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Sabina Khamrakulova
Ferghana State University
Master
Ferghana, Uzbekistan

Mukhtorali Turdaliyevich Zokirov
Ferghana State University
candidate of philological sciences, docent
Ferghana, Uzbekistan


PHRASEOLOGICAL UNITS EXPRESSING OLD AGE OF A HUMAN BEING IN THE ENGLISH AND RUSSIAN LANGUAGES

Abstract: The article is devoted to the semantic study of phraseological units which are directed to describe one of the phases in human's life both in the English and Russian languages. The research concerns similar and distinctive peculiarities of expressing old age by using phraseological units from comparative aspect.

Key words: phraseological unit, nomination of the old age, phraseological-semantic group, inner form, seme, literal meaning, transferred meaning, pejorative and meliorative lexis.

Language: English

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Introduction

According to the researchers of linguistics linguocultural specifics and apparent reflection of centuries-old experience of a certain nation is expressively demonstrated in the phraseological fund of its language. The concept of "senility" is considered to be an integral constituent of the concept of "age" which is of great importance to the representative of any linguoculture as far as it refers to such universal categories as "time" and "development".

Generally, the concepts connotative with the age have a wide functional potential since they belong to the number of basic concepts in the picture of the world of many linguocultures and have considerable evaluative opportunities. Physiological changes occurring in a human body during the phase of aging incidental to all human beings. Associations related to the period of aging are always emotional and picturesque

According to Wikipedia senility is a period of human's life lasting from the loss of the fertility to the death. Its specific features include intense decline,

mentality and decrement of body functions. Senility is divided into several shorter periods of human's life : advanced age, senile age and the age of longevity. [Wikipedia 1] The same source notes that advanced age is 55/60-75 years old, whereas senile age is 75-90 years old. Long-living people are said to be those at the age of 90 years and even older. [Wikipedia 2]

The main part

The objective of the following article is to define universal and unique in the fragment of the language picture of the world formed on the basis of phraseological units being studied in the Russian and English languages. Phraseological units in both English and Russian languages referred to the phraseosemantic group with the meaning meaning "old age" were exposed to the detailed analysis. According to the meaning these language units were classified into two groups: those with integral seme and the ones having differential seme. Besides that, all the units were ranked by the stages of the following age period: expressing advanced age, senile age and

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the age of long-livers. It was revealed that in both the languages there are two types of phraseological units – the units which have only integral seme of age, particularly old age, in their seme structure and the units having both integral and differential semes of various age-related signs demonstrating appearance, physical state, character and behavior of old people.

On the basis of the data derived as a part of the study of lexicographical sources it can be concluded that the concept “old age” in the English language has much more diverse and extensive hermeneutic layer than the same concept in the Russian language. As a result of systemic analysis 123 phraseological denotations of old age and old person were found out in English, which is considerably more than in Russian.

The analysis results demonstrated that dimensional and temporal extension is peculiar to the phenomenon of “old age” in both English and Russian languages. Onset of old age in the Russian language is described with the help of such lexemes as year, summer, century, age which are stated in 16 phraseological units: выйти из годов (лет); с лет вышедши; из лет вон; на склоне лет; в годах; на закате лет (дней); на старости лет; быть в возрасте; быть в годах (летах); приходить в возраст; годы ушли (уходят, кончились); арёдовы веки жить; мафусаилов век жить; идти под гору; отжить свой век; глубокая старость.

The similar phraseological units were revealed in the English language: to be getting old; as old as Methuselah; as old as Adam; as old as the hills; one’s day has gone; one’s race is run; decline into the vale of years; in the days of old; ripe old age; decline of life; evening of life; the afternoon of the life; the end of the chapter; autumn or winter of one’s years; advanced age; make old bones.

All the above-mentioned expressions have integral semantics of “getting old”, “growing old”, “to be old”

Temporal sign in Russian phraseological units is conveyed in two ways: through such nouns as century, year, age and by means of the verbs with the meaning “to overcome a certain age barrier” like “get out”, “come”, “leave”, “become obsolete” as well as the adverbs of the same semantics “off”.

Dimensional features of old age are reflected in singular expressions like “great age” in Russian and “decline into the vale of years” in English, where it is possible to observe concealed assimilation of the phenomenon “old age” to the vale i.e. physical space which has a particular extension.

Getting old a human being falls out of the flow of active social life because of his social and physical deficiency, which can be seen in the following expressions: на покой уйти; ехать с ярмарки; выйти в тираж; мало, на что годиться; сходить со сцены; уйти на заслуженный отдых.

In the English language there is a group of phraseological units including such expressions: have served one’s time; retire from the scene; take a back number (seat); be on the shelf; miss one’s market; not worth an old song; be over the hill.

Phraseological unit “not worth an old song” is associated with something useless, inapplicable, old “like an old song”. Such expressions as retire from the scene; take a back number; be on the shelf; have served one’s time mean «getting old, become incapable, retired”.

In both the languages old age is imagined not only as a final stage of social activity of a human being but also as a submortem period of life – дышать на ладан; глядеть в гроб (могилу); стоять одной ногой в гробу (могиле); доживать последние дни; дни сочтены; много не надышит; with one foot in the grave; be near one’s end; at the death’s door; be on one’s last legs.

Physical disability and irreversible senile changes of the body appear in the following phraseological units: выживать из памяти; выживать из ума; песок сыпется; еле-еле душа в теле; ноги не держат; на последнем издыхании; впасть в детство; впасть в маразм; согнуться под тяжестью лет; be in one’s dotage; be not going strong; the sands are running out; on the brink of geezerhood; to have toys in the attic; to loose one’s marbles.

In the following phraseosemantic group it is possible to retrace conceptual signs describing somatic features peculiar to the old age in the order of their arising.

In Russian linguoculture:

1) to be physically feeble, to become decrepit, to become ill;

2) to lose mental endowments, to dement;

3) to lose memory.

In English linguoculture:

1) to lose mental endowments, to dement ;

2) to be physically feeble, to become decrepit, to become ill.

In Russian linguoculture physical disability is considered to be the main somatic sign of old age, whereas the loss of mental endowments and dementation are more often mentioned in English phraseological units.

In both the English and Russian languages there are not so many thematic groups of phraseological units having the sema “external signs of old age : убеленный сединой; седой как лунь; дожить до седины; потрепанный жизнью; быть не первой молодости; grey hairs; white as snow; be no chicken; no spring chicken; long in the tooth; show one’s years.

The basic sign peculiar to the appearance of an old person in English and Russian linguocultures proved to be “grey hair”.

In Russian there is a singular expression describing behaviour specific to the old age: тряхнуть

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старинной – «пуститься в зрелые годы на затеи молодости». The group of expressive nominations of old age is of high interest due to the fact that it includes evaluation, national and cultural stereotypes and traditional images about old age in both linguocultures: чужой век заедать (заживать); вторая молодость; бремя лет; на том свете прогулы ставить; пора расцвета миновала; лучшие годы позади; песенка спета; почтенный возраст; green old age; venerable age; geezerhood; great age; the good old days; gold age; an Indian summer; second childhood; the burden of the years; old age is not for sissies; be past one's prime.

Based on the meaning of the phraseological units belonging to this thematic group the following national Russian stereotypes specific to the old age according to their rank of significance were found out:

1) senility is a period of the end of well-being;

2) senility is burden;

3) senility is a heavy burden, a period of revitalization, a period of honour and respect.

On the other hand, in English linguoculture significant national stereotypes turned to be antithetical:

1) senility is a period of meridian and well-being;

2) senility is a period of the loss of mental endowments and dementation, the time of the end of well-being;

3) senility is a heavy burden, a period of honour and respect.

It is necessary to note that most of the phraseological denotations of an old person (total 36 units in Russian and 33 units in English) belong to pejorative lexics for they have more negative stylistic connotation which varies from ironic to disparaging and in some cases even tough. In both the linguocultures educed groups of phraseological units denoting old people to express cognitive signs reflecting negative attitude to the person include nominations of animals, fish, inanimated things which highlight national and cultural specifics of rapport in English and Russian linguocultural community. Hereby, phraselological denotations of old people can be served as a peculiar cultural sign indicating the standards and stereotypes existing in the society. It is known that in the semantics of any language there is a

reflection of both the universal element of cultures and the specifics of the culture of a particular nation.

According to Mechkovskaya N.B., the universal semantic element is specified by the singleness of the vision of the world by people of different cultures [10, с. 51]. For English and Russian pictures of the world the universal is considered to be awareness of senility as a temporal and dimensional phenomenon, a submortem stage, a period of withering and decay, this can be seen in the following units: стоять одной ногой в могиле - with one foot in the grave; из него песок сыпется - the sands are running out. In both the linguocultures there is a series of denotations of an old person having negative connotation, in other words, reflecting in its semantics personality traits and samples of the behavior of old people which are disapproved by the society. Personal features of old people like grouchiness and quarrelsomeness as well as their striving to behave like the young are criticized in either society. However, alongside with the universal semantic element in each language there is a so called culture-specific lexics which denotes ethnospecific phenomena of the culture. National and cultural identity of the lexics appears not only in the occurrence of specific expressions but also in the absence of the adequate words for implications expressed in other languages, that is in the occurrence of lacunes. The lacunes caused either by the absence of the denotatum in one of the languages or by the fact that in one of the languages it does not matter to differ the meaning which is separated and specified in the other one. Thus, Russian phraseological unit “мышинный жеребчик” is appropriate to the English “sugar daddy, old goat, dirty old man”. In Russian there is no equivalent to the English phraseological unit “mutton dressed as lamb”.

Conclusion

Thereby, the results of the study demonstrated that senility can be associated with both pejorative and meliorative evaluation and evoke various emotions represented in a wide range of emotive labels of connotative meaning of the phraseological units. Moreover, both the English and Russian languages have separate subgroups of phraseological units which do not exist semantically in the other language.

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