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THE PHRASEOSEMANTIC FIELD 'MIND': PHRASEOLOGICAL UNITS WITH THE COMPONENTS 'GOLD', 'SILVER', AND 'PRECIOUS STONES'

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Abstract: This article examines phraseological units (PUs) containing the components 'gold', 'silver', and 'precious stones' within the phraseosemantic field 'Mind' in English and Russian. The linguocultural mechanisms of metaphorizing the concepts of intellect and wisdom through imagery of precious metals and stones are analyzed. The structural-semantic features of these units, their place within the phraseosemantic field system, their cultural connotation, and their interlingual correspondences are established.

Keywords: phraseosemantic field, phraseological unit, precious-metal component, intellect, wisdom, linguoculturology, connotation, interlingual parallels.

Theoretical Foundations of the Study.

The study of phraseological units within the field approach traces back to the works of J. Trier, G.S. Shchur, Yu.N. Karaulov, and V.P. Zhukov. A phraseosemantic field (PSF) is understood as a set of phraseological units united by a shared categorical meaning and organized on the principle of nucleus–periphery. The PSF 'Mind' encompasses units conveying the concepts of intellect, reason, wisdom, shrewdness, and their antonyms. The components denoting precious objects – 'gold', 'silver', 'pearl', 'diamond', 'ruby' – function in these PUs as culturally marked figurative signs, evoking archetypal notions of exceptional value.

The Axiological Basis of the Precious-Metal Image in the Structure of PUs.

Gold, silver, and precious stones occupy the apex of the value scale in the linguistic worldview of most people. This axiological charge is transferred through metaphor onto the intellectual qualities of a person. In Russian: золотая голова [golden head], золотые мозги [golden brains], золотые слова [golden words]; in English: golden mind, words of gold, a diamond mind. The value of knowledge, wisdom, and sharp intellect is likened to the value of a rare and imperishable material. This mechanism of PU formation was noted by Ch. Bally, who highlighted the role of expressive-evaluative imagery in the formation of fixed word combinations.

The Nucleus of the PSF 'Mind': PUs with the Component 'Gold'.

The component 'gold' / gold is the most productive element in forming PUs belonging to the nuclear zone of the PSF 'Mind'. These units are characterized by a high degree of stability and broad currency:

золотая голова (Russ.) used of a person of exceptional intellect; expresses the highest evaluation of intellectual abilities;

золотые слова (Russ.) a wise, precise utterance; semantics of 'a truth worth preserving';

worth one's weight in gold (Eng.) used of a person whose intelligence and competence are extremely valuable;

all that glitters is not gold (Eng.), a warning against deceptive outward brilliance in the absence of genuine intellect;

золото, а не голова (Russ.) colloquial; the highest praise for intellect.





Structurally, these PUs follow the models 'adjective + noun' and 'verbal-nominal group'. The connotation is exclusively positive, with the exception of PUs with implicit irony, such as all that glitters is not gold.

The Periphery of the PSF: PUs with the Component 'Silver'.

Silver occupies the position of 'second after gold' in the axiological hierarchy, which is reflected in the semantics of the corresponding PUs: they denote practical intelligence, eloquence, and diplomacy – qualities that are valuable yet subordinate to supreme wisdom:

speech is silver, silence is golden (Eng.) intellect is expressed above all in knowing when to remain silent; silence is wiser than words;

a silver tongue (Eng.) eloquence and persuasiveness of speech as a manifestation of intellectual superiority;

silver-tongued (Eng.) eloquent, capable of convincing through the power of word and intellect;

серебряные уста [silver lips] (Russ., bookish) used of a person gifted with eloquence and wise speech.

The semantic dominant of this group is intellect as manifested through language and communication. PUs with 'silver' gravitate towards the periphery of the PSF, since they reflect not intellect per se but its outward expression, mastery of speech.

The Distant Periphery of the PSF: PUs with 'Precious Stone' Components.

Phraseological units containing names of precious stones (diamond / алмаз, pearl / жемчуг, ruby / рубин, emerald / изумруд) constitute the distant periphery of the PSF 'Mind' and are characterised by lower frequency and higher stylistic markedness:

pearls of wisdom (Eng.) wise, profound utterances; used with admiration or ironically;

cast pearls before swine (Eng.) to waste wisdom, knowledge, and intellect on those incapable of appreciating them;

a diamond in the rough (Eng.) a person of outstanding abilities and intellect not yet fully revealed or refined by education;

жемчужина мысли [pearl of thought] (Russ., bookish) an exceptionally precise and beautiful thought or idea;

алмазный ум [diamond mind] (Russ.) a firm, sharp, brilliant intellect (less common as a fixed phrase; more frequently an authorial metaphor).

The image of the pearl is particularly noteworthy: its semantics within PUs is dual: the pearl symbolizes the rarity and perfection of thought, but simultaneously its fragility and vulnerability in the face of incomprehension.

Structural-Semantic Models of PUs in This Group.

Analysis of the PU corpus allows the following structural models to be identified:

a) substantive: золотая голова, a silver tongue, pearls of wisdom the most frequent;

b) verbal-nominal: worth one's weight in gold, cast pearls before swine express the dynamics of intellectual action;

c) proverbial (sentential): speech is silver, silence is golden; all that glitters is not gold carry a didactic function;

d) adjectival: silver-tongued, golden-minded (authorial) describe a stable intellectual quality.

The semantic transformation of metallonymic components in these PUs follows the model of metaphorical transfer 'material value – intellectual value', which corresponds to the cognitive mechanism of conceptual metaphor (Lakoff, Johnson).





The Linguocultural Aspect: The Axiology of the Mind in Precious-Metal Imagery.

In both linguocultures (Russian and English) a stable value hierarchy is traceable: gold > silver > precious stones. This hierarchy is reproduced in the ranking of intellectual qualities: supreme wisdom is associated with gold (золотая голова, golden mind), practical intellect and the gift of speech with silver (a silver tongue), and the rarity and depth of thought with pearl and diamond. This hierarchy derives from archetypal and mythological conceptions: the Golden Age was an era of wisdom; the Silver Age, an era of eloquence and culture. Thus, PUs of this group serve as custodians of cultural memory concerning the value-laden picture of the world.

Interlingual Parallels and Lacunae.

Contrastive analysis reveals both equivalent pairs and lacunar phenomena. Equivalent pairs include: золотые слова (Russ.) ≈ words of gold (Eng.); серебряные уста (Russ.) ≈ silver tongue (Eng.); жемчужина мудрости (Russ.) ≈ pearls of wisdom (Eng.). Lacunar cases include: a diamond in the rough (Eng.) Russian has no precise phraseological equivalent with a gemmonymic component; cast pearls before swine (Eng.) the Russian equivalent метать бисер перед свиньями [to cast beads before swine] uses the component 'бисер' (small beads/seed pearls), indicating partial equivalence. The presence of lacunae reflects the specificity of each nation's cultural conceptualisation of intellect.

The Connotative Potential of PUs with Metallonymic Components.

The overwhelming majority of the PUs under consideration carry a positive connotation, functioning as high evaluations of intellect. Negative or ironic connotation arises in cases where the precious material symbolises a value that has gone unrecognised (cast pearls before swine, all that glitters is not gold). Neutral connotation is rare and arises only in contextually conditioned usage. Thus, metallonymic components primarily perform a meliorative (positively evaluative) function in the semantic structure of these PUs.

Conclusions.

The analysis conducted yields the following conclusions: first, PUs with the components 'gold', 'silver', and 'precious stones' form a stable segment of the PSF 'Mind', organised on the principle of diminishing evaluative intensity from the nucleus (gold) to the periphery (pearl, diamond); second, the primary mechanism of formation for these units is the conceptual metaphor 'valuable material valuable intellect'; third, interlingual comparison reveals both universal features (gold as a symbol of supreme intellect) and language-specific characteristics; fourth, these PUs carry significant linguocultural information concerning the archetypal values of both peoples. The research material may be used in courses on phraseology, linguoculturology, and contrastive linguistics.

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