Evaluativity of Fixed Collocations Describing Wedding Traditions in the English and Russian Languages

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Abstract

Phraseologists have always emphasized the role of connotation in the structure of meaning of phraseological units as an aspect of linguistic semantic category. Connotation is used for figurative, expressive and emotional characteristics and intensified subjective evaluation of the phenomena of the reality. It is worth noting that the examples described above visually demonstrate close link of the components of connotation, first and foremost, evaluative and emotive, where similar elements of the analysis in studying phraseological layer are definitely present. The authors emphasize the manifestation of the evaluative component of the studied phraseological units in the English and Tatar languages as a specific feature where one observes the prevalence of phraseological units with rational positive or neutral attitudinal meaning as distinct from vast majority of other phraseological units that have pejorative evaluativity. Thus, our material does not corroborate a widely accepted viewpoint of the scholars about asymmetry in phraseology and substantial shift towards negative evaluation.

Keywords: evaluativity, phraseological units, pejorative, meliorative evaluation, national and cultural originality.
Introduction

Many scholars deal with the subject of studying connotation. Currently there are great number of definitions, since this phenomenon can be discussed from different standpoints.

V. N. Teliya considers connotation to be semantic entity entering usually or occasionally the system of language units. The scholar believes that connotation expresses emotive and evaluative and stylistically marked attitude of the speaker to the reality [1].

Especially significant role of connotation is in the meaning structure of phraseological units, as phraseological meaning represents the semantic category of language used for figurative, expressive and emotional feature and subjective extra evaluation of the phenomena of the objective reality. For that very reason, connotation as a component of phraseological meaning is studied by many phraseologists.

So, D.A. Zhorzholiiani differentiates two components – nominative and connotative – in semantic structure of phraseological unit. According to the scholar, specifics of nominative nature of phraseological units is determined by the very mechanism of the process of phraseologization. This process leads to denominating, based on the relation of the naming subject to the named object, accompanied by evaluation of the subject, his subjective vision of the object, and also feelings and emotions directed to the object. Thus, phraseological nomination is understood as nomination of evaluating character[2].

Tatar investigator G. Kh. Akhunzyanov distinguishes intellectual (logic) and emotional meaning in semantics of PhU, and emotional meaning is treated by G. Kh. Akhunzyanov as a connotative meaning referring expressivity to it. The scholar considers logical meaning prevails over number of types of emotional meanings [3].

It is essential to stress that this component of phraseological meaning is differently treated in scholarly works by home researchers who use different terms to designate it: “connotative content”, “stylistic meaning”, “stylistic colouring” in terms of linguistic school [4]. But overwhelming majority of the scholars considers connotation to be a language system phenomenon inherent in PhU as linguistic units.

Russian scholar A. V. Kunin made great contribution to the study of connotation of phraseological units. According to his standpoint, connotation as a component is in complex unity with denotative and significative components, as there is not only rational knowledge but sense perception of the reality related to it [5].

Ye. F. Arsentiyeva stresses that “… the most authoritative point of view is now that according to which a connotative macrocomponent enters into lexical and phraseological meaning along with significative-denotative and becomes queerly intertwined. … High importance of connotative aspect in phraseological meaning is explained to a considerable degree by two-dimension of semantic structure of PhU based on figurative interpretation” [4].

The problem of volume of connotation and its constituents has not been solved so far. So, for example, L. Ye. Kruglikova believes that semantic structure of the word contains emotional and evaluative components, but does not have stylistic one [6]. According to Yu. P. Solodub, connotation is formed by figurativeness and figurative and expressive means of lexical and phraseological units [7]. V. I. Shakhovsky includes only emotive component [8], while N. F. Alefirenko includes evaluative, expressive, emotive and figurative components into the structure of a connotative element of phraseological meaning [9].

Studying phraseological meaning, most scholars refer four components to connotation: evaluative, emotive, expressive and functional and stylistic. These components in semantics of phraseological unit can be presented together in three-fold and pair combination with each other, as
each PhU is characterized by belonging to a certain style and has negative, positive or neutral evaluativity.

**Methods**

Owing to variety of definitions connected with the description of the processes of functioning of the connotative elements, we would like to emphasize the authors’ position on this issue and present the scholars’ viewpoints that are basis of this research.

From our point of view, it is necessary to lay stress on the fact that differentiating some components of phraseological meaning on the one hand, and the components of connotation - on the other hand, pursues an aim of their detailed scientific study, while their phraseological meaning and connotative component represent a complex, hierarchical whole.

An important constituent of both lexical and phraseological meaning is evaluation. As V. P. Zhukov notes, «Attitudinal meaning is understood as a positive or negative characteristic of a person or an object from the point of view of their persistent features but not random and temporal» [10]. Exactly persistent character of evaluation, that is occurrence of this component in the meaning structure of PhU is emphasized by the scholar at every turn, who differentiates phraseological units with evaluative meaning proper (that is in the language system) and with evaluative use (that is in speech).

According to A. L. Balasanova, connotative evaluation, that is emotional, is expressed implicitly and «… forms layers on the main object-logic meaning of phraseological unit» [12, P. 107]. Ye. F. Arsentiyeva distinguishes two types of evaluation – intellectual-emotional and emotional noting that PhU as the products of particular phraseological nomination combine rational evaluation with emotional, and evaluative component is closely and inseparably linked with significative-denotative component of phraseological meaning [4].

**Results**

The studied phraseological units demonstrate close link of these two components. So, for example, the newlyweds are wished at the wedding to live long and happily. The verbal English PhU «have a good (long) innings» – «прожить долгую и счастливую жизнь» / “live long and happy life” combines purely rational evaluation (live so long life very good irrespective of speech community) and emotional evaluation (long happiness, especially with the beloved, always evokes positive emotions). Celebrating the wedding with observance of all customs and rituals in Rus was always valued. Therefore, lack of wedding when entering into marriage was evaluated negatively, as non-normality (rational evaluation), and also exited indignation, as strong expression of human emotions in the PhU «собачья сбежим» with the meaning «отсутствие свадьбы при заключении брака» / “lack of wedding when entering into marriage”.

Three types of evaluation are differentiated: positive (meliorative), negative (pejorative) and neutral depending on strongly-marked approval or negation (or absence of such) as statement of socially fixed evaluation of a phenomenon of the reality. At that it is necessary to note that quantitative shift towards pejorative evaluation in PhU is observed by almost all the researchers of the phraseological material. At the same time the studied material proposes another picture.

The phraseological units with rational positive or neutral attitudinal meaning are predominant in all three languages. This fact is likely to be explained by the stereotypes of holding wedding ceremony established in all three peoples – the native speakers as a considerable part of phraseological units characterizes the peculiarities of performing various ceremonies or names the participants of marriage ceremony, names attributes associated with this ceremony. So, a number of
English phraseological units nominate the participants of the celebrations or the relatives: «bridal party» – «родственники невесты», «brides man» – «свидетель со стороны жениха», «just married» – «новобрачные», «fresh (new) blood» – «новые члены семьи». In the Russian language one differentiates the PhU nominating certain actions of pre-wedding or wedding ceremony: «окрутить молодуху» – «подвязать на голове фальшонку по-бабы девушке, выходящей замуж», «каравай сажать» – «before getting the bride off to church, one bakes a round bread which is eaten by female-friends of the bride while she is in church», «мылами кидать» – «the girls’ fortunetelling on the eve of nuptials of one of them».

The presence of this group of PhU in both studied languages can be explained from our point of view in the following way. The peoples – the native speakers – used to consider starting a family and extending it to be obligatory, therefore, positive occasion. With the course of time some traditions and customs, peculiarities of marriage ceremony were treated as something usual, customary, without giving rise to the pronounced approval. Habitualness of such phenomena has led to triteness of meliorative potential of these units and regarding them as the norm in society.

At the same time we have revealed a limited number of phraseological units with so called ambivalent neutral evaluation, that is the PhU with ambiguous evaluative charge which can realize either positive or negative evaluative potential depending on situation. So, for example, consummate a marriage to a heir to the throne or a member of aristocratic family (the PhU «marry into the purple»), on the one hand, gives wealth and position, on the other hand, may be shotgun and give much suffering. Wedding ceremony without permission of the parents (the PhU «уходить»), from the point of view of public morality in Rus was seen as negative, at the same time the lovers had sometimes no way out, especially if a marriageable girl was expected to get married to the hated man or she had a baby on the way from the beloved. Mixed marriages provoke different attitudes of people, which become apparent in different historical periods. Thus, mixed marriages may be either happy or miserable.

Also interesting are the English PhU with sentence structure «marriage makes or mars a man» – «человек женится на счастье, либо на горе» and «marriage is a lottery» «свадьба – это лотерея», phraseological meaning of which is neutral, and in the former case the combination of the positive and negative has a neutral result.

It is natural enough that wedding, starting a new family, feelings of the lovers evoke positive emotions and appreciated positively by the peoples – the native speakers of different languages. Therefore, one can well understand that the group of phraseological units with meliorative evaluation is significantly presented in all three languages. And the semantics of these phraseological units will be diverse. So, in English the loved one or darling are called «sweeter pie» (lit. «более сладкий пирог»), the darling, lovely girl - «one’s best girl» (lit. «чья-либо лучшая девушка»), an eligible bachelor, the girls’ dreams «the answer to a maiden’s prayer» (lit. «ответ молитве девушке»), and happiness of being inseparable is designated as «go (hunt, run) in couples» (lit. «идти (охотиться, бежать) в паре»). In Russian we have found out a great number of PhU associated with the presents to the newly married couple: «вынести из-за стола», «выговаривать выговор» – «a wedding ceremony during which a bridegroom gives gifts to his bride», «класть на косу» – «to give a bride gifts, money», «бросать на пирог» – «to present a bridegroom or bride something on wedding», «продавать блины» – «piling the gifts to young marrieds onto an empty plate in the hands of the bride’s matchmaker was holding. Each who presented a gift was given a pancake and a glass of wine for it». Meliorative evaluation of such actions is determined by the necessity of material basis for newly starting family, realized by the
members of speech community, which was especially important in pre-revolutionary period when woman after her marriage took care only of the household.

Interesting is the phraseological unit «закрыть курник» that described the following symbolic ritual action of the Russian people: the bridegroom puts money on the mother’s-in-law pie (kurnik), presenting it to his mother-in-law and admitting her rank as the mother of his bride. Positive evaluation is explicitly expressed in the definition of the phraseological unit, that is, admitting the rank of the mother of his bride. Meliorative evaluation is also expressed explicitly in the component structure of the PhU «Божьё милосердие» – «icons that were given bride and taken away later with her dowry into the bridegroom’s house».

In spite of the fact that wedding, joining fates and hearts is considered by society as positive phenomenon, we have found out a number of phraseological units with pejorative evaluation, which is not a chance phenomenon but determined by extralinguistic factors. One enters into a marriage not always by mutual consent, unfortunately, marriages of convenience are not rare, and family life after wedding may be a bitter disappointment. All these «peculiarities» of human being are reflected in the phraseology of English, Russian and Tatar.

So, for example, hurried wedding, forcible marriage is determined by the English phraseological unit «shot-gun marriage (wedding)», the PhU «catch (marry) smb on the rebound» means «marry with grief». Break of promise to marry (the PhU «a breach of promise») was evaluated in the distinctly negative in the English society, and to marry into money (the PhU «a marriage of convenience») literally means «marriage on a beneficial basis» [13].

An obsolete Russian phrase «венчать с проклятия» with an explicitly expressed attitudinal meaning «marry the distant relatives after the priest’s damnation» is based on the extralinguistic factor – a will to secure the family against sick children, who may be born after getting married to relatives [14]. A dishonorable custom to tie «boottree» (slivers, billets, etc.) to the legs of girls and boys who did not get married on the last day of the Non-Lenten season was «necessitated» by extending the family in Rus, when child mortality rate was high. That custom reflected in the meaning of PhU «волочить колоду» was a kind of contradistinction to celebration in honour of newlyweds: those were signed in public who had not performed their duties. Marriage of convenience is distinctly reflected in the Russian phraseological unit «жениться на деньгах» / marry money.

**Summary**

Analyzing phraseological units from the point of view of connotation, it is worth noting that the examples described above demonstrate visually a close correlation between the components of connotation, first and foremost, evaluative and emotive, where there are present definitely similar elements of the analysis in studying the phraseological layer of set expressions. Emotional thinking is characteristic of people, as everything a person is interested in evokes an emotion, even insignificant. Phraseological units as the units of phraseological nomination based on figurative interpretation in most cases are designations of those phenomena of the reality that excite human emotions containing evaluativity.

**Conclusion**

The peculiarity of manifestation of the evaluative component of the studied phraseological units in English and Russian is the dominance of the PhU with rationally positive or neutral evaluative meaning as opposed to overwhelming majority of other phraseological units having pejorative evaluativity. Thus, our material does not confirm the prevalent scholars’ point of view of asymmetry in phraseology and considerable shift towards negative evaluation. This fact can be
explained by a common positive or neutral tendency of phraseological nomination of extralinguistic denotation – wedding traditions and realities, as starting a new family has a universal value. At the same time a substantial part of the studied phraseological units characterizes the peculiarities of holding different ceremonies or rites, names the participants of the wedding ceremony, attributes or phenomena associated with them.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS
The work is performed according to the Russian Government Program of Competitive Growth of Kazan Federal University.
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