

The Origin Of Phraseological Units Based On Social And Historical Events

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Abstract - The accuracy and expressiveness of speech depend on the regular use of words and expressions. Like words, stable combinations that express a single meaning play a major role in enriching the vocabulary of our language. In many cases, not a single word, but a group of words that form a unity is used to express a certain meaning.

The set of all stable word combinations, indivisible expressions and phrases in the language is called phraseology. Phraseology is originally a Greek word, formed from the combination of the words *phrases* - expression and *logos* - theory, science. Phraseology studies the regular development of stable word combinations, their origin and formation, their characteristics, semantic and grammatical structure, their relationship with words and other combinations, etc.

The words that make up a phraseological unit (phraseologism) are considered its components. They are organically combined in phraseologisms in such a way that it is impossible to separate them from each other and consider each word in an independent sense. All the words that make up a phraseologism or phraseological unit express one meaning in general.

Key words - phraseological units, culture, English, historical events, social life.

I. INTRODUCTION

The phraseological fund of the English language has been formed over many centuries. The main sources of phraseological units are considered to be colloquial speech, written literature, mythical tales and legends. By studying the phraseologisms of the English language, we mostly obtain detailed information about the life experience, psychology, culture, history, religious views and traditions of English speaking people.

Various social and historical events played a major role in the formation of phraseologisms of the English language. It is possible to conduct analysis of phraseological units based on social and historical events in the linguoculturological level according to the following groups:

- a) phraseological units based on historical and social events that occurred in ancient times
- b) phraseological units referring to the information about the lifestyle and history of English-speaking countries, such as England, the USA, etc.
- c) phraseological units based on information about the history and social life of non-English-speaking peoples.

II. PHRASEOLOGICAL UNITS BASED ON HISTORICAL AND SOCIAL EVENTS THAT OCCURRED IN ANCIENT TIMES.

In English, phraseological units whose prototypes are historical events, as well as geographical locations, are often found. The semantics of such phraseological units contains a bright national-cultural components.

The expression *a Caesar's wife (like Caesar's wife)*, which we can consider within the first group, is semantically identical with the phraseological unit *Caesar's wife must be above suspicion*.

This phraseologism, which is included in the phraseological semantic field of “respect”, took its metaphorical coding from the event happened in ancient history: from the divorcement of the Roman Empire, Julius Caesar, from his second wife. Historical sources on the Roman Empire mention that Clodius Pulcher, one of the warriors of the Roman ruler, entered the palace in a woman's dress during a celebration held in the palace, in order to seduce emperor's wife Pompeia. Upon learning of this event, Julius Caesar immediately divorced his wife. When asked whether his former wife was innocent or not, the Roman emperor replied that Caesar's wife must be beyond all suspicion and rumors [1]. And soon after this event, this expression became a pan-European idiom. In this sense, the phraseological unit *to be a Caesar's wife* reflects the meaning of ‘a person who is required to be above suspicion’.

The origin of the phraseologism *to cross (pass) the Rubicon*, which can be included in the phraseological semantic fields of “difficulty” and “tension”, reflects the meanings of ‘to pass a point of no return / take an irrevocable step’. This expression also dates back to the period of reign of the Roman Emperor Caesar. As is known from historical sources, the Rubicon was the name of the small river (this river no longer exists) that once separated the Roman Empire from neighboring Gaul on the Apennine Peninsula. Although Caesar did not have the right to cross that border, ignoring the warnings of the Senate and deliberately violating the law, he decided to cross the Rubicon River with his army in 49 BC to seize power in Rome. Thus, Caesar, who started a war against Pompey and the Roman Senate, crossed the river and occupied Italy. Expanding his empire in a short time, Caesar became the absolute ruler of the Apennine Peninsula [2]. This expression began to be used figuratively in English in the early 1600s.

The origin of the phraseologism *the die is cast*, which means ‘the decision made cannot be changed’, comes from the Latin phrase “*Iacta alea est*”. According to the ancient Roman historian Suetonius, Julius Caesar uttered this phrase in 49 BC when he crossed the Rubicon River and invaded Italy [3].

The phraseological unit *out-Herod*, which means ‘to surpass someone in cruelty or evil’, is also based on events that occurred in ancient times. The event which went down in history as the Massacre of the Innocents, occurred approximately between 37 and 34 BC, is even reflected in the Bible, the holy book of Christianity. Herod the Great, known as a madman, was the king of Judaea from 37 BCE to 4 BCE [4]. As mentioned in the Gospel of Matthew, Herod the Great, who did not hesitate to resort any cruelty to achieve his desires and goals, was informed about the birth of the new Jewish king, the Prophet Jesus. Herod, who got mad at this news, ordered the killing of all children born at that time. Various historical sources state that the number of infants killed is between ten and fourteen thousand [1].

Then Herod, when he saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, became furious, and he sent and killed all the male children in Bethlehem and in all that region who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had ascertained from the wise men (Matthew 2:16-18) [5].

III. PHRASEOLOGICAL UNITS REFERRING TO THE INFORMATION ABOUT THE LIFESTYLE AND HISTORY OF ENGLISH-SPEAKING COUNTRIES.

Phraseological units store information about the norms, values, and social foundations of society and transmit it to future generations. People's social lifestyle, customs, beliefs, behaviors, their relationships with the world around them and to each other are reflected in the phraseology of the language.

Among the phraseological units that arose with reference to events related to the history of England and the United States, we can mention the phraseologism *to eat the crow*, which can be characterized as a pejorative (with negative emotionality) expression. This phraseologism, which can be attributed to the phraseosemantic fields of “regret” and “insult”, reflects the meaning of ‘to be forced to admit a humiliating mistake’ [1].

The expression *to eat crow* has a peculiar meaning that stems from a fascinating origin. Thus, according to the assumptions this phraseologism is associated with real incident that took place near New Orleans during the last battle of the War between the United States and the British Empire in 1815. Historical sources note that a British officer who disarmed an American soldier forced him to eat crow meat. However, later, using a special trick, the American soldier took his weapon back from the English soldier's hands and applied the same insult, that is, eating crow meat (as is known, the taste of crow meat is disgusting), to the English officer himself [6].

Although there are some debates about the etymology of the phraseological unit *turn a blind eye*, which means ‘to deliberately refuse to accept reality’, it is said that this phrase originated from a comment made by the legendary admiral of the British navy Horatio Nelson in the Battle of Copenhagen in 1801. While Admiral Nelson led the attack with Sir Hyde Parker, Nelson's ships clashed with the Danish-Norwegian fleet. Parker, a more conservative senior officer, at one point signaled Nelson with flags to stop attacking to the Danish fleet and to withdraw from the battle. However, Nelson was confident that if they went forward, they could win. Nelson, who had lost an eye in one of the previous battles, held a telescope close to his blind eye and claimed that he had not seen the signal. Thus, he continued to attack, disobeying his commander's order to withdraw from the battle. Thanks to his perseverance, Great Britain won the Battle of Copenhagen. After Nelson's success, Sir Hyde Parker was disgraced and Admiral Nelson was appointed commander-in-chief of the British fleet [4].

The source of the phraseologism *to be born with a silver spoon in one's mouth*, which means ‘to be born in a wealthy family or to be lucky from birth’, is directly associated with the typical aristocratic lifestyle [7].

Azerbaijani linguist Aziza Hajiyeveva, who published a number of books on somatic phraseologisms in the English and Azerbaijani languages, provides very interesting information about the etymology of this phraseological unit. As the linguist notes, this phraseological unit, which arose in the 18th century, is based on an unusual tradition belonging to English noble families in the Middle Ages. After baptism, a baby born into a wealthy English family was given a silver spoon with the image of an apostle on it, which was considered a symbol of wealth and happiness at that time, by their godparents. From the age of one month, rich English children were fed with that spoon until they grew up. The silver spoons of famous English people are still on display in a number of museums today [7].

In modern English, the phraseological unit *mad as a hatter* is used to describe someone who is completely crazy or extremely nervous. The origin of this expression is based on the process of making hats in England, as well as in other European countries. In the 1700s and 1800s, hats were usually made of felt. Hatters and industrial workers used a toxic substance called mercuric nitrate in the process of felting small animal hair. Due to prolonged exposure to this chemical, many of these workers developed mercury poisoning, which caused physical and behavioral changes, such as a metallic taste in the mouth, irritability, and hallucinations [1].

There are various hypotheses about the origin of the phraseological unit *to bring home the bacon*, which means ‘to earn enough money for a family to live on’. The Oxford English Dictionary states that this phraseological unit was first used in 1924. However, according to another hypothesis, there is an unusual tradition that has been preserved since 1104 to this day in Great Dunmow, a small town in the south-east of Great Britain. Participants in the fairs held in this town compete to catch a greasy pig. The winners of this competition are awarded bacon (smoked pork) as a prize [8]. Even the famous English writer Geoffrey Chaucer wrote in detail about this tradition in one of his works.

The origin of the phraseological unit *to bark up the wrong tree*, which means ‘to wrongly accuse someone, pursue a misguided line of thoughts or course of action’, can also be associated with English customs and traditions and stems from the hunting activities of the medieval English nobility.

According to the British hunting traditions, known since the 14th century, hunters on horseback would follow hunting dogs that had tracked a small animal called a raccoon or any other prey. And the dogs would chase the raccoon until it got exhausted. When the prey got tired, it would sometimes run away to deceive the dogs and change its hiding place from one tree to another. The dogs mistakenly barking loudly at 'an empty' tree where there was no prey is the source of the emergence of this figurative phraseologism [2].

The phraseological unit *to beat around the bush* means 'to talk around a subject without getting to the point'. This common expression is also thought to be based on the tradition of hunting animals in England since the Middle Ages. Before the hunt began, hunters would hire special men to drive animals out of the bushes. These men would not go directly into the bushes, as there was a risk of being attacked by animals, but would simply beat the bushes around them with sticks [8].

Phraseological units reflect the originality of the centuries-old history, culture, lifestyle and traditions of the English people. That is why phraseological units are considered highly informative units of the English language.

The phraseological unit *to give (get) the cold-shoulder*, which means 'intentionally ignore someone or show deliberate disrespect', is also directly related to English customs and traditions. The word shoulder in this phraseologism does not reflect the meaning of "shoulder" in modern English, but rather the meaning of "ribs". The literal meaning of the expression as a whole is "to give cold ribs (rib meat)".

According to the existing gastronomic tradition in the Middle Ages in Great Britain, desired and respected guests were naturally greeted with pomp, they were given hot food or freshly roasted meat. Uninvited guests, or guests who abused the hospitality of the host and stayed in the house for a long time, were forced to eat cold food left over from the previous evening's dinner, mainly the cold ribs. This was usually done by the host directly and politely, to indicate that the guest had to leave [7].

The national-cultural component is an integral part of the semantic structure of phraseological units, since they are based on a figurative idea that arose in the minds of representatives of a particular linguistic and cultural community.

In the 17th century, for English noblewomen, wearing elaborate hairstyles was a norm of aristocratic society. Preparing specially fixed hairstyles took a lot of time. In addition, ladies had to spend the whole day in public places with their hair in buns. However, noble ladies would let their hair down when they came home after a long day and rested, or when they were in the company of close friends and family members. The fact that this only happened in the closest circle of people, in a sincere atmosphere, over time "sealed" the freedom from that ritual-fashion appearance with a phraseological semantic attitude. Thus, the phraseological unit *to let your hair down*, which expresses the meaning of 'acting as you are or behave more freely than usual', was formed precisely on the basis of that historical-social condition [8].

The meanings of phraseological units containing the name of a color are determined by the socio-historical, national and cultural experience of speakers of a particular language.

The phraseological unit *to be in a person's black books*, which means 'to be in disfavour with someone', entered the English language in the 17th century. Black book was a black-bound book that recorded the violations of the law by clergy in monasteries in the 17th century. The materials of this book formed the basis of the reforms carried out in Great Britain at the beginning of the 20th century [1].

The phrase *to paint the town red*, which means 'to go out and enjoy yourself by drinking alcohol, having fun with friends, etc.', is based on an event that went down in history as a legendary drunken night in 1837. As is known from historical sources, Henry de la Poer Beresford, the 3rd Marquess of Waterford, who lived in the middle of the 19th century, stood out from other peers for his active social lifestyle and rebellious nature. Thus, Marquess Henry, nicknamed the naughty one, together with his friends, often organized drinking parties, which disturbed his close neighbors and city residents, causing excessive noise. Historical documents from that period (1837) record an act of vandalism in the town of Melton. The Marquis of Waterford and his friends, after knocking over flower pots, tearing off doorknobs, and breaking the windows of some town buildings, painted the town barrier, the doors of several houses, and a swan statue red [9].

IV. PHRASEOLOGICAL UNITS BASED ON INFORMATION ABOUT THE HISTORY AND SOCIAL LIFE OF NON-ENGLISH-SPEAKING PEOPLES

When studying the national-cultural characteristics of English phraseology, it is important to take into account cultural relations, religious realities, as well as the views and beliefs existing in society.

Among the expressions referring to facts related to the culture and historical events of non-English-speaking people, the phraseologism *in the seventh heaven*, which means 'to be extremely happy or be in a state of supreme happiness', can be cited as an example. Kunin notes that this phraseological unit arose with reference to Islamic dogmas, specifically, based on beliefs about those who reach the seventh heaven experience the final state of eternal bliss [10]. Indeed, in verses 13 and 14 of Surah An-Najm (The Star) of the Quran, the holy book of the Muslim world, we read: "And verily, he (Muhammad, peace be upon him, saw Gabriel in his true form) another time (during the ascension); near Sidrat al-Muntaha (in the seventh heaven)."

As is known, the concept of "seventh heaven (sky)" or "seventh layer of heaven" is also based on the teachings of Kabbalah, an esoteric Jewish mysticism. According to cabalist doctrine, while human beings live in the lowest level of material world, angels reside in the higher worlds. Namely, the highest layer of those higher worlds is the 'seventh layer' or the highest heaven, where God and the most exalted angels dwell [11]. Some sources mention that this phraseologism was also encountered in the works reflecting the philosophical views of Aristotle. According to the great Greek philosopher, the sky consists of seven crystal spheres, and on the seventh layer is paradise, where angels reside.

The phraseological unit *butter up* someone, which means 'to excessively praise or flatter someone, usually to gain a favor', can also be noted among the expressions that based on the religious beliefs of other peoples. In ancient India, there was a custom to smear melted butter on statues of gods in order to ask for favor and forgiveness. Similarly, according to the Tibetan tradition, which has continued since the reign of the Tang Dynasty (618-907) to this day, statues are made of butter on New Year's Eve. The Tibetan people believe that such gifts to the Gods will bring peace and happiness [4].

In modern English, the expression *crocodile tears* is used to describe a superficial or insincere display of grief. This expression is actually based on the medieval belief that crocodiles shed tears of grief when killing or devouring their prey. The legend dates back to the 14th century, and the expression was first recorded in the book 'The Travels of Sir John Mandeville'. The book, which became very popular after its publication, recounts the adventures of a brave knight during his voyages to Asia. In addition to fictional stories, the book also contains descriptions of crocodiles. It is stated in the book that these reptiles kill and eat their prey while crying. [2]. Although Mandeville's description of the weeping reptiles is factually inaccurate, it later found its way into Shakespeare's works, and the expression *crocodile tears* began to be used as a phraseologism from the 16th century.

The origin of the phraseological unit *white elephant*, which reflects the meaning of 'an undesirable or useless item' is based on the legendary Siamese tradition that white elephants could only belong to kings. Because rare albino (white) elephants were once considered sacred animals in Thailand. Even until 1917, the image of a white elephant was depicted on the national flag of Thailand. The cunning kings of Siam (now Thailand) also used albino elephants as a clever form of punishment. According to legend, the king of Siam would give a white elephant as a gift to a rival or subordinate who angered him. It was strictly forbidden to kill such albino elephants or use them for profit. Although it seemed like a reward, these animals were very expensive to maintain. Taking care of a white elephant often cost the owner a lot of money, and at the end they even went bankrupt [1].

The phraseological unit *blue blooded* is used to describe a person born into a noble family or member of a socially prominent family. This term is a translation of the Spanish expression '*sangre azul*' and applied to Spanish aristocrats who were not descended from those who had intermarried with the invading Moors and had light skin with visible veins on their arms and legs. Since rich people were not used to working in the sun and lived luxuriously in their palaces, their skin was extremely light and their veins were visible through their skin [8].

The phrase *it takes two to tango*, which is used to mean 'a task that requires two people to perform', takes its origin from Latin American dance. South American countries are famous for their various dances around the world, and tango is a Latin

American dance that requires two dancers to participate. The phrase *it takes two to tango* originated in the 1920s, after the tango gained popularity all over the world. The shortened version of this phrase, *it takes two*, is more common in modern English [4].

V. CONCLUSION

The phraseology of the English language is distinguished by its national specificity and is at the same time considered an important source of socio-cultural information about the country of the language. Phraseological units formed with reference to both the history of antiquity and the socio-historical events of English-speaking and non-English-speaking countries are of great importance in significantly enriching vocabulary of the English language.

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