DISCOURSAL ANALYSIS OF PHRASEOLOGICAL EUPHEMISMS: EXPERIMENTAL DATA IN TEACHING ENGLISH

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Abstract. The article, firstly, presents the typology of phraseological unit (PU) modifications in discourse. Secondly, some problems arising in teaching students stylistic and phraseological competence are discussed. Thirdly, the term "phraseological euphemism" is clarified. The experiment carried out with non-native speakers of English in applying two most complicated types of PU modifications, namely, phraseological pun and extended metaphor is presented. The requirements of enabling non-native speakers to perceive the image and to understand its mental representation, to have a double vision of the base metaphor, and to spread it by creating associative metaphors are pointed out.

Keywords: Discourse, phraseological unit, phraseological euphemism, core use, instantial stylistic use, modifications, phraseological pun, extended phraseological metaphor

Introduction

The problem of phraseological unit discoursal usage have been one of the most controversial problems for several decades. As A.Naciscione states, some scholars and even lexicographers were absolutely against any stylistic changes to phraseological units as such changes "… have been seen as undesirable and therefore as something which need to be changed back to "normal" … Another practice is that of deliberate avoidance or non-acceptance of PUs or stylistic changes to them" (Naciscione, 2010:21-22). Any deviation from the PU core use (i.e. the use of it in its most common form and meaning presented in dictionaries) has been considered as something abnormal and incorrect, and the use of the following pejorative terms proves this assumption without doubt: abnormality, anomaly, defectiveness, deficiency, distortion, misquotation, violation, etc. And only the third, or the largest group of scholars and lexicographers, have been engaged in the thorough study of such discoursal changes of phraseological units.

The same distinctions may be observed in the creative activity of some writers. As P.Mrazović points out, three groups of German writers may be distinguished, the division being based on the peculiarities of using PUs in their literary works (Mrazović, 1998). Writers belonging to the first group (H.Böll, F.Kafka) don't use such stable units in their works at all considering them as ready-made clichés unsuitable for the author's individual style. Writers of the second group (B.Brecht, H.Kant) successfully apply to the core use of phraseological units. And only the writers belonging to the third group (T.Mann, G.Grass) are rather prolific in modifying them in the creative way.

It's a well-known fact that play on words and creative use of language has always been part of the English tradition. Phraseological units as specific units of language were not an exception. The play on them in the English language continues an old tradition of puns and other types of play on words characteristic of W.Shakespeare, O.Wilde, L.Carrol and many other writers. A.Naciscione presents illustrative examples of some common patterns of instantial stylistic use of phraseological units already in the works of G.Chaucer in Middle English, not to speak of W.Shapespeare, J.Galsworthy, B.Shaw and many other authors of the 19th and 20th centuries (Naciscione, 2001; 2010). Even one of the most sophisticated patterns of contextual modifications of PUs as extended metaphor was resorted to in G.Caucer's 'Troilus and Criseyde':

Criseyde, whan that she hir uncle herde,
With dreadful herte, and desirous to here
The cause of his coming, thus answered,
"Now by your feyth, myn uncle," quod she, "dere,
What mener windes gydeth yow now here?
Tel us your joly wo and your penaunce,
How ferforth be ye put in **loves daunce**".

"By god," quod he, "*I hoppe* alwey *bihinde*!"
And *she to-laugh, it thoughte hir herte breste*. (Naciscione, 2001:72).

On the whole English literature abounds in the creative approach to language usage but though the practice of word play is considered to be typical of the English tradition for many centuries, the first researches of authors' creative use of phraseological units appeared only in the second half of the 20th century. Scholars from different countries were among those who contributed greatly to the development of Phraseology as a linguistic science on the whole, and to the study of discoursal behaviour of phraseological units, in particular.

1.1. A review of most important contributions in the field of phraseological unit discoursal behavior

B. Frazer should be mentioned among the first researchers who explored the transformational potential of English idioms and the stylistic effects of such transformations, and worked out a six-level transformational scale starting from completely frozen units up to unrestricted ones (Frazer, 1970).

Large-scale researches in the form of monographic works are devoted to the study of different types of PU modifications in the English and German languages (Fernando, 1996; Moon, 1998; Fleischer, 1997; Burger et al., 1982; Ptashnyk, 2009).

A profound study of English phraseological units was undertaken by Professor A.Kunin, a well-known Russian scientist who was the first to introduce the terms "usual use" and "contextual use" of PUs and to distinguish three types of phraseological context necessary to define the type of PU contextual modification: inter-phrasal, phrasal and super-phrasal (Kunin, 1973; 1983; 1996). It was proved later that different types of PU modifications depend on the type of phraseological context, i.e. complicated modification types such as extended metaphor or phraseological saturation may predominantly occur in the third type of it and only sporadically in the second one (Abdullina, 2007).

A short survey of achievements of Russian scientists in the field of different types of PU modifications is presented in the first part of the monograph of a group of researchers from Kazan federal university - members of Europhras society "Contextual Use of Phraseological Units" (Contextual Use of Phraseological Units, 2009). The book presents theoretical study as well as its practical implementation based on the investigation of different types of PU modifications in the English, Russian, German and Spanish languages and in different types of texts and genres: belles-léttres, mass media, the so-called creolized texts. Part IV of the monograph "Phraseology in Multilingual Society" containing the best reports at Europhras conference in 2013 is also devoted to the discoursal behavior of phraseological units and the stylistic effects produced (Phraseology in Multilingual Society, 2014).

The following PU modifications are distinguished on the basis of thorough study of works of different scholars in the article "Complex Modifications of Phraseological Units and the Ways of their Translation":

1. Substitution or replacement of a PU component or components;
2. Permutation;
3. Addition, including insertion;
4. Deletion of a PU component or components, or ellipsis;
5. Cleft use (according to A.Naciscione), or 'metasprachliche Kommentierung' (according to H.Burger);
6. Phraseological allusion, which is closely connected with ellipsis;
7. Phraseological Reiteration;
8. Phraseological Pun, or 'Verweise in Kontext' (according to H.Burger);
9. Contamination of two phraseological units;
10. Extended metaphor;
11. Phraseological saturation of discourse (according to A.Naciscione), or complex cases of contextual use of phraseological units (Arsenteva and Kayumova, 2014).

It is also stated that all these types of modifications of phraseological units may be subdivided into two main types: semantic and structural-semantic. "Semantic modifications, such as phraseological pun and extended metaphor occur without any changes in the form of a PU, they affect only the semantic aspect of the unit. Modifications of the second type involve the change in the structure of a PU thus making some alterations in its meaning" (Arsenteva and Kayumova, 2014:503).

S.Ptashnyk introduces her own classification (and terms): structural modifications, which include both lexical and grammatical changes to a phraseological unit, and contextual modifications, which is her term for semantic changes without structural changes based on the interplay between literal and phraseological meaning of the PU in the context (Ptashnyk, 2009). In our opinion, the classification proposed by S.Ptashnyk is only a kind of alteration of the widely accepted subdivision of PU modifications into semantic and structural-semantic ones, all of them occur in context, or discourse, which means that all of them refer to contextual modifications.

We witness nowadays not only the increase in the number of researches devoted to the investigation of different types of PU modifications but also the appearance of the new type of dictionaries reflecting different contextual PU modifications in actual speech. It's suffice enough to mention the "Dictionary of Anti-Proverbs" compiled by W.Mieder and A.Litovkina (Mieder and Litovkina, 1999) and "Phraseologisms in Russian Speech" created by A.Melerovich and V.Mokiyenko (Melerovich and Mokiyenko, 2001).

Though the process of singling out and analyzing all the above-mentioned PU modifications requires many data-based and corpus-based efforts, it is much more difficult to understand the reason why such modifications are possible. In this respect the works of American linguists R.Gibbs, J.O'Brien, N.Nayak, C.Cutting, J.Bolton, M.Keppel are of paramount importance (Gibbs 1994; Gibbs and O'Brien, 1990; Gibbs and Cutting, 1989; Gibbs et al., 1989). Researches conducted by them demonstrate that the metaphors on which phraseological units are based are still alive for the speakers and are a prominent part of their conceptual system. Such an assumption explains, why the majority of PUs is analyzable and can be modified. As the scholars state, any idiom can be lexically changed in a creative manner and it will be still understood if there is sufficient pragmatic context (Gibbs et al., 1989).

On the whole, varied types of PU modifications are not arbitrary, but are dictated, on the one hand, by cognitive processes common to all homo sapiens, on the other hand, by each language possibilities in terms of their internal grammar. Contextual PU modifications follow some cognitive schemes, which are strict enough, and their realization in speech is a vivid evidence of their systematic character. Contextual use (or instantial stylistic use of PUs according to A.Naciscione) "… is one of the ways to reflect a novel turn of thought… it expands the semantic or

syntactic framework of the base form, exceeding the limits and requirements of core use. This is determined by the thought and the context. Instantial changes are possible due to semantic and stylistic cohesion of the base form, securing an associative continuity of phraseological links in discourse" (Naciscione, 2010:79).

1.2. Some problems of phraseological euphemism instantial use teaching

It's common practice that students specializing in English are taught to deal with phraseological units in their core form. Of course they deal with the instantial use of these units while reading and analyzing different authentic texts of English and American authors. But language efficiency calls for acquiring knowledge and skills not only in identifying typical patterns of instantial use of phraseological units but also in using them properly. It means that students should be taught in such a way that they are able to create different types of PU modifications themselves and do it with confidence.

Speaking about the difficulties arising in teaching students stylistic and phraseological competence A.Naciscione distinguishes five of them, the art of creation being most hard to acquire. "A creative approach to language … also implies teaching how to create instantial use and networks, to extend and sustain an image, linking words and phrases together and providing meaningful associative ties. A focus on creativity requires greater language awareness on the part of language teachers and learners… The ultimate goal is learner ability to create instantial use in discourse by exploiting existing language patterns. … learners need to develop specific discourse skills to cope with all the relevant difficulties" (Naciscione, 2010:219-220).

In order to be able to create different types of PU modifications themselves learners should have a very good command of English, the least level being High Intermediate. They should also have a rather good command of English phraseology. They should understand and know the mechanism of each type of phraseological unit modification, and they should be able to use each type with true proficiency. Besides they should be creative that means their creative potential for creative thinking, and a creative approach, which are absolutely necessary in order to identify the PU inner form and to "see" the image of it. These skills are absolutely necessary in figurative thinking in order to achieve the level of accuracy in using English.

This article examines only two types of phraseological euphemism instantial use, both of them involves a great skill of creative thinking.

Phraseological pun and extended metaphor are considered to be among the most complicated patterns of instantial stylistic use of phraseological units. The first one belongs to the so-called semantic type of PU modifications, it involves simultaneous realization of two meanings: the figurative one of the PU, and the literal meaning of the corresponding free combination of words or its constituent or constituents. In phraseological pun we come across the dual perception of one and the same item, as a rule it creates a humorous effect based on misunderstanding. A.Naciscione proposes a cognitive insight into the process of creating phraseological pun considering that the essence of this process is the uncovering of the image, double exposure and cohesive links are achieved by using it (Naciscione, 2010).

The term "extended metaphor" was first used by A.Naciscione in her book "Phraseological Units in Discourse: towards Applied Stylistics" (Naciscione, 2001), now it's a term widely used by many linguists. The most common definition of this instantial stylistic device is as follows: extended phraseological metaphor is "an instantial pattern involving a string of sub-images sustained and tied together by the base metaphor of the PU, creating a cohesive network of associated metaphorical bonds" (Naciscione, 2010:252). We consider that the basis of it is also the dual perception of two meanings and the ability to "see" the image of the phraseological unit based on the metaphorical transfer of meaning. In case the phraseological image is accepted by the user "in the right way", it may be spread, and a sub-image or sub-images based on various associations may be created. Only the base metaphor and the base image are essential in creating a cohesive network of different types of associative bonds as a sub-image or sub-images cluster around the base metaphor. Extended phraseological metaphor may involve the extension of one of the constituents of the PU, successive use of sub-images, or the extension of several notional base components. In any case it's a brilliant example of creative thinking.

The term "phraseological euphemism" should also be clarified.

The term "euphemism" has been used to denote a definite stylistic device for many centuries. In linguistic researches nowadays euphemism is considered to be the substitution of words and expressions of mild or vague connotations for expressions rough, unpleasant or for some other reasons unmentionable. Scholars distinguish several reasons for using euphemisms: superstitious taboos; social and moral taboos; the need to soften painful news; using a learned word that sounds less familiar, hence less offensive.

On the whole, euphemisms are considered to be a complex and versatile linguistic phenomenon having three interconnected and interdependent aspects: social, psychological and linguistic proper. Two indications of the process of eupheminisation are distinguished from the point of view of linguistic aspect. The first one is the designation of some negative object or phenomenon, the direct designation of which is tabooed at the definite period of time. The second indication is connected with the indirectness of some meliorative nomination.

Phraseological euphemisms were thoroughly studied in the dissertation of Yu.Arsentyeva (Arsentyeva, 2012). It was proved that phraseological euphemisms are complex language units combining typical features of both phraseological units and euphemisms. They are image-bearing expressions with transferred meaning and are characterized by inseparability, lexical and grammatical stability with the possibility of discoursal modifications. The connotational potential of these units is great. Phraseological euphemisms belong to the class of units with indirect

nomination the main aim of which is to alleviate and veil tabooed or socially and morally blamed objects of reality. This aim is mainly achieved by using neutral and, in some cases, elevated images which, in their turn, result in contextually ambivalent or constantly meliorative emotional evaluation of nominating some phenomena which are quite pejorative from the point of view of logical (rational) evaluation. It was found out that stylistically neutral and bookish phraseological euphemisms are based on positive or neutral images, even units belonging to colloquial and low-colloquial style have the images which are considered admissible from the social and moral point of view and, in some cases, are of jocular nature.

The experiment

The experimental method of informants is used in our research. Previously such method was already used in order to find out the key component in seven English proverbs (Arsenteva and Arsentyeva, 2013).

Fifty students from Kazan (Volga region) federal university, Russia, were chosen to apply two most difficult types of instantial stylistic use of phraseological euphemisms: phraseological pun and extended metaphor. The informants are not native speakers of English but their major is the English language. The language level is High Intermediate, so the word stock and the knowledge of the language structure are enough "to create" phraseological pun and extended metaphor. The cognitive mechanisms of these two types of phraseological modifications were studied beforehand, and the examples from the works of English and American writers were also analyzed thoroughly for the students to be able to "read between lines" and create new sub-images.

The following phraseological euphemisms were chosen, both substantive and verbal:

New-York (California) kiss-off;

Dose of P45 medicine;

running shoes;

walking papers;

golden bowler hat;

golden parachute;

human sacrifice;

to get on one's bike;

to give time to other commitments (interests);

<to be> on the beach;

to put out to grass;

to walk the <golden> <gang>plank;

to spend more time with one's family;

to send down the road;

to take the breeze;

to tie a can on.

All these phraseological euphemisms were selected from the heading "Dismissal" of R.W.Holder's "Dictionary of Euphemisms. How Not to Say What You Mean" (Holder, 2007), all of them are based on vivid and bright images which allow users to "play" with them and create sub-images.

2.1. Phraseological pun

In this article the most interesting examples are presented. It was found out that phraseological pun is considered to be the easier case of PU instantial use in comparison with extended metaphor by all the students engaged in the experiment. All examples present the case of pun sustained beyond sentence level and used in dialogue. An abrupt return to the literal meaning is based on misunderstanding. Such misunderstanding is especially typical of children who can't perceive the figurative meaning of PU and understand literally the expression pronounced by adults. Examples based on this type of misunderstanding form the first group:

Mother: And your uncle had **New-York kiss-off** again last month. Poor Dick!

Tommy: Who kissed him, mum, and why in New-York? He had never been to New-York, you know.

Father: Again a lot of people will have **to walk the golden gangplank**.

Little Willie: Dad, are you telling the story about the pirates who attacked a very rich ship and made the crew walk the plank?

The second group gives us the examples of misunderstanding when both (or even more) interlocutors are grown-up people, and only one of them possesses a very good command of English phraseology. It is considered that such misunderstanding as a rule creates a humorous effect, which is proven by the following examples:

Tom: Was Jack Willson also given **running shoes**?

Andrew: I think he was.

Tom's wife: You are talking utter nonsense, my dear. Only people can run in their shoes.

(Two elderly workers speaking sadly about the situation at the factory)

- Who will be the next **to take the breeze**?

(A young lad who knows nothing about the forthcoming people cuts)

- Oh, let's go together. The weather is really nice, and the breeze is so gentle.

It was interesting for us to notice the lack of humorous effect in some examples, we consider that it is the result of phraseological euphemism use - dismissal can't be viewed humorously. The following two examples prove it vividly:

- The employer of our advertising firm was very polite to me. I **will be given time to other interests**, he said.

- My God! It sounds promising. Does it mean that you will work less hours and enjoy yourself?

- It only means that I've lost my job.

- The last words of our administration were that some of us **will spend more time with our families**.

- Does it mean that your administration is going to take care of the employees and let them work less hours?

- Unfortunately it means that some of us will be sacked.

The image of the phraseological euphemism "dose of P45 medicine" is based on the contradiction between some medicine the task of which is to cure people, and the tax form P45 which is given to employees in case of their summary dismissal. The following example is based on mere misunderstanding as the phraseological euphemism with the transferred meaning is understood by the second interlocutor as a non-figurative combination of words:

- Hard times again! I am afraid I will be given the **dose of P45 medicine** next week.

- Have you fallen ill? And what a strange name of the medicine you will have to take!

In the last example of phraseological pun bitter irony is expressed by using the word "victims":

- So they are both hands for new **human sacrifice**.

- And who will be the victims for the gods?

The unit itself contains punning on ancient rites to propitiate the gods, the student was creative enough to re-create the image and sarcastically call gods those who dismiss people.

2.2. Extended phraseological metaphor

The results of the experiment prove the fact that students are able not only to have a double vision of the base metaphor but also to extend the phraseological image and to create bright and convincing sub-images.

In the following example the image of getting on one's bike is "prolonged" by the sub-image of using it – cycling in some direction. The web is "prolonged" again – the bike can choose the direction itself being an old friend of the narrator:

- They say a lot of people **will get on their bikes** again.

His friend's remark wasn't news to Tom. The situation was again the same as several years ago when a lot of mines were closed. So he will get on his bike again and cycle in some direction… He even became used to such a situation. But what direction will he cycle this time with his old metallic companion? Let the bike choose it itself.

The key component "grass" of the phraseological euphemism "to put out to grass" serves as the starting point of a string of sub-images of some pleasant feeling of lying on the green grass, which may as well be faded and unpleasant to lie on. The analogy between two common actions – lying on the green grass and looking into the blue sky - brings to life another opposition, i.e. if the grass is faded the sky is gray and clouded:

So he **was put out to grass**. Firstly the idea of lying on the green grass and admiring the blue sky seemed fascinating to him. But he suddenly realized that he was no young and, consequently, it would be very hard for him to find a new job. The grass seemed suddenly pale and very unpleasant to lie on, and the sky was full of clouds.

A very interesting example was presented by the student who "developed" the image of the unit "walking papers" with several sub-images while perceiving such walking papers as animate beings:

He got out of the office with his **walking papers**. Staring at the notice vacantly he suddenly thought about the strange image being the basis of this expression. Walking papers … as if papers can walk for themselves… Walk perhaps wearing a mask of seriousness on their paper faces and hobbling on their strange small legs. And, perhaps, being very proud of themselves.

The verb "imagine" may be of great help in creating the spread of the phraseological image and the stream of consciousness:

Of course, it's much better to get a **golden bowler hat** than nothing. Suddenly he imagined himself wearing a bowler hat in a crowded street. He will look funny. And why golden? Bowler hats are black, it's general truth. And again he imaged his boss gilding it with his usual smile. It will glitter in the sunlight and everybody will look at him in amazement… What tricks your imagination can play on you, he thought again.

The image of one component of the phraseological euphemism, namely the "beach" in the first example, and the "road" in the second one, may be very powerful in creating sub-images in extended metaphor:

Why was he again as drunk as a cobbler? He knew it beforehand that the captain would have to give him the order to leave the ship. And, as they say, he **will be on the beach**. On the unknown beach full of danger. Who knows what may await him on this isolated stony beach?

He could hardly sleep after all. Of course, nearly everybody was waiting for a pink slip after the bank's bankruptcy and was ready **to be sent down the road**. But who knows what road it will be: a big busy road, or a small back one. Will he be well on the road to a better and well-paid job? Or will the road take him to his last home? God only knows what may happen with him and his family.

As all the previous examples have shown extended phraseological metaphor is a very complex phenomenon: in order for the basic image to be sustained it should be perceived both literally and in the transferred way. So phraseological pun is engaged in producing it. Besides phraseological reiteration of one or more components is obvious which leads to the phraseological saturation of discourse. In many cases we also observe the use of other phraseological units, e.g. in the previous examples "to wear a mask of", "to play a trick on", "as drunk as a cobbler", "be well on the road", "God only knows". In the last example the student was very creative in using one more phraseological

euphemism referring to the sphere of dismissal "pink slip" as well as the phraseological euphemism denoting death "one's last home".

In the last but one example chosen for the analysis the image of a parachute and its ability to land a person and bring him or her somewhere is in the focus of attention, the adjective "golden" does not play any role in extending the image, it is only necessary as a component of the phraseological euphemism "golden parachute":

At least he had **a golden parachute**. Enough to live on for some period of time. But what he will do then? <u>Will this parachute bring him to some remote harbor where he will be saved from heavy life storms? Or it won't be even strong enough to land him safely</u>.

The last example illustrates the allusion to the cruel practice of tying an old can to the tail of a stray cat to drive it away, it reveals the prototype being the basis of the phraseological euphemism "to tie a can on". Besides the image of the old can is expanded, and one more phraseological unit "here and there" is used to saturate the discourse:

The reaction of the workers was unpredictable. He heard angry voices here and there. And he remembered very well one remark: "They want **to tie a can on** us. <u>As if we are stray cats. An old can that will frighten us and drive us away</u>. But we aren't afraid of it, we are human beings clever enough to be ready to fight for our rights".

Conclusions

Discoursal instantial use of phraseological euphemisms is a complicated and versatile phenomenon. Phraseological pun and extended metaphor are among the most powerful manifestations of creative thought, they show the ability of human mind to establish cognitive links between different objects of reality by simultaneous realization of literal and figurative meaning of word combinations. Genuine creativity is revealed in the ability of a user to extend the phraseological image by using one or several sub-images, based on various associations.

The results of the experiment carried out with non-speakers of English demonstrate the fact that even non-speakers are able to "deduce" the image, to have a double vision of the base metaphor, and to spread it by creating associative metaphors. The following requirements are needed: the language level starting with High Intermediate; a rather large word stock and deep knowledge of the language structure; the knowledge of the cognitive mechanisms of creating phraseological pun and extended metaphor (as well as other types of phraseological unit modifications), practical identification and cognitive skills, the ability to think in a creative way. The knowledge of phraseological euphemisms belonging to the designation of dismissal adds to the wealth of their vocabulary appropriate to be used in different situations.

The examples given by the students are a vivid evidence of their ability not only to apply two most difficult types of phraseological euphemism modifications but also to do it using their creative potential to the utmost degree as in many cases we observe the examples of phraseological saturation of discourse.

The perspectives of the research is seen in adding Russian, German, Spanish and Tatar phraseological counterparts of the presented English euphemisms in order to prove the similarity of the mechanisms engaged in creating phraseological images in different languages, in comparing the results and using the material from corpuses.

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