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A SEMANTIC APPROACH TO CLASSIFICATION OF ENGLISH IDIOMS WITH AN ANTHROPONYM AS A COMPONENT

Abstract: *Specific semantic features of idioms containing a proper name as one of their components have been considered. The classification of this group of idioms and the definition of the main subgroups depending on the character of anthroponyms in their structure have been given. The qualitative originality of a proper name as a component of phraseological units is analysed.*

Key words: *idiom, anthroponym, proper name, phraseological units, etymological and semantic features.*

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СЕМАНТИЧЕСКИЙ ПОДХОД К КЛАССИФИКАЦИИ АНГЛИЙСКИХ ИДИОМ, СОДЕРЖАЩИХ АНТРОПОНИМ КАК ОДИН ИЗ КОМПОНЕТОВ

Аннотация: *Рассмотрены специфические семантические особенности фразеологизмов, содержащих имя собственное в качестве одного из компонентов. Даны классификация этой группы идиом и определение основных*

подгрупп в зависимости от характера антропонима в их структуре. Проанализировано качественное своеобразие антропонима как компонента фразеологической единицы.

Ключевые слова*: идиома, антропоним, имя собственное, фразеологические единицы, этимологические и семантические свойства.*

Interest in phraseology in the last decades has increased which is accounted for mainly by the specific lexical and semantic features of idioms that are central to their identification and help to distinguish them from other phrases.

Phraseology — (from Greek phrasis and logos) is the science that studies fixed combinations of words — idioms or phraseological units. The term «phraseology» was introduced by the Swiss scientist Sh. Balli where this science was defined as «studying coherent combinations». In spite of the fact that these units are called by various authors differently, each definition emphasizes the essence of phraseological units — their semantic unity, stability of meaning, which is, as a rule, characterized by reproducibility of already available combinations in a complete form. A. V. Kunin distinguishes five types of stability of phraseological units: stability of the usage, structural-semantic stability, semantic stability, lexical and syntactic stability [1].

The first type of stability is that phraseological units are language units, but are not formed in the speech flow. As a rule, they are formed as a result of memorizing phrases by native speakers for their originality and laconicism; then an individual author's phrase becomes general property and fills up the language treasure trove of people.

Structural-semantic stability of idioms means impossibility of creating similar phraseological units by means of modelling [1].

Semantic invariance is defined as stability of meaning and existence of similar meaning in phraseological variants and also existence of a semantic invariant at any changes of phraseological units [1].

Speaking about lexical stability, A. V. Kunin meant «invariability of components» [1]. For example, inclusion of pronouns into the structure of idioms is not violation of this type of stability as these components can serve for specification, but not for change of semantics of an idiom.

Specific features of idioms, as a rule, are revealed as a result of comparison with another type of speech units — free word combinations. The main trait of any phraseological unit is its reproducibility in a fixed form. At the slightest violation of the structure or omission of one of components the total loss of sense or transformation into free word combination is possible.

The second peculiarity of the phraseological unit is stability of component structure. Replacement of one of elements, as a rule, leads to loss of unique sense, that is phraseological unit also turns into free word combination. Insignificant replacements (substitution of the necessary pronoun, the use of plural) are admissible.

The idiom has dual nature. On the one hand, the idiom consists of two or more words which are formed morphologically, but, from the point of view of semantic integrity, any idiom may be equated to one word. While considering the meaning of components of the idiom it is easy to notice that their meanings are a little blurred or absolutely lost [2].

Thus, any idiom possesses a number of distinguishing features, alongside with the main characteristics it is possible to discern some others, for example, connotation, idiomaticity etc. [3].

Idioms are more, than any other part of lexicon, connected with history, traditions and literature of the people speaking this language. This property is especially brightly revealed in those idioms whose component is a proper name.

The analysis of etymology of anthroponyms as the main components of idioms gives an opportunity to define the main groups of these idioms. One of them is represented by idioms, in which the proper name is connected with English (Scottish, Irish) realities, everyday life, history, literature [4].

These idioms, in their turn, can be divided into several subgroups depending on the character of proper names used in them:

1) idioms in which the proper name is connected with historical events, the facts of the remote past. Within this group it is possible to define idioms containing surnames, names or a combination of names and surnames, e.g. [5]:

— when queen Anne was alive — «in days of yore», «long ago»;

— Since Adam was a boy – since time immemorial;

— Jack Ketch — «executioner» (by the name the English executioner of the 17th century).

2) idioms in which the proper name is connected with national legends, popular beliefs, tales, songs, child's games, etc., for example:

— peeping Tom — «a person who is too curious» (it is connected with the legend of Lady Godiva);

3) idioms with the proper name taken from literary sources:

— Paul Pry — «a person, poking his nose into other people's business» (the main character of the comedy of Poulat of «Paul Pry»);

— Uriah Heep — «Uriya Gip», «a hypocritical intriguer» (by the name of the character of the novel by Ch. Dickens «David Copperfield»).

4) idioms whose part is one of the most widespread English names. Examples of the similar widespread idioms created by the people are:

— every Tom, Dick and Harry / Brown, Smith and Robinson — «common, ordinary people»;

In this subgroup of idioms the proper name means just «any ordinary person».

For example:

— Jack of all trades — «a person able to do all sorts of practical work»;

— Jack of both sides – a double-faced person, two masters' servant.

A small amount of idioms of this subgroup refer to inanimate objects, for example:

— Long Tom — «a the long-range gun»;

— Black Jack — «Jolly Roger» — «a pirate's black flag»;

— Yellow Jack — «yellow fever»;

— Union Jack — «the flag of the United Kingdom of Great Britain»

In this subgroup the number of idioms with man's names prevails.

Thus, this group of idioms is non-uniform by structure and covers the whole bulk of idioms with proper names.

It should be remarked that the etymological motivation is preserved, as a rule, by those idioms in which the proper name is connected with mythology (they fill up the phraseological fund of many languages).

The majority of these idioms have international character. They date back to antique mythology, for example, the following idioms:

— «Achilles's heel» — «the heel of Achilles» — «Achilles' heel» — the only weak point;

— «Procrustes' bed» — «Procrustean bed» — a measure to which the phenomena which are not suitable for it are adjusted. (Procrustes is a nickname of the legendary Ancient Greek robber Polipemon who, according to the legend, caught travellers and chopped off or stretched their legs to the length of the bed);

— «Cassandra warnings» — cautions which were neglected, but which came true (Cassandra is the Trojan princess endowded according to the legend with a prophecy gift);

— «Hercules' labor» — «Herculean work» — exclusively difficult business;

— «Sisyphean labor» — «Sisyphean task» — hard and fruitless work;

— «Promethean fire» — striving for ideals;

— «Hercules' pillars» — «Pillars of Hercules»:

1) ancient names of two rocks on the coast of the Strait of Gibraltar;

2) limit, border on something.

According to the Ancient Greek myth, Heracles passed through whole Europe and Libya and put the Pillars of Hercules in commemoration of his wanderings.

The idioms of this group belong to a large group of idiomatic expressions formed on a classical basis which fill up phraseological fund not only of the English language, but also a number of other languages.

The idioms with a proper name as one of components are most often substantivised. The constant dependence of components is characteristic of these substantive idioms consisting of proper names (i.e. irreplaceability of components).

During the process of idiomatic formation a proper name loses its normative individualizing-identifying function, and undergoes quality changes, i.e. acquires new characteristics not inherent to it. It is caused by a qualitative originality of a proper name — a component of an idiom, unlike a proper name in the free use.

The selective metaphorization is the process during which disintegration of the single concept corresponding to a specific denotation most often occurs as one of the ways of idioms formation.

If in the free use a proper name comprises a complex of properties referring to one person, whereas idioms with a proper name as one of components have the ability to assign only one characteristic to potentially unlimited number of denotations.

The etymology and semantics of the considered idioms directly influence their translation. The way of translating phraseological units depends on the correlation between units of source language and target language. In modern linguistics there are two types of such relationship:

1) there is a full compliance with an idiom in a target language. Thus, transfer is made by means of the equivalent which is already assigned to it.

2) the second group is made by incomplete equivalents, or analogues.

Translation of phraseological units is performed using the method of search of an analogue. It is more widespread, than trial and error method of equivalents. Tracing is the rarest way of translation. Verbatim,word-for-word translation is possible not always

as transfer of contents of the phraseological unit which can lead to a complete loss of its sense. Also translation of phraseological units is influenced significantly by their etymology and semantics.

In conclusion we should note that idioms containing a proper name as one of their components occupy an important place in the phraseological fund of English. At the same time each proper name has the etymology and semantics and is widely used both in fiction, and in informal conversation.

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