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**THE AXIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF THE EUPHEMISMS CONTAINING
A NUMERICAL COMPONENT (AS SEEN IN THE EXAMPLE
OF THE DRINKING CONCEPT)**

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Purpose: this article discusses which implicit meanings can be uncovered by means of the etymological analysis of the lexical units containing a numerical component as seen in the example of the lexemes which describe the degree of drunkenness in the English language.

Methodology: method of continuous sampling; descriptive method, etymological analysis of the lexical units.

Results: The analysis of the numerical component in the DRINKING concept helps one to better study the inner form of the latter and understand its cultural meanings. The ideas taken as a basis for the nomination of some phrases are impossible to clarify, however all the expressions describe a different degree of violation of the norm.

Practical implications: lectures on stylistics and lexicology; teaching English as a foreign language; dictionary compiling; interpreter preparation.

Keywords: DRINKING concept; the category of quantity; quantificativity; numerical component; inner form.

АКСИОЛОГИЧЕСКИЙ АНАЛИЗ ЭВФЕМИЗМОВ, СОДЕРЖАЩИХ ЧИСЛОВОЙ КОМПОНЕНТ (НА ПРИМЕРЕ КОНЦЕПТА DRINKING)

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Цель: рассмотреть, какие имплицитные смыслы концепта DRINKING могут быть восстановлены путем анализа этимологии лексических средств, содержащих числовой компонент, на примере лексем, описывающих степень опьянения в английском языке.

Метод или методология проведения работы: метод сплошной выборки из словарей, метод анализа словарных дефиниций, этимологический анализ лексических единиц.

Результаты: Анализ использования числового компонента в концепте DRINKING помогает лучше изучить внутреннюю форму последнего и раскрыть его культурологические смыслы. Идеи, положенные в основу номинации некоторых выражений, уже не представляется возможным выяснить, однако во всех выражениях речь идет о разной степени нарушения нормы.

Область применения результатов: лекционные курсы стилистики и лексикологии; практика преподавания английского языка как иностранного; при составлении словарей и в практике подготовки переводчиков.

Ключевые слова: концепт DRINKING; категория количества, квантификативность; числовой компонент; внутренняя форма.

The distinguishing feature of the lexical material of the DRINKING concept is a high frequency of its representatives in speech which justifies its high communicative relevance [1]. The analysis of this concept shows a broad range of its representation in the semantic area of the English language. Frequently, a negative

assessment and violation of the norm prevail, which is specific of the concept in question [2], [3].

According to A. Kiklevich, the category of quantity is a complicatedly organized subsystem in the semantic system of the language [8, p.6]. One of the variations of the category of quantity is quantificativity. In the broad sense of a word, by quantificativity we understand the lexical means, expressing quantity with the help of different linguistic means. As functional classes of the category of quantity we consider different quantificative expressions (for example, such words as *much*, *little*, *a little*, any number expressions, etc.).

A.A. Tertychnyy notices in his article «A number is a delicate thing» «number information gives the material more objectivity, visibility and proof» [12, p.76]. The conceptual foundations of the linguistic numerology in the DRINKING concept help to better understand the inner form of the concept in question and study the specifics of the world perception of the English speaking nations.

As V. Zusman notices, the inner form of the concept is dynamic, potential and symbolic [6, p.17]. We define the inner form of the concept as the inner form of the words-representatives of this concept. As Yu.S. Maslov believes, the inner form is «an imprint of that movement of the thought which took place at the moment of the word's appearance preserved in a word» [10, p.123].

Yu. S. Stepanov analyses the inner form of a word to get the information about the structure of a concept, whereas V.I. Karasik sees the inner form of the words as an additional means for studying the cultural dominants in a language [7, p.195].

For the purposes of this research we define the inner form of words as their etymology. To clarify the inner form of a concept it is necessary to know the etymological data. Let's consider which implicit meanings can be uncovered by means of the etymological analysis of the lexical units containing a numerical component as seen in the example of the lexemes which describe the degree of drunkenness.

We do not quite agree with A.G. Boychenko who, when studying the DRINKING concept in the Russian concept sphere, wrote that «the implicit meanings of the DRINKING concept, discovered with the help of the analysis of the etymological links of its representatives, justify on the linguistic level the universality of the conceptuality of the alcoholic theme as an over-national constant» [4, p.152].

We agree that the character of the basic cognitive categories is universal and their contents do not depend on which language a person speaks but are defined by the cognitive factors on which a cognitive human activity is built» [9, p.11]. However, we suppose, that firstly, it refers not to all basic categories, and secondly, that an alcoholic theme is a more like a national constant with its specific ways of conceptualization which are specific for different societies. Moreover, as A.Wierzbicka fairly notices, the more simple the concept, the less dependent on the culture it is [22, p.288], correspondingly, «complex» concepts will be more culture-dependent and thus the process of conceptualization will be very specific.

As a rule, the numerical component in the euphemisms, meaning «drunk» is represented by:

1. a numeral;
2. an adverb *too* in combination with a pronoun *much/many*;
3. adverbs (*a little/a few/a bit*);
4. a percentage proportion;
5. a fraction;
6. a noun, meaning quantity (*number, couple, double*);
7. a semi-affix *half*.

The axiological significance of the quantificative expressions in the DRINKING concept lies in the indication of the excessive use of the alcoholic beverages.

Very often the words meaning quantity (number, couple) serve as a numerological component: *had a couple (of drinks/shooters), had a number of beers*.

The numeral *one* (or the article *a* in the meaning «one») is often used in the expressions in which there is an indication that one had a glass/cup/drop, etc. too many: *(take) a glass too much, (had) a drop too much, (had) a cup too much/has (got) a cup too much, (had) one too many, had a cup too many, has taken a drop too many, one too many under the belt.*

Had one or two – «slightly drunk».

The idiom *had one for the worms* may have the following explanation: alcohol is considered to kill microbes. Hence, there is an opinion that worms also die under the influence of the alcohol consumed.

The numeral *two* and the noun *double* often imply hallucinations: *seeing by twos/seeing double*. It is explained by a famous fact that a drunkard can develop a diplopia – a double vision.

Three sheets in/to the wind/three sheets – the phrase comes from the nautical slang. *Sheets* in the nautical terminology are ropes or chains which are fixed to the lower corners of sails, to hold them in place. If three sheets are loose and blowing about in the wind then the sails will flap and the boat will lurch about like a drunken sailor [17], [19].

Other variations of this phrase are: *three sheets in the shade, three sheets in the wind and one flapping/three sheets in the wind and the other one flapping, three sheets in the wind's eye, two sheets in/to the wind* (a smaller degree of drunkenness is implemented than in the phrase *three sheets in/to the wind*, the smallest degree – *one sheet in/to the wind/a sheet in the wind's eye*, the extreme degree of drunkenness is expressed in the expressions *four sheets/four sheets in/to the wind, six sails in the wind/six sheets in the wind/9 sheets to the wind*).

Carrying two/three red lights.

This phrase is also likely to originate from the nautical terminology: in case of emergency a ship transmits color distress signals displaying groups of three flares or short color signals separated by a short pause – they are red fires fired by rockets or

grenades [11]. The sight of a very drunk person «signalizes» that he can't control himself.

The expressions *one brick short of a load*/*three bricks short of a load* are variations of the idiom often used in the American and British English (means a mad/insane person) [16]. Also mean «drunk».

Drank the three outs – the phrase means «to drink to excess». Possibly *the three outs* figuratively means that a person 1. drank all alcohol, 2. drank until he was out of his head, 3. drank until his money was out of his pocket [18].

The phrases *(one) over the eight*/*with one over the eight* originate from British military slang and are based on the assumption that an ordinary man can safely drink eight glasses of beer [15]. The idiom appeared in the early thirties of the 20th century when beer was not as strong as nowadays. The variations of the idiom are: *one over the odds*, *one over the light*.

Locoed out on an 8-ball.

8-ball is a billiards game, popular in many countries of the world. It is played with 15 balls and a cue ball. The goal of each player is to pocket their set of balls (solid: 1-7, or stripes: 9-15) and then to pocket the 8 ball. The first player to legally pocket the 8 ball wins the game. To pocket the 8 ball where the opponent points out is the most difficult thing in this game and can take a long period of time enough to get heavily drunk.

Eighty-six/eighty-sixed/86ed.

Eighty-six – «86» – in bar slang means to refuse to serve (a customer) alcoholic drinks [20]. The origin of this term remains obscure but can relate to one of the following hypotheses: 1) Chumley's Bar and Restaurant at Bedford street, 86, Greenwich village, NYC; 2) in New-York at Delmonico's restaurant the Delmonico steak was item 86 on the menu. It was often unavailable in the early years of the establishment and, when sold out, it was «86'd» [19]; 3) During the Great Depression in the 30's in America in the free canteens for the poor they often cooked only for 85

people, the 86th person was not served; 4) a coffin is usually 8 feet long and it is dug 6 feet deep, thus a person in the coffin is «eight by sixed» (shortly «86ed») [23].

One and thirty – the idiom means «very drunk».

One and thirty – is a Spanish card game, a predecessor to modern blackjack (appeared at the end of the 16 century). In this game each player antes in and is dealt three cards, a total of 31 is the highest hand [14].

45 degrees listed.

The phrase may also come from the nautical slang. *List* in the nautical terminology means a vessel's angle of lean or tilt to one side, in the direction called roll. A 45 degree lean is considered to be quite severe and potentially dangerous.

Twelve Gauged/12 Gauged.

The term *12 Gauge* is used for describing the diameter of the barrel in guns [23]. A 12-gauge shot is known to have the biggest diameter of the barrel, moreover, 12 gauge is the most widespread on the territory of the USA [13, p.361]. Figuratively, the phrase may mean that a person got terribly drunk, extremely intoxicated.

80.

As a slang term it means «drunk». It refers to 80 proof, the most common concentration of hard liquor [20].

Reached a hundred proof.

Proof is the measure of the percentage of alcohol in potent potables. 100 proof means 50% alcohol, so this may mean extremely intoxicated (as the beverages with such percentage of alcohol are known to be very strong).

Drunker than 300 dollars – the understanding of the idiom may be based on the fact that 300 dollars is a big sum of money for an average American. *Drunker than 300 dollars* may mean that a person spent more than 300 dollars on the alcoholic drinks and that is why they are very drunk.

Drunker than five thousand Indians.

Earlier *Indian* as a slang term meant «penny». So, the phrase may mean «drunker than 50 dollars» and have the same explanation as the above idiom.

The idioms *drunk as ten Indians*, *drunk as a thousand Apaches* (slang) may have the same explanation.

The phrases with adverbs *a little/a few/a bit*; an adverb *too* in combination with a pronoun *much/many* (*had a few drinks*, *had a little*, *had a bit of the creature*, *to get a bit on*, *(had) a few (too many)*, *had a little too many/much*, *taken too much*, *been barring too much*, *(had) too much*) mean «to get drunk».

The adverbs *(a)little*, *(a)bit* are also used for describing a light degree of drunkenness (*lit up a little bit*, *lit a bit*, *little bit on the go*, *little (bit) round the corner*, *little off the beam*, *little tight*, *little woozy*).

To describe a light degree of drunkenness fractions can also be used (*three parts five-eighths*/*three parts seven-eighths* – these are the phrases from the nautical slang, possibly derived from the idiom *three sheets to the wind* [18]), and the phrases with the semi-affix *half* (*half-drunk*, *half-canned*, *half-cooked*, и т.д.).

The origin of the phrase with a percentage proportion *99-44/100% drunk* is very interesting.

One of the most famous and long-lasting advertising slogans in history is the Ivory Soap slogan «99 44/100% Pure». Ivory Soap was created by Proctor & Gamble in 1878. A new soap formula resulted in a white soap with some special characteristics. The bars made from it floated, instead of sinking like other soaps. The chemical analysis showed that the new soap did not fall into the category of *pure* – the ingredients equaled 56/100%. Harley Procter subtracted from 100, and wrote the slogan «99-44/100% Pure: It Floats» [5], [21]. The idiom *99-44/100% drunk* is likely to mean that a person is very drunk (99,44% drunk).

So, the uncovering of the origin of the drinking idioms is based, in many cases, on special background knowledge about the realias particular to the English cultural community.

The analysis of the numerical component in the DRINKING concept helps one to better study the inner form of the latter and understand its cultural meanings. The etymology of the idioms containing numerical components which express the

category of quantity shows that they are often connected with nautical, military terminology, bar slang, card slang – that is, that they are related to those spheres which are often associated with drinking alcohol. The phrases mainly describe a great degree of drunkenness. In some cases, to understand the mechanism of the phrase formation it is necessary to have special knowledge in advertising, alcohol production, sports, and board games.

The ideas taken as a basis for the nomination of some phrases are impossible to clarify, however, all the expressions describe a different degree of violation of the norm.

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