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HISTORICAL CORE VOCABULARY EVOLUTION IN AUSTRALIAN AND NEW ZEALAND ENGLISHES: CROSS-VARIETIES ANALYSIS OF PHRASEOLOGY

Core vocabulary (CV) is understood in this study as the corpus of lexemes that have been part of English since Old English. This research focuses on the study of the semantic evolution of core lexemes being the components of phraseology formed in Australian and New Zealand Englishes and the role of CV in the evolution of English as a polycentric. The results obtained demonstrated that CV has the status of the pivot of evolutionary processes in the lexicon in the course of English expansion world-wide since all adaptive processes taking place during its adaptation to the altered environment penetrate into its lexicon and are immediately projected into its CV which provides adequate feedback contributing to the new cultural space exploration in terms of the native language conceptual system.

Key words: core vocabulary, phraseology, English varieties, semantic change, semantic potential, adaptive processes.

1. Introduction

The English language has evolved into polycentric after its transplantation outside the British Isles in the course of the colonization of the territories of North America, South Africa, Australia, New Zealand, etc. Endemic culture, way of life, nature of the new territories as well as specific socio-economic relations, atypical to the perception of Anglo-Saxons, who settled in these regions, stipulated language changes, triggering its adaptive mechanisms to the altering milieu.

Thus, the course of the English language territorial dissemination is accompanied by the formation of ethno-specific conceptual system which specificity is the most explicitly reflected on the lexical level. Consequently the result of adaptive processes in the lexical system is either the influx of borrowings from autochthonous languages or innovations based on the inner resources of the language. The latter group embraces the products of semantic change, word-derivation, compounding, phrasing and phraseology-formation – of the processes which involve all chronological layers of the English lexicon [cf. Горяйнова 2005; Скибина 1996, с. 97-104; Skybina 2006].

This paper focuses on the research of the role performed by the core layer of the English lexicon in the processes of its adaptation to the altering environment after territorial dissemination of English and the culture-specific ways of semantic evolution of the English core lexemes being the components of phraseology formed in English national varieties.

Core vocabulary is investigated within numerous paradigms, among them being structural, communicative, semantic, etc. [Виноградов 1951; Кретов 1987; Carter 1992; Hughes 2000, p. 360-393; Modiano 1999, p.11; Peyawary 1999; Quirk 1982;

Stein 1978; Stubbs 1986]. In this article it is treated as the corpus of lexemes dating back to the earliest stages of the language history, i.e. which have been part of English since Old English and are represented in the lexicons of all native varieties of English. The procedure of their compilation included the selection from the etymological and general regional dictionaries [Onions 1966; Procter 1982; Orsman 1994; Ramson 1988; Gove 1986; Barber 2004; Silva 1996] and is described in detail in the previously completed research [Skybina & Galutskikh 2008]. The list comprises 2166 lexemes.

The study of the core vocabulary from the historical perspective was started in concern with the assumption of its exceptional role in the language structure, functioning and evolution. Otherwise, what other reasons of its longevity there could be? The results obtained of our research of this chronological layer of two Germanic languages – English and German – proved this statement. The analysis attested high functional, structural and evolutionary significance of core vocabulary in the lexicon [Галуцких 2007a; Skybina & Galutskikh 2007] and sustained the idea that lexicon evolution is guided by internal impulses generated by the processes taking place in its historical core. Besides it proved the correlation between core vocabulary evolution and that of the entire lexicon [Галуцких 2006; Галуцких 2007b; Галуцких 2008]. All in all the results demonstrated the pivotal role of historical core vocabulary in the evolution.

From this assumption proceeds the hypothesis of this research. I hypothesize that core vocabulary has the status of the pivot of evolutionary processes in the lexicon in the course of English expansion world-wide and its transformation into polycentric since all adaptive processes taking place during its adaptation to the altered environment penetrate into its lexicon and are immediately projected into its core vocabulary. In other words all changes in cultural, socio-economic and other spheres of life Anglo-Saxon settlers faced on the new territories are mirrored in English lexicon and infiltrate into it historical core. Such changes result in semantic transformations of core lexemes, which "absorb" culture-specific connotations. It ends up covering vast semantic continuum and verbalizing significant concepts of the culture-recipient which is a sort of feedback to the lexical system nominative necessity.

The present research is aimed at the verification of the above-stated hypothesis. For such purpose lexical material of two English native varieties — Australian and New Zealand, which are the youngest ones, having started to be shaped in the XVIII-XIX cent. — was chosen. That will allow to trace the intensity of changes in the core vocabulary semantics which took place in a relatively short time span of these varieties evolution and to observe how active the reaction of core vocabulary to the changing environment was.

Among the diversity of regional lexical innovations as an object of this research Australian and New Zealand phraseology was taken. Why phraseology? It was chosen for the verification of the hypothesis for several reasons, the most important being the fact that it is the most explicit "culture-specific" lexical fund, where culture-marked components of the semantics dominate over nominative ones

[Маслова 2004, с. 69]. As V. Maslova stated it, the metaphors reflected in them become the «exponents of culture codes» [Маслова 2004, с. 73]. Idiomatic fund serves more as a means of the world interpretation and evaluation than of its mere description as its semantics reproduces the peculiarities of nation's mentality, contains the information about the world, the society and the society's perception of the world. Phraseology reveals the specific national way of life, traditions, beliefs, superstitions, rituals, legends, etc., i.e. all spheres of human existence. Some of them are based on the descriptions of "prototypical situations", corresponding to the literal meaning of an idiomatic phrase, which afterwards is cemented in its semantics as figurative or transferred one. The role of such "prototypical situations" is often performed by myths, traditions, historical events, elements of material culture [Маслова 2004, с. 71]. All the information based on ethnic stereotypes, symbols, etalons, etc. that idioms and phrases bear, subsides in the connotations of their constituents.

The method applied consisted in three stages. First, the selection of the corpus of phraseology (with core lexeme being constituents) formed in Australian and New Zealand Englishes out of regional dictionaries [Orsman & Orsman 1994; Ramson 1988] was carried out. Second, the analysis of the extralinguistic background of the formation of local lexicons and their idiomatic fund in Australian and New Zealand varieties was performed with special accent made on the semantic domains embraced by the core lexemes' semantics being reinterpreted in the context of socio-economic, cultural, historical, etc. aspects of Australian and New Zealand varieties evolution. Third, the examination of amplitude of the semantics transformations core lexemes underwent contributing to the new cultural space exploration in terms of the native language conceptual system.

The results obtained are discussed in the following parts of the essay. They are not presented in a contrastive manner in order to present the phenomenon more as of universal nature.

2. Discussion

2.1 Extralinguistic background conditioning phraseology formation in Australian and New Zealand Englishes as one of the mechanisms of adaptation of language to new reality

The analysis of the corpus of the selected idiomatic phrases demonstrated that the processes of phraseologization accompanying the evolution of English in the course of its transformation into a polycentric language were active enough.

The observation on the core vocabulary semantic shifts in the cultural space of Australian and New Zealand ethnos sustained the idea that core vocabulary does not stay apart of evolutionary processes, on their periphery. On the contrary, historical core has the central status in the lexicon evolution as far as it is the centre of attraction of nominative processes verbalizing the most significant concepts corresponding to new reality and indispensable in the culture of Australians and New Zealanders and thus reflecting the conditions of Anglo-Saxon ethnos formation outside their native lands.

This statement is illustrated by the examples of culture-specific idioms and phrases with core lexemes as components. They were grouped according to the extralinguistic background of their formation in Australian and New Zealand Englishes.

Thus, the emergence of a considerable part of phraseology formed in Australian and New Zealand Englishes on the basis of English historical core is stipulated by the influence of culture and beliefs of Aborigines and Maori and social relations pertained to them, rituals they practiced, e.g. to point the bone, the meaning of which comes from Aboriginal ritual practice where a bone is pointed at a person whose death is willed. It was fixed in the semantics of the core word bone, which is obvious in its usage in the same meaning in the phrases death bone and pointing bone. «Ritual origin» has the phrase Sunday business meaning 'an exclusive ritual or traditional lore' as well. The specific quality of interpersonal relations stimulated the emergence in Australian English of a local phraseological unit **feather foot** 'one who undertakes the mission of vengeance', its semantics being influenced by synonymic aboriginal kurdaitcha. The way of life of Aborigines and Maori initiated the formation of idioms to go back to the mat 'to return to Maori ways', to put up a smoke 'to make a signal', in smoke 'in hiding'. The belief that the strength lies in understanding the essence of something is reflected in the idioms to get the strength of 'to get the meaning, significance' and to get the strong of 'to comprehend'.

Cultural specificity of some Australian and New Zealand phraseological units based on English core vocabulary is manifested in the figurative character of its basic component, e.g.: **as dry as a wooden god** 'thirsty', where metaphoric component stems from pagan beliefs and traditions of Aboriginal population.

Beside the cultural stimuli of phraseology formation due to which new connotations in the core lexemes' semantics emerge, there are plenty of others. Among them unusual climate, landscape, nature characteristics, endemic flora and fauna of Australia and New Zealand which being "fresh" for the perception of Anglo-Saxon settlers and consequently being simultaneously accentuated also inspire the formation of new idiomatic phrases. To this group belong not only direct nominations of nature phenomena, climate characteristics, etc., as, for instance earthquake weather 'still, warm, humid oppressive weather, thought to forebode an earthquake', open land 'land not covered with bush' including figurative nominations appealing directly to such characteristics as it can be observed in the following geographical nicknames: Land of the Long White Cloud which is one of the translations of Aotearoa [Maori: 'land of the long twilight', differentiating the length of the New Zealand twilight from that of tropical islands], adopted, often ironically, as a romantic appellation for New Zealand and Land of Ferns – name given to New Zealand by non-New Zealanders, especially Australians. Even more often idiomatic phrases of this kind which are referred to the same group metaphorically depict human behaviour, e.g.: tall poppy 'conspicuously successful person, usu. one exiting envy', a whale in the bay 'a person with money to spend', to get one's wool combed 'to receive a scolding or thrashing', as miserable as a shag on a rock 'lonely, miserable', not to have a feather to fly with, not to have a feather left 'to be broke or penniless'; as mad as a snake/a wet hen 'very angry', to go like a hairy goat 'to run roughly, unevenly', fit as a buck rat / as a flea / trout 'very fit and active' or making one's behaviour explicit through the natural phenomenon: I didn't come down in the last shower 'used to indicate smb. without experience'.

Moreover, Australian and New Zealand peculiar landscape division and its specific differentiation where assimilated territory is often opposed to wild, remote areas (bush) is revealed in the following idiomatic phrases: Sydney or the bush 'all or nothing', polysemantic phrases to go bush with meanings in New Zealand English - 'of a Europeanized Maori: to revert to traditional tribal ways', 'to leave urban life for that of a rural outdoors', 'to escape, disappear from one's usual haunts' and Australian English - 'of Aborigines: to return to traditional life', 'to leave beaten track and travel cross-country', 'to leave urban life for that of the country'; to take to the bush said of convicts 'to escape from custody or justice, to run away', the variations of the same phrases to take to a bush, to go into the bush which were originally used of a Maori in the meaning 'to seek refuge in the bush', later – 'to hide, go underground', of domestic and farm animals and birds 'to escape and return to the wild', of explorers, trampers, hunters, etc. - 'to be forced to leave a passable track and proceed through usually untracked bush', used nowadays to designate any movement reverse to less civilized ways: 'to live in remote areas'; to spread like a bush fire 'of news, etc. very quickly' and Bush capital which is used in Australia as a derisive name for Canberra.

In the semantics of some local innovations social differentiation and relations between Aborigines/Maori and Anglo-Saxon colonizers is revealed, e.g.: **to live white** (of an Aboriginal) 'to live in the manner of white people', **gin shepherd** 'a white man who cohabits with an Aboriginal woman (fr. Gin - Aboriginal woman)', 'one who seeks to prevent the sexual exploitation of Aboriginal women by white man', **brown man's burden** 'the social, etc. burden imposed by European society on the Polynesian', **brown velvet** (offensive) 'a Maori woman as a sexual object'.

Criminal past of the first settlers of Australia where convicts from the United Kingdom were exiled in 1770-1840, initiated the formation of such phraseological units as **on the roads** 'convicted for forced labour on the roads', **grey death** 'a weak prison stew', **old hand** 'an Australian former convict', **good man** 'a convict whose behaviour in custody is exemplary', **field police** 'a police force employed to maintain law and order outside closely settled districts (from field as the territory opposed to town)', **to take to the bush** used of convicts in the meaning 'to escape from custody or justice; to run away'.

Among the analyzed corpus of phraseology formed on the basis of core vocabulary in Australian and New Zealand Englishes the significant bulk of local innovations is concerned with the sphere of industrial and manufacturing activity of the settlers, one of the most important and popular being gold-mining as Australia and New Zealand are famous for their gold-bearing territories. The times of gold rush and activity of gold-diggers are shrouded in romantic aureole, no wonder they generated the numerous expressive phraseological innovations, e.g. **good as gold** 'fine', as well as neutral ones, e.g. **wash up** 'to recover gold', to work away from

home 'to be involved in goldmining'.

The popular on the territories of Australia and New Zealand employment in sheep-shearing inspired the formation of the idiomatic units **to swing the gate** 'to be the fastest shearer in the shed', **in hand** (of a mob of sheep) 'under control', **to walk the board** 'to be in charge of the shearing', **to get up** 'to prepare wool for sale' transferred to the meaning 'to be successful in an endeavour', **Sunday shearer** 'a lazy or choosy shearer', **boots on the board** 'a shearers' warning call of the approach of the owner or farmer'.

Exceptional attitude of English-speaking Australians and New Zealanders towards the products of their activity, particularly in the most developed and profitable spheres comprising gold-mining, sheep-breeding, sheep's wool-shearing, timber processing and apple-growing is reflected in the emergence of phraseological units which reveal their national outlook. For example, phrases golden fleece 'wool, perceived as the source of national wealth', sheep's back 'national prosperity', to live off the sheep's back 'indicating or alluding to prosperity from wool growing' indicate national attitude towards sheep and wool as benefit and the source of wealth and prosperity. Positive estimation is often possible through the description of the prototypical situation connected with productive activity. Thus, get up with initial local meaning 'to prepare wool for sale' later starts to indicate any successful activity; to think one is doing a great stroke 'to be very proud of a considerable achievement', is a transferred 'to discover gold'; as well as the phrases good as gold 'fine, expression of approval, agreement'; to have the wood on 'to have advantage', that emphasizes the significance of gold-mining and timber-processing in nation's prosperity. Success in Australian and New Zealand Englishes is also associated with apple-growing, their fruit being the most popular exported goods (cf. Apple Land 'Tasmania', so called because of its popular identification as an apple-growing region), which apparently stimulated the emergence of positive connotations of core word apple in the phraseological units she's apples! - 'she's all right' and to be apples 'used to express confidence in a happy outcome, reassurance, agreement, etc.'

Traditions closely connected with industrial activity and values of Anglo-Saxon settlers stipulated the formation of the following phraseological units: save a match and buy a farm 'used as caution against unnecessary waste', before the gold 'prior to the discovery of gold in Australia', to wait for a death 'describing an old custom of unemployed shearers waiting round a shed in case smb is sacked in the hope of getting his job', to do well 'to keep stock plentifully fed', home and dry 'certain to succeed or win', not to call the Queen one's aunt, not to call a King one's uncle used as an expression of positive independence. From the prototypical situations described in the abovementioned phrases it becomes obvious that the highly valued aspects of life for Anglo-Saxon settlers are their independence, the importance of home, where happy life has its grounds in a roof, work and fed livestock in the shed. As the evidence of the ritual customs which are also concerned with manufacturing the following phrases serve, describing everyday behaviour in working and leisure time: ducks on the pond 'a shearer's call of warning to all in the shed that a woman

is approaching', a shilling in and winner shouts 'a bar-room gambling game to determine who is to pay for drinks, in which each participant contributes a shilling and the winner shouts', ladies bring a dish 'alluding to the provision of a contribution of food to a social occasion, often with remission of the full entrance fee paid by males', to have a day for the King (Queen) 'to take a day off, especially when conditions do not allow outdoor work', bring your own (wine, beer) used by restaurants not fully licensed to sell liquor but which may serve a customer's liquor, used in party invitations, buck's night 'a party given for a bridegroom on the eve of his wedding by male friends', working bee 'an unpaid working party, often for social or charitable purposes; a group of volunteers formed to carry out a specific task', smoke concert 'an informal male gathering for smoking, drinking and light entertainment'.

As far as the first settlers of Australia were outcasts of the British society, common ways of spending spare time for them were mostly attending bars, hard-drinking, etc. It is well revealed in the numerous regional idiomatic nominations and phrases designating such places of having rest: **blood house** 'a disorderly public house, one with a reputation for violence', **cat's bar** 'a bar other than a public bar, where women and their 'escorts' could be served liquor', **to drink with flies** 'drink alone', types of alcoholic drinks: **purple death** 'cheap, red, Italian wine', **blue lady** used among street alcoholics in Australian English and white lady in New Zealand English of 'a methylated spirits as a drink', lady's waist 'a small slender beer-glass of convex shape, having a brim wider than the base; the liquor contained therein' as well as describing various stages of alcoholic addiction: as drunk as a wheel barrow 'very drunk', in the rats 'hallucinating through liquor', as full as a boot lord / kite / tick 'very drunk', one's skin is cracking 'dry' with craving for alcoholic liquor'.

At last, several phraseological units either enriched local phraseological fund to nominate the realia of the life of Anglophones on the newly-occupied territories or directly appeal to them: to be in King Street 'in financial difficulty (used in allusion to the hearing of bankruptcy cases in the Supreme Court located in central Sydney in the King Street)', shilling-a-month-man, n 'men who agreed to work for one shilling a month for the privilege of being allowed to remain in Sydney'. Some of the idiomatic phrases are represented by toponymic nicknames of Britain in the one hand and Australian/New Zealand territories on the other which implicitly reflect the attitude to the former and new home of Anglo-Saxons. Thus, negative connotations are obvious in Old Dart referred to Britain or other country of emigration formed from British dialect pronunciation of dirt, as well as in Cold Country – a jocular name for Great Britain in Australian English and Fog Land used with reference to the British Isles, Fog town – to London, which don't create the image of hospitality.

In contrast one can come across phrases which make quite welcoming picture of their new home: **Golden colony** 'Victoria', **Golden land** 'Australia', **Land of Ferns** 'New Zealand', **God's own** – elliptical from God's own country with reference to New Zealand regarded often ironically as an earthly paradise, the latter being based on a catchphrase popularized during the political times of Richard John Seddon (Premier 1893-1906). Of course, to the same category of nominations the popular

Land of the Long White Cloud belongs (see above), adopted as a romantic appellation for New Zealand.

The abovementioned examples made it evident that phraseology formed in Australian and New Zealand Englishes on the basis of its core vocabulary is characterized by explicit and implicit cultural specificity that consists not only in the quality of nominative space covered by their semantics, but in the images of metaphorization bearing cultural significance.

2.2 Core vocabulary semantic transformations and its semantic potential

The elaboration of the types of idiomatic phrases built in Australian and New Zealand varieties of English with core lexemes as basic constituents guided by the quality of their extralinguistic background provided the data for the observations on the principles and processes of their formation. The latter demonstrated that core vocabulary is always ready to react to the ever-changing environment. The abovementioned illustrations made it obvious that the semantics of core lexemes being the components of phraseological units undergoes semantic changes and acquires culturally marked connotations. Thus, as a result of semantic shifts core lexeme **bush** is referred to wild uninhabited territories opposed to town, **sheep**, **wool** - to national prosperity, **apple** - to advantage, **death** - to unemployment, **gold** acquires highly positive connotations and becomes a marker of success and so on.

The major transformations comprise the processes of metaphorization and specialization. Such changes are a respond to the altering milieu and the need of enrichment of Anglophones' conceptual system with new knowledge and images. Consequently there appear new lexical representatives of this knowledge which are constituents of their conceptual system. The nature of these changes is in direct dependence on the complex of factors determining the specificity of territorial variation and evolution of national varieties of English. Therefore the semantics of core lexemes being the components of Australian and New Zealand phraseology acquires culture-specific character. Such conclusion is opposed to the assumption made by R.M.W. Dixon, who claimed core vocabulary to be "culture-free" [Dixon 1973].

The examination of the amplitude of the semantics transformations core lexemes underwent contributing to the new cultural space exploration in terms of the native language conceptual system proved that core vocabulary preserves the most essential primordial semantic features and the changes taking place in the core vocabulary does not bother with its ability to secure lexicon's dynamic equilibrity.

Consequently core vocabulary semantics manages to embrace plenty of semantic domains, being shaped by the complex of socio-economic, cultural, historical, etc. aspects of Australian and New Zealand varieties evolution. Enriched with plethora of culture-specific connotations core vocabulary semantics provides a succulent conglomerate of national outlook.

3. Concluding remarks

The results obtained verified the assumption about the evolutionary significance of core vocabulary and demonstrated inexhaustible semantic potential of core lexemes and their ability to be subdued to semantic variation and change and absorb

new connotations as a respond to the need of adaptation to the new reality. Active participation of historical core in the nominative processes makes it both the pivot of the evolutionary processes in the lexicon in the frames of its polycentric nature and semantic core of the lexicon transmitting national culture which is conceptualized in core vocabulary semantics. The analysis of the corpus of local phraseological innovations stimulated by Anglo-Saxon expansion to the territories of Australia and New Zealand and appealing to core vocabulary illustrated the usage of core lexemes for both description of the world, its interpretation and evaluation. Therefore core vocabulary semantics being dynamic is active to contribute to the formation of the fragment of their "world", it reproduces the peculiarities of ethnos mentality, attitude of Anglophones to new reality, bears the information about their way of life, traditions, beliefs, etc. Due to such status being the components of Australian and New Zealand phraseology core vocabulary semantics accumulated cultural connotations reflecting stereotypes and patterns of national outlook.

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