

## THE PECULIARITIES OF PHRASE CONCEPTUALIZATION IN AMERICAN ENGLISH

Науковий вісник Ужгородського університету.

Серія: Філологія. Випуск 2 (44).

УДК 811.111(73)81'373.7

DOI:10.24144/2663-6840/2020.2(44).97-101

Гузинець Ю. The peculiarities of phrase conceptualization in American English; кількість бібліографічних джерел – 11; мова англійська.

**Abstract.** The article deals with basic peculiarities of phrase conceptualization in American English. The topicality of the article is due to the particular importance of the problems related to the correlation of language, thinking, cognition and culture, the solution of which is based on the principles and methods of cognitive and linguocultural analysis and fundamental views of domestic and foreign researchers. Studying phrases from the standpoint of cognitive approach enables establishing the mechanism of correlation of speech and cognition processes, because it is important to find out how in such specific lingual signs, such as phrases, the most varied manifestations of human being are realized. The aim of the study is to identify and analyze the semantic-cognitive features inherent in phraseological units of the American variant of the English language on the basis of knowledge of human and national-specific phenomena of material and spiritual culture, realities and myths of folk life.

The object of the work is the verbalization of value concepts with the help of phraseological units in American English. The subject of the study is the structural-semantic features of phraseological units that verbalize value concepts in the above mentioned variant.

In the article the subject and tasks of cognitive linguistics are outlined. The most important views of domestic and foreign linguists on the nature of the concept are characterized. The subject of special attention was the importance of the phraseological unit as part of the semantic content of the concept, as well as its nominative function. The explication of the national identity of the American nation in the phraseological fund of the English language is considered. It was found that phraseological units comprise verbalized cultural codes that reflect the national linguistic model of the world, demonstrating the peculiarities of the national vision of the surrounding reality. Consideration of the phraseological foundation of the American version of the English language in the linguistic-cultural aspect made it possible to identify and substantiate the basic values of American culture: self-reliance, hard working, optimism, intelligence, privacy and friendship.

**Keywords:** Cognitive Linguistics, concept, phrase, American English, linguistic culturology.

**Problem statement.** A peculiar feature of modern linguistics is the study of language in close relation with a person, his or her consciousness, ways of cognizing surrounding reality. Therefore, the forefront in the latest linguistic research has highlighted the study of language, taking into account its speaker – both the individual and the society among which he or she lives.

«One of the tasks of cognitive linguistics is to establish elementary units of linguistic consciousness. These units have different forms of pronunciation depending on the mode of consciousness work» [Караулов 2010, с. 32]. One form of verbalization of such elementary components of linguistic consciousness is embodied in phraseological units.

The phraseological foundation of language is the most important linguistic repository of cultural heritage, passed down from generation to generation, the exponent of information about the system of values and traditions of a particular nation. In this respect, the national identity of phraseological units is not in doubt, because, being highly informative, they emerge «not so much to describe the world, but to interpret, evaluate and express a subjective attitude to it».

**Analysis of the previous research.** The field of phraseology attracts the attention of linguists and does not lose its relevance. The problems of phraseological nomination were the subject of consideration in the works of S. Aleshkevich, O. Glazunova, D. Zhorzholiani, N. Petrova, Yu. Shuvalova, etc., phraseologi-

cal semantics – in the researches of E. Pozdnyakova, A. Fedorov, N. Venzhynovych etc., phraseography – in the publications of L. Lebedeva, T. Likhovidova. From the standpoint of phraseological stylistics, linguistic units were considered in the writings of S. Bashieva, V. Vinogradov, G. Vinokur, and M. Shansky. Significant contribution to the development of phraseological theory was made by L. Avksentyev, N. Amosova, A. Baranov, M. Hamziuk, S. Denysenko, V. Kononenko, O. Koonin, Yu. Pradid, O. Selivanova, Yu. Solodub, V. Telia, O. Tkachenko, V. Uzhchenko, I. Chernyshova, W. Chafe, A. Cutler, A. Makkai, F. Newmeyer, P. Howarth, M. Everaert, E.-J. Van Der Linden, R. Schreuder, P. Prinz, J. Strassler and others.

A number of fundamental works of foreign scholars (V. Evans, H. Clark, W. Croft, L. Talmy, A. Wierzbicka, J. Dillon) and domestic scholars (M. Poluzhyn, A. Askoldov, V. Karasik, D. Likhachev, Yu. Stepanov) deal with the problem of concept study.

The overall **aim of the article** is to identify and analyze the semantic-cognitive features inherent in phraseological units of the American variant of the English language on the basis of knowledge of human and national-specific phenomena of material and spiritual culture, realities and myths of folk life.

The realization of this aim involves the following **tasks**:

- to systematize the views of domestic and foreign researchers in the field of cognitive science and linguocultural studies, to evaluate them in terms of the

possibility of applying key concepts of the thesis to the scholarly interpretation;

- to determine the theoretical foundations of linguistic cognitive modelling of concepts objectified by phraseological units;
- to find out features of verbalization of concepts by means of the American English phraseological system;
- to establish cognitive and linguocultural features of the phrase composition in American English.

When performing the tasks set in the work at different stages of the study, the following **methods** of linguistic analysis were used: Conceptual analysis was used to identify the structure of concepts. Important is the method of semantic-cognitive analysis, which involves the implementation of a special stage of description - cognitive interpretation, that allowed to model the content of concepts as global mental entities in their national specificity, as well as determine their place in the national conceptual sphere. Componental analysis was used to refine the semantics of the phrases.

**Material description.** The problem of a human being and a language has lately come in the spotlight since a full-fledged study of any given language is impossible if it is analysed within linguistic borders. Any language should be surveyed through its native speakers and the society they form because their usage of this language makes people distinguished and highlights peculiar features of the language itself. Studying the nature of linguistic units is a cognitive activity, serving as a means of expressing thoughts. A cognitive activity comprises informative, denotative and referential linguistic activities. Thus, a language is more than names of some objects and notions, it is a special mindset, the representation of human experience gathered throughout the years, and it cannot function without social interference.

A German philosopher and linguist W. von Humboldt (1767–1835) was the first to analyse such key notions as language, thinking and reality. In L. Weisgerber's opinion, language cannot express the objective reality, it reveals only a person's subjective take on it. That is why cognition is determined by a certain language. «Language is a key to the world» [Вайсгербер 2004, с. 12]. In this case, the scholar assimilated language and cognition (thoughts), and studied them without reference to the world (objective reality).

The term «cognitive science» initially meant the process of acquiring information, its proceeding, preserving and further using. As a result, this scientific branch was concerned with the formation and replenishment of knowledge held within a human brain. The emergence of cognitive linguistics dates back to the first half of the 70<sup>s</sup> of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and is associated with the names of J. Lakoff and H. Thompson.

Cognitive Linguistics is a new approach to the study of language which views linguistic knowledge as a part of general cognition and thinking; linguistic behavior is not separated from other general cognitive abilities which enable mental processes of reasoning, memory, attention or learning, but understood as an integral part of it.

According to M. Poluzhyn «Cognitive linguistics focuses on various cognitive processes that occur during the interaction of speech and knowledge in the mental schemes of a person» [Полюжин 1999, с. 4].

Developing as part of the information approach, cognitive linguistics (and cognitive phraseology as its component) is confronted with the fact that the information used in decoding texts is not reduced only to the knowledge of language, but includes the knowledge about the world as a whole, about social and cultural context, i.e. mental foundations of understanding and producing speech. The interests of cognitive linguistics include the structures of the linguistic representation of knowledge and the procedures for their processing.

In this area, language is considered as data medium of cognitive processes, as a general cognitive mechanism, a cognitive tool – a system of signs that play a role in the representation (coding) and in the transformation of information. Jerry Fodor showed that the mental processes of a person, including the mental foundations of understanding and producing speech, are carried out through mental representation, considered as intermediaries. In this regard, V.V. Petrov writes: «<...> in the course of theoretical and practical activities, people do not deal directly with the world, but with representations of the world, cognitive maps and models» [Петров 1990, с. 27].

In describing the meaning of phraseological units from the point of view of the cognitive approach, the anthropocentric approach has become relevant, revealing and explaining what a person knows when he/she believes in having command of the meaning of a word, what processes and their products are associated with the formation and functioning of meanings and about which forms of representation of meaning in the consciousness of an individual can be discussed.

The development of humanitarian knowledge put forward a dilemma to work out a new term which would adequately indicate the content of the linguistic sign, which would remove the functional limitations of traditional sense and meaning, and which would organically merge logical-psychological and linguistic categories.

Any science possesses the concepts that, on the one hand, do not have a clear, precise and universally accepted definition, on the other – the term is “approximately” clear to all professionals in this field of research.

Representatives of the linguistic-cognitive direction (O. Kubryakova, Z. Popova, Io. Sternin, A. Babushkin, M. Dorofeeva, O. Selivanova, L. Lysyenko, etc.) consider concept as a mental unit of operational consciousness, as a global mental unit representing the object of the real or ideal world and is verbally stored in the memory of native speakers.

According to O. Kubryakova, a concept is an operative semantic unit of memory, mental lexicon, conceptual system and language of the brain (*lingua mentalis*), the whole model of the world reflected in the human psyche [see Полюжин 2015]. M. Poluzhyn notes, that «although concept is primarily a mental unit and an element of consciousness that mediates between the real world and language, it also covers cultural in-

formation in which it is filtered, processed and systematized. Therefore, concepts form a kind of cultural layer that functions between a person and his or her environment» [Кубрякова 2002, с. 215].

Each concept as an idea of a fragment of the world in the form of an image, idea, symbol is formed by nationwide signs, which are complemented by the achievements of individual experience and personal apprehension. It follows that concept is a national image, idea, symbol, which can be supplemented by individual signs.

Language is realized by verbalizing the manifestation of the ethnic model of the world, it accumulates its essential features, preserves them and transmits them from generation to generation, but is not fixing everything that is present in the ethnic worldview. The national specificity of a language can manifest itself at different levels, but it is most clearly represented in phraseology, and not only in phraseological units alone, but throughout the phraseological system.

The proof of this is a word or phrase that not only names objects or phenomena as fragments of the outside world, but also processes the passage of a specific name through the human consciousness by displaying specific features inherent in a particular social consciousness in accordance with the level of culture of the people. Words or phrases of different languages, denoting the same notion, may differ in semantic unity and encompass different spheres of the surrounding world. It is extremely difficult to find words, and even harder to find phrases in different languages that express the same notion and do not differ in emotionally expressive, stylistic or any other type of information.

It is the phraseological expressions that are of the greatest interest in this regard, since they directly reflect the linguistic reality and have a symbolic basis. The study of phraseology in the linguocultural aspect reveals specific features of the nation's mentality, which are conditioned by peculiarities of worldview, system of moral requirements, norms, values and principles of education.

The process of understanding and analyzing phraseological units as linguistic signs of national culture is a way to cognize the mentality of the people. In addition, the study of concepts on the basis of phraseological units is one of the ways to describe the mental activity of a person and helps to understand the deep-seated features of the thinking, peculiar to a certain nation [Серебренников 1988; Телия 1996].

Phraseological units are formed on the basis of metaphorical, metonymic and symbolic transfers that represent a wide range of meanings that characterize different aspects of the peoples' long-term experience in the context of the changing picture of the world. They systematize knowledge about the world through the means of phraseology, which we call phraseological world model.

The issue of the origin of phraseological units is one of the important and frequently discussed questions in the field of phraseology in general and, of course, in the field of English phraseology, in particular. Linguists note that many phraseological units came to England

from the United States. Such phraseological units relate to intralinguistic borrowing. Some of these phraseological units have been so assimilated that English dictionaries do not indicate their American origin. Such «Americanisms» include, for example, the following verbal phraseological units: 'to have an ax to grind', 'to cut no ice', 'to do one's level best'.

In old days, English phraseological units, as a rule, came from the British version of the English language. French was also a popular source of idioms. However, American English is currently in this position. New idioms usually arise in the USA, and then become popular in the so-called «world English».

The cultural information of phrases in this work is understood as creating a map of the American linguistic model of the world. In the linguistic model of the world of Americans, as in the model of the world of any other nation, there is a certain set of linguistic features. An American historian D.K. Stevenson identifies the following typological features of the American ethos: willingness to take risks and go to the unknown; sense of independence; optimism; patriotism; business efficiency; willingness to experiment, the ability to find innovative solutions to problems; friendliness and ease of communication [Стивенсон 1993]. In addition, Americans have a sense of freedom, which is simply necessary for them.

The conceptual analysis of idioms enabled distinguishing several semantic fields, where the mentality of the American people is most noticeable. Thus, the core values of linguoculture of the United States of America are reflected in these dominant features of the national character of the Americans, represented in the idioms: *self-reliance, hard work, optimism, friendship/support, intelligence, privacy*.

Restraint, caution, practicality and self-esteem are the main features of the American national character, which is very clearly expressed in American phraseology in particular. There is a widespread belief that it was the unbridled energy of the pioneers of the West that made it possible in a fairly short period of time to master the vast territory of free lands and form an archetype of American national character.

Such qualities as endurance, persistence turned out to be vital traits for the pioneers of the West, and these traits are mentioned by numerous researchers to describe the character of Modern American. For example, when identifying the most typical features of the American way of life, self-reliance is usually put in the third place, thereby emphasizing the importance of this concept for Americans: *at all costs* – regardless of the difficulty or cost; *at any rate* – anyway; *paddle one's own canoe* – to do something by oneself.

Self-reliance implies a cheerful outlook, optimism, faith in the future, in success, which is why even the most serious crisis is not perceived as the "end of the world", but as the next life stage that must be overcome with dignity, as it will have a happy ending. The idiom fund illustrates the presence of numerous units representing this concept: *all better now* – improved; *all right* – well, good or okay, but not excellent; *all to the good* – for the best; for one's benefit; *all's well that ends well* – a prov-

erb meaning that an event which has a good ending is good even if some things went wrong along the way; *every cloud has a silver lining* – a proverb meaning that there is something good in every bad thing.

The psychological characteristics of Americans are their efficiency and practicality. Labor is always organized, the American worker does everything clearly, he knows his job from the inside, in detail. An American can benefit from everything: from things, from his own labor and even from those around him. The concept hard work is represented in the following idioms: *burn the candle at both ends* – to work very hard and stay up very late at night; *burn the midnight oil* – to stay up working, especially studying late at night; *bring home the bacon* – to earn a salary, *all-out effort* – a very good and thorough effort; *as busy as a bee, as busy as Grand Central Station* – very busy; *get down to work* – to begin to negotiate or conduct business, *hit the books* – to begin studying.

Laziness and irresponsibility are reflected in the national conceptsphere as one of the main vices: *all talk and no action* – talking about doing something, but never actually doing it; *asleep at the switch* – not attending to one's job; failing to do one's duty at the proper time.

Americans highly value the inviolability of a person, personal time, personal space of the individual. The position of the concept of privacy in the national conceptual sphere is confirmed by the material of the phraseological foundation: *all in the family* – restricted to one's own family, as with private or embarrassing information; *behind the scenes* – privately; out of public view.

A gross violation of privacy is considered to be issues related to finances, intimate and personal relationships, politics, bad habits, health, religion, ethnicity and are negatively perceived by the American people: *air someone's dirty linen in public* – to discuss private or embarrassing matters in public, especially when quarrelling; *dish the dirt* – to gossip about someone or something.

An important concept in the American model of the world is intelligence. American people tend to ridicule stupidity and highly value a person's intellectual abilities: *A little knowledge is a dangerous thing* – a proverb meaning that incomplete knowledge can embarrass or harm someone or something; *as smart as a fox* – smart and clever; *as mad as a hatter* – crazy; *fool around with someone or something* – to waste time with someone or something.

Friendship also plays an important role in the life of Americans. They are always ready to support and help in difficult times: *a friend in need is a friend indeed* – a proverb meaning that a true friend is a person who will help you when you really need something; *be friends with someone* – to be a friend of someone; *all wool and a yard wide* – genuinely warm-hearted and friendly; *bear someone or something up* – to support someone or something).

**Conclusions.** The model of the world of any society necessarily comprises an element of self-identification, which is particularly evident in the opposition of members of that society to others outside the group. The current American nation is in its own ways unique, because it was not based on ethnicity, but on the basis of territorial unity and unity of beliefs. The American society was formed as the unity of people of different races and nationalities from many countries of the world, which is reflected in the language on the whole and phraseology in particular as the most emotional and expressive part of the language. The analysis of the reflection of the national identity of the American nation in the phraseological fund of American English enabled distinguishing such features of the national character, reflected in phraseology: self-reliance, hard work, optimism, intelligence, privacy and friendship. The prospects for further research are seen in further in the in-depth study of the phraseological model of the world, formed by the long existence and development of the American ethnos, on the empirical material of a wider scope.

#### ЛІТЕРАТУРА

1. Вайсгербер Й.Л. Родной язык и формирование духа. Москва: Эдиториал УРСС, 2004. 232 с.
2. Караулов Ю.Н. Русский язык и языковая личность. Изд. 7-е. Москва: Издательство ЛКИ, 2010. 264 с.
3. Кубрякова Е.С. О современном понимании термина «концепт» в лингвистике и лингвокультурологии. *Реальность, язык и сознание: междунар. межвуз. сб. науч. тр.* Тамбов: Изд-во ТГУ, 2002. Вып. 2. С. 5–15.
4. Петров В.В. Идеи современной феноменологии и герменевтики в лингвистическом представлении знаний. *Вопросы языкознания.* 1990. № 6. С. 104–110.
5. Полужин М.М. Когнітивна парадигма лінгвістичних досліджень. *Проблеми романо-германської філології: зб. наук. праць.* Ужгород: Ужгород, 1999. С. 4–22.
6. Полужин М.М. Поняття, концепт та його структура. *Науковий вісник Східноєвропейського національного університету імені Лесі Українки.* 2015. № 4. С. 212–222.
7. Попова З.Д., Стернин И.А. Когнитивная лингвистика. Москва: АСТ: Восток – Запад, 2007. 314 с.
8. Серебренников Б.А. Роль человеческого фактора в языке: Язык и мышление / отв. ред. В.М. Солнцев. Москва: Наука, 1988. 244 с.
9. Степанов Ю.С. Концепты. Тонкая пленка цивилизации. Москва: Языки славянских культур, 2007. 248 с.
10. Стивенсон К.Дуглас. Америка: народ и страна. Москва: Изд-во «ППП», 1993. 192 с.
11. Телия В.Н. Коннотативный аспект семантики номинативных единиц. Москва, 1986. 141 с.

## REFERENCES

1. Weisgerber Yo.L. (2004) *Rodnoy yazyk i formirovanie dukha* [Native language and formation of spirit]. Moskva: Editorial URSS. 232 s. [in Russian].
2. Karaulov Y.N. (2010) *Russkiy yazyk i yazykovaya lichnost* [Russian language and linguistic identity] Izd. 7-e. Moskva: Nauka. 264 s. [in Russian].
3. Kubryakova E.S. (2003) O sovremennom ponimanii termina «concept» v lingvistike i kulturologii [On the modern understanding of the term «concept» in linguistics and cultural linguistics]. *Realnost, yazyk i soznanie: Mezhdunarodn. Mezhvyz. Sbornik*. Vyp. 2. Tambov: Izdatelstvo TGU imeni G.R. Derzhavina. S. 5–15 [in Russian].
4. Petrov V.V. (1990) Idei sovremennoy fenomenologii i germeneytiki v lingvisticheskom predstavlenii znaniy [The ideas of modern phenomenology and hermeneutics in the linguistic representation of knowledge]. *Voprosy yazykoznaniiya*. № 6. S. 104–110 [in Russian].
5. Polyuzhyn M.M. (1999) Kohnityvna paradyhma linhvistychnykh doslidzhen [Cognitive paradigm of linguistic research]. *Problemy romano-hermanskoj filolohii: zb. nauk. prats*. Uzhhorod: Uzhhorod. S. 4–22 [in Ukrainian].
6. Poluzhyn M.M. (2015) Poniattia, kontsept ta yoho struktura [Notion, concept and its structure]. *Scientific Bulletin of Lesia Ukrainka East European National University*. № 4. S. 212–222 [in Ukrainian].
7. Popova Z.D., Sternin Io.A. (2007) Kognitivnaya lingvistika [Cognitive linguistics]. Moskva: «Vostok – Zapad». 314 s. [in Russian].
8. Serebrennikov B.A. (1988) Rol chelovecheskogo faktora v yazyke: Yazyk i myshleniye [The role of the human factor in language: Language and thinking] / otv. red. V.M. Solntsev. Moskva: Nauka. 244 s. [in Russian].
9. Stepanov Yu.S. (2007) Kontsepty. Tonkaya plenka tsivilizatsii [Concepts. Thin film of civilization]. Moskva: Yazyki slavyanskikh kultur. 248 s. [in Russian].
10. Stivenson K. Duglas (1993). *Amerika: narod i strana* [America: people and country]. Moskva: Izd-vo «PPP». 192 s. [in Russian].
11. Teliya V.N. (1996) Konnotativnyiy aspekt semantiki nominativnyikh yedinit [The connotative aspect of the semantics of nominative units]. Moskva. 141 s. [in Russian].

## ОСОБЛИВОСТІ КОНЦЕПТУАЛІЗАЦІЇ ФРАЗЕМ В АМЕРИКАНСЬКОМУ ВАРІАНТІ АНГЛІЙСЬКОЇ МОВИ

**Анотація.** У статті розглядаються особливості концептуалізації фразем в американському варіанті англійської мови. Актуальність праці зумовлена особливою важливістю проблем, пов'язаних із співвідношенням мови, мислення, пізнання та культури, розв'язання яких ґрунтується на принципах та методах когнітивного та лінгвокультурного аналізу та фундаментальних поглядів вітчизняних і зарубіжних дослідників. Вивчення фразем із позицій когнітивного підходу уможливило встановлення механізмів співвідношення мовленнєвих та пізнавальних процесів, оскільки важливо з'ясувати, як у таких специфічних мовних знаках, як фраземи, відтворюються найрізноманітніші вияви людського буття. Метою дослідження є виявлення та аналіз семантико-пізнавальних особливостей, притаманних фразеологічним одиницям американського варіанта англійської мови на основі знання національно-специфічних явищ матеріальної та духовної культури, реалій і міфів народного життя.

Об'єктом роботи є ціннісні концепти, реалізовані за допомогою фразеологічних одиниць в американському варіанті англійської мови. Предметом дослідження є структурно-семантичні особливості фразеологічних одиниць, які вербалізують ціннісні поняття в американському варіанті англійської мови.

У статті окреслено тему та завдання когнітивної лінгвістики. Охарактеризовано найважливіші погляди вітчизняних та зарубіжних лінгвістів щодо природи концепту. Основна увага зосереджена на вивченні значення фразеологічної одиниці як частини змістового обсягу концепту, а також його номінативної функції. Розглядаються також вияви національної ідентичності американської нації, маніфестовані у фразеологічному фонді англійської мови. Було, зокрема, встановлено, що фразеологічні одиниці містять вербалізовані культурні коди, які відображають національну мовну картину світу, демонструючи особливості національного бачення навколишньої дійсності. Розгляд фразеологічної основи американського варіанта англійської мови в мовно-культурному аспекті дав змогу виявити та обґрунтувати такі основні цінності американської культури, як самовідданість, працьовитість, оптимізм, інтелектуальність, приватність та дружба.

Ключові слова: когнітивна лінгвістика, концепт, фразема, американський варіант англійської мови, лінгвокультурологія.

© Гузинець Ю., 2020 р.

**Юлія Гузинець** – магістрантка факультету міжнародних економічних відносин напряму «Філологія. Прикладна лінгвістика», Ужгородський національний університет, Ужгород, Україна; <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7480>

**Yulia Huzynets** – master of the Faculty of International Economic Relations, speciality «Philology. Applied Linguistics», Uzhhorod National University, Uzhhorod, Ukraine; <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7480>