



CHARACTERISTICS OF PROPER NAMES AS COMPONENTS OF PHRASEOLOGICAL UNITS

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Annotation: The following article focuses on the specific behavior of the common noun as a lexical component within phraseological unities of the English language. It is also discussed how common nouns experienced semantic transformation, lose or restrict their grammatical paradigm (number, article usage, pluralization), and acquire figurative, symbolic, or connotative meaning when incorporated into a phraseological unity.

Key words: common noun, unity, idiomaticity, connotation, onomastic component, transformation, figurative.

Proper names are an integral part of the lexical system of any language. They are a special class of words, belonging lexically and grammatically to the category of nouns. Proper names are the oldest layer of vocabulary. A phraseological unit is formed through a specific linguistic process—phraseologization. "Phraseologization is a reinterpretation of a basic phrase (or sentence) based on comparison, metaphor, metonymy, hyperbole, euphemism, illogicality, etc." ¹ As a result of phraseologization, the phraseological unit loses its original semantics and becomes desemantized. It is important to note that phraseologization of the phraseological unit is holistic, not fragmented. This means that the phraseological meaning is not composed or synthesized from figurative, "specific," or other meanings, but rather arises through semantic transformation, the "recoding" of the original phraseological unit as a whole.

Unlike free use, in which the systemic connections of a phraseological unit are extremely limited and paradigmatic properties are absent, within a phraseological unit, a phraseological unit acquires a number of features that indicate the convergence of the phraseological unit with the intrinsic unit. Like the latter, the phraseological unit acquires the ability to express a concept corresponding to a class of homogeneous objects. Overcoming its semantic isolation, the phraseological unit, which can only be considered as such conditionally within a phraseological unit, expands its systemic connections. It acquires the ability to enter into semantic contact with both the intrinsic unit and other phraseological units, forming various paradigmatic series.

¹ Zhukov V.P., 1986



The characterization of a phraseological unit in terms of the semantic interaction of its components also depends on its structural and semantic properties. In semantically segmented comparative phraseological units and phraseological combinations with semantically significant words, determining the role of the semantically significant component in the overall meaning of the phraseological unit is not particularly difficult, since the habitual use of one of the components of the phraseological unit helps clarify the nature and role of the components in its formation. Ex.: (as) rich as Croesus - rich as Croesus (very rich). Due to its traditional use, this phraseological unit experiences a certain consolidation of the meaning of its components. This is facilitated by the fixed grouping of semes in the onomastic component that serves as a comparison: the features by which the comparison is made are brought to the forefront, while the others are relegated to the background. Cf.: Hobson's choice - a forced choice.

Among English phraseological units with a plural form, one can identify a group of phraseological units whose semantic content is unrelated to the meaning of their components. The motivation for the meaning of such phraseological units with a plural form may not be preserved in modern language, in most cases. Here are the following varieties of such phraseological units with a plural form :

- a) They are homonyms of variable phrases or sentences that match them in form (for example- 'by the Lord Harry!'),
- b) They are associated with the obsolescence, disappearance of a certain type of social practice, the loss of realities (for instance- 'custom of Kent'),
- c) They have unusual combinations of semantic meanings of components, i.e., phraseological units that exhibit a certain semantic incompatibility (for example -'all my eye' and 'Betty Martin').

The absence of homonymous variable phrases or sentences in the corresponding phraseological units, as well as the absence of components in the phraseological units that are incompatible with the modern lexical system, contribute to their classification into a separate group. They become semantically indecomposable units. The components in such phraseological units not only lack semantic information but, as a rule, also do not predetermine the stylistic coloring of the phraseological unit.

The common noun, as the most numerous and semantically flexible word class, plays a disproportionately large role in the formation of phraseological unities. Expressions like *to bury the hatchet*, *to have a skeleton in the cupboard*, *a fish out of water*, or *to spill the beans* all rely on a concrete common noun (*hatchet*, *skeleton*, *fish*, and *beans*) whose ordinary referential meaning is reshaped through metaphor into the figurative meaning of the whole unit.





Within a phraseological unity, the common noun typically undergoes a shift from its direct, denotative meaning to a transferred, connotative one, while the link between the two remains perceptible. In *to spill the beans* ("to reveal a secret"), *beans* no longer denotes the vegetable but evokes an image of scattered, uncontainable small objects — a metaphor for information that cannot be gathered back once released. This differs from fusions (e.g., *to kick the bucket*), where the connection between the literal and figurative meaning has been historically obscured and is no longer transparent to the average speaker.

Common nouns selected for phraseological unities are rarely neutral; they frequently carry cultural, symbolic, or evaluative connotations that reinforce the figurative meaning of the unit. *Skeleton* (as in *a skeleton in the cupboard*) evokes concealment and death-related taboo; *fish* (as in *a fish out of water*) evokes helplessness through displacement from a natural environment. The common noun thus functions not merely as a naming unit but as a carrier of implicit cultural or emotive meaning that the whole phraseological unity exploits.

A recurring feature of common nouns within phraseological unities is the restriction of their normal grammatical paradigm. Number is frequently fixed: *beans* in *spill the beans* are obligatorily plural, and singular substitution (*spill the bean*) destroys the idiomatic meaning. Similarly, article usage becomes fixed rather than variable: *the* in *bury the hatchet* or *let the cat out of the bag* is obligatory and cannot be replaced by *a* without disrupting idiomaticity.

Common nouns functioning within phraseological unities display a distinct set of semantic and grammatical peculiarities: semantic transformation accompanied by retained motivation, restriction of number and article variation, loss of free modifiability, and fixed syntactic positioning. These features set the phraseological bound common noun apart from its use in free word combinations and confirm its central role as the image-bearing nucleus of the phraseological unity.

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