

THE COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF SET EXPRESSIONS WITH THE LEXEME FIRE AS A COMPONENT IN TYPOLOGICAL ASPECT

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DOI: 10.7813/jll.2014/5-4/4

Received: 16 Apr, 2014

Accepted: 25 Oct, 2014

ABSTRACT

The article deals with the functional semantic and pragmatic features of phraseological units which either contain the lexical unit FIRE in their structure or nominate it in different European languages. It means that the ongoing research is based on general principles of the comparative approach. The investigation clearly points out the fact that the phraseological units of different languages under study possess more or less identical structural, functional, semantic and pragmatic characteristics. Such results add more information to the linguistic worldview which can be modeled in the prospect of study.

Key words: phraseological units, European languages, fire, comparative approach, evaluation, value, set expression

1. INTRODUCTION

One of the most convenient forms of transforming comprehension of reality in our mind is verbally represented in the phraseological system of any language [1; 2; 3; 4]. The main goal of its investigation is to trace down the main mechanisms and factors determining the congruence of forming set expressions within different languages in order to see whether they differ much in various systems of representation the actual knowledge of surrounding material, rational and emotional world and thus to define both integral and differential characteristics of such systems [5; 6]. One of such extralinguistic phenomena represented in the language is fire. Thus naming the object of reality it appears in set expressions of different European languages. For example, *Women, Fire and Dangerous Things* [7] is one of the most prominent books in the sphere of the cognitive approach to the study of linguistic phenomena. One of these words, and namely, fire, has caught our attention. And if one undertakes its semantic study on some unbiased basis, it will be rather easy to clear out that this particular quantum of content, this special knowledge structure which semiotically can be expressed as *fire* is no less interesting than the gender structure of knowledge mentioned in the above-said book by G.Lakoff [7]. Generally speaking, there are a lot of things which are both dangerous and necessary. So let us pass over to the description of some of them verbally represented.

2. METHODS

The ongoing research is based on the cognitive methods paying special attention to the structure of knowledge verbalization in general. The latter is studied with the comparative analysis in a group of European languages. Some specific features and peculiarities are worked out.

3. MAIN PART

The analysis of different dictionaries' entries shows that lexemes nominating fire differ in the respect of their initial interpretations of that structure of knowledge. For instance, the initial meaning of these and semantically correlated words in the Wikipedia online Dictionary of the Russian Language gives us the following: *совокупность раскалённых газов и плазмы, выделяющихся в результате: произвольного/непроизвольного нагревания горючего материала до определённой точки; химической реакции; соприкосновения тока высокого напряжения с горючим материалом. Огонь является основной фазой процесса горения и имеет свойство к самораспространению по затронутым им другим горючим материалам* [8]. The MacMillan Online Dictionary suggests the following: *flames and heat from something that is burning in an uncontrolled way, e.g. The school was badly damaged by fire. Three children died in a fire at their home last night; **be destroyed by fire:** The theatre was completely destroyed by fire; **start a fire:** It is thought that local youths may have started the fire* [9].

It can be clearly seen that the main discrepancy of these two semantic descriptions consists not only in the more comprehensive Russian definition. The English dictionary lays an emphasis on the general uncontrolled action of fire whereas the Russian explanation tends to be more objective and academic.

Let us consider the other meanings of the word fire in the English dictionary: *a small pile of burning wood, coal etc that you make in order to produce heat, e.g. a coal fire; make/build a fire: We went off to collect wood to build a fire; light a fire: Once the fire was lit, the room seemed more inviting; a blazing/roaring fire: We sat in front of a blazing log fire. 3. British a piece of equipment that uses electricity or gas to heat a room: an electric/gas fire: There was an old gas fire in the bedroom. 4. shots from a gun: We heard a sudden loud burst of machine gun fire... 5. strong feelings such as anger or enthusiasm: His words were full of fire and passion* [9].

This description shows us that the prototypical apprehension of the fire for the majority of people is connected with the plasma tongues of bright orange-yellow colour winding upstairs and disappearing immediately, as in a stove or a burned heap of wood or dry grass in the open air. At the same time, for many average city inhabitants fire is associated primarily with the proportioned small tongues of intense blue colour of a standard kitchen natural-gas burner or a cigarette lighter. For those involved in the sphere of metallurgy these are long tongues of bright straw-yellow colour. All these states of fire which otherwise can also be called *flame/пламя* are characterized with a high (no less than 300° Centigrade) temperature, a definite product of combustion (visible or invisible smoke), a certain burned material and so on.

The indirect meaning of the lexemes representing fire and flame in different languages is primarily associated with actions done in accordance with a person's will or involuntarily but in a certain way reflecting his or her world outlook, devotions, beliefs, convictions, presumptions. All this is produced not by some outer impact but in accordance with the soul's inclination at the moment. It is this particular meaning that produces different peculiar senses often expressed in the form of set expressions, sayings, proverbs, - in a word, by idiomatic means of a language, by its phraseological resources.

Let us view some actual specimen of using this structure of knowledge within the set-expressions of some European languages. But first we would rather make some general considerations that empirically unite the total number of the idioms investigated. First of all, it is a high degree of variability of the set-expressions where the structure of knowledge denoting FIRE is a source-domain of a general meaning of an idiom, as well as of the other set-expressions which have such lexical meaningful components of different languages that correspond to such English words as *fire, flame, burn, scorch* and the like.

In the Russian language such words as *огонь* or *огонёк/огоньки* as denoting the state of outer manifestation or inner experience of different feelings or emotions often testify to their strong degree or a strong emotion by itself. Their language variability in such cases is primarily predetermined by their outer manifestations. And in the absolute majority of these cases such manifestations are those of facial expressions, the eyes being the most expressive facial organ of these expressions. This particular extra-linguistic phenomenon explains the fact that the most recurrent model of the idiomatic use of the lexeme ОГОНЬ are the lexemes expressing the notions connected with eyes proper, their pupils, peculiarities of a glance and the like, as well as the emotional semantic features, the phenomenon being intrinsic to all the languages investigated. Here are the particular examples:

Прохор задыхался от слов, от мыслей, от бурных ударов сердца, его глаза горели страшным огнем внутренней силы и раскрывавшегося в душе ужаса (В. Шишков. Угрюм-река).

The yawning, shaking, peevish figure of the mother, with her eyes raised to confront the proud erect form of the daughter, whose glance of fire was bent downward upon her, had a conscious air upon it, that no levity or temper could conceal (Ch.Dickens. Dombey and Son).

It should be admitted that the scope of feelings and emotions expressed with eyes cannot be reduced to any particular axiological preferences. They may be both of emphatic character and of a mere expression of hatred, anger etc., for instance:

- *Ти можеш катувати мене, бо я тепер у твоїй владі, а ганьбити не смій, - відповів Гонта похмуро, і в очах його блиснув недобрый вогник* (М.Старицький. Останні орли).

The only sign of Sollozzo's disappointment was a quick flickering of his eyes around the room, as if he hoped Hagen or Sonny would speak in his support (M.Puzo. The Godfather).

It is rather easy to notice that the presented above examples describe emotions associated as antagonistic, and it is expressed with such words as *борьба, злорадство успеха, балованный, отчаянный, недобрый, лиховісний, disappointment*. Besides, there exist cases when the definite peculiarities of any look contain some vague emotion, for example:

Иван Алексеевич, покуривая, глядел на Митьку, а у того в кошачьих зрачках толпились огоньки, и нельзя было понять - смеются зеленые его глаза или дымятся несытой злобой (М.А.Шолохов. Тихий Дон).

This example shows that structurally isomorphic set-expressions may denote quite polar emotional or evaluative attitude. This does not seem surprising because we usually allot idioms with some shade of evaluative meaning. But actually it is not evaluative but value meaning. This statement needs some additional explanation. According to the basic theses of the axiological theory, that is, the theory of value, values are basic notions, and evaluation, linguistic evaluation in particular, is merely the means of expressing value [10]. This value receives a certain evaluative (positive or negative) sign in a certain communicative situation, and thus we speak about either a positive or a negative evaluative attitude. Still, the cases when a clear-cut evaluative sign is hard to be defined due to a special pragmatic pattern of the utterance is impossible, are rather numerous. Moreover, the written practice when an author of a piece of fiction or newspaper article restrains from a definite evaluative accents within his creation intending to arouse a problem situation within a reading society is widespread in modern

literature. For example, the eyes can *hide, burn, dim, die out*, the fire of eyes may *pursuit, scorch, tease*, the eyes may *throw fire, glitter, sparkle with fire* and so on. Despite such an ample list of such actions we are apt to consider them the variants of the same phraseological model, as the varied forms of idioms actually express the same structure of knowledge which may in a compressed way be expressed with the word-combination *expression of strong feelings and emotions with eye movements*, and while applied to description of certain emotions, the number of such variations is multiplied manifold. It is due to this particular reason that to *catch* their multitude within a limited space of an entry in a phraseological dictionary.

According to the well-known Russian proverb, *глаза – это зеркало души*. In the case of the phraseological modeling of the concept FIRE this maxim works, so to say, to the full extent. The fire of eyes entails the fire of heart, the fire of soul, the fire of those strong feelings and emotions that overflow a person. That is why the list of the variants representing the general metaphoric model *strong feelings and emotions → fire* may be doubtless be enriched with the set expressions the components of which are not directly connected with the semantic characteristic features of a glance, eye expression etc and describe such feelings and emotions on the basis of subjective state of a certain person. It goes without saying that *eyes and soul, thought, inner state* constitute the metonymical relations, or, to be more exact, the relations of synecdoche. Such cases of reinterpretation of the object of description can be found in all the languages investigated. For example:

*Не хоче батько твого пташиного молока. Не приймає душа. Тільки **вогнем образу** вибурухує вона* (О.Гончар. Собор).

*Tief verneigte sich Govinda, Tränen liefen, von welchen er nichts wusste, über sein altes Gesicht, **wie ein Feuer brannte das Gefühl der innigsten Liebe, der demütigsten Verehrung in seinem Herzen*** (Hermann Hesse. Siddhartha).

It should be also admitted that there is the English set expression *fire and brimstone* which is polysemic in its content. In its primary meaning it represents an equivalent of the hell-fire but rather often are the cases of its positive usage where a living and brisk character of a person is expressed. These are the particular examples of both cases:

*The minister gave out his text and droned along monotonously through an argument that was so prosy that many a head by and by began to nod-and yet it was an argument that dealt in limitless **fire and brimstone** and thinned the predestined elect down to a company so small as to be hardly worth the saving* (M.Twain. The Adventures of Tom Sawyer), but:

*But Papa was a man of **brimstone and hot fire**, in his mind and in his fists, and was known all over that section of the state as the champion of all the fist fighters* (Guthrie, Woody. Bound for Glory).

Now, it seems quite logical to turn attention to the semantic correspondence of the phraseological units with the lexical component *fire, flame, burn* and the like in different European languages. The analysis of such units in these languages shows the general homogeneous character of their formal semantic traces while preserving the high degree of variability mentioned above. But here one must admit that such a phenomenon is a characteristic feature of the languages belonging to a peculiar language group. For instance, the equivalents of the Russian set expression *огнём и мечом* is practically met in all the languages belonging to the Slavonic group, and we have met no corresponding cases in the Germanic languages, for example:

*Тут бы, казалось, самое время вскричать: “**Огнем и мечом!**” - однако же нет. Оказывается, нам всем надлежит всего-навсего использовать все меры воспитательного, идеологического и политического воздействия, основанные на рекомендациях наших педагогов и социологов* (А. и Б. Стругацкие. Отягощённые злом, или сорок лет спустя).

Another recurrent idiom of the Slavonic languages is the one expressing readiness to venture some dangerous undertaking due to some convictions, love, ideas and the like. Its metaphorical target domain while creating the phraseological model is also represented with the lexical units denoting fire, in particular:

*Ротмистр посмотрит, щелкнет хлыстиком по голенищу, скажет: «**Сла-авно!**» *Вся даже грудь выпячивает от горделивой радости. С ротмистром Соломиным **хоть в огонь**. Вся молодежь от него без ума. Храбрый офицер* (Б.Ясенский. Я жгу Париж).*

*«**Přeji si, abyste mluvil vždy pravdu a vykonával bez reptání všechny mé rozkazy. Jestli řeknu: „Skočte do ohně, tak do toho ohně musíte skočit, i kdyby se vám nechtělo**»* (J.Hašek. Osudy dobrého vojáka Švejka za světové války).

There are also peculiar set expressions (at least, those with the *fiery* components) which are met in a particular language only, or, at least, within a certain language sub-group. Here we would like to point to the idioms of the east-Slavonic languages denoting different value ideas. The Russian idiom *из огня да в полымя* meaning getting from a bad situation into an even worse one has no corresponding English variant and perhaps is influenced by the peculiarity of the East-Slavonic peculiarity of the world perception, for example:

*После этого разговоры приутихли. Долго баюкалась в красных вагонах дремлющая тишина. - **Из огня да в полымя!** - высказал долговзъятый Борщев общую для большинства мысль* (М.А.Шолохов. Тихий Дон).

We must admit that actually there exists the full equivalent of this particular set-expression in the Ukrainian language (*з вогню та в полум'я*) but we failed to find such equivalents in the rest of the languages investigated. The same should be said about the following idioms as well:

- Умеете ли вы стрелять из ружья?
- Оборони бог-с... **Как огня боюсь...** *Когда Прохор Петрович производит выстрелы на охоте, я затыкаю уши. Например, вчера...* (В.М.Шишков. Угрюм-река):
- *Плевал я на толпу, - запальчиво сказал Прохор, и мутные от бессонницы глаза его засверкали.*
- *Нет-с, Прохор Петрович, с **огнем шутить опасно*** (Ibid.).

Special attention should be paid to those set expressions with the lexical components representing FIRE as a structure of knowledge which are of allusive character. This is, so to say, some kind of all-human vertical context based on certain facts, legends, fairy-tales, well-known citations from the Bible and other books and the maxims pronounced by some prominent people. As an example, the following international idiom based on the well-known fact of the famous Greek philosopher Diogenes looking for a man with a lantern in a day-light may be brought forth in fiction contexts:

- *Их, шелужинов-то, на базу днём с огнём не сыщешь*, - со вздохом сказала Ильинична (М.А.Шолохов. Тихий Дон).

4. CONCLUSION

Thus, the structure of knowledge which in English is usually represented with the lexeme *fire* as a component of different set-expressions is widely represented within the phraseological systems of different European languages. This should be attributed to the high value potential of fire as the main means of providing nature and human beings in particular with energy so necessary for life and at the same time highly dangerous while being used recklessly phenomenon of the material world. The investigation shows that the set expressions with the components with the lexemes corresponding to the English word fire in most cases appear in the units having not only identical or similar from a semantic point of view structural and componential but functional characteristic features. Surely, there exist peculiar separate phraseological cases of such set expressions inherent to only one or few languages among the enlisted, but they are rare. This standpoint is confirmed with the results of the present investigation in which the corresponding or semantically analogous lexical units of such European languages were viewed within the set expressions. This fact gives grounds to consider that this phenomenon may be inherent to other languages, that is, such a phenomenon is of international character. Surely, such a conclusion needs confirmation with similar investigations based on the material of other languages belonging to other language groups or families.

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