

EVALUATION AS A COMPONENT OF PHRASEOLOGICAL MEANING IN ENGLISH

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Abstract. The article is devoted to the study of a special layer of English phraseology, namely axiologically marked phraseological units as an important means of expression of evaluation in the English language picture of the world. The paper deals with the structure of evaluation as a component in the structure of phraseological meaning, the principles of differentiation of axiologically neutral and axiologically marked PUs, axiological characteristics of phraseological units and peculiarities of their lexicographical representation, as well as types of axiologically marked PUs. As a result of the research, the author comes to the conclusion that the phraseologisms are complex semantic formations dominated by connotative semes, i.e. most of them are axiologically marked.

The analysis of axiologically marked PUs in modern English has shown that in such units, evaluation is inextricably linked with expressiveness and emotionality – the expression of an emotional attitude, either positive (approval, encouragement, praise, admiration, etc.) or negative (disapproval, condemnation, neglect, contempt, judgment). Axiologically marked PUs have a special illocutive and perlocutive potential, promote the development of communicative interaction, express and form interpersonal relationships, provide for appropriate responses etc. It has been found that phraseological units can express the evaluative meaning explicitly and implicitly. Phraseological units expressing axiological meaning explicitly fall into classes, among which axiologically simple and axiologically complex phraseological units are distinguished. It has been determined that evaluative PUs qualify different aspects of human life and spheres of activity. The evaluative meanings contained in PUs, to a certain extent, construct fragments of the axiological picture of human life and social relations. The formation of phraseologisms is based on some stereotypical life situations. The analysis of English axiologically-marked phraseological units has allowed revealing evaluative attitude of native speakers to subjects, actions, phenomena of extra-linguistic reality, as well as human behavior and state, embedded in the structure of phraseological meaning.

Keywords: phraseological unit, evaluation, positively marked PU, negatively marked PU, axiologically simple PU, axiologically complex PU.

Problem statement. Phraseology is the most vivid, active, semantically saturated, pragmatically marked, and nationally specific component of the language system. Phraseology plays a special role not only in language but also in its use, in speech. In communication, phraseology is the most economical, expressive, complex and pragmatically most effective means of embodying the speaker's communicative intention and creating the recipient's desired perlocutive effect. Despite the fact that phraseology is one of the most important objects of linguistic research, which is receiving increasing attention in modern research, many questions of theoretical, applied, phraseographic and methodological description of phraseology remain open or debatable. One of the least researched issues of phraseology is axiological aspects of phraseological meaning.

Analysis of the previous research. The category of evaluation is the subject of many studies including philosophical, logical, sociological, psychological, cultural and linguistic ones [Вольф 2002; Ильин 2005]. However, it is such a versatile and closely related phenomenon to all aspects of human activity that axiology research will always be indispensable, since evaluation plays a pivotal role in all human activities – it influences interpersonal relationships, human behavior, speech activity, choices and decisions. The relevance of axiology issues in phraseology is determined by the fact that evaluation is interrelated with the evaluative world picture and national specifics of society,

which in turn are in the process of constant rethinking, development and renewal.

The issue of evaluation is often analysed in the context of cultural issues. However, it should not be forgotten that between an evaluation word, word combination, phraseological unit (PU), sentence or statement and the evaluated object there is always a person – a linguistic personality, a social group, society, nation. Thus, speech actions are often accompanied by evaluation, and the axiological dimension cannot exist without the evaluating subject – the person [Космеда 2000, p. 45]. Consequently, the formation of PU semantics is based on background knowledge, allegories, ideas about the significance of the phenomenon in the value system of a certain people.

The society forms the basis for evaluations under the influence of real properties of objects, cultural and historical facts, emotional and sensual perception, which causes positive and/or negative reaction to different types of objects. Therefore, evaluations in a concise form reflect a person's spiritual and emotional world, as well as practical and cultural experience [Гуай 2009]. Thus, the cultural basis of ethical and aesthetic evaluations goes back to the knowledge and well-established judgments about cultural and historical facts of life of a certain community, including the linguistic one.

Research aim and objectives. The aim of the study is to provide a comprehensive analysis of English evaluative phraseological units functioning in modern English. To achieve the aim of the research, the follow-

ing **objectives** have been put forward: to analyze the structure of evaluation as a component in the structure of phraseological meaning, to determine the principles of differentiation between axiologically neutral and axiologically marked PUs, to examine axiological characteristics of phraseological units and peculiarities of their lexicographical representation, to distinguish the types of axiologically marked PUs.

Methods and methodology. In order to select the material for the study, we have determined the evaluative phraseological units using different identification methods. The identification of evaluative lexemes in the composition of a PU or its definition is necessary, first and foremost, to distinguish between evaluative and neutral PUs and to determine their mark – positive or negative. In this case, it is desirable to have a complete list of relevant assessment identifiers, i.e. evaluatively marked lexemes. Linguistic studies have developed special procedures for determining various semantic groups of words including evaluative ones. The simplest but at the same time the most time-consuming way is consulting dictionaries. Thus, the method developed by E.I. Frenkel [Френкель 1981, p. 26–28] is based on the fact that the most common axiological correlates of general concepts “good” and “bad” are singled out. Then, the researcher selects the vocabulary which contains the corresponding correlates in its definitions.

The second method consists in considering the sets of evaluative vocabulary already singled out in special studies. Thus, the most complete list of English negatively marked lexemes is presented in I.I. Kvasyuk’s research, which contains more than 160 nouns [Квасюк 1983, p. 230–233]. Thus, the definition of a negative axiological PU (*as mad as a hatter (a March hare)*) – “abnormal in behaviour (ranging from mere eccentricity, recklessness, folly, irresponsibility etc. to near-madness and insanity itself)” [CIDI 2001, p. 24], comprises 6 negative evaluative nouns.

The most complete list of positively marked and thematically arranged adjectival, substantive and verbal English vocabulary is presented in N.B. Kuvanova’s study [Куванова 2005, p. 61], for example: honesty (sincere, open, forthright), bravery (courageous, brave, heroic), resoluteness (resolute, determined) etc. The definition of a positive axiological PU *take your breath away* – “if something takes your breath away, you feel surprise and admiration because it is very beautiful, good, or exciting” [CIDI 2001, p. 50] contains a positive evaluative noun and three positive evaluative adjectives.

The list of evaluative verbs includes more than 200 units, including the so-called meta-evaluation verbs of type *appraise*, *assess*, *evaluate*, *estimate* etc., which express the evaluation activity but are not evaluative themselves. The semantic space of positively marked verbs consists of three thematic groups: “love”, “appreciate” and “improve”.

In the study, we have used all three of the above-given methods to identify the evaluative PUs. We have also taken into account the place of the evaluative vocabulary – whether it is in the lexical composition of the PU itself or only in its definition. Accordingly, it is possible to distinguish the most frequent

evaluative indicators in the composition of axiologically marked PUs and the most frequent evaluation indicators in their vocabulary definition. The first list includes such positive units as *bright*, *happy*, *smart*, *blessings*, *clever*, *astute*, *confident*, *determined*, *experienced*, *intelligent*, *knowledgeable*, *quick-witted*, *sensible*, *talented*, *wise* and the negative units such as *daft*, *frighten*, *fool*, *mad*, *nutty*, *scare*, *swear*, *crazy*, *foolish*, *ignorant*, *insane*, *mentally ill*, *senile*, *silly*, *stupid* etc., for example: *play the fool* – “to behave in a silly or irresponsible way” [LID 2000, p. 127]; *count your blessings* – “to think about the good things in your life, often to stop yourself becoming too unhappy about the bad things” [CIDI 2001, p. 37]; *a smart cookie* – “someone who is clever and good at dealing with difficult situations” [CIDI 2001, p. 358].

The second list includes the following positive units such as *clever*, *intelligent*, *happy*, and negative evaluative lexemes: *silly*, *crazy*, *angry*, for example: *on the ball* – “If you describe someone as on the ball, you mean that they are alert and deal with things in an intelligent way” [CCID 2004, p. 15]; *welcome/greet sb. with open arms* – “to show that you are very happy to see or meet someone, or to have him, her etc. as part of your group, organization etc.” [LID 2000, p. 74]; *nutty as-a fruitcake* – “used in order to say that someone is behaving in a way that is slightly crazy” [LID 2000, p. 130].

Following the criteria of distinguishing evaluative PUs elaborated in K. Yu. Huai’s thesis [Гуай 2009, p. 52], positive axiologically marked phraseological units selected for the present research are the units containing:

- evaluative positively marked lexemes in their composition and dictionary definition: *happy as a sandboy* – “extremely happy; perfectly contented with your situation” [ODEI 2000, p. 136];

- evaluative positively marked lexemes in their dictionary definition: *be all that* – “be very attractive or good” [ODEI 2000, p. 6]; *she’s apples* – “used to indicate that everything is in good order and there is nothing to worry about” [ODEI 2000, p. 8],

- evaluative negatively marked lexemes and negation: *be nobody’s/ no man’s fool* – “be a wise and/ or astute person; not be easily deceived or exploited by anyone” [ODEI 2000, p. 52], etc.

Negative axiologically marked phraseological units selected for the research are the units containing:

- evaluative negatively marked lexemes in their composition and dictionary definition: *crazy like a fox* – “very cunning or shrewd” [ODEI 2000, p. 65]

- evaluative negatively marked lexemes in their dictionary definition: *off (or out of) your head* – “mad or crazy; extremely drunk or severely under the influence of illegal drugs” [ODEI 2000, p. 139], etc.).

- evaluative positively marked lexemes and negation: *sb. is daft as a brush* – “used in order to say in a kind or friendly way that someone is not sensible or behaves in a strange way” [LID 2000, p. 45] etc.

Material description. The category of evaluation is verbalized by means of phraseologisms expressing a certain evaluation assigned to them at the dictionary

level in its usual (invariant) form. In other words, the presence of the evaluation component in the semantic structure of phraseological units suggests that at the level of the phraseological dictionary they possess usual evaluation, thus expressing a kind of attitude to the content of the statement. Such attitude is formed on the basis of qualifying features of the denotatum, which is a judgment on the objective reality.

As previously noted, the evaluation mark of a PU is determined according to the evaluation mark of the lexemes included in its dictionary definition. For instance, the PU *hit it off with* has a positive evaluation mark as its dictionary definition contains positively marked lexemes “liking” and “friendly” (“feel a liking for; be friendly with” [ODEI 2000, p. 144]), while the PU *tread (or step) on someone’s toes* has a negative evaluation mark since its dictionary definition contains a negatively marked lexeme “offend” (“to offend someone, especially by encroaching on their privileges” [ODEI 2000, p. 297]). The analysis of the research material shows that the vast majority of PUs contain in their definitions one or more homogeneous evaluation indicators, and are, from this point of view, axiologically simple units as the above-mentioned PU *hit it off with*. However, there exist evaluative PUs, which contain two or more heterogeneous evaluation indicators in their definitions, and thus, they are considered axiologically complex units. Thus, the following dictionary definition of the PU *caviar to the general* contain the indicators of both positive and negative evaluation: “a good thing that is not appreciated by the ignorant” [ODEI 2000, p. 49], for example:

For the play, I remember, pleased not the million. 'T was caviar to the general. But it was-- As I received it and others whose judgments in such matters cried in the top of mine [NYT].

The analyzed phraseologism has a double evaluation spectrum: the speaker feels joy and pleasure but this joy is a consequence of the fact that the subject ceased to feel the opposite negative feeling – discontent.

Axiologically complex PUs, in turn, fall into two groups – evaluatively unambiguous and evaluatively ambiguous PUs. The former group includes the PU *be glad to see the back of sb. / sth.; put a brave face / front on sth.* etc. The latter group includes such axiologically complex PUs, the definition of which contains both indicators of evaluation, i.e. positive and negative. Thus, the PU *a back-handed compliment* is evaluatively ambiguous since it combines opposing and “equal” evaluative marks, cf.:

– *a back-handed compliment* – a remark which seems approving but which is also negative [CIDI 2004, p. 78];

– *a back-handed compliment* – something that someone says to you that is both pleasant and unpleasant at the same time [LID 2000, p. 68], for instance:

It is home to 25 percent of all of Mexico’s manufacturing plants and produces about 75 percent of the country’s steel and iron, earning it a back-handed compliment as “the Pittsburgh of Mexico” [NYT].

A complex evaluation structure of the meaning of an evaluative PU can be represented not only in the

dictionary interpretation, but also as part of the PU itself, for example, the evaluative ambiguous PU *damn sb. / sth. with faint praise* contains in its lexical structure two equal evaluative lexemes with opposite evaluation marks – the pejorative marked verb “to damn” and the meliorative marked noun “praise”. Dictionary definitions also confirm the ambiguity of the meaning of this PU, cf.:

– *damn sb./ sth. with faint praise* – to praise something or someone in such a weak way that it is obvious you do not really admire them [CIDI 2001, p. 125];

– *damn sb. with faint praise* – to say something about someone that sounds fairly nice but shows that you do not really have a high opinion of them [LID 2000, p. 271];

– *damn with faint praise* – not condemn, but mention for praise only qualities of such slight merit as to imply that more valuable or important qualities are lacking [ODEI 2000, p. 130], for example: *Sometime his boss **danned him with faint praise**. In a 1996 memo to directors, Mr. Eisner wrote, “He is not an enlightened or brilliantly creative man, but with a strong board he absolutely could do the job” [NYT].*

The conducted research allows determining that axiologically marked PUs are classified into axiologically explicit and axiologically implicit ones. Axiologically explicit PUs have axiologically marked components in their lexical composition, i.e. evaluation indicators (e.g. *a nice little earner, easy as pie, sick and tired* etc.). Axiologically implicit PUs do not have axiologically marked components in their lexical composition. Thus, the researcher has to refer to their dictionary interpretation in order to determine whether such phraseological units are axiologically marked or not (e.g. *a curate’s egg* – “something that is partly good and partly bad” [ODEI 2000, p. 68], *to die for* – “extremely good or desirable” [ODEI 2000, p. 78] etc.

We shall consider several positive and negative PUs, which express an estimation of the reality, revealed in the newspaper articles under consideration. Analyzing the PU *wipe the slate clean* – “forgive or forget past faults or offences; make a fresh start” [ODEI 2000, p. 315] (“почати все з чистого аркуша”) at the dictionary level, it is worth noting that it evokes a positive emotion, given the associations that relate us to the prototype of the situation. Any new start marks a retry in any activity, despite past mistakes and failures. Perhaps it will encourage the successful implementation of new ideas, which will undoubtedly have a positive impact on all future activities. The evaluation of this PU is explicitly stated as positive, for example:

*We should also avoid holding the whole of our health care system responsible for failures in some of its parts. There is a natural temptation in dealing with any complex problem to say: “Let us **wipe the slate clean** and start from scratch” [NYT].*

The PU *drop the ball* is defined as “to make a mistake, especially by doing something in a stupid or careless way” [FD] (“псувати; погано контролювати ситуацію”). When considering the basic modal characteristics of this PU at the dictionary level, we should

point to its negative assessment. As a rule, a person should have a good command of the situation and be well informed in order to control the process of any activity and avoid all kinds of mistakes and failures. Otherwise, the situation may get out of control and lead to an unfavourable outcome. The image of a person who spoils everything due to his or her inability or negligence, with all the ensuing consequences, forms a negative perception in our consciousness, which is then reflected in the evaluation, for example:

*“The federal government **dropped the ball** in terms of mental health resources”, Mr. Hamilton said. “The system is overwhelmed. No matter which reservation you go to, that’s what you’ll find” [NYT].*

The dictionary interpretation of the PU *pain in the neck* – “a person or thing that is extremely annoying or inconvenient” [FD] (“зануда, надокучлива людина, проблема”) is characterized by the negative evaluation. A person, who is characterized as a nuisance and annoying, is perceived negatively because these personality characteristics evoke dislike and rejection. The communication with such a person leads to a state of extreme irritation. In addition, a rethought image of the situation causes unpleasant associations, since, based on the literal interpretation, “pain in the neck” causes extremely uncomfortable sensations, which hinder the productive human activities. The specificity of the internal form of this PU correlates with the situation in which we could feel something annoying and unpleasant. All this has a negative impact on perception, therefore, the evaluation fixed in the image is manifested as negative, for example:

*“Putin will be **a pain in the neck** for Mr. Bush”, says Ariel Cohen, a Russia scholar with the Heritage Foundation in Washington. Putin’s popularity remains high, even as the public’s hopes in the country’s future have declined [USAT].*

The interpretation of the PU *laughing stock* –

“If you describe someone or something as a laughing stock, you mean that people think they are silly” [FD] (“посміховисько”) possesses a negative connotation as in this case the evaluation exposes such behavior which causes mockery and scolding. Applied to a person, this PU correlates with the image of an individual, who, as a result of their behavior, has become a subject of ridicule and mockery. As a result, a strictly negative attitude towards this image is formed, which affects the further perception of the PU. The internal structure of this PU imparts its semantics with a bright image, gives the PU a bright emotional colouring making it expressively loaded. Thus, at the dictionary level, the PU has negative evaluation characteristics, for example:

*Why, Donaldson was asked during his White House interview last year, would a man in his position want to take over an agency that had been reduced to a **laughing stock** for late-night comedians? [USAT].*

Based on an analyzed sample, it should be noted that the prevailing number of PUs have a negative evaluation, reflecting problem situations and cause negative emotional states such as anxiety, dislike, envy, resentment, anger, etc.

Conclusions. Having considered and analyzed the examples, we came to the conclusion that evaluative PUs are dominated by axiologically negative phraseologisms that reflect problematic situations and cause negative emotional states, such as worry, animosity, envy, offense, anger, etc., which subsequently turn into a negative axiological modality. Using evaluative phraseologisms, the speaker indicates his/her perception of the surrounding world and reality, imparts the phraseologism with his/her emotional-evaluative attitude to the surrounding objects. The speaker’s intention is the result of a subjective modality that reflects the attitude to the object of the utterance and the assessment of the situation.

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ОЦІННІСТЬ ЯК КОМПОНЕНТ ФРАЗЕОЛОГІЧНОГО ЗНАЧЕННЯ В АНГЛІЙСЬКІЙ МОВІ

Анотація. Стаття присвячена дослідженню особливого пласту англійської фразеології, а саме оцінно маркованих фразеологічних одиниць (ФО) як важливого засобу вираження оцінки в англійській мовній картині світу. Розглядається питання про структуру оцінності як компонента в структурі фразеологічного значення, принципи розмежування оцінно нейтральних та оцінно маркованих ФО, аксіологічні характеристики фразеологічних одиниць та особливості їхнього лексикографічного представлення, а також типи оцінно маркованих ФО. У результаті проведеного дослідження автор доходить висновку, що фразеологізми є складними семантичними утвореннями, у яких переважають конотативні семи, тобто більшість із них є оцінно маркованими.

Комплексний аналіз оцінно маркованих ФО в сучасній англійській мові показав, що в таких одиницях оцінка нерозривно пов'язана з експресивністю та емотивністю – вираженням емоційного ставлення, позитивного (схвалення, захоплення, похвали, захоплення тощо) або негативного (несхвалення, засудження, зневаги, презирства, осуду тощо). Оцінно-марковані ФО мають особливий ілокутивний і перлокутивний потенціал, сприяють розвитку комунікативної взаємодії, виражають і формують міжособистісні стосунки, передбачають відповідну реакцію тощо. Виявлено, що фразеологічні одиниці можуть виражати оцінне значення експліцитно та імпліцитно. Фразеологічні одиниці, які виражають аксіологічне значення експліцитно, розпадаються на класи, серед яких виділяються аксіологічно прості і аксіологічно складні фразеологічні одиниці. Установлено, що оцінні ФО кваліфікують різноманітні сторони життя і сфери діяльності людини. Оцінні смисли, що містяться в ФО, певною мірою конструюють фрагменти оцінної картини життєдіяльності людини та її соціальних відносин. Формування фразеологізмів відбувається на базі деяких стереотипних життєвих ситуацій. Аналіз англійських оцінно-маркованих фразеологічних одиниць дав змогу виявити оцінне ставлення носіїв мови до предметів, дій, явищ позамовної дійсності, а також поведінки або стану людини, закладене у структурі фразеологічного значення.

Ключові слова: фразеологічна одиниця, оцінність, позитивно маркована ФО, негативно маркована ФО, аксіологічно проста ФО, аксіологічно складна ФО.

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