

STYLISTIC POTENTIAL OF POLYSEMANTIC PHRASEOLOGICAL UNITS IN THE LANGUAGE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Alimjanova Shohsanam Azamat qizi

Teacher at the Faculty of Foreign Philology, National University of Uzbekistan named after Mirzo Ulugbek

ORCID: 0009-0009-6608-8918 alimjanovash97@mail.ru

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Abstract: This article examines the stylistic potential of polysemantic phraseological units used in the language of social media and online publications. It focuses on the potential of polysemantic phraseological units to actualize different meanings in various communicative contexts and on their contribution to the expressiveness and impact of digital discourse. Particular attention is paid to such stylistic functions as expressiveness, evaluation, irony, humour, persuasion, and attracting the reader's attention.

Keywords: phraseological unit, polysemy, stylistic potential, social media, expressiveness, context.

Annotatsiya: Mazkur maqolada ijtimoiy tarmoqlar va internet-nashrlarda qo'llaniladigan polisemantik frazeologik birliklarning stilistik imkoniyatlari tahlil qilinadi. Tadqiqotda polisemantik frazeologik birliklarning turli kommunikativ kontekstlarda ma'no variantlarini aktualashtirishi hamda ularning nutqning ta'sirchanligi va ifodaliligini oshirishdagi o'rni yoritiladi. Ayniqsa, mazkur birliklarning ekspressivlik, baholash, kinoya, yumor, ishontirish va o'quvchi e'tiborini jalb etish kabi stilistik funksiyalari ko'rib chiqiladi.

Kalit so'zlar: frazeologik birlik, polisemiya, stilistik imkoniyat, ijtimoiy tarmoq, ekspressivlik, kontekst.

Аннотация: В статье анализируются стилистические возможности полисемантических фразеологических единиц, используемых в языке социальных сетей и интернет-изданий. Основное внимание уделяется способности полисемантических фразеологических единиц актуализировать различные значения в разных коммуникативных контекстах, а также их роли в повышении выразительности и воздействующей силы цифрового дискурса. Особое внимание уделяется таким стилистическим функциям фразеологических единиц, как экспрессивность, оценочность, ирония, юмор, убеждение и привлечение внимания читателя.

Ключевые слова: фразеологическая единица, полисемия, стилистические возможности, социальные сети, экспрессивность, контекст.

The development of digital communication has significantly influenced the ways in which language is produced, distributed, and interpreted. Social media platforms and online publications have become important spaces for contemporary linguistic interaction, combining features of written and spoken communication and creating new conditions for the use and reinterpretation of established linguistic expressions. Within this changing communicative environment, phraseological units occupy a particularly important position because their structural stability is combined with considerable semantic and stylistic potential.

Phraseological units are generally understood as relatively fixed combinations of words characterized by semantic unity, reproducibility, and a certain degree of lexical and grammatical stability. Their meanings are not always directly predictable from the meanings of their individual components. At the same time, phraseological units are not semantically static. Many of them can develop several related meanings and therefore function as polysemantic units. Polysemy allows a phraseological expression to be interpreted differently depending on its lexical, syntactic, situational, and communicative context.

The study of phraseological polysemy has traditionally focused on the semantic structure of phraseological units, the development of their meanings, and the mechanisms underlying semantic variation. However, the contemporary digital environment provides additional opportunities for observing how such meanings are activated and stylistically modified in actual communication. Social media posts, online news articles, blogs, comments, and other forms of digital discourse frequently employ familiar expressions in contexts that differ from their conventional usage. As a result, a phraseological unit may acquire a particular contextual meaning while simultaneously retaining associations with its conventional meaning.

The stylistic potential of polysemantic phraseological units is particularly significant in digital communication. Unlike formal academic or administrative discourse, social media and many online publications tend to favour concise, expressive, emotionally marked, and attention-oriented forms of communication. Phraseological units meet these requirements because they can convey complex meanings in relatively compact forms. Their figurative character may also increase the expressive force of a message and make it more memorable to the reader. Another important characteristic of digital discourse is its strong dependence on context. A phraseological unit may be deliberately selected because its conventional meaning can be reinterpreted in relation to a particular event, person, social issue, or communicative situation. Such contextual reinterpretation can produce stylistic effects including irony, humour, criticism, evaluation, emphasis, and persuasion. In this respect, polysemantic phraseological units represent an especially productive linguistic resource because their semantic structure provides several potential interpretive directions.

Phraseological units constitute an important part of the lexical and semantic system of a language. Their linguistic specificity is determined by the interaction of structural stability and semantic integrity. According to A.P.Cowie, phraseology encompasses a broad range of fixed and semi-fixed combinations whose meanings and functions are determined not only by their lexical components but also by their conventional patterns of use [1. 1998: P. 1-10]. This approach makes it possible to consider phraseological units as flexible elements of communication rather than merely fixed combinations reproduced without semantic variation. One of the significant characteristics of phraseological units is their ability to develop multiple meanings. Polysemy in phraseology may emerge through semantic extension, metaphorical or metonymic transfer, generalization, specialization, and other processes of semantic change. R.Moon emphasizes the importance of contextual variation in the interpretation of fixed expressions and idioms, demonstrating that their meanings may be closely connected with patterns of actual usage [2. 1998: P. 1-25]. Consequently, the semantic structure of a polysemantic phraseological unit should be examined not only through dictionary definitions but also through its contextual realizations.

Polysemantic phraseological units are particularly relevant to stylistic analysis because different meanings can become prominent in different communicative situations. A phraseological unit may have a conventional meaning in one context and a more specific, evaluative, ironic, or metaphorically extended meaning in another. The stylistic value of the expression is therefore closely connected with the interaction between its established semantic structure and the particular context in which it occurs.

The relationship between phraseology and stylistic variation has also been discussed in the works of V.N.Telia, who emphasizes the expressive and evaluative dimensions of phraseological meaning [3. 1996: P. 80-103]. Phraseological units frequently contain connotative elements associated with emotion, evaluation, intensity, informality, or figurativeness. These characteristics make them particularly effective in discourse where the speaker or writer seeks not merely to communicate information but also to express an attitude towards the subject of communication. The stylistic potential of phraseological units becomes even more visible in contemporary digital discourse. Social media communication is characterized by brevity, immediacy, informality, interaction, and a strong orientation towards audience response. Online publications, while differing in degree of formality, increasingly employ expressive language in headlines, opinion pieces, commentaries, and feature articles in order to attract attention and encourage reader engagement. Phraseological units are highly compatible with these communicative requirements.

The digital environment can also facilitate contextual reinterpretation. A familiar phraseological expression may be used in a headline or social media post in such a way that its conventional meaning interacts with a new contextual meaning. This interaction can create ambiguity, humour, irony, or evaluative emphasis. Polysemantic phraseological units are particularly suitable for such stylistic manipulation because several related meanings are already available within their semantic structure. Thus, the stylistic potential of a polysemantic phraseological unit can be understood as its capacity to realize different semantic and expressive possibilities according to communicative context. In digital discourse, this potential may be activated through contextual specification, semantic extension, deliberate ambiguity, metaphorical reinterpretation, and interaction with visual or verbal elements surrounding the expression.

Polysemantic phraseological units are widely used in contemporary online journalism. Their main stylistic advantage is that they can express an idea in a concise, vivid, and easily recognizable form. Depending on the context, the same phraseological unit may acquire different shades of meaning and perform different stylistic functions. A clear example is the phraseological unit “keep an eye on”, which

means “to watch or monitor something carefully”. In “*The Guardian*” journal article “Starwatch: a gloriously brilliant Venus and a young crescent moon” (24 February 2025), the author writes:

- “*Keep an eye on the western sky for the pairing*”.

Here, the phrase means “*watch the western sky carefully*” in the context of observing celestial bodies. The expression makes the text more natural and reader-friendly than a neutral form such as observe the western sky. Its use also creates a conversational tone. Thus, the phraseological unit performs an expressive and communicative function. The same expression appears in another article about navigation:

- “*...allows you to keep an eye on the wider landscape for navigational clues...*” (Those who prefer a map to an app abound in the age of GPS, 2 May 2025).

Here, the phraseological unit means “*to observe the surrounding landscape carefully*”. The different contexts demonstrate the semantic flexibility of the expression.

The polysemantic phraseological unit “hit the nail on the head” provides another example. It means “to describe or identify something exactly.” In the article “One of the most disgusting meals I’ve ever eaten: AI recipes tested” (31 July 2024), the journalist writes:

- “*Rosson has hit the nail on the head there*”.

The expression is used to say that Rosson has correctly identified the problem with AI-generated recipes. Here, the phraseological unit has an evaluative function. Instead of the neutral expression Rosson is exactly right, the journalist uses a vivid idiom. This makes the evaluation stronger and the text more expressive. The same phraseological unit is used in the article “Donald Trump embodies a collective madness in America” (10 November 2024):

- “*Simon Tisdall has hit the nail on the head...*”

In this context, the expression evaluates a political argument as accurate. Thus, the same phraseological unit can be transferred from one thematic field to another while preserving its semantic core. These examples demonstrate several important stylistic functions of polysemantic phraseological units in online publications. They can make texts more expressive, concise, evaluative, and attractive to readers. Context determines which meaning or semantic shade becomes prominent. In headlines, phraseological units can also create wordplay by bringing their figurative meaning into contact with the literal meaning of their components. Therefore, polysemous phraseological units should be regarded as active stylistic resources of contemporary digital discourse. Their semantic flexibility allows journalists to adapt familiar expressions to different topics while maintaining their visibility and expressive force.

A particularly important feature of digital discourse is the interaction between conventional and contextual meanings. This interaction is especially effective in headlines, where a familiar phraseological unit can attract attention and create additional associations.

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