



## Lexical-Semantic Analysis of English Phraseological Units with Phytonym Component

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### Abstract

This article devoted to the lexical-semantic analysis of English phraseological units with phytonym component. The subject of this paper is a lexical and semantic analysis and characteristics of such phraseological units. Special attention is given to lexical and semantic features of phytonyms functioning. The use of the term “phytonym” is defined. The problem of studying the semantics of phraseological units is one of the most important in theoretical linguistics, so the study of the meaning of language units, its structure occupies one of the main places in modern linguistic research. The language meaning is explained by its dissimilarity, because of the formation of different sides of the language and is determined by the lexical and semantic systems of the language, as a result of reflecting the socially objective reality.

**Keywords:** Phraseological Unit; Phytonym; Seme; Lexical Meaning; Analysis.

### 1. Introduction

The motivation for the creation of any language phraseological fund is the efficient phase of the formation of various PU modifications. Linguistic literature provides numerous PU classifications according to the degree of equivalence. The phraseological fund of any language is a knowledge base and folk wisdom, which is a condensed form of the precedent texts contained in its units. It includes fixed expressions of various degrees of fusion, from stable phrases, idioms, cliches, proverbs, sayings to paremiological means (Natkho & Sardalova, 2020; Onyejebu, 2020; Qizi, 2019; Tleumuratov & Genjekaraeva, 2020). The variety of fixed expressions, their specifics, construal and evaluative make it possible to view phraseology not only as a branch of science but also a source of various linguistic studies. For a long time, the research of phraseology by processing empirical facts was conducted in order to organize phraseological units, to study their evolution, to design a comparative typology (Alaiddinova, Rajabova, & Eshonqulova, 2019; Fedulenkova, 2019), to study collocations (Castro, Martínez, & Faber, 2014), or functioning. Semantic, structural and functional features of a phraseological unit separate it from other language units by a set of characteristics (Koonin, 1970). The lexical meaning of a phraseological unit is one of its categorical features, which can be realized not only in the text but also in the context, revealing practically in lexicographic description and interpretation. Variables, lexical combinations of words that are exposed to phraseology, due to the reinterpretation of meaning, result in the stability of phraseological units. The people's need in refined phrases that enrich the language and often are the only expressions of particular content in the phraseological world view, which cannot be expressed by separate words, is undoubtedly facilitated by this process.

This article will look at the specifics of phraseological units with a phytonym component. The experience of a person's spiritual order and cultural development is recorded by items denoting subjects of the world around us, that's why special attention is paid in linguistic literature to studying lexical units.



### **1.1. Research Objective**

This article was devoted to the lexical-semantic study of the phytonym part of English phraseological units. The lexical and semantic study and characteristics of such phraseological units are the topics of this paper.

## **2. Methodology**

Attention to phytonymy is based on the fact that the words nominating plants establish and reflect the cognitive development of the world of flora in culture. Thereby, the study of phytonyms allows solving terminological, linguo-culturological, and ethnolinguistic problems. One of the pressing challenges concerning the history of phytonymic vocabulary research is the definition of the semantic extension “phytonym”, as there is no commonly accepted interpretation of this term, despite its extensive use in linguistics. Phytonyms are defined as units of botanical nomenclature and opposed to scientific naming units of plants (Pomarolli, 2018). Words belonging to this lexical group have important features that should be taken into account when studying.

The reason for linguists paying special attention to flora is that plants occupy one of the key places in human culture. The use of phytonyms continues mythological, religious and literary traditions harking back to the archetypes of language cultures. Phytomorphism is associated with an early form of reasoning, and concepts induced by this form are held in language. Phytonyms continues to attract the attention of many researchers, and currently, their studying is widely spread. They are considered in different types of discourse (literary, poetic, scientific, and political); based on the material of only one language and on the comparison between languages. Despite the variety of approaches used by the different authors, they are of the idea that the flora is universal, making it possible to consider one of the oldest ways of modelling reality.

The phytonymic world view, associated with the flora conceptualization, is one of the promising directions that study the mosaic piece of linguistic world view. There are a lot of works in modern non-fiction on phytonymic vocabulary analyses in different languages and world linguo cultures. Scientific papers describe the phenomena and, despite a huge number of articles in the field of phytonym studying, try to provide its exhaustive unambiguous definition. And, whereas some scientists include them in the terminological system, others include such vocabulary in the nomenclature. There is also an opinion that phytonyms have a number of terminological characteristics, stably associated with the denotation and have a generic word of a lexica-semantic group. Phytonymy is considered as a link for lexemes of identical semantic proximity, which have an integrated semantic feature that associatively includes separated details. Thus, phytonyms, as signifiers of the flora extra linguistic context, are not only significant lexemes but also evoke a pragmatic and evaluative component in the mind of a native speaker. If we take a phytonym as a generative element or a plant title, then we can distinguish a lexical set in this lexical-semantic group.

The interdisciplinary nature of modern research provides the understanding that language holds, revises and reflects all the cultural and linguistic heritage.

## **3. Results and Discussion**

Many plants are symbols of England. These symbols allow exploring features of people's culture, its values, traditions, and realism. The symbol is a sign of reality, bearing not only the objective and figurative but also cultural meanings. Plants can represent mythological ideas about the world around and concretize it, which allows considering the former as prototypical symbols (Yakovleva, 1996).

There are two groups of the estimated potential of phytonyms:

The estimated component can be determined by objective plant properties: features of appearance, usefulness for practical applications, edibility or inedibility, etc.

The estimated component can be determined by culturological features of plants, by religious and mythological origins of plant names.

Semantic features in the linguistic view of the world provide the most important function – a systemic one: according to semantic features, which are common to a number of definitions, lexical units form lines, groups and paradigms, i.e. the lexical language system. As a type of semantic features, it plays a great significance in the meaning (semantic) structure.



The emotional component cannot appear in a word without estimation. Connotative seems to add the additional, relative to denotation, meanings to the definition (Wolf, 1985).

In the present study, phytonym is a condition for revealing the semantic meaning of phraseological units and exposing their connotations. The continuous sampling method defines that in authentic sources of actual material, the phraseological layer is heterogeneous and includes phraseological units with phytonym components that describe different aspects of human life and activities. This layer of actual material can be studied using a variety of lexical sets, on the basis of connotative and pragmatic components. The selected units are: *as fresh as a daisy* and *a shrinking violet*.

The English-Russian Dictionary of Idioms treats the phraseological unit *as fresh as a daisy* as:

1. Blooming, bursting with good health;  
Cheerful, restless (Kunin, 2001).

The Cambridge English Dictionary and Dictionary of English Idioms and Idiomatic Expressions give the following meanings of this phraseological unit:

2. (Someone who is as) fresh as a daisy, lively and attractive, in a clean and fresh way;  
To be full of energy and enthusiasm (Dictionary, 2015; Dorking, 2018).

There is the following definition of this idiom in The English-Russian Phrasebook: “blooming, (as) fresh as a rose” (Kunin, 2005). The definition from The Universal English-Russian Dictionary is “bursting with good health, full of enthusiasm (full of beans)” (Anokhina, 2010; Volsh, 1993; Шпаковский & Шпаковская, 2009). The English-Russian Modern Dictionary gives the following definition: “always cheerful” (Katzner, 1994; Wilson, 1982). In the Contemporary English Dictionary, this phraseological unit is interpreted as “clean and tidy, sweet, young-looking” (Mayor, 2009). “Someone who is always alert and ready to go” – that is the definition of The Dictionary of American Slang and Colloquial Expressions (Spears, 2005).

The definitions of the English phraseological unit *a shrinking violet* are: 1) “a quiet person who cannot defend their own interests” (Kunin, 2006), “shy person who doesn't express their views and opinions” (Dorking, 2018), 3) “a very shy or unassuming person” (Lobzhanidze, 2016).

As a result of the analysis of English phraseological units with a phytonym component, we can distinguish the following groups according to what these idioms refer to:

### 1) Appearance.

This group includes lexical units based on the similarity of appearance to the described items: *strawberry mark* – “a permanent dark red mark on a person's skin that has existed since birth”. The phytonym *carrot* is often used in phraseological expressions: *many carrot top people have green eyes*. *Carrot top* means a person whose hair is an orange colour. Another English phraseological unit that characterizes the appearance is *as fresh as a daisy*: I met Molly the other day. She looked as fresh as a daisy. The next phraseological unit of this group is *as like as two peas in a pod* – “very similar, or identical. The Cambridge English Dictionary of Idioms states that this phraseological unit means “to be very similar, look, behave or think exactly the same” (AC03763025, 2001). This idiom characterizes the formal resemblance of two objects, as it has the semi “similarity, identity” in its meaning.

### 2) Personality traits.

This group includes phraseological units formed through the re-interpretation of a plant's properties. The phraseological unit *a man of straw* has a semi “unreliability, fragility”. The Modern English Dictionary defines *straw* as “the long, dried stems of plants easy to break” (Thompson & Soanes, 1996; Watson, 1976). This property is used for the formation of the phraseological unit *a man of straw* – “someone who has a weak character”. Another phraseological unit of this group is *a shrinking violet*, which means “a timid or shy person”. The violet is a symbol of modesty and purity of thoughts in the English-speaking culture. The phraseological unit *small dog*, *tall weeds* contain the phytonym *weeds* as one of the components, which means “any wild plant that grows in an unwanted place, especially in a garden or field where it prevents the cultivated plants from growing freely”. Therefore, the meaning of this phraseological unit is “someone who does not have the ability or the resources necessary to perform a task”.

### 3) Similarity of performance.

This group includes phraseological units that are based on a metaphorical reinterpretation of actions and the objects of which are phytonyms (Alimova, 2019). The meaning of the phraseological unit *to make two bites of cherry* is “to make the excessive effort to complete a very easy task”, as cherry is a small berry, usually eaten in one bite, so when using this idiom to describe an action, the speaker implies that there is too much (unnecessary) effort taken. So, there is a semi “meaninglessness, inexpediency” in the meaning of this phraseological unit. The phraseological unit *to nip in the bud* means “to stop something before it has an opportunity to become established”. The etymology of this phraseological unit is due to the meaning of the lexical item *bud*: a part of a plant that develops into a leaf or a flower, and if you destroy it, there will be neither a leaf nor a flower developed.

#### 4. Conclusion

In the present article, the phytonym is a condition for revealing the semantic potential of phraseological units and exposing their connotations. The lexical-semantic analysis of phraseological units with the phytonym component proved their influence on everyday life realities and on the language of people. The study of phytonyms contributes to the knowledge of the specifics of the cultural life of people, their way of life and traditions. Based on the above, it can be concluded that phraseological units-phytonyms are quite diverse in semantic terms, which allow them to be classified into appropriate thematic groups, identified on the basis of connotative and pragmatic meaning. This contributes to their systematization and makes it possible to carry out a further prospective comparative analysis, including in non-related languages.

#### 4.1. Contribution

Owing to the formation of various sides of the language, the meaning of the language is clarified by its dissimilarity and is defined by the lexical and semantic structures of the language, as a result of representing a socially objective truth.

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