

THE TYPES OF THE CONTEXT IN THE SEMANTIC ACTUALIZATION OF THE PHRASEOLOGICAL UNIT

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Abstract:

The article dwells on the different types of the context, demonstrating semantic actualizing process of the phraseological unit on the base of the English literature.

Key words: phraseological unit, context, polysemy, actualization, distant relativity, semantics

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Context – an important linguistic notion that is paid much attention by linguists nowadays. The definition of the context is based on the following principal rules:

- a) possibility of existence of different types of context and their systematic relations, on the base of which we notice realization of syntagmatic attributes of linguistic elements;
- b) interaction of the elements of different systems and subsystems of the language and those concrete units with the help of which the semantic relations within the context are set;
- c) related completeness of the idea, its informative value, connected with the semantic revealing of the realized units.

N. Amosova wrote about necessity of consideration of operational notion of contextual interaction between words. She described context as the combination of semantically realized word with the shown minimum. Phraseologisms, according to this theory, are determined in the conditions of their real colloquial use.

Contextual interaction of the words and phraseological units (PhU) is also described in the theory of context by A.V. Kunin. Here phraseological context is depicted as lexical surrounding of the phraseological unit which provides its total revealing as it stands in different systematic relations with phraseologism. Context is the combination of formal and semantic aspects. Formal aspect of phraseological context is expressed by the elements of different systems of the language – words and PhU. Semantic aspect touches realization of syntagmatic features of interacting units, which form the notional value of the information expressed in the context.

Depending on the means of semantic correlation between phraseological units and their revealers, i.e. combination, relativity and attachment, phraseological context can be divided into several types: inner phrasal, phrasal and upper phrasal.

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Inner phrasal context is the actualizator, expressed by the word or group of words in simple or compound sentence:

There you are; the dog in the manger; you won't let him discuss your affairs and you are annoyed when he talks about his own. (Longman Dictionary of English Idioms – LDEI).

Phrasal context is the actualizator of PhU, expressed by the simple or compound sentence:

She was six when she died. A dear little thing she was as pretty as a picture. (W.S. Maugham, *Cakes and Ale*, ch. 26).

Upper phrasal context is the actualizator of PhU, expressed by two or more sentences as in the following example:

“It seems he is terribly dissipated - drinks”.

“Yes, sir, like a fish...” “A bad lot to say the least”. (F. Norris, *The Pit*, ch.1).

We would like to demonstrate the means of semantic connection between PhU and elements of lexical surrounding in the different types of context.

Inner phrasal context:

The power and the glory, the wealth and the splendor remained aloof – she was just one of the legion of young women who has written a first novel. (R. Aldington. “Soft Answers”, ch.3)

Though cursed as public enemy number one the rate checker was an innocuous looking man...bald as mushroom and as sly as a fox. (A.V. Kunin, 1972, p.128)

Most of his friends had been square pegs in round holes, a doctor for example, who has lost his standing, a disreputable, tinsmith, an outcast... (V.W. Brooks. “New England: Indian Summer”, ch.24).

... Her skin was drab, her hair lost its sheen and she was as thin as a rail. (W.S. Maugham. “The Colonel's Lady”).

The elements of lexical surrounding of phraseologisms in given examples interact with phraseological units in different ways such as contact and distant combination, relativity and connection.

Phrasal context:

The seamy side. There are, you know, men who are wolves in sheep's clothing and there are ... alas, lovely women who stoop to folly. (F. Sullivan. “The Cliché Expert Testifies on Love”, p.217).

We were poor and young. By birth we fell into the ragtag and bobtail of the lower middle (Ch.P. Show. “Strangers and Brothers”, ch.4).

Marriage is not a bed of roses. Disagreements sometimes happen (LDEI).

Look at that fellow – he's walked straight across the road without looking at the traffic. He must be as daft as a brush (LDEI).

The boy's got temper, of course, but he's straight as a die. What he says you can rely on. (J. Galsworthy. “Maid in Waiting”, p.300).

He knew he danced pretty well, and of course, she was easy to dance with. As light as a feather. (W.S. Maugham. “The Facts of Life”, p.270).

As we see from the given examples, the notional structure of the phrasal context is much more difficult than the notional content of the inner phrasal context. The elements of lexical surrounding of the PhU concretize, precise, superadd the semantics of phraseologisms being in initial position.

Upper phrasal context:

“She was born with a silver spoon in her mouth; she thinks she can do what she likes...”

“Silver spoon in her mouth! How apropos!” (J. Galsworthy. “The Silver Spoon”, p.68).

It’s the story they like. Sexy, but tragic.

Of course it’s only a flash in the pan. The way I look at it, she was sort of inspired like by a personal experience... She’ll never write anything else. (The Kenkjusha Dictionary of Current English Idioms - KDCEI).

“He’d do his own brother down if he got the chance. Not a decent thing about him. You should have seen him the last night. I don’t mind telling you it (the hurricane) was a pretty near thing. You’d have been surprised. Calm as a cucumber.” (W.S. Maugham. “The Warrow Corner”, p.191).

Let us kneel down and try if we cannot remember a prayer. Isn’t there a verse somewhere: “Though your sins be as scarlet yet I will make them as white as snow”. (O. Wylde. “The Picture of Dorian Grey”).

Upper phrasal context is more capacious in combining semantic relations between phraseological units and their lexical surroundings.

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