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**Contextual functioning of phraseological units  
(a case of political speeches by  
Margaret Thatcher and John Major)**

*Статтю присвячено аналізу особливостей функціонування фразеологічних одиниць у політичних промовах британських прем'єр-міністрів Маргарет Тетчер і Джона Мейджора. На прикладах, запозичених з текстів промов, показано типи контекстів та особливості функціонування в них фразеологічних одиниць.*

*Ключові слова: політична промова, фразеологічна одиниця, контекст, актуалізатор.*

*Статья посвящена анализу особенностей функционирования фразеологических единиц в политических речах британских премьер-министров Маргарет Тетчер и Джона Мейджора. На примерах, взятых из текстов речей, показаны типы контекстов и особенности функционирования в них фразеологических единиц.*

*Ключевые слова: политическая речь, фразеологическая единица, контекст, актуализатор.*

*The article analyzes the peculiarities of functioning of the phraseological units in political speeches by British Prime Ministers Margaret Thatcher and John Major. On the basis of examples which have been selected, it is shown the types of context where the idioms functions are shown.*

*Key words: political speech, phraseological unit, context, actualizer.*

The study of various aspects of politicians' language has become extremely topical in recent years. The special attention is paid to the usage of vivid and expressive language means, namely phraseological units in political speeches and other means which have political nature since politics is the field of human activity which has received a huge importance.

The **aim** of this article is to analyze the types of context which are peculiar for the political speeches delivered by Margaret Thatcher and John Major. The **task** of the article is to compare the types of context and determine the features of context functioning of the phraseological units.

The reasons for phraseological units preference in political speeches and texts with political orientation can vary depending on the level of the

desired influence on the audience, which is a key point in idioms usage [2, p. 40].

The study of an isolated phraseological unit does not give the idea of the variety of connections which it has functioning in the context, as well as about associations which it can evoke in this or that setting and of additional meanings which it obtains in occasional usage. Consequently, phraseological context acts as an important component in foregrounding an idiom.

An important part of the phraseological context is a phraseological actualizer.

Prof. A. V. Kunin defines a **phraseological actualizer** as a word, a phrase, a sentence or a group of sentences which are semantically connected with the phraseological units used in these contexts, and which introduce them into speech in usual or occasional use.

**The context** is defined as a segment of text isolated and united by a language unit or a speech unit which is able to pass into a language one, which in its turn is determined by an actualizer in usual or occasional use [1, p. 104].

Phraseological context in the speeches of John Major and Margaret Thatcher can be subdivided into three types: interphrasal, phrasal, superphrasal.

Interphrasal phraseological context is a phraseological unit and its actualizer, expressed by a word or word-combination as a part of a simple or compound sentence.

Phrasal phraseological context is a phraseological unit and its actualizer expressed by a sentence which can be simple or compound.

Superphrasal phraseological context is a phraseological unit and its actualizer expressed by two or more simple or compound sentences [1, p. 105].

Let us give some examples of contextual functioning of phraseological units in political speeches by Margaret Thatcher and John Major.

In political speeches by Margaret Thatcher we can single out the following types of context.

#### **Interphrasal phraseological context**

*Yes, we have looked also to wider horizons—as have others—and **thank goodness** for that, because Europe never would have prospered and never will prosper as a narrow-minded, inward-looking club* [20.09.1988].

Margaret Thatcher paid special attention to the peculiarities of the functioning of the European Community and the future of Europe.

Besides, the Prime Minister accentuated that the future of Britain is together with Europe as well as with the European community. It is the record of nearly two thousand years of British involvement in Europe, cooperation with it, contribution to it which is as strong up to the moment as never. Margaret Thatcher insures the audience that the European Community belongs to all its members and it must reflect the traditions and aspirations of all its members. Britain does not dream of some cozy, isolated existence on the fringes of the European Community. The European Community is a practical means by which Europe can ensure the future prosperity and security of its people in a world in which there are many other powerful nations and groups of nations.

*We have a responsibility **to give a lead** on this, a responsibility which is particularly directed towards the less developed countries" [20.09.1988].*

In this speech Margaret Thatcher announces her guiding principles for Europe in general and Britain in particular. She announces that Europe should not keep up to the protectionists policies, quite on the contrary it should be open to the whole world and be ready to cooperate with other countries, because it will more possible to build good trade opportunities. What is more, it is necessary to help less developed countries in building their trading opportunities and relationships opportunities if they are to gain the dignity of growing economic strength and independence.

#### **Phrasal phraseological context**

*... it took the demands of war for every stop to be pulled out and every man and woman **to do their best** [03.07.1982].*

This sentence concerns the meeting which took place in the aftermath of the Falklands Battle. The Prime Minister was proud of her country since it has won the war. She ensured the audience that their generation could match their fathers and grandfathers and if there had been a call for arms they would have been resolute and ready for actions.

*It is busy reinterpreting so many things to give itself and the Community more powers **at our expense** [07.07.1993].*

In this situation Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher speaks about the influence of the European Court upon the sphere of politics and upon the community. The court has overruled specific legislation passed in good faith through Parliament recently (the Merchant Shipping Act 1988) which was framed to stop Spanish fishing vessels from quota-hopping; that is, taking part of our fishing quota under the common fisheries policy. That Act went overboard because by some strange device the court said that Community law overrode it. The court has also reinterpreted the derivative

rights directive. It is busy reinterpreting so many things to give itself and the Community more powers at our expense.

### **Superphrasal phraseological context**

*It has failed **to take root** in the advanced democracies. In those countries where it has taken root – countries backward or, by tradition, authoritarian – it has failed to provide sustained economic or social development [18.12.1979].*

This situation concern Marxism, which from her personal point of view had taken root in many countries but did not find place in countries where full democracy reigns. In other countries, usually authoritarian, it did not provide stable economic or social development.

In the political speeches by John Major the phraseological units function in the following types of context:

### **Interphrasal phraseological context**

*A Britain that is **at ease** with itself [12.02.1997].*

This sentence is taken from John Major's speech dealing with a problem of racial tolerance. He confirmed that his aim was to make Britain the best place in the world to live. By that he meant that Britain had to be tolerant, Britain that was at ease with itself. Britain is a country where everyone has the opportunity to make a success of life, regardless of colour, race, creed, or background.

*"Against the enormous changes that are **taking place**, we need what I call "grown-up" politics. For one small gesture can create a global impact" [07.12.2005].*

John Major states the fact that he and his Government will work at creation of such a politics which will be able to confront the uncomfortable. Politics which everyone will be able to call a long-term one, politics without control and that one which adopts common ideas and rejects common abuse. He gives a promise to build politics with common sense.

### **Phrasal phraseological context**

*We are **keeping a close eye** on this issue [12.02.1997].*

In this example the phraseological unit is used in connection with a tragic event in the history of humanity which is called the Holocaust. In order to show his concern, John Major in his speech suggests including into the national curriculum the Holocaust Studies for students aged from 11 to 14 years since this event cannot be forgotten. Therefore, the Imperial War Museum in London prepared an exhibition which dealt with the topic. John Major claims that these actions will help to ensure that the Holocaust would not be forgotten by anyone.

*We now have non-white icons in business, television, politics, the arts and we **take them for granted** [20.05.2004].*

John Major emphasizes on the fact that trying to tackle the current problems people usually forget what has been already achieved especially in the sphere of human relationships. Despite the presence of the BNP, despite occasional unsavoury incidents, despite progress that still needs to be made – the whole social flavour is different, there are now non-white icons in business, television, politics, the arts and we take them for granted. Prejudice and fear is in retreat. There is hope in that: and the Commonwealth can rightly claim much of the credit.

*Liberals touching their cap and opening the door for Labour. Lib-Lab pacts are putting up council taxes and snuffing out **common sense** [26.02.1994].*

In this situation John Major criticizes the actions of the Labour Party, the participants of which assumed that PR was the key to a new style of politics and that was half true at least because it was a Liberal key to a Labour Britain. Wherever people have voted Liberal in protest, the Liberals have used that key to open the Town Hall door for Labour. Furthermore, he was not satisfied with Lib – Lab pacts which might have undergone the criticism.

### **Superphrasal phraseological context**

*Our children and grand-children are cared for. Never lost or alone. We share their triumphs and disasters. We **make provision** for their future. The children Hope & Homes care for have none of these comforts [16.05.2006].*

In this speech John Major pays attention to children who are living without parents. They need help and support of the government to lead a normal life, to have all supplies for living. He compares his children's way of living with that of orphans in Hope&Homes orphanages.

*Wherever we look, change is accelerating. Science and technology is accelerating changing which already **takes place** at break-neck speed. The past may give us an idea of the scale of change we might see [16.05.2006].*

The Prime Minister speaks about the current situation in the sphere of technologies. He confirms that changes there are extremely fast. The political map is volatile and there exists a global economy. The speed of the medical advances is bewildering. There would have been amazement – even disbelief – at the thought that – one day – it would be possible to breakfast in London and lunch in New York. In 1900, the Europeans were dominant. The United Kingdom, France and Russia controlled 80 % of the world's

surface. How things have changed. The Ottoman Empire has gone. The Austro-Hungarian Empire has gone. The French empire has gone. The British Empire has gone. The Russian Empire has both come – and gone. The US is now the most powerful nation in the world with China and India on course to become great economic powers. The impact of all this is far beyond economics and politics. Children born today will see the conquest of the stars. Most will live longer, see more, do more, know more than any earlier generation. They will see deserts bloom. See a genetic rebuilding of failing bodies.

Live with technical innovations beyond our present imagination. It will be a world unrecognizable to their forebears. But not for all children – and we need to ensure that those children left behind do not suffer the hardships of their forebears. That is what Hope & Homes is about.

Thus, any phraseological context is not created by the author on purpose; on the contrary it comes out of a certain communicative situation and the author's intentions. The three studies of phraseological context illustrated by the above examples from the speeches of the two British Prime Ministers prove the importance of the in-depth analysis of the oratory to unfold the politicians' real intentions. In the speeches by Margaret Thatcher we come across with 5 phrasal, 40 interphrasal and 3 superphrasal cases of the contextual functioning of the phraseological units when in the John Major speeches there are 3 phrasal, 43 interphrasal and 3 superphrasal contexts.

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