

Illustrative Material in the Structure of Phraseographic Entries

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to account for the important role of illustrative examples as an inherent part of entries of phraseological dictionaries. After designating the function of this element of the entry we suggest the review of its development from the earliest dictionaries to the latest ones. On the basis of existing unilingual phraseological dictionaries of the English and Russian languages we draw the conclusion about the necessity of elaborating appropriate methodology of selecting contexts and their arranging in the entry. Research into illustrative examples structure of four online idiom dictionaries evidences that online phraseography has not worked out its methodology of selecting, preparing and representing illustrative material used in resources of computer and corpora linguistics. We also make emphasis on the fact that phraseography is a part of linguistics.

Keywords: phraseography, phraseological unit, unit of meaning, shade of meaning, dictionary entry, sentential context samples, instantiation

1. Introduction

Phraseography is a comparatively new branch of linguistics, it is based mostly upon the theses elaborated in works contributed into lexicography. On this stage it is worth mentioning that the fact of existence of theory of lexicography and its necessity was not admitted by some even well-known scholars as Wierzbicka (Wierzbicka, 1985), Béjoint and others. The role of linguists in the process of dictionary compilation and their involvement in it are totally rejected; as they think “a majority of dictionaries are not about general language anyway” (Bergenholtz & Bergenholtz, 2011, p. 189). Albeit the viewpoint is supported even by some eminent scholars as Henning Bergenholtz we do not hesitate to express our strong belief that dictionary compilation is the work requiring high level of linguistic competence. The same idea is expressed by many contemporary linguists, among them are M. Rundell (2012), L. Zgusta (1992), Z. Zare and Balakumar (2014).

Our experience of compiling Multilingual (Russian-English-German-Turkish-Tatar Phraseological dictionary) Phraseological dictionary published in 2008 (Arsentieva, 2008) evidences about the necessity of serious linguistic basis for completing each step of the work process: selecting the lemmata, their presentation, defining, giving information about optional components of the head phrases and their lexical and grammatical variants, lexical collocability, grammatical valency, stylistic characteristics, providing synonyms and antonyms, representing sentential context samples, etc. This entire job can be carried out successfully, if there is a reliable systematic approach, which we are sure is being elaborated by theory of lexicography and phraseography.

Phraseography deals with even more complex linguistic unit than a word. Semantic structure of a phraseological unit (PU) is different from that of lexical units by its complexity; therefore its appropriate definition can be achieved only by meticulous forethought of each element of the entry, one of which is sentential context samples (SCS).

Phraseological meaning is a conglomeration of diverse units of sense, as A. N. Leontiev states (Leontiev, 1972, p. 207). It varies in speech according to communicative situation PU is used. The sense of PU is the information which is implied by the speaker when using it (PU) in a definite context, at a definite period of time, under definite circumstances. One should underscore that here emotional evaluative type of information is meant rather than logical-denotational one.

Within the framework of this research we use the formula for defining the sense of a PU, suggested by I.M. Kobozeva: “Sense of X for Y is the information tied with X in the consciousness of Y within the period of time T when Y pronounces X or receives it as a means of information delivering” (Kobozeva, 2007, p. 13).

Subjectively, the sense of a PU is inseparable from its meaning, even is included into it, phraseological meaning and its realization in the form of sense to be united in the conscious of the receptor or speaker into one semantic entity. Nevertheless, phraseological meaning and sense have different genetic bases.

Though contemporary semantics witnesses diverse approaches to study of the description of the language content, all of them could be united into two opposing directions: the narrow and broad ones. The subject of the narrow direction is the meaning of a linguistic unit and the expressions it is included in; the broad direction studies the sense of expressions in definite conditions of their use alongside with the meaning.

Phraseological meaning is a part of general sense, phraseological meaning enters into the field of senses of a PU as its obligatory part, but not as the exhaustive one. The sense of a PU is not only the form of phraseological meaning instantiation (specification), but the sense of a PU is rather instantiated (specified) in phraseological meaning.

2. Materials and Methods

One of the important elements of a dictionary entry contributing much to the process of revealing the semantic structure of a head phrase is sentential context samples or illustrative examples.

The empirical material for this research – sentential context samples (SCS) – was taken from entries of printed and on-line monolingual phraseological dictionaries of the English and Russian languages. Though we mention here only nine printed dictionaries, the number of them scrutinized to complete the research is much more. Achieving the main goal of our research was enabled by utilizing the following methods: 1) the method of componential analysis to distinguish all the units (semes) of phraseological meaning; 2) the structural grammatical method to designate the correct form of head phrases; 3) the method of lexicographic definition to study the meaning of head phrases; 4) the method of corpus linguistics to detect the potentials of SCS; 5) descriptive method to describe the process of research and its conclusions.

3. Main Part

3.1 Studying the Question

The main function of SCS is demonstrating complementary meanings, shades of meaning of the head phrase and dynamic potentials of phraseological meaning which the definition fails to represent. Accordingly, SCS makes up the part of the entry describing semantic parameters of lemmata. Moreover, contexts may provide the possibility for realization of emotive, expressive and functional stylistic aspects of phraseological connotation, i.e. SCS may represent the information about stylistic parameters of PUs. As it becomes clear from our analysis all aspects of phraseological meaning are inseparably interwoven with each other and each element of the entry describing one of the parameters of meaning complements to the description of others. Since SCS contribute much to the description of semantic structure of head phrases, lexicographer should be very scrupulous about selecting them (SCS).

The role of illustrative examples in lexicography was analyzed by L.V. Minaeva, she calls them phraseology, because illustrative examples in lexicography are word combinations in which the head word is used. There are three types of phraseology singled out by her: 1) philological phraseology – phrases, word combinations and sentences fixed in philological thesaurus of the language; 2) semiotic phraseology – the ones used when interpreting the meaning of a word; 3) illustrative phraseology, i.e. compilative phrases – the ones specially created for synthesizing the results of semantic analysis of a word after studying philological thesaurus of the language. All these types of phraseology help us to comprehend the essence of dialectical entity of the meaning of a word and its usage (Minaeva, 1986, p. 22).

SCS in phraseological dictionaries cannot be just phrases, usually they are sentences, very often complex ones or contexts consisting of more than one sentence. In Russian phraseography compilative examples are utilized as frequently as examples taken from fiction works and it is observed even in the earlier dictionaries, as “Russian Thought and Speech: Experience in Russian Phraseology” by M. Mikhelson published in 1903. But examples taken from texts of printed press are rare in the phraseography of the Russian language. In 2009 a special dictionary including only PUs used in printed press “Contemporary Phraseological Dictionary of the Russian Language” was compiled. It is natural that SCS of this dictionary consists of only contexts from newspapers and magazines (Zhukov, 2009).

3.2 Illustrative Material Use in Earlier Dictionaries

In the 90s of the previous century contexts with instantial use of PUs began to appear as illustrative examples in entries of Russian phraseological dictionaries. A dictionary fully devoted to illustrating dynamic potentials of

PU was compiled by A. M. Melerovich and V. M. Mokienco. Some entries of this dictionary encompassed up to 9 different variants of instantial use of head phrases. It was recognized as “the first lexicographic experience of describing various modifications of PUs and proverbs observed in dynamics of speech” (Ayupova, 2014, p. 513)

English phraseography can boast stable tendency of having SCS as an entry element beginning with as early dictionaries as “Idiomatic English Phrases” by James Main Dixon (1905), “A Desk-Book of Idioms and Idiomatic Phrases in English Speech and Literature” by Frank Vizetelly (1923). The contexts mostly were either compilative examples or taken from literary works.

However the number of examples in SCS was not exceeding one or at least two per entry in early phraseography of the languages mentioned. Since the 70s of the XX century most phraseological dictionaries of the languages under analysis demonstrate phraseographers’ consciousness of the role of SCS and the importance of various samples exemplifying different variants of senses of phraseological meaning realized in different contexts. So the numbers of contexts given in each entry and the variants of sources lexicographers refer to are growing.

3.3 Sources of Illustrative Material Used in XXI Century Printed Dictionaries

The experience of the Oxford Dictionary of Current Idiomatic English (ODCIE) (A. P. Cowie, R. Mackin, I. R. McCaig) published in 2007 is worth considering. Firstly, contexts from printed press became inherent part of SCS; secondly, the compilers of this dictionary elaborated the method of abbreviating the titles of the sources illustrative examples were taken from. The latter is really important in printed dictionaries, compilers of which have to care about the volume. For example:

*(All) my eye (and Betty Martin) (informal) completely untrue or unsensical, esp if smth said that is intended to deceive or mislead one but does not do so. ‘Maybe there’s nothing in it after all. Maybe be it’s **all my eye**.’ ‘I’ll go on for a bit. I’ll let you know soon enough if I think the whole thing’s a front.’ PP. This notion of earning an honest penny is **all my eye**. A man can work a whole lifetime and when he is 65 he considers himself rich if he has saved a thousand pounds. Rich! CSWB. That was **all my eye and Betty Martin** about her having a headache. She just wanted to stay at home in case her boyfriend phoned (Cowie, 2007, p. 393).*

Two of the contexts used in the above example are from texts of literary works. They are followed by abbreviations PP and CSWB which, as the list of abbreviations given in the dictionary shows, stand for Robert Harling, The Paper Palace and Arnold Wesker, Chicken Soup with Barley, accordingly. The third context is a compilative one. In the list of abbreviations given in the dictionary one can also find the following ones: DM Daily Mirror (newspaper) 21 June 1960; G The Guardian (newspaper) April – October 1967, 1971-78; H Honey (magazine) August 1960 etc.

“The Large Phraseological Dictionary of the Russian Language: Meaning. Usage. Cultural commentary” (LPDRL) compiled under the leadership of Veronika Telia demonstrates a real circumspect approach to the illustrative examples arranging. The contexts are selected from various sources: fiction works, press, internet, entries of existing dictionaries. Compilative sentences also became part of SCS of this dictionary (Telia, 2006).

The compilers of the abovementioned dictionary represent the sample contexts dividing them into subzones, each of which is marked by a special sign. In the first subzone a verbal PU is exemplified in an infinitive construction or in impersonal construction with modal words. In the second subzone one can find grammatical potentials of the head phrase; if it is a verbal PU and its grammatical valency allows having a subject expressed by an animate or inanimate noun, the examples are given in four units: a) in the form of the utterance about a third person; b) in the second person; c) first person; d) inanimate subject, etc. Sample contexts of a verbal PU which can collocate only with indirect object are given without dividing into units. Special systems were also worked out for arranging SCSs in entries where the head phrase is a substantival PU, adjectival PU, adverbial PU, etc.

In the introductory text the authors of this dictionary express their belief that the method of arranging illustrative material they utilize helps to demonstrate vividly in which types of utterances the head phrase can be used (LPDRL).

3.4 Requirements to Illustrative Material Use in Printed Dictionaries

A phraseographer should be experienced enough to distinguish between the usual and instantial variants of PU use. Because only his ability to analyze different methods of using PU in philological thesaurus of the language results in appropriate level of SCS, which is, on the one hand, enough to represent all the shades of meaning of the head phrase; on the other hand, consists of limited set of contexts, to avoid unnecessary volume in printed dictionaries. None of the contexts should be devoted to representing the unit or shade of meaning that can be

deduced from any of the previous contexts. So each context used as an illustrative example should have some informational value in the type of dictionaries mentioned above.

Mean business *to be serious* ◇ *After she scored that point, I realized that she meant business.* ◇ *We hoped that the government means business and we will really do something about the lack of affordable business* (Makkai, 2003, p. 53).

In the example given above the first context confirms the shade of meaning described in the definition, the second one demonstrates a bit different shade of meaning - “to consider seriously”. That is why there is no doubt as to the informational value of both the contexts.

Cupboard love (informal) (a show of) affection sustained by the thought of what one can get out of a situation for oneself ◇ *‘It’s only cupboard love that brings the boy round here so often,’ the old man said sadly ‘He knows I’ll always give him a bit of money when he leaves.’* ◇ *‘But I thought that couple Mrs. Smith rented her basement flat to were absolutely devoted to her.’ ‘Just cupboard love; they were always coming up to cadge from her – money, food, furniture, anything and everything’* (Cowie, 2007, p. 125).

Two examples used as parts of the SCS in the entry above reveal exactly the same meaning of the head phrase; therefore lexicographers could make the entry shorter omitting one of the examples.

As the result of analyzing SCS of entries in unilingual phraseological dictionaries of the English and Russian languages we underscore the fact that lexicographers of both the languages working in this field are aware of the role of SCS, as one of the elements of an entry, in the revealing the semantic structure of head phrases. However one can come across some mistakes in selecting contexts for SCS, most typical of which are the following: 1) giving contexts with zero informational value; 2) using more contexts representing realization of occasional variant of some of the head phrase meaning, which may push a user to draw a false conclusion failing to distinguish between the occasional and usual senses (Molotkov, 1968, p. 280).

3.5 Illustrative Material Use in Contemporary Online Dictionaries

Rapid development of computer technologies in the recent years had a major influence on phraseography. There are online versions of most of existing printed dictionaries at the disposal of today’s users. Potentials of computer linguistics provide dictionary compilers much more possibilities to enhance each element of entry. Given to so many different methods of data processing elaborated, SCS should open unlimited number of sources representing each meaning, shade of meaning and all possibilities of instantiation of each PU for a user.

Already in 1970 Cornell University scholars wrote: “It might be better to store document titles or even abstracts on-line so that they may be seen by the user” (Salton, 1970, p. 519). It is impossible even to compare the tools linguists had in their hands then with the ones computer technology provides a contemporary linguist or lexicographer.

Recently theoretical lexicography witnesses increasing number of researches bringing together the knowledge in the field of linguistics, lexicography and computer technology. After analyzing the development of lexicography and linguistic corpora in the Persian language Z. Zare and M. Balakumar come to the conclusion that “computer processes the information faster and more accurately, the lexicographer considers the computer record more useful than copying from other lexicons” (Zare & Balakumar, 2014, p. 401). The work by Gary Coen is a real example of uniting linguistic experience of dictionary compilation with the potentials of modern computer technology. In his work about database lexicography this scholar writes that it “focuses on managing the metadata namespace and its intrinsic dependency architecture” (Coen, 2002, p. 313). These ideas should be implemented in form of user-friendly on-line dictionaries with sophisticated CSS offering great varieties of contexts illustrating realization of all possible meanings and shades of meaning of lemma.

Considering entries from online idiom dictionaries can give us the information about the state of things in fact, e.g.:

pie in the sky

something good that is unlikely to happen: *I wanted to be a major league baseball player, but I knew it was probably pie in the sky.*

(Definition of pie in the sky from the Cambridge Academic Content Dictionary © Cambridge University Press) (<http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/american-english/pie-in-the-sky>).

on the back burner

(ALSO to the back burner)

not being done now, but left to be considered in the future: *The company put the project on the back burner. Their complaints have definitely been pushed to the back burner.*

(Definition of on the back burner from the Cambridge Academic Content Dictionary © Cambridge University Press) (<http://dictionary.cambridge.org/ru/%D1%81%D0%BB%D0%BE%D0%B2%D0%B0%D1%80%D1%8C/%D0%B0%D0%BC%D0%B5%D1%80%D0%B8%D0%BA%D0%B0%D0%BD%D1%81%D0%BA%D0%B8%D0%B9-%D0%B0%D0%BD%D0%B3%D0%BB%D0%B8%D0%B9%D1%81%D0%BA%D0%B8%D0%B9/on-the-back-burner?q=back+burner>).

Tie the knot

1. Fig. to marry a mate. *We tied the knot in a little chapel on the Arkansas border. They finally tied the knot.*
2. Fig. [for a cleric or other authorized person] to unite a couple in marriage. *It was hard to find somebody to tie the knot at that hour. It only took a few minutes for the ship's captain to tie the knot.*

See also: knot, tie (<http://idioms.thefreedictionary.com/tie+the+knot>).

The examples above are taken from two different online idiom dictionaries. As the examples show there are no references to other internet sources in them. Moreover the number of SCS in these entries is even less than in many printed dictionaries. We have chosen exactly these entries from the dictionaries analyzed, because they are the most typical entries of contemporary on-line idiom dictionaries. We checked the possibilities the simplest reference to the widely available British National Corpus could provide for the PUs used in the given examples: 31 solutions for the first entry, 16 – for the second one, 22 – for the third one and 24 – for the last one.

4. Conclusions

Theory of phraseography emerged as a branch of linguistics, because of the necessity to study the empirical experience in phraseography, analyze it, draw conclusions and elaborate system of arranging each element of entry. SCS as one of the inherent elements of entry in phraseological dictionaries was given much attention from the very first years of existing phraseography. In the course of its development the number of contexts given in each SCS increased and the sources they were taken became more varied. In the earliest dictionaries phraseographers used compilative contexts and the ones extracted from fiction works. Later printed press, internet texts were also included into the list of sources of contexts. Adding contexts with instantial use of PUs into SCS was one more step in its development. But these contexts should stand apart from contexts representing usual ways of PU use, i.e. necessity in methodology of arranging the two types of contexts is vivid.

During the last decade phraseography development is closely related to the potentials of computer and corpora linguistics: online versions of existing idiom dictionaries and new ones appeared. Some of them already provide a user with enhanced SCS, referring him to different other internet sources. However SCS as an element of entry has not achieved the sophisticated level of quality which could be provided by utilizing all the methods and methodologies of data processing.

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