

**PRESENTATION OF VARIABILITY, PARADIGMATIC FORMS  
AND SYNTACTIC RELATIONS OF STABLE EXPRESSIONS  
IN "RUSSIAN-ENGLISH DICTIONARY OF  
PHRASEOLOGICAL EUPHEMISMS"**

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*The article deals with the problem of adequate presentation of such typical features of Russian phraseological euphemisms and their English phraseological counterparts as variability, paradigmatic forms and syntactic relations in the "Russian-English Dictionary of Phraseological Euphemisms" which is being compiled now. The dictionary is the first bilingual dictionary of euphemistic units in both languages. The results of the multidimensional comparative analysis of Russian and English phraseological euphemisms help to solve the problems arising in the process of the dictionary compilation. All the types of variants including formal (phonetic, morphological, graphic-orthographic, lexico-derivational, morphological-syntactic, lexico-grammatical), lexical, optional and mixed ones are presented in the dictionary, as well as paradigmatic completeness/incompleteness and syntagmatic relations of Russian phraseological euphemisms with other words in speech.*

***Keywords:** phraseological euphemism, variability, types of variants, paradigmatic forms, syntagmatic relations*

One of the aims of our research of Russian and English phraseological euphemisms is the compilation of the "Russian-English Dictionary of Phraseological Euphemisms" which means also an adequate solution of many problems set before the compilers of bilingual phraseological dictionaries [Arsentyeva 2021]. The dictionary contains more than 1700 Russian phraseological euphemisms and their phraseological and non-phraseological counterparts in English. The majority of English phraseological counterparts are also euphemistic phraseologisms, others belong to English phraseological stock, but their euphemistic function is limited, all of them are stable expressions with wholly or partially transferred meaning.

Phraseological euphemisms "are complex linguistic unities characterized by transference of meaning, separability, 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].

Correct and complete presentation of euphemistic and phraseological units of both languages is necessary in the process of compiling the "Russian-English Dictionary of Phraseological Euphemisms", which implies a complete reflection of the variability of the linguistic units of the Russian and English languages, the reflection of their paradigmatic forms and syntagmatic relations.

Let us first of all turn to the consideration of the notion of variability in the language, in general, and in phraseology, in particular. The general understanding of variability is presented in the "Linguistic Encyclopedic Dictionary", and two senses of variability are distinguished. In the first sense, variability is considered as “the presentation of different ways of expressing any linguistic entity in the form of its modification, variety, or as a deviation from a certain norm” [LED 1990: 80]. The second meaning of variability emphasizes this phenomenon as a fundamental property of the language system, therefore this notion is designated as “the term characterizing the way of existence and functioning of language units and the language system as a whole” [LED 1990: 80]. When defining different types of variants in a language, it is also important to understand correctly the concept of “variant” itself. This term is understood by the compilers of the dictionary as “different manifestations of the same entity, for example, a modification of the same unit, which, with all its changes, remains itself” [LED 1990: 80].

A deep analysis of the history of the study of variability as a linguistic problem is presented in the work of T.N. Fedulenkova [Fedulenkova 2005]. The scientist considers two different points of view on the variability phenomenon in the language. According to the first point of view, variability is an excessive, anomalous phenomenon. However, most researchers adhere to the second point of view and regard variability as a fundamental property of the language, without which its changes and development are impossible. Indeed, one cannot but agree with the statement of F.P. Filin, who argues that variability is “one of the most important conditions of the development of a language, since ... many shifts occur at all language levels through a change in the relationships between options” [cit. according to: Fedulenkova 2005: 62]. The article of T.N. Fedulenkova presents the points of view of such well-known Russian scientists as E.S. Paulaskene, V.I. Zimin, A.I. Smirnitsky, N.N. Amosova, A.V. Kunin, V.N. Teliya, N.D. Arutyunova, E.I. Dibrova, G.I. Kramorenko and others [Paulaskene 1957; Zimin 1994; Smirnitsky 1956; Amosova 1963; Kunin 1984; Teliya 2017; Arutyunova 1988; Dibrova 1979; Kramorenko 1962].

The second half of the XX and the beginning of the XXI century were the periods of close attention of native and foreign researchers to the study of

phraseological variability. Scientists consider variability in the sphere of phraseology as a rather widespread phenomenon [Zhukov 1978; Eckert 1987; Khusnutdinov 1996; Arsenteva 1993; 2006; Moon 1998; Zholobova 2005; Yuzdova 2009; Ayupova 2010; 2013; Matveeva 2017; Zhevnerovich 2018; Zinnatullina 2019].

E.I. Dibrova made a great contribution to the study of the problem of phraseological variability in the Russian language [Dibrova 1979]. While analyzing the features of the manifestation of variability in Russian phraseological units, V.P. Zhukov indicates that this phenomenon is mainly inherent in motivated phraseological units [Zhukov 1978].

The English researcher R. Moon comes to the conclusion that about 40% of fixed expressions in the English language have lexical variations [Moon 1998]. As a result of the analysis of the peculiarities of phraseological variability in the English language, A.V. Kunin combines this concept with the phenomenon of separability. According to him, the allocation of such a criterion as a variant separability is of particular importance for phraseological units, the only indicator of the separability of which is their separate spelling [Kunin 1996].

The variability of phraseological units in the comparative aspect was the object of research in the monograph by E.F. Arsenteva, candidate dissertations by A.O. Zholobova and Yu.O. Matveeva, doctoral dissertation by R.A. Ayupova [Arsenteva 2006; Zholobova 2005; Matveeva 2017; Ayupova 2013]. In our opinion, it is important to understand the fact that “variability in the sphere of phraseology is the perception of different ways of expressing one or more phraseological units, in which the invariant of the meaning does not undergo any changes. Variability in phraseology is due to variability in language” [Ayupova 2013: 209].

The importance of the correct phraseographic description of variants of phraseological units of different languages is indicated by R. Eckert, E.F. Arsenteva, R.A. Ayupova, Yu.O. Matveeva and other native scientists [Eckert 1987; Arsenteva 2006; Ayupova 2013; Matveeva 2017]. In this regard, bilingual dictionaries pose a particular difficulty, since not only correct, but also uniform recording of all types of phraseological variants is necessary in both languages.

One of the first scientific classifications of phraseological variants in the English language was developed by A.V. Kunin, who identified the following types of variants according to the way of their formation: lexical, grammatical, positional, quantitative and mixed ones. In turn, lexical variants are subdivided by the scientist depending on the type of phraseological units, attributive-substantive; prepositional-nominal substantive, adverbial, verbal and adjectival phraseological units with lexical variants are distinguished. Grammatical variants, in turn, are subdivided into morphological, syntactic and morphological-syntactic ones [Kunin 1996].

We present our own classification of variants of phraseological euphemisms of the Russian and English languages by taking into account Kunin's classification, as well as detailed classifications of phraseological variants by T.N. Fedulenkova, E.F. Arsenteva, R. Moon, A.O. Zholobova and Yu.O. Matveeva [Fedulenkova 2014; Arsenteva 2006; Moon 1998; Zholobova 2005; Matveeva 2017]. Phonetic variants of phraseological euphemisms are typical of Russian phraseological euphemisms, graphic-orthographic (in R. Moon's terminology, spelling variations) and morphological-syntactic variants were found only among semantically transferred English phraseological units, morphological, lexico-grammatical, lexical, optional and mixed options exist in both languages. Despite the fact that lexico-derivational variants (in the terminology of A.O. Zholobova) are presented in the phraseological stocks of both languages, these variants are highlighted only in Russian in our material. Morphological-syntactic variants are extremely rare. We did not find accentological variants of Russian phraseological euphemisms in the selected material though they exist in the Russian phraseological stock.

All the above mentioned variants of Russian and English phraseological euphemisms are presented in the "Russian-English Dictionary of Phraseological Euphemisms", optional variants are enclosed in broken brackets, all other types of options are given in parentheses.

Phonetic variants have several examples in Russian: “дать **трэзвон** (**трэзвону**)”, “задавать **трэзвон** (**трэзвону**). задать **трэзвон** (**трэзвону**)”, “держать на **откупу** (**откупе**) кого-л.”, “**золотой** (**златой**) телец”.

Graphic-orthographic options, which are separate or hyphenated spelling, the design of individual components with a capital or lowercase letter, as well as the spelling of separate phraseological euphemism components using abbreviations, are presented in English: “to give smb a good dressing<->down”, “common<->law husband”, “common<->law wife”, “dead conscripts (Conscripts)”, “to fall into delirium tremens (DTs)”. Hyphenated spelling is given in the dictionary with the help of a hyphen, enclosed in broken brackets.

Morphological variants, which are represented mainly by the alternation of the singular and plural, or case forms, are identified in both languages: “без **признаков** (**признака**) жизни кто”, “в **тягости** (**тягостях**)”, “**дело** (**дела**) швах”, “without **signs** (**sign**) of life who”, “in **burden** (**burdens**)”, “затмение **ума** (**в уме**)”, “**ladies** (**ladies'**) room”. As the last two examples show, the variability of case forms in the Russian language is limited to isolated cases, therefore it is difficult to judge the frequency of the use of one or another case of a noun. In English, due to the presence of only two cases, we observe the alternation of the Common and the Possessive (Genitive) cases. In the Russian language, we also discovered the euphemistic expression “есть **просит** (**просят**)” with alternating singular and plural verbs.

Despite the fact that lexico-derivational variants were identified by scientists in the phraseological stocks of both languages, this type of variants

was found only in Russian euphemistic units, and the absolute number of examples falls on the variability of the perfect and imperfect forms of verbs:

“в места не столь отдаленные **идти**. в места не столь отдаленные **пойти**”, “**вводить** в заблуждение. **ввести** в заблуждение”, “**вставлять** на путь исправления. **встать** на путь исправления”, “**давать** прикурить. **дать** прикурить”. Phraseological euphemisms with a sentence structure, in which we observe the alternation of the verb in the present, future or past tense, are also of interest: “дело **крякнет**. дело **крякнуло**”, “ветром **надувает**. ветром **надуло**”, “дом **едет**. дом **поехал**”, “душа **отлетает**. душа **отлетит**”, “жизнь **угасает**. жизнь **угаснет**”, “жизнь **отлетает**. жизнь **отлетит**”. Scientists did not distinguish this type of lexico-derivational variants previously. Lexico-derivational variants with suffixal modifications are represented by isolated cases: “душа (душенька) с телом расстается”.

Isolated examples of morphological-syntactic variants with a change in syntactic relations were found in the English language: “to rap **smb over the knuckles** (to rap **smb's knuckles**)”.

Lexico-grammatical variants with the alternation of part-of-speech components of phraseological euphemisms are presented in English and Russian in a very limited number: “great **certainty (leveler, perhaps)**” (alternation of noun and adverb), “in **a (some)** way” (alternation of the indefinite article and pronoun), “one's cup is **filled (full, full to the brim, overflowing, running over)**” (alternation of different grammatical forms of verb and adjective), “**без царя в голове кто. нет царя в голове**” (alternation of preposition and particle), “**бог знает кто (что, куда, как и т.п.)**” (alternation of pronoun and adverb).

Of interest are English linguistic units in which the indefinite pronoun “one’s” or “smb’s” is used in the dictionary form, but are replaced in the context by the possessive pronouns “his” or “her”, a noun or personal name in the possessive case, and as a variable component – the definite article: “to rattle **one's (the)** saber”, “**smb's (the)** hour has struck”, “to get **one's (the)** call”.

Lexical variants of Russian phraseological euphemisms and their English phraseological counterparts are most numerous in both languages, they are represented by different types: nominal, verbal, adjectival. The following parts of speech are used as lexical options: nouns, verbs, including phrasal verbs, adjectives, adverbs, prepositions, indefinite and definite articles (only in English): “**ангел (дух, князь) тьмы**”, “в некотором **роде (отношении)**”, “**second youth (spring)**”, “**smb's hour (turn, time)** has come”, “в любви **быть (жить, находиться)**”, “have **had (taken)** a little drop”, “to **exceed (pass)** the age limit”, “to **be fond of (to take to)** the bottle”, “in a **certain (delicate, interesting)** condition”, “to **some (a certain)** extent”, “**еле (чуть) дышать**”, “дела **как (что)** сажа бела” “three sheets **in (to)** the wind”, “**in (after)** a fashion”, “in **a (the)** family way”. The number of varied components can be limited to two or three, or be extended:

“засеребрились **волосы** (**виски, косы, пряди** и проч.)”, “**водить женщин** (девушек), **мужчин** (парней)”, “to **gild** (**sugar, sugar-coat, sweeten**) the pill”, “to **call** (**haul, rake, take**) smb over the coals”. Alternation of one or several components can be observed in both languages: “близость между **полами** (между **мужчиной и женщиной**)”, “to live on **air** (**next to nothing**)”. Synonyms (both ideographic and stylistic) can be used as variable components: “**делить ложе** (**постель**)”, “**годы** (**лета**) не маленькие”, “to **oil** (**grease**) smb’s palm”, as well as semantically close lexemes that have a common seme in the signification-denotational component of their meaning: “**дверь гроба** (**могилы**)”, “**держаться бутылочки** (**чарочки**)”, “to **depart** (**go**) to God”, and the components which are not semantically connected with each other: “smb **went out** (**lost**) his or her mind”. In the last example, we also observe the alternation of the possessive pronouns “his” and “her”, which replace the English indefinite pronoun “one’s”.

The difference between optional components and all other variation types lies in the possibility of their omission in the context, that’s why they are highlighted in the dictionary in the broken brackets for their correct recognition. In addition, such a dictionary representation of optional variants is considered the most acceptable in phraseography.

Different parts of speech, and both separate words and phrases can act as optional components. Thus, in the Russian language, we can often find the optional component “свой”: “блистать <**своим**> отсутствием”, “в <**своём**> марьяжном интересе”, “во всей <**своей**> красе”, “все <**свои**> онеры”. The structure of Russian phraseological euphemisms and their English phraseological counterparts can also include such parts of speech as a verb, in a limited number of cases in the function of an adverbial modifier: “ветер в карманах <**гуляет**>”, “время <**не жалея**> косит”; an adjective: “делать <**такие**> вещи”, “to give smb a <**good**> flogging”; a noun, also with a pronoun: “to breath one’s last <**breath, gasp**>”, “to cash in <**one’s chips**>”; a pronoun: “велеть <**вам**> долго жить”; an adverb: “<**часто**> заглядывать в рюмочку”; a particle: “<**as**> scarce as hen’s teeth”, and even an article: “to push up <**the**> daisies”. As noted above, the number of varied components can be different, including, but not limited to, a subordinate clause: “to give smb the business <**what for**>”, “to let smb have it <**with both barrels**>”, “to fear the Greeks <**even when bringing gifts**>”. Variability of optional components is more typical of English phraseological counterparts.

The last type of variants is mixed variants that combine various types of formal, lexical and optional variants. Their fixation in the dictionary requires special care and correct designation with the help of both round and broken brackets. The most important thing in mixed variants is the phenomenon that despite the fact that almost all components of phraseological euphemisms can be variants of different types, the integrity of meaning and structure of these units is preserved.

Here are just a few examples. The combination of lexical and optional variants we observe in the following English euphemistic units: “to **drain (drink)** the cup <of **misery (grief)** etc.> to the dregs” and “to drink **this (that)** cup <to the dregs>”. The examples show that optional variants can be found in the middle, at the end, or even at the beginning (e.g., adjectival English units) of phraseological euphemisms, the number of different variants can also differ.

Lexical, lexico-derivational and optional variants are present in the Russian euphemistic units “засыпать <вечным (последним, могильным, мертвым)> сном <навек>. заснуть <вечным (последним, могильным, мертвым)> сном <навек>” and “<навек> закрывать глаза (очи). <навек> закрывать глаза (очи)”. The last Russian phraseological euphemism is a vivid example that even all components of such units can serve as different types of variants.

The combination of lexical and lexico-derivational variants can be observed in the Russian euphemistic units “заливать горе (тоску). залить горе (тоску)” and “вынимать душу (дух) у кого-л. вынуть душу (дух) у кого-л.”. The prevalence of such a combination of variants within mixed variability can be explained by the presence of an imperfect and perfect forms of Russian verbs, as well as a greater occurrence of lexical variants in comparison with rarely encountered phonetic or morphological ones.

Still even the combination of lexico-derivational and phonetic variants, in the first case, and of lexical and morphological variants, in the second case, is observed in the following Russian euphemistic units: “задавать трезвон (трезвону). задать трезвон (трезвону)” and “в состоянии (условиях) алкогольного опьянения”. Thus, within mixed variability, we can meet a combination of two or three types of different variants.

In the process of making monolingual and bilingual phraseological dictionaries their compilers note the necessity of correct representation of phraseological unit paradigmatic completeness/incompleteness as well as their syntagmatic relations with other words in speech. We find a clear idea of the solution to this problem in the monograph by E.F. Arsenteva and candidate dissertation by Yu.O. Matveeva [Arsenteva 2006; Matveeva 2017]. Based on the already sufficiently developed solutions to the problem, we will briefly present the ways of reflection of the paradigmatic forms and syntactic relations of Russian phraseological euphemisms in our dictionary.

Unlimited in their paradigmatic forms, Russian euphemistic units are given in the dictionary in their initial, vocabulary, original form. Thus, verbal phraseological euphemisms are presented in the form of an infinitive of an imperfect and perfect form: “ложиться на стол. лечь на стол”, “лишать свободы. лишит свободы”, substantive and adjectival euphemisms – in the form of nominative case: “злачное место”, “заплечный (заплечных дел) мастер”, “стесненный в средствах”, “бывший в употреблении”.

Adverbial phraseological euphemisms, as a rule, have only one form in the Russian language, in which they are recorded in the dictionary: “на коммерческой основе”, “с нелегким сердцем”. Euphemistic units with a sentence structure, regardless of the type of sentence, are given in their established form in Russian: “мы ждем аиста”, “знаешь, как это называется?”, “булавка в голове бродит”, “было то, что было”.

However, in the case of paradigmatic incompleteness, only fixed forms are presented in the dictionary. Thus, verbal phraseological euphemisms can be given only in the form of a perfect or imperfect form: “зашибать хмелем”, “на ладан дышать”, “костей не соберешь”. The flawed paradigm of substantive and adjectival phraseological euphemisms is presented as the existence of only the singular or plural for substantive units, and a short form of the adjective for adjectival euphemistic units: “лохнесское чудовище”, “злая водица”, “люди старшего возраста”, “любовные утехи”, “гол как сокол”. Completely unchangeable forms are given in a dictionary entry in the only form inherent to them: “с подлецей”, “трудно лежать”, “так себе”, “рискни здоровьем”.

The Russian-English dictionary of phraseological euphemisms also reflects the syntactic relations of phraseological euphemisms with other words in speech, i.e. the grammatical compatibility of a euphemism with words, which is expressed with the help of indications, usually placed at the end of the euphemistic unit and represented by lowercase letters: “БЕЗ ПРЕДРАССУДКОВ кто”, “ВЗЯТЬ ЖИЗНЬ (ДУШУ) у кого”, “ВЗЯТЬ НЕЧЕГО с кого”, “КОТЕЛОК НЕ ВАРИТ у кого”. Cases of double grammatical transitivity are also subject to fixation: “БОГ ОБДЕЛИЛ кого чем”. In cases where grammatical indications are usually used in the middle of phraseological euphemisms, they are also placed in the middle of the euphemistic expression in the dictionary: “БУДЕТ кому-л. КИРДЫК”, “БЬЕТ чей-л. ЧАС”, “ЕСЛИ что с кем-л. СЛУЧИТСЯ”. The peculiarities of the euphemistic nomination from the point of view of reflecting the syntactic relations of phraseological euphemisms with other words find the following presentation in the dictionary: “ВРЯД ЛИ ЭТО МОЖНО СЧИТАТЬ + прил. с полож. оценкой”, “ВОТ ТАК + сущ. со знач. лица”. For the sake of fairness, it must be said that we borrowed such a representation of the peculiarities of the syntactic relations of Russian euphemistic units from the "Dictionary of Euphemisms of the Russian Language" by E.P. Senichkina [Senichkina 2008].

The so-called “phraseological lexico-syntactic paradigmatics”, considered as a kind of grammatical derivation in the process of forming phraseological units, which, according to V.G. Gak's point of view, are common in meaning, but differ in additional meanings [Gak 1987], is represented by several examples of Russian phraseological euphemisms. Similar euphemistic units are recorded in different dictionary entries: “ЛИШАТЬ НЕВИННОСТИ. ЛИШИТЬ НЕВИННОСТИ” and “ЛИШАТЬСЯ НЕВИННОСТИ.



ЛИШИТЬСЯ НЕВИННОСТИ”, “ЛИШАТЬ ЖИЗНИ” and “ЛИШИТЬСЯ ЖИЗНИ”.

To sum it up, all identified formal and lexical variants are enclosed in the "Russian-English Dictionary of Phraseological Euphemisms" in round brackets, optional variants – in broken brackets. Mixed variants are presented with appropriate design. The dictionary also reflects the completeness or inferiority of the paradigmatic forms of phraseological euphemisms, their syntactic relations with other words in speech, as well as the so-called phraseological lexico-syntactic paradigmatics.

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