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THE NOMINAL PREDICATE EXPRESSED BY PHRASEOLOGICAL UNITS IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

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Abstract
The present article investigates the expressive potential of nominal predicates expressed through phraseological units in the English language. Particular attention is paid to the interaction between grammatical structure, phraseological meaning, emotional colouring, and stylistic function. Phraseological units represent an important component of language because they communicate information not only through their lexical meanings but also through imagery, cultural associations, evaluation, and emotional attitudes. When incorporated into nominal predicates, these expressions make descriptions more vivid, meaningful, and expressive. The article examines the grammatical characteristics of nominal predicates, the semantic and structural properties of phraseological units, and their contribution to the expressive potential of English sentences. It also considers the ways in which idiomatic expressions convey positive and negative evaluations, characterize individuals, describe situations, and strengthen the communicative effect of utterances. Examples are analysed to demonstrate how phraseological units functioning as subject complements contribute to the stylistic organization of sentences. The research is based on descriptive, contextual, semantic, and functional-stylistic approaches. The findings suggest that phraseological units used in nominal predicates serve as effective linguistic resources for expressing evaluation, emotional intensity, figurative characterization, and the speaker's subjective attitude.

Keywords: Nominal predicate, phraseological units, expressiveness, idiomatic expressions, phraseology, emotionality, evaluativeness, stylistic function, figurative meaning, English language.

Introduction

Language is not simply a system for exchanging information. It is also a powerful instrument through which people express emotions, attitudes, personal opinions, and evaluations of the surrounding world. Speakers do not always choose neutral vocabulary when communicating their thoughts. Instead, they frequently use figurative expressions, idioms, metaphors, and phraseological units to make their speech more natural, interesting, and emotionally meaningful.

One of the important linguistic phenomena that contributes to expressiveness is the use of phraseological units within grammatical structures. Phraseological units are relatively stable combinations of words whose meanings are established through conventional usage. In many

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cases, their general meanings cannot be understood by translating each individual component literally.

For example, the expression a piece of cake does not normally refer to an actual piece of food when used idiomatically. It means something that is very easy to accomplish. Similarly, a pain in the neck is commonly used to describe an annoying person or situation.

These expressions demonstrate how language can communicate complex evaluations through relatively short combinations of words.

Phraseological units can perform different grammatical functions in English sentences. They may function as subjects, objects, attributes, adverbials, or components of predicates. Their use within nominal predicates is particularly interesting because it allows speakers to identify, characterize, and evaluate people, objects, and situations through figurative language.

Consider the following examples:

1. He is a real pain in the neck.
2. She is the life and soul of the party.
3. Their decision was a blessing in disguise.
4. My brother is a fish out of water in formal situations.

In these sentences, the expressions following the linking verb function as subject complements and form part of the predicative structure. At the same time, they communicate more than simple factual information. They create vivid images and convey the speaker's attitude towards the subject.

According to Quirk et al. (1985), the English clause has several major elements, including subject, verb, object, complement, and adverbial. Subject complements are particularly relevant to the present research because they provide information about the subject by identifying or describing it.

The expressive potential of phraseological units has also been discussed in phraseological and stylistic research. Kunin (1996) examines the structural, semantic, and functional characteristics of English phraseological units, while Nunberg, Sag, and Wasow (1994) emphasize that idiomaticity involves more than the inability to derive meaning from individual words. Conventionality and figurative interpretation are also important.

Consequently, studying phraseological units in nominal predicates requires consideration of both grammatical organization and contextual meaning.

The main purpose of this article is to investigate how phraseological units functioning as nominal predicates contribute to expressiveness in English and how they communicate emotional, evaluative, and stylistic information.

The predicate is one of the central components of sentence structure. It provides information about the subject and indicates what is being stated about it.

In English grammar, a distinction is commonly made between verbal predicates and non-verbal predicative constructions. A nominal predicate typically contains a linking verb, such as be, become, seem, remain, or feel, followed by a noun phrase functioning as a subject complement.

For example:

- She is a teacher.
- He became a successful businessman.

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- This situation seems a disaster.
- Their victory was a miracle.

In these examples, the noun phrases following the linking verbs identify or characterize the subjects.

Quirk et al. (1985) explain that subject complements occur after copular verbs and provide information about the subject. Huddleston and Pullum (2002) also discuss the grammatical relationship between copular constructions and their predicative complements.

For the purposes of this article, the term nominal predicate refers to a copular construction in which the predicative complement is a noun phrase, including a phraseological expression functioning as a noun phrase.

It is important to distinguish a nominal predicate from an ordinary verbal predicate.

Compare:

- He became angry.
- He became a different person.

In the first sentence, angry is an adjective functioning as a predicative complement. In the second sentence, a different person is a noun phrase functioning as a predicative complement.

This distinction is essential when examining phraseological units because not every idiomatic expression functions as a nominal predicate.

Phraseology is a branch of linguistics concerned with fixed and relatively stable combinations of words. Such expressions are commonly reproduced in speech as established linguistic units.

Kunin (1996) considers phraseological units in terms of their structural, semantic, and functional characteristics. His work is particularly important for the study of English phraseology.

Phraseological expressions can differ in their degree of semantic transparency.

For example:

1. A piece of cake

Meaning: Something very easy to accomplish.

2. A black sheep

Meaning: A person regarded as different from or disapproved of by a group.

3. A blessing in disguise

Meaning: Something that initially appears unpleasant but eventually produces a positive result.

4. A fish out of water

Meaning: A person who feels uncomfortable or unfamiliar in a particular environment.

These examples demonstrate that phraseological meaning is frequently figurative rather than literal.

Nunberg et al. (1994) distinguish different dimensions of idiomaticity and argue that idiomatic expressions cannot all be explained through a single principle of semantic non-compositionality. Their approach demonstrates the importance of conventionality, figurative interpretation, and the relationship between an expression's components.

Phraseological units therefore represent meaningful linguistic structures that combine lexical stability with figurative and contextual interpretation.

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Expressiveness is an important feature of language that enables speakers and writers to make their communication more influential, emotionally meaningful, and vivid.

It is closely connected with several linguistic categories:

- Emotionality;
- Evaluativeness;
- Imagery;
- Intensification;
- Stylistic colouring;
- Subjectivity.

Although these concepts are interconnected, they are not identical.

Emotionality refers to the expression of feelings such as happiness, disappointment, anger, surprise, or admiration.

Evaluativeness communicates a positive or negative judgment about a person, object, event, or situation.

Imagery creates a mental picture through figurative language.

Intensification strengthens the meaning or emotional force of an utterance.

Phraseological units can combine several of these characteristics within one expression.

For instance:

He is a black sheep in his family.

The expression a black sheep does not simply identify the person. It communicates a negative social evaluation and creates an image of someone who differs from the expectations of a group.

Similarly:

She is the life and soul of the party.

This phraseological expression communicates a positive evaluation. It characterizes a person as sociable, energetic, and capable of creating an enjoyable atmosphere.

Jabbarova (2020), in her research on emotionality, expressiveness, evaluativeness, and the renewal of phraseological units, discusses the importance of these features in phraseological usage.

Tursunova (2021) also examines the expressive and stylistic colouring of English phraseological units, paying attention to their functional and emotional characteristics.

These studies support the idea that phraseological expressions should be analysed not only according to their dictionary meanings but also according to their stylistic and communicative functions.

The use of phraseological units in nominal predicates is particularly effective because it allows speakers to characterize the subject through established figurative expressions.

A simple noun may provide basic information, whereas an idiomatic noun phrase can communicate additional emotional and evaluative meanings.

Consider the following comparison:

Neutral sentence:

He is an annoying person.

Expressive sentence:

He is a real pain in the neck.

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Both sentences communicate a negative evaluation. However, the second sentence is more conversational and figurative. The expression a pain in the neck presents the person's behaviour as something irritating and difficult to tolerate.

Another example:

Neutral sentence:

She is a very sociable person.

Expressive sentence:

She is the life and soul of the party.

The second sentence creates a more vivid characterization. It suggests that the person contributes significantly to the atmosphere of social gatherings.

This demonstrates that phraseological units can increase the expressive potential of nominal predicates by introducing figurative meaning and evaluative information.

Phraseological units with positive connotations are frequently used to express admiration, appreciation, and favourable judgments.

Consider the following examples:

Example 1: She is the apple of her father's eye.

Meaning: She is deeply loved and cherished by her father.

Analysis: The phraseological expression communicates affection and emotional attachment. Instead of simply stating that the father loves his daughter, the speaker uses an established figurative expression to emphasize the strength of this relationship.

Example 2: He is a man of his word.

Meaning: He is reliable and keeps his promises.

Analysis: This expression characterizes the subject positively by emphasizing honesty and responsibility. The nominal predicate communicates an evaluation of the person's moral qualities.

Example 3: Their achievement was a feather in their cap.

Meaning: Their achievement was a source of pride or distinction.

Analysis: The phraseological expression gives the achievement a positive evaluative meaning. It suggests that the result deserves recognition and admiration.

Example 4: She is a diamond in the rough.

Meaning: She has valuable qualities or potential that are not yet fully developed or recognized.

Analysis: The metaphorical image of a diamond suggests value and potential. The expression therefore communicates admiration while implying that further development is possible.

These examples demonstrate that positive phraseological units make nominal predicates more emotionally meaningful and stylistically attractive.

Negative phraseological units are also widely used in nominal predicates. They allow speakers to express criticism, disapproval, disappointment, and dissatisfaction.

For example:

Example 1: He is a black sheep in the family.

Meaning: He is regarded as different from or disapproved of by the other members of the family.

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Analysis: The expression creates a figurative image of social difference. Its negative colouring depends on the context and the attitudes of the people using it.

Example 2: That excuse is a lame duck.

Meaning: The excuse is ineffective or unsuccessful.

Analysis: This is a creative illustrative use rather than a claim that a lame duck has this exact conventional meaning in every context. Traditionally, a lame duck refers to an ineffective or powerless person, organization, or institution. Applying it to an excuse involves a contextual figurative extension.

Example 3: He is a wolf in sheep's clothing.

Meaning: He appears harmless or friendly but has hidden harmful intentions.

Analysis: The expression communicates distrust and negative evaluation. Its imagery is based on the contrast between outward appearance and hidden character.

Example 4: Their argument was a storm in a teacup.

Meaning: Their disagreement was exaggerated in relation to its actual importance.

Analysis: The expression reduces the seriousness of the conflict through humorous imagery. It may also communicate the speaker's critical attitude towards unnecessary emotional reactions.

Negative phraseological expressions are therefore important stylistic resources because they allow speakers to criticize or evaluate people and situations indirectly, often with greater vividness than neutral descriptions.

These are common in everyday conversation and frequently communicate informal attitudes.

Example:

My neighbour is a pain in the neck.

The expression sounds natural in informal communication and expresses irritation.

Some expressions can occur in both spoken and written language without being strongly associated with a particular social situation.

Example:

Her success was a blessing in disguise.

The expression can be used in ordinary conversation, journalistic writing, and narrative texts.

Some phraseological expressions acquire additional stylistic importance through their use in literary contexts.

Example:

He was a shadow of his former self.

This expression can contribute to the emotional atmosphere of a narrative and emphasize a character's personal transformation.

It should be noted that the boundaries between stylistic categories are not absolute. An expression may be appropriate in several types of discourse, depending on its context and intended effect.

The investigation of phraseological units functioning as nominal predicates demonstrates their significant contribution to the expressive potential of the English language.

Nominal predicates provide an important grammatical structure through which speakers identify and characterize subjects. When phraseological units are incorporated into these constructions, they introduce additional semantic and stylistic dimensions.

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The analysis has shown that phraseological nominal predicates can perform several important functions:

First, they characterize individuals by describing their personal qualities, behaviour, and social roles.

Second, they communicate positive and negative evaluations, allowing speakers to express admiration, criticism, approval, or disapproval.

Third, they describe emotional conditions through figurative imagery, making psychological experiences more vivid and understandable.

Fourth, they intensify the communicative effect of utterances by combining conventional meaning with emotional and stylistic colouring.

Finally, they contribute to the naturalness and cultural richness of English communication.

Examples such as a man of his word, a black sheep, a fish out of water, a bundle of nerves, and a blessing in disguise demonstrate that phraseological units can convey complex meanings through relatively compact grammatical constructions.

The research also confirms the importance of context. The expressive potential of a phraseological unit cannot always be determined through its dictionary definition alone. Its actual stylistic function becomes clearer when it is examined within a complete sentence and a particular communicative situation.

In conclusion, phraseological units functioning as nominal predicates represent an effective linguistic means of combining grammatical structure, figurative meaning, emotionality, and evaluation. Their study contributes to a deeper understanding of English grammar, phraseology, and stylistics.

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