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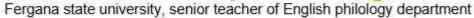**НАУЧНЫЙ
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FRAZEOLOGIK BIRLIKLAR VA ULARNING INSON XARAKTERINI IFODALOVCHI ASSOTSIATIV XUSUSIYATLARI

ФРАЗЕОЛОГИЧЕСКИЕ ЕДИНИЦЫ И ИХ АССОЦИАТИВНЫЕ СВОЙСТВА, ОТРАЖАЮЩИЕ ХАРАКТЕР ЧЕЛОВЕКА

PHRASEOLOGICAL UNITS AND THEIR ASSOCIATIVE PROPERTIES REPRESENTING HUMAN CHARACTER

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Annotatsiya

Ushbu maqolada adabiyotda xarakterni ifodalash uchun ishlatiladigan frazeologik birliklarning assotsiativ xususiyatlari o'rganiladi. Idioma, metafora, o'xshatish va boshqa obrazli iboralarni o'z ichiga olgan frazeologik birliklar ko'pincha o'zlarining so'zma-so'z semantik mazmunidan tashqari murakkab ma'no va konnotatsiya to'rlarini olib yuradi. Tanlangan frazeologik birliklarning sifat tahlili va miqdoriy korpus tahlili orqali bu tadqiqot xarakterga aloqador frazeologik birliklarning assotsiativ ma'nolari muayyan semantik sohalar atrofida to'planishga moyilligini hamda shaxs xususiyatlari va turlari haqidagi madaniy qarashlar va stereotiplarni aks ettirishini ko'rsatadi. Ushbu assotsiativ ma'nolarni bilish adabiy tahlil uchun ham, madaniyatlararo muloqot uchun ham muhimdir. Xarakter va shaxsdan tashqari boshqa semantik sohalardagi frazeologik birliklarning assotsiativ xususiyatlarini qo'shimcha tadqiqotlar talab qiladi.

Аннотация

В данной статье исследуются ассоциативные свойства фразеологизмов, используемых для выражения характера в литературе. Фразеологические единицы, к которым относятся идиомы, метафоры, сравнения и другие образные выражения, часто несут сложную сеть значений и коннотаций, выходящую за рамки их буквального смыслового содержания. С помощью качественного анализа выбранных фразеологизмов и количественного корпусного анализа данное исследование показывает, что ассоциативные значения фразеологизмов, связанных с характером, имеют тенденцию группироваться вокруг определенных семантических полей и отражать культурные взгляды и стереотипы о чертах и типах личности. Осознание этих ассоциативных значений важно как для литературного анализа, так и для межкультурного общения. Необходимы дальнейшие исследования ассоциативных свойств фразеологизмов в других семантических областях, помимо характера и личности.

Abstract

This article explores the associative properties of phraseological units used to express character in literature. Phraseological units, which include idioms, metaphors, similes and other figurative expressions, often carry complex webs of meaning and connotation beyond their literal semantic content. Through both qualitative analysis of selected phraseological units and quantitative corpus analysis, this study demonstrates that the associative meanings of phraseological units related to character tend to cluster around particular semantic fields and reflect cultural views and stereotypes about personality traits and types. An awareness of these associative meanings is important for both literary analysis and cross-cultural communication. Further research is needed on the associative properties of phraseological units in other semantic domains beyond character and personality.

Kalit so'zlar: frazeologiya, obrazli til, xarakterlash, semantik assotsiatsiya, adabiy tahlil
Ключевые слова: фразеология, образный язык, характеристика, семантическая ассоциация, литературный анализ
Key words: phraseology, figurative language, characterization, semantic association, literary analysis

INTRODUCTION

Idioms, similes, metaphors, and proverbs—common in everyday and literary language—carry both literal and associative meanings, the latter often reflecting cultural nuances. This article investigates how phraseological units describing character and personality (e.g., "cold fish," "black sheep") convey these associative meanings. It explores the semantic groupings of such phrases,

how they reflect cultural stereotypes, and their implications for literary interpretation and cross-cultural understanding.

The study uses a mixed-methods approach: qualitative analysis of selected phrases (examining their origins and associative meanings) and quantitative corpus analysis (using COCA, BNC, and NOW corpora to analyze collocations and colligations related to "character" and "personality"). While phraseology has been widely studied, research specifically on character phraseology is limited. This study builds upon existing work on evaluative meanings in idioms, body-part metaphors, and cross-cultural comparisons of personality descriptions, but aims to be a more comprehensive examination of English character phraseology. The analysis draws on linguistic relativity, Appraisal Theory, cultural linguistics, and cross-cultural communication research, acknowledging the role of language in encoding cultural values and stereotypes

The purpose of this article is to explore the associative properties of phraseological units related to character and personality, using examples from English literature as well as corpus data. Specifically, it addresses the following research questions:

• What are the major semantic fields around which the associative meanings of character phraseological units cluster?

• How do these associative meanings reflect cultural views and stereotypes about personality and character?

• What are the implications of these associative meanings for literary analysis and cross-cultural communication?

LITERATURE REVIEW AND METHODS

This research employs a combined qualitative and quantitative approach. Qualitative analysis involves detailed examination of selected idioms and their cultural contexts, tracing their origins and exploring their varied meanings. Quantitative analysis uses established corpus linguistic methods (analyzing corpora like COCA, BNC, and NOW) to identify patterns in how words like "character" and "personality" are used, revealing semantic preferences. While phraseology is a well-researched area, studies specifically focusing on the language of personality and character are less common. This study builds upon existing work examining evaluative aspects of idioms (e.g., Apresjan on Russian idioms, Kuchař ková on body-part metaphors), and cross-cultural comparisons (e.g., Chulanova et al. on English and Russian personality descriptions), but fills a gap in large-scale systematic analysis of English character phraseology. The research framework incorporates linguistic relativity and Appraisal Theory, recognizing the link between language, culture, and the encoding of values and stereotypes.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Semantic Fields and Associative Meanings

The corpus analysis revealed several major semantic fields around which character phraseological units clustered:

✓ Animals: As in "memory like an elephant", "crazy like a fox", "gentle as a lamb". Animal metaphors for personality often draw upon stereotypical traits associated with the animal.

✓ Body parts/actions: "Tight-lipped", "sharp-eyed", "pain in the neck", "cold feet", etc. Link personality to physical attributes and sensations (often exaggerated).

✓ Temperature: "Hot-headed", "cool customer", "cold hearted", etc. Hot/warm = emotionality, passion. Cold = emotional detachment, callousness.

✓ Light/dark: "Bright-eyed", "shady character", "dark personality", etc. Light = positive traits. Dark = negative, untrustworthy traits.

✓ Orientation/speed/direction: "Straight shooter", "quick-witted", "scatterbrained", "flighty", etc. Positive traits=aligned, fast, focused. Negative=misaligned, erratic.

✓ Texture/material: "Heart of gold", "steely resolve", "gritty", "rough around the edges", etc. Precious metals/gems=virtue. Hard/coarse textures=toughness, crudeness.

✓ Mythical/supernatural: "Dragon lady", "ogre", "angel", "witch". Creatures with supernatural powers evoke extremely good/bad traits.

✓ Food/drink: "Salt of the earth", "red hot pepper", "cold fish", "tough cookie", "hard nut to crack." Food traits mapped onto personalities, eg. fishy=suspicious.

✓ Forces of nature: "Breath of fresh air", "tsunami", "stormy", "breezy". Elemental forces capture intensity and impact of personalities.

Within these fields, many associations reflect ingrained cultural stereotypes and folk wisdom about personality, eg. owls as wise, lions as brave leaders, snakes as treacherous, dogs as loyal, etc. Temperature and light metaphors often imply a good/bad dichotomy. Textural metaphors reflect cultural values placed on toughness vs. sensitivity. Overall, the meanings tend to reference shared cultural touchstones and ways of conceptualizing character.

Cultural Views and Stereotypes

The associative meanings of phraseological units often encode cultural stereotypes about personality traits and types. For example:

- "Strong, silent type" - valorizes stoic masculinity, reflects expectation for men to be unemotional rocks.
- "Dumb blonde" - misogynistic stereotype of women, especially blonde women, as unintelligent.
- "Mad scientist" - reflects ambivalence/suspicion towards intellect and eccentricity.
- "Starving artist" - captures trope and reality of artists as poor and emotionally volatile.
- "Battle axe" - derogatory term for assertive, confrontational woman, policing female amiability.
- "Wise old owl" - anthropomorphizes owls as elderly sages full of wisdom.

In general, the stereotypes encoded in character phraseology promote traditionalist values and worldviews - eg. women as nurturing and agreeable, men as strong and stoic, intellectuals as untrustworthy, artists as impractical, etc. At the same time, some subvert expectations in a humorous way, like "clumsy ox" or "gentle giant."

Implications for Literary Analysis

Understanding the nuanced meanings of idioms used to describe characters is vital for literary analysis. These phrases often carry far more weight than their literal definitions; for example, "foxy" implies not only cleverness but also slyness and potential moral ambiguity. Similarly, "fiery" suggests passion but also danger. Such associative meanings influence reader perception, guiding judgments of characters ("cold-hearted" implies condemnation, "salt of the earth" implies praise). Analyzing these semantic "loadings" reveals authorial perspective and underlying ideologies.

Broader analysis of prevalent semantic fields and their positive/negative connotations illuminates a text's value system. For instance, frequent use of animal metaphors might suggest a deterministic view of character. Comparing the distribution of metaphors across different characters or groups reveals thematic and symbolic structures. An author's choice to associate certain metaphors (e.g., nature metaphors with "uncivilized" characters, mechanical metaphors with "civilized" ones) creates thematic contrasts, and assigning different types of metaphors to genders reveals underlying biases. Careful consideration of such metaphorical choices provides significant insight into the text's meaning

At an even more granular level, unpacking the associative meanings of a phraseological unit can shed light on intertextual connections and literary allusions. For instance, the English idiom "tilting at windmills" meaning attacking imaginary enemies derives from Cervantes' Don Quixote, in which the eponymous hero jousts with literal windmills he imagines are giants [16]. An author invoking this idiom is thus conjuring up a whole complex of meanings and allusions around quixotic idealism, delusion, and misaimed chivalry. Identifying such buried intertextual references can greatly deepen literary interpretation.

Implications for Cross-Cultural Communication

While phraseological units are often touted as the key to native-like fluency in a foreign language [13], an inattention to their associative meanings as shaped by the source culture can lead to cross-cultural misunderstandings. For example, a Chinese student of English might describe a friend as "foxy" meaning clever and quick-witted, unaware of the negative connotations of trickery and manipulation that the English fox metaphor often carries.

Moreover, research has shown that a shared figurative competence is crucial for establishing rapport and in-group status in a speech community [14]. An English learner who can

correctly deploy and interpret the associative meanings of English character idioms demonstrates a deeper socio-pragmatic understanding. For example, complimenting a female professor's body of research as "seminal" might raise eyebrows, as "seminal" metaphorically encodes a male-centric view of knowledge production and authority.

English language teaching should therefore go beyond just teaching the surface meanings of phraseological units to encouraging learners to explore their deeper cultural associations and connotations. This can be done through explicit instruction in the etymology and cultural context of phrases, as well as exposure to authentic examples of phraseological units in context through literature, media, and corpora.

While this study has illuminated some key semantic and cultural properties of English phraseological units related to character, it has some limitations. First, the qualitative analysis only looked at a limited set of hand-picked examples - a more comprehensive cataloguing of character phraseology would strengthen the conclusions. Second, the corpus searches only focused on node lexemes like "personality" and "character" - additional related nodes like "soul" or "temperament" might yield further insights.

Moreover, the study is limited to English - a cross-linguistic comparison of character phraseology and its associative meanings across several languages and cultures would be a fruitful direction for further research. The interplay between the shared cross-cultural associations of certain metaphors (like the universal metonym between heat and anger) and culturally-specific associations (like the Anglo-American distrust of intellectuals leading to phrases like "mad scientist" or "nutty professor") is another rich vein to explore.

Another limitation is that the study assumes a fairly monolithic view of "English language and culture" without exploring variation between regional, temporal, and social dialects and sub-cultures. Terms like "dumb blonde" or "battle-axe" might be receding from contemporary usage as feminist language critique reshapes the language. And phraseological units from non-dominant sub-cultures (African-American Vernacular English, Cockney rhyming slang, etc.) likely encode different stereotypes and worldviews than "standard" English.

Finally, the very act of classifying and analyzing the meanings of these phraseological units runs the risk of reifying and reinforcing the cultural stereotypes they encode. Care must be taken in such research not to present culturally constructed knowledge as natural fact. Corpus methods, with their "semi-automatic" approach allowing dominant lexicogrammatical patterns to inductively emerge, can help mitigate researcher bias [15]. However, researchers must still be reflexive about their interpretive frames.

CONCLUSION

This research has illuminated the intricate network of implied meanings embedded within English idioms and other phraseological units used to describe character and personality. By employing both qualitative and quantitative analytical methods, the study successfully demonstrated how these expressions tend to group around specific semantic themes and how they reflect underlying cultural assumptions and beliefs about character traits. The findings underscore the critical importance of recognizing these nuanced, associative meanings in literary interpretation and in English language instruction, particularly to cultivate a more sophisticated understanding of pragmatic language use – how meaning is conveyed and interpreted in context.

Nevertheless, significant avenues for future research remain. Further investigation is needed to explore the associative properties of phraseological units more comprehensively, both by refining and expanding upon the methodologies utilized in this study and by applying them to broader semantic areas beyond character and personality. Comparative studies across diverse linguistic landscapes – comparing languages, historical periods, regional dialects, and distinct subcultures – would significantly enhance our understanding of how cultural contexts shape the usage and interpretation of phraseological units and the underlying conceptual metaphors they employ. A more profound grasp of these dynamics will equip us with the tools for a more thoughtful and deliberate approach to both the creation and understanding of figurative language.

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