# The Main Problems of Multilingual Phraseological Dictionary Compilation

*Elena Arsenteva*
*Kazan state university, Kazan*

**ABSTRACT**

The main problems of "Russian-English-German-Turkish-Tatar Phraseological Dictionary" (REGTTPD, 2008) compilation are under consideration. The dictionary, based on "Russian-English Dictionary of Idioms and Set Expressions" (Arsentyeva, 1999), was compiled by a group of scientists of Kazan state university, Russia, and was published in 2008. The dictionary is designed to represent the wealth of Russian phraseology and the ways of rendering Russian phraseological units into four languages belonging to different language groups. Much attention is paid to the following problems: phraseological unit (PU) arrangement in the dictionary, presentation of different variations, providing necessary connotational linguistic information, ways of translation of Russian phraseological units, with a view to translation in case of zero phraseological equivalence.

## INTRODUCTION

Phraseological dictionaries "…appeared much later and have undergone less development than general and/or bilingual dictionaries" (Pamies, 2008, 991). Still there are numerous problems arising before their compilers. As far as multilingual phraseological dictionaries are concerned, "Russian-English-German-Turkish-Tatar Phraseological Dictionary" may be considered to be considered to be the first phraseological dictionary of the kind presenting enormous phraseological material of five languages belonging to different language groups. So it goes without saying that the number of problems the compilers had to solve is rather large. Being responsible for the Russian and the English parts of the dictionary I'll dwell upon the main problems on the whole with the examples both in Russian and in English.

## PHRASEOLOGICAL UNIT ARRANGEMENT IN THE DICTIONARY

Phraseological units are arranged and lemmatized according to their main grammatical (syntactical) component. This choice is mainly caused by the fact that the most complete phraseological dictionaries of the Russian language are based on the same principle.

Each phraseological unit is presented in the dictionary only once under its grammatical headword. The article is presented under the headword.

If a phraseological unit has the structure of a combination of words, it is presented under its main component, i.e. substantive PUs – under noun, verbal PUs – under verb, adjectival units – under adjective (in full or short form), if it is absent – under noun or, if there is no categorematic word in the PU, - under the first syncategorematic word. Adverbial and interjectional units are also presented under their structurally organizing component.

So, the substantive PU "вольный казак" is presented under the noun "казак", the verbal unit "насвистеть в уши кому" under the verb "насвистеть", the adjectival phraseological units "красный как рак" and "высшей /чистой/ пробы" under the adjectives "красный" and "пробы", respectively, the adverbial unit "с наскока /наскоку/" under the adverb "наскока", etc.

If a phraseological unit has the structure of a sentence, it is lemmatized according to its structure:

1. PUs with the pattern of subject-predicate sentence are organized under subject, so the unit "карта бита кого, чья" is presented under the noun "карта" which is the subject of the sentence.
2. If there is no subject in the sentence, PU is arranged under predicate, for example, the unit "мало каши ел" is presented under the predicate "ел", the PU "вот куда махнул" – under the predicate "махнул".

If a phraseological unit has the structure of the combination of two or more homogeneous parts of the sentence, it is lemmatized under the first component as well as PUs with coordination. So the unit "волки и овцы" is presented under the headword "волки".

If a phraseological unit contains comparison, it is presented under the component which serves as its grammatical centre, e.g. the unit "как /будто, словно, точно/ ножом отрезал" is arranged under the headword "отрезал".

## PRESENTATION OF PHRASEOLOGICAL UNIT VARIATIONS

Variation of phraseological unit components is a common phenomenon both in the Russian and English languages. Of course the great importance of variation in phraseology must have its reflection in phraseography.

Variation in phraseology may occur in different ways. It may affect separate components of a PU or it may affect the whole PU. All the following variation components are delimited in the dictionary with the help of the oblique stroke:

a). Phonetic variations which occur only in the Russian language: "свистеть /свистать/ в кулак", "посыпать голову /главу/ пеплом". As a rule, phonetic variation is connected with sound interchange.

b). Accentological variations are also characteristic of the Russian language: "пасть на се́рдце /на́ сердце/, кому" (obsolete).

c). The so-called spelling variations are typical of the English language, in Russian we find only several examples of them: "Merrie /Merry/ England", "the land of Cockaigne /Cockayne/", "number one /Number One/", "arty and crafty /arty-and-crafty/" (jocular col.), "превратиться в соляной столп /столб/". As it is seen from the above mentioned examples, variation may affect the spelling of a separate component of a PU, its solid, hyphenated or separate spelling.

d). Grammatical variations embrace morphological and morphological-syntactical ones. Morphological variations may be of different types: with the variation of Sg and Pl: "открывать Америку /Америки/", "grow like a weed /weeds/", "власти имущие /власть имущий/"; with suffixal modifications in Russian only: "ни один волос /волосок/ не упадет с головы", "разливаться соловьем /соловушкой/"; with variations of verbal Number and Time in English only: "there's /there are/ as good fish in the sea <as ever came out of it>", "as ever is /was/" (col.). There are two verbal forms of Aspect (Perfective and Imperfective) in Russian only: "показывать класс /марку/. показать класс /марку/", "приставать /приступать/ с ножом к горлу. пристать /приступить/ с ножом к горлу". Morphological-syntactical variations are characterized by change of syntactic relations and part of speech reference: "Иудин поцелуй /поцелуй

Иуды/", "the land of promise /the promised land/", "the Procrustean /Procrustes'/ bed /the bed of Procrustes/", "a banquet of Lucullus /a lucullan, Lucullean, Lucullian banquet/". The change of the pronoun *somebody* position: in preposition in non-prepositional word combinations, and in post-position in prepositional combinations is typical of the English language: "step /tread/ on smb's toes /on the toes of smb/", "sing smb's praises /the praises of smb/". All mentioned types of variants can be termed formal.

e). Lexical variation is the most common type both in Russian and in English: "наставлять на ум /на разум/ кого", "проглядеть /просмотреть/ все глаза", "пересчитывать ребра /кости/ кому", "беден как церковная крыса /мышь/", "хромать на оба колена /на обе ноги/", "объехать на кривой /на козе, на вороных/ кого" (low col.), "Иудин поцелуй /лобзание/", "Фома неверный /неверующий/", "close /shut up/ shop" (col.), "be fond of /love/ one's own way"; "eat the bread of affliction /humiliation, sorrows/", sift the grain /wheat/ from the chaff", "the King's /Queen's/ England", "put a /more often the/ cat among the canaries /pigeons/", "on cloud seven /nine/" (col.); "smb's days /hours/ are numbered", "shoot off one's face /mouth/", "show one's face /joc. one's nose/"; "live on air /on nothing/", "a queer beggar /card, cove, duck/".

In the English language variation components may belong to Americanisms or words used in Australia which are also represented in the dictionary: "stand /stick/ to /Amer. stand by/ one's guns", "blow a fuse /Amer. one's stake, Austral. one's boiler/" (col.). Common verbs may vary with phrasal verbs in the English language: "charge /fight with, tilt at/ the windmills", "shorten /take in/ sail, "lay /play, play with, put, throw/ <all> one's cards on the table", "come into /enter/ one's head", "in a fine /pretty, sorry/ pickle" (col.).

Variation of the definite or indefinite article is typical only of the English language: "care killed a /the/ cat". We can also observe variation of a possessive pronoun (which has the form *one's* in the basic form of a PU) and the definite article: "one's /the/ last card", "one's /the/ latter end", "sport one's /the/ oak".

Variation of prepositions is more typical of English PUs, although there are also some examples of such variation in Russian: "be slow in /on/ the uptake" (col.), "from /out of/ the jaws of death", "a land flowing with /of/ milk and honey", "shake the

dust from /off/ one's feet", "книга за /под/ семью печатями", "небо с /в/ овчинку кажется кому. небо с /в/ овчинку показалось кому" (low col.), "не от /из/ мира сего". There are also some examples of pronoun variation in English, and of adverb variation in Russian: "get his /theirs/" (jarg.), "как будто /словно, точно/ громом пораженный кто" (col.), "как /будто, словно, точно/ банный лист пристал".

f). The so-called lexico-grammatical variations are found in the English language only. We observe the interchange of different parts of speech, Participle I and Participle II, Gerund, adjective and the negative particle or preposition in such PUs: "Jesus Christ! /Jesus wept!, Jumping Jesus!/", one's cup is filled /full, full to the brim, overflowing, running over/", "have a bad /no/ head for smth".

g). The so-called mixed variants in which both the composition and the form of a PU are effected: "садиться в лужу /в калошу, галошу/" (in this PU we observe the combination of phonetic and lexical variations), "к черту /чертям/ на кулички /на рога/" ( the combination of morphological and lexical variations).

h). The so called optional components which may be omitted in speech are presented in broken brackets: "указать <свое> место кому", "ставить в <один> ряд кого с кем. поставить в <один> ряд кого с кем" (разг.), "<одна> кожа да кости", "по Сеньке <и> шапка", "садиться на хлеб и <на> воду", "neither fish nor fowl <nor good red herring>", "<well> I'm jiggered!", "hit the <right> nail on the head", "be one's own <worst> enemy", "<down> on the nail".

i). Mixed variations may include all the above mentioned variation types: "направлять /обращать/ <свои> стопы /шаги/ куда, к кому", "стоять /оставаться, топтаться, танцевать/ на <одном> месте", "send a cold shiver /cold shivers/ down /up; up and down/ smb's back /spine/", "look as if one <just> came /stepped/ out of a band-box /bandbox/".

Such a way of variation presentation is considered to be the most economical and consistent. As far as the problem of dictionary presentation of PUs with variation components is concerned, it is usually solved by taking into consideration the frequency of occurrence of this or that PU variation (which is already registered in unilingual dictionaries due to the numerous cases of their use in speech).

## PRESENTATION OF NECESSARY CONNOTATION INFORMATION

One of the most important problems which arise during the process of phraseological dictionary compilation is the problem of providing necessary connotational linguistic information. In bilingual and multilingual phraseological dictionaries nearly all connotational information is arranged in labels the role of which is rather great.

The first component of connotation which must find its reflection in the dictionary is the so-called functional-stylistic component showing the functional-stylistic reference of the unit. This component also indicates chronological and territorial characteristics as well as the way of using phraseological units.

The following labels are used in the dictionary to show the PU stylistic reference: «книжн.» (книжное –bookish), «возвыш.» (возвышенное – elevated), «поэт.» (поэтическое – poetical), «lit.» (literary), «возвыш.» (возвышенное - high-flown style), «разг.» (разговорное), «col.» (colloquial), «low col.» (low colloquial), «разг.-фам.» (разговорно-фамильярное - colloquial-familiar), «груб.» (грубое – rude), «вульг.» (вульгарное – vulgar), «жарг.» (жаргонизм – jargon), «эвф.» (эвфемизм - euphemism), «slang»: “обагрять руки в крови” книжн., “держаться насмерть” высок., “браться за ум /разум/” разг., “переть против рожна” прост., “сопля зеленая” груб.-прост., “давить фасон” жарг., “rend the air” bookish, “<as> pure as a lily” poet., “full of beans” col., “a clever dog” col.-fam., “a pair in the ass” vulg., “put the acid on smb” jarg., “send smb ro glory” euph.

Neutral phraseological units don’t belong to any particular functional style as they may be used in any style (whenever occasion demands). Such units predominate in the dictionary and have no label: “оставаться /быть/ самым собой. остаться самим собой”, “раскинуть карты”, “be left in the basket”, “be a load off smb’s mind”.

As obsolete units are not included in the dictionary, chronological characteristics show the temporary functioning of neologisms, with Russian units the label «нов.» (новое - neologism) is used: “сменить пластинку” нов.

Territorial reference is presented with English PUs. Such labels can be found in the dictionary: «Amer.» (used in the USA),

«Austral.» (used in Australia), «Scottish» (used in Scotland), «Canad.» (Canadian), etc.: “a straight arrow” Amer., “blow one’s bags” Austral., “teach the cat the way to the kirn” Scottish.

The second type of labels used in our dictionary reveals the emotiveness of phraseological units. The scale consisting of 10 emotive labels representing 10 emotive semes of Russian PUs are used: «ласк.» (ласкательное - the term of endearment), «шутл.» (шутливое - jocular), «ирон.» (ироничное - ironical), «неодобр.» (неодобрительное - disapproval), «пренебр.» (пренебрежительное - disdainful), «предосуд.» (предосудительное - blameworthy), «презр.» (презрительное - contemptible), «уничиж.» (уничижительное - pejorative), «груб.» (грубое - rude), «бран.» (браное - expletive expression): “расправлять крылышки” ласк., “мальчик-с-пальчик” шутл. (in the second sense), “ангел без крылышек” ирон., “бить баклуши” неодобр., “что взять с кого” пренебр., “выхватывать кусок <хлеба> изо рта у кого” предосуд., “пропойное рыло” презр., “башка с затылком” уничиж., “на рыло” груб., “чертово семя” бран.

Some phraseological units have a mobile emotive gradation, which means that they may have two or even three (which happens very seldom) emotive semes depending on their realization in speech (context). As a rule they are characterized by the labels which stand close to each other on the scale of emotiveness, e.g. «шутл. или ирон.» (jocular, or ironical), or they can also have the label «часто» (often) «чаще» (more often): “подбитый ветром /ветерком/” пренебр. или презр., “подпускать турусы <на колесах> кому. подпустить турусы <на колесах> кому” часто неодобр. или пренебр.

The last label «экспрес.» (экспрессивное – expressive) shows the expressivity of Russian phraseological units: “растаптывать душу кого, чью. растоптать душу кого, чью” экспрес., “сердце кровью обливается чье, у кого. сердце кровью облилось чье, у кого” экспрес.

All the above mentioned labels are presented in the “List of Abbreviations” and are given in strict order: the label of functional-stylistic reference, the label of expressivity, and the label of emotiveness, e.g.: “дрожать как осиновый лист. как осиновый лист дрожит /трясется/. как осиновый лист задрожал /затрясся/” разг., экспресс., чаще презр., “без пути” прост., неодобр., “в пух и <в> прах” разг., экпрес., “пустить под нож

кого" прост., "рыцарь без страха и упрека" экспрес., "в ряду кого, чего".

## TRANSLATION OF RUSSIAN PHRASEOLOGICAL UNITS

The following types of interlanguage phraseological relations are distinguished:

1. Phraseological equivalents (full and partial);
2. Phraseological analogues (full and partial);
3. Phraseological units having no phraseological counterparts in another language.

### PHRASEOLOGICAL EQUIVALENTS

Phraseological equivalents are phraseological conformities which are characterized by functional-semantic and aspect identity. The coincidence of phraseological meaning seme composition on the significational-denotational and connotational levels (i.e. the coincidence of evaluative, emotive, expressive semes and functional-stylistic reference of PUs) leads to their functional-semantic identity. The coincidence of lexeme and grammatical structure of PUs belonging to different languages means their aspect identity.

It goes without saying that the group of phraseological equivalents constitutes a small part as the languages belong to different language groups: Slavonic and Germanic. International PUs serve as good examples: "играть с огнем" – "play with fire"; "играть роль" – "play the role".

The existence of interlanguage phraseological equivalents facilitates the work of a lexicographer: "не верить <своим> глазам" – "not to believe one's eyes"; "вторая натура" – "second nature"; "двуликий Янус" – "two-faced Janus"; "терять голову" – "lose one's head"; "метать бисер перед свиньями" – "cast pearls before swine".

The existence of partial phraseological equivalents, the main distinctive feature of which is the presence of some minor differential formal indications on the aspect level combined with full coincidence of significational-denotational and connotational components of meaning also finds its expression in the dictionary: "петь другим голосом" – "sing another /a different, a new/ tune"; "открывать зеленую улицу кому, чему" – "give a /the/ green light to smb /smth/".

## PHRASEOLOGICAL ANALOGUES

The majority of Russian phraseological units may be rendered into English with the help of phraseological analogues. In linguistic literature phraseological analogues are understood as multilingual PUs having differences not only in componential (lexeme) and grammatical structure but also in emotive, expressive and functional-stylistic components of connotation but coinciding in their significational-denotational component of meaning and evaluative component of connotation.

If Russian phraseological unit has phraseological conformity/conformities in the form of analogue/analogues, the dictionary presents it/them after the special mark designating their similarity ~ : "как две капли воды" ~ "not a pin to choose between them" разг.; ~ "as like as <two> peas <in a pod>"; ~ "like father /mother/, like son /daughter/ /about smb's behaviour/" разг.; "камень с души /с сердца/ свалился у кого" разг. иногда поэт. ~ "be a load off smb's mind"; ~ "off one's mind"; ~ "a <great> weight off one's mind /shoulders/" разг.; "вон куда махнул" прост. ~ "go beyond /over/ the mark"; ~ "overshoot /overstep/ the mark".

The connotational differences are marked with the help of labels.

Partial analogues are presented rather seldom as they are characterized by the low level of semantic conformity: "отпускать вожжи" ~ "draw rein"; "не давать слова вымолвить кому" разг. ~ "shut /stop/ smb's mouth". Partial phraseological analogues may sometimes be used by interpreters in the appropriate context.

## TRANSLATION OF PHRASEOLOGICAL UNITS HAVING NO PHRASEOLOGICAL COUNTERPARTS IN ANOTHER LANGUAGE

The last group of Russian phraseological units may be rendered into English with the help of translation loans, descriptive and lexical translation. As a rule translation loans are accompanied by descriptive translation, e.g. "бедный родственник" – "a poor relation, i.e. a humble person who depends on others"; "хромать на обе ноги" – "be lame in both legs, i.e. have considerable gaps in one's knowledge".

Some Russian phraseological units are rendered into English with the help of lexical translation if they have lexical equivalents: “с тяжелой рукой” – “heavy-handed”; “золотая рота” – “vagabonds, trams; ragamuffins”; “как (будто) писаный” прост. экспрес. - “beautiful, handsome”.

Descriptive translation is also a good way of rendering Russian PUs with no phraseological counterpart(s) in English: “плести /плесть/ лапти” прост. пренебр. или презр. – “do smth unskillfully, stupidly, confuse smth with smth”; “даром не пройдет что кому” разг. экспрес. – “smb will not get away with smth; smb will pay for it”.

But it is more convenient to give combined translation thanks to which it is possible to convey the meaning of PUs having no phraseological counterparts more completely and adequately: “большой руки” – “large scale; possessing the highest degree of some quality; inveterate. About smb”; “слоны продавать” прост. пренебр. – “loaf; stroll around aimlessly; wander around”.

The compilers of the dictionary are trying to do their best to give all possible variants of interlanguage conformities and in this way to present the reader all the variants necessary to understand PUs and find the best way of their translation in different contexts: “пустое место кто” разг. часто пренебр. – “a lay figure”; “a negligible quantity”; “he /she, etc./ has nothing in him /her, etc./”; ~ “a mere /poor, remote/ circumstance” (амер. разг.); “smb counts for nothing”; “a nobody”; “с копыт долой” прост. – “kick the bucket” (жарг.); “kick up one’s heels” (разг.); “fall off the perch” (жарг.); “turn up one’s toes” (разг.); “push up <the> daises” (разг.); “ни в зуб толкнуть” прост. экспрес. – “have no idea about smth”; “not to have the faintest idea about smth”; ~ “smb doesn’t know a word of it”.

Polysemantic phraseological units, though they are few, are also under consideration. Each meaning is registered under its own number: “кровь с молоком” разг. экспрес.- 1. “the very picture of health”; “full of health”; ~ “milk and roses”; ~ “in blooming health”; “full of health” 2. ~ “have roses in one’s cheeks”; ~ “<as> red as a cherry /rose/”; “rosy-cheeked”; “with rosy cheeks”.

**CONCLUSIONS**

In this paper I have tried to show the ways of solving the most difficult problems arising before the compilers of multilanguage phraseological dictionary. All decisions are based on the results of comparative studies of phraseological units and the latest achievements in phraseology, lexicography and phraseography.

We hope that the dictionary will be of great help for all those working in the field of phraseology as well as for numerous translators and interpreters.

**REFERENCES**

Arsentyeva, E. 1999. Russian-English Dictionary of Idioms and Set Expressions. Kazan: Haetaer.

Pamies, A. 2008. Spanish Phraseography. *Phraseology. An International Handbook of Contemporary Research.* Berlin. New York: Walter de Gruyter, 991.

Russko-Anglo-Nemecko-Turecko-Tatarsky Frazeologichesky Slovar' (Russian-English-German-Turkish-Tatar Phraseological Dictionary). 2008. Kazan: Izdatel'stvo Kazanskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta.