Realisation of Phraseological Modifications by Uupdating the Existing Contexts

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Abstract   The study paper examines phraseological activity of writers, the phraseological variations and modifications in particular. Phraseological variations and modifications are deliberate, creative, innovative forms of the original phraseological units` structure and meaning that produce different semantic, stylistic and pragmatic effect in the literary discourse. The purpose of this paper is to focus on the analysis of the phraseological activity of writers and to identify the procedures, transformations and changes that take part in the process of formal modification which result in the extension of the phraseological system of the language.

Keywords   Phraseological Innovation, Phraseological Variation, Semantic Volume, Modification, Literary Discourse

1. Introduction

This paper aims to deepen the understanding of conceptual changes and procedures that ensure lexical and syntactical transformations of phraseological units,as well as and the understanding of semantic relationship between the modified utterance and the original phraseological units . Any kind of semantic and structural study of the modified phraseological units requires the analysis of language in context since isolated forms cannot provide sufficient information about the semantic content of the expressions, making, therefore, the observation of the semantic relations impossible.

As the researchers indicate there are certain textual types and genres which favour the use of creative phraseological variations. In this regard we consider a literary discourse as the most prolific type with the modified occurrences of phraseological units. Literary discourse is relevant for writers who find plenty of possibilities to transform and decompose phraseological units both lexically and syntactically. [1],[2],[3],[4]

According to A. Baranov and D. Dobrovol'skij who describe the actual meaning of idioms as derived from specific cognitive structures: frames and scenarios, "the cognitive model of meaning is[5] based not on the literal meaning of words forming an idiom, but on the corresponding cognitive structure". The formation of the meaning of an idiom is the result of different cognitive transformations which take place in the initial scenario or frame and are reflected in the resulting cognitive structure. The phraseological units are characterized, therefore, as conceptual structures, frames and scenarios with several slots, in which diverse transformations take place. Baranov and Dobrovol'skij classify the main types of simple transformations which ensure the derivation of idiomatic meaning [5]:

1). The replacement of slot contents by uncharacteristic (or sometimes oppositional) content.

2). The introduction of an uncharacteristic slot with its own contents (when a slot of this type was not previously present).

3). The transposition of conceptual contents of a frame slot from one frame to another.

4). The integration of the conceptual contents of a slot in the initial frame or scenario into the corresponding slot of the resulting frame or scenario

5). The elimination of slots or subslots.

6). The reduction of a frame to a single slot or subslot.

As for us we are going to dwell on the lexical and syntactical transformations within the phraseological units that can highlight our understanding of how various modifications of phraseological units are realized.

2. Creative Activity of a Writer as a Lingual Personality

Literary discourse contains the words of common words employed in all language styles, as well as in spoken and written speech. These words are characterized with rich meanings and semantic shades, as a result of which their stylistic functions in literary discourse are very miscellaneous. In addition, if we take into account that writers tend to enrich and develop semantics of words,

search for new ways and means of their literary use, the very principles of studying content and the role of common words in a writer's language, must appreciably differ from their study and classification principles in standard language.

While analyzing the literary discourse it's expedient to focus on studying semantic and stylistic versatility of common words and individual authoric means in literary discourse.

A number of cases are known when author boldly exceeded the limits of common literary vocabulary. In this respect the very role of writers in a struggle for adjusting literary vocabulary to the standard language that was observed before and still continues, assumes particular interest, though means and methods have changed.

While studying the content and role of common-usage words in the writers works it is necessary to pay special attention to polysemanticism of words. Writers not only use all varieties of meanings of the native words, but also highly extend semantics of words, providing them with new meanings or semantic shades.

History shows that the creative practice of writers normally was successful in case when author developed meaning of words according to the rules of internal language development. The impact of internal rules of language development reveals the fact that alongside with direct meanings figurative meanings also appear as a result of metaphorization process. Development of meanings of words can be vividly traced in the phraseological innovations of writers, in which words put into new and unusual contacts assume quite different meanings. According to V. Vinogradov, "It is necessary to dwell on the very nature of enriching and complicating meanings of the words belonging to the lexicon of language, as the semantic development of the lexicon words is related to enriching standard language phraseology. Formation and extension of figurative meanings in the words belonging to the lexicon result in creating phraseological units included into the lexicon of language"[6].

How a stable and popular expression is formed and by which means it becomes the part of the phraseological system of language and makes up the golden stock of its figurative sayings is one of the most important challenges for researchers of a writer's language and personality.

While studying literary use of various sayings of writers we have opportunity to observe how they are developed into aphorisms used in figurative- allegorical meaning. Let us refer to the examples as below:

The expression **a blot on one`s escutcheon** is created by G. Draiden (1631-1700) in the translations from Vergilium: *The banishment of Ovid was **a blot in his escutcheon***. Later R.Browning used it in his tragedy's name. Probably after that it was spread in the English literature. *Surely crudity is only to be expected from **a mere blot on the family escutcheon*** (R.Aldington. Rejected Guest).

Modern English phraseology has also fixed the variant ***a blot on the copybook[***7]

W. Shakespeare created the expression **the course of true love never did run smooth** in his *Dream at Summer Night* and used it in direct meaning:
Lysander. Ah me! For aught that ever I could read.
Could ever hear by tale or history.
The course of true love never did run smooth…
And R. Aldington used it in sarcastic tone with quite a different semantics:
*Ralph's letter was a long, involved and- in Etta's opinion – priggish document, beginning with another spring of apologies, repeating most of what he had said, and going over all their past. Quite a valuable essay on the theme of the **course of true love never did run smooth**. Etta though sardonically* (Women must work).

For W. Shakespeare this expression is an ordinary sentence, for R.Aldington it's already a phraseological unit (sometimes fixed as a proverb)[7].

Phraseological activity of writers shows itself first of all in updating the contexts in which the words usually appear. Words displaced from one surrounding to another assume new distributive capacities, undergo interesting semantic and stylistic changes. Study of the phraseological word connections is of paramount importance not only for characterizing the semantics of the words while including them into new phraseological contexts, but also for determining creative peculiarity of a writer as a language personality dealing with phraseological innovation.

According to I.R.Galperin, "the stylistic device of decomposition of fused set phrases consists in reviving independent meanings which make up the component parts of the fusion; i.e. it makes each word of the combination acquire its literal meaning which in many cases leads to the realization of an absurdity." [8]

While characterizing phraseological connections of the words it's very interesting to establish how words assume new meanings. In order to show those highly rich semantic and stylistic capacities of words belonging to the lexicon of language we can point out, for example, phraseological connections   and meanings of the word "knot".

This word is fixed within 8 English phraseological units and in each of them it assumes a certain semantic and stylistic meaning mostly due to being used in a literary environment. [7]

Compare:

1) Гордиев узел: A great city struggled for a score of years to untangle that which was all but beyond the power of solution- a true Gordian knot (Th.Dresier. The Titan)

2) Разрубить узел: I don't want to speak ill of your father…but…he'll be back on your mother's hands before a year's over. You can imagine what that will mean to her and to all of you after this. The only thing is to cut knot for good (J. Galsworthy. In Chancery).

3) Небрежно завязанный узел: "It`s all right for you" Frankie muttered, tying granny knots over and over each other (Ch. Dickens. The Heart of London).

4) Завязать себя узами брака:
Ld. Sparkish: Is your friend Ned Kattle married?

Yes, my Lord: he has tied a knot with his tongue, that he can never untie with his teeth. (O. Wilde. Lady Windermere's Fan).

5) Увязнуть в трудностях: *Violet. It's a fearfully difficult language. Sometimes my head seems to get tied up in knots* (W.S. Maugham. Caesar's Wife).

6) Запутать кого-то: *Watch him tie that witness in knots* (J.O'Hara.Ten North Frederick).

7) Поженится: *We'll tie the old knot whenever* you say the word, Dawnie (J. Jones. Some Came Running).

8) Узел верности (как символ преданности и любви): Splendid cake, covered with cupids, silver, and true-lover's knots (Ch. Dickens. Our Mutual Friend).

3. Lexico–Syntactical Transformations of Phraseological Units

The use of the separate elements of already established and generally known phraseological units by a writer when he/she had to realize dependent, phraseologically connected word meanings is of significant interest for the phraseological analysis. Methods of realizing dependent word meanings being components of set combinations are rather specific for every writer. Violations and innovations of the phrase clichés are rather usual in the literary discourse. Compare:

"And what are people like us supposed to do?" asked Lina. "Live in a vacuum? Bury our heads in the sand? (M. Dodd. Sowing the Wind).

I loved even your so very British talent for hiding your head in the sand when you can no longer avoid the ugliness before your eyes (D. Gusack. Heatwave in Berlin).

Hamlet: I am but mad north-north-west; when the wind is sourthly. I know a hawk from a handsaw (W. Shakespeare. Hamlet).

The clever Eliott who knew a hawk from a handsaw never floundered into that platitude (Th. Carlyle. The history of Friedrich Called the Great).

He too knows a hawk from a handsaw (W. S. Hoole. Humor and Satire)

These examples are peculiar for distinguishing and accentuating lexical meanings of separate phrasal components.

As for searching new forms of the phraseological word connections the modifications of generally known sayings are most popular. A writer finds these modernization capacities in the very synthetic nature of aphorisms, proverbs and other winged expressions, in which general meaning of the whole combination is derivative from meanings of its lexical components. However, it should be taken into consideration that appreciability of lexical components in such combinations is very relative as meanings of separate parts are shaded by figurative semantics of the whole phraseological unit. Stability of the latter attaches specific shades not only to meaning, but also to the syntactic relations of the closed combinations'

elements, as in the following example:

"Ни один господин большой руки пожертвовал бы сию же минуту половину душ крестьян и половину имений, заложенных, со всеми улучшениями на иностранную и русскую ногу, с тем только, чтобы иметь такой желудок, какой имеет господин средней руки…" (Н.В.Гоголь, "Мертвые душе") In this case the phraseological combination "*на широкую ноуг*" is completely decomposed, new words are supplemented and the new combination "*на иностранную и русскую ногу*" is created, where both lexical and syntactical changes take place.

Substitution of one of the elements changes semantics of the whole expression. For example, compare the proverb ***a fool may ask questions in an hour than a wise man can answer in seven years*** with its variant used by W. Scott: *Bryce Snailsfoot is a cautious man ... he knows **a fool may ask more questions than a wise man cares to answer*** (The Pirate)

As we can observe in this example, the substitution of one or more lexical components of phraseological units, can result in the creation of an occasional synonymous unit. This type of occasional productivity is not directly related with the lexemes that take part in the process of substitution. This means that the semantic relationship which exists between these two elements does not necessarily and directly ensure the final phraseological product. In fact, in most cases, there is no semantic relationship at all between the constituents involved in the process. In spite of this, the result is a unit, which, in context is synonymous of the original one. This means, in turn, that the synonymy will appear in the figurative interpretation and not in the literal meanings of the phraseological units involved. Therefore, the success in the new synonymous creation lies, not on the semantic relation between the two lexemes involved, but on the correct contextualization of the original unit. The contextual information is so important that sometimes the interchange of synonymous lexemes in a specific context yields an utterance which is semantically very distant from the original form in a specific context. This implies that the context leads to the literal interpretation of the utterance but does not forget the figurative meaning, which will be used to achieve other pragmatic and stylistic effects.

According to F. Martinez, "the relation between the canonical phraseological utterance and its contextualized synonym creates a supraunit, defined as a virtual unit which functions as a mould or pattern for future synonymous creations; in each occasion, this supraunit will get specific and particular referents, which will make it into a synonymous particularized utterance".[9]

Contextual information can also change semantics and expression of phraseological combination even without appreciable modification of its structure:

" Little pitchers have big ears," they used to say when I was smaller. Then they stopped saying it… (S. Chaplin. The Big Room).

*When I was little, parents told:" **Little pitchers have long***

ears" (in the meaning: *"Children like to listen to the talks of adults"*)

In this respect individual variations of the phraseological turns which are well known in a literary language and used due to principle of style contrasts combination are of great interest. Compare:

Our team **has gone into orbit**- *Наша команда добилась больших успехов («вышла на орбиту»). Another variant: John was afraid his father* **would go into orbit** *when he found out about the car accident.*

Джон боялся, что отец взбеленится, когда узнает, что он разбил машину.

Besides lexical transformations, for creative practice of writers syntactic deformation of stable expressions is also typical. Breaking syntactic closeness and integrity of phraseological units, a writer includes into narrative speech separate components of expressions which however don't lose connection with content and structure of the whole stable combination. Compare: phraseological unit **hold (keep/put) one's nose to the grindstone** with its syntactic variation:

I can see as far into **a grindstone** *as another man; further than a good many, perhaps, because I had* **my nose well kept to it** *when I was young* (Ch. Dickens. Hard Times)

Or**:** *to be a shadow of one's former self* in the variations:
He **was worn** *by anxiety and remorse almost* **to a shadow**... (Ch. Dickerns. Oliver Twist).

Lord Augustus: I want to speak to you particularly, dear boy, I'm **worn to a shadow***(O. Wilde. Lady Windermere's Fan).

As we see in this examples, writers can differently change the structure of a phraseological unit depending on stylistic effect they aim to achieve.

4. Conclusions

Our study has shown that the semantic effect produced by the modification of phraseological units through lexical and syntactical transformations depends mostly on the contextual clues that direct the particularization and referentialization of the lexeme or lexemes which have been substituted. The context plays, therefore, a highly significant role. In this respect, it is necessary to analyze the context for the study of connections between canonical forms of phraseological units and their creative variations. Examples of both lexical and syntactical transformation of set word combinations testify to those unexhaustible potentials which are at disposal of writer by his/her native language phraseology. Thus, a phrase isn't a fossilized and inseparable unit for a literary personality who finds a number of not yet exhausted potentials of semantic and stylistic –syntactic nature in it.

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