

Linguo-Cultural Peculiarities of Phraseological Units with the Component 'Water' in English, Russian, Spanish, and German

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Abstract

The characteristics of phraseological units with the component *water* in the linguistic and cultural aspect on the example of four different-structured languages are shown. The analyze of this formation of phraseological fund by comparing semantic groups and identifying common and specific in languages is performed. As a result of the conducted research, it was revealed that PU with the *water* component show a great variety in the compared languages both in terms of the general phraseology semantics and the symbolism of the water component, in connection with which a fairly large number of phraseosemantic groups have been identified, some of which show minimal occupancy (one or two units in each group) The greatest similarity is found in English and German phrasicons. At the same time, German language is the leader in the number of unique thematic groups that are not represented in other comparable languages. Russian and English languages show only one common thematic group. In quantitative terms, negative connotation units prevail in all languages, followed by neutral PU, and in the last place in terms of the number of identified phraseological units are PU with positive coloring. Spanish language is the exception

among the compared languages with the number of neutral and positive connotation PU is equivalent.

Keywords: linguoculturology, comparative phraseology, phraseological unit, phraseosemantic group, connotation.

1. Introduction

Phraseological units which contain names of classical elements in their structure occupy a special place among many other phraseological units because the four elements – water, earth, fire and air – have always been an integral part of all cultures and religions from pre-history to modern day.

Water is the element that is closest to a person. The human body is 85% water. The human brain is composed of 95% water. If you look at our blue planet, you can see that the Earth is nothing more than a world of water.

Water has been subjected to a thorough, multifaceted linguistic study for many years. In our opinion, works that focus on comparative analysis of phraseological units with the component "water" in genetically related and unrelated languages are of particular interest.

For instance, one of the recent studies is devoted to interlanguage relations of phraseological units with the lexeme "water" in the Bulgarian and Romanian languages. Researchers have found a significant number of equivalent phraseological units, which indicates a common perception of the surrounding world (Marinov & Todoranova, 2019).

As regards studies on finding translation parallels, we could mention the work by Mohammad-zadeh Sh.G. called "Phraseological units with the component "water" in the Russian language and ways of translating them into Persian". The author gives examples of full and partial equivalents. The article also explains the linguistic and cultural parallels between these units (Мохаммад-Заде, 2013).

Phraseological units with the "water" component might be studied from the linguoculturological point of view as in Erkinbaeva's article where the author compared phraseological units of the Russian and Kazakh languages. The researcher emphasizes that the lexeme "water" has different interpretations with both positive and negative connotations in the phraseological units of the Kazakh language (Эркинбаева, 2016).

The linguistic and cultural significance of the component "water" in Russian and English phraseological word stocks was revealed by O.V. Balonkina. A thorough analysis led to the following results: the element of water correlates with such global concepts as "life", "time", "space", "truth" and "purity" in both Russian and English linguocultures. Specific to the Russian linguoculture are the ideas about water as a habitat of evil spirits. The English linguoculture has unique associations of water with material values, as well as a natural reservoir for navigation (Балонкина, 2017).

The work of D.D. Khairullina is a comparative study aimed at identifying phraseological equivalents and non-equivalent phraseological units with the component "water" in phraseological corpora of three different-structured languages – English, Russian and Tatar. The author gives a large number of examples but does not provide a quantitative analysis. In conclusion, the author states that all the languages under analysis contain both interlanguage equivalents and phraseological units with a distinct national specificity

(Хайруллина, 2011; Kitsantas, Stavropoulos, & Vazakidis, 2021; Кос, 2021).

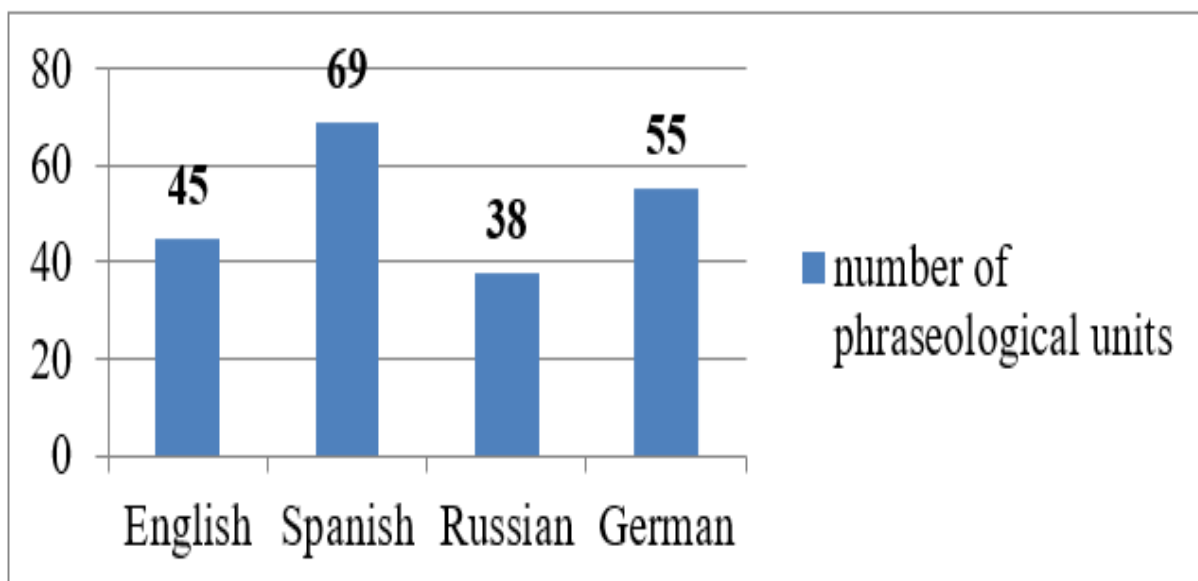
Interlanguage phraseological relations have always been an integral part of comparative studies at Kazan School of Phraseology (Konopleva & Kayumova, 2014; Mukhamadiarova et al., 2018; Mukhamadiarova et al., 2018; Ibragimova et al., 2018; Yarullina et al., 2019); however, our literature review showed that phraseological units with the component "water" had not been the subject of a comparative study in four languages yet.

2. Methods

The present study is a synchronous comparative description of the material. The main research methods are the method of definitional analysis, the comparative-descriptive method, the method of continuous sampling and the method of quantitative analysis.

The research algorithm is as follows:

The first stage of the research consisted in selecting phraseological units with the component's "water", "agua", "вода" and "Wasser" from a number of paper and online dictionaries (Buitrago, 2012; <http://dictionary.cambridge.org>; <http://www.collinsdictionary.com>; <http://etimologias.dechile.net/?agua>; Real Academia Española. Corpus de Rephraseological unitsencia del Español Actual (CREA); <http://www.redensarten-index.de>; <http://www.thefreedictionary.com>; Weibel, 2004; <http://idiome.de-academic.com>; <http://www.phrasen.com/tags/wasser>; Большой фразеологический словарь русского языка, 2009; Фразеологический словарь современного русского литературного языка, 2012; Кунин, 2006). The number of phraseological units with the given component in each of the languages is given in Picture 1.



Picture 1: *The number of phraseological units with the component "water", "agua", "вода" and "Wasser"*

The total number of the units under analysis is 207. It should be mentioned that paremias were not taken into consideration just as English phraseological units

with the component “to water” (a verb).

1. Then, phraseological units were divided into thematic groups in accordance with their definition. It should be noted that the names of phraseosemantic groups are conditional, to a certain extent.
2. Finally, a semantic analysis of phraseological units was carried out from the connotative point of view. Phraseological units were divided into three groups: units carrying a negative, positive or neutral evaluative meaning.

3. Results and Discussion

Analysis of data obtained revealed that phraseological units with the "water" component demonstrate a great variety in the compared languages both in terms of their general semantics and symbolism of the "water" component. As a result, a sufficiently large number of phraseosemantic groups show minimal occupancy, i.e., they contain from one to two units.

Phraseological units with negative connotation prevail in all the languages under analysis, followed by phraseological units with neutral and positive evaluative meanings with the exception of Spanish, where the number of phraseological units with neutral and positive connotations is equivalent (see Picture 2).

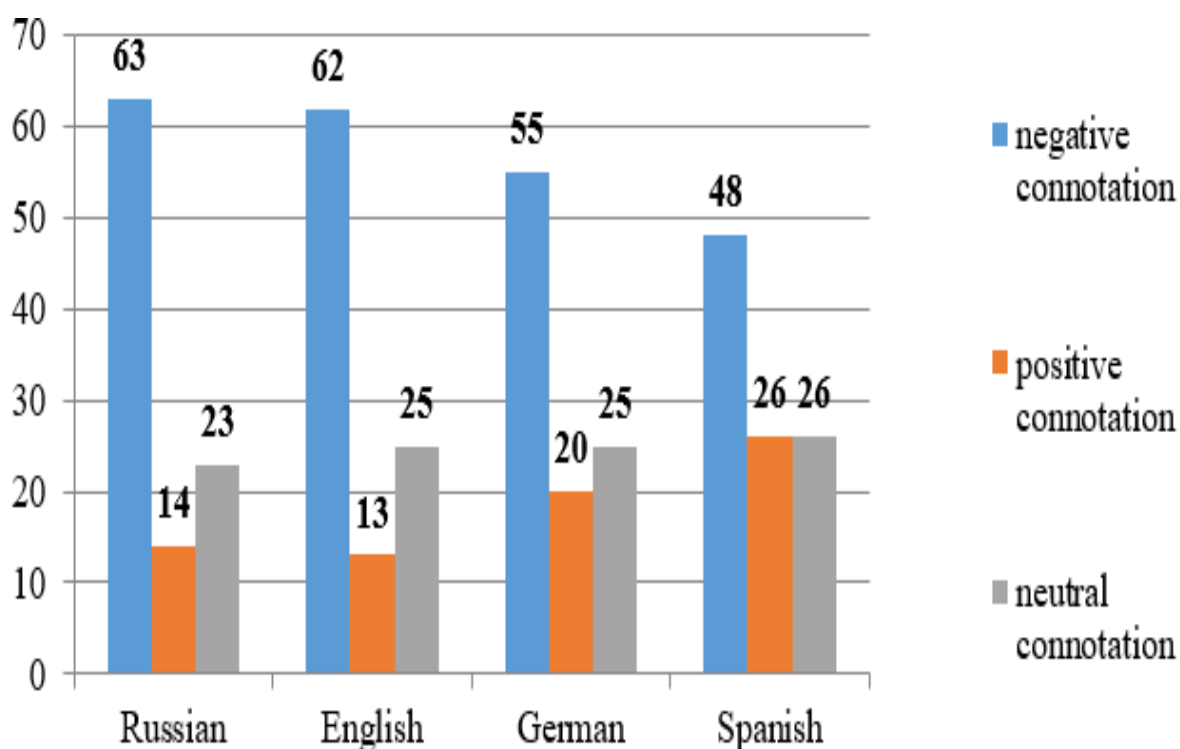


Fig.1: Percentage of phraseological units with the component "water" in the four languages with respect to their connotation (negative, positive, neutral) (%)

The thematic groups which are present in all the languages under analysis mostly have a negative connotation. Phraseological units of positive and neutral connotation were found

only in one thematic group each:

- 1) difficulties: 16 phraseological units
- 2) time flow: 8 phraseological units (neutral connotation)
- 3) negative emotional state: 7 phraseological units
- 4) confusion: 6 phraseological units
- 5) poverty, deprivation: 4 phraseological units
- 6) lie: 5 phraseological units
- 7) talkativeness: 3 phraseological units
- 8) self-interest: 4 phraseological units
- 9) comfortable conditions: 4 phraseological units (positive connotation)

Here is an example of a thematic group 'comfortable conditions' which is present in all the four languages:

English: as a duck takes to water (easily and smoothly; naturally)

Russian: как рыба в воде (lit. like a fish in the water; i.e. easily and smoothly; [feel] good)

Spanish: como pez en el agua (lit. like a fish in the water, i.e. [feel] comfortable; at ease)

German: sich wie ein Fisch im Wasser fühlen (lit. feel like a fish in the water, i.e. [feel] very comfortable)

We have found 9 common thematic groups present in 3 languages. Four of them have a negative connotation; two have a neutral connotation; three groups have positive connotation:

- 1) failure (not present in English)
- 2) waste of time (not present in Russian)
- 3) to pee (not present in Russian)
- 4) healing power (not present in English)
- 5) modesty (not present in English)
- 6) impermanence (not present in German)
- 7) turmoil (not present in German)
- 8) alcoholic beverage (not present in German)
- 9) excellent quality (not present in Spanish)

As we can see, there are three thematic groups in German (impermanence, turmoil and alcoholic beverage) which can be attributed to lacunar. Two subgroups are absent in Russian (waste of time, to pee) and in English (healing power, modesty). One thematic group is not present in Spanish (excellent quality).

Binary oppositions of the thematic groups, characteristic of only two languages, are distributed quantitatively as follows:

- 1) four groups are present in English and German: tears, criticism, death, opposite

- 2) four groups are present in Russian and German: conflict, help, family ties, illness
- 3) three groups are present in Russian and Spanish: similarity, evidence, willpower
- 4) two groups are present in English and Spanish: large number, weakness
- 5) one group is present in Russian and English: impunity.

Thus, Russian and German, as well as English and German, are characterized by the greatest similarity in binary oppositions. Russian and English reveal only one common thematic group.

Phraseosemantic groups, represented only in one of the described languages, belong to the periphery of the studied group of phraseological units.

The largest number of unique phraseosemantic groups was found in German (15 phraseosemantic series): fear, sabotage, servility, stagnation, indifference, overcoming trials, help, the same conditions, taste sensations, wishing good luck, luck, life experience, cologne, inconsistency, the beginning of something.

The Spanish language includes 13 peripheral groups: happiness, Schadenfreude, flattery, nonsense, rain, a novice, to wash, to sweat, to wash, to baptize, to drink a lot, make the engraving.

In the Russian language we have found 9 peripheral groups: high water, shallow water, deep water, friendship, courage, vision/foresight, hiding facts, blindness, nothing to do.

In English there are 8 peripheral thematic groups, such as stupidity, boredom, waste, destruction, high stature, high status, test/challenge and persuasiveness.

The analysis of data collected made it possible to identify the main categories that include the concept of water in terms of its figurative components. The following questions remain open:

1. Some phraseological units of the compared languages are characterized by ambiguity due to polysemy, which leads to certain difficulties in determining the categorical meaning of the group. For example, the Russian phraseological unit *облить холодной водой* (*lit.* pour smb with cold water) has equivalents in all the languages under study with a similar component composition (German: *wie mit kaltem Wasser übergossen*, English: *throw cold water on smb*, Spanish: *caer como un jarro de agua fria*). All of these units have two main meanings: 1) to cool smb's enthusiasm and 2) to confuse, shock; thus, their semantics is a reflection of two different processes. Since both of them describe an unexpected unpleasant effect on the general psychological state of a person, we have built on a generalized semantics of these phraseological units and named the group "confusion".
2. According to mythology and theology (Faiella, 2004; Knoll, 2015; Monaghan, 2004; Похлебкин, 2001; <http://rushist.com>; Бирих, 1998; Зимин, 1996; Крылов, 2009), water is the source of life, a necessary condition for existence, a habitat, and a symbol of purification. The question that requires further research is why the number of

phraseological units with a negative connotation significantly prevails over positively colored units.

3. Another finding that is worthy of attention is our discovery of antonymous thematic groups; for example, difficulties - lack of difficulties, negative emotional state - happiness, willpower - weakness, opposites - similarities, hiding facts - exposure, etc.
4. The question remains open about the presence of a large number of peripheral groups of phraseological units in the compared languages, with the German language occupying the leading position in this regard.

4. Summary

Semantic analysis of the symbolic meaning of the component "water" in the phraseological units revealed 5 universal manifestations of water in phraseologies of the compared languages:

- 1) water as a vital habitat
- 2) water as a source of power
- 3) water as a symbol of purification
- 4) water as a source of danger
- 5) water as a fluid substance, a symbol of change and constant variability.

It is noteworthy that positive symbolism of the "water" component is represented in all the languages compared; however, phraseological units where water is associated with difficulties, risk and danger (i.e., have a negative connotation) prevail in quantitative terms.

As regards national specifics of the phraseological units under analysis, German is at the forefront in the number of unique thematic groups not present in other comparable languages. Only in German there is a unit that serves to designate the cologne (*echt Koelnisch Wasser*), since it was first invented in Germany, in the city of Cologne. The most striking examples with a unique figurative meaning are German phraseological units with the meaning of servility (*Wasser auf beiden Schultern tragen*, lit. to carry water on both shoulders, i.e. to please someone else) and inconsistency (*jmdm. nicht das Wasser reichen können*, lit. he is not able to serve water, i.e., he is not a match for anyone).

Only in Russian there is a phraseological unit *не разлей вода* (lit. do not spill water) to denote a strong friendship. Another unique expression is *как в воду глядел* (lit. as I looked into the water); it is connected with the pagan beliefs of the ancient Slavs. There is an assumption that this expression refers to witchcraft (Weibel, 2004). The phraseological unit *концы в воду* (lit. ends in water, i.e. no evidence will be left for anyone to discover) is also present only in Russian. According to one version, the expression originates from the era of Ivan the Terrible, more precisely, from the time of the tsar's massacre of the inhabitants of Novgorod the Great, suspected of treason. Novgorodians had stones tied around their necks and thrown into the Volkhov River (Чернобай, 2012).

Component analysis of data also revealed that the "water" component can be used in its

direct meaning as a designation of water reservoirs, liquids, or natural secretions of the human body (tears, urine, sweat, etc.). In Spanish, a fairly large number of units are associated with hygienic manipulations, e.g. *cambiar el agua a las aceitunas* to urinate; *estar hecho un agua* to sweat, etc. In addition, specifically in Spanish, water denotes precipitation, namely rain, which can be explained by its exceptional importance in arid regions of the country (e.g. *venir como el agua de mayo*, *lit.* come like the water/rain of May, i.e. be a godsend).

In English, about 20% of the phraseological units with the component "water" is used in the meaning of "a reservoir", in particular, "a reservoir for navigation", which can be explained by the importance of navigation in the United Kingdom – an island state where England once held the title of the Mistress of the Seas. For example, initially the marine term *be in smooth water* (i.e., to be in calm waters) moved from the professional sphere to the commonly used literary language and acquired the figurative meaning of overcoming difficulties (Яковлева, 2011; Чернобай, 2012).

5. Conclusions

Quantitative analysis of phraseosemantic groups showed that only 9 common thematic series are found in all the four compared languages, but these thematic series (a) are the most numerous and (b) contain phraseological units where the universal symbolism of water is reflected.

At the same time, most of the thematic groups belong to the peripheral zone: in German, Spanish and Russian, the "water" component is contained in a large number of examples that represent unique single-component thematic groups (a total of 43 phraseosemantic series, 15 of them are represented in German), which indicates that there are quite a large number of differential dominant semes in the compared languages.

The analysis of semantic features and quantitative data allowed us to conclude that the greatest similarity is found in English and German, where phraseological units are often characterized by similar component composition, similar meaning and in most cases shared negative connotative coloring. At the same time, German is the leader in the number of unique thematic groups that are not present in other languages under analysis.

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