

ЯЗЫКИ НАРОДОВ ЗАРУБЕЖНЫХ СТРАН (С УКАЗАНИЕМ КОНКРЕТНОГО ЯЗЫКА ИЛИ ГРУППЫ ЯЗЫКОВ)/LANGUAGES OF PEOPLES OF FOREIGN COUNTRIES (INDICATING A SPECIFIC LANGUAGE OR GROUP OF LANGUAGES)

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.60797/RULB.2025.72.5>

ANALYSIS OF ENGLISH PHRASEOLOGICAL COMBINATIONS EXPRESSING INTENSIVE ACTION WITH A NEGATIVE RESULT

Research article

Malykhina N.I.^{1,*}, Mogilnichenko S.V.², Chernikova A.E.³

^{1,2,3} Military Training and Research Center of the Air Force "Military Air Academy named after Professor N.E. Zhukovsky and Yu.A. Gagarin", Voronezh, Russian Federation

* Corresponding author (kni.07[at]mail.ru)

Abstract

This research explores the semantic characteristics of English phraseological combinations that convey intensive actions resulting in negative outcomes. The study concentrates on analyzing phraseological combinations connected to human activities, emotional states, and behavioral patterns across four key groups: moral-ethical, psycho-physiological, intellectual-psychological and physical actions.

The analysis demonstrates that these English phraseological combinations often operate as pejoratives with synonymic series indicating different intensity degrees, reflecting cultural perspectives on specific behaviors and personality traits.

These findings significantly contribute to understanding the semantic organization of English phraseology.

Keywords: phraseological combinations, semantic analysis, negative evaluation (pejorative assessment).

АНАЛИЗ АНГЛИЙСКИХ ФРАЗЕОСОЧЕТАНИЙ, ВЫРАЖАЮЩИХ ИНТЕНСИВНОЕ ДЕЙСТВИЕ С ОТРИЦАТЕЛЬНЫМ РЕЗУЛЬТАТОМ

Научная статья

Малыхина Н.И.^{1,*}, Могильниченко С.В.², Черникова А.Э.³

^{1,2,3} Военный учебно-научный центр Военно-воздушных сил «Военно-воздушная академия имени профессора Н.Е. Жуковского и Ю.А. Гагарина», Воронеж, Российская Федерация

* Корреспондирующий автор (kni.07[at]mail.ru)

Аннотация

Данная статья посвящена изучению семантических характеристик английских фразеосочетаний со значением интенсивного действия с отрицательным результатом. Исследование сосредоточено на анализе фразеосочетаний, связанных с человеческой деятельностью, эмоциональным состоянием и моделями поведения в рамках четырёх основных групп: морально-этической, психофизиологической, интеллектуально-психологической и физической активности.

Анализ показывает, что изученные английские фразеосочетания часто функционируют как пейоративы с различной степенью интенсивности, что отражает национально-культурную специфику определённых моделей поведения человека и его черты характера.

Полученные результаты вносят значительный вклад в понимание семантической организации английской фразеологии.

Ключевые слова: фразеологические сочетания, семантический анализ, негативная оценка.

Introduction

The main task of phraseology is a comprehensive study of the phraseological fund of a language. Such aspects as the system nature of phraseology, the semantic structure of phraseological units, phraseological stability, the main functions of phraseological units have attracted the closest attention of linguists [1], [2]. In addition, linguists are developing the grounds for the classification of phraseological units, methods of their analysis, systematization and phraseography [3], [4].

Despite the steady interest of linguists in phraseology in general [5], [6], [7], comprehensive study of English phraseological combinations (PCs) that convey the meaning of intensive action with a negative result has not been conducted yet. The relevance of such a study is due to a number of interrelated factors: the insufficient study of the semantic characteristics and variability of the meanings of the units, the significant role of phraseological combinations as carriers of culturally specific information that reflects the national worldview (which is especially important in the context of globalization to prevent communicative failures); the increasing attention of psycholinguistics to the way such phraseological combinations encode emotional assessments and represent models of understanding unsuccessful actions, and the interdisciplinary potential of the research which allows for the integration of linguistic, cultural and psychological approaches.

The *purpose* of the study is to identify and describe the semantic features of English phraseological combinations expressing the meaning "to act intensively with a negative result" considering their emotionally evaluative component and culturally specific load.

Achieving this goal involves solving a number of specific tasks: to define the term "phraseological combinations" via contrasting broad/narrow approaches; to compile a corpus of English PCs meaning «to act intensively with a negative

result» (using lexicographical sources), to classify PCs into groups; to analyze semantic characteristics; to identify emotional and culture-specific connotations; to map synonymous PC series.

The *object* of the study is a group of English phraseological units that express intensive action with a negative result. The *subject* of the study is the semantic features of the phraseological units under consideration.

It seems appropriate to give a definition of the term "phraseological unit". Supporters of a broad approach understand phraseological units to include not only idioms, but also free combinations and refer to them as phraseological combinations [8]. Representatives of the narrow approach study idioms and phraseological units exclusively and refer to these units as "phraseological units" [9].

This work analyzes phraseological combinations, following the representatives of a broad approach to phraseology. Even though the broader conception of phraseology sometimes encompasses proverbs (paroemias) as part of phraseological units, the present work follows a more restrictive interpretation, concentrating solely on those phraseological combinations that serve nominative or expressive functions. Paroemias are "sentences, i.e., units with a closed structure, proverbs and sayings possessing semantic and intonational completeness, as well as categories of predicativity and modality, which distinguish them from phraseological units, which are most often expressed by a word or a phrase" [10, P. 98] (*translation ours*).

Many years of practice in teaching phraseology demonstrate that focusing on the analysis of specific PCs related to human description, their daily activities, and emotional responses leads to deeper understanding and better mastery of English phraseological expressions.

The relationship between emotions, language, and consciousness is the subject of many interdisciplinary studies, as emotions accompany humans in all aspects of their lives. Emotions were initially studied philosophically. According to Aristotle, Kant and Spinoza emotional acceptance or rejection plays a crucial role in knowledge acquisition [11]. The biological approach, based on Darwin's research, considers emotions universal due to human nature [12]. Psychologist Izard argued for genetic programming of emotions through facial expressions across cultures [13]. However, Russian psychologist Rubinstein criticized this view. They stressed that thinking is a unity of intellectual and emotional processes [14]. Linguists are particularly interested in the linguistic means used to express the speaker's emotions and to influence the listener's emotional state. Studying emotions linguistically is challenging, since "every time an attempt is made to ride emotions, once again and again one has to be amazed at how difficult it is to bring them under any general subject area..." [15, P. 161] (*translation ours*).

Main results

In the course of our research, phraseological combinations, their descriptions and literary illustrations have been obtained from *lexicographical sources* [16], [17], [18]. Phraseological combinations with an assessment of

- I) *moral and ethical* activity;
- II) *psycho-physiological* activity;
- III) *intellectual and psychological* activity;
- IV) *physical* activity have been singled out.

The criteria for grouping phraseological combinations are outlined during the detailed description of each group's semantics.

Due to our analysis, 26 English phraseological combinations under consideration out of 100 ones pertain to the first group, 14 — to the second, 33 — to the third and 27 — to the fourth. The characteristic feature of emotive-actional phraseological combinations is that their semantics is negative.

I. Let's consider emotive-actional phraseological combinations with an assessment of the subject's moral and ethical activities. We can distinguish two types among these PCs:

- 1) PCs that denote actions aimed at emotional and psychological influencing a person;
- 2) PCs denoting actions whose purpose is to have a moral and psychological effect on a person.

While the former are directed at emotions and feelings, the latter focus more on the moral and ethical aspects of a person's intellectual and psychological sphere.

Let's focus on the characteristics of the group of PCs, which refers to the emotional and psychological impact on a person. For example, "to anger": **MAKE SMB SEE RED** become extremely angry: *The mere thought of Piers with Nicole **made her see red**.*

The emotional and evaluative component contained in the meaning of the PCs of this group reflects the unseemly purpose (and method) of implementing the verbal action.

PCs that denote a person's moral and psychological state are distinguished into the following semantic series:

- a) "torture, exhaust": **TIRE SMB. OUT** to cause to become completely tired, exhaust: *The children **have really tired me out**;*
- b) "humiliate": **DRAG A PERSON'S NAME THROUGH THE MUD (THE MIRE)** to talk about publicly in a way that brought shame on a person: *His name **was dragged through the mire**.*

II. Among the emotive-actional phraseological combinations with an assessment of the subject's psycho-physiological activity the following PCs have been marked emotionally evaluative PCs with an evaluation of the way of a) seeing, b) speaking, c) laughing, d) crying, as well as e) PCs that characterize the intrusiveness of someone or something.

a) This group includes PCs with the meaning of "looking motionless in one direction" and "concentrating on a specific detail". **KEEP ONE'S EYES OPEN/ PEELED/ SKINNED** to watch carefully: *The thieves **kept their eyes peeled for the police**.*

b) Emotional and evaluative phraseological combinations with an evaluation of the way of speaking: **TILL ONE IS BLUE IN THE FACE** unsuccessful for ever: *You can call that dog **till you're blue in the face** but he'll never come.*

c) The PCs of this subgroup characterize the intensity of laughter: **BUST A GUT** to laugh very hard: *I thought I'd **bust a gut** when he fell off the wall.*

d) This subgroup of PCs explicates the degree of intensity of crying that denotes an action as a process: **CRY ONE'S EYES (HEART) OUT** to cry very sadly and usually for a long time, to the point where one can cry no more: *When his dog died he **cried his eyes out**.*

e) The meaning of most English PCs of this type contains the seme "obtrusiveness, annoyance": **BE FED UP WITH SMB** unhappy, tired, and not satisfied, especially about smth uninteresting, annoying: *I'm rather **fed up with** your complaints.*

III. Examples of English phraseological units with an assessment of the subject's intellectual and psychological activity are the following, meaning "to cheat, to rob": **CLEAN SMB. OUT** infml a) to take all the money of: *If we have to get our car repaired, we'll **be completely cleaned out**;* b) to steal everything from (a place): *The thieves **cleaned out** the store.*

Along with reflecting the intellectual feature, the emotional-evaluative component characterizes the unethical purpose of these PCs.

IV. Phraseological units with an assessment of the subject's physical activity are very diverse in their semantic composition and include PCs with the following meanings:

a) "physical destruction": **BEAT/SMASH SMB. (IN)TO A PULP**: *I'll beat/mash him (in)to a pulp if I catch him;*

b) "physical fatigue": **WORK ONE'S FINGERS TO THE BONE** to work very hard: *Farmers often **work their fingers to the bone** during the harvest season;*

c) "filling" **EAT ONESELF SICK (ON SMTH)** (informal) eat too much so that one either feels sick: *She'd **eat herself sick on** icecream if I let her;*

d) "physical condition" caused by weather conditions: **CHILLED/FROZEN TO THE BONE** infml feeling cold right through the body: *Come sit by the fire-you must be **chilled to the bone**.*

As can be seen from the above examples, phraseological combinations of the analyzed class can denote different degrees of manifestation of an action or feature – from low to the highest. It should be noted that English phraseological combinations have numerous synonyms.

Conclusion

Based on the analysis of four thematic groups of English phraseological combinations with the meaning "to act intensively with a negative result, it can be concluded that the analyzed PCs have the following semantic features:

- 1) There is a constant indicator of negative evaluation, and thus they can be called absolute phraseological pejoratives.
- 2) There are synonymous series of PCs associated with the gradation of the feature. Intensity is revealed from the contextual analysis, which emphasizes the presence of the seme "very" in the semantics of the PCs under consideration.
- 3) The speaker usually associates the analyzed PCs with the process, as well as with the result.
- 4) Based on the system of dictionary definitions, it is also possible to analyze the correspondence between the stylistic reduction of the PCs.

The study has also found out that human behavior is part of a person's evaluative activities. The thematic groups under consideration demonstrate the negative attitude of the English people towards certain aspects of life. In particular, according to the study, the unreasonable expenditure of a large amount of effort and energy on work is criticized, which can be harmful to health. Negative evaluations are given to unattractive personality traits such as stinginess, self-interest, annoyance and anger.

Конфликт интересов

Не указан.

Рецензия

Все статьи проходят рецензирование. Но рецензент или автор статьи предпочли не публиковать рецензию к этой статье в открытом доступе. Рецензия может быть предоставлена компетентным органам по запросу.

Conflict of Interest

None declared.

Review

All articles are peer-reviewed. But the reviewer or the author of the article chose not to publish a review of this article in the public domain. The review can be provided to the competent authorities upon request.

Список литературы / References

1. Смит Л.П. Фразеология английского языка / Л.П. Смит. — Москва : Учпедгиз, 1959. — 208 с.
2. Амосова Н.Н. Основы английской фразеологии / Н.Н. Амосова. — Ленинград : Издательство Ленинградского университета, 1963. — 208 с.
3. Арсентьева Е.Ф. Фразеология и фразеография в сопоставительном аспекте (на материале русского и английского языков) / Е.Ф. Арсентьева. — Казань : Казанский государственный университет, 2006. — 171 с.
4. Рогалева Е.И. Современная учебная фразеография: теория и практика : монография / Е.И. Рогалева. — Псков : Логос Плюс, 2014. — 343 с.
5. Ковшова М.Л. Лингвокультурологический метод во фразеологии: коды культуры / М.Л. Ковшова. — Москва : Книжный дом «ЛИБРОКОМ», 2013. — 2-е изд. — 453 с.
6. Никулин Е.А. Терминологизмы как результат взаимодействия и взаимовлияния терминологии и фразеологии современного английского языка : автореф. дис. ... д-ра филол. наук : 10.02.04 / Е.А. Никулин. — Москва, 2005. — 46 с.
7. Голенева Е.В. Англоязычные фразеологизмы с антропонимами: лингвокультурные характеристики и особенности перевода / Е.В. Голенева. — Екатеринбург, 2022. — 109 с.
8. Шанский Н.М. Фразеология современного русского языка / Н.М. Шанский. — Москва : Высшая школа, 1985. — 3-е изд. — 160 с.
9. Смирницкий А.И. Лексикология английского языка / А.И. Смирницкий. — Москва : Московский государственный университет, 1998. — 260 с.

10. Алефиренко Н.Ф. Фразеология и паремиология / Н.Ф. Алефиренко, Н.Н. Семенов. — Москва : ФЛИНТА, 2018. — 3-е изд., стер. — 344 с.
11. Бердяев Н.А. Философия творчества, культуры и искусства : в 2 т. / Н.А. Бердяев. — Москва : Искусство, 1994. — Т. 1. — 508 с.
12. Boucher D. Jerry Culture and Emotion / D. Boucher; edited by A.J. Marsella, R.G. Tharp, T.V. Caborowski // Perspectives on Cross-Cultural Psychology. — San Diego, 1979. — P. 159–178.
13. Изард К.Э. Психология эмоций / К.Э. Изард ; пер. с англ. — Санкт-Петербург : Питер, 2000. — 464 с.
14. Рубинштейн С.Л. Эмоции / С.Л. Рубинштейн // Психология эмоций. Тексты. — Москва : Московский государственный университет, 1993. — С. 160–170.
15. Дорфман Л.Я. Эмоции в искусстве: теоретические подходы и эмпирические исследования / Л.Я. Дорфман. — Москва : Смысл, 1997. — 424 с.
16. Кунин А.В. Большой англо-русский фразеологический словарь = Comprehensive English-Russian Phraseological Dictionary: около 20 000 фразеологических единиц / А.В. Кунин. — Москва : Просвещение, 2021. — 5-е изд., стер. — XVIII, 1210 с.
17. Литвинов П.П. Англо-русский фразеологический словарь / П.П. Литвинов. — Москва : ВАКО, 2005. — 336 с.
18. Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English: with new words supplement. — Harlow : Longman, 2000. — 3rd edition. — 1568 p.

Список литературы на английском языке / References in English

1. Smith L.P. Frazеologiya anglijskogo yazyka [English idioms (From words and idioms, studies in the English language)] / L.P. Smith. — Moscow : Uchpedgiz, 1959. — 208 p. [in Russian]
2. Amosova N.N. Osnovy anglijskoj frazeologii [Fundamentals of English phraseology] / N.N. Amosova. — Leningrad : Leningrad University Press, 1963. — 208 p. [in Russian]
3. Arsentieva E.F. Frazеologiya i frazeografiya v sopostavitel'nom aspekte (na materiale russkogo i anglijskogo yazykov) [Phraseology and phraseography in a comparative aspect (based on Russian and English languages)] / E.F. Arsentieva. — Kazan : Kazan State University, 2006. — 171 p. [in Russian]
4. Rogaleva E.I. Sovremennaya uchebnaya frazeografiya: teoriya i praktika [Modern educational phraseography: theory and practice] : monograph / E.I. Rogaleva. — Pskov : Logos Plus, 2014. — 343 p. [in Russian]
5. Kovshova M.L. Lingvokul'turologicheskij metod vo frazeologii: kody kul'tury [Linguocultural method in phraseology: culture codes] / M.L. Kovshova. — Moscow : LIBROCOM Book House, 2013. — 2nd edition. — 453 p. [in Russian]
6. Nikulin E.A. Terminologizmy kak rezul'tat vzaimodejstviya i vzaimovliyaniya terminologii i frazeologii sovremennogo anglijskogo yazyka [Terminologisms as a result of interaction and mutual influence of terminology and phraseology of modern English] : abst. of dis. ... of Grand PhD in Philology : 10.02.04 / E.A. Nikulin. — Moscow, 2005. — 46 p. [in Russian]
7. Goleneva E.V. Angloyazychnye frazeologizmy s antroponimami: lingvokul'turnye kharakteristiki i osobennosti perevoda [English phraseological units with anthroponyms: linguocultural characteristics and translation features] / E.V. Goleneva. — Yekaterinburg, 2022. — 109 p. [in Russian]
8. Shansky N.M. Frazеologiya sovremennogo russkogo yazyka [Phraseology of modern Russian] / N.M. Shansky. — Moscow : Higher School, 1985. — 3rd edition. — 160 p. [in Russian]
9. Smirnitky A.I. Leksikologiya anglijskogo yazyka [Lexicology of the English language] / A.I. Smirnitky. — Moscow : Moscow State University, 1998. — 260 p. [in Russian]
10. Alefirenko N.F. Frazеologiya i paremiologiya [Phraseology and paremiology] / N.F. Alefirenko, N.N. Semenenko. — Moscow : FLINTA, 2018. — 3rd edition, stereotype. — 344 p. [in Russian]
11. Berdyayev N.A. Filosofiya tvorchestva, kul'tury i iskusstva [Philosophy of creativity, culture and art] : in 2 vol. / N.A. Berdyayev. — Moscow : Iskusstvo, 1994. — Vol. 1. — 508 p. [in Russian]
12. Boucher D. Jerry Culture and Emotion / D. Boucher; edited by A.J. Marsella, R.G. Tharp, T.V. Caborowski // Perspectives on Cross-Cultural Psychology. — San Diego, 1979. — P. 159–178.
13. Izard C.E. Psikhologiya emocij [The Psychology of Emotions] / C.E. Izard ; transl. from English. — Saint Petersburg : Piter, 2000. — 464 p. [in Russian]
14. Rubinstein S.L. Emocii [Emotions] / S.L. Rubinstein // Psikhologiya emocij. Teksty [Psychology of emotions. Texts]. — Moscow : Moscow State University, 1993. — P. 160–170. [in Russian]
15. Dorfman L.Ya. Emocii v iskusstve: teoreticheskie podhody i empiricheskie issledovaniya [Emotions in art: theoretical approaches and empirical research] / L.Ya. Dorfman. — Moscow : Smysl, 1997. — 424 p. [in Russian]
16. Kunin A.V. Bol'shoj anglo-russkij frazeologicheskij slovar' = Comprehensive English-Russian Phraseological Dictionary: okolo 20 000 frazeologicheskikh edinic [Large English-Russian phraseological dictionary = Comprehensive English-Russian Phraseological Dictionary: about 20,000 phraseological units] / A.V. Kunin. — Moscow : Prosveshchenie, 2021. — 5th edition, stereotype. — XVIII, 1210 p. [in Russian]
17. Litvinov P.P. Anglo-russkij frazeologicheskij slovar' [English-Russian Phraseological Dictionary] / P.P. Litvinov. — Moscow : VAKO, 2005. — 336 p. [in Russian & English]
18. Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English: with new words supplement. — Harlow : Longman, 2000. — 3rd edition. — 1568 p.