Linguistic and Semantic Representation of the WAR Concept by Phraseological Units

Solomiia Albota

Lviv Polytechnic National University, Bandera Str. 12, 79013 Lviv, Ukraine

Abstract

The relevance of the paper is determined by the need for a comprehensive study of the process of verbalization of the WAR concept using phraseological units as microtexts that store information about culture, and their components, semantics along with cultural codes. In order to allocate phraseological units, such English language thesaurus as Cambridge and Macmillan dictionaries have been chosen as a material for linguistic data. The Reddit social environment has been used as an instrument to reveal semantic contexts of the WAR by means of phraseological units. Thorough linguistic and semantic analysis of the variety of Reddit war posts and comments has been conducted. Textual software (LIWC-22) has been applied to the linguistically elaborated data in order to represent it in a percentage ratio and compare with the average for social media language statistics revealing the WAR semantics according to the following semantic groups: positive emotions, negative emotions and cognitive processes.

Keywords

WAR concept, phraseological units, linguistic and semantic analysis, Reddit social environment, post, comment, LIWC-22, contextual analysis, linguistic interpretation

1. Introduction

One of the most distinct features of modern linguistics is the emergence and intensive development of new linguistic trends, among which the most relevant are those involving the conceptual study [1; 2]. Ambiguity in the interpretation of its main concepts, diversity of approaches to the analysis of linguistic phenomena seems to be common in terms of formation of a new scientific direction. The concept itself does not have a unanimous definition either. It is considered a complex of culturally determined ideas about the subject [3; 4] as well as the union of mental and psychic resources of our consciousness, those information structures that reflect human knowledge and experience [5; 6]. The aim of this paper is to reveal the semantics of the WAR concept by means of phraseological units, the study of which is based on knowledge of cultural studies, because they contain elements of the national color and mentality of the people. This approach makes it possible to understand the meaning and use of phraseological units in a specific cultural context. Additional task is to apply textual semantic analysis using LIWC-22 software in order to reveal WAR semantics according to the emotion tone and cognitive processes, and statistically represent the linguistic data.

The study of phraseological units is an important aspect of learning any language, including English and Ukrainian languages. Phraseological units consist of words that are used together, so they cannot be considered separately. They have their own meaning, which may differ from the meaning of the individual words that make up these phraseological units. In addition, the use of idioms in speech makes it more expressive and understandable, since these constructions are standard and familiar to native speakers. In addition, phraseological units help enrich the vocabulary and improve the level of understanding of a foreign language.

EMAIL: Solomiia.M.Albota@lpnu.ua (S. Albota) ORCID: 0000-0003-3548-1919 (S. Albota)



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Moreover, phraseological units reflect the cultural characteristics and traditions of the people who use this language. They often contain metaphors, allegories, and other linguistic devices that may be difficult for speakers of another culture or language to understand.

In addition, the study of phraseological units can be useful for the development of speech competence, which includes not only knowledge of grammar and vocabulary, but also the ability to use language in various situations and communications.

Therefore, the study of phraseological units is an important aspect of learning any language, which can help to improve the level of understanding, expressiveness of speech and the development of speech competence.

2. Studies Referring to the Issue

It should be emphasized that WAR is usually considered as a concept in the conceptual picture of the world in linguistics which justifies its significance and relevance. However, this paper focuses on the perception of war around the world with attention to unknown users of social networks, which diversifies the linguosemantic analysis of the material. Traditionally, military affairs played a significant role in English-speaking society. Unfortunately, in the light of the events of recent months in our country, we can conclude that the relevance of researching this concept is beyond doubt, as social networks are full of aggressive sentiments in the comments. Since we have chosen the social network Reddit (http://www.reddit.com) as a basis for linguistic analysis, the verbal disclosure of the consequences of war is covered in Internet discourse (real-time discussions are held in the Megathread section https://www.reddit.com). The meaning of such a concept is conditional, since the phenomenon of war is consciously perceived in different ways. For most people, war is associated with coercion, loss, destruction and death. In this paper, we examine social comments on the social network *Reddit*, which we consider both positive and negative, as well as distinct cognitive processes. It is worth noting that the social representation of war implies nothing more than a negative perception, although we analyze the semantics of the comments, and they can be interpreted both positively and negatively depending on the degree of perception. There is a task to incorporate phraseological means into the linguistic and semantic analysis of the WAR concept.

Phraseological units are constituent parts of the language that differ from ordinary words and phrases. They consist of words that have a stable combination and meaning that cannot be understood on the basis of the literary meaning of individual words.

The theoretical basis of the study of phraseological units includes various approaches. For example, the structural-functional approach allows you to study phraseology from the point of view of grammatical and structural features. This approach helps to understand how a phraseological unit is composed and what role it plays in speech [7].

In addition, the study of phraseological units is based on knowledge of cultural studies, because phraseological units contain elements of the national color and mentality of the people. This approach makes it possible to understand the meaning and use of phraseological units in a specific cultural context.

One of the most important methodological approaches is contextual analysis, since the meaning of phraseological units depends on the context of use. The context can be determined by both linguistic (the text in which the phraseology is used) and extralinguistic (the situation in which the phraseology is used) aspects [8].

In general, the study of phraseological units is based on a complex approach that includes theoretical and methodological approaches, knowledge of linguistics and cultural studies, as well as the ability to root out contextual analysis and research on the sources of use of phraseological units.

One of the methods of researching phraseological units is corpus analysis, which consists in collecting and analyzing texts of various genres in order to identify and describe the use of phraseological units in different contexts. This approach makes it possible to obtain comprehensive information about the semantics, structure and use of phraseological units in various types of speech and communicative situations.

Moreover, methods such as comparing international and national phraseological units, analyzing phraseological classifications and cultural sources, researching the role use of phraseological units in different genres of speech, etc. are used to study phraseological units [9].

Therefore, the study of phraseological units is based on a comprehensive analysis of theoretical and methodological approaches, knowledge of linguistics and cultural studies, the use of corpus and other research methods that allow obtaining comprehensive information about the semantics, structure and use of phraseological units in speech.

An important aspect of studying phraseological units is also their role in the communicative process and interaction of speech partners. Phraseologisms are highly expressive and expressive, they help emphasize emotional states and shades of speech, give the text a humorous or ironic tone, strengthen the persuasiveness of arguments, etc. [10].

However, the use of phraseological units can also lead to understanding the text in a superstitious or stereotypical way, especially if they are used without taking into account the context and speech situation. Therefore, the study of phraseological units requires not only analytical skills, but also a deep understanding of cultural features and social norms of speech use.

In general, the study of phraseological units is an important aspect of linguistic research. It helps to reveal the multifacetedness and complexity of the language, its cultural and historical context, as well as to reveal the mechanisms of its interaction with other aspects of human activity [11].

Another important aspect of the study of phraseological units is their role in the study of language culture and the development of speaking competence. The study of phraseological units helps not only to deepen their knowledge of the language, but also to develop the ability to use language tools correctly in various speech situations.

In addition, the study of phraseological units is an important element of the formation of speech culture. There is a task to distinguish stylistic and emotional shades of phraseological units, to find analogies and differences between phraseological units of different languages. The study of phraseological units contributes to the formation of speech culture, the expansion of speech abilities and the development of critical thinking.

3. Phraseological Units Revealing the War Concept: Linguistic Representation

The concept as a multidimensional and culturally significant social and psychological formation within the collective consciousness of a certain language community is implied in the content of lexical units, a corpus of phraseology [12]. In other words, the concept receives linguistic expression through the means of language, in particular through phraseological units [13]. According to the cognitive linguistics, phraseological units are considered as a culturally determined sign representation of the world, as a cognitive form of information processing in the human mind [14, 15, 16]. In this paper, the concept of WAR is uncovered through a set of phraseological units allocated from Cambridge [17] and Macmillan [18] dictionaries, where the meaning of one and the same unit from one source has been compared with those units from other sources in order to make sure that assigning the unit to the military thematic group

is relevant. Phraseological units consist of words that are used together, so they cannot be considered separately. They have their own meaning, which may differ from the meaning of the individual words that make up these phraseological units [19].

This time there is an attempt to consider English phraseological units which are close in meaning to our national and cultural peculiarities, mainly to the perception of war realias in Ukraine. The reason is that the linguistic data has been allocated on the basis of the Reddit social media with English language content in order to trace the peculiarities of attitude of foreign network users to the war in Ukraine. In addition, phraseological units help enrich the vocabulary and improve the level of understanding of a foreign language. An important aspect of studying phraseological units is their role in the communicative process and interaction of speakers. Phraseologisms are highly expressive, they help emphasize emotional states and shades of speech. Among the analyzed phraseological units of the thematic group "war" in the English language, their adjectival, adverbial and prepositional categories are noted. Words and phrases referring to military sphere are highlighted in bold. Those units not being highlighted in bold include their linguistic interpretation referring to military actions in brackets.

Adjective phraseological units have the meaning of a sign of quality and, like adjectives, appear in a sentence in the function of attribute or nominal part of a predicate: *quick on the trigger* (full of energy, striving to win and gain benefits at any cost), *slow on the trigger* (feel lack of abilities, lose the winning skill), *armed to the teeth* (demonstrate readiness to combat and defend native country), *low on amps and voltage* (be low on sober mind, not control one's actions) [17; 18].

Adverbial and prepositional phraseological units include qualitative phraseological units. Qualitative adverbial idioms are stable phrases denoting the quality of any subject: *with flying colors* (feeling of the victory), *on the alert* (be ready to react the moment); *without* (*striking*) *a blow* (not taking part in battle), *up in arms* (demonstrate readiness to combat, to defend the native place), *above the battle* (the military actions are over), *with the colors* (be in charge of forming military staff) [17; 18].

The following phraseological units are classified according to the verbalized features of the WAR concept. The first semantic group of phraseological units includes those units indicating the beginning of a certain action, the military readiness to combat: *fly to arms* (to provide successful readiness to combat), *take up arms* (armour, military readiness to combat), *join battle* (start competition or negotiation), *clear the decks* (be ready to combat), *dig up the hatchet* (start a war) [17; 18].

The following group of verbal phraseological units outlines the nature of the battle, which can be both positive and hostile: *change one's battery* (change military actions into another direction), *mask one's batteries* (hide hostile intentions), *turn smb's battery against smb* (hit the enemy with his own weapon), *throw oneself into the breach* (to come to rescue) [17; 18].

Verbal phraseological units denoting success, victory should be singled out into a separate semantic group: *carry the day* (to win the battle), *save the day* (to decide the outcome of the battle), *show fight* (continue to resist) [17; 18].

On the contrary, there are a number of phraseological units that mean failure, collapse, defeat: *lay down one's arms* (surrender, capitulate), *throw down one's arms* (to throw down weapons), *fight a losing battle* (to wage a fruitless struggle), *leave smb in possession of the field* (to be defeated) [17; 18].

Stable combinations of phraseological units are also distinguished. They serve to express emotions and feelings, characterize the speaker's attitude to the topic of the statement: *all clear* (air raid passes), *as straight as an arrow* (without any deviation) [17; 18].

Communicative phraseology, i.e. proverbs and sayings, are considered: *attack is the best method of defense* (offense is the best defense), *a threatened blow is seldom given* (emerge unscathed from the battle), *every bullet has its billet* (what will happen cannot be avoided), *forewarned*, *forarmed* (warned means armed) [17; 18].

With regard to the allocated classification of the phraseological units which semantically foster to discover the WAR concept, there is a task to linguistically interpret the peculiarities of these phraseological units and their usage within the Reddit social media and to apply textual semantic analysis along with software application to the Reddit posts and comments in order to indicate the semantic nature of war in Ukraine among the foreign users and their attitude to this action.

4. Textual Semantic Analysis of the War concept through phraseological means

Actually, when conducting textual semantic analysis concerning peculiarities of WAR concept verbalization by means of phraseological units, there is a slight certainty to reveal the latter within Reddit social network (https://www.reddit.com/) as well as their close linguistic contexts because the Reddit social environment is full of colloquial speech inherent in obscene words and short dialogue replicas, etc. However, after a thorough linguistic analysis of the Reddit posts and comments, it was established that some individual users tend to use phraseological units in their speech while chatting.

The aim of this research is to discover as many cases as it is possible of those phraseological units representing the concept of WAR within the Reddit posts and their comments and apply textual semantic analysis by means of LIWC-22 software (<u>https://www.liwc.app/</u>) to the close contexts of these phraseological units discovered in a form of words, phrases, textual fragments based on the war semantics. The final step of the complex linguistic analysis is to indicate whether there are only negative emotions or positive emotions as well as cognitive processes and compare their percentage statistics with average for social media language one.

Unlike previous papers where the author discovered the semantics of war within the particular Reddit community [20-30], in this paper it is impossible to choose certain Reddit section as it is a rare chance to reveal any of the WAR phraseological units within this digital media. Firstly, the linguistic analysis lies in filtering all phraseological units concerning WAR in a search space and thoroughly analysis of their contexts in order to reveal semantic groups necessary for textual semantic analysis by means of LIWC-22 and further comparison in a statistical way, Figures 1, 2.

🌀 reddit	Q Search Results		
	Posts	Comments	

Figure 1: Working space for allocating the Reddit posts and comments concerning war in Ukraine



Figure 2: Filtering all phraseological units concerning WAR within the Reddit post search space

Since the meaning of phraseological units depends on the context of usage, the context can be determined by both linguistic (the text in which the phraseology is used) and extralinguistic (the situation in which the phraseology is used) aspects [19]. That is why the one of the tasks of this paper is also to discover the context these military phraseological units are surrounded by.

Secondly, the structure of the analyzed linguistic data has the following description: phraseological unit, in brackets – its equivalent from within the Reddit post section and semantic groups allocated according to the contexts this phraseological unit has been referred to. In each semantic group we highlight words and phrases in bold which denote affiliation to the certain emotional state.

The first phraseological unit – quick on the trigger (It's worrisome. I don't think their enemies will ever NOT haunt him...you never know whose attack will be quick on the trigger); semantic field – negative emotions (bullied into the whole thing; responsible for all their misery, slave, negatively affects everyone, mentalities are fucking awful, women are the most burdened by it, killed pregnant wife and two children, This is horrifying, murdering family), semantic field – cognitive processes (find someone who wants the same, be free, single, childless and start again, system takes away THEIR choice and freedom, ridiculing his victims and blaming them for his actions, is only going to get worse).

Within these linguistically analyzed semantic groups there is only a flow of negative states and even cognitive processes are mainly negatively-driven as semantically context of impulsive person lacks positivity, it is a sense of a poor both spiritually and physically enemy who only strives for ruins and deaths.

The second phraseological unit – *slow on the trigger* (*I was a little slow on the trigger the other night*); semantic field – **positive emotions** (*The second time was the charm*; *hoping to bully them into giving up*; *profitable contract; convince the player to chose us over them; enchanted weapon*

the defenders threw at them; with all magical effects drained; pushed along with the advancing army; These were even stronger now), smantic field – cognitive processes (his forces advanced on the human fortress). According to the context of this phraseological unit, only positive semantics dominate as our armed forces gain achievements. The paradox lies within these two antonymic phraseological units: where there is "quick", positive semantics must have prevailed, and with "slow" – negative, however, we consider war actions and the meaning of words does imply ambivalent senses. Contextual fragments referring to these two phraseological units were taken from the Reddit posts and comments enumerating 456 textual fragments which have been previously linguistically interpreted and semantically analyzed.

The third phraseological unit – *armed to the teeth (In a Nation Armed to the Teeth, These Tiny Missteps Led to Tragedy)*; semantic field – **positive emotions** (*Friendly reminder; well-regulated militia; in charge of guarding the citizens*); semantic field – **cognitive processes** (*prepared to kill everybody; How considerate of them; he'll make quick work of this problem; pick out the hotter houses; socially destructive law remains in place*). In this case, cognitive processes dominate as the semantics of combat readiness calls out for a comprehensive discussion and actions. Contextual fragments referring to this phraseological unit enumerated 283 textual fragments.

The fourth phraseological unit – *strike a blow* (*NATO summit was a success: Even without Ukraine's entrance, European unity strikes a blow to Putin*); semantic field – **negative emotions** (*being on a war*); semantic field – **positive emotions** (*a good reflex to terrorist war; like a participation award; compared to a gold medal*); semantic field – **cognitive processes** (active duty military). Here, positive semantics with readiness to go into a battle and win prevails. Among the phraseological units singled out for the WAR semantic analysis, there was *without* (*striking*) *a blow*, but as none of such unit was revealed, *strike a blow* is under investigation, and the real war is going on. Contextual fragments referring to this phraseological unit are the least in number in terms of comment section (enumerated only 5 textual fragments), which indicates not a recent event within the Reddit dialogue section and a lack of interest to this news statement).

The fifth phraseological unit – Up in arms (Ukrainian women take up in arms and join men in the war effort against Russia); semantic field – negative emotions (those without swords can still die upon them; Better to be shooting Russian soldiers than being raped by them; some of whom died from their injuries; executed/committed genocide against millions of them too); semantic field – positive emotions (women of this country learned long ago); semantic field – cognitive processes (history of using rape as a weapon; Russian men catch some lead from these ladies; kind of bizarre). Mostly, the Reddit post is dedicated to women ready to be up in arms against occupants, thus, outlining the most awfully negative semantics of violence and abuse. Contextual fragments referring to this phraseological unit enumerated 379 textual fragments.

The sixth phraseological unit – *Lay down one's arms* (*We won't lay down our arms*. *We will defend our country. Glory to Ukraine*); semantic field – **positive emotions** (*hope he makes it through this; extremely brave; he comes out of this alive; His country needs him; man is braver than I could ever be; A true leader, not just a mere politician; one of the fiercest leaders*).

The semantics of the phraseological unit itself has a negativity - giving up - but the context demonstrates the opposite - praise to our president and hope for the win. Contextual fragments referring to this phraseological unit enumerated 287 textual fragments.

The seventh phraseological unit – *take up arms* (*Ukraine's Civilians Take Up Arms*); semantic field – **negative emotions** (*These are real people standing up and laying down for their country right now at this moment*); semantic field – **positive emotions** (*They're fighting for their freedom, families and mother land; We need to open our borders indiscriminately to Ukrainians; I welcome any Ukrainian refugees who need refuge; strong and willing to help anyone; how to get BACK to Ukraine to fight*); semantic field – **cognitive processes** (*this is what war looks like; stop with the cosplay shenanigans and tough talk; We are the ultimate human experiment. For better or worse*). Nothing positive is in war but semantics of calling to the battle for our native land deserves prevalence over the negativity. Contextual fragments referring to this phraseological unit

enumerated 452 textual fragments.

The eighth phraseological unit – *Clear the decks* (*Clear the decks* – we are under attack from Russia); semantic field – **negative emotions** (get to the bottom of Russia's attack on our country; Russia launched a nuclear strike first; hesitation due to incompetence and some hesitation due to Russian loyalty). All users are convinced that all troubles come from russia – dominance of negativity. Contextual fragments referring to this phraseological unit enumerated 241 textual fragments.

The nineth phraseological unit – *fight a losing battle* (I feel like Putin needs to realize he's *fighting a losing battle*); semantic field – **negative emotions** (*keeps the rest of the world at bay*; *Yeah sadly he doesn't care about love or respect*; He wants fear; This is what makes him more dangerous than Hitler); semantic field – **positive emotions** (*His invasion doesn't go as planned*; *this is a dangerous mixture with a lunatic like him in power*); semantic field – **cognitive processes** (*Hopefully the Russians manage sooner than later to get rid of him; the world hates what he is and what he's doing*). Both phraseological unit and semantics of its context is purely negative with positive elements for us. Contextual fragments referring to this phraseological unit enumerated 355 textual fragments.

Only nine out of thirty-one phraseological units have been linguistically and semantically analyzed as only the mentioned above units were found in the Reddit social media within the war post and comment sections. When looking at them from a linguistic point of view, they all include words and phrases referring to military actions and military sphere, which proves their relevance of the research.

So, looking at Figure 3 of the percentage frequency of LWIC-22 software textual analysis of the Reddit post sections and their comments by means of LIWC-22 (https://www.liwc.app/demo-results/), there is a vivid evidence that the WAR concept is represented by phraseological units in a total negative way (6.47%). Even there are some positive semantic groups singled out, still our research is less positive in percentage (2.54%) in comparison to the average for social media language (5.93%). Negative tone in our textual study prevailed in percentage (6.47%) over average for social media language (2.34%) proving war to be the most destructive act against humanity. Cognitive processes also dominate (11.55%) over the average for social media language (8.86%) as each user's statement concerning war semantics refers to speculations and considerations.

Traditional LIWC Dimension	Your Text	Average for Social Media Language
I-words (I, me, my)	0.25	5.44
Positive Tone	2.54	5.93
Negative Tone	6.47	2.34
Social Words	5.96	6.74
Cognitive Processes	11.55	8.86

Figure 3: Percentage frequency of LWIC-22 software textual analysis of the Reddit post sections and their comments concerning the WAR concept by means of phraseological units

Comparison of the above mentioned statistical data is provided in Table 1.

itive N		
	Negative	Cognitive
e t	tone	processes
4 6.4	.47	11.55
3 2.	.34	8.86
	e	e tone 4 6.47

Table of frequency of LWIC-22 textual analysis of the Reddit posts and comments concerning the WAR concept by means of phraseological units

To conclude, it is worth stating that not so often the war news within the Reddit social media is tracked down by foreign users and the war in Ukraine is not as much debated nowadays as it was a year ago. However, this research showed that the negative war semantics may be beneficial for our country judging from the semantic analysis using phraseological units – negative state itself within the phraseological unit but positive semantics implied, notwithstanding the fact that negative emotions towards WAR prevailed.

5. Conclusion

Table 1

Providing an outline of the research, verbalization of the WAR concept using phraseological units as the markers of semantic state of the Reddit media comment statements was provided. According to the analyzed military-oriented phraseological units, their classification and linguistic interpretation were presented. The Reddit social environment allowed to reveal semantic contexts of the WAR concept through a set of phraseological units. A variety of Reddit war posts and comments were interpretatively and semantically analyzed. Linguistic data was represented by textual software (LIWC-22) in percentage ratio.

Therefore, learning phraseological units is an important element of learning any language, which helps to expand the vocabulary, improve communication skills and understand the cultural and linguistic features of each language. However, it is necessary to remember that the study of phraseological units requires separate attention to each language separately and their possible formal and stylistic use.

Regarding the thematic group "war", phraseological units related to this topic are very important for effective communication and understanding of news in mass media. These idioms not only help a person to speak freely on the subject of war, but also help to read news from foreign media.

Having analyzed the phraseological units of the topic "war" in the English language, we can conclude that this language is rich in phraseological units on the topic of "war".

So, in any case, one needs to study languages in detail with all phraseological units, neologisms, etc., in order to be able to express his/her opinion without problems and understand the interlocutor.

Even if it seems at first sight that only some of the set of phraseological units were semantically represented by linguistic contextual analysis, a great amount of their contextual fragments was thoroughly analyzed, interpreted and compared with the average social media language in a statistical way. It was proved that war in Ukraine is a lively dynamic process fostering combat readiness to defend our land under any circumstances.

In perspective, it would be beneficial to provide contrastive analysis of war-oriented phraseological units in English and Ukrainian applying corpus-based approach with reference to linguistic toolkit and textual semantic analysis.

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