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# КОГНІТИВНА ЛІНГВІСТИКА ТА ПРАГМАТИКА

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e-mail: bihunov.d@gmail.com

svitozara.rv@gmail.com

katjatrejakova4080@gmail.com

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**Dmytro O. Bihunov,**

*PhD in Psychology, Lecturer of Practice of English Language Department,  
Rivne State University of the Humanities*

**Svitozara A. Bihunova,**

*PhD in Psychology, Associate Professor of Practice of English Language Department,  
Rivne State University of the Humanities*

**Kateryna V. Tretiakova,**

*PhD in Philology, Associate Professor of Methodology of Foreign Language Teaching Department,  
Rivne State University of the Humanities*

## ENGLISH PHRASEOLOGICAL UNITS OF LATIN AND FRENCH ORIGIN: COMPONENT "WILDLIFE"

*Borrowings enrich the English language during the whole history of its development and the extent of borrowings in the lexico-graphic stock of the language is rather big. In its turn, the English phraseological stock is characterised by the great number of Romance elements due to the certain historical conditions of the development of Great Britain. But despite the fact that phraseological units are highly informative units which keep the knowledge and experience of different nations, the problem of the borrowed phraseological units remains an unstudied sphere within the cognitive linguistics. As the problem of the phraseological borrowing has not been examined properly in the linguistic literature, the article deals with English phraseological units of Latin and French origin with component "wildlife". The authors have singled out English phraseological units with wildlife components. Then the etymological investigation of the borrowed phraseological units has been conducted. Also an attempt has been made to analyze the inner form of the wildlife component in English phraseological units of Latin and French origin. It has been noticed that they contain the human knowledge of the world and the role of people in it. Besides, the similarity of the images and associations, connected with the investigated wildlife component, is caused by rather identical cognition of the world around – the world of nature.*

**Key words:** phraseological unit, borrowing, Latin origin, French origin, component, "wildlife", inner form.

**Бігунов Дмитро Олександрович,**

*кандидат психологічних наук, викладач кафедри практики англійської мови,  
Рівненський державний гуманітарний університет*

**Бігунова Світозара Анатоліївна,**

*кандидат психологічних наук, доцент кафедри практики англійської мови,  
Рівненський державний гуманітарний університет*

**Третякова Катерина Володимирівна,**

*кандидат філологічних наук, доцент кафедри методики викладання іноземних мов,  
Рівненський державний гуманітарний університет*

## АНГЛІЙСЬКІ ФРАЗЕОЛОГІЗМИ ЛАТИНСЬКОГО ТА ФРАНЦУЗЬКОГО ПОХОДЖЕННЯ: КОМПОНЕНТ «ДИКА ПРИРОДА»

*Мова є «живим явищем», що вербалізує існування певної культурно-історичної епохи, постійно змінюючись та еволюціонуючи, набуваючи нового і «архівуючи» старе. Запозичення збагачували англійську мову протягом всієї історії її розвитку. Фразеологічні одиниці, будучи високоінформативними одиницями, які зберігають знання та досвід різних націй, потребують прихильнішої уваги з боку лінгвістів. Дана праця присвячена англійським фразеологічним одиницям латинського та французького походження з компонентом «дика природа». Авторами було здійснено вибірку, досліджено етимологічні джерела фразеологізмів. У статті зроблено спробу проаналізувати внутрішню форму компоненту «дика природа» в англійських фразеологічних одиницях латинського та французького походження.*

**Ключові слова:** фразеологізм, фразеологічна одиниця, запозичення, латинська етимологія, французька етимологія, компонент, «дика природа», внутрішня форма.

*The applicability of the article.* Any language of the world is a fusion of the native and the borrowed. If to speak about English, it should be mentioned that borrowings enrich the English language during the whole history of its development and the extent of borrowings in the lexico-graphic stock of the language is rather big. What is more, the English phraseological stock is characterised by the great number of Romance elements due to the certain historical conditions of the development of Great Britain.

Unfortunately, the problem of the phraseological borrowing has not been examined properly in the linguistic literature. As a rule, the results of the study of the linguistic borrowings are shifted automatically to the material of phraseology. Very few researches of the phraseological borrowings come to the historical and etymological analysis (Kunin O. V., Nazarian A. G.) or retrace the way of the phonetic, grammatical or the semantic evolution of the borrowings in correlation with the development of these units in the language-source (Soloduho E. M). So, despite the fact that phraseological units are highly informative units which keep the knowledge and experience of different nations, the problem of the borrowed phraseological units remains an unstudied sphere within the cognitive linguistics.

That is why *the subject-matter* of the given article is the inner form of the wildlife component in English phraseological units of Latin and French origin.

*The tasks* of the research are:

- 1) to single out English phraseological units with wildlife components;
- 2) to make the etymological investigation of the borrowed phraseological units of Latin and French origin with wildlife components;
- 3) to analyze the inner form of the wildlife component in English phraseological units of Latin and French origin.

There are words which, as a rule, undergo the metaphorization. Among these words there are the names of parts of the human body, animals and plants, materials and household items, etc. But this time we are going to concentrate our attention on the names of wild animals. Many of the animal names have become the steady metaphors showing the characteristic features of a man or a woman, for example, *a fox – a cunning person, an ass – a stupid or stubborn person.*

Animals in the animalistic fairy tales and fables are characterized by the human features, behave like people and use the things of material culture of people. For example, in Aesop's fable "The Fox and the Grapes", the Fox came across a ripe and large bunch of grapes and decided to taste it. But after several attempts he couldn't get it, that is why the Fox said that he saw the grapes were sour and because of this he didn't want them. The cognitive structure, correlated to the level of the inner form of the phraseological unit, keeps this knowledge: *sour grapes (Aesop "The Fox and the Grapes") – criticism of anything that a person cannot get or achieve.*

The borrowed phraseological units, the sources of which are animalistic, magic and domestic fairy-tales and fables, are presented in the research material.

#### **Phraseological units with the component "bird"**

In the phraseological stock of the English language there are several phraseological units with the component "bird". First of all, the Latin expression *rara avis* and its phraseological calque *a rare bird* – an unusual or even extraordinary thing should be mentioned. Rather often it is used humorously about a person who is not met or seen very often.

Also there is a phrase *birds of a feather* (cf *Lat. pares cum paribus*) – *people with similar tastes, interests, etc.* This expression comes from the proverb *birds of a feather flock together (Lat. pares cum paribus facillime congregantur / Concolores aves facillime congregantur).*

When a person has been able to complete two different tasks or solve two or more tasks simultaneously, the phraseological unit *Kill two birds with one stone (Fr. faire d'une pierre deux coups)* – to achieve two (or sometimes more) actions by doing only one action is used. Besides, a proverb *Every bird likes its own nest / Every bird thinks his own nest best (Fr. à chaque oiseau son nid est beau)* is often used in English.

In the expression *One speaks as he thinks (cf Lat. Canit avis quaevis sicut rostrum sibi crevit – every bird sings in such a way as its beak lets)* – *you shouldn't expect more of the person, he or she does as much as he or she can* – there is no component "bird". But nevertheless it can easily be compared with the given Latin expression, that is why it is placed in this thematic group.

The investigation of the inner form and the meaning of the following units shows that the component "bird" is also associated with getting news. But if the first one, with *bad birds (Lat. malis avibus, Cicero)*, implies the bad news, the second unit gives the opposite meaning with *good birds (Lat. bonis avibus)* – under favourable omens and sometimes can be compared with *bonis auspiciis (Lat.)* and have the connotation of wishing a nice and safe trip.

In such a way, the analysis of the inner form of the borrowed phraseological units shows that they contain the human's knowledge about birds which has been collected during centuries.

#### **Phraseological units with the component "crow"**

As for the phraseological units with the component "crow", it has been found only some of them. The first example is a borrowed phraseological unit as the *crow flies (Fr. a vol d'oiseau)* – in a straight line, the shortest distance between two points. This idiom is the result of noticing that crows fly in direct routes without paying attention to rivers, lakes, forests, hedges, and so on, i.e. they have no obstacles on their way and that is why they move very fast.

The second is a native one – to have a crow to pluck with – to have something to revenge someone. The origin of this phrase comes back to ancient times when children had birds as pets. When the children made quarrels during their games, they started to pluck or pull feathers of each other's birds trying to take out on his opponent for his own losing [4]. Nowadays it has the meaning that the speaker has something to discuss and he is annoyed and bothered with this problem.

Thus, direct observations of the surrounding world have led to the appearance of the phraseological units with the component "crow".

#### **Phraseological units with the component "fly"**

A very small number of borrowed phraseological units with the component "fly", is presented in the English phraseological stock. Here are some examples.

A fly on the wheel / coach (Fr. la mouche du coche) – a person of little consequence who considers himself of great importance. It comes from Laurentius Abstemius's fable about a fly which sat on the chariot-wheel at the beginning of the race and, watching a swirl of dust, said "See what a dust I make" [4].

To catch the fly (Fr. prendre la mouche) – make a fuss about nothing. This expression is used when someone is angry for no reason or because of a trifle.

To making a mountain out of a molehill (cf Lat. *Elephantum ex musca facis* – to make an elephant out of a fly) – to make a big and difficult problem out of something small and unimportant. The given expression does not have the component “fly” but as comes from the following Latin expression, it is placed in this thematic group.

Besides, there are some native phraseological units with the component “fly”, such as *a fly in the ointment (nat)*. – an only thing that can spoil the whole situation, like *a fly in amber (nat)*. – something very rare, but well preserved (like prehistoric insects in amber) and *to be a fly on the wall (nat)*. – to wish to find out what will be said or done without being seen or heard.

So, phraseological units with the component “fly” are also based on the direct observations of the surrounding world and are used to talk a person who gets nervous about a matter of indifference.

#### **Phraseological units with the component “fox”**

In the phraseological stock of the English language there are native phraseological units with the component “fox” that present the complex of associations “a fox – a very clever and artful person”:

as crafty / cunning / sly / wily as a fox – smart, extremely clever, shrewd;

to play (the) fox – to behave in a devious way;

to be crazy like a fox – to be very clever while pretending to be a fool.

It also can be found in the proverb *Don't let the fox guard the henhouse* (cf Lat. *Ovem lupo committere* – to let a wolf guard a sheep) – to avoid trusting the chosen person to protect something as he / she is an absolutely incorrect person for the task.

As for the component “fox” in borrowed phraseological units, it can be found in

*An old fox is not caught in a snare* (Lat. *Annosa vulpes haud [facile] capitur laqueo*) – an old person is an experienced one as during his or her life the person has got different situations which made him or her cautious and wise.

*A fox may change its hair, not its tricks* (Lat. *Vulpes pilum mutat, non mores*) – a person can change his or her behaviour but not the ambitions.

*With foxes you must play the fox* (Lat. *Contra vulpem vulpinandum*) – it is necessary to behave in a cunning way with cunning people. To some extent it is similar to the expression *To set a thief to catch a thief*.

The next three phraseological units have got a similar meaning – in case the strength and valour (i.e. a lion's behaviour) do not help, it is necessary to use cunning and wiliness (i.e. to behave like a fox) to achieve the necessary goal:

*Sew the fox's skin to the lions* (Fr. *coudre la peau du renard à celle du lion*);

*The fox's skin must be sewn to that of the lion* (Lat. *cutis vulpina consuenda est cum cute leonis*);

*If the lion's skin is not enough, we must sew on the fox's / If the Lion's skin cannot, the Fox's shall* (Lat. *si leonina pellis non satis est, assuenda vulpina*).

So, the component “fox” has associations with a crafty, sly and artful person.

#### **Phraseological units with the component “eel”**

To some extent phraseological units with the component “eel” are similar to the phraseological units with the component “fox”. But the gained knowledge that an eel is a very slippery fish which is almost impossible to hold with hands, gives some more additional meaning:

*as slippery as an eel (nat)*. – something that is very difficult to grasp; somebody who is elusive, devious and untrustworthy; a person who is very difficult to catch or to get the necessary answers;

*to skin an eel by the tail (nat)*. – to do something in a wrong way.

The borrowed phraseological unit with the key component “eel” is

*to hold an eel by the tail* (Lat. *anguillam cauda tenes*) – to try to contact a very elusive person.

Therefore, the component “eel” has associations which deals with something or someone that is very difficult to take hold of.

#### **Phraseological units with the component “hare”**

A rather small amount of borrowed phraseological units with the component “hare” has been found in the English phraseological stock. The most frequently used phrases among them are

*to live the life of a hare* (Lat. *leporis vitam vivit*) – to be always scared;

*here lies the hare* (Lat. *hic jacet lepus*) – here lies the difficulty.

As for the proverbs, first of all there should be mentioned the one which is often used as a warning *the one who follows two hares is sure to catch neither* (Lat. *duos qui sequitur lepores neutrum capit*) – if a person tries to cope with two different things simultaneously, he will do nothing.

Besides, to show sarcasm and disapproval of somebody's behaviour the following proverb can be used: *hares may pull dead lions by the beard / even hares strike (or insult) a dead lion* (Lat. *mortuo leoni et lepores insultant*) – to demonstrate self-confidence only in front of weaker people.

So, the presented examples demonstrate that the cognitive structure “hare” which is correlated with the borrowed phraseological units has a meaning of cowardice and self-assurance.

#### **Phraseological units with the component “lion”**

The metaphorical transfer *a lion – a brave person* is familiar to the native English speakers since ancient times which can be seen in the comparison “as bold / brave as a lion”. What is more, at the beginning of the 12<sup>th</sup> century Richard I was called *Richard the Lionheart* (*Lionhearted*) for his bravery. Besides, as a lion is often associated with nobility, courage, vigour etc., it often appears in heraldry, e.g. the lion is a symbol of Great Britain and the expression *the British Lion* is used when the British nation is mentioned.

On the other hand, the cognitive analysis of the phraseological unit *to beard the lion (in his den)* – to confront a danger or a risk (to resist someone on his / her territory) allows to say that the component “lion” arouses the associations of not only force and power but also of danger. The analogical complex of associations occurs also in the following borrowed phraseological units:

*to put / stick one's head in the lion's mouth* (Lat. *liberatus sum de ore leonis*) – to place oneself in a difficult or dangerous situation;

to throw somebody to the lions (wolves) / to be thrown (tossed / fed) to the lions (Lat. *et in lacum leonum missi sunt*) – to be unexpectedly put in an unpleasant or difficult situation *when a person can be treated badly, unfair and without any help*;  
*the stag provoked becomes a lion (Lat. cervus lacessitus leo) – even not a very brave person becomes brave and dangerous being annoyed*;

*a lion in the path / in the way – a dander or an obstacle, very often an imaginary one*;

do not irritate / provoke (the) lions (Lat. *noli irritare leones*) – to avoid problems do not disturb those problems. Besides, it should be mentioned that in Latin it has been found some more creatures that should not be disturbed. They are octopuses, scorpions *Noli octipedem / scorpionum excitare* – don't wake up octopuses / scorpions and hornets *Noli irritare crabrones* – don't disturb hornets.

Very often in fairy tales and fables, the lion is characterized as “King of animals” who kills other animals and eats the greater part of the prey. Due to this the following expressions appear:

the lion's share (Fr. *part du lion*) – bigger or the biggest part;

the lion's partnership (Lat. *leonina societas*) – a partnership in which one partner, being the most powerful one, takes the whole of the profit.

In the given examples, the component “lion” evokes associations connected with domination of the lion over the other animals.

Thus, the component “*lion*” arouses the complex of associations connected with grandeur, supremacy, and at the same time danger and hostility. The similarity of associations can be observed in native and borrowed phraseological units and is caused by the equal perception of the animal world.

#### **Phraseological units with the component “snake” (“serpent”)**

It should be mentioned that since ancient times, a snake has been a symbol of wisdom, health and an object of worship. The earliest mentions of the snakes belong to the ancient Egyptians and Greeks. The image of a snake as a symbol of healing (small portions of poison were used for medical purposes), youth (every year a snake changes its skin, i.e. becomes younger), and longevity (snakes live long) exists in caduceus, a well-known medical symbol [8]. On the other hand, a snakebite is dangerous (and sometimes fatal) for people and animals. However, native and borrowed phraseological units with the component “*snake*” have only negative connotation as the following examples show:

a snake in the grass (Lat. *latet anguis in herba*) – a person with harmful intentions who is not easily recognizable, a hidden enemy is based on the metaphor a snake – a mean and guileful person. The indication of cruelty and meanness is taken from the association stock – the knowledge that the snake is hardly visible in the grass and that its bite may be fatal. This metaphor was firstly used in “The Eclogues” by the Roman poet Virgil.

to swallow (grass) snakes (Fr. *avalier des couleuvres*) – 1) to be very naive and believe everything what is said; 2) to be forced to accept something unpleasant without any word of protest.

One of quite possible explanations of this phrase is the following: in old times eels were served as a delicious dish. And a host could sometimes add pieces of snakes there whether to make revenge or to play a joke. The person who got such a dish might not notice the difference and ate it credulously or having understood the situation could do nothing as he didn't want to show the absence of good manners and he had to eat the given meal.

to nourish / nurse / nurture a snake (a serpent / a viper) in one's bosom (Lat. *viperam nutrire sub ala* (Petronius); *in sinu viperam habere* (Cicero)) – someone who is believed, cared and trusted suddenly behaves ungratefully and unreliably.

There is Aesop's fable “The Farmer and the Viper” about a man who found a snake which was almost dead from cold. The man felt pity for it and wanted to save. To warm the snake he put it next to his skin. But when the snake felt better, it bit the man.

to scotch the snake, not kill it (nat., Shakespeare) – *to neutralize something or somebody temporally*.

The phrase was used in “Macbeth” and sounded “*scotch'd the snake, not kill'd it*”. It had a meaning “we have wounded the snake but have not killed it completely”. With the help of this phrase Macbeth explained his wife that in spite of killing king Duncan they couldn't still be sure of getting the throne.

In such a way, the given examples show that the native and borrowed phraseological units containing the component “*snake*” reflect a negative evaluation of the snakes and the analogy between a snake and an insidious, untrustworthy and mean person.

#### **Phraseological units with the component “wolf”**

The phraseological unit a big bad wolf (nat.) – someone or something that threatens or causes fear shows that the element “*wolf*” arouses the associations connected with threat or fear. In the following borrowed phraseological units, the component “*wolf*” evokes the similar associations:

to have / hold a wolf by the ears (Lat. *lupum auribus tenere*; from Terence *Auribus teneo lupum Auribus tenere lupum*) – *to be in situation equally dangerous to retain or to abandon*;

to put one's head into the wolf's mouth (Aesop “The Wolf and the Crane”) – *to expose oneself to the needless danger*;

between dog and wolf (Lat. *inter canem et lupum*) – at twilight. It means the time when it is difficult to distinguish a dog (something familiar and harmless) from a wolf (something unknown and frightening), i.e. a friend from an enemy.

The analysis of the borrowed phraseological units shows that complex of associations connected with the element “*wolf*” is various. For example, wolf's head (Lat. *caput lupinum*) – *to be outlawed*. This phrase was said about a person who was an outlaw, he had no rights and anybody could kill that person freely. The expression wolf's head (Lat. *caput lupinum*) was used to show that that person is like a lonely wolf, i.e. an ordinary dangerous wild beast, which is not under the protection of law and which should be destroyed.

Besides, in spite of the fact that among the ancient Egyptians and Romans a wolf was a symbol of valour [5, 375], it was so terrifying that its one glance deprives of a gift of speech: to see a wolf (Lat. *lupi videre priores*) – *to be tongue tied*.

Also in fairy tales a wolf appears suddenly: the wolf in the fable / tale (Lat. *lupus in fabula* (Terence)) – a person who appears just as he is being spoken of.

There is an opinion that according to the Christian image world, a wolf is considered to be a symbol of the devil, threatening all good people. Thus, in the phraseological unit a wolf in sheep's clothing – *a person with a pleasant and friendly appearance that*

*hides the fact that he / she is evil*, the wolf is regarded as a character of false prophets and tempters, whose aim is to ruin the simple-hearted [5, 375].

One more example is *Man is a wolf to a man* (Lat. *Homo homini lupus est*; from Plautus *Lupus est homo homini*). This phrase is used to describe a person's behaviour which is compared with a wolf's behaviour. And as a wolf considered to be selfish, cruel and mean, the same characteristics are given to the person who behaves himself / herself more like an animal rather than a civilized personality.

So, in the given language community, the image of a wolf is associated with danger and hostility. Native and borrowed phraseological units with the component "wolf" have only negative connotations, in spite of the fact that there are legends in which the she-wolf took care and brought up the human children Romulus and Remus, the future founders of Rome, saving them from death (*The Capitoline Wolf* (Lat. *Lupa Capitolina*)).

*Conclusions.* As O. S. Kubriakova rightly mentions, any phraseological unit as a linguistic sign is a keeper of our knowledge about the world and is considered to be a carrier of information, a special structure of knowledge [1]. Having examined the cognitive level of the inner form of the English phraseological units of Latin and French origin with wildlife components, it can be noticed that they contain the human knowledge of the world and the role of people in it. Besides, the similarity of the images and associations, connected with the investigated wildlife component, is caused by rather identical cognition of the world around – the world of nature.

But during the research, except English phraseological units of Latin and French origin with fauna components, there have been noticed phraseological units with other components, such as names of parts of the human body, materials and household items, food, nature phenomena and plants etc. Therefore, we are going to proceed further in our next publications.

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