Филологические науки, германские языки

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ETYMOLOGY AND SEMANTICS OF PROPER NAMES IN PHRASEOLOGICAL UNITS OF ENGLISH

Etymological and semantic features of phraseological units containing a proper name as one of their components are considered. Special attention is paid to the classification of this group of phraseological units, in particular, to the definition of the main subgroups depending on the character of proper names in their structure. The qualitative originality of a proper name as a component of phraseological units is analysed.

Key words: proper name, phraseological units, etymological and semantic features.

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ЭТИМОЛОГИЯ И СЕМАНТИКА ИМЁН СОБСТВЕННЫХ ВО ФРАЗЕОЛОГИЧЕСКИХ ЕДИНИЦАХ АНГЛИЙСКОГО ЯЗЫКА

Рассмотрены этимологические и семантические особенности фразеологизмов, содержащих имя собственное в качестве одного из компонентов. Особое внимание уделено классификации данной группы фразеологических единиц, в частности, выделению основных подгрупп в зависимости от характера имени собственного в их составе. Проанализировано качественное своеобразие имени собственного как компонента фразеологической единицы.

Ключевые слова: имя собственное, фразеологические единицы, этимологические и семантические свойства.

The proper name as a component of a phraseological unit (PU) dictates the need for studying the features of its functioning and gives the grounds for attributing set expressions with an onomastic component to a special group. It is caused by a qualitative originality of a proper name (PN) as a component of phraseological unit unlike proper name in the free usage.

The process of formation of PU is a complicated linguistic phenomenon. The analysis of PU whose etymology is precisely defined allows us to distinguish the main stages of a phraseologization and some patterns of this phenomenon. As many researchers remark regardless of the way of their formation they will pass a stage of a potential idiomaticity [1].

Potential phraseological units, broadening the sphere of their use become PU acquiring elements of phraseological stability, i.e., as well as in any other process of development, the quantity gradually turns into quality.

There is no doubt that in the diachronic sense all PU with a proper name are etymologically motivated since at the time of their emergence native speakers clearly realized the connection between a proper name and PU meaning. In the synchronous usage most of them have lost their motivation and people using, for example, the expression «Hobson's choice» («to have but Hobson's choice» — not to have any choice at all), do not know and do not think of the fact that Hobson is the surname of the owner of a stable in England in the 16th century limiting the choice of horses for lodgers.

The etymology of a proper name is one of the main questions while studying this PU group since the semantics of all PU is based on proper name etymology. The motivation of using a proper name as one of the components has often been erased and can be restored only by etymological analysis. However, alongside with inexact and wrong data on PU origin, there are a considerable number of the English phraseological

units whose origin is precisely determined.

Phraseological units more, than any other part of vocabulary of the language, are connected with history, traditions and literature of the people speaking this language. This property is especially brightly revealed in those PU whose component is a proper name.

The analysis of etymology of a proper name as the main component of PU gives an opportunity to define the main groups of these PU. One of them is represented by PU, in which the proper name is connected with English (Scottish, Irish) realities, everyday life, history, literature [2].

These PU, in their turn, can be divided into several subgroups depending on the character of proper names used in them:

1) PU in which the proper name is connected with historical events, the facts of the remote past. Within this group it is possible to define PU containing surnames, names or a combination of names and surnames, e.g. [3]:

— when queen Anne was alive — «in days of yore», «long ago»;

— Jack Ketch — «executioner» (by the name the English executioner of the 17th century).

2) PU in which the proper name is connected with national legends, popular beliefs, tales, songs, child's games, etc., for example:

— peeping Tom — «a person who is too curious» (it is connected with the legend of Lady Godiva);

3) PU with the proper name taken from literary sources:

— Uriah Heep — «Uriya Gip», «a hypocritical intriguer» (by the name of the character of the novel by Ch. Dickens «David Copperfield»).

4) PU whose part is one of the most widespread English names. Examples of the similar widespread PU created by the people are:

— every Tom, Dick and Harry — «common, ordinary people»;

— Jack of all trades — «a person able to do all sorts of practical work».

A small amount of PU of this subgroup refers to an inanimate object, for example:

— Long Tom — «the long-range gun»;

— Black Jack — «Jolly Roger» — «a pirate's black flag»;

— Union Jack — «a flag of the United Kingdom of Great Britain».

In this subgroup the quantity of FE with man's names prevails.

Thus, this group of PU is non-uniform by structure and covers the whole bulk of PU with proper names.

It should be remarked that the etymological motivation is preserved, as a rule, by those PU in which the proper name is connected with mythology (they fill up the phraseological fund of many languages).

The majority of these phraseological units have international character. They date back to antique mythology, for example, the following PU:

«Achilles's heel» — «the heel of Achilles» — «Achilles' heel» — the only weak point;

«Procrustes' bed» — «Procrustean bed» — a measure to which the phenomena which are not suitable for it are adjusted. (Procrustes is a nickname of the legendary Ancient Greek robber Polipemon who, according to the legend, caught travellers and chopped off or stretched their legs to the length of the bed);

«Cassandra warnings» — cautions which were neglected, but which came true (Cassandra is the Trojan princess endowded according to the legend with a prophecy gift);

«Hercules' labor» — «Herculean work» — exclusively difficult business;

«Sisyphean labor» — «Sisyphean task» — hard and fruitless work;

«Hercules' pillars» — «Pillars of Hercules»:

1) ancient names of two rocks on the coast of the Strait of Gibraltar;

2) limit, border on something.

According to the Ancient Greek myth, Heracles passed through whole Europe and

Libya and put the Pillars of Hercules in commemoration of his wanderings.

PU of this group belong to a large group of idiomatic expressions formed on a classical basis which fill up phraseological fund not only of the English language, but also a number of other languages.

PU with a proper name as one of components are most often substantivised. The constant dependence of components is characteristic of these substantive PU consisting of proper names (i.e. irreplaceability of components).

During the process of phraseologization proper name loses the normative individualizing-identifying function, and undergoes quality changes, i.e. acquires new characteristics not inherent to it. It is caused by a qualitative originality of PN — the PU component, unlike PN in the free use.

The selective metaphorization is the process during which disintegration of the single concept corresponding to a specific denotation most often occurs as one of the ways of PU formation.

If in the free use PN comprises a complex of properties referring to one person, PU with PN as one of components has the ability to assign only one characteristic to potentially unlimited number of denotations.

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