

Classifying Combinatorially Conditioned Meanings of Colorative Collocations

Vlavatskaya M.V.
 Faculty of Humanities
 Novosibirsk State Technical University
 Novosibirsk, Russia
 vlacaczkaya@corp.nstu.ru

Tsvenger L.V.
 Faculty of Humanities
 Novosibirsk State Technical University
 Novosibirsk, Russia
 czvenger@corp.nstu.ru

Abstract – The article is devoted to colorative collocation in the Russian and English languages. The research is conducted in the framework of combinatorial linguistics that studies the linear relations of language units and their combinatorial potential. The authors determined and characterized colorative collocations, i.e., combinatory type of the lexical units limited by a color component. Their universal characteristics and national peculiarities in both English and Russian languages are revealed by the combinatory semantic and contrastive analysis. Moreover, the authors offer a combinatory-conditioned meaning classification.

Key words – *combinatorial linguistics, collocations, colorative collocation, combinatory semantic and contrastive analysis, national specifics*

1. INTRODUCTION

This research is conducted in the field of combinatorial linguistics which studies syntagmatic relations of linguistic units and their combinatorial potential.

In the definition of combinatorial linguistics two components come to the fore. On the one hand, syntagmatics, which is understood as an aspect of language study involving the compatibility rules of language units and, on the other hand, combinatorics, which is treated as making combinations of words due to a given meaning. In the field of combinatorial linguistics, many works have appeared recently [1-4].

M.M. Makovsky formulated the importance of linguistic combinatorial studies in [5] as making word combinations that are subordinate to the specific communicative tasks under the conditions of their implementations and which can be formed from a given number of words. This definition forms the basis of combinatorial linguistics. Its study and description plays an essential role for both theoretical and applied linguistics. The relevance of our research is determined by the need to study new lexical units whose formation is regarded due to the factor of lexemes compatibility. Furthermore, the investigation of word semantic components and their compatibility is carried out to determine the manifestation of various connotations, the creation of expressive word usage, the formation of occasional word combinations, lexemes actualization, etc. Combinatorial linguistics is of great importance in solving applied problems related to teaching foreign languages, translation and speech culture of native and foreign languages, etc.

Within the framework of combinatorial linguistics researchers are carrying out investigations not only on the problems of language units compatibility, but also on the

problems of semantics and compatibility relationship, the words compatibility functioning in speech, the peculiarities of combinatorial syntagmatic properties of language units, etc. All of them are included in the collocations theory. Its goal is to single out and describe combinatory-conditioned types of various lexical units of different languages including their contrast analysis.

The significance of these units called collocations has been widely recognized in recent decades. According to a broad interpretation, collocation is understood as co-occurrence of predictable combinations of two or more words. Other meanings of the term distinguish specific types of collocation and differ them with respect to the relevant criterion of showing this or that specific characteristics. Thus, in accordance with definitions of L. N. Iordanskaya and I.A. Melchuk [6], A.N. Baranov and D.O. Dobrovolskiy [7] collocations are syntactically-bound word combinations; E.V. Orlova [8] points out that collocations preserve their unity in perception and reproduction; by the present emphasis on the words study in context [9]. Moreover, it is claimed that “collocations are the building blocks of any language” [10]. Also lexical-semantic perspectives are reviewed, in which collocations are accounted for by lexical functions or semantic frames [11]. Thus collocations as useful lexical units existing in all languages in the world attract researchers’ special attention abroad and in our country.

The focus of our research is of the adjectival type words combinations as «color adjective + noun», or *colorative collocations*, we define them as the type of combinatorially conditioned word combinations having an adjectival nature and including color semantics, for instance: Rus.: *жёлтый сигнал, красный регион, белое облако, зелёный подозреваемый*; Amer.: *white liberals, black humor, yellow fever, white noise*, etc. In collocation theory within combinatorial linguistics, we distinguish several types of colorative collocations as special lexical units having universal and specific features (national-cultural, terminological, expressive, etc.). Collocability (lexical valency) is an indisputable fact that words are used in certain lexical contexts, i.e. in combination with other words.

Thus, collocability is a subject of separate study that should be described in an independent area of theoretical and applied study. In this area collocations is the research subject, they consist of the elements filled with combinatory and syntagmatic properties which implement human cognitive activity and speech communication.

This paper goal is to reveal semantic and combinatory peculiarities of colorative collocations in Russian and American English newspaper corpora and classify them by the types of combinatory-caused meanings.

II. METHODS AND MATERIALS IN THE THEORY OF COLLOCATION

We use the following research methods: definitional, contextual, combinatory semantic and contrastive analyses as well as continuous sampling method.

The object of our study are colorative collocations from newspaper articles published in the period from 2000 to 2017 and selected by continuous sampling method out of the Russian language National corpus (NKR) and the Modern American English Corpus (COCA). Collocations were sampled from linguistic corpora with the help of the lexical- grammatical search function, which made it possible to select the adjective "color" + noun from all available contexts. It is important to note that we have focused on qualitative rather than quantitative analysis.

The combinatory semantic analysis of the language material from the National newspaper corpora of the Russian and English languages is used to identify the semantics of words and the types of combinatory-conditioned meanings of colorative collocation.

First, these collocations reflect the phenomena and objects existing in the two analyzed languages and cultures. As the contrastive analysis show, they fully retain their identity, i.e. coincide both in the plane of expression and in the plane of content, for instance:

коричневый (тростниковый) сахар - brown sugar;
жёлтая пресса - yellow press;
yellow fever - жёлтая/тропическая лихорадка;
чёрный рынок - black market;
белые кровяные клетки - white (blood) cell;
зелёный мох - green moss;
белый цветок - white flower;
белый медведь - polar bear (white bear);
белая лошадь - white horse;
белый рис - white rice;
белое пятно - white spot;

We see that the above collocations reflect the real world by means of lexical equivalents in two languages. This meaning type of colorative collocations we call 'conceptually conditioned' since their combinatory and semantic features of Russian and English words constituting collocations coincide completely.

However, the semantic volume of words similar in the plane of expression and denoting the same realities in the two languages may often not coincide [12], for example:

красное яйцо (пасхальное) - pasch egg;
секретные операции - black ops;
топленое масло - black butter;
даурская берёза - black birch;
белые барашки на море - white horses;
офисные служащие, менеджеры - white collars;

молодой сыр - green cheese;
синяк - black eye;
белая горячка - delirium tremens (Lat.), in English it is an unassimilated medical term.

We can explain this discrepancy by different linguistic designation of the same object or phenomenon of reality. As E.A. Maklakova [13] regards, it is due to the reflection of historical and social events and the people culture in the language. Collocations presented above demonstrate some differences in the plane of expression, i.e. different collocability.

The characteristic features of such manifestations are correlated, in particular, with semantic differences of lexical units. Therefore, in the process of combinatory semantic and contrastive analysis these collocations demonstrate a general (conceptual) and particular dependency on their meanings. As I.A. Sternin [14] concludes, the national specific of any lexical unit's semantics is manifested in its value difference from semantically similar units of comparison including cases of unit lacunarity or non-equivalence.

Next the manifestation facts of 'lacunarity' and 'non-equivalence of units' will be discussed. As our study shows, some colorative collocations defy contrastive analysis. In other words, such units are available in one language, but completely absent in another that indicates their distinct national and cultural specific [15]:

blue pencil (Am.) is not a crayon of blue color, but the pencil for the corrections when editing;
blue book (Am.) is not a blue book, but a blue cover notebook for written exam answers in colleges and universities (distributed to students before the exam);
blue flu (Br.) is a police strike, simulating disease;
black frost - (Am., Br). strong black frost: A black frost occurs when temperature falls below 0°C and no ice forms on the surface;
yellow vegetables (Am., Br.) are vegetables of yellow colour;
orange squash (Br.) drink of orange juice and soda;
brown betty (Am.) apple pudding with bread crumbs, butter, sugar and spices, etc.

As can be seen, the above colorative collocations reflect axiologically significant realia for the one culture that are completely irrelevant to the other.

Of great importance for our research is the fact that a communicant from several possible combinatory sets of language units (in this case words) chooses the variant that the most accurately reflects his communicative intention, i.e. contributes to the solution of the given communicative task. In other words, the context plays a central role in the realization of communicative intention. Moreover, the context determines lexemes combinability (or collocability) and meaning actualization of different types words sememes and actual senses [16].

The term 'context' is differently understood and defined in the related literature. In combinatorial linguistics, within the framework of which our research is conducted, the context is defined as a combinatorially-conditioned fragment of speech

containing the unit of analysis in which the communicative task (meaning or actual sense) is realized (fully or partially) [17]. Thus, for example, to determine the meaning of such collocations as (Rus.) *белая тьма, жёлтый океан, красный вихрь* and (Engl.) *white conscience, white grievance, white story* etc., the context is required. Note that in these cases the context is considered as a certain piece of text which is necessary and sufficient for determining the semantics of this complex unit. The meanings of colorative collocations in this group can be called contextually-conditioned, because their meanings cannot be understood out of a certain context (or even a text, article or essay).

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Types of combinatorially conditioned meanings in colorative collocations.

Taking into account different semantic manifestations of colorative collocations we have developed a classification based on the principle of combinatory conditioned types of their meanings. Using methods of contextual, combinatory semantic and contrastive analyses has allowed us to draw clear distinctions to delineate the following types of combinatorial-semantic conditionality of the examining units' meanings.

A. Conceptually conditioned meanings of colorative collocations

The conceptual conditionality of words meanings in colorative collocations lies in the fact that the phenomena and concepts they denote exist in Russian and American linguocultures, consequently, their components are identical either in the plane of expression or the plane of content. For example:

yellow roses – жёлтые розы;
red caviar – красная икра;
red dress - красное платье;
black caviar – чёрная икра;
black market – чёрный рынок;
white noise – белый шум;
white light – белый свет;
white wine – белое вино;
orange revolution – оранжевая революция;
yellow vests – жёлтые жилеты, etc.

As illustrated above, these colorative collocations take place in both analyzing languages, as their basis is people's physical experience. Moreover, this type of colorative collocations includes:

1) neutral, or ordinary colorative collocations, denoting objects and phenomena of the world around us and performing a nominative function (*yellow roses – жёлтые розы; red caviar – красная икра; red dress- красное платье*),

2) terminological collocation implementing the denominative function within a particular field of specialized knowledge (*белые кровяные клетки - white (blood) cell (medicine); белый шум – white noise (stationary noise the spectral components of which are evenly distributed over the entire range of frequencies involved (physics); белый свет - white light (visible light emission (physics), orange revolution - the revolution which changes completely the elite - the top*

layer of the power and the country always obtains a new route of movement (polit.); yellow vests – movement, named after the high visibility vests of French motorists (polit.), etc.

Thus, colorative collocations of this type are identical in form and content, i.e. they explicitly reflect realia of the real world within the framework of the two analyzed linguocultures.

B. Conceptually and linguistically conditioned meanings of colorative collocation

Denoting the same objects and phenomena of reality, such units are characterized by different lexical and phraseological compatibility of words, and they may have features of idiomaticity. Here are some examples, with corresponding collocations from another language:

красный диплом (lit. red diploma) – first class degree;
белая ворона (lit. white crow, unlike other people) - stick out like a sore thumb;
тоска зеленая (lit. green melancholy, a depressive state) – black dog;
green day - день растительной диеты (lit. day of vegetarian diet);
black money – черные доходы (lit. black income, an income hidden from taxation);
black sheep - паршивая овца (lit. scabbed sheep, a bad person)
black swan - странное явление; большая редкость (lit. A rare phenomenon.

It should be emphasized that such collocations in the Russian and English languages are equivalent in the plane of content, but differ in the plane of expression, or in their componential composition.

C. Ethnoculturally conditioned meanings of colorative collocations

Ethnoculturally conditioned colorative collocation are word groups with clearly expressed national and cultural restrictions. The peculiarity of such collocations is the absence of an equivalent in the compared language, so they require necessary explanations and clarifications for representatives of other linguocultures. For example:

красный день – lit. red day (in the calendar) - a holiday or a day off;
красный галстук – lit. red tie - as a symbol of belonging to the pioneer organization in the USSR and other countries;
красный угол – lit. red corner - the corner in the Russian peasant house where the icons hang;
красный регион – lit. red region - the region of the Russian Federation, where Communists headed the poll at the elections;
красный борщ – lit. red borscht - a kind of soup based on beets;
yellow pages – trade and industrial section of the telephone directory;
red carpet – to give a reception;
brown community – an ethnic group of Indians;
white elephant – an unnecessary thing;
white supremacy – the superiority of the white race;
green card – a card for entering the United States under an employment contract;

black book – a list of insolvent debtors;
black voice system – unclassified telephone system, etc.

Such collocations do not have a linguistic analogue in other linguocultures because of either the absence or axiological insignificance of realia that they denote. It is important to note that the basis of this type collocations is lexical and phraseological compatibility (collocability) caused by certain social factors and usual syntactic norms of communication.

D. Contextually conditioned meanings of colorative collocations

Contextually conditioned colorative collocations are word groups whose meaning can be determined only in a certain context, or rather in the context of a specific situation. It is noteworthy that these units are often based on linguistic expressive means and stylistic devices as metaphor, epithet, synesthesia, etc. For example:

*Платье оказалось настолько выразительным, что определило хореографию; оно помогает танцовщице рассказать свою историю, превращаясь то в **красный вихрь**, накрывающий ее с головой, то в младенца, лежащего на гнибе ее руки* (RBK Daily, 2013).

*(The dress was so expressive that it determined the choreography; it helps the dancer to tell her story turning into **a red whirlwind** that covers her head, then into a baby lying on the bend of her hand).*

Colorative collocation *красный вихрь* (*a red whirlwind*) is based on metaphorical transference. In the sentence the dance dress is associated with gusty movements of the flying wind.

1) *А вот на арене, где впервые заполнены даже верхние ярусы трибун, – **жёлтый океан*** (Советский спорт, 2012).

*(But in the arena where for the first time were filled even the upper tiers of the stands, **the yellow ocean**).*

In this context collocation *жёлтый океан* denotes a large number of fans dressed in yellow. It is formed as a result of metaphorical transference, which is based on similarity association with a huge number of people like the ocean.

3) *Но и для не виртуальных, а вполне реальных путешествий «жёлтый» язык пригодится* (Комсомольская правда, 2009).

*(But for not virtual, but real travel "**yellow**" language is useful).*

The broader context of the article makes it clear that "*жёлтый*" denotes Chinese. This collocation is based on the metaphorical transference, which is based on the association with the yellow race – the skin color of the Chinese.

Now let us consider the colorative collocations in the American media.

4) *This is now the spirit that animates the so-called values voters -- the right-wing evangelical crowd that dominates the GOP. Instead of self-reliance, work ethic and concern for the*

most vulnerable, they preach the gospel of white grievance (Washington Post, 2017).

In the context described the colorative collocation *white grievance* denotes nostalgic feelings that some people of the white race have for the times of racial inequality when they were on top of the system by the virtue of their race, leading them to support the right wing of a political party. This collocation is created by metaphorical transference and based on the association with people's skin color.

5) *Throughout his career, Coates had strained against writing anodyne pieces that would soothe the white conscience* (New York Times, 2017).

This context allows us to establish that the collocation *white consciousness* means a sense of moral responsibility of people belonging to the white race. This collocation is created by metaphorical transference and based on the association with people's skin color.

As research showed, contextually conditioned colorative collocations are the result of creative understanding of reality. They are atypical language units formed with intentional violation of collocability.

Such units can be referred to the type of occasional collocations, whose main function is an emphasis on the author's personal attitude to the surrounding reality or a desire to accurately and originally express a thought [9, pp. 32-34]. Unlike usage, the meaning of occasional collocations is determined by the situation context and directly depends on it. Thus described above colorative collocations are used to create a vivid image, express evaluation and emotional attitude to the subject of speech. Hence, they are intended to influence the addressee of speech.

IV. CONCLUSION

While reviewing the performed research, it becomes apparent that colorative collocation is widely represented in the modern newspaper corpora of Russian and American English texts. As discussed above, a characteristic feature of all colorative collocations is their combinatory semantic conditionality of meaning expressed by different types.

In the above-described types of combinatory semantic conditionality of colorative collocation meanings manifest both universal and specific features.

A universal feature of conceptually conditioned collocations is the reflection of objects and phenomena characteristic of two or more compared cultures, which are fully equivalent both in the plane of content and expression. The formation of such collocations is based on the human experience as a whole.

Conceptually and linguistically conditioned colorative collocation reflect semantically identical phenomenon of reality, i.e. they are completely equivalent in the plane of content, but different in the plane of expression.

National specific semantics is clearly reflected in ethnocultural collocations, which have national cultural restrictions, which are absent or are not significant in the

language of comparison. This type of collocation meaning is based on collocability caused by society and language usage.

Contextually conditioned collocations are made by intentional violation of collocability and, as a rule, are of occasional character. Such units are the result of creative understanding of reality, and their meaning can be established only in the context of a situation described by the author.

Summing up, the developed classification of colorative collocations based on combinatorily and semantically conditioned meanings contributes to a clear distinction between the types of not only considered in this article colorative units, but also other collocation types in combinatorial semantic, comparative, contrastive and some other aspects of their study.

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