

Characteristics of French Idioms

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Abstract. The article's topic is devoted to studying the specific characteristics of idioms in the French language. Due to the constant and continuous development of the French language, the topic of idioms always arouses interest in linguistics and remains relevant. To communicate perfectly in the mother tongue, it needs to master the phraseological system of that language. An idiom is a non-free combination of words repeated in speech with a unified, generalised meaning, formed based on a model of connecting or subordinate phrases or sentences.

Idioms are linguistic structures that serve to convey certain concepts. In the phraseology of the French language, many expressions reflect national-cultural characteristics. Many reflect ideas about the French people, their culture and way of life.

The article deals with the specific features of idioms realised in French. Idioms are expressions of the French language that reflect the French way of life and socio-cultural conditions. Idioms live and develop together with the culture and worldview of the respective people. They contain certain concepts and cultural codes. Many idioms generally describe the national character of the French. Idioms are an essential part of any country's linguistic heritage and are considered a reflection of the mentality of the people. The French have a reputation for being arrogant and sensitive, which is reflected in some idioms.

Keywords: idiom; language; French; expressiveness; figurativeness; imagery.

INTRODUCTION

The internal form of idioms is the essential component of the whole semantic structure of phraseology. According to some characteristics, it is related to other semantics components and, above all, to the motivation of idiomatic meaning.

Idioms are language units consisting of stable words that differ semantically and have a free meaning due to their structure and usage [9, p. 10]. One of the main theoretical issues of phraseology is to determine its subject. It is essential to determine the characteristics of expressions-idioms included in the category of phraseological units. Mokienko defines a phraseological unit: "An idiom is a combination of words that have relative stability, expressiveness, a single meaning and are repeated in a ready form" [8, p. 4].

The attitude of idioms is almost the same in all world languages. Jafarov states: "Fixed word combinations existing in the language are mainly formed based on unstable, or rather, grammatical combinations. When the grammatical combination itself or the words in it become figurative and lose their dynamism, the means that create a connection and relationship between words become stagnant and turn into a fixed word combination expressing a concept" [3, p. 88].

Makkai grouped idiomatic expressions and called them "phraseological idioms". According to the researcher, there is little connection between the meaning of such components and the whole constructions in phraseological idioms. In this case, not being the meaning obvious can be considered a high indicator of its idiomaticity [7, p. 94]. The main terms in idioms are 1) integrity of meaning;

2) semantic stability; 3) lexical stability; 4) syntactic stability.

There are several classifications of idioms based on different criteria in French. Thus, three structural types are distinguished depending on the syntactic model of which phraseological units are formed: non-predicative, partially predicative and predicative phraseologies. Non-predicative idioms comprise a large part of the phraseological stock of the French language. They can be divided into two subtypes: single-peak phraseological units and phrasemes, consisting of two or more meaningful words and expressing expressions with subordinate, coordinating or subordinate-coordinating relations [4, p. 59].

In partially predicative phraseological units, the primary member has an attribute as a direct or indirect object, adverbial modifier, or subordinate clause.

Predicative idioms are expressions that have a predicative structure. There are two subtypes of such language units: closed and open structured. A predicative idiom with a closed structure expresses a completed idea and is syntactically formulated as simple or compound sentences. On the other hand, open-structured predicative idioms express incomplete ideas and require distribution in speech using variable words. Most of the predicative idioms in French have a closed structure, while only a few open-structured combinations are represented. Since idioms are multifunctional language units, i.e., besides giving figurativeness and expressiveness to speech, they also perform many other functions.

Idioms are divided into two major functional types: non-communicative and communicative. The first type includes idioms that do not have a communicative function. That is, they do not have a message transfer function.

According to their structure, they are related to words and expressions, and in most cases, they are non-predicative; less often, they are partially predicative. The following subtypes are nominative, auxiliary, exclamatory and modal idioms.

Nominative idioms perform the function of nominative or denominator. They express objects, events, actions, quality, state, etc. Auxiliary idioms do not have an independent meaning and cannot be part of a sentence.

Exclamatory idioms perform an emotional function. They are not members of a sentence but represent its independent units.

Modal idioms reflect the personal subjective attitude of the speaker to the value he gives to his expression or the content of the message.

Depending on the nature of such a relationship, these idioms can express assumption, reliability, desirability or non-desirability, the possibility of what is being said, etc.

The communicative type includes idioms that act as independent communicative units and are structurally related to sentences. All idioms of this type are predicative.

They can be divided into two groups: proverbial and non-proverbial idioms. Communicative proverbial idioms are educational and reflect the society's national consciousness, traditions and culture. In speech, such idioms are either independent sentences or part of a compound sentence.

Phraseological units that are not communicative proverbs characterise an event or situation. Basically, they have a closed predicative structure.

An essential problem of phraseology is the semantic classification of idioms.

Many researchers classify the idioms of the French language according to the degree of combination of components and the degree of motivation of their meanings. They also note that French phraseology stands out by its excellent mobility and clear analytical tendencies.

The internal form of idioms contains traces of past cultures. This means that the analysis emphasises the national-cultural characteristics of the internal form of French language idioms in the linguocultural aspect. From this point of view, the main content provisions of the description of the internal form of idioms can be considered as follows: the internal form of idioms should be studied in the anthropological paradigm of knowledge, it should be taken into account to other components of the semantic structure of idioms and, above all, the motivation of the idiomatic meaning and the evaluative-emotional attitude of the speaker to the reality indicated in the idiom.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Linguistic study of the internal form of idioms is of particular importance. Mastering the cultural connotation of idiomatic units to one degree or

another is important for expressing linguocultural competence for representatives of the language community. You cannot think about the world without knowing the basic categories of the culture of your linguistic ethnos. The cultural essences acquired by a person from the moment of his birth are based on world understanding, ideas about life, death, destiny, friendship, love, homeland, etc. Almost all such ideas form the basis of the internal form of idioms and are revealed in a nationally characteristic form. That is why interpreting the cultural-national connotations of idioms aims to understand the deep features of the national mentality in the French language.

Examples of idioms in speech are taken from various works of fiction, mainly from the second half of the 20th century and modern newspapers and magazines. French idioms are usually involved in interpretation and sometimes in etymological analysis. The latter is done to reveal the etymological (primary) internal form of idioms. French idioms are provided with an indication of the exact (literal) translation and an explanation. A literal translation must show French idioms' inner form and understand their figurative essence.

The use of different methods in analysing the internal form of idioms is related to the complex nature of the object of description - the idioms of the French language. In general, we tried to follow the principle: "...these methods are the best methods that ensure the accuracy and objectivity of the research" [2, p. 18] and are dictated by the logic of the facts.

The main parameters for describing the internal form of idioms in French are various intra-linguistic features (primarily the various types of relationships between the internal form of idioms and other macro-components) and extra-linguistic knowledge (folkloric texts, myths, legends, religious texts, etc.) - in particular, referring to textual sources, the etymology of idioms containing common knowledge, their traditions, household style, ancient customs, historical events etc.

The basis of the formation of idiomatic meaning is the internal form, defined as a description of the state of the natural world. It is reflected in the world's linguistic, especially phraseological, landscape. This function of the internal form can be considered the most important.

Since the modern meaning of idioms is understood only by reflecting on the original image of

the idiomatic unit, the internal form is also an emotogenic factor of idioms.

The internal form is the conveyor of cultural meanings or cultural connotations of idioms. The primary way to detect cultural connotation is to interpret the symbolic basis of idioms (internal form) in the national-cultural space of the French language community.

The primary purpose of the cultural interpretation is to connect the image of the idiom with the myths (mythologems), symbols, archetypes, standards, rituals, beliefs, customs, signs of the national culture, etc. This correlation is possible only based on reflection on the image, that is, its interpretation in the context of the native speaker's worldview.

The national-cultural specificity of idioms arises for various reasons: the internal form contains elements that indicate the national culture; idioms are associated with one or another field of the collective life of the linguistic community (see: everyday empirical experience of the people, material culture, history, etc.); idioms correlate with cultural codes reflected in their figurative structure (symbols, myths (mythologies), archetypes, standards, rituals, etc.); as a rule, idioms that are formed on a figurative-metaphorical basis participate in one way or another in the formation of the linguistic landscape of the world and thus essentially form the basis of national cultures; finally, national culture can be distinguished in idioms, because the meanings of idioms are interpreted from the point of view of value systems inherent in the mentality of a particular nation.

French is one of the most beautiful languages in the world. It sounds harmonious and melodic and is the primary language of the French Republic, as well as one of the official languages of the European Union, the United Nations and other international organisations. French is not only the language of love but also the language of culture and art.

Learning French immerses you in a world of beautiful words and sounds. When speaking in French, one can feel that the voice is softer and more melodious. In French, words sound bright and live, and their pronunciation is obvious. It is also a language of intense emotion and high expression.

Besides being a beautiful language, French is also convenient for communication. This language is essential for trade and cultural exchange between France and other countries. Learning French can

be helpful for business communication, tourism, academic research and other fields.

French is the language of culture and art. French literature, cinema, music and art have always been in the spotlight. French is the language of many great works of world literature. Pearls of world literature such as "Madame Bovary", "The Count of Monte Cristo", and "A Journey to Central Africa" have been created in this language.

French culture is a world heritage popular for its beauty and sophistication. France is famous for its art, architecture, cuisine, fashion, literature and music heritage. These are the elements that make French culture beautiful and unique.

France's cultural heritage has left an irreplaceable mark on world culture, and the beauty of French culture continues to inspire and amaze anyone who loves and appreciates high mastership.

The French are considered friendly people who can enjoy beauty and create it themselves. They love culture and art and are always ready to discuss the latest creative achievements in cinema, literature, music and other art forms.

Idioms in the modern French language reflect the French people's history, culture, literature, and ethnography.

For example, the idiom "*vivre comme un Dieu en France*" (to live like God in France) describes the luxurious lifestyle of the French, which is not usually found in other countries. Also, the idiom "*ni lumière ni aube*" (neither light nor dawn) is characterised as laziness and slowness/indolence in French [5, p. 131].

Another phraseological unit, "*Les crabes sont partis?*" (Are the crabs really gone?) They are also associated with the French people. This idiom is usually used in French to describe a person who continues to live his old life without trying to adapt to changing circumstances. Thus, this idiom is rough and inflexible, mainly related to the French national character [5, p. 34].

The idiom "*en état d'ébriété*" (in a drunken state) is also often used, associated with the romantic picture of the French way of life - spending quiet evenings enjoying cosy cafes and a glass of wine. Thus, this idiom reinforces the image of a country where having fun and enjoying life are essential in France.

Finally, the idiom "*Le Zack n'est pas un vice*" (being too passionate about something is not a vice) shows another aspect of French thinking. French

education is one of the best in the world, and this idiom speaks of an attitude of erudition and knowledge. On the contrary, a desire for education and a passion for learning are not qualities to be despised in France.

Another example is the expression "*ski à l'épaule*" (ski on the shoulder) - which refers to difficulties that must be overcome in search of a better job or life. This idiom is associated with young people travelling to the Alps to find work in the tourism sector. This expression also references the culture related to skiing and winter sports [5, p. 134].

The idiom describing the French national character - "*signalisation du linge*" - is to hang clothes. This expression expresses comfort and openness in people to discuss their problems. This is typical of French culture, where people are open and publicly show their private lives.

The idiom "*La Dolce Vita*" (a sweet life), also widely used in French, comes from the Italian language. It means "sweet life" and refers to the French way of life, described as slow and relaxed. The French are known for their relaxed lifestyle, socialising in cafés, and gastronomic culture. These features of French culture are reflected in idioms.

The expression "*L'après-midi d'un faune*" (faun's afternoon) describes the lifestyle of the French bourgeoisie. The idiom implies a lazy rest during the day. It also has a symbolic meaning - it deals with the desire of the French bourgeoisie to escape from reality and pretend to live in a fairy-tale world.

"*Réunion des vieux de la vieille*" (meeting of the old residents) is an idiom that reflects the French tradition of getting together with like-minded people to remember the old days. This expression is usually used to describe the custom of the French family to gather at the table as a sign of respect for respected elderly relatives [1, p. 39].

Thus, it is clear that any idiom reflects the national identity and mentality of the people. Their elegance and exquisite style distinguish French idioms and show a high appreciation of the intellectual and a passion for luxury. At the same time, the phraseological structures of the French language mainly reflect myths and ideas about the French people, their national character and culture. They are an integral part of language and culture and are essential for learning language characteristics.

CONCLUSIONS

It is possible to divide French idioms conditionally as follows:

Idioms related to tradition: *a votre santé*

Idioms related to historical events and personalities: *fortune de baradas*

Idioms related to personal quality: *écrire comme un ange*

Idioms related to anecdotes: *minute, papillon!*

Idioms involving the connection of the French with other nations: *fort comme un turc*

Idioms related to holidays and festivities: *a pâques ou à la trinité*

Idioms related to French cuisine: *couper la poire en deux*

Idioms related to the capital of France and its provinces: *paris vaut bien une messe* [10, p. 50].

Several ways of the origin of phraseology in French can be distinguished: natural French phraseology, non-terminological origin of idioms, terminological origin of idioms, and phraseological borrowings.

Let's consider them in more detail. 1) actual French phraseology. In this case, the images of idioms of a particular language have been presented from the people's material-cultural and socio-economic life spheres. Its history, lifestyle, culture, spirit, way of thinking, etc., is reflected in these spheres. For example, "pendre la crémaillère" celebrates a party when moving to a new apartment. It was based on French custom, so people who settled in a new house attached a cogged stick to the stove to cook. The word "crémaillère" refers to this centre [6].

2) Non-terminological origin of idioms. This group includes idioms related to historical facts or events, folk tales and beliefs, morals and customs of the French people, idioms based on historical expressions and quotations, anecdotes or anecdotal stories, and literary idioms. In addition, this category also includes idioms related to humans and animate and inanimate nature.

– Idioms based on historical facts. For example: "*Paris vaut bien une messe!*" (Paris is well worth a mess!). This quote was said by Henry Navarre, who renounced the Protestant faith and accepted Catholicism for the sake of the French throne in 1593 [11, p. 310].

– Idioms related to a person or a part of his body. For example: *homme de lettres* (writer), *à l'oeil* (free, gratuitous)

– Idioms related to nature can be based on elements and substances of inanimate nature. For example, *faire feu de tout bois* (do not neglect any means), *se ressembler comme deux gouttes d'eau* (to look alike like two drops of water in a bowl) [6].

3) Terminological origin of idioms. The idioms of terminological origin include idioms based on various professions, sports, hunting, games, etc. [6, p. 269].

In the past, such expressions were used literally in certain activities, but their meaning has become figurative over time. This was also characteristic of military affairs. For example: *faire long feu* (failure).

Previously, when using a gunpowder gun, it was ignited with a fuse; it happened that the gunpowder did not ignite immediately, and there was no quick shot; this was called a failure.

Idioms derived from hunting expressions are also widespread. For example: *rompre les chiens* (to engage in an unpleasant conversation). This phrase translates as calling the dogs.

4) Idiomatic borrowings. One of the ways to enrich the layers of idioms of the language and introduce them into the French language is by borrowing words. Idiomatic borrowings are an important but not the primary source in forming fixed word combinations. Most of the borrowings are from different languages. The most common borrowings are from Latin and Greek. The primary way they appear in the French language is literature.

Often, Latin idioms come into French as calque, but sometimes they can be used without translation. For example, *terra incognita* (something unknown) can be used without translation into French. But the idiom *advocatus diaboli* (angry accuser, devil's advocate) has a French equivalent - *avocat du diable* - [11, p. 310].

As for the Greek language, the following idioms were taken from it: *l'âge d'or* (golden age. This expression came to French from Hesiod's poem "Works and Days"), *cheval de Troie* (Trojan horse. This phraseological unit was introduced from Homer's poem "Iliad").

There are also idioms borrowed from other languages in French, but not many of them. For example, *guerre froide* (cold war), *bas bleu* (blue

stocking) expressions are taken from the English language, *faire fiasco* (failure) from the Italian expression *far fiasco* [11].

Thus, like any other language, the phraseology of the French language has many sources of origin, which makes it challenging to define a complete classification and systematisation of idioms. Their sources date back to ancient times and cover almost all spheres of French society. Idioms of non-terminological origin are very diverse and numerous.

Idioms can be based on historical events, events specific to a particular nation, animate and inanimate elements of nature, etc. Terminological idioms are derived from words or expressions that were previously used or are still used in a literal meaning but can also have a symbolic meaning. In

most cases, the translation of such expressions depends on the situation or context. In addition, the phraseological dictionary of the French language is filled thanks to words borrowed from other languages. The most famous and familiar are idiomatic borrowings from Latin and Greek. Still, there are also borrowings from English, Italian and many other languages, but such phraseological units are not widespread and not many.

Thus, although the idioms in the modern French language reflect the outlook and lifestyle of the French people due to their semantic and conceptual features, as well as their material and moral culture in general, they have a commonality with world languages due to the structure of the idioms.

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