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АНГЛИЙСКИЕ ИДИОМЫ, СВЯЗАННЫЕ С ЯВЛЕНИЯМИ ПРИРОДЫ

Аннотация. Культурный код нации закреплен в устойчивых языковых формах, к которым относятся идиомы, отражающие быт, обычаи и традиции, особенности поведения народа. Все окружающее находило отклик в языке: от географического положения страны, климатических условий и традиционных промыслов до религиозных представлений и верований. Английская фразеология изучается во многих аспектах: семантическом, структурно-синтаксическом, стилистическом, лингвокультурологическом, каждый из которых обогащает наше знание и привносит новое в понимание данного феномена. В статье описываются полностью или частично переосмысленное значение и образность как важнейшие особенности идиом. Приводятся результаты структурно-семантического анализа идиом и идиоматических выражений, в состав которых входит компонент, относящийся к природе или природным явлениям. Для анализа были отобраны порядка 80 идиом методом сплошной выборки из фразеологических словарей и других источников. Результаты исследования могут быть полезны студентам, обучающимся по направлениям подготовки «Экология и природопользование», «Техносферная безопасность», и всем, интересующимся изучением английского языка.

Ключевые слова: идиома, идиоматическое выражение, фразеологическая единица, метафорическое переосмысление, образность

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ENGLISH NATURE IDIOMS

Abstract. The culture code of a nation is fixed in stable linguistic forms including idioms that reflect the way of life, customs and traditions, and the peculiarities of the human behavior. Everything around was reflected in language: from the geographical location of the country, climatic conditions and traditional crafts to religious ideas and beliefs. English phraseology is studied in many perspectives: semantic, structural, stylistic and cultural, each of them enriches our knowledge and better understanding of the concept. The article considers metaphorical shift and imagery as basic features of idioms. The results of structural and semantic analyses of the idioms and idiomatic expressions including nature component are shown. About 80 idioms were collected by complete enumeration method from the dictionaries of English idioms and other sources. The findings can be useful for the students major in Ecology and Nature Management, Technosphere Safety, but also for everybody interested in the English language.

Key words: idiom, idiomatic expression, phraseological unit, metaphorical shift, imagery

Introduction

Idioms and idiomatic expressions are considered an integral part of everyday speech making it more colourful and expressive. The use of idioms shows your language proficiency. They also reveal the peculiarities of the country culture and history, the way of life, customs and traditions, and human behavior. There is no doubt, geography and climate conditions as well as traditional trades are sure to be reflected in the language. The United Kingdom is an island nation and the weather there is famous for its changeability, so there is a significant amount of nature idioms in the English language.

In Russia the term “phraseological unit” is commonly used and the branch of linguistic science that deals with them is phraseology. Idioms in your speech make you sound more natural. Some idioms are informal; they may create an effect such as joke, shock, exaggeration, or help you give a piece of advice, evaluate something. Some have become so well worn that they are also clichés, that means they are overused or common expressions.

According to the definition given in the dictionary of linguistic terms, an idiom is “a phrase which means something different from the meanings of the separate words that are a part of it” [1]. It cannot be usually understood by the literal interpretation of the words that make up the expression. Used together, the words convey a meaning that is often unrelated to the individual words in the idiom:

e.g. *rain at seven, fine at eleven* – семь пятниц на неделе; *to live on air* – жить неизвестно на что, питаться воздухом.

As many scholars say, the most important features of an idiom are its metaphorical reconsideration (or metaphorical shift) and its imagery. A shift in a broad sense can be considered as any change in the literal meaning of words or the extension in the meaning of words. Metaphorical extension is the extension of meaning in a new direction through popular adoption of an originally metaphorical meaning [2]. Imagery is gained when the meanings of the words in an idiom are used metaphorically. Imagery is defined as “a literary device that refers to the use of figurative language to evoke a sensory experience or create a picture with words for a reader” [3]. By applying idioms effectively one can appeal to people’s senses to create an emotionally coloured image.

Idioms can be classified according to semantic, structural, historical or stylistic criteria. Russian linguists made a significant contribution to the studying of idioms and idiomatic expressions. A.I. Smirnitskiy, V.V. Vinogradov, I.V. Arnold, A.V. Kunin, A.N. Baranov, N.M. Shanskiy research these language units from their semantics and structure. They underline idioms are “semantically undivided units”.

From the structural point of view idioms can be nominative to name a person or a thing (substantive, e.g. *There is a calm just now; the calm before the storm.*), to give a characteristic (adjective, e.g. *The whole system is rotten to the core.*), or to compare something or somebody (adverbial, e.g. *Come on, kids, go like lightning out to the car, or else we're going to be late!*). They also can consist of a verb phrase and be used as a predicate in a sentence (e.g. “*My goal in undertaking this film was to illustrate ‘we’re dancing on a volcano.’*”).

Due to the functional approach idioms play a communicative role in the speech being used as a whole phrase (proverbs and sayings, e.g. *During exam week, it never rains but it pours with multiple assignments, projects, and quizzes scheduled one after the other.*) [4].

Semantic and Structural Analysis of English Nature Idioms

We base our semantic analysis of nature idioms on one of the world’s most widely recognised typology of phraseological units by Russian linguist V. N. Teliya. In her work “Russian phraseology” she divides phraseological units into the following groups:

1) idioms as fully metaphorically reconsidered expressions (*to live on the fat of the land* – жить в роскоши, припеваючи);

2) idiomatic expressions with one metaphorically reconsidered word in it (*the top of the tree* – ведущее положение);

3) clichés (*the tip of the iceberg* – верхушка айсберга, *more or less* – более или менее, *sooner or later* – рано или поздно);

4) proverbs and sayings (*it’s an ill wind that blows nobody any good* – нет худа без добра);

5) aphorisms that go back to the Bible or a famous person (**from the Bible:** *to sow the wind and reap the whirlwind* – досл. посеять ветер и пожать бурю, перен. жестоко поплатиться, *to fall on stony ground* – досл. падать на бесплодную землю, перен. быть безрезультатным; **aphorisms by W. Shakespeare:** *a sea change* – превращение, *trifles light as air* – ничтожные пустяки) [5].

We analysed 70 nature idioms from semantic and structural points of view [6-11]. The results run as follows:

1) 70% idioms:

to stick in the mud – примириться со своим жалким положением,

to clear the air – разрядить атмосферу,

to cry to the moon – требовать невозможного,

to make a splash – вызвать сенсацию,

to smell a rat – чувствовать неладное,

root and branch – полностью;

2) 6% idiomatic expressions:

something in the air – в воздухе носится (о слухах),

the top of the tree – ведущее положение,
to praise to the skies – расхваливать до небес;

3) 4% clichés:

the apple of discord – яблоко раздора,
the tip of the iceberg – верхушка айсберга,
in a nutshell – вкратце;

4) 8% proverbs and sayings:

it's an ill wind that blows nobody any good – нет худа без добра,
rain at seven, fine at eleven – семь пятниц на неделе,
once in a blue moon – после дождичка в четверг,
half a loaf is better than no bread – на безрыбье и рак рыба;

5) 12% aphorisms:

from the Bible: *to sow the wind and reap the whirlwind* – досл. посеять ветер и пожать бурю, перен. жестоко поплатиться,
to fall on stony ground – досл. падать на бесплодную землю, перен. быть безрезультатным;

aphorisms by W. Shakespeare: *a sea change* – превращение, *trifles light as air* – ничтожные пустяки, **aphorisms by Aesop:** *the last straw* – предел терпения.

The described proportion is illustrated in Figure 1.

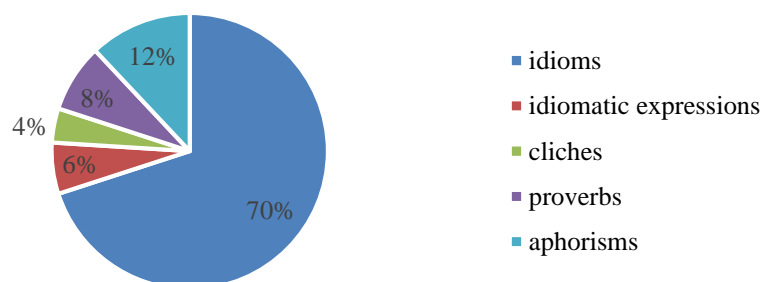


Figure 1. Semantic analysis of nature idioms

From the point of view of their grammar structure we divided the idioms into four groups:

1) 24% idioms defining a person or a thing. They are either nouns or have a structure «a noun + a preposition + a noun»:

the top of the tree – ведущее положение,
the tip of the iceberg – верхушка айсберга,
a break in the clouds – луч надежды,
calm before the storm – затишье перед бурей,
a bed of roses – не житье, а масленица,
a rose between two thorns – красивая женщина, сидящая между двумя мужчинами;

2) 50% idioms defining actions. They have a structure «a verb + a noun/ a noun with a preposition»:

to get out of the wood – выпутаться из затруднительного положения,
to clear the air – разрядить атмосферу,
to praise to the skies – расхваливать до небес,
to have a place in the sun – иметь благоприятное положение,
to cry for the moon – требовать невозможного,
to dance on a volcano – находиться в постоянной опасности;

3) 16% idioms describing a person or a thing. They have either a structure «an adjective + a noun»:

extinct volcano – человек, утративший былую энергию,
rotten to the core – прогнивший насквозь,

stolen fruit – украденный плод (сладок)

or a comparative structure with the conjunctions as...as.../ like...:

as old as the hills – старо как мир,

as right as rain – в полном здравии,

as steady as a rock – надежный как скала,

like lightning – с быстротой молнии;

4) 10% proverbs and sayings. They are usually used as a whole sentence in the speech:

It never rains but it pours. – Беда не приходит одна.

His star has set. – Его звезда закатилась.

It's an ill wind that blows nobody any good. – Нет худа без добра.

Rain at seven, fine at eleven. – Семь пятниц на неделе.

The described proportion is illustrated in Figure 2.

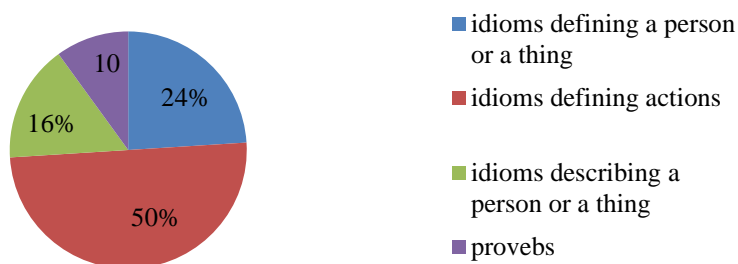


Figure 2. Structural analysis of nature idioms

Conclusion

As a way of conclusion, it should be said that idioms and idiomatic expressions are very powerful tool to express your ideas and thoughts and sound natural and proficient. But they are quite difficult to translate and tricky to use without knowing the cultural, historical and national peculiarities. There are special dictionaries of idioms to help the learners find not only the translation, but also the origin of the word. On the one hand, idioms are not easy to deal with, but on the other hand, they cause you to change into a more advanced learner.

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