

Phraseological Units in German Song Discourse

By

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Abstract

In the modern world, rock music is perceived as a social and cultural phenomenon and is a powerful tool for influencing a wide audience. In this respect, the study of song discourse from the point of view of pragmalinguistic features, in particular, from the point of view of the use of phraseological units in modern song texts composition, is regarded as curious and promising for further study. The songs of the German rock band Versengold have been chosen as the research data. In total, 42 song texts from the latest three albums of the band have been analyzed: *Zeitlos* (2015), *Funkenflug* (2017) and *Nordlicht* (2019) and 78 phraseological units revealed. The selection and systematization of phraseological units has been carried out by means of continuous sampling, the component and contextual analysis of phraseological units having been applied. The analysis of the songwriting of the Versengold band made it possible to reach the following conclusions: phraseological units are seen as highly informative units of the language, which, on the one hand, are a means of emphasis; on the other hand, reflect the peculiarities of folk culture, everyday life of people and their historical development; their use in song texts contributes to the implementation of the main communicative strategy of song discourse - the impact on the emotional sphere of a personality. In addition, phraseological units in song texts are often found as part of several textually significant compositional blocks and perform text-forming functions: the function of

a reference of a phraseological unit, the function of a leitmotif, the function of creating hidden motivation or creating a circular composition.

Keywords: phraseological unit, song discourse, phraseological dominant, contextual transformations

1. Introduction

Popular song texts, i.e., of rock music, represent a significant part of everyday culture in the German-speaking world. The increasing attention of linguists to the study of modern song discourse is caused by its lexical and stylistic diversity.

In Russia the works of O.N. Alekseeva, I. S. Samokhin, O. V. Shevchenko, L. G. Dnyasheva, N. A. Plotnitsky, M. A. Potapchuk are concerned with the study of song discourse in the light of linguistics. In particular they deal with the issues of the position of song discourse, its unique features, lingvostylistic and lingvocultural peculiarities, genre features, the functioning of signal words (Alekseyeva, 2013; Samokhin, 2010; Shevchenko, 2009).

In modern linguistic science song discourse is defined as a text combined with its context and interpretation, including the effect it produces on the audience in the frames of a certain historical and cultural context (Dnyasheva, 2011).

Song texts generally represent a sophisticated unity of verbal and non-verbal (music) components, which, according to Plotnitsky, represents one of the main challenges of its research (Plotnitskiy, 2005). Thus, a song text can be regarded as a special variety of a creolized text, combining linguistic and extralinguistic features in itself.

Besides, studying song texts it is necessary to take into account that being regarded as a communicative process song discourse is inseparably connected with the cognitive sphere of a personality, with society and culture in general (Potapchuk, 2013). Consequently, such factors as song creation time, its target audience and the issue of contextual use and modification of its phraseological units is in the spotlight of linguistic research (Gololobova et al., 2018; Davletbaeva et al., 2013; Guryanov et al., 2017).

One of the leading researchers of the pragmatic functions of phraseological units in German song texts is Kh.Lenk. He pointed out the following functional features of them as the usage of colloquial phraseology, play on words, and the accumulation of phraseological units in a number of songs. The main purpose of using colloquial phraseological units is to make the text emotionally intense, close and clear for the recipient (Lenk, 2008). In his other scientific article Kh.Lenk focuses on the issue of using phraseological units in songs in lingvodidactic light (Lenk, 2001).

In this respect we may note the special contribution to song discourse study by young scholars, in particular regarding the singer Udo Lindenberg (Fagerström, 2000) and the band

Tot Hosen (Saha). Some new accents have been highlighted by E. Aherman and G. Nashert in the course of their research of song discourse in the literary aspect based on the rap song data (Achermann, 2005).

2. Методы (Methods)

The data of present research is represented by the songs of the German rock-band Versengold, which was formed in 2003 and can be described as a German Neo-medieval folk community. They combine historical texts with the elements of modern folk style what contributes to the originality of their music. In total 42 song texts of three latest Versengold albums Zeitlos (2015), Funkenflug (2017) and Nordlicht (2019) have been analyzed and 78 phraseological units revealed (Versengold.com. 2021). The selection and systematization of phraseological units has been based on their definition analysis and component analysis. Furthermore, the contextual analysis of phraseological units has been carried out in the course of their study in song discourse. The main emphasis in the current research has been put on the functioning of phraseological units in various composition blocks of a poetic text and revealing its phraseological dominant.

3. Results and Discussion

Versengold band song text analysis has shown that the poetry of this band can be characterized by high intensity of phraseological expressions. Phraseological units serve as headlines in a number of songs and contribute to the song tonality in general, e.g. «*In aller Ohr*», «*Butter bei die Fische*», «*Herz Durch Die Wand*», «*Spaß Bei Saite*».

In a number of songs we have revealed the phraseological units which we can group thematically. For instance, the «*Der Rubel rollt*» (album Zeitlos 2015), which contains more than 10 set phrases united by the theme “Money”. Speaking about the song content, the main idea of this song is connected with social inequality and injustice money flow in the modern society. The headline of the song is a phraseological unit which means that “money rolls”. In the first verse two set phrases are used *Auf Kosten anderer zu schaffen*, *Koste es auch was es wolle* meaning in general that the rich gain their wealth by any means, going to great lengths.

Antithesis is the main stylistic device of this song. The author opposes the lives of the rich and the poor: the latter are into debt, lick empty plates and starve whereas the former have plenty of money, eat fried peacocks, sleep in silk and wealth. The author uses the set phrase *am Hungertuch nagen* to express the latter antithesis; as the result of the antithesis *am* of *Saidenlacken schnarchen* double actualization of the meaning of this phraseological unit takes place:

So steht es halt im goldnen Buch
Das Geld ist voller Ös und Habgier
Der Eine nagt *am Hungertuch*

Der Andre *schmarcht am Seidenlacken*

The next verse of the song consists completely of phraseological units and set phrases, containing currency as its component. *Der Rubel rollt, für bare Münze nehmen, der Groschen fällt, das Geld auf den Kopf hauen*. Only one unit does not contain it (*Weichen stellen*), but it is the rouble which is the subject of this construction being the key concept „The rouble is rolling all over the world and determines the course of its development“. Thus the main idea of the song „Money rules the world!“ sounds as its leitmotif due to the second use of the phraseological unit already having been applied in the song headline:

*Der Rubel rollt auf dieser Welt
Zu dem der seine Weichen stellt
Drum nimms für bare Münze armer Tropf
Denn wenn dir auch der Groschen fällt
Schon bald ein Geier ihn behält
Und der haut lieber anderen
Als das Geld auf den Kopf*

A number of songs covers the theme of freedom, rebel, protest against society odds and limitations, what is expressed in their headlines “Durch den Sturm“, „Herz durch die Wand“, „Zeitlos“ etc.

The song «*Durch den Sturm*» demonstrates a large number of images and extended metaphors which correlate with famous set-phrases. For instance, in the first verse the songwriters appeal to the audience to flow against the current, nevertheless transforming the construction, replacing the verb “to swim” by the verb “to dance”, representing the main character as rebellious and carefree. Still, we observe the verb *schwimmen* in the very next line in the word combination *Schwimmen raus in die Gezeiten*, which means “swimming towards the tide”, scaling the regarded image even wider:

*Komm wir springen in die Brandung
Trotzen allen Widrigkeiten
Tanzen gegen jede Strömung
Schwimmen raus in die Gezeiten*

Further the author appeals the audience to protest:

Schmeiß' die Gläser an die Wände Auf die andere Teufel malen Wir woll'n frei sein bis zum Ende *Und kein' Heller dafür zahlen*

This is the case of double actualisation of the phraseological unit *den Teufel an der Wand malen*, which literally means „painting the devil on the wall“, meaning „exaggerating fears“. Using this phraseological unit the songwriter appeals not to be afraid of anything, be free till the end and pay nothing for freedom (*Und kein' Heller dafür zahlen*).

In the final verse the author compares the voices of their audience with the favourable wind, which determines the ship's further course, wishes all the successful sailing, replacing number 7 in the set phrase *7 Wasser unterm Kiel* („seven feet under the keel“) by the adjective *endlos* („endless“), emphasizing the significance of absolute freedom for the persona:

*Eure Stimmen sind der Wind
Der uns immer weiter trägt
Der mit uns die Fahrt bestimmt*

Und uns bewegt
Endlos Wasser unterm Kiel

The song «Braune Pfeifen» (literally “brown pipes”) contains the same appeal to reckless freedom, although all the images in this song, including its metaphoric headline are borrowed from the world of art, dance and music. The key concept to impersonate freedom from governmental power is dance:

Tanz aus dir raus, tanz in dich rein
Von mir aus tanz deinen Namen
Tanz auch mal aus den Reihen
Und falle aus dem Rahmen

The songwriter deliberately uses two synonymically close phraseological units meaning „to stand out of the crowd, rebel against the established order“ in the same verse to emphasize the main intention of the persona to anticipate the policy of useless speeches. In addition to semantic duplication, the units under consideration are used in this song in an uncharacteristic grammatical form of the imperative mood, which modifies the communicative intention and brings additional expression to the general context.

The author criticizes the mediocre and hypocritical government, which does not know how to manage the orchestra (personifying the image of the country and the people), but only creates a complete cacophony of sounds that lasts endlessly. In one of the verses, the author uses the antithesis *Die Köpfe leer* (empty heads), *die Hosen voll* (full pants), thus expressing his extremely negative attitude towards spineless politics, the main feature of which is disorder and hatred.

The call to always be on the alert and never lose sight of the babblers is voiced in the modified phraseological unit *aus den Ohren nicht verlieren*, where the somatism *Auge* (eyes) is replaced by the somatism *Ohr* (ear), which can be explained by the correlation of the general context with the world of music.

The last line of the song uses the key message ***Wir tanzen nicht nach braunen Pfeifen*** (= we won't dance to their brown tune). Thus, the author is most likely hinting at the extreme left-wing forces, which have been gaining power and votes in recent years and in German politics and encourages the audience to leave the ranks of obedient performers and make their choice, to determine their own path of development.

Thus, the dominant metaphor *braune Pfeife* gives the song a frame structure, with a persistent expression appearing in the title and in the final line of the song.

Summary

The conducted research allows us to draw the following conclusions:

The texts of the poetry of the Versengold band are full of phraseological units of various thematic groups, but the themes of freedom, protest against social injustice and the

desire for change predominate. The authors use phraseological units not only as a pictorial and expressive stylistic means that enhance the emotional and expressive impact on the audience. In a number of cases a phraseological dominant highlight a significant social phenomenon and performs the function of creating a circular composition, when phraseological units are used in the text as part of the beginning and ending, as well as the function of hidden motivation, when a set phrase is not verbalized in a conventional form; however, the variable components of the meaning of the text signal the reader about the motivating role this phraseological unit performs. The analysis of song text composition has revealed that fixed expressions are most frequently used in headings, refrains and in the final part of songs; while phraseological units can become an incentive for the implementation of the entire concept of a work and form its thematic dominant. Most often, the phraseological dominant serves as a leitmotif throughout the entire song text, being realized in transformed phraseological units with similar themes, or in an associative series.

The most frequent methods of semantic transformation of phraseological units are double actualization of phraseological units and substitution, which implies the replacement of one or more components of a set phrase.

4. Conclusions

The analysis of the songwriting of the Versengold band has clearly demonstrated that the phraseological image of the world of this band is superimposed on the general mental image of the Western world, it is this fact that determines the widespread use of set phrases of the thematic group "Freedom" and "Social Equality" in the songs of this band.

The peculiarities of the functioning of phraseological units in strong text positions indicate that they are also used as a phraseological dominant and form the conceptual field of the song as a whole. As a rule, phraseological expressions are characterized by a rich semantic figurative-associative plan, due to which metaphorical polyphony is created in song texts. In addition, it should be noted that phraseological units can serve both for euphemization and text expressivity, as well as contain an evaluative component that characterizes the attitude of the persona to various social phenomena.

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