

# STRUCTURAL PATTERNS OF PHRASEOLOGICAL UNITS TO DENOTE THE PERSONAL CHARACTER

**Kobyakova Irina Karpivna, Professor**

**Baranova Svitlana Volodymyrivna, Associate Professor**

**Matuzka Vita Anatoliyivna, Student**

**Sumy State University, Ukraine**

*Участники первенства: Национальное первенство по научной аналитике - "Украина"*

*Открытое Европейско-Азиатское первенство по научной аналитике*

*В статье рассматриваются фразеологические единицы, обозначающие характер человека в английском языке. Особое внимание уделяется субстантивному словосочетаниям. Выделяются их структурные типы, анализируются вариации в составе и значении.*

**Ключевые слова:** *фразеологические единицы, субстантивные фразеологические единицы, модель, структура, конститuent, отношения, главное слово, зависимое слово, характер человека, черта характера.*

*The article deals with the phraseological units denoting the personal character in English. Special attention is paid to substantive word groups. Their structural patterns are distinguished, variations in composition and meaning are analysed.*

**Key words:** *phraseological units, substantive phraseological units, pattern, structure, constituents, relations, head word, adjunct, the personal character, personality trait.*

The language habits and behaviour of a person have been investigated by linguistics and theory of communication for the last two decades [1]. His / her emotional state [3; 4] and manners of interaction [5] have been in the focus of

attention. Another aspect is represented by the means of verbalizing traits of the human character.

Each language has its own peculiarities in phonetics, grammar, lexicology and phraseology [2]. The substantive idioms that denote personality traits are the subject matter of this article.

Substantive phraseological units are word groups that are functionally associated with a noun, i. e. word groups with a headword expressed by a noun.

The following subgroups among substantive phraseological units semantically oriented to the character of the person are distinguished:

1. The subgroup with the structural pattern Adjective + Noun and attributive relations between the components: *a tough customer, yellow dog.*

*And remember, I don't want a fortunate thing for this - only a good price. There are a lot of **tame cats** who mightn't follow the new man around (Cronin A. J. «The Citadel»).*

In this example the man who can be easily influenced by someone else is mentioned.

The subgroup characterized by the constant and variable dependence of components. In English there are such lexical variants:

a) interchangeable nouns: *easy game (mark, pray);*

b) interchangeable adjectives: *good (clear) conscience;*

*... talking of the dead with a regretful cheerfulness, relating old examples of his character, smiling at them with **a good conscience**; and when the day of the funeral came round, doing the honors with exact propriety (Stevenson R.L. «Master of Ballantrae»).*

*... watched it, as was fit, the while he worked; ate it at the fit hour; was in all things served and waited on; and could take his hire in the end with **a clear conscience**, telling himself the mystery was performed duly, the beards rightfully braided, and we (in spite of ourselves) correctly served (Stevenson R.L. «In the South Seas»).*

Interchange of adjectives *good* / *clear* meaning the *integrity* / *conscience* can be traced in the sentences.

Among grammatical variants of the substantive phraseological units there is replacement of an attribute expressed by a noun in the Genitive Case by a prepositional noun attribute, for example: *a stony heart* - *a heart of stone*; *iron will* - *a will of iron*. There are several cases with proper names as a head word in English: *a smart Aleck*, *a gay Lothario*.

In the idioms adjectives in different degrees of comparison can be found. This phenomenon is typical of the English language: *the older Adam*, *the worst mixer*.

- *It's nice not to be dependent on them.*

- ***The worst mixer*** in the world. *But you, I should have thought (Galsworthy J. «Flowering Wilderness»).*

The example uses the superlative degree of comparison of the adjective *bad* to point to an unsociable person. On the basis of the idiom *a bad mixer* we get a new one – the *worst mixer*.

It is a prepositive attributive type with the adjoinment that is characteristic of English. There are two subgroups within it:

1) adjective-nominal in which an adjunct is expressed by a qualitative adjective without morphological markers (*yellow dog*);

2) numeral-nominal (*second fiddle*).

In English contextual extension of the adjective takes place that does not concern the whole substantive phraseological unit but its headword. In the following example the occasional extension is combined with the formation of a sustained metaphor.

*All things therefore seemed to point to this: that I was slowly losing hold of my **original and better self**, and becoming slowly incorporated with my second and worse (Stevenson R. L. « The strange case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde »).*

2. The subgroup with the structural pattern Noun + Noun. In this combination the second component can be extended by a prepositive adjective or noun in the Genitive Case (*the girl next door*).

The combination Noun's (Pronoun) + own + Noun is also typical of English:

*If I play my card well I can get some old woman to me back and go into management. One's got to be **one's own master**. That's the only way to make a packet (Maugham W. S. «Theatre»).*

In this example the phraseological unit *one's own master* means the independence of an individual.

Substantive phraseological units of the English language are characterized by a prepositive attributive type of adjoinment to a substantive-nominal group. About 50 % of the substantive phraseological units of this structural subgroup that are semantically oriented to the human nature are combinations with a proper name functioning as a headword and a dependent component: *Jack Homer, a Miss Nancy*. Accordingly, in this subgroup substantive phraseological units with the constant dependence of components are prevalent. The proper names as constituents of an idiom are a specific feature of English substantive phraseological units.

*But it was delicious sin, and she did not deny her eyes. In vain **Mrs. Grundy** admonished her. The pagan in her, original sin, and all nature urged on her (London J. « The Game»).*

The proper name *Mrs. Grundy* refers to a person from the point of view of generally accepted norms of decency.

3. The subgroup Noun + preposition + Noun. The English substantive phraseological units are characterized by an attributive prepositional type with postposition and adjoinment. In some cases there is extension of the second noun through an adjective or noun in the Genitive Case (*wolf in sheep's clothing, knight in shining armour*).

*She took my hand and led me to the foot of the hummock: "Here's your **knight in shining armour**" (Fowles J. « The Magus»).*

This example describes the so-called prince on a white horse denoting the image of a guy in girl's dreams.

There may be a change in the number form of the first component both from

singular to plural, and vice versa (*baby in the wood - children in the wood, pests of society - pest of society*).

*...And just look what he called me, a heartless scoundrel - me, the best-hearted man, what ever lived - **a pest of society** and a danger to the public* (Maugham W. S. «*The Round Dozen*»).

*A pest of society* shows such a feature of the character as human sponging.

English is characterized by the use of such prepositions as *of, in, about, at, on* in the units under investigation.

When the preposition *of* is used a head word is an object or phenomenon that has attributive or attributive-objective relations to the adjunct. Most of the substantive phraseological units are motivated. Among the analyzed substantive phraseological units there can be distinguished the following subtypes:

a) with a head word referring to the person that has the quality denoted by an adjunct: *a gentleman of fortune, child of nature*.

*She felt that he wanted her to be **a child of nature**. That suited her very well* (Maugham W. S. «*Theatre*»).

This idiom nominates a playful, extremely friendly and quite mischievous person;

b) with a head word denoting a feature, characteristic of a person or object expressed by the adjunct: *presence of mind*.

*She was indeed so taken aback that she had not **the presence of mind** to deny it* (Maugham W. S. «*Theatre*»).

This example shows the ability of an individual to remain calm, and take quick and reasonable actions;

c) with a head word expressing the whole thing, an adjunct – a part of the whole: *the baby of the family*;

d) with a head word designating an object, the adjunct – its content: *the ball of fire, bowels of mercy, bundle of nerves*.

*At least it would be a face worth seeing: the face of a man who was without **bowels of mercy**: a face but which had to show itself to raise up in the mind of the*

*unimpressible Enfield, a spirit of enduring hatred (Stevenson R.L. «The strange case»).*

This idiom emphasizes such a personal feature as the capacity for mercy.

When the preposition *in* is used a head noun denotes an object that is in attributive- spatial relations to adjunct. In this subgroup there are several subtypes:

a) with a head word denoting the person or thing that are limited by place or space designated by an adjunct: *cat in pan, the man in the street*.

*I shall always be grateful to Albert because he keeps me in contact with **the man in the street**. (Maugham W. S. «The Creative Impulse»);*

b) with a head word naming an action, an adjunct – the place of this action being performed: *fire in the blood*. Other prepositions are rarely used: *about (man about town, hair about heel), on (Johnny on the spot), at (the man at the wheel)*.

*He never attempted to play, anyone but he himself specialized in **men about town**, gentlemanly gamblers, gold and young scamps with a good side to them (Maugham W. S. «Theatre»).*

The example indicates the popularity of a man who is constantly in the spotlight, fashionable identity.

#### 4. The subgroup Noun + and + Noun.

This subtype is characterized by coordinate connection and constant dependence of components in the majority of cases. Morphological invariability is inherent in most coordinate substantive phraseological units. Two-member units of the English language semantically oriented to the person's character can have both components in the singular (*David and Jonathan*) or in the plural (*stocks and stones*) forms.

Among the substantive phraseological units semantically oriented to the personality traits this structural pattern is commoner in the English language. Sometimes in English one can observe variation of the preposition, e. g. *a stick or a stone - a stick and a stone*.

*Insidiously, and by remote ways, as well as by the power of **stick and stone** and clout of hand, were the shackles of White Fang's bondage being riveted upon*

him (London J. «White Fang»).

"Why couldn't you leave me alone?"

"Hang it all, I'm not **a stick or a stone**" (Maugham W.S. «The Painted Veil»).

5. The subgroup Participle I (II) + Noun.

English substantive phraseological units belong to participial-nominal group of a prepositive attributive type with adjoinment (*rolling stone, broken reed*).

*To Caroline's extreme annoyance, she has not been able to find out anything about him, except that he is a foreigner. The Intelligence Corps has proved a broken reed* (Christie A. «The Murder of Roger Ackroyd»).

The phraseological unit *a broken reed* indicates such a feature of human nature as unreliability.

Thus, we have found a number of characteristic features in the structural organization of the substantive phraseological units to describe the human nature in the English language. The commonest structural pattern is the combination Adjective + Noun. The less frequent patterns are Noun + preposition + Noun, Participle I (II) +Noun. English is also characterized by the use of proper names as constituents of the units under investigation.

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