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The phraseological meaning construal in the traditional vs. cognitive culture-oriented perspectives

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Abstract: As a point of departure, the paper discusses two approaches to phraseological meaning: traditional and cognitive. Following the latter as well as certain semiotic and cultural accounts of language, semantics, and idiomaticity, I seek to elaborate a cognitive culture-oriented theory of phraseological meaning. This theory is tested against the basis of a representative corpus of selected Russian phraseologisms (more than 1000 items) that describe various aspects of verbal communication, e.g., *igrat' komediyu* (lit. *to play comedy*), *zloj yazyk* (lit. *an evil tongue*). The results obtained are supported by the cross-cultural study of Russian and English phraseological units.

Keywords: cognitive linguistics, semantics, phraseological meaning, inter-semiotic transposition, macro-metaphorical conceptual model, phraseological creativity.

1. Introduction: Some key remarks on the traditional approach

The study of phraseological (or idiomatic) meaning has been an area of keen scholarly interest of linguists from a variety of countries (as well as specialists in other disciplines related to linguistics) since the 1930s when phraseology began to acquire the status of an academic discipline in its own right. Particular approaches were elaborated within the framework of various national phraseological traditions, for instance, Russian, Czech, Slovak, German, Anglo-Saxon, French, Spanish, etc. Representatives of

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different national phraseological schools have made great contributions to the investigation of both phraseological meaning and the ways, in which it differs from other types of meaning. As a result of combined scientific effort, the general theory of phraseological semantics in its traditional understanding began to take shape. Despite quite evident differences in national scientific approaches to the issue in question and in theoretical backgrounds, there is a wide agreement as to what are the essential or inherent properties of phraseological meaning.

Generalizing the interpretations given in linguistic encyclopaedias and dictionaries, text-books and manuals of linguistics (e.g., Кунин 1996; Телия 1996; Ярцева 1998; EL 2005¹; ELL 2005²; GSP 2006⁴; LE 2002⁵; RDLL 2006⁸), phraseological (or idiomatic) meaning is traditionally defined through such overlapping notions as 'non-compositionality', 'arbitrariness', 'opacity' (or 'transparency'), 'motivation', and 'figurativeness'.

The **non-compositionality** manifests itself in the fact that the phraseological meaning, as a meaning peculiar to an institutionalized multiword construction, has to be decoded as a whole rather than be deduced from the meanings of the constituent words of the construction, such as, *red tape* – 'bureaucracy', or *to spill the beans* – 'reveal secret information unintentionally or indiscreetly' (Fraser 1976; Katz & Postal 1963; Makkai 1972; ELL 2005²; LE 2002⁵). Hence, in accordance with the traditional approach, the phraseological meaning is characterized by **arbitrariness** due to the absence of a direct relation to the form of a multiword construction, to which it (i.e. the phraseological meaning) pertains (Кунин 1988; Gibbs 1995). At early stages of research, phraseological (or idiomatic) meaning was defined as both fully opaque and non-motivated. Later, however, it was acknowledged that **opacity** and **motivation** peculiar to phraseological meaning were properties of gradable character. As Ayto (2005) claims, at one extreme of the spectrum of semantic opacity are phrases, in which each word defies literal understanding (e.g., *eat crow* – 'to admit humiliatingly that one was

wrong'), while at the other extreme are phrases that are almost completely semantically transparent (e.g., *beneath contempt*, *go wrong*). Cowie (2005) also emphasizes the fact that the phraseological meaning continuum ranges from transparent 'free combinations' at one end to opaque idioms at the other. In connection with the greater or lesser extent of opacity, different degrees of **motivation** of phraseological meaning became a point of wide discussion among researchers from different frameworks (e.g., Виноградов [1953] 1977; Cacciari & Glucksberg 1991). Most of the scientific focus was also on the role that is mainly played by metaphor (and more rarely by metonymy) as a motivating base of phraseological meaning. However, in the majority of cases the **figurativeness** of phraseological meaning was considered to be founded on dead metaphors and metonymies. As Gibbs points out, scholars adhering to the traditional view insist that idiomatic meaning arises from dead metaphors, i.e. "mostly from historical circumstances that are opaque to contemporary speakers and have little to do with ordinary human cognition" (1995: 104). Such a view even made it possible to speak of non-figurativeness that can characterize the phraseological meaning of multiword constructions like, for instance, in *by and large*, which means 'on the whole', and seems to be totally non-figurative (Куних 1996; ELL 2005²).

The detection of the essential properties of phraseological meaning was important for determining semantic taxonomies in order to categorize phraseologisms whose meanings could exhibit varying degrees of those properties (see, e.g., Cowie 1988; Wood 1986). The systematization of the phraseological fund of a language in accordance with such semantic criterion was one of the major tasks in the traditional approach, or in the classical works of the majority of leading researchers.

In addition, within the traditional framework much attention was paid to the study of the inner architecture of phraseological meaning. The research carried out revealed a rather intricate organization of phraseological meaning, which can consist of a number of interconnected semantic constituents or components. For instance, Kunin (1996) distinguished three main constituents, of which the phraseological meaning is

composed, namely: signification, denotation, and connotation. Teliya (1988) elaborated a functional-parametric model of phraseological meaning, according to which it falls into six interrelated macro-components: descriptive, evaluative, motivational, emotive, stylistic, and grammatical. Different methods of component-based analysis of phraseological meaning have been offered in the works of many linguists (see, e.g., Копыленко, Попова [1978] 2010; Мелерович 1979). The detailed analysis of phraseological (or idiomatic) meaning from the point of view of its constituents provided scholars with relevant data pointing to its inner semantic complexity and heterogeneity as well as to other distinctive features, such as its diffusive nature and rather wide scope.

As a whole, the theories and approaches that form a traditional view of phraseological meaning have contributed much to the understanding of its essence and to the description of its specifics. However, many relevant issues remained outside the range of such interests. In particular, these approaches have no way of accounting for how phraseological meaning is formed, how cultural or sociocultural information is encoded and stored during its creation and then is retrieved by speakers while using phraseologisms in actual communication, as well as how the mechanisms of the phraseological processing work. Neither has the special nature of the phraseological imagery nor its genesis been subject to an exhaustive description. As Baranov and Dobrovol'skij (2013) claim, in traditional works on phraseology the study of phraseological semantics was confined, to a great extent, to rather general observations.

Cognitive science opens up new lines of argument in the field of phraseological research concerning many issues so far unresolved, and, offering a new theoretical framework, provides researchers with new methodological tools for the exploration of phraseological meaning.

2. The cognitive approach as a break-through in the theory of phraseological meaning

With the emergence and development of cognitive science and cognitive linguistics as one of its branches, the traditional view of phraseological meaning began to alter. Innovations in the theory of phraseological meaning were caused primarily by a number of tenets of cognitive linguistics, among which most relevant are as follows:

Cognitive linguistics "places central importance on the role of meaning, conceptual process and embodied experience in the study of language and the mind, and the way in which they intersect" (GCL 2007⁴: 22; also Evans & Green 2006). In cognitive investigations, meaning is taken to be essentially encyclopaedic in scope and is studied as a mental entity, or integral part of more general cognitive processes; from the perspective of which emerge such its interlinked aspects as experiential, prominence, and attentional. One of the core areas of cognitive linguistics is the phenomenon of imagery or figurativeness. Current research of cognitive scholars aims to examine figurative language (of which phraseology forms an essential part) and to show that metaphor (together with metonymy and other tropes) is one of the major modes of conceptual organization. It is a figure of both language and thought that helps store people's shared experience of the world in language signs "working" by the principle of cross-domain mappings or correspondences between conceptual domains (Ungerer & Schmid 2006; GCL 2007³; ELL 2005²).

As such, the cognitive approach to language has added a new dimension to the research of phraseological (or idiomatic) meaning. The tenets of cognitive linguistics have caused linguists to reconsider the essence of the inherent properties of phraseological meaning (i.e. arbitrariness, figurativeness, etc.). For instance, *the Encyclopedia of Linguistics* mentions that "recent research within the theoretical framework called 'cognitive linguistics' has shown, by contrast, that the form-meaning relation underlying many idiomatic expressions is far from arbitrary – that it is motivated not only by their primitive meaning but also conventional images and conceptual

metaphors" (2005: 492). In other words, "on classical views, idioms have arbitrary meanings, but within cognitive linguistics, the possibility exists that they are not arbitrary, but rather motivated. That is, they do not arise automatically by productive rules, but fit one or more patterns present in the conceptual system" (Lakoff [1993] 2006: 194-195). "Contrary to the traditional view, the figurative meanings of idioms might well be motivated by people's conceptual knowledge that is itself constituted by metaphor" (Gibbs 1995: 104). According to Dobrovolskij (2005), most idioms are clearly motivated by underlying structures of knowledge.

As opposed to the traditional approach to phraseology, within the cognitive framework phraseological (or idiomatic) meaning is proved to reside in the human cognitive ability to conceptually structure reality, proceeding from what one perceives or conceives. By now, many phraseological studies have provided evidence that phraseological (or idiomatic) meaning is conceptually grounded (Langlotz 2006; Moon 1998; PhCE 2007⁶; PhIHCR 2007⁷). It is the conceptual structures (in particular, conceptual metaphors and conceptual metonymies, or their combinations) underlying the semantics of phraseologisms that govern the processes of their comprehension, application, and lexicogrammatical behaviour in discourse. For instance, Gibbs points out that "people's knowledge of the metaphorical links between different source and target domains provides the basis for the appropriate use and interpretation of idioms" (1995: 107).

In general, cognitive research gives an opportunity to address the issues concerning **the cognitive motivation of phraseological meaning** rather than linguistic (or semantic). It focuses on the study of cognitive mechanisms of phraseologism-formation in order to explicate the conceptual-semantic complexity of phraseologisms as signs capable of storing, accumulating, and transmitting people's knowledge, and of representing the typical as well as special ways in which they comprehend (perceive) reality. Thus, it offers the researcher a set of analytical tools for exploring the phraseological meaning construal – a central issue of the present-day theory of phraseology.

3. The phraseological meaning construal in a new cognitive culture-oriented perspective: the Case-study

3.1 The phraseological material: principles of selection and lexicographical sources

While addressing the issue of the phraseological meaning construal, I attempted to elaborate a cognitive culture-oriented theory, which was applied to Russian phraseologisms from the word-field of verbal communication. This particular word-field was chosen because the evaluation of verbal communication was assumed to be one of the most relevant topics (or concepts) in Russian culture and, therefore, the phraseologisms describing it were expected to be numerous in quantity and to provide a representative sample of the Russian phraseological stock. Resting on this, the main criterion for selecting phraseologisms for the research was the presence in their structure and/or semantics of a component (or components) that relates (or relate) to the verbal communication understood in a very broad sense, i.e. including its various aspects and processes, for instance: *злой язык* (lit. *an evil tongue*) – 'a person's habit of saying unkind, mocking words'; *ниже всякой критики* (lit. *below any criticism*) – 'to be of very poor quality'; *лечь колокола* (lit. *to mould/cast bells*) – 'to disseminate gossip'; *масло масляное* (lit. *butter is buttery or oil is oily*) – 'the repetition of something already said in different words without clarifying anything'.

The phraseologisms from the word-field of verbal communication were extracted from well-known contemporary Russian phraseological as well as monolingual explanatory and bilingual (translation) dictionaries that offer a broad collection of Russian idioms that are in current use, for instance: *Фразеологический словарь русского литературного языка* (Федоров 2001); *Фразеологический словарь русского языка* (Молотков 2001); *Русская фразеология. Словарь-справочник* (Яранцев 2001); *Большой фразеологический словарь русского языка* (Телия 2006); *Большой толковый словарь русского языка* (Кузнецов 2003); *Russian-English Dictionary of Idioms* (Lubensky 2013). Besides, with regard to the problem explored, I found it both appropriate and important to include into the research Russian phraseologisms that were considered to be of low frequency, out of date (archaic) or dialectal. Such

phraseologisms were drawn from several sources: dictionaries of outdated lexis, dictionaries of dialect expressions, etymological dictionaries of fixed phrases and idioms, for instance: *Русская мысль и речь: Свое и чужое: Опыт русской фразеологии* (Михельсон [1902] 1997); *Толковый словарь устаревших слов и фразеологических оборотов русского литературного языка* (Федоров 2012); *Русская фразеология: Историко-этимологический словарь* (Бирих et al. 2012).

As a result of the selection procedure, more than 1,000 Russian phraseological units came to be included in the material to be analyzed.

3.2 Key assumptions of the theory developed in the research and analytical procedure

The cognitive culture-oriented theory of the phraseological meaning developed in my research is based on a number of ideas advanced in modern cognitive linguistics and outlined above (see subsection 2) as well as on some ideas elaborated in semiotics and linguoculturology (or linguo-cultural studies) in relation to the interface between culture and language.

As a point of departure, I rest on the assumption that culture and language are two separate and interacting semiotic systems (e.g., Зыкова 2011; Иванов & Топоров 1965; Лотман 2001; Степанов 1997; Толстой 1995; Есо 1984; Hjelmslev [1941] 1973; Jakobson 1971). Their interaction results in the emergence of various cultural as well as language signs; in particular phraseologisms (Телия 1996). In order to explore the phraseological meaning construal as a result of such 'culture-language' interaction I apply the term of 'inter-semiotic transposition', which was coined by Jakobson in the late 1950s and which should be discussed in more detail.

In his well-known paper "On linguistic aspects of translation" Jakobson (1959) specifies the inter-semiotic transposition as a process of transferring some information from the system of verbal signs into other systems of signs, for example, into music, dance, cinema, painting, etc. Though the scholar quite clearly brings out the conceptual

essence of the inter-semiotic transposition, he does not give the phenomenon in question further development and depicts only a one-way possibility of its functioning, i.e. as a transfer of some verbal contents into nonverbal signs. Unlike Jakobson's interpretation, in my work the term 'inter-semiotic transposition' is used to describe the reverse process. In accordance with the approach elaborated in my research, **the phraseological meaning is formed as a result of the inter-semiotic transposition**, which is understood as a transfer of some conceptual information from nonverbal signs of culture into verbal, i.e. phraseological, signs. For instance, the meaning of the phraseologism *в трубу трубить* (lit. *to blow/play the trumpet*) 'to spread rumours; proclaim widely and loudly' is apparently formed due to the transfer of particular conceptual contents from the semiotics of music into the language semantics; whereas the meaning of the phraseologism *открыть свои карты* (lit. *to show/reveal one's cards*) 'to cease hiding one's plans or intentions' is evidently created as a result of the transfer of certain conceptual contents from the semiotics of card games into the language semantics. Besides, my research also rests on a cognitive treatment of language meaning, according to which it is regarded as **a two-strata structure** which includes the surface (or semantic) stratum and the deep (or conceptual) stratum (Беляевская 2007). Proceeding from this, the inter-semiotic transposition results primarily in the formation of the deep (i.e. conceptual) stratum of the phraseological meaning, which, in its turn, underlies the creation of its surface (i.e. semantic) stratum (Figure 1).

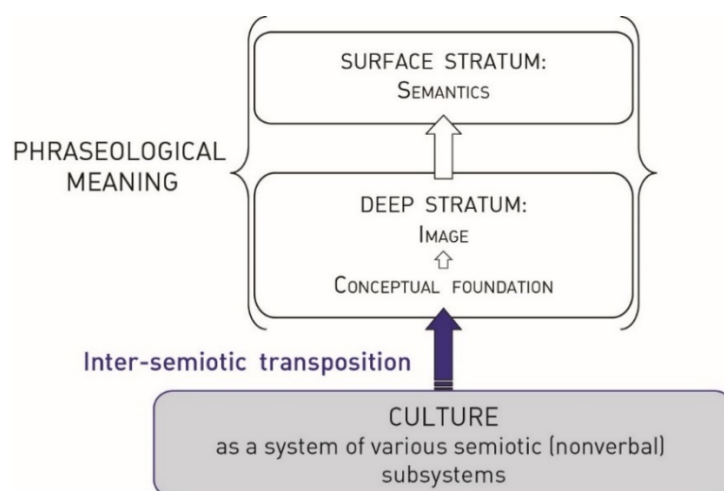


Figure 1. The phraseological meaning: the specifics of formation and organization

As Figure 1 shows, **the deep stratum of the phraseological meaning** encloses two constituents – **the phraseological image** and **its underlying conceptual foundation**. To uncover what the conceptual foundation of the phraseological meaning is, how it is formed and how it provides the production of images as well as influences the semantic organization of phraseologisms, the selected Russian phraseologisms were modelled by means of the linguoculturological reconstruction (ЗЫКОВА 2014) resting on the theory of conceptual metaphor (as well as conceptual metonymy) (Fauconnier 1997; Gibbs 1994; Kövecses 2010; Lakoff & Johnson 1980; Reddy 1979; Talmy 2000).

According to my research, the conceptual modelling of phraseological meaning, presumably, implies the following cognitive operations that are constituent parts of the whole process of inter-semiotic transposition: selecting some conceptual contents from different semiotic spheres of culture (1), its synthesizing (2) and structuring (3), which leads to the creation of a conceptual model (4) that serves as a conceptual foundation for the image (5) and semantics (6) of a phraseologism (7).

For instance, the linguoculturological reconstruction of the way the Russian phraseologism *без дальних разговоров/слов* (lit. *without long-distance talks/words*) is formed has showed that the conceptual information from two particular semiotic spheres, i.e. Traveling and Communication, is chosen as relevant to build up its meaning. This fact is indicative of the first cognitive operation taking place in the process of inter-semiotic transposition – the conceptual selection. Further consideration reveals that the selected conceptual information is synthesized in order to render at least the following correlated core ideas (or concepts): the idea of communication as a (not) long-lasting journey, the idea of communicants as travellers, the idea of the subject of conversation as a close (not faraway) destination, the idea of words as vehicles that are driven at a high speed and straight ahead, i.e. along a straight road. The synthesis of several conceptual constituents (i.e. the second cognitive operation), which are, in essence, metaphorical concepts, inevitably entails their arrangement and the establishment of interconnected relations between them. In other

words, the third cognitive operation, i.e. the conceptual structuring, takes place. All these cognitive operations lead to the emergence of such a structured conceptual integrity that can be called a conceptual model (i.e. the fourth cognitive operation). Schematically and rather abstractedly, the mentioned above structural constituents of the resultant model provided by all these processes can be presented in the following way (Figure 2).

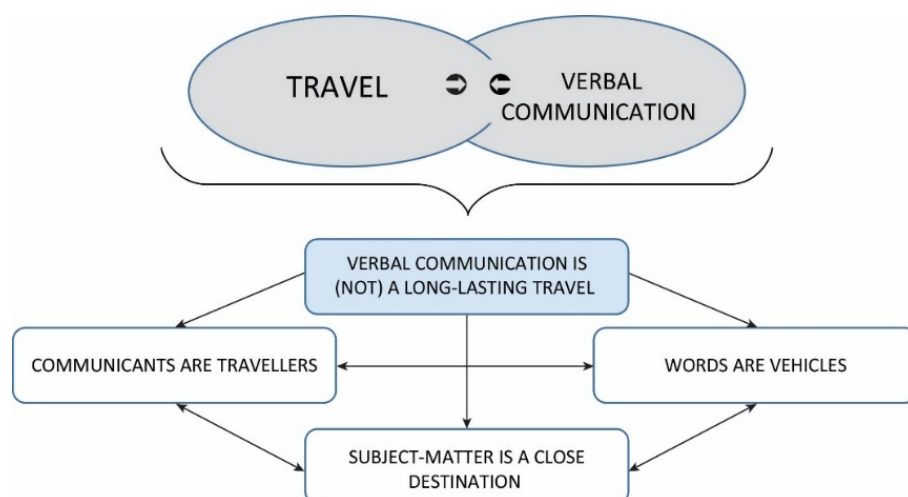


Figure 2. The specifics of the conceptual modelling of meaning of the idiom
без дальних разговоров/слов

It is of importance to emphasize that, taking into account the nature and quantity of metaphorical concepts (and there are some more, which are not indicated in the figure; see in Зыкова 2014) involved in constructing the conceptual foundation of the idiom in question, it can be defined as **a multi-metaphorical conceptual model** VERBAL COMMUNICATION IS (NOT) A LONG-LASTING TRAVEL. This model serves as a source of the phraseological image, in which talking to the point is perceived in terms of a short travel to the place of destination (i.e. the fifth operation). In its turn, the image gives rise to the semantics 'to talk directly to the point without wasting time' (i.e. the sixth operation), which signals that the process of forming the integral meaning of this phraseologism is completed (i.e. the seventh operation).

It is worth making special mention of the fact that this multi-metaphorical conceptual model, according to the research findings, proved to be part of a more general and more complex conceptual construction that can be termed **the macro-metaphorical conceptual model** VERBAL COMMUNICATION IS TRAVEL. The latter embraces a number of multi-metaphorical conceptual models that generate images and semantics of other Russian phraseologisms under consideration.

For instance, the linguoculturological reconstruction of the formation of the Russian phraseologism *легче на поворотах* (lit. *easier while (on) turning*) has revealed that its meaning is built up according to the same general principle. However, the conceptual foundation that underlies its image and semantics is modelled by another set of interrelated core metaphorical concepts. The conceptual information selected and transferred from two spheres of culture, i.e. Traveling and Communication, is synthesized in order to render at least such correlated ideas (or concepts) as: the idea of communication as a dangerous travel, the idea of a communicant as a venturesome/adventurous traveller-driver, the idea of words as vehicles run at a (very) high speed, the idea of word contents as a means of violating road regulations that can lead to a road accident. On the basis of structuring these correlated ideas the corresponding multi-metaphorical conceptual model is formed, i.e. VERBAL COMMUNICATION IS A DANGEROUS TRAVEL (Figure 3).

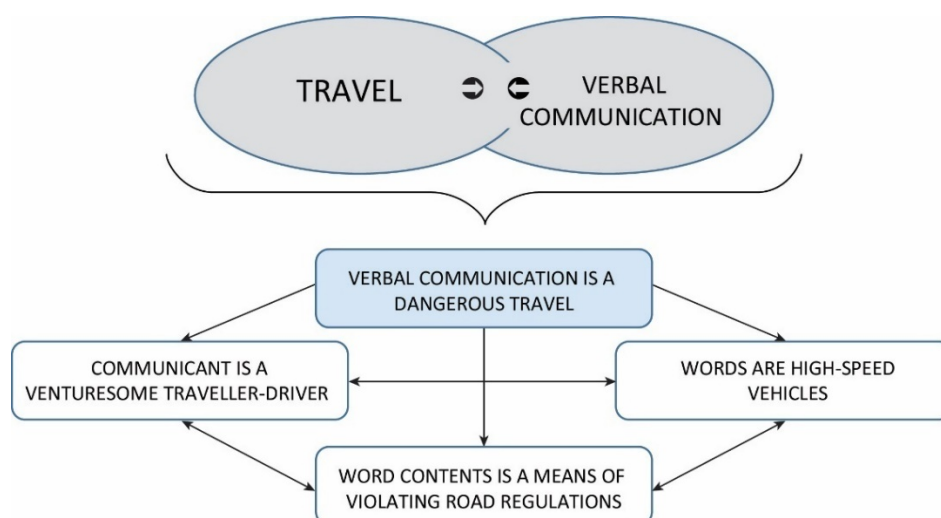


Figure 3. The specifics of the conceptual modelling of meaning of the idiom *легче на поворотах*

The multi-metaphorical conceptual model under analysis (as a network of certain core ideas) generates the phraseological image, owing to which speech-containing information that can offend someone is viewed in terms of a risky road transport travel. This image gives rise to and patterns the phraseological semantics 'be careful of what you say', which signals that the whole process of forming the integral meaning of the phraseologism in question is finalized.

Thus, both multi-metaphorical conceptual models, VERBAL COMMUNICATION IS (NOT) A LONG-LASTING TRAVEL and VERBAL COMMUNICATION IS A DANGEROUS TRAVEL as well as some others established in the research, can be considered constituents or particular cases (or profiles) of a larger conceptual construction – the macro-metaphorical conceptual model VERBAL COMMUNICATION IS TRAVEL.

Summing up, it is necessary to emphasize that it is the macro-metaphorical conceptual model that results from the multistage cognitive process of inter-semiotic transposition. This model is a rather complex conceptual formation that serves as an immediate source of the phraseological image and, together with the latter, forms the deep (conceptual) stratum of phraseological semantics. The analysis of all the Russian phraseological units under consideration has enabled me to establish that their meanings are founded on a particular number of macro-metaphorical conceptual models.

3.3 Basic research findings

On the basis of the theory and the analytical procedure elaborated in the course of research, it became possible to establish the fact that the meanings of all the Russian phraseologisms under study (more than 1,000 units) are based on 11 macro-metaphorical conceptual models. These models are as follows:

1. VERBAL COMMUNICATION IS TRAVEL, for instance: *наставлять на путь* (lit. *put on the way/~ show the direction*) – 'admonish'; *пойти по языкам* (lit. *go along/by the tongues*) – 'become well-known; be talked about'.

2. VERBAL COMMUNICATION IS CRAFT, for instance: *лить пули* (lit. *to cast/mould bullets*) – 'to lie shamelessly'; *срезать острые углы* (lit. *to cut off sharp edges*) – 'to (try to) minimize the intensity of disagreements, etc. between people'.
3. VERBAL COMMUNICATION IS PLAY, for instance: *устроить представление* (lit. *to put on (give) a performance*) – 'to make a row, a scandal', *играть комедию* (lit. *to play a comedy*) – 'to speak untruthfully'.
4. VERBAL COMMUNICATION IS TRADE/COMMERCE, for instance: *устроить (устроить) базар* (lit. *to hold a bazaar /a trade fair*) – 'to argue intensely expressing one's annoyance, irritation, etc.'; *на вес золота (слова)* (lit. *worth one's weight in gold*) – 'be very valuable'.
5. VERBAL COMMUNICATION IS GASTRONOMY, for instance: *кормить обещаниями (завтраками) (кого)* (lit. *to feed someone promises/breakfasts*) – 'to promise someone repeatedly that one will do something in the immediate future and not fulfil one's promises'; *чушь на постном масле* (lit. *nonsense on lenten oil*) – 'stupid, meaningless, or insignificant talk'.
6. VERBAL COMMUNICATION IS SOCIAL ACTIVITY, for instance: *собратья по перу* (lit. *brothers in pen*) – 'writers, literary men'; *детский лепет* (lit. *childish prattle*) – 'naïve, immature, superficial ideas, writings, speech, etc.'.
7. VERBAL COMMUNICATION IS MEDICINE-RELATED ACTIVITY, for instance: *язык прилип к гортани у кого* (lit. *the tongue cleaved to the larynx*) – 'someone suddenly lost the ability to speak (from surprise, amazement, fright, etc.)'; *уши пухнут* (lit. *someone's ears are swelling*) – 'it is unpleasant or repulsive for someone to listen to some person, story, etc. (because what is being said is ridiculous, offensive, etc.)'.
8. VERBAL COMMUNICATION IS HOUSEHOLD ACTIVITY, for instance: *выносить сор из избы* (lit. *to carry/throw rubbish out of one's house*) – 'to divulge arguments, squabbles, etc. occurring within one's family or a narrow circle of friends, coworkers etc.'; *устроить головомойку* (lit. *to wash someone's head*) – 'to scold someone severely, rebuke someone harshly'.

9. VERBAL COMMUNICATION IS HUNTING/FISHING/MINING, for instance: *не находить слов* (lit. *not to find words*) – 'to be unable to express one's sentiments because of great admiration, overwhelming gratitude, etc. or shock, outrage, etc.'; *выуживать сведения (секрет)* (lit. *to angle for some (secret) data*) – 'try to get some information by means of deceit or evasion'; *читать (прочитать) между строк* (lit. *to read between the lines*) – 'to (be able to) deduce the underlying meaning of what someone says (writes) by guessing at what has not been directly expressed'.
10. VERBAL COMMUNICATION IS RELIGION-RELATED ACTIVITY, for instance: *курить фимиам кому-либо* (lit. *to burn incense to someone*) – 'to praise someone enthusiastically'; *раздувать кадило* (lit. *to swing a censer/thurible to make incense burn in it*) – 'to speak too much about something in public (e.g., about some event, deeds, etc.)'.
11. VERBAL COMMUNICATION IS PAINTING, for instance: *не жалеть красок (на что)* (lit. *to spare no paint for something*) – 'to describe something with special vividness, very expressively, often exaggerating'; *развертывать картину (чего-либо)* (lit. *to unroll the picture of something*) – 'to describe something in detail; to reveal the contents of something'.

It should be specially emphasized that the analysis conducted has revealed a rather important fact related to the specific ways the images of the Russian phraseological units in question are generated due to the given macro-metaphorical conceptual models. As it was stated, each macro-metaphorical conceptual model produces a particular number of phraseological units in the Russian language, which speaks in favour of **a certain creative potential that each of them possesses in the process of phraseologism-formation**, or, in other words, of their special **phraseological creativity**.

In my research, **phraseological creativity** is understood or defined as the ability of macro-metaphorical conceptual models to systemically create phraseological images

and, therefore, diverse phraseological signs to replenish the phraseological subsystem of a language (ЗЫКОВА 2014).

According to the analysis data, the degree of phraseological creativity of this or that model can be assessed from the **quantitative** perspective. Hence, taking into account, for instance, the number of phraseologisms whose images stemmed from the macro-metaphorical conceptual models VERBAL COMMUNICATION IS TRAVEL (approx. 150 units) and VERBAL COMMUNICATION IS PAINTING (approx. 20 units), it is possible to conclude that the first model is characterized at present by a relatively high degree of phraseological creativity in the Russian language, while the second one – by a low degree of phraseological creativity (though the situation may change through time).

Besides, phraseological creativity can have another dimension, which can be termed **qualitative**. The qualitative dimension implies that the phraseological creativity of macro-metaphorical conceptual models can be estimated from the point of view of the diversity of phraseological images produced by this or that model as it is possible to speak about "typical" images and unique images produced in the given language system. The exploration of this aspect of phraseological creativity was carried out by means of the cross-cultural analysis of Russian and English phraseologisms.

4. Phraseological creativity of the macro-metaphorical conceptual models: Cross-cultural research

The analytical procedure developed in the research was applied to an analogous group of English phraseologisms, i.e. to idioms that describe various aspects of verbal communication (more than 2,000 items), for instance: *a left-handed compliment* – 'a remark that seems approving but which is also negative'; *bitter words* – 'cutting or sarcastic words'; *to steal the show* – 'to attract the most attention and praise'; *to get down to brass tacks* – 'start talking about the most important or basic facts of a situation'.

Interestingly, the results obtained have shown that the images of the English idioms under analysis are actually generated by the same set of 11 macro-metaphorical conceptual models, for instance: VERBAL COMMUNICATION IS TRAVEL (e.g., *to talk in circles* – 'waste time by saying words that do not mean very much', *flattery will get you nowhere* – 'someone's praise will not persuade you to do anything that you do not want to do'); VERBAL COMMUNICATION IS CRAFT (e.g., *to hammer something home* – 'say something very clearly and with a lot of force, often repeating it several times, so that you are sure that people understand it', *to make something up out of whole cloth* – 'if a story or excuse is made up out of whole cloth, it is not true'); VERBAL COMMUNICATION IS PLAY (e.g., *to put one's cards on the table* – 'to tell people exactly what you are thinking or what you are intending to do', *to turn the spotlight on something/someone* – 'to attract attention to something/someone, usually to give information about something bad'); VERBAL COMMUNICATION IS TRADE/COMMERCE (e.g., *be lavish in one's praise(s)* – 'commend someone exuberantly', *to return the compliment* – 'say something nice to someone after they have said something nice to you'); VERBAL COMMUNICATION IS PAINTING (e.g., *to paint with a broad brush* – 'describe something in a very general way without giving any details', *in black and white* – 'written down').

The creative potential of the analogous macro-metaphorical conceptual models in two languages and their cultural peculiarities were estimated with the help of the analysis of **the degree of differentiation** of the phraseological images they generate.

For instance, the phraseological images generated by the macro-metaphorical conceptual model VERBAL COMMUNICATION IS CRAFT in the Russian language are differentiated, firstly, into those in which verbal communication is represented as:

1. The craft based on the processing of raw wood and mineral material (Craft A domain), for instance: *снимать стружку (с кого-либо)* (lit. *to remove chips; to cut the chips off*) – 'to reprimand, criticize, scold someone severely';

2. The craft based on the processing of fibrous material and the production of clothes or other goods (Craft B domain), for instance: *ставить всякое лыко в строку* (lit. *to put each bast into the line*) – 'to blame someone for any and every mistake';
3. The craft based on the processing of metal and the production of metal goods (Craft C domain), for instance: *медная глотка* (lit. *a copper throat*) – '(someone has) the ability to shout, swear, sing, etc. loudly and for a long time';
4. The craft as it is, i.e. as a process of creating/making something in general (without taking into consideration any special spheres of production) (Craft D domain), for instance: *делать предложение* (lit. *to make an offer*) 'to ask (a woman to become one's wife').

The phraseologisms of each of these groups are further differentiated into subgroups (particular clusters of images), which in their turn can be also subjected to further differentiation.

As it was stated, the analogous macro-metaphorical conceptual models are characterized in the Russian and English languages by a difference in the number of groups and subgroups formed by the phraseological images generated by these models as well as in the very names of these (sub)groups. It means that one and the same model can produce a different number of clusters of non-similar images in the two languages under study. Mostly remarkably, the names the clusters of images possess may relate to different types of craft, different instruments used in this or that craft, different technological specifics, and so on.

For instance, as far as the macro-metaphorical conceptual model VERBAL COMMUNICATION IS CRAFT is concerned, in the Russian language the process of differentiating the phraseological images based on this model results in their division into 55 groups and subgroups with the names that reflect certain ways verbal communication is perceived in Russian culture; while in the English language – into 39 groups and subgroups with the names that render the specifics of understanding

verbal communication in the culture of the English-speaking community. Taking into account this fact, it seems possible to claim that as in the Russian language the model VERBAL COMMUNICATION IS CRAFT produces phraseological images with a greater degree of differentiation it speaks in favour of its greater degree of phraseological creativity as compared to the analogous model in the English language. In other words, the greater is the degree of differentiation of phraseological images generated by a particular macro-metaphorical conceptual model the higher is the degree of its phraseological creativity.

The way this process differs in two languages can be illustrated, for instance, by the specifics of differentiation of images of the Russian and English phraseologisms via which verbal communication is represented as a craft based on the processing of fibrous material and making clothes or other goods (Craft B domain). Therefore, in the Russian language the differentiation of the images in question involves four main phases with further corresponding subdivisions (Figure 4).

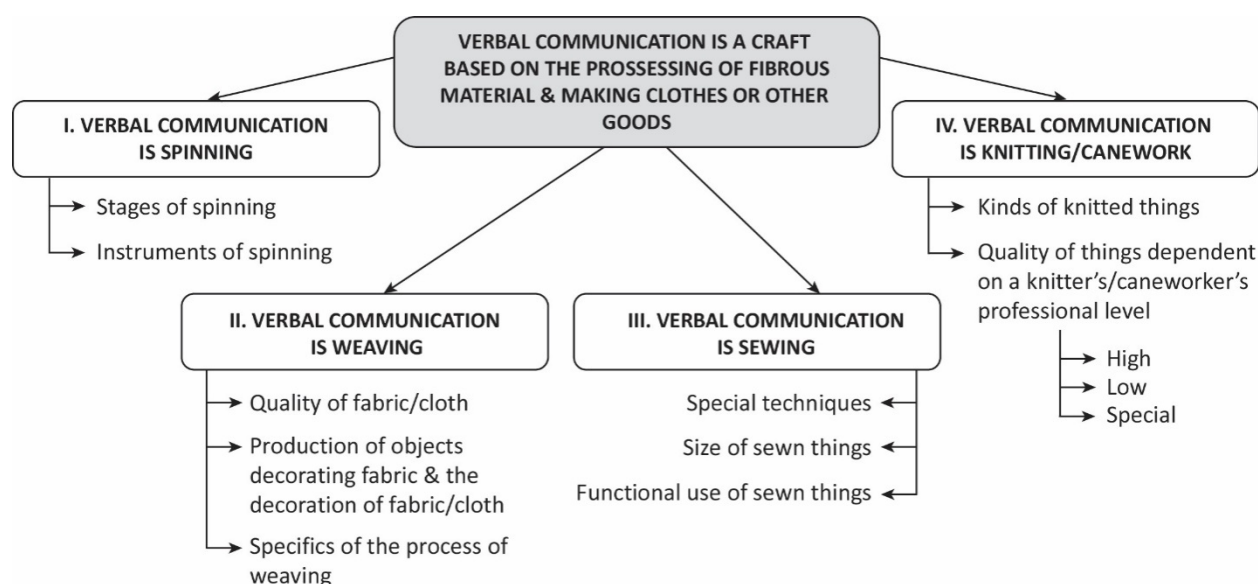


Figure 4. Differentiation of phraseological images in the Craft B domain in Russian

In the English language, the differentiation of the images in the same domain involves three main phases with the corresponding subdivisions that differ from those in the Russian language (Figure 5).

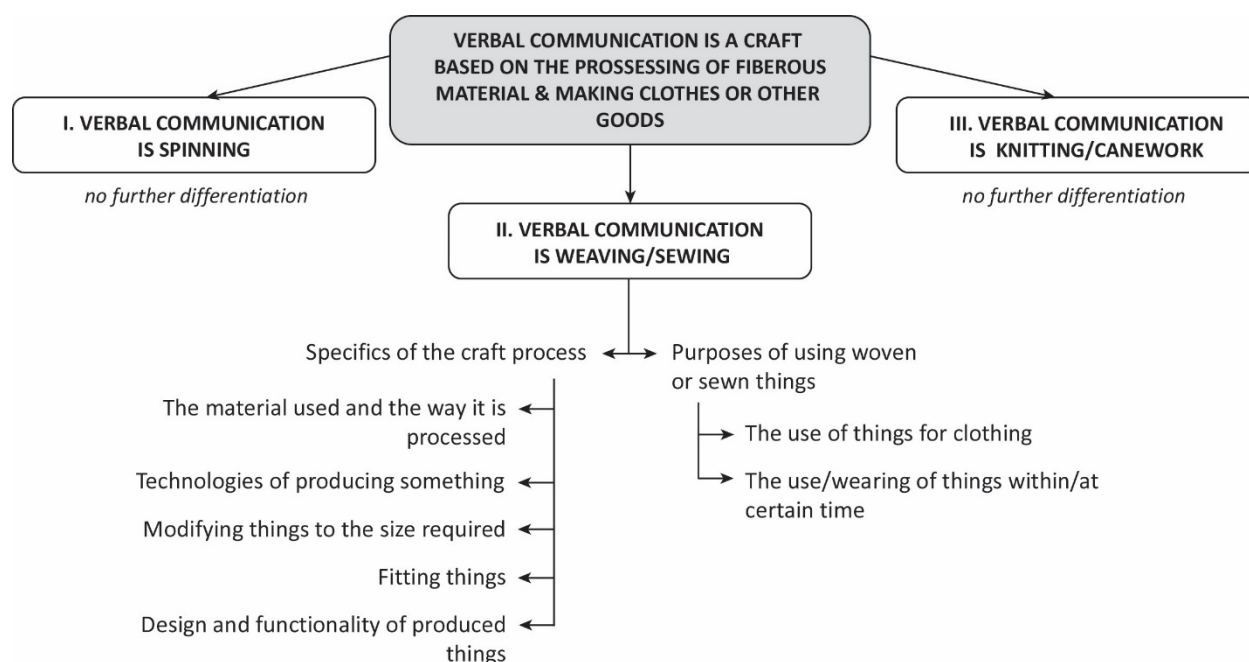


Figure 5. Differentiation of phraseological images in the Craft B domain in English

The specifics of differentiation of phraseological images assessed on the basis of the analogous macro-metaphorical models in the Russian and English languages constitute another aspect of comparing cultural peculiarities of phraseologism-formation. In accordance with the research findings, the difference in the phraseological images in the Russian and English languages is rooted in the choice of different realia (or different aspects of the same realia) depending on their relevance for the phraseologism-creation in this or that culture. In other words, this difference results from **a different cultural profiling** taking place in the process of cognizing the world by representatives of two linguo-cultural societies. For instance, the perception of verbal communication as a spinning craft is typical of both cultures (see Figures 4 and 5).

However, particular phraseological images may be profiled in reference to their certain aspects that vary from culture to culture, cf., for instance: in Russian the images of the idioms *тпенать язык* (lit. *to scutch one's tongue*) – 'to talk to no purpose' and *чесать язык* (lit. *to comb one's tongue*) – 'to say nothing important, to occupy oneself with empty chatter' reflect different stages of spinning, the image of the phraseologism *язык*

как веретено (lit. *one's tongue like a spindle*) – 'someone's talk is idle and has no purpose' renders the idea of the tongue as an instrument of spinning; whereas in English there is only one idiom with the image according to which verbal communication is perceived in terms of a spinning craft, i.e. *to spin a yarn* – 'to tell someone a fanciful story, esp. one designed to mislead, impress, or get rid of someone'.

Thus, the results obtained lead to the conclusion that the study of phraseological creativity of macro-metaphorical conceptual models in general and, in particular, in its so-called qualitative aspect helps get a deeper insight into the process of modelling the phraseological meaning and its conceptual foundation, as well as into its culture-specific nature.

5. Conclusion

One of the main points worth special emphasis is that the cognitive approach to phraseology does not deny the traditional view of studying the semantics of phraseologisms (or idioms). On the contrary, proceeding from the achievements of the latter the cognitive approach helps exceed the present limits of understanding the complex process of phraseologism-formation. It provides linguists with new, i.e. cognitive, means of studying the phraseological (or idiomatic) meaning on new theoretical grounds and, therefore, lets them address the issues that defy the exploration or full explication by traditional methods.

The cognitive culture-oriented theory of phraseological meaning elaborated in my research was based on the synthesis of certain cognitive, semiotic, and (linguo)culturological accounts of language, semantics, and idiomaticity. The study carried out provides some reliable data about and gives quite clear insights into the fact that the phraseological meaning is created as a result of inter-semiotic transposition – the process involving a number of cognitive operations that lead to the formation of intricate conceptual structures that give rise to images and semantics of phraseological signs. The analysis of the Russian phraseologisms denoting verbal communication has

shown that their meanings are based on eleven macro-metaphorical conceptual models (e.g., VERBAL COMMUNICATION IS PLAY, VERBAL COMMUNICATION IS TRAVEL, VERBAL COMMUNICATION IS GASTRONOMY, VERBAL COMMUNICATION IS CRAFT, etc.).

Special attention has been given to the study of the creative potential of the macro-metaphorical models established in the research and to the development of a corresponding notion of phraseological creativity. According to the research findings, the phraseological creativity of macro-metaphorical models has quantitative as well as qualitative dimensions. The quantitative dimension concerns the establishment of the number of phraseologisms produced after a particular macro-metaphorical conceptual model. From this perspective, in the Russian language such macro-metaphorical conceptual model as, for example, VERBAL COMMUNICATION IS TRAVEL is one of the most creative ones. The qualitative dimension suggests the study of phraseological images from the point of view of the degree of their dissimilarity. The cross-cultural study of Russian and English idioms describing verbal communication revealed that the analogous macro-metaphorical conceptual models generate different phraseological images. These images reflect those aspects of the same realia that became most relevant for the linguocultural communities in question in the processes of cognizing particular phenomenon (i.e. verbal communication) and of encoding sociocultural knowledge about it in phraseological signs. This fact can be considered a reliable evidence of the culture-specific nature of phraseologism-formation.

To sum up, the cognitive approach to phraseology gives a new impetus to the development of the general phraseological theory. The cognitive culture-oriented theory elaborated in my research in line with particular achievements of cognitive linguistics sheds more light on the specifics of the phraseological meaning construal. In particular, it helps clarify some aspects of how the phraseological (or idiomatic) meaning is formed, how cultural or sociocultural information is encoded into phraseological signs as well as to bring out cultural specifics of the process of

phraseologism-formation. The results obtained in the research, the notions explored, and the analytical procedure developed may be applicable in translation studies and lexicography and may be of interest for specialists in language teaching and second language acquisition.

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Abbreviations:

EL¹ – *The encyclopedia of linguistics*.

ELL² – *The encyclopedia of language and linguistics*.

GCL³ – *A glossary of cognitive linguistics*.


GSP⁴ – *A glossary of semantics and pragmatics.*

LE⁵ – *The linguistics encyclopedia.*

PhCE⁶ – *Phraseology and culture in English.*

PhIHCR⁷ – *Phraseology: an international handbook of contemporary research.*

RDLL⁸ – *Routledge dictionary of language and linguistics.*

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Résumé (in English)

The paper addresses one of the central problems in the field of phraseology – the problem of the phraseological meaning construal. The main aim of the given work is to trace the present-day tendencies in developing the theory of phraseological semantics and to highlight new approaches to the study of phraseological signs. As a starting point, the paper describes the traditional view of phraseological meaning that began to take shape in the first half of the 20th century. Special attention is paid to the traditional way of interpreting such notions as 'non-compositionality', 'arbitrariness', 'opacity', 'motivation', and 'figurativeness', in terms of which the phraseological semantics is usually described. Though much work was done in traditional linguistics in order to exhaustively explore the process of phraseologism-formation, yet many

issues within its framework remained debatable and unsolved. That favoured the development of new approaches, which were offered, in particular, by cognitive linguistics. Cognitive linguistics has shaped a new outlook on the essence of the phraseological meaning, its formation and architecture. Following some basic theoretical tenets of cognitive linguistics as well as semiotics and linguoculturology, the present paper sets out to elaborate a cognitive culture-oriented theory of the phraseological meaning. This theory is developed and tested against the basis of a representative corpus of selected Russian phraseologisms (approx. 1,000 items) that describe various aspects of verbal communication. The research conducted helps show that the phraseological meaning is formed in the course of inter-semiotic transposition and is composed of two main strata – the surface (semantic) stratum and the deep (conceptual) stratum. The analytical procedure applied in the research allows to establish that the deep stratum of the meanings of all the Russian phraseologisms under consideration is constituted by 11 macro-metaphorical conceptual models (e.g., VERBAL COMMUNICATION IS CRAFT, VERBAL COMMUNICATION IS PLAY). Most importantly, the given macro-metaphorical conceptual models are characterized by a different degree of phraseological creativity. The analysis reveals that they are capable of creating a certain quantity of phraseological images, which, furthermore, are peculiar only to the Russian language. The latter fact has been established in the course of the cross-cultural study of the Russian phraseologisms and the analogous thematic group of idioms in English (approx. 2,000 items). As a whole, the study of deep foundations of phraseological semantics sheds more light on the cognitive mechanisms of phraseologism meaning construal and different interpretations of phraseological images in different cultures.

Key words: cognitive linguistics, semantics, phraseological meaning, inter-semiotic transposition, macro-metaphorical conceptual model, phraseological creativity.

Résumé in German (translated by Dmitrij Yurchenko)

Der vorliegende Artikel ist einem der Schlüsselprobleme der Phraseologie – dem Problem der Bildung der phraseologischen Semantik – gewidmet. Das Ziel des Artikels ist es, die Forschungstendenzen in der Theorie der phraseologischen Bedeutung aufzuarbeiten und neue Ansätze in der Erforschung der phraseologischen Zeichen zu beleuchten. Die Beschreibung der traditionellen Ansichten zu der phraseologischen Bedeutung, die in der ersten Hälfte des 20. Jahrhunderts entstanden sind, werden als Ausgangspunkt genommen. Begriffe wie '(Nicht) Kompositionalität', 'Bedingtheit', '(Nicht)Transparenz', 'Motivation' und 'Bildhaftigkeit' im Rahmen des traditionellen Ansatzes für die Semantikbeschreibung werden besprochen. Wie im Artikel gezeigt wird, ändert das Entstehen der kognitiven Linguistik die traditionelle Vorstellung von diesen Begriffen und trägt dazu bei, eine neue Betrachtungsweise des Wesens der phraseologischen Semantik, des Prozesses ihrer Bildung und Organisation zu entwickeln. Aufgrund neuer Ideen, vor allem aus der kognitiven Linguistik, Semiotik und Linguokulturologie wird in der vorliegenden Studie die kognitiv-kulturologische Konzeption der phraseologischen Bedeutung vorgeschlagen. Als Forschungsmaterial treten 1000 russische Phraseme auf, die sich ihrer Bedeutung nach auf die verbale Kommunikation beziehen. Es wird gezeigt, dass die phraseologische Bedeutung eine komplizierte modellierbare Einheit ist, die im Laufe der intersemiotischen Transposition entsteht und aus zwei zusammenhängenden Ebenen besteht – der oberflächlichen (semantischen) und der tiefen (konzeptuellen) Ebene. Durch die in der Studie entwickelte Methode wurde festgestellt, dass 11 makrometaphorische konzeptuelle Modelle die tiefe Inhaltsebene aller erforschten russischen Phraseme erfassen können (z.b. VERBALE KOMMUNIKATION IST EIN HANDWERK, VERBALE KOMMUNIKATION IST EIN SPIEL). Besonders bemerkenswert ist die Tatsache, dass diese Modelle unterschiedliches kreatives Potential besitzen, d.h., sie können eine unterschiedliche Anzahl der phraseologisch geprägten Bilder produzieren, die auch eine unterschiedliche Differenzierungsspezifität haben. Die Studie der Differenzierungsspezifität der phraseologisch geprägten Bilder in den russischen Phrasemen im Vergleich mit den ähnlichen Idiomen im Englischen (2000 Einheiten)

stellt eine Möglichkeit dar, ihre unikal, kulturbedingten Züge aufzuweisen und die Frage über die kulturell-nationale Spezifik des Phraseologisierungsprozesses zu klären. Die in dieser Studie entwickelte Theorie der phraseologischen Bedeutung, Methoden der phraseologischen Analyse und die Forschungserkenntnisse leisten einen neuen Beitrag zur Forschung der phraseologischen Bedeutung und erklären mögliche Wege und Mechanismen der Kodierung für die Kulturinformation in der phraseologischen Semantik.

Stichwörter: Kognitive Linguistik, phraseologische Bedeutung, intersemiotische Transposition, makrometaphorisches konzeptuelles Modell, phraseologische Kreativität

Résumé in French (translated by Olga Khutoretskaya)

Le présent article est consacré à un des problèmes clés de la phraséologie actuelle qui est le problème de la formation de la sémantique phraséologique. La question est principalement de déterminer les tendances actuelles du développement de la théorie de la signification phraséologique, ainsi que de décrire les nouvelles approches dans l'étude du sens des signes phraséologiques. Pour arriver à cette fin, nous avons pris comme point de départ la description de l'approche traditionnelle du traitement de la signification phraséologique qui a vu le jour dans la première moitié du 20ème siècle. Dans le cadre de cette approche, une attention spéciale est portée sur l'analyse de notions telles que '(non)compositionnalité', 'conventionnel', '(non)transparence', 'motivation' et 'caractère imagé'. L'article démontre que l'apparition d'une nouvelle école linguistique, celle de la linguistique cognitive, change les idées arrêtées sur ces notions et favorise la formation d'une nouvelle perception de la nature, de la création et de l'organisation de la sémantique phraséologique. En se basant sur nombre d'idées progressistes, surtout sur celles de la linguistique cognitive, de la sémiologie et de la culturologie linguistique, cette étude élabore une conception cognitivo-culturologique de la signification phraséologique. L'analyse des unités phraséologiques en russes dans le domaine des connaissances en communication verbale (mille unités analysées) révèle

que la signification phraséologique représente une entité complexe modelable qui résulte d'une transposition intersémiotique. Cette entité se compose de deux niveaux liés entre eux: le niveau de surface (niveau sémantique) et le niveau profond (niveau conceptuel). Notre analyse, dont la méthode originale est mise au point par la présente étude, permet de constater que le niveau profond de signification de toutes les unités phraséologiques étudiées est représenté par 11 modèles conceptuels macrométaphoriques (par exemple, LA COMMUNICATION VERBALE EST UN METIER, LA COMMUNICATION VERBALE EST UN JEU). Il paraît significatif que les modèles étudiés possèdent une capacité créative différente de sorte qu'ils puissent générer différents nombres d'images phraséologiques qui ont d'ailleurs différentes spécificités de différenciation. L'étude comparative des spécificités de différenciation des images propres aux unités phraséologiques russes en question et aux idiomes similaires en anglais a révélé des traits originaux, déterminés par la culture du pays, et a permis de parler de spécificité nationale et culturelle du processus de phraséologisation. La théorie de la signification phraséologique et les méthodes d'analyse des unités phraséologiques élaborées dans la présente étude, ainsi que les résultats obtenus, permettent d'enrichir par de nouveaux faits l'expérience accumulée de l'analyse de la signification phraséologique et de découvrir les mécanismes de codification de l'information culturelle dans la sémantique phraséologique.

Mots-clés: linguistique cognitive, signification phraséologique, transposition intersémiotique, modèle conceptuel macrométaphorique, créativité phraséologique.

Résumé (in Russian)

Настоящая статья посвящена одной из ключевых проблем фразеологии – проблеме формирования фразеологической семантики. Цель работы – проследить современные тенденции развития теории фразеологического значения и осветить новые подходы к изучению содержания фразеологических знаков. Исходя из поставленной цели, отправной точкой в работе является описание специфики традиционного взгляда на фразеологическое значение,

начало формирования которого приходится на первую половину 20-го столетия. Основное внимание уделяется разработке в рамках традиционного подхода к описанию семантики фразеологизмов таких понятий, как '(не)композициональность', 'условность', '(не)прозрачность', 'мотивация' и 'образность'. Как показано в статье, становление нового – когнитивного – направления в лингвистике меняет традиционное представление, сложившееся в отношении данных понятий, и способствует формированию нового взгляда на природу фразеологической семантики, на процесс её создания и её организацию. С опорой на ряд передовых идей, прежде всего, из области когнитивной лингвистики, а также семиотики и лингвокультурологии в настоящем исследовании разработана когнитивно-культурологическая концепция фразеологического значения. На материале русских фразеологизмов предметной области вербальной коммуникации (1,000 единиц) показано, что фразеологическое значение представляет собой сложное моделируемое образование, которое образуется в ходе межсемиотической транспозиции и состоит из двух взаимосвязанных уровней – поверхностного (семантического) и глубинного (концептуального). Посредством разработанного в исследовании метода анализа было установлено, что глубинный уровень содержания всех исследуемых фразеологизмов русского языка представляют 11 макрометафорических концептуальных моделей (напр., ВЕРБАЛЬНАЯ КОММУНИКАЦИЯ – ЭТО РЕМЕСЛО, ВЕРБАЛЬНАЯ КОММУНИКАЦИЯ – ЭТО ИГРА). Особо примечательным представляется тот факт, что данные модели обладают разным креативным потенциалом, т.е. способны порождать разное количество фразеологических образов, имеющих, к тому же, разную специфику дифференциации. Изучение специфики дифференциации образов изучаемых русских фразеологизмов по сравнению с образами аналогичных идиом в английском языке (2,000 единиц) позволило выявить их уникальные, культурно обусловленные черты и прояснить вопрос о культурно-национальной специфике процесса фразеологизации. Разработанные в настоящем исследовании теория фразеологического значения и методы анализа фразеологизмов, а также

полученные на их основе результаты позволяют пополнить новыми фактами накопленный опыт изучения фразеологического значения и раскрыть возможные пути и механизмы кодирования культурной информации во фразеологической семантике.

Ключевые слова: когнитивная лингвистика, фразеологическое значение, межсемиотическая транспозиция, макрометафорическая концептуальная модель, фразеологическая креативность.

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