



## PHRASEOLOGICAL UNITS ARE THE FOUNDATION OF COGNITIVE LINGUISTICS

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**Abstract.** *This article explores the central role of phraseological units within the framework of cognitive linguistics, highlighting how the shift from system-centric to anthropocentric paradigms has transformed the understanding of idiomatic expressions. The study investigates the relationship between language and thought, conceptualization processes, and the cognitive mechanisms underpinning idioms, proverbs, and sayings. It discusses theoretical contributions from prominent linguists such as N.F. Alefirenko, A.B. Feokistova, and M.L. Kovshova, who emphasize the discursive, conceptual, and cultural significance of phraseological units. The article also engages with ongoing debates concerning the inclusion of proverbs and sayings in phraseology and evaluates their semantic, structural, and communicative features. Through a cognitive lens, phraseological units are presented not merely as linguistic constructs but as carriers of cultural knowledge, mental models, and collective memory, making them vital tools for expressing complex human experience and social understanding.*

**Keywords:** *Phraseological units, Cognitive linguistics, Idioms, Proverbs and sayings, Conceptualization, Discursive categories, Linguistic worldview, Anthropocentrism, Language and thought.*

**Introduction.** The enormous popularity of cognitive research in modern linguistic studies contributes to the formation of new cognitive, economic and social development.

to the study of phraseology. The appearance of works tries to study phraseological units in this aspect, which indicates shifts in emphasis when



composing phraseological units and a new look at traditional problems. The main thing that distinguishes modern research in this area. Phraseology from traditional ones is a transfer of the emphasis of the system of co-centrism to anthropocentrism under the influence of interest in the nominative patterns of the formation of idioms, which is associated with the study of their communicative purpose, and thereby with the entire palette of information, management idioms as units of a special type of secondary nomination. The change in the scientific paradigm caused the justification at the definition of phraseological units. Unlike the “traditional” phraseology, which considers phraseological factors only as system of effective language within the framework of cognitive phraseology most often invent positions of linguistic phenomena, such as “microtexts, in the nominative support of which, associated with the situational nature denoted, during its conceptualization, all typical information characteristic of displaying situations in the text is drawn in, but presented in phraseological units in the form of a “convolution”, ready for use as text within text”.<sup>1</sup>

Much modern research in the field of Linguists is turning to the study of the relationship between language and thinking. Thus, linguistic units are analyzed through mental categories or cognitive structures and mechanisms. Increasing interest in the cognitive side of linguistic units in the second half of the 20th century served as the basis for further study of the language as means of formation, organization, storage and expression of knowledge and thoughts. Attitude to language as a guide to the world of human thinking marked the formation of the cognitive direction of linguistics. Hence, I.A.Zabrosaeva notes that the scope of cognitive linguistics includes the mental foundations of understanding and speech production in which linguistic knowledge is involved in information processing. Cognitive linguistics, being a new field of theoretical and applied linguistics, it is associated with the study of the cognitive aspects of lexical units<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Телия В.Н. Русская фразеология: семантический, прагматический и лингвокультурологический аспекты. – М.: Шк. «Языки рус. культуры», 1996. 288 с.

<sup>2</sup> Забросаева И. А. Особенности когнитивной лингвистики. Приволжский научный вестник – Приволжский научный журнал, 2014, №1. 12-1 (40) (на русском языке).



N.F.Alefirenko<sup>3</sup> suggests considering the conceptual essence of phraseological meaning based on its discursive nature - the conceptual organization of phraseological units is based on discursive categories (situation, event, presupposition, preconstruct and interdiscourse). According to the author, verbalized discursive categories serve as those linguocreative elements which form the cognitive basis of phraseological meaning as a special semasiological category. The method of cognitive modeling of the denotative aspect of the meaning of idioms is being developed by A.B.Feokistova<sup>4</sup>, who believes that in the process of communication the denotative aspect of the meaning of a phraseological unit always implicitly interacts with background knowledge about the signified. Its main idea is that the concept of an idiom is closely related to the concept of the object/phenomenon/situation, etc. described by the idiom. This is expressed in the fact that each phraseological unit is stored in the form of a collapsed frame basic information, acting as background knowledge of the meaning of a phraseological unit, from which the person using and perceiving the idiom starts.

The appearance of works owned by try to study phraseological units in this aspect, which indicates shifts in emphasis when composing phraseological units and a new look at traditional problems. The main thing that distinguishes modern research in this area. Phraseology from traditional ones is a transfer of the emphasis of the system of co-centrism to anthropocentrism under the influence of interest in the nominative patterns of the formation of idioms, which is associated with the study of their communicative purpose, and thereby with the entire palette of information, management idioms as units of a special type of secondary nomination. The change in the scientific paradigm caused the justification a look at the definition of phraseological units. Unlike the "traditional" phraseology, which considers phraseological factors only as system of effective language within the framework of cognitive phraseology most often invent positions of linguistic

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<sup>3</sup> Алефиренко Н.Ф. Фразеологическое значение и концепт // Когнитивная семантика: Материалы 2 Междунар. школы-семинара по когнитивной лингвистике. – Тамбов, 2000. – Ч. 2. С. 33–36.

<sup>4</sup> Феоктистова А.Б. Когнитивные аспекты семантики идиом, обозначающих чувства-состояния: Автореф. дис. ... канд. филол. наук. – М., 1996. – 18 с.



phenomena, such as “microtexts, in the nominative support of which, associated with the situational nature. The denoted, during its conceptualization, all types of information are drawn in, characteristic of displaying situations in the text, but presented in phraseological units in the form of a “convolution”, ready for use as text within text.

Phraseology, being an integral part language, within the framework of cognitive linguistics is analyzed from the point of view of its semantics. Phraseological meaning is considered as the main element of the phraseological picture content. The phraseological picture of the world is defined by V.V.Shkatova<sup>5</sup> as part of an integral linguistic pictures of the world, that is, a picture of the world expressed by phraseological means of language. The phraseological picture of the world is a set of phraseological ideas about action. At the same time, phraseological units do not reflect only the understanding and vision of the world of speakers of a certain language, but also their culture. Phraseologisms undoubtedly increase, replenish and at the same time complicate cognitive sphere, since they represent the result figurative rethinking of accumulated human knowledge about the world.

In this regard, the question of phraseological meaning. It is within the framework of the cognitive approach that the meaning of a phraseological unit begins to be perceived not just as a construct, but as a “property” linguistic consciousness, a real source of information that works as language code unit”; as a macro-component structure, including various blocks of information; as a multidimensional information complex<sup>6</sup>.

Based on the study of all types of information carried by a phraseological unit as a linguistic sign, it is possible to determine the specifics of phraseological meaning. She proposed a model of the declarative-procedural form of meaning

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<sup>5</sup> Шкатова В. В. Фразеологическая картина мира как объект лингвистического изучения // Вестник ЛГУ им. А.С. Пушкина. 2012.

<sup>6</sup> Телия В.Н. Русская фразеология: семантический, прагматический и лингвокультурологический аспекты. – М.: Шк. «Языки рус. культуры», 1996. 288 с.



phraseological unit capable of embodying and describing all types of information included in the phraseological unit and which is a set of cognitive procedures that, “including the corresponding knowledge belonging to the world “Ideal” indicates not only the properties of an object from the world “Actual”, but also dispositional abilities of the denotative aspect of meaning, as well as on the nature of the subjective relations of the speaker / listener to referent and to the conditions of speech”. According to M.L.Kovshova<sup>7</sup>, the meaning of an idiom can be presented as an “informational text”, the various meanings of which pass “through the mental filter” of the speaker and listener, are interpreted in the space of social and cultural knowledge, activated by the subject of speech in moment of communication”.

The method of cognitive modeling of the denotative aspect of the meaning of idioms is being developed by A.B.Feokistova<sup>8</sup>. Cognitive aspect of studying phraseology, Feokistova who believes that in the process of communication the denotative aspect of the meaning of a phraseological unit always implicitly interacts with background knowledge about the signified. Its main idea is that the concept of an idiom is closely related to the concept of the object/phenomenon/situation, etc. described by the idiom. This is expressed in the fact that each phraseological unit is stored in the form of a collapsed frame basic information, acting as background knowledge of the meaning of a phraseological unit is based on the use and perceiving by human.

The range of “cognitive” research interests includes the question of connection between a phraseological unit as a cognitive microstructure and a more voluminous cognitive structure-concept. This is expressed in an attempt to present a phraseological unit as a representation of a certain part of the concept. The solution to this issue is directly related to the cultural orientation of a number of works in the field of modern phraseology, in which phraseological concept is studied as a unit containing the experience and worldview of a given people. The

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<sup>7</sup> Ковшова М.Л. Как с писаной торбой носиться: принципы когнитивно-культурологического исследования идиом // Фразеология в контексте культуры. – М.: Языки рус. культуры, 1999. С. 164–173.

<sup>8</sup> Федуленикова Т. Н. Вариантность английских фразеологизмов моделей – Вестник Поморского университета. Серия «Гуманитарные и социальные науки», 2019, вып. Т. 3. С. 55–62 (на русском языке).



focus of researchers is the study of the cultural component of phraseological meaning, considered as “certain cultural knowledge stored in its “memory” and included in the conceptual sphere of the national language”<sup>9</sup>. The construction and description of a phraseological concept is often focused on identifying the national and cultural uniqueness of phraseological units of a language - a traditional problem that has received a new interpretation within the framework of the cognitive approach to the study of phraseology. Telia V.N. emphasizes that the cultural and national specificity of idioms can be found only in large ideographic groups, arrays data based on the “affinity” of their conceptual content. The same idea is expressed by E.E.Chikina<sup>10</sup>, who notes that the cognitive approach to identifying the national and cultural uniqueness of phraseological units involves the analysis of individual phrase-semantic fields in order to describe within their framework phrase-forming models, the totality of which shows both the national characteristics of the linguistic division of the world and the characteristics of linguistic creative thinking.

Phraseology is represented by phraseological units such as idioms, proverbs and sayings. The question of including proverbs and sayings in phraseology is debatable among scientists, and they have different attitudes to this phenomenon. Proverbs and sayings are sentences and answer all of them syntactic rules: they have the same word order, are constructed according to the same rules as regular offer; the structure is always a simple or complex sentence; The proverbs can be declarative, imperative or interrogative. Proverbs are an integral part of phraseology or an independent section language, still remains controversial. One of the most controversial issues in phraseology before the question still remains about whether a phraseological unit can have a sentence structure and possess communicative meaning.

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<sup>9</sup> Ковалева Л.В. Фразеологизация как когнитивный процесс. – Воронеж: Изд-во Воронеж. гос. ун-та, 2004. 184 с

<sup>10</sup> Чикина Е.Е. Выявление национально-культурной специфики фразеологизмов: современные подходы [Электронный ресурс] // Международный научно-практический (электронный) журнал «INTERCULTUR@L-NET». – 2004.



Proverbs are short, stable sayings that have the structure of a simple or complex sentences, usually of an edifying nature, with rhyme, reproduced in speech in finished form, and containing a literal or figurative meaning. The proverb is based on a metaphor, comparison, hyperbole, or idiomatic expression. Unlike a proverb, a proverb is always monomonic, represents part of a judgment and usually devoid of general instructive meaning. Many Russian scientists, including N.N.Amosova, V.P.Felitsina are opponents of the inclusion of proverbs and sayings in phraseological units. N.N.Amosova believes<sup>11</sup>: “Proverbs and sayings, which are miniature parables, are not included in the language system, because they are independent units of communication. They can be recognized as neither lexical units nor equivalents of lexical units. If consider that a lexical unit is any linguistic formation that differs stability and metaphorical or at least traditional meaning, then under this concept we will have to summarize the generally diverse works of such “small forms” of folklore as jokes, counting rhymes, riddles”. She motivates her disagreement by the fact that PP, like riddles and fables, belong to the genre folklore, oral folk art.

G.L.Permyakov<sup>12</sup> defines a proverb as a folk saying expressed in a sentence (for example, proverbs, sayings, signs) or a short chain of sentences (for example, fables, “one-shot” jokes, riddles). Thus, the researcher does not include phraseological units among the paremiological units. He also writes about that phraseological units are in many ways similar to proverbs and sayings, not only because both of them belong to linguistic clichés, but also for a number of other characteristics. These signs include: external syntactic form, the presence of three plans, the presence of figurative or direct motivation of general meaning, etc. Despite the fact that proverbs, sayings and phraseological units belong to various kinds of linguistic clichés (stable verbal combinations), all of them, reflecting in their semantics a long process of development culture of the people, recorded and passed on from generation-to-generation cultural attitudes and stereotypes.

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<sup>11</sup> Amosova, N.N. The basis of English Phraseology / N.N. Amosova. - L., 1963. - 203p. - M., 1986

<sup>12</sup> Пермяков Г.Л. От поговорки до сказки (Заметки по общей теории клише). М.: Главная редакция восточной литературы издательства «Наука», 1970.



Phraseology, like paremiology, is a fragment of the linguistic picture of the world. Phraseological units which are always directed towards subject arise not so much in order to describe the world, but in order to interpret, evaluate and express it subjective attitude<sup>13</sup>. The nature of the meaning of phraseological units is closely related to the background knowledge of a native speaker, to the practical experience of the individual, to the cultural and historical traditions of the people, speaker of a given language. Phraseological units are attributed objects, features that are associated with the picture of the world, imply a whole descriptive situation (text), and evaluate it. With their semantics, phraseological units are aimed at characterizing a person and his activities.

N.Amosova<sup>14</sup> is of the opinion that some sentences are phraseological units, and some are not. She classifies partially predicative phraseological units as phraseological units. As for whole predicative units, then N.N.Amosova believes that to phraseological units include only those that appear in speech with the function inherent in phraseological units of nomination or, in any case, are not units of communication. Thus, according to N.N.Amosova phraseological units are those phraseological units that have a holistic meaning and constitute a constant context, and being part of a variable sentence, act as a single member. For example: *As crow flies, as luck would have it.*

N.N.Amosova believes that the attribution of proverbs and sayings, independent sentences with figurative or additional didactic content, to phraseology seems unfounded. She opposes the inclusion of proverbs and sayings in the number of phraseological units. She argues that in order for a proverb to be considered an idiom, it is necessary to prove that the proverb has a holistic lexical meaning and appears in speech as a unit of nomination, since units of communication do not have lexical meaning.

N.N.Amosova believes that proverbs of predicative structure are similar to phraseological units with many of their features:

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<sup>13</sup> Маслова В.А. Лингвокультурология. М.: Академия, 2001. 208 с.

<sup>14</sup> Амосова Н. Н. Основы английской фразеологии. - Издательское дело. Ленинградский университет. - Л., 1961. 207 с.



1. Their lexical composition is constant;
2. Their meaning is traditional and, in most cases, has a figurative nature;
3. Many of them are demotivated and have unclear motivation precisely because of integrity their content;
4. The lexical meaning of their components is weakened or reinterpreted;
5. They are not created anew in the process of speech, but are reproduced in finished form.

Based on this, N.N.Amosova does not include stable phraseology with predicative structure (proverbs and sayings). Also opposed to the inclusion of proverbs and sayings in phraseological units is V.P.Felitsina<sup>15</sup>. In her opinion, proverbs, unlike sayings, are devoid of idiomaticity. She believes that a proverb is not equivalent to a word, but is equivalent to a story and is a complete phrase with a direct meaning, and therefore cannot be considered a phraseological unit. V.P.Felitsina claims that the features of the proverb bring it closer to the fable. Like a fable, a proverb is an allegory, but expressed in an extremely concise form. When comparison of proverbs and fables should take into account significant morphological and structural differences. Proverbs are expressed in sentences, while a fable is a short story, usually in poetic form. A fable is a literary work. Proverbs are phraseological units with partially or a completely rethought meaning of the components, and in structure they do not go beyond framework of a complex sentence. A common feature of proverbs and fables is their moralizing character.

In comparative terms, proverbs and sayings drew attention of professor M. Azimova<sup>16</sup>, who believes that they are communicative phraseological units and are part of phraseology. In terms of structure, proverbs can be not only simple, but also complex sentences with coordinating and subordinating connections. The inclusion of proverbs and sayings in phraseological units by these scientists is great achievement in world studies. The named authors limit themselves to the

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<sup>15</sup> Фелицина, В.П. О пословицах и поговорках как источниках для фразеологических словарей/ П.Фелицина, - М.,1964. 122 с.

<sup>16</sup> Azimova, M.N. Comparative-typological research of Tajik and English phraseological system /M.N.Azimova.- Dushanbe, 2006



recognition of proverbs and sayings by phraseological units. They make no attempt to explain or give justifications for what characteristics and why proverbs are included in phraseological units. Proverbs also have a stable system of components, their composition is constant, they are reproduced in finished form and are not created again each time, have complete or partial rethinking of the meaning of the components.

In Russian linguistics G.L.Permyakov<sup>17</sup> includes proverbs and sayings, proverbs, catchwords, aphorisms. His opinion is shared by N.M.Shansky<sup>18</sup>, classifies proverbs as part of phraseology and tries to give explanation of the terms “proverb and saying”. He notes: “According to the nature of the message they express, phraseological units can be distinguished into two groups. The first group is formed by phraseological units, which are various colloquial clichés, peculiar sayings for the occasion”. He also notes that "there is the second group of phraseological units containing some kind of moral teaching, apt thought, undoubted truth or everyday observation and representing a linguistic expression, folk wisdom". He calls them proverbs. Further emphasizes that portable meaning is a mandatory feature of proverbs. N.M.Shansky believes that it is unlawful exclude from the composition of phraseological units stable combinations that are structurally organized as sentences if they have all the constitutive features of phraseological units.

In English linguistics, A. Taylor studied this problem. Its research results is reflected in the work “The Proverbs and an Index to the Proverb”<sup>19</sup>. A. Taylor in this work characterizes the problem of the emergence and development of proverbs and sayings. He pays attention to such issues as typology, variation, geography of their distribution, types and types of proverbs, as well as their stylistic and semantic peculiarities. He reveals the role and place of proverbs in language, especially in Western European countries. A. Taylor analyzed about 400 English proverbs with their analogues in German and Latin languages. The author especially noted the

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<sup>17</sup> Пермаков, Л.П. Избранные пословицы и поговорки народов Востока/Л.П. Пермаков.-М,1968.-380с.

<sup>18</sup> Шанский, Н.М. Фразеология современного русского языка/ Н.М. Шанский. – М.,1985. 160р.

<sup>19</sup> Taylor, A. The Proverbs and the Index to the Proverb. /A. Taylor. - Copenhagen, 1992. - 120с.



positive aspects and disadvantages in the study of proverbs, especially in Western European countries. The merit of A. Taylor is that he considered proverbs as units of phraseological order. On the other hand, A. Taylor showed the meaning and content of proverbs and made an attempt to classify them. He studied proverbs in semantically, thematically and the use of expressive means in them. He thought, that these features are the three constituent parts of proverbs, but did not touch upon such important aspects of the issue, such as linguistic, sociological and philosophical aspects associated with them <sup>20</sup>.

Within the framework of traditional linguistics, scientists strive to answer the question of what is the specificity of the meanings of proverbs in contrast to the meanings of words, what is the structure of the content. The main features of phraseological units are reinterpretation, value, stability of components, reproducibility in finished form, completeness, which proverbs also have. Having analyzed and considered the views of a number of scientists who classify proverbs as part of phraseology, we can say that these linguistic units are rightfully included in phraseology.

Today, economic-political, cultural and scientific relations between people, peoples, countries, international-cultural communication processes in the field of linguistics, such as the interaction of languages and linguistic culture, as well as the national identity of the language, and cultural studies itself have led to the emergence of a new field with a specific direction and subject – linguistic and cultural studies. As a result, at the beginning of the 21st century, a new branch of linguistics is rapidly developing - linguistics and cultural studies, which aims to study the problem of language and culture. The world of proverbs and sayings is a “fertile field” for research by scientists - linguists, literary critics, paremiologists, folklorists, ethnographers, who are specialists in various fields. This is natural, because despite the fact that the proverb is compact and simple in form, it can be viewed from different research points of view. Proverbs, as semantically and structurally complete texts, attract the attention of text linguistics, which is a very

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<sup>20</sup> Collis, H.101 American and English Proverbs/H.Collis. - Chicago, 1975.-106с.



popular branch of linguistics. Different proverbs in the same language, even in closely related and completely unrelated languages, can belong to the same logical type and exhibit the same feature. Therefore, they are directly related to logical semantics and semiotics. Proverbs are sentences that, from a grammatical point of view, are considered a special syntactic unit. Therefore, the formal structure of the proverb as a syntactic unit should be studied in grammar.

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