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DEPENDENCE BETWEEN THE WORD, THE PHRASEOLOGICAL UNIT AND THE «FREE» WORD-COMBINATION

Abstract

The article under consideration dwells on the interrelationship between the word, its idiomatic equivalent and the word-combination. In actual speech words always come up in word-combinations. The lexical meaning of relatively 'free' word-combinations is the combined meaning of the component parts. But they are 'free' only in inverted commas because of the rules of lexical-phraseological combinability of words of this or that language.

Substitutability of lexical components is the distinguishing feature of 'free' word-combinations in contrast to phraseological units. The latter, although consist of several words, semantically whole and convey a global meaning. Phraseological units are reproduced in speech.

Key words: word, lexical meaning, 'free' word-combinations, restrictions of lexical-phraseological character, phraseological unit, global meaning, idiomatic meaning, component words, distinguishing feature, independent unit.

СӨЗДҮН, ФРАЗЕОЛОГИЯЛЫК БИРДИКТИН ЖАНА «ЭРКИН» СӨЗ АЙКАШЫНЫН БАЙЛАНЫШЫ

Кыскача мазмуну

Каралып жаткан макалада сөздүн, анын идиомалык эквивалентинин жана сөз айкашынын өз ара байланышы маселеси көтөрүлөт. Кеп агымында сөздөр эки же андан көп маанилик сөздөрдөн турган айкалыштарды түзүп, бир бүтүн түшүнүктү туюндурат. Мындай салыштырмалуу «эркин» сөз айкаштарынын лексикалык мааниси составдык бөлүктөрдүн бириккен мааниси болуп саналат.

Лексикалык компоненттердин орун алмаштыруучулугу фразеологиялык бирдиктерден айырмаланып, структуралык өзүнчөлүккө караганда семантикалык бекемдик басымдуулук кылган «эркин» сөз айкаштарынын өзгөчөлүгү болуп саналат. Башкача айтканда, фразеологиялык бирдик бир нече сөздөн туруп, семантикалык жактан бирдиктүү болуп, өзүнчө сөз катары глобалдык маанини берет. Ал семантикалык жактан мотивациясыз, башкача айтканда, анын мааниси глобалдуу жана аны түзгөн компоненттердин лексикалык маанисинен келип чыгууга болбойт.

Түйүндүү сөздөр: сөз, лексикалык маани, «эркин» сөз айкаштары, лексика-фразеологиялык чектөөлөр, фразеологиялык бирдиктер, глобалдык маани, идиомалык маани, компоненттүү сөздөрдү, айырмалоочу белги, өз алдынча бирдиктер.

ЗАВИСИМОСТЬ МЕЖДУ СЛОВОМ, ФРАЗЕОЛОГИЧЕСКОЙ ЕДИНИЦЕЙ И «СВОБОДНЫМ» СЛОВСОЧЕТАНИЕМ

Аннотация

В рассматриваемой статье поднимается вопрос о взаимозависимости слова, его идиоматического эквивалента и словосочетания. В потоке речи слова образуют сочетания, состоящие из двух или более знаменательных слов для выражения единого нерасчлененного понятия. Лексическое значение таких относительно «свободных» словосочетаний представляет собой комбинированное значение составных частей.

Заменяемость лексических компонентов является отличительной чертой «свободных» словосочетаний в отличие от фразеологических единиц, в которых семантическая монолитность довлеет над структурной раздельно-

стью. Иначе говоря, фразеологические единицы состоит из нескольких слов, но семантически едины и, как отдельное слово, передают глобальное значение. Они семантически немотивированные, т. е. их значение глобально и не может быть выведено из лексического значения составляющих компонентов.

Ключевые слова: слово, лексическое значение, «свободные» словосочетания, ограничения лексико-фразеологического характера, фразеологическая единица, глобальное значение, идиоматическое значение, слова-компоненты, отличительный признак, самостоятельная единица.

The utterance, used as the title of the present article, has always been in the limelight of leading Soviet and Russian philologists and western linguists. It is everybody's knowledge that the word is the basic unit of language [1, p.20]. The word can be used by itself as a free-standing item within sentences to express different kinds of meaning because it is capable of referring individually to a certain piece of extralinguistic reality [2, p. 27].

One of the most general and most firmly established facts is that the word as a global unit possesses both sound envelop and meaning. It goes without saying that neither can exist without the other. In the flow of speech the word undergoes various modifications and functions in one of its grammatical forms, i.e., word-forms. The system illustrating a word in all its forms is called a paradigm. The lexical meaning of a word is the same throughout the paradigm; as far as the grammatical meaning is concerned it changes from one form to another, e.g., to sleep, sleeps, slept, sleeping; lake, lake's, lakes, lakes', etc.

In addition to the grammatical forms of words it is necessary to distinguish the following variants of words: 1) the lexico-semantic variant (polysemantic words in each of their meanings), e.g., the word design can be (a) a drawing or an outline; (b) the art of making such drawings; (c) the general arrangement or planning of smth; (d) a plan or intention; 2) the phonetic variant (the pronouncing variants of one and the same word), e.g., often | 'ɔ:fn|, |' ɔ:fn|; 3) the morphological variant, e.g., the two variant forms of the past indefinite tense of the verb to learn: learned |-d| and learnt |-t| [3, pp. 236, 487]. Otherwise stated, the word exists as a unity of all its forms and variants within the language system. These aspects are closely interrelated because ultimately they contribute to the same end - the meaningful use of a lexical item in the flow of speech [4, p. 11].

It is very important to realize that in actual speech words always come up in combinations with other words. The two-sided lexical unit consisting of more than one word is called the word-combination. In the Dictionary of Linguistic Terms word-combinations are defined as “соединение двух или более знаменательных слов /вместе с относящимися к ним служебными словами или без них/, служащее для выражения единого нерасчлененного понятия или представления” [5, p.426]. It follows, then, that the word-combination is a combination of two or more notional words / together with or without related syncategorematic words, serving to express a single undivided concept or idea.

We proceed from the premise that the lexical meaning of the word-combination may be characterized as the combined lexical meaning of the component words. Thus, for instance, the lexical meaning of the word-combination a white shirt may be described as the combined meaning of the words white + shirt. The lexical meaning of the word-combination an interesting book is the combined meaning of interesting +book. To demonstrate that the same regularities are observed in other languages the English examples will now

be complemented by illustrations from Russian and Kyrgyz. Thus, the lexical meaning of the Kyrgyz word-combination көк гүл is the sum of meanings of the words көк and гүл. The lexical meaning of the Russian word-combination синий платок is the sum of meanings of the words синий and платок.

It ought to be taken for granted that substitutability of lexical components is the distinguishing feature of word-combinations. If in the word-combination a white shirt the component white is substituted for by other adjectives, for example, black, red, violet, etc., the lexical meaning of the resultant word-combinations will not change fundamentally: a black shirt, a red shirt, a violet shirt (a shirt of a certain colour). In the word-combination көк гүл the word гүл may be substituted for by a number of nouns, e.g., көк көйнөк, көк жоолук, көк баштык, etc., on the one hand. On the other hand, any other adjective denoting colour (ак, кызыл, сары, etc.) may be used without essentially changing the meaning of the word-combination under discussion: ак гүл, кызыл гүл, сары гүл, and so on and so forth.

From what has been demonstrated above, it may well be highlighted that word-combinations of this type are described as 'free' word-combinations because they are each time built up anew in speech. They are 'free' because they are not fixed, their meaning is not global. At the same time, such word-combinations are 'free' only in inverted commas. We may sound too categorical, but in the natural flow of speech words do not appear as independent units, they do not form speech-events like beads strung upon a thread. It should always be borne in mind that word-combinations in different languages are combined strictly in accordance with the rules of lexical-phraseological combinability of words of this or that particular language. Thus, the English word-combination long grass has the following Russian equivalent – высокая трава and not длинная трава [6, p. 8]. Some more illustrations to clarify the point: spring onions – зеленый лук, gentle sex –слабый пол, bad mistakes – грубые ошибки, dead leaves – опавшие листья, and so forth and so on. Examples of this kind can be multiplied infinitely.

We could go so far as to suggest that the same regularities will be observed in the Kyrgyz language. The following peculiar and interesting examples require special attention because the English word-combinations green tea and green grass (note that there is one-to-one correspondence between their Russian equivalents зеленый чай and зеленая трава) have corresponding Kyrgyz word-combinations көк чай and көк чөп. It would be natural to conclude that lexical-phraseological bounds of the Kyrgyz language come to the fore. As a result, we deal with көк чай (blue tea), not жашыл чай (green tea), көк чөп (blue grass), not жашыл чөп (green grass). There can be no doubt whatsoever that a speaker / writer can 'freely' group words into different combinations but nonetheless this freedom should be taken with a grain of salt because there are restrictions of lexical-phraseological character.

A very important point to be underlined in this connection is the fact that side-by-side with more or less free word-combinations there are 'phraseological units' or 'set expressions' or 'idioms' of different kinds. In the Dictionary of Linguistic Terms a phraseological unit is defined as: "Фразеологическая единица – это словосочетание, в котором семантическая монолитность довлечет над структурной раздельностью" [5, p. 503]. Otherwise stated, a phraseological unit is a polylexemic entity in which the globality of nomination reigns supreme over the formal separability of elements.

To reiterate. In spite of the fact that a phraseological unit is structurally separable (i.e., consists of several words), it is semantically whole and like the word it conveys a global meaning. 'A phraseological unit is the functional equivalent of a word because it is characterized by 'semantic wholeness' or 'globality of nomination' [6, p. 13]. Like words phraseological units are 'ready-made', they are simply reproduced in speech by a speaker / writer. In contrast to relatively 'free' word-combinations, the meaning of phraseological units is not just the sum of meanings of their parts. Thus, for instance, the meaning of the phraseological unit one's cup of tea is by no means the sum of meanings of the constituents. Its global, idiomatic meaning 'one's chosen or preferred thing, task' can be clearly revealed in the following amusing context: 'Coffee is not my cup of tea'.

Some more material becomes a must to clarify the point under consideration. The global meaning of the Russian phraseological unit *наломать дров* is 'to make stupid or careless mistakes'. It is not in the slightest the sum of meanings of *наломать* and *дров*. The global, idiomatic meaning of the Kyrgyz phraseological unit *эшек такалоо* is 'to do nothing out of laziness'. Not on any account it is *эшек* + *такалоо*. The phraseological unit *көк бет* means 'stubborn as a mule'; the phraseological unit *көк мээ* means 'not very clever', and so on, and so forth. These illustrations are sufficient to conclude that in the phraseological unit the meaning of the whole is never equated with the sum of meanings of the constituent elements.

This being the case, a very important question is bound to arise: what is the correlation between the word, the phraseological unit and the relatively free word-combination? Academician V.V. Vinogradov was the first to attract attention to the triple dependence between these linguistic events. Otherwise stated, the interrelationship between the word, its idiomatic equivalent and a free combination of the idiomatic equivalent was clarified [7, p.143]. The next examples will clarify the point. Thus, the word inattentively has the corresponding phraseological unit with half an ear and its equivalent is a relatively free word-combination missing most of it (of what has been said); bureaucracy – red tape – adherence to rules and formalities; finally – in the long run – after some time; etc., etc.

Before we go any further, the following important point requires clarification. There is every reason to emphasize that it is not always easy to draw a distinct line between the so-called 'free' word-combinations, on the one hand, and phraseological units, on the other. Thus, for instance, what is the distinction between the English 'free' word-combination a red flower ('a flower of red colour') and the phraseological unit red tape ('bureaucratic methods')? What is the difference between the Kyrgyz free word-combination *көк гүл* ('a flower of blue colour'), on the one side, and the

phraseological unit *көк бет* ('stubborn as a mule'), on the other? What is the distinctive feature between the Russian 'free' word-combination *красный цветок* ('a flower of red colour') and the phraseological unit *красная линия* ('conditional border')?

It has already been expounded above that the component *көк* in *көк гүл* may be substituted for by any other adjective denoting colour (*ак, кызыл*, etc.) without essentially changing the meaning of the word-combination in question (a flower of a certain colour). As far as the phraseological unit *көк бет* ('stubborn as a mule') is concerned, it is semantically non-motivated; its meaning cannot be deduced from the lexical meaning of its components. The phraseological unit *көк бет* exists as a ready-made linguistic unit which does not allow of any alteration of its lexical components. No substitution is possible here, because, for example, a change of the adjective *көк* would immediately involve a complete modification in the meaning of the whole group. Thus, the 'free' word-combinations *ак бет* (*сары* ~, *кызыл* ~, etc.) would mean 'a face of a certain colour' in the direct sense of the word.

Some more material becomes a must to make the point under discussion crystal clear. In the phraseological unit red tape ('bureaucratic methods') an alteration of the adjective would involve an absolute change in the meaning of the whole group because a blue tape (a black ~, a white ~, etc.) would mean 'a tape of a certain colour'. If in the Russian phraseological unit *наломать дров* ('to make stupid or careless mistakes') we change the constituent *дров* into *ветки* the resultant free word-combination *наломать ветки* would mean 'break twigs' in the proper sense of the word. It appears to be fairly obvious that the substitution of *ат* (horse) for *эшек* in the Kyrgyz phraseological unit *эшек такалоо* ('do nothing out of laziness'), then, the resultant free word-combination *ат такалоо* will have a direct meaning 'to shoe a horse'.

It would be natural to conclude from what has been demonstrated above that, on the one hand, a phraseological unit is semantically non-motivated, i.e. its meaning is global and cannot be deduced from the lexical meaning of its components. On the other hand, it is a ready-made linguistic unit which does not allow of any change of its parts without destroying its idiomatic meaning [7, p. 143].

Now that we have come to understand the triple dependence between the word, the 'free' word-combination and the phraseological unit it is reasonable to focus attention on the classification of phraseological units put forward by Academician Vinogradov V.V. On the basis of the degree of idiomaticity the following three groups - phraseological fusions, phraseological unities and phraseological collocations - were distinguished.

It ought to be taken for granted that phraseological fusions are completely non-motivated word-groups, that is, the meaning of the components has no connection whatsoever with the meaning of the whole group [7, p. 145]. Thus, for instance: to kick the bucket (to die); neck and crop (entirely, altogether); the green-eyed monster (jealousy); to be between the horns of a dilemma (a difficult choice in which the alternatives appear equally distasteful or undesirable); at sixes and sevens (in confusion or in disagreement), and so on, and so forth.

As far as phraseological unities are concerned, it has been suggested that they are partially non-motivated because their meaning can usually be seen through the metaphoric meaning

of the whole phraseological unit [7, p.151]. The following examples will suffice to clarify the point: to stick to one's guns; to catch a straw; to lose one's head; to lose one's heart to smb.; to lock the stable door after the horse is stolen; to look a gift horse in the mouth; the last drop, etc., etc.

As for phraseological combinations, they may be said to be clearly motivated, that is, their meaning can be easily deduced from the meanings of its parts [7, p.159]. For example: to go to bed; to be good at something; to be a good hand at something; to have a bite; to take something for granted; to keep one's promise / words; to stick to one's words; bosom friends; a horn of plenty; gospel truth, to look one's age, and so forth, and so on.

A short digression becomes a must before we go any further. It should be specially pointed out that the literature on the subject of English phraseology for foreign students is very extensive. For phraseological units - we could do no better than refer students to Professor Koonin's English-Russian Phraseological Dictionary. The importance and interest of this comprehensive research is very great indeed. The two-volume dictionary is of the greatest value to learners of English because it contains an exhaustive analysis of peculiarities of English phraseological units in language and speech. Thus, for example, the phraseological unit on the spur of the moment is not only supplied with its Russian equivalents (не раздумывая, без подготовки; в данную минуту) but also with an illustration of how it is used in a fairly extended context: "Benham felt it was very kind of him to take so intimate an interest in these matters, but on the spur of the moment he could find no better expression for this than a grunt" [8, p. 863].

It is of paramount importance to bear in mind that phraseological units are not at all divided into watertight well-defined groups or classes. Nothing could be more misleading. When we deal with natural human language, nothing can ever be neatly pigeonholed or docketed, because there is always the principle of gradience to be taken into account. It seems very likely that the first necessary step to be made in the study of phraseological units is to understand the dichotomy: phraseological units and idioms proper.

It appears to be fairly obvious that most phraseological units are simple neutral word-equivalents which form part and parcel of English and are used in speech to pass on information proper, thus: 'in spite of', 'instead of', 'by means of', 'in order that', 'to put on', 'to sum up', 'to give up', 'to carry out', 'to point out', 'to turn to', 'to come about', 'to take into account', 'to take advantage of', 'to take for granted', 'to take place', 'to keep in mind', 'to bring forth', 'to make sense', 'to put forward', 'to come into use', 'to keep to the safe side', and so forth, and so on.

We are perfectly justified in emphasizing that it is necessary to keep phraseological units of this type apart from what is generally known as 'idioms proper' or 'dead metaphors' which are heavily filled with metaphor, for instance: to call a spade a spade; to kill two birds with one stone; a skeleton in the cupboard; to put the cart before the horse, to turn the other cheek; to go to the dogs; to come to grief; to wash one's dirty linen in public, etc., etc.

Being ready-made units, idioms proper are introduced in

speech as such, and no wonder that their continual repetition wears them out, as it were. As a result, dead metaphors lose their colours and become trite clichés. To make a long story short, the use of idioms proper in their usual dictionary form in Modern English is regarded as lack of education, culture and linguistic sophistication. It would seem obvious that well-educated Brits will never miss the chance to deform idioms proper or dead metaphors to achieve a certain stylistic effect.

As is well-known, the content plane and the expression plane of a linguistic unit taken together may serve as expression for a new content - meta-content to function on the metasemiotic level [8, pp. 63]. The same is true in case of deformed idioms. Thus, for instance, the idiomatic meaning of the dead metaphor to drop a brick is 'to make an embarrassing mistake, to say unintentionally a tactless thing that shocks and offends people' [9, p.120]. In the following fairly extended context the idiom proper is deformed to achieve a humorous effect and enhance, as it were, the discourse to the metasemiotic level: "Isn't our Kate a marvel! I wish you could have seen her at the Harrisons' party yesterday. If I'd collected the bricks she dropped all over the place, I could build a villa".

It would be natural to conclude from what has been expounded above that foreign learners of English should always keep to the safe side and avoid using idioms proper or dead metaphors in speech. It appears to be fairly obvious that a foreign student of English (especially the not very advanced one) does not know enough English to use idioms proper to the best advantage without incurring the well-known danger of giving an archaic tinge to his speech, on the one hand. On the other hand, his command of the language is not sufficient by far to be able to deform a dead metaphor as properly as a native speaker of English would do.

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