

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)

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THE COGNITIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF PHRASEOLOGY (BASED ON PHRASEOLOGICAL SEMANTIC FIELD “LOVE” IN ENGLISH AND CHINESE)

Research article

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Abstract

The aim of the research is to reveal cognitive characteristics of phraseological units comprising phraseological semantic field “Love” in English and Chinese. The authors examine Chinese chengyu and guangyunyu and English idioms included in printed and online dictionaries and solve the following research tasks:

- 1) elaborate on the peculiarities of phraseological semantic field “Love” in English;
- 2) find out how different aspects of love are conveyed in phraseological semantic field “Love” in Chinese;
- 3) conduct a comparative analysis of phraseological representation of love in English and Chinese.

The scientific novelty of the work lies in the comprehensive study of specific, culturally determined models of phraseological verbalization of a particular emotion, namely “Love”. The research is of practical significance as its results contribute to theoretical and applied linguistics and can be used in teaching cross-cultural communication, translation and academic disciplines related to comparative studies of linguistic pictures of the world of unrelated languages.

Keywords: phraseological unit, phraseological semantic field, chengyu, guangyunyu, microfield “Love”.

КОГНИТИВНЫЕ ХАРАКТЕРИСТИКИ ФРАЗЕОЛОГИИ (НА МАТЕРИАЛЕ ФРАЗЕОСЕМАНТИЧЕСКОГО ПОЛЯ «ЛЮБОВЬ» В АНГЛИЙСКОМ И КИТАЙСКОМ ЯЗЫКАХ)

Научная статья

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Аннотация

Цель данной статьи – выявить когнитивные характеристики фразеологических единиц (далее ФЕ), входящих в состав фразеосемантического поля (далее ФСП) «Любовь» в английском и китайском языках. Материалом для исследования послужили английские идиомы и китайские ченьюй и гуаньюньюй, зафиксированные в печатных и электронных словарях, полученные методом сплошной выборки.

Авторами решаются следующие задачи:

- 1) определены основные особенности ФСП «Любовь» в английском языке;
- 2) изучено, как различные аспекты эмоции «Любовь» репрезентируются во ФСП «Любовь» в китайском языке;
- 3) проведен сравнительно-сопоставительный анализ фразеологической репрезентации эмоции «Любовь» в английском и китайском языках.

Научная новизна работы заключается в комплексном изучении специфических, культурно обусловленных моделей фразеологической вербализации отдельного сегмента эмоциональной жизни человека, эмоции «Любовь». Данное исследование имеет практическую значимость, поскольку его результаты вносят определенный вклад в теоретическую и практическую лингвистику и могут быть использованы в преподавании межкультурной коммуникации, перевода, а также дисциплин, связанных с изучением языковых картин неродственных языков.

Ключевые слова: фразеологическая единица, фразеосемантическое поле, ченьюй, гуаньюньюй, микрополе «Любовь», эмосема.

Introduction

Modern ideographic description of phraseological units within the anthropocentric paradigm helps to identify the features of the phraseological picture of the world, which is part of the linguistic picture of the world and a way to describe the reality by means of phraseology.

Phraseological picture of the world is characterized by anthropocentrism. As noted by L.Yu. Buyanova and E.G. Kovalenko, “the cognizing subject seeks not only to designate the realities of the surrounding world with the help of phraseological units, but to express his / her attitude to them. A person who perceives the world as created in his / her own image and likeness remains the main value of the universe” [1, P. 47]. Since most phraseological nominations are somehow related to a person, his / her actions, thoughts, emotions, etc., he / she becomes the central concept of the phraseological picture

of the world. Based on the nominative-thematic principle, phraseological units filling the conceptual sphere “Person” can be divided into phraseological semantic fields and groups referring to human appearance, physical features, character traits, moral qualities, emotions and feelings, etc.

Phraseology is one of the most important ways of expressing emotions, so the phraseological semantic field of emotivity contains a significant number of units in English and Chinese. This phraseological semantic field has a complex hierarchical structure, which includes macro- and micro-fields, defined by thematic principle. In this article, we will consider phraseological representation of love in English and Chinese.

Research methods and principles

In our research we applied the methods of continuous sampling, descriptive analysis, context analysis, structural semantic analysis, component analysis, comparative analysis.

Main results

Phraseological semantic field “Love” in English linguaculture

In modern psychology there are various approaches to the definition of love. However, most scholars agree that love covers a wide range of emotional experiences, the depth and intensity of which may vary depending on the situation and individual psychological characteristics. It may be accompanied by tenderness, joy, delight, jealousy, etc. Researchers also note that describing the concept of “Love” is a rather complicated task due to the fact that “the reason why one starts feeling love and the choice of the subject of love are initially inexplicable” [3, P. 189].

The complexity of this feeling is also confirmed by dictionary definitions. According to Longman Dictionary of English Language and Culture, love is:

- “1) a strong feeling of fondness for another person, especially between members of a family or close friends;
- 2) fondness combined with sexual attraction;
- 3) warm interest and enjoyment (in) and attraction (to);
- 4) the object of such interest or attraction;
- 5) a person who is loved” [12, P. 830].

Apparently, different types and forms of love predetermine the variety of phraseological units characterizing it. In this paper we consider love in its broadest meaning, which makes it possible for us to include in the scope of our research all phraseological nominations related to any aspect of this concept.

We presume that in English the core of phraseological semantic field “Love” includes phraseological units that metaphorically describe a strong feeling of love, for example, *be madly in love* – “to love someone very much” [7], *fall (be) head over heels in love* – “completely in love with another person” [7], *love to bits* – “to love someone very much” [7], *be dead gone on sb* – “to like someone a lot” [7], *(love) with all your heart and soul* – (love) “completely” [7], *have eyes only for sb* – “to be interested in or attracted to only one person” [7], *be (fathoms) deep in (love)* – “very strongly felt or experienced and usually lasting a long time” [7], *have (got) it bad* – “to be very much in love” [7], *worship the ground someone walks on* – “to love and admire someone very much” [7].

Carrol Izard defines any emotion as “a complex process with neural, neuromuscular / expressive, and experiential aspects” [10, P. 42], which means that emotions are accompanied by bodily reactions and certain facial expressions. Based on this assumption, phraseological semantic field “Love” includes idioms that reflect certain physiological responses typical of the one in love, for instance, *to be inflamed (burn) with (love)* – “if you burn with an emotion, you feel that emotion very strongly” [7], etc.

It is worth noting that the peculiarity of some phraseological units mentioned above is that they can be attributed to phraseological semantic field “Love” only if there is an appropriate qualifier such as *to love* or *love*. E.g.: I was so **blind with rage** that I struck him in the face before I could control what I was doing. A: “He’s moving to a different country because of some girl he met?” B: “Yeah. It seems a bit rash to me – I guess he’s just **blind with love**” [14]; *head over heels in love* – “deeply in love” [14], *head over heels in debt* – “deeply in debt” [14].

Some English idioms that figuratively represent love contain a zoonym. Researchers note that “zoonymic images reveal a whole set of relationships, and certain species become symbols of specific hidden properties for a primitive observer” [4, P. 94]. Rats as a figurative element of phraseological semantics traditionally reflect negative traits. In phraseological semantic field “Love”, *rat* is associated with dishonesty and cruelty. Thus, *love rat* is often used by journalists to refer to an unfaithful spouse [7]. The idiom *to cast (make) sheep’s eyes at somebody* means “to give one an adoring, doting, or amorous look or glance” [14]. *Puppy love* (also *calf love*) is polysemantic and has the following meanings:

1) “romantic love that a young person feels for someone else, which usually disappears as the young person becomes older”;

2) “romantic love that a young person feels for someone else” [7].

We suppose special attention should be paid to English phraseological nominal groups denoting people and / or the relationship between them, such as *old flame* – “one’s former lover” [14], *love triangle* – “a situation in which two people both love a third person” [7], *cupboard love* – “love shown by someone, typically a child, in order to get something that they want, such as food” [7] or “love that is ultimately motivated by greed” [14], etc.

In English, there are phraseological units that describe certain actions, gestures and mimics typical of love game or flirting. These include *play footsie with someone* used in its first meaning – 1) “to rub someone’s foot or feet with one’s own, usually in secret beneath a table as a means of flirting or indicating romantic or sexual interest” [14], *flutter one’s eyelashes at someone* – “to flirt with or feign romantic interest in someone [14], *bill and coo* – “to kiss, nuzzle, and talk sweetly with another person, typically a romantic partner” [14], etc.

Love as a happy union, the relationship between two people is represented in such idioms as *be an item* – “having a romantic or relationship” [7], *to be loved-up* – “very much loved by someone” [7], *go steady* – “have a firm relationship and go out together regularly” [12, P. 1362], etc.

There are also some idioms in English that reflect the fact of triggering the feeling of love in another person, for instance, *win someone's affections* – “to succeed in persuading someone to love you” [7], *sweep someone off their feet* – “to make someone become suddenly and completely in love with you” [7].

Negative emotions associated with love are conveyed by phraseological unit *break one's / sb's heart* – “(cause to) feel considerable grief, mental anguish, disappointment etc. (especially in matters of love and personal relationships” [9, P. 77], love which is not reciprocated is implied in *carry a torch for someone* – “to be in love with sb” [7].

Phraseological semantic field “Love” in Chinese linguaculture

Interestingly, in Chinese linguaculture, words that express feelings of love did not exist until a hundred years ago. Traditionally the most natural and spontaneous loving feeling between the sexes was rarely expressed directly. Moreover, some of the ways to declare love were taboos normally avoided. For this reason, such phrases as “he loves” (他爱 tā ài), “she loves” (她爱 tā ài), “I love you” (我爱你 wǒ ài nǐ) are not found in Chinese classical literature. The wife never called her husband “honey” or “sweetheart”, as it contradicted the norms of social etiquette. Instead they adopted 我那位/那个 wǒ nà wèi/nàgè – “my only one” (to refer to one's spouse), 孩子他爹 háizi tā diē – “father of a child” and 孩子他娘 háizi tā niáng – “mother of a child” [15].

Scholars state that the equivalent word for *love* in English, *Liebe* in German, *l'amour* in French or *любовь* in Russian is Chinese word àiqíng (爱情) that appeared in the first two decades of the last century, along with the translations of European literature and emergence of literature in the modern everyday language of baihua [5, P. 148].

Both components of 爱情 àiqíng can be part of other hieroglyphs and have their own meaning. For example, the scope of 爱 includes: 爱惜 àixī – “cherish, treasure” [6]; 爱慕 àimù – “adore, admire” [6]; 爱戴 àidài – “respect, support” [6]; 爱护 àihù – “take care, protect” [6], etc. Used as a verb, the character 爱 implies such meanings as “to love (including the Motherland, people)”, “to be fond of”, “to like sb or smth” [13]. The character 情 can be combined with 情谊 qíngyì – “affection, friendly feelings” [6]; 情绪 qíngxù – “mood, feelings, emotions” [6]; 情感 qínggǎn – “feelings, emotions” [6]; 情调 qíngdiào – “mood, spirit” [6], etc. Thus, it is obvious that 爱 ài and 情 qíng are not equivalent in terms of their separate use.

As for Chinese phraseology, it should be noted that the source of many chengyu is Chinese classical literature [2, P. 18], phraseological semantic field “Love” being no exception. For example, 剪烛西窗 jiǎn zhú xī chuāng – literally translated as “trim wicks by the western window” means “to think about your beloved wife, sincere romantic conversation” [16] (from Li Shangyin's poem “Night Rain to the North”: “何当共剪西窗烛，却话巴山夜雨时” – “When shall we again trim wicks by the western window”) [11]; 反目成仇 fǎn mù chéng chóu – “turn against each other” but also means “family strife”, “discord between husband and wife” [8] (from Cao Xueqin's novel “Dream in the Red Chamber”: “反目成仇的多着呢 – “There are many people who turn against each other”).

On the whole, love in Chinese linguistic culture is associated with true and lasting feelings, which is reflected in the following chengyu: 海誓山盟 hǎi shì shān méng – “to swear eternal love” [16]; 白头偕老 bái tóu xié lǎo (literally translated as “grow old together, live together until your hair grows white in old age”) – “to live to a ripe old age in conjugal bliss / until death do us part” [13]; 之死靡它 zhī sǐ mí tā (literally translated as “before death there was no other”) – “a widow, faithful to the memory of her deceased husband, selfless devotion, unwavering loyalty to the end, true love” [16].

Traditional primacy of man over woman in family life is manifested in idioms 夫唱妇随 fū chàng fù suí (literally translated as “the man starts singing, the woman joins the song”) – “family harmony” [13], 形影不离 xíng yǐng bù lí – (literally translated as “inseparable as an object and its shadow”) – “not to be apart even for a minute” [13].

Love is typically characterized by affection and desire to be with one's beloved one. This aspect of love is conveyed by a number of phraseological expressions: 爱不释手 ài bù shì shǒu (literally translated as “to love so much that you cannot pull your hands apart”) – “not to tear yourself away from each other, to love something too much to part with it” [13]; 如胶似漆 rú jiāo sì qī (“like glue”) – “thick as thieves, passionate feelings (between a husband and a wife), “stuck” to each other, stuck together as if by glue” [13].

Emergence of strong love is implied in phraseological units 干柴烈火 gān chái liè huǒ – (literally translated as “dry deadwood burst into flame”) – “love”, “passion” [16]; 墙头马上 qiáng tóu mǎ shàng (literally translated as “(a girl is standing) on the crest of a wall, (a young man) is sitting on horseback”) – “love at first sight” [16], 一见钟情 yī jiàn zhōng qíng – “to fall in love at first sight” [13].

Many phraseological units in Chinese compare romantic relationships with nature. For example, 风花雪月 fēng huā xuě yuè – literally translated as “wind, flower, snow and moon” refers to a romantic relationship that is comparable to the beauty of the four seasons: “romance is in the air” [13]. It should be noted that certain plants and animals have a symbolic meaning in Chinese culture, which is reflected in phraseology. Traditional symbols of love in Chinese are a peach flower and a lotus. (走) 桃花运 táo huā yùn (literally translated as “lucky with peach flowers”) describes a man who is lucky in adventures with

women [13] and 莲开并蒂 lián kāi bìng dì (literally translated as “two lotuses growing from the same stem”) means “harmony of husband and wife” [16].

The end of a romantic relationship between two people is rendered by phraseological units: 肝肠寸断 gān cháng cùn duàn (literally translated as “liver and intestines are torn to pieces”) – “a broken heart, grief-stricken” [13]; – 刀两断 yī dāo liǎng duàn (literally translated as “cut into two parts”) – “to part, break up” [16]; 夫妻反目 fūqī fǎnmù (literally translated as “husband and wife look in different directions”) – “family strife, man and wife fall out” [13]; 反目成仇 fǎn mù chéng chóu (literally translated as “turn against each other”) – “quarrel, discord between a husband and a wife, to become enemies” [13]; 分道扬镳 fēn dào yáng biāo (literally translated as “to take different roads and spur the horses”) – “part, everyone went their separate ways” [13].

Negative aspects of love are reflected in phraseological units associated with betrayal, the fickle nature of man or woman: 弃旧迎新 qì jiù yíng xīn (literally translated as “throw away the old one for the sake of the new one”) – “part with one’s old partner, having met someone else” [16], 暮翠朝红 mù cuì cháo hóng (literally translated as “green in the morning, red in the evening”) – “loving one girl in the morning and another one in the evening” [16].

Discussion

A comparative analysis of the illustrative corpus of phraseological semantic field “Love” in English (55 units) and Chinese (36 chengyu, 11 guanyunyu) showed that the way love is verbalized in English and Chinese phraseology is determined by culture, which is reflected in the structural, semantic, component and stylistic features of the phraseological nominations.

Structurally, in English this field is dominated by verbal word combinations describing love as a state, process or vigorous action (37 phraseological nominations), followed by nominal groups (16 units), while Chinese chengyu related to love are short sentences consisting of three or four characters, the most common structure being *Verb + Object + Verb + Object* (7 units). As for guanyunyu, most of them are bound word combinations consisting of an attribute and a noun (6 units).

In terms of component composition of the units included in phraseological semantic field “Love”, it should be mentioned that in English the most common is “love” used as a noun and a verb (19 phraseological nominations). Lexeme “heart” occurs in 7 units, as this organ has traditionally been regarded as the centre of affection in a person. By contrast, in Chinese love as such is not explicitly represented in chengyu or guanyunyu, which reflects China’s cultural norms and traditions.

The metaphors on which idioms are based help to understand the differences in the perception of love in English and Chinese linguacultures. Thus, in English phraseology love is often presented as an all-consuming feeling beyond control and is associated with inability to adequately perceive the reality and evaluate personal qualities of the loved one, hence such images as blindness, madness or destruction. At the physiological level, it is accompanied by unusual sensations (fire, flame, heat). In Chinese, love is allegorically implied in chengyu and guanyunyu with metaphorical reference to the beauty of nature, its flora and fauna (a peach flower, a lotus, a pearl), inanimate objects (a candle) or mythical creatures (a phoenix). Our research shows that there are no phraseological equivalents among English and Chinese phraseological units belonging to phraseological semantic field “Love”.

Based on the semantic analysis, we presume that in most cases English idioms related to love emphasize the intensity of this emotion, as they contain such semes-intensifiers as “completely”, “to an excessive degree”, “very”, “a lot”, “strongly” combined with “love” in their meaning. However, in Chinese phraseological picture of the world love is mostly a long-lasting union characterized by loyalty, commitment and attachment (hence such semes as “eternal”, “inseparable” in their semantics), which excludes any possibility of flirting and explains a highly negative connotation of idioms referring to unfaithfulness.

Unlike English, most Chinese phraseological units under study come from classical literature, philosophical teachings, legends, etc. In English there are only 3 idioms related to love whose etymology can be traced to a certain source such as the Bible (*the apple of sb’s eye* – “somebody who is the main object of somebody’s love, devotion, attention, etc.” [9, P. 15]), or a particular author like Shakespeare (*love not wisely but too well* – “love with good but misguided intentions, or to such an excessive degree that one suffers for it” [9, P. 368]) or Thomas Moore who coined the idiom *love’s young dream* – “a young couple in a romantic relationship” [14].

Etymology of English and Chinese phraseological units determines the functional style they belong to. Thus, Chinese chengyu are bookish, while guanyunyu are mostly colloquial, though frequently used in fiction and publicist genres. The majority of English phraseological nominations are not stylistically marked. However, in dictionaries some idioms are tagged as informal (13 units) or belonging to other functional styles, such as slang (3 units), formal (1 unit), literary (1 unit).

Conclusion

Summing up, we would like to emphasize that different aspects of love are reflected in the phraseological semantic field “Love”, both in English and Chinese. However, there are certain peculiarities in the ways this complex feeling is conveyed by means of phraseology, which can be traced at the structural, semantic and stylistic levels. The results of the study demonstrate that the dissimilarities in the phraseological representation of love in Chinese and English are due to the national character and the disparities in the norms of social and communicative behavior in Western and Asian countries.

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.

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