

Realities – the Basis of Extra Linguistic Motivation of the Connotative Meaning of Phraseological Units

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Abstract: The article focuses on the role of the realities in the forming and functioning of extra linguistic motivation of the connotative meaning on the material of English phraseological units through the linguistic and cultural approach. The notion of the reality in the phraseological aspect is specified, in-depth study of the historical evolution of this linguistic phenomenon is carried out, and the realities are classified according to their denotative and connotative meaning.

Keywords: linguistic and cultural studies; extra linguistics; motivation; connotative meaning; phraseological unit

A stormy development of modern linguistic investigations in the theory of intercultural communication emphasizes the interest to the language a tool of the reality cognition. Theoretical schools of this tendency (Y. Stepanov, A. Baranov, V. Krasnih, I. Sternyn & others) allow us to analyze the language system deeply, because the meanings of words and concepts reflect the world of realities.

The significance of our research lies in the interest to the problem of the motivation of the connotative meaning, where the most essential part is played by realities as national specific elements of interlinguistic and intercultural communication, which makes the basis of the background knowledge.

Researching into the motivation of the connotative meaning of the phraseological units can't be provided without extra linguistic information, because the background knowledge in the way of speaking acquires the functions of extra-speech factors (such as ethno-cultural, social-psychological, mental-psychological), which determine the choice of the motivative sign. In our research the phraseological units are regarded as the representation of national peculiarity, history, culture, traditional way of life. Because of such approach phraseology appears to be the focal point of the background knowledge about the country and the nation, and it can't be investigated without the extra linguistic or linguistic and cultural information. The interrelationship between the language and culture exists

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in the language units with vividly manifested national and cultural semantics, which contains the knowledge of the definite people who are the language bearers and the experts of surrounding reality. These language units are the signs of reality.

The origin of the word “reality” is from Latin adjective, neuter, plural (realis, -e, pl. realia – “material”, “effective”) transformed into the noun, feminine under the influence of analogical categories in the Slavic languages. It means the object of material culture or different factors connected with the state system of the country, history and culture of the nation, the language contacts of the bearers from the point of their representation in the definite language (Vlahov & Sider, 1980, p. 7).

The realities were investigated by A. Reformatsky, M. Vaysburd, A. Rayhshteyn, V. Rozentsveyg, I. Revzyn, L. Sobolev, A. Suprun, G. Tomahyn, G. Chernov, Y. Kostomarov, V. Vereshagyn, V. Berkov and many others. But the absence of clear formulation of this notion and the diffusiveness of its borders in linguistics, linguistic and regional, linguistic and cultural studies, translation and interpretation causes some difficulties. The reason of this is in the fact, that reality-object has a wide meaning, and, being an element of extra language reality, it is not always put into the borders of reality-word. At the same time reality-word is the sign with the help of which the objects – their references – receive language form. In our research “reality” – is everywhere only the lexical (or phraseological) unit, but it’s not the object which is marked.

We consider that the notion of connotation contains the notion of color, because exactly the color makes the realities from stylistically and emotionally natural units. The color is the nuance of the word or phrase, which they get because of the reference’s belonging to the definite nation, country, historical epoch, culture, traditions, and way of life, especially the peculiarities of the existing reality as for the other countries, nations, and ages.

The national and historical tinge of the realities is a new acquired meaning, exactly the additional one to the primary meaning. That’s why realities, with their principle characteristic – color, are considered to be the bearer of the connotative meanings.

In this way, following by S. Vlahov and S. Floryn, we perceive realities as words, units and, in our case, phraseological units, which name the objects of life (culture, way of life, social and historical development) familiar to one nation and alien to the others. Being the bearers of national and/or historical color, they often don’t have exact equivalents in other languages and they need special interpretative approaches.

The example of the phraseological unit, the meaning of which in denotative and connotative spheres is motivated by reality, is the one of British origin from the field of historical and political studies: *the Iron Lady*.¹ The nucleus of the

¹ Collins English Dictionary: <http://www.collinsdictionary.com/>

denotative meaning here is a British as an individual subject in the variety of his characteristics and conditions, in particular the famous representative of British linguistics and culture with the marker of his social role, private features or the precedent connected with this person. At the same time the connotative meaning is motivated by the image of Margaret Thatcher – the woman, who owing to her determination and power occupied the post of Prime Minister of the United Kingdom from 1979 to 1990. Nowadays her image is associated with stereotypical idea about the woman-fighter, independence, justice and courage. Besides this phraseological unit contains the noun *iron* as an attribute in the meaning “firm”, “determined”, which is used to confirm the effectiveness of her intentions about the realization of her own political views, despite the resistance and the critics of the opposition. The expressive effect is achieved by the positive evaluation and the high level of historical, cultural, ideological and foreign types of connotation.

Representing the specific character of national culture, the realities possess the connotations, which create the colorful image, but it's not always easily understood by non-native speakers. The perception of this image in the whole scope of national and cultural associations is the basic problem of linguistics and culture studies. A well-defined and detailed classification of the realities can help with it.

Our own classification reproduces not only the subject meaning (semantics) of the realities but also their connotation coloring – their national and historical tinge. It is important to add that the classification is based on the denotative/connotative principle.

In conclusion we may present the following schema of the classification:

1. Anthroponyms – the personal names of people (group of people):

a) the typical national names, surnames and nicknames: *John (or Tom) Collins* (Baransev, 2006, p. 560), *John (or Tom) Long the carrier* (Baransev, 2006, p. 560), *cousin Betsy (or Betty)* (Baransev, 2006, p. 1426), *Tom, Dick and Harry (or Jack, Jem and Jonathan)* (Baransev, 2006, p. 956), *John Bull* (Baransev, 2006, p. 560);

b) the names of historical personalities, public figures, scientists, artists, writers, sportsmen: *Vicar of Bray* (Baransev, 2006, p. 986), *Lord High Steward of England* (Baransev, 2006, p. 626), *Joe Miller* (Baransev, 2006, p. 560);

c) the names of the characters from fiction, folklore, mythology, The Bible: *Darby (or Derby) and Joan* (Baransev, 2006, p. 259), *Daniel come to judgement* (Baransev, 2006, p. 259), *Lady Bountiful* (Baransev, 2006, p. 584), *Judas kiss (a kiss of Judas)* (Baransev, 2006, p. 562), *Damocles' sword* (Baransev, 2006, p. 258);

2. Toponyms – the place-names of towns, regions, localities, streets, especially having strong associations with historical facts, economical and cultural events, despite the object's character: *ship-shape and Bristol fashion (or in Bristol fashion)*

(Baransev, 2006, p. 857), *Lincoln green* (Baransev, 2006, p. 613), *three tailors of Tooley Street* (Baransev, 2006, p. 944), *Downing Street* (Baransev, 2006, p. 285);

3. Ethnographisms – the representation of traditional forms of material and inner culture, including ceremonies, customs, beliefs, rituals, etc.:

a) the forms of material culture – the names of objects and phenomena of traditional way of life (food, drinks, clothing, head-dresses, crockery, tools, buildings and their parts, transport, etc.): *flich of Dunmow* (Baransev, 2006, p. 341), *halfpenny lick* (Baransev, 2006, p. 449), *Welsh rabbit (or rarebit)* (Baransev, 2006, p. 998), *all ale (or beer, porter) and skittles* (Baransev, 2006, p. 23), *wear the King's (or Queen's) coat (or uniform)* (Baransev, 2006, p. 996), *Norfolk suit* (Baransev, 2006, p. 697); *Oxford ties* (Baransev, 2006, p. 744), *Welsh wig* (Baransev, 2006, p. 998); *black jack (or blackjack)* (Baransev, 2006, p. 140), *reach (or be raised to) the wool-sack (or woolsack)* (Baransev, 2006, p. 810), *French roof* (Baransev, 2006, p. 358);

b) the names of measures and money: *inch by inch*¹, *run a mile*², *not have a red cent*³ *two a penny (or ten a penny)*⁴, *in for a pound*⁵, *dollar signs in your eyes*⁶, *crooked sixpence* (Baransev, 2006, p. 246);

c) the forms of inner culture, customs, traditions (the names of holidays, including folk and religious calendar, ceremonies, games, dances, musical styles, etc.): *April fool*, ⁷ *Lammas Day [or harvest festival]* (Baransev, 2006, p. 585), *fox and hounds* (the name of the game) (Baransev, 2006, p. 357), *dance the Tyburn jig* (Baransev, 2006, p. 259), *and all that jazz*⁸;

4. Historisms – the historical events, important landmarks in the history of the country, the names of documents, political and historical groups of participants in the events of the past, etc.: *Industrial Revolution* (Baransev, 2006, p. 528), *Long Parliament* (Baransev, 2006, p. 622), *Bubble Act* (Baransev, 2006, p. 172), *Kentish fire* (Baransev, 2006, p. 574), *read the Riot Act* (Baransev, 2006, p. 810), *Black and Tans* (Baransev, 2006, p. 139), *little Englander* (Baransev, 2006, p. 615);

5. The realities or commonly known terms, relating to different spheres of life, work processes, interests of the nation (political sphere, legal sphere, warfare, art, sports, navigation and different trades): *enter the House* (Baransev, 2006, p. 305), *Courtesy of England* (Baransev, 2006, p. 243], *play doctor* (Baransev, 2006, p.

¹ (2002). Chambers Dictionary of Idioms: English-Ukrainian semibilingual. K. Vseuvito, p. 198.

² Idem, p. 261.

³ Idem, p. 69.

⁴ Idem, p. 310.

⁵ Idem, p. 309

⁶ Idem, p. 116

⁷ Idem, p. 18

⁸ Idem, p. 201

762), *Little Go (or the little go)* (Baransev, 2006, p. 615), *get a half-nelson on one* (Baransev, 2006, p. 373), *in dry dock* (Baransev, 2006, p. 527), *put (or throw) (one, something) off the scent* (Baransev, 2006, p. 789), *full house* (Baransev, 2006, p. 365);

6. The realities reflecting the typical fragment of the real world in the consciousness of the language personality – cultural standards, ethnic stereotypes, national symbols: *the British lion* (або *Lion*) (Baransev, 2006, p. 170), *halcyon days* (або *time*) (Baransev, 2006, p. 789), *blue rose* (Baransev, 2006, p. 149), *blue – jacket* (Baransev, 2006, p. 148).

Let's study an example from the gastronomical sphere of knowledge. The basis of the connotative meaning of the phraseological unit with the name of national English dish *the flitch of Dunmow* – salted and baked piece of pork (Baransev, 2006, p. 341) is the symbolic image of the relationships between husband and wife. The toponym as a part of the phraseological unit shows the history of this gastronomical reality, because in Dunmow (county Essex) this traditional dish was taken to the married couple, who proved that they had been living in love and peace during the year and one day.

The peculiarities of the language material lie in the reflection of extra linguistic semantics that is in special information, derived from national culture. The realities are the basis of such information. It's hard to define the associations relating to the definite objects and to study the motivation of the connotative meaning of the phraseological units in different languages without the awareness of the realities.

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