# Phraseological terminology in the English economic discourse

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#### Abstract

The research is devoted to the phraseological terms that are encountered in English economic texts. The research analyzed lexical-semantic, cognitive, pragmatic, and linguistic-cultural peculiarities of phraseological units. This research extracts 50 phraseological terms from papers in linguistics, mass media materials, business and professional literature on economics. They were distinguished through four phraseological and semantic fields: "monetary relations", "buying and selling", "business and management", and "economic and production relations". The dominant term "money" was determined. This term has a conceptual meaning, expressed by the positive and negative connotative marking. Phraseological units mean abstract things that take a shape within a specific context. This research explains the use of toponyms, anthroponyms, and zoonyms in phraseological units, as well as the presence of occasional lexemes. Other aspects that were addressed include the main origins of economic phraseological units (mythology, real-life events, characters and persons, literary works, religion), the ethnic, psychological, socio-political and cultural constants of the English economic sphere.

**Key words:** English language, phraseology, phraseological unit, professional communication, economic discourse, idioms

### Introduction

The figurative language creeps into the business discourse, making its way through economic journalism, news reporting, interviews and analytical discussions of leading economic experts, through TV programs and economics textbooks (Kazakova, 2012). The open use of figurative language was always peculiar to the journalistic discourse. In the economic discourse, however, expressive language was not used until economic journalism stood on the path of modern rule-breaking performance (Handford – Koester, 2010; Gleicher, 2011). In our opinion, the flow of idioms and metaphors to different areas of professional economic communication is the result of current loosening in the field of English business discourse. The idioms that formed on the basis of metaphors are used not only to describe the current economic realities (O'Halloran, 1999) but also to express yourself in the professional sphere (Kunin, 2005; Di Giovanni, 2008; Erll – Rigney, 2006).

Fixed phrases are a natural way of knowing the world. Metaphorical rethinking or metaphorization is a major tool of phraseological vocabulary development, not to mention the amount of new abstract concepts that appear because of metaphorization (Hadian – Arefi, 2016; Sasina, 2006; Sommer, 2004).

Considering this fact, the analysis of phraseological units used in English economic discourse allows not only distinguishing these lexemes, but also discovering the peculiarities of English mentality, the peculiarities of English socioeconomic and socio-political relations, and the peculiarities of English lifestyle (Skandera, 2007).

From the researchers' perspective, economic discourse is an extremely general phenomenon. Some scholars do not distinguish it from business or professional discourse (Boylan – Foley, 2005; Samuels, 2013). Thus, the functional status, constituents, and linguistic boundaries of the economic discourse are understudied.

Economic discourse emerged through communication in the economic field under the effect of various factors: extra-linguistic, pragmatic, sociocultural, etc. In common

with other types of discourse, the economic discourse is affected not only by the situational context and communicative/pragmatic attitudes of participants but also by the extra-linguistic (socio-psychological and cultural-historical) factors (Shchyokina, 2001).

On the side of a phraseological domain, the economic discourse has a number of specific attributes, including logical presentation, accuracy, argumentativeness, and informativeness (Anderson, 2006; Shybika, 2003). These attributes are typical for the terminological system of any language.

Phraseological units feel fine in the English economic discourse because this type of discourse is as flexible as any other discourse (Kolotnina, 2001; Bondi, 2010).

In general, the English system of phraseological meanings is a complex branched subsystem, which was formed through centuries together with the human society, and which is still forming (Apalat, 1999). Therefore, this system houses many units that can be found in economic texts and act as a source of important ethnocultural information (Gumovskaya, 2012; Adolphs – Carter, 2007).

This is why it is reasonable to analyze phraseological meanings as the unique culture-bound language units denoting the collective picture of a nation on the basis of different features, associations, relationships, etc. (Brody, 2003; Dirven, 2004; Taylor, 2002). Indeed, any language contains notions denoting the stereotypic values. These notions may emerge within the system of phraseological units. At this point, phraseological units can be a relevant target of linguistic-and-cultural studies. On the other hand, the stereotypic character of phraseological units is an additional notable attribute. The same applies to the axiological side of phraseological meanings (Sinelnikov, et al., 2015).

Although widely used in business settings, fixed terminological phrases and collocations or phraseological units with a terminological meaning have been outside the scope of special studies for a long time. They were not considered as linguistic means of expression in the national context. However, there is considerable progress in this area now. This change of focus allows stretching the phraseological domain of different languages for analysis (Sasina, 2006; Safina, 2002; Nerubenko, 2013).

In English economic discourse, many phraseological units are in use. Yet, their semantic and structural features, classification, and purpose of use are understudied. Therefore, the new issue is to study English phraseological filed of economic terminology from the standpoint of functional, lexical-semantic, and structural-semantic features (Kolotnina, 2001).

The purpose of this research is to analyze the structure and meaning of phraseological units that prevail in English economic texts. The research involves the analysis of lexical-semantic, cognitive, pragmatic, and cultural-linguistic features of fixed terminological phrases. Research objectives:

- analyze the internal and external factors that have defined and shaped the English phraseological units;
- based on the lexical-semantic relations between the phraseological units in the economic discourse, distinguish the dominant lexemes;
  - characterize of the background of phraseological units in economic speech;
- analyze phraseological units and determine the ethnic, psychological, sociopolitical and cultural constants in English economic sphere.

### Research

This research was carried out on the phraseological units used in the English economic language. The research objects [phraseological units] were taken from the English-language economic texts of the last five years (documents, online materials, journals and newspapers, such as "The Economist", and fiction). The description of English phraseological units was additionally supplemented with details from

lexicographic sources, including phraseological, terminological, and etymological dictionaries, as well as dictionaries with specific English-language vocabulary. The latter category includes the English-Russian Economic Dictionary, the Longman Dictionary, and one from Slovar-vocab.com.

This research extracts 50 phraseological terms from papers in linguistics, mass media materials, business and professional literature on economics. They were distinguished through four phraseological and semantic fields: "monetary relations", "buying and selling", "business and management", and "economic and production relations". The research used the following methods of linguistic analysis:

- componential analysis. This method describes the semanteme, helps to understand the meaning of the phraseological unit denoting an ethnic group, and investigates the lexical-semantic structure of phraseological macro-groups of words;
- linguistic-cultural and ethnolinguistic analysis. This method allows determining the cultural and axiological side of the phraseological content of terminological units;
- structural-semantic modelling. This method determines the regularities and concrete mechanisms of the phraseological unit formation in the English language;
- functional analysis. This method is used to determine the relevant meaning of fixed terminological units in the context of economic communication;
- continuous sampling. This method is aimed at obtaining the factual phraseological material that prevails in the economic discourse;
- interpretation. This method is used to understand the meaning of phraseological units and how they interrelate with each other in the context of a discourse.

#### Results

The use of a phraseological unit in the economic text depends on external and internal factors. On the one hand, language development led to the emergence of new phraseological combinations in the economic field, for example:

to play economics – to resort to dishonest methods in economic activity; to play a dishonest economic game;

On the other hand, economics actively uses those phraseological units that originated from history, cultural traditions, etc.

Some phraseological units are not fully fixed, so they may differ in keywords. Such a grouping of words allows changing one component without losing semantic integrity, for example: *to enter into a contract – to enter into an agreement.* Phraseological units act as finished language units with a stable structure and meaning, for example, *to catch the wind* means *to catch a wave, be successful at a certain time.* 

Those phraseological units that are used in economic discourse refer to non-abstract things and are close to the people's everyday life. This, in turn, explains the presence of a considerable number of figurative nominations among the phraseological units in the terminological field. These phraseological units include metaphoric meanings that denote economic realities, for example, *cats and dogs (speculative stocks)* or *lame duck (a company or businessperson facing financial difficulties)*.

Economic texts contain phraseological units that define money as an economic unit:

purse full of money, the root of all evil (money), money burns a hole in my pocket, nor for love or money, to be stony-broke – to have no money, fry the fat out of (fry out fat) – obtain money by pressure or extortion.

The term 'money' in phraseological collocations is frequently used in the context of illegal economic actions, for example:

"trade-based money laundering" - the misuse of commerce to get money across borders. Sometimes the aim is to evade taxes, duties or capital controls; often it is to get dirty money into the banking system.

The 'money laundering' means the process of washing money obtained from criminal activity.

Phraseological units that denote money obtained from criminal activity are the following:

- black money But big rich countries still like to portray themselves as leaders in the fight against black money (Dirty money. Rich smell, The Economist);
- dodgy money Big rich countries often accuse small offshore financial centres, such as Jersey and the Cayman Islands, of acting as willing conduits for dodgy money (Dirty money. Rich smell, The Economist);
- bloody money Blood money from terrorism in the North Caucasus to the boardrooms of Moscow, corruption is Russia's biggest problem (Corruption in Russia. Blood money, The Economist).

The phraseological units that shine a positive light on money are the following:

- white-money this was to be part of a national "white-money strategy", still in the making, to shed Switzerland's image as a tax haven once and for all. Critics suspect it is a smokescreen (Rise of the midshores, The Economist);
- honest money what the opponents of the primacy of the electronic money do not realize is that the economic yardstick of electronic money making is the key to the eliminated inflation and an honest fund (Miles Kimball on How Electronic Currency Could Yield True Price Stability).

There are many new phraseological units denoting monetary units, such as *web money*, *Internet money*, *electronic money*, that have recently appeared in the economic discourse, for example:

- electronic money — Electronic money would fix that, however, by making it impossible to move money out of a form subject to negative rates — except by spending it or investing it in a high-yield asset, which is precisely the stimulative outcome the central bank is hoping to generate (Shrink this e-dollar, The Economist).

Phraseological units with proper names are also encountered in the economic discourse, including ones with:

- toponyms: the Trojan horse, To carry coals to Newcastle, between Scylla and Charybdis.

For example: Economists have been carrying coal to Newcastle since Adam Smith provided English merchants with a rationalization of what they had always wanted to do – treat their fellow human beings as beasts of burden. Economists continue to perform the same function (John Kozy).

The expression 'to carry coals to Newcastle' means to do useless and vain work.

The Trojan-horse strategy would be a bold shift, but it seems more likely that both sides will stick to trench warfare and wait to see how the politics of the law play out (Trojan horse. The Economist).

The *Trojan-horse* means dishonest, deceptive gifts, which bring death to those, who receive them.

- anthroponyms:

Gordian knot, Peeping Tom, Doubting Thomas.

For example: The solution of the Gordian knot of the European Monetary System is very similar, except there is a little extra secret. It would not work unless the sword was made of gold.

The phraseological unit derives from the name of the Phrygian king Gordius and means a problem, a very complicated issue and the "ability to solve the problem quickly and decisively".

The meaning of an economic phraseological unit is also affected by abstract concepts. For example, the phraseological unit *goldilocks economy:* 

The blame lies with central bankers, who in the late 1990s put too much faith in the so-called goldilocks economy: not too hot, not too cold (You beasts. The Economist).

This phraseological unit means the "golden-mean economy, the economy of countries with sustainable development and natural level of inflation. Literally, the "economy of Goldilocks" is based on the fairy-tale about Goldilocks and the three bears, in which the main character tasted the porridge of the smallest bear and it turned out to be "not too hot and not too cold". This expression – *aurea mediocritas* – was first used in Latin by Horace, the Roman poet and a philosopher.

In Economics, some phraseological units are derived from mythology, historical events, literary works and Biblical Scenes (Table 1).

**Table 1.** Phraseological units from mythology, historical events, literary works and Biblical Scenes

Derived from	Phraseological units	Usage example	Explanation
Mythology	Midas touch Achilles heel Grim Reaper Pandora's box	But some EU governments have similar instincts. Most retain "golden shares" in big privatized companies. It is a Midas touch.	Phraseological unit derives from the Greek legends about the king, who wished for everything he touched to transform into gold. In the modern interpretation, the expression means a very successful person.
		Fleet Street's grim reaper. Lord Justice Leveson proposes much tougher press regulation, handing a nasty puzzle to David Cameron.	The <i>Grim Reaper</i> means the Reaper, who was one of the embodiments of death in ancient mythology.
Historical events, characters and persons	Cross the Rubicon Caesar's wife is under suspicion The Judgment of Solomon The Wisdom of Solomon	President Reagan won plaudits for appointing the first female Supreme Court justice. Mr. Bush will need the Wisdom of Solomon to please even half the country in nominating her successor.	The Wisdom of Solomon expression is associated with the name of King Solomon, who was famous for his wisdom and justice.
Literary works	American dream Don Quixote James Bond	Americans have come to tolerate extreme inequality, more so than the people living in any of the other rich countries around the globe. And the <i>American dream</i> may be to blame.	It means a complex of axiological orientation points of the USA citizens, their "American idea";

Biblical and religious scenes	To wash one's hands, Thirty pieces of silver, Forbidden fruit Alpha and Omega Tower of Babel	He was forced to learn <i>the alpha and omega</i> of corporate law in order to even talk to the lawyers.	It means the basic meaning of something, the whole things. So, he has to learn all about corporate law.
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Phraseological units with zoonyms are also a typical finding in the economic discourse. Such language units attribute the behaviour of economic agents and economic relations to animals. For example, the phraseological unit 'bulls and bears':

Even though the bulls and bears are constantly at odds, they can both make money with the changing cycles in the market.

This phraseological unit contains the names of two animals in its structure: bull – an adult male animal of the cattle family; the male of some other large animals such as the elephant and whale; bear – a large strong animal with thick fur that eats flesh, fruit, and insects.

Based on this, phraseological units with zoonyms appeared to be the following:

- bull-market a market with a tendency to increase rates (shares). A bull market is when everything in the economy is great, people are finding jobs, gross domestic product is growing, and stocks are rising.
- bear market a market with a tendency to decrease rates (shares) Bear markets make it tough for investors to pick profitable stocks. One solution to this is to make money when stocks are falling using a technique called short selling.

The *bull and bear* images in English phraseological units are associated with the perception of the bull and the bear as strong animals: a "bear with strong legs" decreases the rates, while a "bull with horns" increases the rates. The images of the bull and bear in the economic discourse can be used with negative connotations, as an attempt to discredit the opponent, for example:

This is the worst bear market of all times is embarrassing to us. Your cheap headlines, such as "the bears show their teeth" or "grin and bear it" are insulting (You beasts. The Economist).

The expression 'the bears show their teeth' come from a transformed expression to 'show teeth – to bare one's teeth'. The phraseological unit 'grin and bear' means to hide the true attitude to someone or something with a smile. In this context, the phraseological units are used in the articles of "The Economist" with the connotation of humiliation and discredit.

Besides the abovementioned animals, one may come across the following zoonyms encountered in the phraseological units: *rat, cat, dragons, pigs*, etc. For example:

- dead cat bounce:

"In other words, we might be seeing what economist Nouriel Roubini in the context of the US economy earlier called "dead cat bounce". An enduring revival would have been backed by a turnaround in investment" (Dead Cat Bounce. The Hindu Business Line).

The phraseological unit means the "bouncing off a dead cat", a sharp growth of the financial asset price after a period of its decline. It is usually caused by a paring of losses; it is short-termed and does not imply changes in the stock decline tendency.

The expression is derived from the idea that even a dead cat will bounce if it falls from a great height;

- to smell a rat (someone who has been disloyal to you or deceived you):

On the face of it, this move seems sensible. But critics smell a rat. They point out that even the biggest democracies, including America, have not always felt a need to increase the numbers of representatives in line with the population (What's Malay for gerrymandering? The Economist).

#### Discussion

The phraseological terminology in economic discourse was also considered on the example of units from the German language. In German, the concept of "money" is used due to analogical or metaphorical language displacements (Shybika, 2003; Fedyanina, 2005). Moreover, the lexeme "money" is commonly considered from the perspective of assigned moral judgments (Kamyshanchenko, 2012; Nerubenko, 2013). The communicative and pragmatic effect of the popular economic texts depends on the completeness of the phraseological terminology usage (Patseyevskaya, 2010).

The obtained results also can be explained by Kunin's phraseological conception (Kunin, 2005). His theory of phraseological identification says that the phraseological meaning is hard to substantiate a linguistic category because there are different interpretations of the unit, its componential structure and volume.

In this article, phraseological units are considered a manifestation of thinking, which marks a similarity between two specific situations in language, one of which is the denotatum, while the other one is a reference base. This is confirmed by the fact that phraseological unit implies the presence in the language of a stable generalized thought, to which it refers (Potebnya, 2011). This means that the potential of the phraseological unit is also sequentially directed at overcoming useless stereotypes.

Scholars take different approaches to the problems, objectives, and functional bases of phraseological units (Fedulenkova, 2015; Hunston – Francis, 2000; Wierzbicka, 2009; Leroyer, 2013; Cheng, 2007; Taylor, 2002). There is often a confusion related to either particular words, or to the terminological groups of words. There is still no single interpretation of the conceptual basis of phraseological terminology in a specific field, including the economic field. The researchers face the task of forming and improving the qualitative content of the terminological meta-language.

Our research found some terminological groups of phraseological units in the economic sphere, which will be not only added to the vocabulary of the modern English language but also will expand the research capacity of the English economic discourse. The relevance of the topic necessitates on further studies of phraseology and its connection with terminology and cognitology.

#### Conclusions

The phraseological side of each language provides rich linguistic research material because it not only records knowledge of the native world image and the attitude of an individual to its fragments but is also programmed to transfer the golden standards and stereotypes of the national culture. Thus, phraseological terminology reflects the "axiological world image". The study of its connections with ethnic experience and with the original reflection of the environment, culture, traditions, and national customs in the ethnic world enables determining how ancient archetypal human ideas are encoded in the language (Teliva. 1996).

Phraseological and terminological, language units are able to transfer two types of information: information that was acquired by humanity in general, and the information that was acquired by specific nations. We believe that the information, which is recorded in the studied terminological phraseological units, accumulates the information of the language and culture as semiotic components that constitute a holistic world image. Language speakers perceive phraseological units as meanings

that emerged back in history and can be used only within a context. Despite this, they remain a social phenomenon and are used for social purposes.

The lexical-semantic content of terminological phraseological units reflects conceptual micro-fields that are realized in the following spheres: the individual, space and time, animals, objects and their state, biology, medicine, evaluative definitions, etc.

Phraseological terminology in the economic discourse denotes currency units, participants of market and stock exchange relations, objects and subjects of economic relations, evaluative economic characteristics (for example, the rate of success), etc. The meaning of phraseological units in economic texts originates from different sources, including mythology, the Bible and religious texts, history, national-cultural peculiarities of the ethnos, its habits and traditions. The main purpose of phraseological units in economic texts is to affect the consciousness of readers. This is possible because phraseological units are emotionally and expressively colored.

The economic phraseological units embrace the following lexical-semantic microfields: banking and financial field, industrial and production field, economic policy. The research found the division of these semantic micro-groups to be arbitrary since one phraseological unit with a terminological meaning could belong to different fields.

Within the economic discourse, the dominant "money" denotes an expressive conceptual meaning with negative and positive markers. The lexical-semantic field with negative connotation includes phraseological collocations, such as "black money", "dodgy money", "blood money", etc. The positive connotation is usually denoted by such constructions as "white money", "honest money", etc. The concept of "electronic money" is especially common nowadays.

Toponyms, anthroponyms, and zoonyms were encountered most frequently among the English economic phraseological unit. Phraseological units mean abstract things that take shape within a specific context.

The main origins of the economic phraseological units are mythology, historical events, characters and persons, literary works, and religion, including Biblical Scenes. The description of phraseological units determined the psychological, socio-political, and cultural features of the English economic sphere.

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