Lingvo-Cognitive Aspects of Idioms with Lexeme "Water"

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Abstract: This study spotlights on the lingvo-cognitive aspects of idioms with lexeme "Water". The research is carried out in the light of cognitive-pragmatic approach and aimed at studying "cognitive substance" of idioms, structured with frame and script with lexeme "water". The researchers consider that cognitive analysis of phraseology is possible in cognitive terms of lexicology. The priority is placed on the structure of phraseological meaning and its peculiarities. Special attention is given to a prototype and metaphor, representing different spheres of life. In this study, the functioning of idioms in discourse is also under study.

Key words: Cognitive phraseology, frame, script, idiom, semantic meaning, denotation-1, denotation-2, significatum, connotation, prototype, metaphor

INTRODUCTION

Idioms are popular and widely spread in all languages of the world as they are very expressive, colorful and contain sociocultural information. Idioms' semantics has been always an interesting object for scientific research. The problem of phraseological meaning is rather complicated and controversial as it can not be equal to the sum of its components' meanings. The world's leading specialists consider the nature of phraseological meaning, undoubtedly, unique. Linguists also point out the strong interconnection between words and phraseological units. In the light of cognitive phraseology theory the specific character of phraseological units as the signs of secondary nomination is "such a knowledge conceptualization in the process of which there might be not only semantic changing and peripheral correction of already structured and verbalized conceptual formation but a birth of an absolutely new conceptual structure" (Teliya, 1996). There are different conceptions connected with the structure of phraseological meaning. In this study, the researchers consider that some aspects of nominating process to a certain extent can correlate with the traditional phraseological theory concerning the componential structure of phraseological meaning. They are: denotative, significatum and connotative, those components can correlate to the structure of lexical meaning. But, it's vitally important to emphasize that the specific character of phraseological units is that they are the signs of secondary nomination. It means that "on the one hand, phraseological meaning is characterized with indirect but not direct identification of objects and phenomena of actual reality, but on the other hand, it

derives from its own phraseobuilding components" (Alefirenko, 2008). From the traditional phraseology point of view denotation of an idiom equals the notion as "its properties being essential or not are always sufficient for objects identification and they are reflected in lexical definitions" (Kunin, 2005). In this study, the researchers follow the principles of cognitive theory of phraseology suggested by such scientists as N.F. Alefirenko, A.A. Ufimtseva and another linguists who consider that denotation of an idiom is complicated with dualism that means that denotation-1 "is located in the sphere of object relations of the actual reality pointing out the typical notion of a subject phenomenon" (Alefirenko, 2008) and denotation-2 "lies in the sphere of psychological notion underlying that typical notion of an actual reality which is marked with the phraseological unit" (Alefirenko, 2008).

According to Alefirenko (2008), one of the leading experts in the field, "the cognitive substance" of an idiom there might be frame which is "multicomponential structuralization of a stereotype situation of a propositional type, script". Thus, the meaning of an idiom like a fish out of water "to be in a very uncomfortable situation" "I grew up in the countryside so when I moved to the city I felt like a fish out of water" is realized with the help of frame which contains some conceptions and behavior regulations which are taken in a certain culture and are kept in a long term memory of a man. The inner form of another phraseological unit like a duck to a water hints at its positive connotational meaning "to learn how to do something very quickly and to enjoy doing it" sue just took to motherhood like a duck to water.

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It should be noted that an idiom is connected with denotative-2 due to significatum as "it is extracted from denotative in a form of an image-bearing idiom structure as a result of lingvo-creative way of thinking" (Alefirenko, 2008). So, significatum connects an idiom with denotative and has sense properties modeling the denotative situation. Generally speaking, these two notions amplify each other as at the denotative level there might a categorization of an actual reality and at the level of significatum, it is presented the way a man sees the world (Alefirenko, 2008).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

In cognitive analysis of phraseology it's possible to describe phraseological units in the cognitive terms of lexicology. "Lingvo-cognitive research implies sorted out structural description in cognitive terms" (Alefirenko, 2008).

It should be mentioned that idioms are "not only purely linguistic phenomenon but also a cognitive one" (Baranov and Dobrovolskiy, 2008). We first outline the origin of lexeme "water" as a unique nature element vitally important for all living beings. We apply the analysis of their inner structure in the diachronic aspect which helps us to spotlight on the history, culture and traditions of different nations.

The next step is to point out semantic properties basing on which we specify semantic groups of idioms with metaphor water as a "source-domain" (Lakoff, 1987). English and American idioms dictionaries and fiction cover the empirical evidence. Then, we analyze idioms belonging to each group, focusing on their meaning, structure, inner form and semantic properties. Sometimes, we point out the prototype to see the metaphor influences the connotation. Where possible, we compare common and distinctive features of English and Russian idioms. Also, we study idioms in contextual analysis in order to identify additional semantic properties in discourse. The research results are represented in the conclusions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Main part: In this study, we are going to describe idioms with "water" component in English as this nature element is vitally important for all human beings because on the one hand, it is a source of life: human body consists predominately of water but on the other hand, it is a powerful nature element, it can be ruinous and disastrous, the depth of water is enigmatic and dangerous as it can take living beings' life away. Moreover, there might be some poisonous aggressive living beings in the depth of the water.

The etymological analysis of the verbal lexeme shows that it goes back to the "Old English waeterian "moisten, irrigate, supply water to; lead (cattle) to water". Old English lexeme waeter is of Germanic origin; Old Saxon variant was watar, Old High German wazzar, Gothic wato, Old Slavonic voda; it also related to Greek hudo. Apparently, there might be two roots for the lexeme "Water": *ap-* and *wed-*. The first one (preserved in Sanskrit apah as well as Punjab and julep) was "animate", referring to water as a living force such as fire and the second was "inanimate", referring to it as a substance. Thus, etymological analysis gives us quite interesting results: it's evident that in many languages the base-root of lexeme "water" under study has similar features, it means that there was a proto-lexeme with a common root. The next interesting fact can be outlined: it is water as a living force being "animate", on the one hand and water being "inanimate". Evidently, when people observed a terrible storm, they thought about it as personification of a living force. The indirect evidence of existence of "animate" and "inanimate" water can be found in different cultures, there are a lot of folk-tales where the main hero is usually treated with the help of "inanimate" and "animate" water. Actually, the modern scientific research of water as a chemical substance really proved the curious observance of our ancestors: water can really have healing and harmful properties. This general truth is already reflected in language: folk tales, a phraseological cluster of language.

The next step in our research is the definition analysis of the lexeme "water". There are the following definitions of the lexeme "water" in Cambridge Dictionary Online:

- A clear liquid, without colour or taste that falls from the sky as rain and is necessary for animal and plant life: a bottle/drink/glass of water bottled/mineral/tap water hot/cold water, can I have a drop of water in my whisky, please? Is the water hot enough for a bath? The human body is about 50% water
- An area of water such as the sea, a lake or a swimming pool: the water's warm are you coming for a swim? I don't like getting my head under (= in) water. Dad, I swam a whole length of pool under water
- The level of an area of water: high water this morning at portsmouth is at 11
- Waters (plural) the area of sea near to and belonging to a particular country: St. Lucia depends on its clean coastal waters for its income
- The water contained in a particular lake, river or part of the sea: in the shallow waters of the Gulf of Mexico, oil rigs attract fish

- UK (US water) the liquid that surrounds a baby inside a pregnant woman's womb: at 3 am her waters broke and the baby was born soon after
- Waters from a spring, especially when used in the past for drinking or swimming in in order to improve the health: people used to come to this city to take (drink or swim in) the waters

According to Collins Dictionary Lexeme "water" in addition to abovementioned definitions can be also used in the following spheres of life:

- (Jewellery) the degree of brilliance in a diamond
- Excellence, quality or degree (in the phrase of the first water)
- (Banking and finance) finance
- (Astrology) astrology (modifier) of or relating to the three signs of the zodiac Cancer, Scorpio and Pisces

Basing on the etymological and definition analyses, we may distinguish predominantly the following properties of the lexeme "water":

- Substance
- An area of this liquid
- Any physiological fluid
- The degree of brilliance
- Finance
- Destroying force

The semantic analysis of idioms under research shows that their semantic properties partially coincide with the properties of the lexeme "water". In this study, we suggest that the "production and processing of figurative expressions are mediated by metaphorical and metonymic correspondences that are part of the human conceptual system, i.e. that figurative expressions are interpreted as instantiations of deep conceptual metaphors or metonymie" (Marija Omaziu, 2005). Thus, analyzing idioms under study from a semantic point of view, we pay attention to metaphor and the way it can objectify the following semantic groups.

The "source-domain" water (Lakoff, 1987) in this group stands for danger and can be represented with the following idioms: to be in deep water "to be in a difficult situation which is hard to deal with". This idiom illustrates the prototype based on the fact that to be in deep water might be dangerous for life. "I'll be in deep water unless I pass that exam. Without a pass, I won't be able to get into university". To be in hot water "very similar to deep water (above) but with an emphasis on being punished for

your actions": "I'm going to be in hot water with my boss when he finds out that I lost our client's account. To be like a fish out of water.

The antonym of danger is safety and the prototype describing smooth water in an idiom be in smooth water which is realized with the help of frame, reveal the denotation-2 "to overcome all handicaps and to reach "a safe port" at last they had turned the corner of their lives and were in smooth water.

The "source-domain" water (Lakoff, 1987) in the second group can stand for financial state and money: be in low water "to be without money". He hastily reviewed the fortunes of his co-directors. Old Fontenoy was always in low water; the chairman a dark horse; Mont was in land, land right down in value and mortgaged at that (Galsworthy, 1928).

The ancient prototype to be in low water has negative connotation but there might be prototypes with positive connotation in a matter of money. For example, prototype keep one's head above water; hold one's head above water is realized with the help of script which describes the behavior of a man in water which guarantees safety, it is the basis of denotation, thus is formed denotation, meaning of an idiom above water "a good financial state". In general, the connotation remains positive but the attitudinal meaning and pragmatic impact, depend on the context: his wife had extravagant tastes and they never seemed to be able to get above water. In this context, under study context semantic elements colour the connotation of this idiom into a negative form.

In English and Russian culture, the way water flows also actualizes prototype money. In the following context, we can the representation of the idiom's meaning. Money is going to flow like water and the labs are going to be asked very nicely to work for the military.

The third group of idioms might be connected with the social shpere of human life. It might be social status, human behavior and personal characteristics. An idiom to draw a lot of water means "to be on a high level of social position" The old man's a little tough. They say he draws a lot of water. The prototype of the following idiom is connected with the underwater world: to work under water where denotation, to work under water represents a certain situation which is rendered with a combination of words. As for denotation, we can see a reconsidered situation to hide one's real intentions. A described situation is a result of reconsidering the components of an idiom: to work to produce a certain action, under the water a place where everything could be concealed as we don't know the depth. It is evident that the meaning of an idiom is formed on the basis of metaphor connected with water and its enigmatic, sometimes mysterious and even

dangerous nature as we don't know what might be kept at the bottom. This metaphor actualizes prototype connected with concealed character of underwater work. Thus, the result of blending of denotation-1 and denotation-2, there might be principally new reconsidered meaning.

As we found out, a person can be characterized with idioms: unstable as water She was an artist and as formless and unstable as water or to carry water on both shoulders You want to carry water on both shoulders. You want to be friendly with people but you betray their confidence. The idiom weak as water ((as) weak as water) can be used for describing:

- Physical state: Sir, I am only just getting well of a fever and I am as weak as water
- Character: You love Eva and Eva loves you, Ernest but remember this, she is weak as water. The usage of this idiom reveals in a context

Generally speaking, it should be mentioned that there are cases when the shades of the semantic meaning of water-idioms coincides in English and Russian. The cognitive approach to idioms in cross cultural analysis lays stress on metaphors and is interesting for studying the cognitive principles, culture and phraseology. It can be proved at the functional level in idioms. There is such an old-fashioned idiom as to go through fire and water. The meaning of the idiom "to experience many difficulties or dangers in order to achieve something". It is realized with the help of script which describes some actions directed for overcoming some obstacles in order to achieve a principally new level. In Russian, there is an idiom with the similar meaning. Thus, it is evident that the inner form of the idiom goes back to a certain source when probably people were somehow initiated through this powerful nature force. Thus, denotation-1 renders a situation represented with a word combination. Denotation-2 reveals the meaning of an idiom based on the archaic prototype concealed in a language memory of native speakers.

Summary: To summarize, cognitive-pragmatic approach applied to linguistic research of idioms with lexeme "water" gives rather promising results in respect of revealing specific features of this semantic area in both linguistic and cultural aspects. Further, cognitive research of idioms in cognitive terms of lexicology can also be useful for studying its unique meaning and certainly deserves consideration.

CONCLUSION

In all cultures water is a unique nature substance and it is reflected in a phraseological cluster of language. In English there is a great variety of idioms with lexeme "water". We studied only a small part of it. We followed the principles of cognitive theory of phraseology and applied cognitive-pragmatic approach while analyzing structure, semantic properties and discourse functioning of English idioms. In the light of cognitive phraseology, "cognitive substance" of idioms can be structured with frame and script. But, it is evident that some aspects of nominating process to a certain extent can correlate with the traditional phraseological theory concerning the componential structure of phraseological meaning. They are: denotative, significatum and connotative, those components, in its turn, can correlate to the structure of lexical meaning.

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