

**ESSENTIAL PROBLEMS OF PHRASEOLOGICAL UNITS WITH THE COMPONENT “DENOTING NAMES”**

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**Abstract.** The article discusses essential problems of phraseological units with the component “denoting names”. It then focuses on broad analysis of phraseological units with the component denoting names, that, semantic peculiarities of the phraseological units with proper noun components have been revealed.

**Key words:** proper nouns, toponymic component, phraseological units, cognitive linguistics, geographical components, linguocultural analysis, linguoculturological knowledge.

## INTRODUCTION

Phraseology tends to reflect the correlation between language and culture. Therefore, the language user needs shared knowledge in order to be able to understand given units properly. The knowledge of connotative meanings of components enables the language user to decode modifications for comical forms of phraseological units as well as to create their own modification.

The aim of the paper is to discuss how phraseological units are decoded. The issue is decoding idioms containing proper nouns. Proper nouns constitute one of the most numerous groups of components which function as culture carrier is composed of proper nouns which have some stereotypical value attributed to. Proper interpreting cultural allusions carried by proper nouns is a prerequisite to decoding the whole unit.

In order to analyze the process of decoding phraseological units a research study was conducted on a group of many people, native speakers of English, half of whom were English, half of whom were English, philology students, while the other half studied another subject. Such groups were selected in order to analyze potential differences in decoding phraseological units dependent on the educational profile of the language user. Questionnaires containing phraseological units used in a given context followed by questions regarding the meaning and origins of idioms were implemented to research the process of decoding.

Proper Noun as Culture – Bound Components of Phraseological Units. In every natural language there is culture – bound lexis, which comprises a variety of units. The group consists of such units as: names of some geographical phenomena, institutional terms, faunal terms, realia names, and many others, naming phenomena unique to culture. It should be stressed that some proper nouns also belong to this group.<sup>1</sup>

Proper nouns constitute a group “ (...) distinguished on grammatical and semantic ground from common noun, and written with a capital letter.”<sup>2</sup>

Such nouns tend to be culturally loaded and they may carry connotations of international, national or local character, they are observed in numerous idioms of biblical or mythological origins. What is important is the fact that proper nouns may function as core elements of phraseological units, which exploit their connotations.

The names to be chosen as components of phraseological units are selected from the repertoire of proper nouns in use at a given period of time, some names are created as well; such nouns become a symbol of certain characteristics.

Proper nouns may be used predicatively to evoke some properties typical of the referent so as to ascribe a given quality commonly associated with them to other referents.

Therefore, they become carriers of cultural information which is of importance for decoding idioms containing proper nouns in discourse.

It is worth noticing that proper nouns tend to be carrier of evaluation as well. Certain names carry positive evaluation, while others are of depreciative character. All proper nouns functioning in a given language form a mental map, which reflects the society's evaluations attributed to proper nouns. In some cases the axiological load is so important that it is even registered in lexicographic works. For instance, the Van Dale school dictionary contacts the name Anita as a common noun meaning a fashion – sensitive, lower class youngster. The evaluative potential of the names discussed tends to be realized in phraseological units.<sup>3</sup>

In fact all kinds of proper nouns can be components of phraseological units. However, anthroponyms and toponyms are observed to appear in phraseological units with highest frequency, while other proper nouns, such as: Zoonyms, chrematonyms, ideonyms, are not used so often as components of fixed units.

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<sup>1</sup> Taylor. Ch. Language to language, 1998 p-103- 106.

<sup>2</sup> Mc. Arthur, T. ( 1996). The Oxford Companion to the English p-729.

<sup>3</sup> Schulz. R. Indirect Offensive language in Dictionaries P-111

From the point of view of sociolinguistics, proper nouns typical of a given culture are of particular interest, since the proper noun is a complex phenomenon, which can be analyzed on a historical, geographical, cultural, symbolical, linguistic, cross – linguistic and social planes. Such names are components of the collective memory of a given nation and they are very important from the point of view of the identity.

Idiomatic expressions are treated as lexicalized item, since the sum of the meaning of components is not equal to the meaning of the whole unit. It should be stressed that numerous phraseologisms have been in use for such a long period of time that their motivation is not clear to modern language users. The English informal idiom, registered in lexicographic works, “Before you can say Jack Robinson” (пазр.before you can (or could)) say Jack Robinson (before you can say knife) – extremely quickly a suddenly, contains a proper name which is optional, i.e. it is not the key component of the unit. The idiom belongs to phraseologic units of motivation somehow unclear to the contemporary English.

Second, some idioms have motivations known to language users. For instance, the idiom out – Herod, used in the spoken variety of English, is associated by the English with its origins.

The connotations of the proper nouns appearing in realizations of such models have to be known to language users; otherwise, decoding is not possible, as the onym is the core component determining the meaning of the whole unit. Such units are rarely registered in lexicographic works, since many of them are either of occasional character or disappear within short time, as they refer to the situation described in the moment of using the unit.

The connotations carried by the onymic component are of different character, i.e. international, national or local. In the case of connotations both of international and national character it can be assumed that such units as well as their modifications are decoded properly by the majority of language users. It is also corroborated by the research study conducted.

In the case of idioms containing proper noun components carrying connotations of local character the unit may be decoded correctly on condition that sufficient context is provided. For example, the model “it’s a kind of type of game that only children are interested in it” is found in a great number of languages and used to express the meaning “Tom Tiddler’s ground”.

In fact, on the example of the English language, one can show how the toponym changes depending on the region. There are a number of place names to be found in units realizing this schema: the curse of Scotland, also the place names reveals interesting aspects, place in UK: London, with its for and districts “A London particular, from Dicken’s Bleak (cause the man on the Clapham omnibus”); Newcastle – upon –Tyne, which was a centre of coal – mining ( Carry

coals to Newcastle); Coventry, probably from an old story that soldiers on military duty there were greatly disliked by the people of the town (send to Coventry); Bristol, a major port trading with America in 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century, hence the reference to ships newly painted, with scrubbed surfaces and brass polished (shipshape and Bristol fashion); the Cheshire country (grin like a Cheshire cat, after the character in Carroll's Alice in Wonderland); Blarney Stone near Lork (have kissed the Blarney Stone); the Forth Bridge in Scotland (paint the Forth Bridge); Eastern countries related to the British colonial past: India, in like the Black Hole of Calcutta, referring to an event in Calcutta in 1756, when a large number of Europeans were put into one very small prison for a night; in the morning, only a few were still alive: China, in all Lombard Street to a China, from China to Peru.

Places related to classical heritage: fiddle while Rome burns; between Scylla and Charybdis.

Places on the Continent. Spain and Waterloo (melt one's Waterloo).

If the units appear in context the receiver finds sufficient to decode the meaning the substitution of the place names does not impede the process of decoding the unit. Otherwise the receiver may either have difficulty decoding the unit, or can decode it in a wrong way. For instance, one can understand the idiom literally, i.e. the receiver can interpret the toponymic component as a name of the speaker's destination. Therefore, in many cases the successful decoding of such units requires the knowledge of connotations evoked by the names. Numerous names become conventionalized metaphors and they function in the collective memory of a given group of language users.

Phraseological units may undergo, in fact they tend to do, the process of transformation, which depends on the language user's needs in a given communication context. The basic transformations are: replacements or substitutions, additions, permutations, deletions. In the case of decoding transformed idioms containing onymic components the key factor is the ability to decipher the metaphorical meaning of the proper noun.

It should be stressed that decoding phraseological units should be analyzed in a socio-linguo-cultural perspective, since it is of complex nature. The process of decoding differs in individual processes are analyzed, since the receiver is characterized by a set of parameters, such as: age, sex, education, interests and hobbies, social background and others.

Decoding phraseological units labeled bookish, in lexicographic works, such as; Danaides' barrel and (lit) Deianeira's shirt, differs qualitatively in two groups of students which were asked to explain the meaning of the units given. The vast majority of English philology students as many as 94% could do the task correctly.

The later group of respondents was also able to provide information on the origins of the unit. The difference can be explained by the fact that the units analyzed, very rare and appearing almost exclusively in the written variety of the language, originated from Greek mythology with which students of English philology well familiar.

It is worth mentioning that onyms of distinctive connotations, well-set in the collective memory of a given language users may come an element around which new phraseological idioms of different degree of fixedness will be grouped. Therefore, such idioms require a proper lexicographic description including the information regarding the connotations of the onym. Such a description facilitates greatly the process of interpretation and translation.

### **CONCLUSION**

To sum up, it should be emphasized that more comprehensive studies are necessary to give more insight into decoding phraseological units viewed as a socio – linguistic problem.

Considering the names in phraseological expressions, we can note a predominance of personal over place names within the former, a predominance of male over female names and first names over family names, with a number of hypocorisms. The very low presence of female names is motivated by socio – cultural factors: in society, men played a more active role than women. Among them, can be found: Alice in Wonderland, Florence Nightingale, Mrs. Grundy, Aunt Sally, plain Jane, Pandora, Fanny Adams. They are usually employed to convey a negative or not wholly positive evaluation.

With regard to the presence of hypocorisms derived from very common first names, it seems to be a culture-specific feature of English phraseology; for example, hypocorisms are rarely found in Italian phraseology. In particular, Mike and Mickey are now the generic name for an Irishman; Jack has come to denote any individual person and also occurs in compounds, denoting types of person objects and animals.

In some cases, the sources of the PN is unknown. In one case the PN is apparently a humorous interpretation of the letters stamped on army supply boxes during the War of, i.e. U.S.

The collected expressions exemplify the two mechanisms exploited in the use of PNs in phraseology: on one hand, the use of very common names on the other hand, the “cultural allusion”, i.e. the reference to people and places the members of British culture are familiar with. In this case, devotional meaning is established extracting salient bits of information from world knowledge associated with each of them.

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