

TYPES OF MEANING IN THE SPHERE OF PHRASEOLOGY

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There is no doubt about the fact that the problem of meaning in language is the most debatable issue among linguists in this country and abroad. Since phraseology, as a self-contained linguistic discipline, has started its way, the linguistic world launched another discussion, that one on the difference of lexical meaning and phraseological meaning.

The matter is that, complexity of lexical semantics and variety of semantic classes of words do not exclude singling out the lexical meaning of a word, which makes it possible to establish the variety of that meaning. Analogous principle is also observed in the field of phraseology. The fact of singling out phraseological meaning gives an opportunity to establish its main varieties: idiomatic meaning, idiophraseomatic meaning and phraseomatic meaning in accordance with the three classes of phraseological units: idiomatic ones, idiophraseomatic ones and phraseomatic ones [КуНИН 1996: 136]. These meanings are included into the phraseological microsystem of a language, and give an opportunity to find out their varieties in accordance with the structural and semantic peculiarities of phraseological units characteristic of every PU class.

The term 'phraseological meaning' was almost simultaneously and independently introduced in 1964 by the two authors, namely by V.L. Arkhangelsky [Архангельский 1964: 9] and by A.V. Kunin [КуНИН 1964: 758].

Substantiation of phraseological meaning as a linguistic category is complicated by the fact that there exist different interpretations of the phraseological unit, as well as of its componential structure and of the volume of phraseology.

Evidently the determination of the status of phraseological meaning is very important because it will prevent some authors to substitute the notion of 'idiomaticity' by the notion of 'phraselogicity' (as A.V. Kunin puts it), it will prevent them to see 'phraseological meaning' at all the structural levels of the language including the lexical level, it will prevent them to ascribe lexical meaning to the phraseological unit.

So, the establishing of phraseological meaning is an extraordinarily difficult task. Tackling this problem, A.V. Kunin thinks it necessary to take into consideration the experience of a number of linguists who worked in the field under study, such as S.G. Gavrin, V.P. Zhukov, A.M. Melerovich, A.M. Kaplunenko et al. Taking into consideration the observations of E.V. Bogoyavlenskaya, we think it necessary to carry on this list with such names as V.N. Telia, S.G. Ter-Minasova, V.G. Gak, T.N. Fedulenkova (for further information see: [Богоявленская 2007: 170]).

To formulate the definition of phraseological meaning A.V. Kunin appeals to V.A. Zvegintsev's ideas on the structure of a linguistic sign and its peculiarities and on distinctive features of different types of language meaning [Звегинцев 1957: 99] and as a result, in his phraseological theory the author pays much attention to the dichotomy of form and meaning (see also: [Федуленкова 2003: 149; 2005: 147]), i.e. it is important not only 'what is expressed', but also 'how it is expressed'.

We maintain a very productive idea flashed out by the linguist and consisting in that phraseological meaning cannot be realized without the existence of definite structures, i.e. it is impossible to study the features of phraseological units without knowledge of their structure [Кунин 1996: 105]. There are, as far as his scheme goes, seven main structural types of phraseological units in the English language. They are as follows:

1. Unitop phraseological units (the term was introduced by A.I. Smirnitsky [Смирницкий 1956: 208]) consisting of one notional and one functional lexeme, or one notional and two or three functional lexemes (*at hand – nearby; at large – on the whole; by the way – incidentally; out of the way – remote*). By functional lexemes one should consider lexemes which do not function as independent members of the

sentence and serve for word connection in the sentence (prepositions, conjunctions), and also for characterization of the categories of number, definiteness or indefiniteness of nouns (or articles).

2. Phraseological units with the structure of subordinate or coordinate combination of words (*to have a finger in every pie – to be involved in every plan; high and mighty – the powerful minority*).

3. Phraseological units with the partially predicative structure (i.e. lexeme + subordinate clause): *ships that pass in the night – momentary encounters*).

4. Phraseological units with the structure of subordinate clause (*when pigs fly (colloq.) – never*);

5. Phraseological units of nominative-communicative class, i.e. verbal constructions with the structure of a word combination with a verb in the form of infinitive and the structure of a sentence with a verb in the passive voice (*break the ice – to make a beginning > the ice is broken – the beginning is made*).

6. Phraseological units with the structure of a simple or complex sentence (*A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush – Better an egg today than a hen tomorrow; Do you see any green in my eye? – Do you really think me to be so naive? Tell it to the marines! – Nonsense!*).

7. Phraseological units that are equivalents of a sentence, i.e. some structural types of interjectional constructions that have a power of expression and are characterized by independent (its own) intonation (*by George! – Upon my word!; my foot! – I'm far from believing it!*). However, referring of interjections of this type to sentence equivalents is not undisputable [Виноградов 1974: 747].

As it is, specific character of phraseological meaning is established on a purely semantic basis without proper consideration of PUs structural peculiarities. Though phraseological units exist within the boundaries of the definite structures, all the specific features of phraseological meaning cannot be brought only to relations between PU meaning and its structure. It is known that monostructural constructions can differ in their meaning and vice versa polystructural constructions can be close in their meaning. Phraseological meaning possesses a well-known degree of notional

independence, which is not to be mixed in those relations, which can easily happen during the absolutization of the structure [Свидерский 1999: 266].

The main contradiction, that is peculiar to phraseological units, is the linguistic contradiction between the integrity of the PU meaning on the one hand and the discreteness of PU structure [Федуленкова 1996: 119]. Lexical meanings of the PU components and the integral meaning of the PU are in the inverse proportion to each other: the more weakened the lexical meaning of the components is, the more integral the meaning of the PU is, which cannot be distributed among its components. The mentioned contradiction is partially solved, on the one hand, by the loss of the discreteness of PU, and, consequently, transformation of a PU into a word (cf. *goodbye* – at first: *God be with you*; Russian, *спасибо* – первоначально: *спаси Бог*) and, on the other hand, by means of high 'specific gravity' of the inner form in the semantic structure of PU, which leads to the motivation of the lexical meanings of the components and, consequently, to the weakening of the integrity of the PU meaning.

But some types of PUs with partially transferred meaning are characterized by double asymmetry [Кунин 1988: 98]. This is evidently true, for example, for comparative constructions such as, *plain as the nose on your face (colloq.)* – *very clear*; *take to something like a duck to water (colloq.)* – *to start doing something with high spirits*; etc. Double character of asymmetry in such constructions is created by means of, on the one hand, asymmetry of the components with literal meanings and components with transferred meanings, on the other hand, asymmetry of the partitioned figurative part and the integral meaning expressed by it.

The analysis of various aspects of the content, of the form and of the function of PUs and words gives all the reasons for singling out the PU meaning as a linguistic category alongside with the lexical meaning. The notion 'invariant of information' is important for PU meaning. A.V. Kunin follows I.S. Narsky and considers invariant of information as “something which is constantly preserved in the process of transformation of information” [Кунин 1996: 139]. As applied to PUs and words, information is a generalized conscious-reflected form of objects of reality, expressed by means of language signs.

In the process of defining PU meaning it is important to take into consideration that PUs are not made up according to generative structural-semantic model of variable word combinations, as it is not possible to predict, which feature of the prototype will be the semantic basis of the next PU, and whether it will be created at all.

We maintain after A.V. Kunin that phraseological meaning is an invariant of information, expressed by semantically complicated, discrete language units, which are not formed by generative structural-semantic models of the variable word combinations.

Such an understanding of the phraseological meaning gives the author an opportunity to define its three main kinds: idiomatic meaning, idiophraseomatic meaning and phraseomatic meaning.

Idiomatic meaning is an invariant of information, expressed by means of discrete language units with completely or partially transferred meanings.

Idiophraseomatic meaning is an invariant of information expressed by means of discrete language units, one of which phraseosemantic variants have literal, but complicated meanings, and the others, being their derivatives, are completely transferred.

When a phraseological unit was formed on the basis of a set expression being a term or a professionalism with a complicated semantic structure, it should be regarded as a phraseosemantic variant with literal meaning, for example *fight a battle* – 1) (*military.*) *be engaged in battle*; 2) *launch a quarrel* (*пересмысленное значение*).

Such a peculiar combination of ideomatics and phraseomatics gives an opportunity to single out ideophraseomatic meaning.

Phraseomatic meaning, according to A.V. Kunin, is invariant of information expressed by means of discrete language units, having non-transferred but complicated meanings.

Phraseomatic meanings can be found not only in structures with non-transferred, bound-free meanings (*better late than never* (*посл.*)), but also in

constructions with non-transferred, bound meanings, such as *pay attention; pay a call (или visit)*.

Obviously, hierarchical character of phraseological meaning consists in the fact that semes, denoting different features which refer to the meaning as the aspect to the gender, are singled out in it, for example the semantic feature of purpose: *to draw the long bow – to go beyond the limits of the truth, e.g. in order to impress or surprise* and so on.

Analysis of types of meanings in the field of phraseology is important not only for the theory of phraseology but also for the progress of the language science as a whole, as without semantics the existence of any language is impossible.

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