

## ETYMOLOGICAL LEVEL OF MANIFESTATION OF THE NATIONAL AND CULTURAL SPECIFICITY OF RUSSIAN AND ENGLISH PHRASEOLOGICAL EUTHEMISMS

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*The article is devoted to identifying the national and cultural specifics of phraseological euphemisms in English and Russian languages. For the first time, one of the levels of manifestation of this specificity of English and Russian phraseological euphemisms is studied in detail, namely, the etymological level, which implies a connection between the appearance of a phraseological euphemism with some extralinguistic phenomenon: traditions, customs, historical factors in the development of society of speakers of Russian and English languages. As a result of the comparative linguoculturological research, it was revealed that phraseological euphemisms of both languages can denote a variety of phenomena, actions, events, including those of a purely national character. Russian phraseological euphemisms have the following allomorphic characteristics: the etymological connection of a number of euphemistic units with works of poetic or prosaic nature created by Russian or Soviet authors; the presence of euphemisms-sovietisms that appeared in the Russian language in the twentieth century and are inextricably linked with the tragic events for millions of people in our country. The allomorphic features of the etymological level of manifestation of the national- and cultural specificity of English phraseological euphemisms are as follows: the presence of so-called Americanisms, nominating the features of historical development, and everyday life in the United States; reflection of the colonial policy of Great Britain, as well as the intervention of the United States and Great Britain in the affairs of the former colonies and other independent states in the euphemistic stock of the English language.*

**Keywords:** *phraseological euphemism, national and cultural specificity, prototype, etymological level, etymological data*

Interest in the study of the national and cultural specifics of phraseological units has significantly increased in linguistic research over the past two to three decades, R.R. Zamaletdinov believes that phraseological units can be considered as a bundle of culturally significant information, since national and cultural stereotypes and standards are laid when phraseological units appear in the language and are consolidated in the language system [Zamaletdinov 2009]. The analysis of the spheres and sources of the formation of phraseological units, in the terminology of R.Kh. Khairullina, is based on the characteristics of extralinguistic factors of formation of stable expressions [Comparative cultural linguistics 2015]. From our point of view, in this case we

are talking about the etymological component, i.e. the emergence of a phraseological unit is associated with some extralinguistic phenomenon. As the third component of the regional geographic value of phraseological units, E.M. Vereshchagin and V.G. Kostomarov call the ability of these units to reflect the national culture by their prototypes due to the fact that “genetically free phrases describe certain customs, traditions, details of everyday life, cultural facts, historical events, etc.” [Vereshchagin 1983: 85]. At the same time, in many cases, the knowledge of traditions, customs, and historical factors in the development of society of native speakers gives us a clear picture of the manifestation of the national and cultural specifics of these units.

Thus, the etymological criterion indicates the origin of the phraseological unit, its initial use by native speakers associated with some national and cultural characteristics. The borderline between the etymological criterion and the prototypical component of phraseological units is extra-linguistic data, fixed in the figurative basis of the free phrase underlying the phraseological unit.

The study of phraseological euphemisms began only in the last two or three decades. It is indicated in their definition that they “are complex linguistic unities characterized by rethinking of meaning, separate formality, lexical and grammatical stability with the possibility of contextual transformations, imagery and high significance of the connotational component in the structure of phraseological meaning. A distinctive feature of phraseological euphemisms is their ability to express socially and morally unacceptable or taboo extra-linguistic denotations by using neutral, positively assessed or, in some cases, sublime images” [Arsentyeva 2012: 5].

Linguists agree that euphemisms are extralinguistic in nature. Thus, the etymological criterion is one of the main criteria for determining the national and cultural originality of phraseological units and euphemisms. Only knowledge of some historical realities, facts from the life of native speakers allows us to reveal the peculiarity of the manifestation of the national specifics of Russian and English euphemistic units.

Let us turn to the analysis of the linguistic material.

The historical euphemism “лютый зверь”, meaning lynx, is associated with the taboo name of this wild animal among the Russian people. E.P. Senichkina quotes a statement from the historical work of B.A. Rybakov "Paganism of Ancient Slavs": “In some Russian dialects (for example, Vyatka), the lynx is called a “fierce beast” (“лютый зверь”), without mentioning the word lynx, which speaks of the taboo of the sacred animal ... The *fierce beast* is mentioned by Vladimir Monomakh: a lynx jumped onto his saddle. The possibility is not excluded that the cult of the lynx goes back to much earlier times. Amulets in the form of a lynx, as if ready to jump, were to be considered reliable guards. The fierce beast is the largest feline of our latitudes and one of the strongest and most agile predators of the Russian forests. The lynx's stay in

the trees, jumping from top to bottom could contribute to its rapprochement with the heavenly symbols” [cit. according to: Senichkina 2008: 182–183].

The veiled designation of such a sin as drunkenness with the help of a colloquial euphemistic phraseological unit with an emotive seme of irony “за галстук (за воротник) закладывать (заложить)”, used since the middle of the 18th century in the everyday life of the Russian Europeanized nobility, owes its appearance to the great Colonel Raevsky. In the "Dictionary of Euphemisms of the Russian Language" the words of V.V. Vinogradov are given: “P.A. Vyazemsky in the "Old notebook" talks about the inventor of this expression, about the favorite of the brother of Emperor Nicholas – Grand Duke Mikhail Pavlovich – a wit, Guards Colonel Raevsky: “He was a fluff and joker; was in some respects a linguist, at least enriched the guards language with many new words and expressions, for example: *lay for a tie* ... As the word shows, the *tie* came out of the privileged classes. *Lay* indirectly hints at the military environment, as a place of its widespread distribution (cf., *lay a shell, mine*)” [cit. according to: Senichkina 2008: 127].

The colloquial outdated playful euphemistic expression “дать (здать) березовой каше кому” – ‘whip someone with rods’ in the "Historical and Etymological Dictionary" is considered both as a proper Russian expression, and as East Slavic, and as known to other Slavic dialects and languages ... It is indicated that as a proper Russian expression, it was based on the pun on the name of birch rods, which in the old days were used to punish negligent students for disobedience or for not preparing lessons. It is believed that the expression is jokingly ironic, since such punishment for idlers was painful but safe [Birikh 2007: 295].

The brainchild of the second half of the twentieth century, the Russian colloquial phraseological euphemism “компания на троих” with the meaning ‘three of us drinking a bottle of wine or vodka’ is directly related to the cost of a bottle of vodka, which was then estimated at three rubles. A.M. Katsev describes the "basis" for the creation of this euphemism as follows: “Unfamiliar men after work, without going home, gathered near vodka shops and looked for a "company": they put up money for a ruble, bought a bottle of vodka and went nearby and drank it right there, talked about life, "communicated”” [cit. according to: Senichkina 2008: 159].

The Russian phraseological euphemism “вставать (встать) с левой ноги” – ‘to be in a bad mood’, figuratively presented in English as "to stand on the wrong side of the bed" is of a great interest. The "Dictionary of Euphemisms of the Russian Language" indicates that we are talking about adverse events that are caused by getting up on the wrong foot, since the concept of "left" can be euphemized. This phenomenon is associated with prejudice and is not accidental, since the left leg is a sign of Satan: “he starts with the left, he also “limps on his left leg”, he also “leads to the left” [Senichkina 2008: 90].

The literal meaning of the English phraseological euphemism “awful experiment” does not allow us to understand its meaning ‘the prohibition of sale and consumption of intoxicants in the USA from 1920 to 1933’ without referring to etymological data. The emergence of this euphemism is associated with the ban on the sale and consumption of alcoholic beverages and intoxicants in the United States from 1920 to 1933. The results of this prohibition were that intoxicants were forced into illegality of production and consumption, awful for the impetus that gave to organized crime, which bedevils parts of the country still [Holder 1995: 16].

The euphemistic phraseological unit “beer and sandwiches <at Number 10>” with the meaning ‘political appeasement of a trade union in an industrial dispute’ is of a great interest. The location – Number 10, Downing Street – was the residence of the British Prime Minister, and the fare was that thought to be agreeable to the trade union leaders whom he was trying to propitiate [Holder 1995: 25].

The common English expression “to catch a cold” takes on its euphemistic meaning ‘to contract gonorrhea’ in connection with the SWW during which ‘the British Army soldiers could ‘get themselves into trouble’ [Holder 1995: 57].

The practice of setting a victim's lower legs in a concrete block to prevent subsequent floating and discovery of the corpse by the police underlies the emergence of an English euphemism with two variable lexical components “<in> cement (concrete) shoes” with the meaning ‘murdered and hidden’ [Holder 1995: 58].

English phraseological euphemism “cream crackered (cnackered)” has the meaning ‘exhausted’ and appeared in 1980s rhyming slang for ‘knackered’ [Lexico <http://>]. The expression was first used on the BBC Radio on 21 September 1987 by a reporter describing his exhaustion after a period of competitive rowing [Holder 1995: 86]. The semantics of the phraseological euphemism was also influenced by the meaning of the component of Anglicism “cnackered”, meaning ‘worn out, exhausted, worn out’.

Anglicism “to cross the floor” with the meaning ‘to change political allegiance’ owes its etymology to the accepted procedures in the House of Commons of Great Britain. The seating arrangements in the House of Commons have the opponents facing each other across the floor of the House. If a representative of one-party changes parties, he (she) sits the other side the supporters of his former party [Holder 1995: 88].

The English phraseological euphemism “fishing expedition” with the meaning ‘a foreign trip to seek a husband’ is of considerable interest from an etymological point of view. According to the data of R. Holder's “Dictionary of Euphemisms”, simple British girls were sent to Malta or India, where they might meet naval or army officers on extended tours in societies [Holder 1995: 133].

Only the Russian language is characterized by the presence of phraseological euphemisms, etymologically associated with any work created by a Russian or Soviet author, most often a poetic or prose work.

Therefore, for example, vomiting is indicated by the colloquial euphemistic expression “бахчисарайский фонтан” with an emotive sense of irony. The linguistic unit was created based on the title of the work of A.S. Pushkin's "Fountain of Bakhchisarai". Phraseological euphemism “палата номер шесть” with the meaning ‘insane asylum; group of madmen’ as its basis has the title of the story by A.P. Chekhov's "Ward number six", the main content of which is associated with the description of the insane asylum. The colloquial veiled expression “индейская хижина” instead of the abusive “фиг вам”, which has been recorded as a euphemism in Russian since the end of the 20th century, appeared after the release of a series of cartoons based on E. Uspensky's story "Uncle Fedor's Aunt, or Escape from Prostokvashino". The euphemism arose on the basis of the sound similarity between the abusive refusal “фиг вам” and the name of the Indian hut “вигвам” [Senichkina 2008: 143]. And, finally, the appearance of the meaning ‘cemetery’ of the phraseological unit “вечный покой” is associated with the title of the picture of the famous Russian artist I.I. Levitan "Above Eternal Peace". All four phraseological euphemisms also have vivid imagery.

The colonial policy of Great Britain, the intervention of the United States and Great Britain in the affairs of the former colonies and other independent states is also reflected in the English phraseological stock of euphemisms. First of all, attention is drawn to the presence of such phraseological euphemisms regarding the peculiarities of life and household chores in India, a former British colony.

Thus, for example, the expression “to drink mild” is labeled Indian and the designation of restriction of use is ‘of a baby’, the meaning of this euphemism ‘to drown’. The Parsees set a high value on male children and used to drown females in milk. Holder's dictionary presents the example of this euphemistic expression usage:

*... if it were a daughter, Bapaiji swore she would make it **drink milk**; all good women, so she contended, hated their sex* [Holder 1995:109].

The representative of the untouchables in Indian society is called the beautiful name “child of God” [Holder 1995: 62].

The phraseological euphemism “Civil Co-operation Bureau” entered the phraseological stock of the English language from the South African dialect of British English. This expression is a South African variant and means a unit established by government to try to perpetuate white political domination [Holder 1995: 64].

Just understanding what could have happened to white British officers at the end of the period of English colonization of Zimbabwe (the original name of the country is Rhodesia, English colonization from the end of the 19th century

until the end of the 1980s of the 20th century) can give us knowledge about the appearance of the meaning of 'torture' in the English phraseological euphemism "appropriate technology". The prototype of the free word combination of the euphemism does not give us the opportunity to establish the national and cultural specifics of this euphemism. Originally euphemistic unit "appropriate technology" was used by the Daily Telegraph in September 1983 to describe the actions of Home Affairs Minister of Zimbabwe Ushewokunze under the Mugabe government, who introduced the practice of torturing white British officers. In the House of Assembly, Harare's Commons he used this expression to refer to torture with electric shock, which forces inmates to give out all the information requested. Speech by Ushewokunze drew appreciative nods from his colleagues [Holder 1995: 11].

The Gulf War "gave birth" to the euphemistic expression of the Gulf War usage "circular error probability" – 'the extent to which ordnance will miss the target' for the veiled camouflage of killing military and civilians. R. Holder's dictionary also gives an example of the use of this euphemism:

*There was something called **circular error probability**, which simply meant the area where a bomb or missile was likely to fall* [Holder 1995:64].

Linguistic units were also identified among the Phraseological euphemisms with the etymological level of manifestation of national-cultural specificity were also identified in the American variant of the English language? They have the territorial label Amer.

For example, the phraseological euphemism of American usage "cactus juice" means 'an intoxicant'. It is supposed that cactus juice is able to save the life of a traveler dying of thirst. This phraseological euphemism is usually a coded name of tequila, especially in states bordering on Mexico [Holder 1995:51].

Another phraseological euphemism of the American sphere of use "eye in the sky", meaning 'a police helicopter', was first used as the American Citizens' band expression to warn other truckers of possible speed assessment by the police working from that vantage point. Euphemisation is traced along the line of the veiled name of the police to warn drivers of unwanted speeding tickets [Holder 1995: 123].

The English phraseological euphemism "bonds of life being gradually dissolves" is used to denote the slow process of leaving to another world. In this example, we observe the unification of two levels of identifying national and cultural specifics: the etymological and the level of the prototype of expression, i.e. the level of figurative components, since the direct meaning of the prototype allows us to represent figuratively the process of slow extinction of human life. From an etymological point of view, this euphemism is associated with Bath Abbey in Great Britain, where this colorful and poetic expression was first used. "R. Holder's dictionary of euphemisms indicates that this abbey offers many such delightful if morbid evasions like:

*“She winged her Flight from this World in expectation of a better, the 15<sup>th</sup> January”* [Holder 1995:39].

For billiards players, the prototype of the euphemistic expression of Americanism “behind the eight ball” Amer. is quite understandable with the meaning ‘in severe difficulty’. The meaning is connected with potentially losing position in the game of pool, “billiards-eight”, a variation of the American pool [Holder 1995: 25].

Another vividly marked feature of Russian phraseological euphemisms of the twentieth century is their inextricable connection with the historical events of our country, which are often tragic in nature.

Thus, for example, it is quite clear that such a concept as “enemy” finds its linguistic expression in the phraseological stocks of both languages; therefore, we are not talking about non-equivalent units. At the same time, the Russian euphemistic expression “вредный элемент” does not mean just an enemy. We are talking about ‘anti-Soviet people acting to the detriment of the national economy’ [Senichkina 2008: 87].

The terrible era of Stalin's repressions of the thirties was reflected in the phraseological euphemisms “набор тридцать седьмого года” – ‘arrests in the thirty-seventh year’ and “десять лет без права переписки” – ‘shooting’. The last euphemism-Sovietism is based on the formulation of a sentence in the thirties and fifties of the twentieth century. Such linguistic units, on the one hand, are a vivid manifestation of the etymological level of manifestation of national and cultural specificity, on the other hand, due to the “specificity” of the historical events of our country, they do not have phraseological equivalents and analogues in the English language. Therefore, in a number of cases it is rather difficult to distinguish which level of manifestation of the national and cultural specificity of this or that Russian phraseological euphemism is dominant. It is probably more correct in these cases to speak of an inextricable connection between the etymological level and the level of aggregate phraseological meaning of such units.

From this point of view, the phraseological euphemism-Sovietism “вставать (встать) на путь исправления” – ‘to become an informer in a prison, camp’ is of interest. V.M. Mokienko points out that embarking on the path of correction meant starting cooperation with the leadership of the camp through denunciation and informing. This term was unofficially used by the Chekists in relation to prisoners, otherwise called informers, who collaborated with them. Article ICT-70 lists “incentive measures for convicts who have firmly embarked on the path of correction” [cit. according to: Senichkina 2008: 90].

Each new stage of the country's development “generated” new phraseological euphemisms. So, for example, the appearance of the expression “имели место нарушения социальной законности” refers to the era of the seventies – the first half of the eighties. The reason for the appearance of the expression is indicated in the following example:

*“в скорлупу эфемизмов прятали истинное значение слов. Вы утверждаете, что в 30-е годы был разгул террора? А мы считаем, что всего-навсего **“имели место нарушения социальной законности”**»* [Сеничкина 2008:142–143].

The names of military institutions and the actions they performed were euphemized. Thus, there appeared euphemistic expressions of the Sovietism “особый отдел” – ‘department of detective service and censorship in military units (army and navy)’, “объект 1” – ‘a military institution; any secret, closed institution’, “объект 2” – ‘a person under secret surveillance’. Those killed during military service, including during the war in Afghanistan, were called “груз-2000” according to the number ciphers “200”, which means transporting the bodies of the dead.

Perestroika also contributed to the creation of Russian new phraseological euphemisms. The euphemistic expression “антиперестроечные элементы” appears with the meaning ‘political opposition’, which has been fixed as a euphemism since the end of the twentieth century.

To sum it up, one of the levels of manifestation of the national and cultural specificity of phraseological euphemisms is the etymological level. It is the knowledge of historical realities, events, the way of life of native speakers of the Russian and English languages that give us the opportunity to understand the meaning of such units, and the national realities themselves introduce national and cultural specifics into their meaning. The conducted comparative analysis shows that phraseological euphemisms can denote a variety of phenomena, actions, events, including those of a purely national character.

Phraseological euphemisms etymologically associated with any work, poetic or a prose one, created by a Russian or Soviet author were found only in the Russian language.

In English, the so-called Americanisms are distinguished, reflecting the peculiarities of historical development and life in the United States, as well as phraseological euphemisms associated with the colonial policy of Great Britain. The latter ones as well as some Americanisms may be connected with the intervention of the United States and Great Britain in the affairs of former colonies and other independent states.

There are euphemisms-Sovietisms that appeared in the Russian language in the twentieth century and are inextricably linked with the tragic events for millions of people in our country, such as the Stalinist repressions, the fight against dissent, the perestroika era.



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