which are visible to others. This is reflected in the vocabulary, including idioms. The semantic field of English phraseological units expressing JOY includes such idioms as: to be in the seventh heaven, to walk on air, over the moon, be lighthearted, etc. These idioms designate happy states through analogies present in their images. One of the imagist depiction of joy and happiness is the conceptual metaphor HAPPINESS IS UP, a state which also goes with lightness, while GRIEF IS DOWN as a state which goes with weight, e.g. to have a heavy heart, to be down/ to be down in the dumps, feel let down, feel low, sinking feeling. A likely source of such a conceptual metaphor may serve the medieval theory of humors, which although not current, remains in the Anglo-Celtic cultural memory, and possibly European as a form of folklore. The theory offers explicit explanation for the conceptual metaphors underlying these phraseological idioms.

According to the theory of humors, the choler, phlegm, blood and melancholy are linked, on the one hand, to planetary influence (Mars, Moon, Jupiter, Venus, and Saturn), and on the other, to the natural elements, fire, water, air, and earth. The belief in humors as the causes of health and disease went with the belief in the influence of planets as a factor affecting the proportion and combination of choler, phlegm blood and melancholy in the body [5, p. 123].

It is this proportion of any humor that is relevant to the metaphors of emotions. In their imagery, idioms typically imply the superabundance of a certain emotion and by implication the excess of a particular humor. Although the average language users today are unlikely to know anything about the humors per se, they draw on the resources of language, which still retains in its meaning system concepts traceable back to the Middle Ages. Choler, melancholy, passion and sluggishness were thought to originate in the liver (bile), the stomach, the heart and the brain [ibid, 124]. The belief in such origins could be a possible reason for the preponderance of body-part idioms in English.

The heart and the brain dominate the imagery of emotions in English. The heart symbolizes the passions, the affections of the soul, while the head symbolizes the spirit, the rational intellect. While the heart was generally accepted as the seat of the soul, there were many differences of opinion among medieval philosophers regarding the site of the rational spirit. English idioms favor the head and the brain as the seat of the reason and the heart as the seat of emotion.

Emotion – heart, e.g., for one's heart to leap, steal someone's heart, lose one's heart to somebody, have one's heart in the right place, have a soft heart, be kind/good-hearted, break somebody's heart, sob one's heart out, have one's heart in one's mouth, for one's heart to miss a beat, etc.

Rational spirit – head, e.g., have one's head screwed on the right place, keep one's head, have a good head for something, a level head/ level-headed, lose one's head, have one's head turned, have one's head in the clouds, etc.

The figurativeness of the above idioms is, on the one hand, traced back to the medieval theory of humors and on the other, we can also identify a series of concptual metaphors in them, e.g., THE HEAD IS AN OBJECT: have one's head screwed on the right place, lose one's head, keep one's head, etc.

THE HEAD IS MOBILE: have one's head turned, have one's head in the clouds, etc.

5. Concluding remarks. Summarizing, it is worth mention¬ing that each metaphorical model, being a shared conceptual foun¬dation for some number of phraseological images (the amount may vary) becomes an aggregate resource storing cultural information that each phraseological image retains and transmits. The conceptual nature of phraseological images turns out to be a reliable criterion for relating them to cognitive mechanisms of cultural memory. A close consideration of the principles of the forma¬tion of phraseological images has testified to their similarly / identically patterned conceptual organizations.

We can conclude that the combination of the cognitive and linguo-culturological approaches to phraseology gives a new impetus to the development of the general theory of phraseology. The cognitive culture-oriented theory sheds more light on the specifics of the phraseological meaning. In particular, it helps clarify some aspects of how the phraseological (or idiomatic) meaning is formed, how cultural or sociocultural information is encoded into phraseological

signs, as well as to bring out cultural specifics of the process of formation of the phraseological unit.

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