



## English Nouns' Valency in Terms of Phraseology

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### Abstract

This article deals with the analysis of the noun used in the English phraseology as it has the highest phraseological activity. The subject of special attention is a study of phraseological units with a phytonym component. The group of phraseological units with a phytonym component is the most frequently used one. Some phytonyms demonstrate unusual cultural connotations typical to this language. The importance of the plant world for people and the fact that they make analogies between humans and plants are reflected in the language. Results indicate that the choice of the properties of a particular plant as a prototype for re-interpretation is due to several reasons: on the one hand, the peculiarities of the human thinking process, which leads to the formation of similar images in different cultures; on the other hand, this choice depends on the cultural and historical development of the country, its geographical location and political structure.

**Keywords:** Phraseology; Phraseological unit; Noun; Phytonym; Cultural and Historical Development.

### 1. Introduction

First spoken in early medieval England, English is a West Germanic language that gradually became the leading language of foreign discourse in today's world. It is named after the Angles, one of the ancient Germanic communities that migrated to England, the region of Great Britain that later took its name. Both names are derived from Anglia, the Baltic Sea peninsula. The English language has a thousand-year history. During this time, the language has collected a large number of expressions that were, in people's opinion, successful, true and beautiful. Thus phraseology, a set of stable expressions that have an independent meaning, had appeared. Charl Bally, a Swiss linguist of French origin, is a creator of the theory of Phraseology. He introduced the term "Phraseology" as a section of stylistics, studying connected word-combinations (Balli, 1991). In linguistics, phraseology means the science of systems or types of fixed expressions like idioms, phrases, phrasal verbs and other kinds of multi-word lexical segments of a language (Ahmadova, 2020; Amirkulovna, 2020; Demir & Sergeevna, 2019; A. Jabbarova, 2020; A. J. Jabbarova, 2020). The components of a phrase are connected to each other in order to make one meaning in a sentence. Nevertheless, they cannot give that meaning when they are used independently.

The object and purpose, scope and methods of studying phraseology are still not clearly defined, and have therefore not been fully elaborated. Other less developed questions are about the main features of phraseology as compared with the free-word combinations, the classification of phraseological units and their relationship with the parts of speech (Nikolaevna Gilyazeva & Mannurovna Polkina, 2019). Phraseological units are word-groups that cannot be made in the process of speech; they exist in the language as ready-made units. According to Koonin A.V., phraseological units are stable word-groups with partially or fully transferred meanings (Koonin, 1970). According to Rosemarie Gläser, a phraseological unit is a lexicalized, reproducible billexemic or polylexemic word group in common use, which has relative syntactic and semantic stability, maybe idiomatized, may carry connotations, and may have an emphatic or



intensifying function in a text (Gläser, 1994). S. Balli called the phraseological units “combinations that have firmly entered the language” (Balli, 1991)

It is known that phraseological units are based on various realities, including also the concept of phytonym, since plants have always played an important role in human life (Abilmazhinova, 2014; Ryabinina, 2019). Phraseological units with a phytonym component have an emotional colouring and help to reflect the estimated attitude of people to the reality of life better, besides, they help provide the complete picture of the world of language speakers because they reflect the history and the habits of their life. A phraseological unit, as a stable phrase, serves for figurative reflection of the world.

### **1.1. Research Objective**

The study of the noun used in English phraseology as it has the highest phraseological operation is discussed in this article. An analysis of phraseological units with a phytonymal aspect is the topic of special attention.

## **2. Methodology**

Phraseological units differ from free word-groups semantically and structurally:

- They convey a single concept, and their meaning is idiomatic, i.e. it is not a mere total of the meanings of their components;
- They are characterized by structural invariability (no word can be substituted for any component of a phraseological unit without destroying its meaning);
- They are not created in speech but used as ready-made units. Unlike a word, a phraseological unit can be divided into separately structured elements and transformed syntactically.

Phraseological units are classified in accordance with several criteria. In the classification proposed by Professor V.V. Vinogradov, phraseological units are classified according to the semantic principle, and namely to the degree of motivation of meaning, i.e. the relationship between the meaning of the whole unit and the meaning of (Smirnitsky, 1998). Its components. Three groups are distinguished: 1) phraseological fusions – the meaning of the whole is not deduced from the meaning of the components; 2) phraseological unities – the meaning expressed in the whole construction, the metaphors on which they are based are transparent; 3) phraseological combinations – one of their components is used in its direct meaning while the other can be used figuratively (Vinogradov, 1977). Professor A.I. Smirnitsky classifies phraseological units according to the functional principle. Two groups are distinguished: 1) phraseological units are neutral, non-metaphorical; 2) idioms are metaphoric, stylistically coloured N.N. Amosova classifies phraseological units according to the type of context. Phraseological units are marked by a fixed (permanent) context, which cannot be changed. Two groups are singled out: 1) Phrasemes consist of two components, one of which is phrase logically bound, the second serves as the determining context; 2) idioms are characterized by idiomaticity: their meaning is created by the whole group and is not a mere combination of the meanings of its components (Amosova, 1963). A.V. Koonin's classification is based on the function of the phraseological unit in communication. Phraseological units are classified into 1) nominative phraseological units, which are units denoting objects, phenomena, actions, states, qualities. They can be: substantive, adjectival, adverbial, and prepositional; 2) nominative-communicative units containing a verb; 3) interjectional phraseological units expressing the speaker's emotions and attitude to things; 4) communicative phraseological units, which are represented by proverbs and sayings (Koonin, 1970). some linguists (Amosova, 1963) do not include proverbs and sayings into their classifications. Others (I.V. Arnold, A.V. Koonin, and V.V. Vinogradov) do on the grounds that 1) like in phraseological units, their components are never changed and 2) phraseological units are often formed on the basis of proverbs and sayings.

## **3. Results and Discussion**

The problem of studying phraseological units is of importance when training in the language. It is possible to enter words relating to any part of speech into the structure of phraseological units. Different parts of speech are used in forming phraseological units. They can be pronouns, participles, numerals, and adjectives. But the main part of speech is the noun since it has the highest phraseological activity (Baranov & Dobrovolsky, 2008). One of the most frequently used groups of nouns in English phraseology is phytonyms.

Phraseological units with a phytonym component reflect human observation of the flora world, describe people's attitude to the surrounding nature, and become a cultural English vocabulary (Садовский & Чайковский, 2017). Three hundred eighty phraseological units were selected for this study. The largest group is the group with a *rose* component. It is found in more than 7% of the sample set. The rose is considered the most honoured flower in England, associated with beauty, love and youth. It is a vivid image that is widely used by writers and poets. The well-known Shakespearean *a rose by any other name would smell as sweet*, which appeared in *Romeo and Juliet*, means “no matter how you call a rose – its fragrance will remain the same”. A young woman is usually compared with a rose. Thus, the phraseological units *English rose* and *as fresh as a rose* are often used as a compliment and are most often applied to girls. The rose is associated with something pleasant, light, and beautiful. By the same token are such phraseological units as *to come up roses* means “to result favourably or successfully”; the *bed of roses* means “a luxurious situation, an easy life”; *not all roses* mean “not entirely perfect or agreeable”; and *to gather life's roses* – “to pluck flowers of pleasure”. But, at the same time, the rose is an object of admiration and often approach less, so it is used to characterize something rare: *a blue rose* – “something unattainable”; *a rose without a thorn* means “every apparently desirable situation has its share of trouble or difficulty”. Also, a rose is associated with health, or rather a healthy complexion: *to have roses in one's cheeks* – “to have a healthy glow on someone's cheeks”; *to bring back the roses to one's cheeks* – “to return a healthy glow to someone's cheeks”; *to lose one's roses* that means “to become weaker, to lose youth”; or *to blush like a rose* means “to become red in the face”. The rose was a symbol of silence in Ancient Rome. Here out, there are such phraseological units as (*to be said*) *under the rose* – “privately, confidentially, or in secret” and (*to be born*) *under the rose* – “to be illegitimate” in the English language (Lyll, 1931).

There is also a fairly large group of phraseological units with an *apple* component, which made up 5.8% of the sample set: *an apple of another tree* – “quite a different thing”; *apple-pie order* – “neat and tidy in the arrangement”; *to upset smb's apple-cart* – “to wreck an advantageous project or disturb the status quo, to spoil or disrupt a plan or arrangement”. Four phraseological units that belong to this group are of Biblical and mythological origin: *Adam's apple*; *the apple of Sodom*; the *apple of discord* – “something that causes trouble or unhappiness, a subject of dissension”; *the apple of one's eye* – “a person or thing of whom you are extremely fond and proud of”.

Phraseological units with a *nut* component made up 5% and most of them are related to the conversational style or slang: *be nuts on something* – “to be very enthusiastic about or fond of”; *do your nut* – “be extremely angry or agitated”; *nuts and bolts* – “the basic practical details of something”. This component is also used to indicate an effort: *a tough (or hard) nut (to crack)* – “someone who is difficult to deal with or hard to beat”. There are also interjection phraseological units, which contain the components *nut*: *Nuts to something! It feels like a nuthouse!*

Phraseological units with a *tree* component made up 5.3% of the sample set are mostly used in a bookish way of speaking: *family tree* – “a chart showing the genealogical relationships and lines of descent of a family”; *out of your tree* – “completely stupid, mad”; *up a tree* – “in a difficult situation without escape, cornered”; *to flourish like a bay tree* – “to thrive, to grow very successfully”; *the tree of life* – in the Bible, “a tree in the Garden of Eden whose fruit, if eaten, gave everlasting life”. We also found many proverbs with a tree component: *a tree is known by its fruit* – “people judge your character by what you do”; *the apple never falls far from the tree* – said when “someone is displaying or behaving in the same way as their relatives (especially parents)”; *money does not grow on trees* – “it is not easy to get money” (Mirzaakbarov, 2020).

Table 1. *Other widely used floral components*

Phytonym	Number of phraseological units	% of the sample set
Grass	18	4.7%
Bean	17	4.5%
Root	14	3.7%
Bush	13	3.4%
Fruit	13	3.4%

According to the grammatical structure, phraseological units with a floral component follow the same classification as lexical items. We took A.V. Koonin's classification as the basis. We distinguish the following groups of phraseological units with a floral component (Table 2).

Table 2. *Groups of phraseological units with a floral component*

Group	Number of phraseological units	% of the sample set	Example
Nominal	134	35.3%	<i>small potatoes</i> – “something insignificant or unimportant”; <i>a broken reed</i> – “an unreliable or unsupportive person” (Lubensky, 2013)
Verbal	126	33.1%	<i>to drive someone nuts</i> – “to drive someone crazy” (Judith, 2004)
Proverbs	44	11.6%	<i>a reed before the wind lives on, while mighty oaks do fall</i> – “an insignificant, flexible person is more likely not to get hurt in a crisis than a prominent or rigid person” (Delacroix, 2014)
Adjectives	27	7.1%	<i>(as) cool as a cucumber</i> – “perfectly cool or self-possessed”; <i>full of beans</i> – “lively, energetic, in high spirits” (Judith, 2004)
Adverbial	25	6.6%	<i>Under the rose</i> – “privately, confidentially or in secret” (Dictionary of Idioms. The University of Birmingham, 1997); <i>up a tree</i> – “confused, without an answer to a problem, in difficulty” (Judith, 2004)
Interjection	7	1.8%	<i>Nuts to you!</i> – “Go away!” (Spears, 1991)

Even in such groups, the noun is used, though it does not play a major role in phraseological units of these groups. The most widely spread group of phraseological units with a floral component is a group of interstitial phraseological units that make up 56.5% of the sample set, which are successfully used both in the publicist style and in the conversational style: *to come up roses* – “to result in success or an exceptionally good outcome, especially in the face of doubts or difficulties”; *to spill the beans* – “to give away a secret or a surprise”; *to hold out an/the olive branch (leaf)* – “to extend an offer or gesture of peace, so as to end a disagreement or dispute” (Subbotina, 2013; Vinogradov, 1977).

The next group is the literature layer, which made up 10.5% of the sample set. This group includes biblical expressions: *a fig leaf* – “something used to hide an embarrassing or shameful problem”; *the flower of something* – “the finest, most vital or most exemplary part of something”; as well as author’s phraseological units, or Shakespearean and poeticism: *primrose path* – “earthly delights that come to an end”; *the crown of thorns* – “something that causes one pain and suffering”; *be a thorn in one’s flesh* – “to be a constant or persistent cause of annoyance, frustration or trouble”; *the apple of one’s eye* – “a cherished or favoured person”; *forbidden fruit* – “an indulgence or a pleasure that is illegal or is believed to be immoral”.

Finally, the last group includes the conversational layer. This group composed 33% of the sample set. Among the expressions related to the conversation vocabulary, mostly used ones are *bananas* and *nuts*: *to be nuts on* – “to be very enthusiastic about or fond of”; *to be off one’s nuts* – “to be crazy and/or wacky”; *to be nuts about (someone or something)* – “to be very romantically interested in or in love with someone or enthusiastic about something”; *banana oil* – “superfluous, disingenuous or nonsensical talk, bullshit”; *to go bananas* – “to become irrational or crazy”; *top banana* – “the boss, the leader or head of something” (Baldwin et al., 2001).

Table 3 presents phraseological units with a floral component as related to a field of human activity.

Table 3. *Phraseological units with floral component as related to the field of human activity*

Title	Number of phraseological units	% of the sample set	Example

Intellectual faculties	34	8.9%	<i>one smart apple</i> – “a smart or clever person” (Judith, 2004); <i>hayseed</i> – “an unsophisticated person, particularly from a rural place, a bumpkin” (Garmonsway & Simpson, 1987); <i>to know one’s onions</i> – “to be fully knowledgeable about something”; <i>to know how many beans make five</i> – “to be intelligent”; <i>banana-head</i> – “a stupid person” (Judith, 2004)
Emotional state	20	5.3%	<i>to do one’s nana</i> – “to become angry” (Spears, 1991); <i>to feel one’s oats</i> – “to be very active and energetic”; <i>full of beans</i> – “very energetic, lively, in high spirits”; <i>keen as mustard</i> – “very enthusiastic and excited” (Judith, 2004)
Eccentricity and queerness	20	5.3%	<i>Fruitloop</i> – “someone prone to behaving in a clumsy”; <i>fruitcake</i> – “someone who is odd or wacky” (Spears, 1991)
Evaluative statements (expressions)	13	3.4	<i>Cool beans!</i> – “Awesome! Great!” <i>(the) berries</i> – “the most excellent or outstanding”; <i>peacherino</i> – “a particularly pleasing person or thing” (Judith, 2004)
Money	12	3.1%	<i>Beans</i> – “a small amount” (Spears, 1991); <i>Lettuce</i> – “paper money”; <i>for peanuts</i> – “for practically no money at all”; <i>not a bean</i> – “penniless, having no money at all” (Judith, 2004)

Phraseological units with floral components, or phytonyms, should be described both from the point of view of their direct functioning in different knowledge area and from the point of view of their use as phraseological units with the complete description and illustrative matter. Such facts considerably fill the lexical gaps in English phraseology and phraseography, and will contribute to the further studies of the English language in semantic and lexicographic aspects.

#### 4. Conclusion

The phraseological stock of the English language is so large that the complete studying of it would not fit into one article. The current research shows that nouns play a very important role in the phraseology of the English language. In the speech, where phraseological units are used, nouns perform not only an informative but also aesthetic function. Nouns are used to form a large number of phraseological units, which make speech more expressive and picturesque. The article considered the creativity of nouns in English phraseology in terms of phytonyms. The selected features of phytonymic phraseological units are not the total reflection of the linguistic picture of the world; however, studying cultural features of phraseological units, it can be confirmed that phytonyms convey to phraseological units their characteristics, such as the human nature, or appearance. Phytonyms can also denote different kinds of action, financial and emotional state, problems of mental health, and hierarchical relations.



#### 4.1. Contribution

There are a variety of reasons for choosing the properties of a particular plant as a template for re-interpretation: on the one hand, the peculiarities of the mechanism of human thought, contributing to the creation of similar images in various cultures; on the other hand, this option depends on the cultural and historical development of the region, its geographical position and political structure.

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