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## ПЕВНІ ОСОБЛИВОСТІ, ФУНКЦІЇ ТА МОДИФІКАЦІЇ ФРАЗЕОЛОГІЧНИХ ОДИНИЦЬ, ЩО ВИКОРИСТОВУЮТЬСЯ ДЛЯ СТВОРЕННЯ ГУМОРИСТИЧНОГО ЕФЕКТУ (на основі роману “Бог знає” Джозефа Хеллера, 1984)

Олександр Солошенко

*Університет імені Яна Кохановського,  
Словацька вулиця 114/118, Piotrkow Trybunalski 97–300, Польща*

Словосполучення, відомі нам як ідіоми або фразеологічні одиниці (ФО), характеризуються подвійним змістом: з одного боку, певну картину створюють загальноприйнятні значення складових компонентів цих одиниць, а, з другого боку, фактичне значення цілої ФО висвітлює цілком інший образ, який лише в незначній мірі пов'язаний з такою картиною або цілком відмінний від неї. ФО виконують специфічну і дуже важливу функцію, яка дозволяє мовцю чи письменнику виразити свою думку стисло, експресивно, надаючи своєму твердженню необхідну семантичну глибину, яка навряд чи б могла бути забезпечена іншими засобами. Вони споряджують мовця “готовим” матеріалом для вираження свого інтелектуального потенціалу, іронії, дотепності тощо, причому ці вислови рідко заяжуються або стають трафаретними. Дана стаття присвячена деяким особливостям та функціям ФО (в основному біблійного походження). Крім створення гумористичного ефекту, ФО можуть також використовуватись як свого роду вісь при описі певних біблійних епізодів, для створення і підсилення контрастів, для характеристики дійових осіб, а також для самохарактеризації. Як видно з дослідження, гумористичний ефект забезпечується не лише так званім конвенціоналізованим гумором, притаманним деяким ФО, а й за допомогою різних специфічних форм уживання ФО та їх модифікацій.

*Ключові слова:* фразеологічні одиниці, модифікації, функції, подвійний зміст, гумористичний ефект.

An important fact which must be stressed is that idioms or phraseological units (We use the terms **idioms** and **phraseological units** interchangeably) are not only colloquial expressions, as many people believe. They can appear in formal style and slang. They can appear in poetry or in the language of Shakespeare and the Bible. Incidentally, in this article we mostly deal with biblical expressions. What, then, is an idiom? We can say that an idiom is a number of words which, taken together, mean something different from the individual words of the idiom when they stand alone. The way in which the words are put together is often odd, illogical and even grammatically incorrect. These are special features of some idioms. Other idioms are completely regular and logical in their grammar and vocabulary [12, p. 4].

If synonyms can be figuratively referred to as the tints and colours of the vocabulary, then phraseology, to which idioms or phraseological units belong, is a kind of picture gallery in which are collected vivid and amusing sketches of the nation's customs, traditions and

prejudices, recollections of its past history, scraps of folk songs and fairy-tales. Quotations from great poets or the Bible are preserved here alongside of the dubious pearls of philistine wisdom and crude slang witticisms, for phraseology is not only the most colourful but, probably, the most democratic area of the vocabulary and draws its resources mostly from the very depths of popular speech.

And what a variety of odd and grotesque images, figures and personalities one finds in this amazing picture gallery: dark horses, white elephants, bulls in china shops and green-eyed monsters, cats escaping from bags or looking at kings, dogs barking up the wrong tree and men either wearing their hearts on their sleeves or having it in their mouths or even in their boots. Sometimes this parade of funny animals and quaint human beings looks more like a hilarious fancy-dress ball than a peaceful picture gallery.

The metaphor *fancy-dress ball* may seem far-fetched to sceptical minds, and yet it aptly reflects a very important feature of the linguistic phenomenon under discussion: most participants of the carnival, if we accept the metaphor, wear masks, are disguised as something or somebody else, or, dropping metaphors, **word-groups known as phraseological units or idioms are characterized by a double sense: the current meanings of constituent words build up a certain picture, but the actual meaning of the whole unit has little or nothing to do with that picture in itself creating an entirely new image** [13, p. 111].

Like winged words idioms perform a very important and specific function. They enable one to express one's thoughts concisely, vividly, and give one's utterance a semantic depth which would be difficult if not impossible to achieve by other means. They provide the speaker with "ready-made" expressions of wisdom, irony, jocularly, etc., which rarely become threadbare with wear. This is because these types of units, especially belonging to educated speech, are generally not used frequently enough to become hackneyed, and also because of their intrinsic value. Besides, idioms and winged words, like no other units of the vocabulary, bear a clear national stamp, providing information about a country's history, cultural background and character of its people [15, p. 14].

According to some linguists, the latter feature makes idioms and phraseological units different. Phraseological units derived from classical languages (i.e. Latin and Old Greek) and the Bible have a marked international character, for example: *lion's share* – *la part du lion*, French; *la parte del leone*, Italian; *lwia część*, Polish; *левова пайка (частка)* Ukrainian, etc., and, therefore, they cannot be qualified as idioms in their narrower sense [see: 3, p. 6].

**Phraseological unit functions and a humorous effect.** As regards phraseological units, including biblical ones, and their employment in producing a humorous effect, we can postulate a number of functions which can be potentially performed thereby. Individual phraseological units can be **used as a kind of pivot for representing or reproducing a certain biblical episode, legend or parable**. This can be illustrated by the following quotation:

"We liked smart clothes in many colors and always had. Samson gambled for shirts, and Joseph swaggered about in his coat of many colors and nearly forfeited his life to the jealousy of his ten older half brothers. Lucky for all of us they sold him into slavery in Egypt instead" [9, p. 36].

Here the biblical expression *the coat of many colours* (Genesis, 37; 3; 23; 32), used metonymically in the meaning 'an object of jealousy', appears to be a kind of nodule representing the life story of Joseph, the favourite son of the third patriarch Jacob. Joseph was given

‘a coat of many colours’ by his father, and this made his brothers jealous of him. They sold him as a slave to some Egyptians, but Joseph later became powerful by becoming an adviser to the Egyptian pharaoh, and brought his people to live in Egypt. Such is the background.

Now for what can be seen on the surface. The whole excerpt falls into two parts with the phrase “in his coat of many colors” in the middle emphasizing the causative-consecutive sequence. The reason for the tragic end is quite banal and is mentioned explicitly: **the jealousy**, which was caused by the following fact: “We liked smart clothes in many colors and always had.” And what is important that the clothes had to be smart (‘neat and stylish’) and colourful. The situational humour is intensified here by the facts that “Samson (a judge of Israel) gambled for shirts” and “Joseph swaggered about in his coat of many colors”. The verb *gamble* implies that Samson tried to get them at the cost of ‘great risks’, and Joseph deliberately provoked his brothers by swaggering, which normally ‘shows too much of self-confidence or self-satisfaction’. But for good luck, Joseph “nearly forfeited his life to the jealousy of his ten older half brothers”, i.e. he was nearly killed by them because they found his behaviour unbearable. The disproportionate relation between the cause and the consequence creates the necessary splash for producing a humorous effect.

Phraseological units, used in parallel with neutral lexical items, function as means of expressiveness since all of them are charged with certain stylistic values or are emotionally coloured, which accounts for their capacity of relating some information in a very expressive, vivid and colourful way. Besides, they quite often add to the utterance an ironical or jocular colouring [3, p. 7; 11, p. 19]. This may be **used for creating or intensifying contrast**.

“My sleep was fitful. In the dead of night, I came bolt upright on my bed with a shock of vivid clairvoyance and emitted my characteristic yawp of surprise: “Holy shit!”

My servants stormed in with their swords drawn and their bodkins bared. I called for my recorder, I called for my scribe. I could see beyond doubt what inadvertently I had done. “Send a wire!” I shouted.

“We have no wires,” Jehoshaphat recalled for me” [9, p. 379].

This text reflects David’s state of mind. Previously he admitted: “I have the feeling that the kingdom is going to fall apart not long after I let it go” [9, p. 378]. This premonition made him worried that is why his sleep was fitful, i.e. irregular.

The contrast here is created by the expressions *in the dead of night* (‘in the quietest or least active period of the night’) and *to come bolt upright* (‘straight as an arrow shot from a crossbow’). David’s mind and feelings were upset “with a shock of vivid clairvoyance”, which made him emit his “characteristic yawp of surprise: “Holy shit!” (oxymoronic taboo interjection expressing anger or annoyance). And this “characteristic yawp” was sufficient for triggering off a whirlpool of commotion: “My servants stormed in with their swords drawn and their bodkins bared.” This description is followed by a number of clauses with anaphoric repetition of the pronoun *I* in order to show who was guilty for all that commotion allowing for his royal whim (“I could see beyond doubt what inadvertently I had done.”) to force so many people to rush to his service “in the dead of night”. And all this was being done merely for sending a wire (AmE for ‘telegram’), which was, in fact, impossible in David’s times even though he could use for this the services of his scribe and his recorder. (This is a clear-cut case of anachronism [see: 1]). It is also noteworthy that the latter’s function was performed by Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah.

Phraseological units can help to perform a **characterizing function** through bringing someone's characteristic features into focus. Throughout the whole novel David considers his son Solomon as a moron. At one point David lost his patience and fairly screamed at him: "Are you moronic or something? Can't you get even one thing right?" [9, p. 212]. The following passage makes some other features of Solomon's character quite salient.

"That seems a great deal."

"I would rather waste than want."

"What will be done with the people who lack bread for themselves?"

"Let them eat cake," he said calmly. "Man does not live by bread alone."

"That is spoken," I comment acidly, "with the wisdom of Solomon."

"Thank you," he replies. "I got that from you."

"You're a very hard man, Shlomo."

"Thank you again. My heart will not bleed for my people. My finger will lade them with a heavy yoke, and I will chastise them with whips" [9, p. 278].

This is part of a dialogue between King David and his son Solomon, who is ambitious enough to become a king and in "his ravings" discloses the ways which he is going to use while ruling his country. He does not hesitate to reveal his greediness and rapacity. All David's attempts to bring his son to reason turn out to be quite futile. Solomon tries to justify himself by saying: "I would rather waste than want" (here the proverb *waste not, want not* is decomposed, with its original meaning emasculated and turned into its opposite). His people who may "lack bread for themselves" are ignored by Solomon with utter cynicism. He calmly retorts here: "Let them eat cake. ... Man does not live by bread alone" (using the biblical expression *man does not live by bread alone* (cf.: Matthew, 4:4) in its literal meaning). At this point his father can hardly abstain from being ironical: "That is spoken," I comment acidly, "with the wisdom of Solomon" (here the phrase *the wisdom of Solomon* – usually meaning 'a very special ability to make the right decision in situations where it is extremely difficult to know what to do' – has lost its original meaning entirely).

At the end of the extract Solomon is qualified by his father as "a very hard man". But instead of feeling ashamed, Solomon takes this critical remark for a compliment and beams with pride while saying: "Thank you again. My heart will not bleed for my people. My finger will lade them with a heavy yoke, and I will chastise them with whips." He cannot even imagine himself to sympathize with his people or to feel great distress for them. Therefore "a heavy yoke" and "whips" seem to be the only instruments Solomon intends to use in dealing with his people.

In order to see the actual degree of deviation in Solomon's characteristic in the novel from the prototypical one, which, incidentally, accounts for creating comicality here, we should compare this passage with the following biblical text: "And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart, even as the sand that *is* on the sea shore" (all biblical quotations are taken exclusively from the King James Bible, with the original italics preserved) (1 Kings, 4:29). The humorous effect seems to result here from the reversal of the prototypical scenario, according to which Solomon's wisdom was a gift from God [10, p. 24].

Similarly, phraseological units can be **used for self-characterization** as can be seen from the following extract in which King David, in a fit of frankness, reveals some of his

characteristic features. Here we can also note, at least partially, the above-mentioned technique of “the reversal of the prototypical scenario”. Besides, King David seems to be laughing at himself as a sign of the so-called objectivism, aimed at anticipating possible criticism, as if to say “I’ll laugh at myself before others laugh at me, and show that I am perfectly aware of myself, as others might see me”. Such humour seems to play the role of a sociolinguistic protective mask against being made fun of [2, p. 130].

“One time even before that, in an access of pride during a lull between conquests, I decided to construct a spectacular edifice to myself and call it a temple of the Lord; but God said no. God knew my inward reason. Vanity of vanities, said the Preacher, all is vanity. God had no need for Ecclesiastes to acquaint Him with vanity” [9, p. 25].

Being a warrior king, David was, undoubtedly, militant and brave, which is merely implied here by the phrase “during a lull between conquests”. But the phrase “in an access of pride” explicitly mentions such features as impulsiveness and pride connected with David’s egocentrism. However the main feature of his character, confessed by him here, is **vanity**: 1. the quality of being vain; unreasonable pride in oneself or one’s appearance, abilities, etc.; conceit; 2. the quality of being without true lasting value.

This particular trait of his is specially emphasized in the last two sentences which incorporate a biblical quotation given without any quotes (cf.: Ecclesiastes, 12:8) and repeat the noun *vanity* four times. The biblical expression *vanity of vanities* is usually used derogatorily before mentioning something or somebody that shows great pride and stupidity. Here it is associated with David’s decision “to construct a spectacular edifice to myself and call it a temple of the Lord” and his conflict with God who knew his “inward reason”, which was, no doubt, to perpetuate David’s own name. And that is a clear-cut manifestation of his vanity.

**Modifications of phraseological units and humorous effect.** It is also necessary to mind **the so-called conventionalized humour arising from the very nature of phraseological units preconditioned by their usage**. By conventionalized humour we mean humorous meanings that have found their way to dictionaries, thesauruses and other reference works, and as such constitute a part of the common linguistic core shared by English-speaking communities [10, p. 19].

This has also been noted by some Polish phraseologists in connection with certain Polish biblical expressions. Specifically, we should like to refer to their assertion that not all of them have retained the respectful and ceremonial character of the source text, i.e. the Bible, some of the biblical expressions have acquired jocular or ironical shades of meaning, for instance: *pójsć do Abrahama na piwo, trąba jerychońska, niebieski ptak/ptaszek, niewierny Tomasz, uczony w piśmie*, etc. [11, p. 14].

As regards English biblical expressions, some of them may be paraphrased or used as a pattern on which new items may be modelled. For instance: (Units marked with \* are translated into English by the compilers of the dictionary) *\*In the beginning was the deed* (Goethe. *Faust, pt. I, Studierzimmer*; paraphrase of the biblical expression *In the beginning was the word* (John, 1:1) [15, p. 48]).

Others may be labelled, in specialized dictionaries, as humorous, ironic, used jocularly (jocosely, jokingly) or in a derogatory sense. For example:

*\*Two of every living creature under the sun* (Genesis, 6, p. 19–20; 7, p. 1–8) (the phrase is used as a humorous description of a motley crowd of people [15, p. 56]).

*The spirit ... is willing, but the flesh is weak* (Matthew, 26:41; Mark, 14:38) (used jocularly in excuse of one's inability to do something [15, p. 76]).

*The servant of two masters* [the title of the comedy *Il Servitore di due padroni* by Carlo Goldoni; derives from the Bible (Matthew, 6:24; Luke, 16:13) (used in a derogatory sense [15, p. 183]).

*His left hand does not know what his right hand is doing* (Matthew, 6:3) (used ironically of persons whose actions are inconsistent [15, p. 109]).

“He was further disconcerted by the murmurs of ridicule resonating among them with the facile repetitiveness that transmutes conversational statements into tiresome proverbs.

“Is Saul also among the prophets?” he heard more times than he could count.

“What then? It's not Saul among the prophets?”

Can Saul be among the prophets?”

“Saul can't be among the prophets?”

“How can Saul be among the prophets?”

“Go give a look.”

“With my own eyes I saw Saul among the prophets.”

Is it any wonder there were many opposed to accepting Saul the son of Kish as king?” [9, p. 172; see also: p. 188–189]

It is a known fact that King Saul, “the son of Kish”, suffered from regular fits of melancholy or depression [4, p. 176]. This extract follows a description of one of such fits, which turned out to be extremely hard because Saul's neighbours were astonished “to see him in such a state”: lying naked “thrashing about in the dust in a foaming, spastic, orgiastic frenzy”, his chin “still wet from drooling” [9, p. 172].

This passage is a unique example in which the biblical expression “Is Saul also among the prophets?” (1 Samuel, 10:11) (said of one who unexpectedly bears tribute to a party or a doctrine that he has hitherto vigorously assailed) is subject to a number of **transpositional repetitions** and used as an extended irony. The whole transpositional sequence opens with the original interrogative sentence, being powerfully relieved by the hyperbole “heard more times than he could count”. Subsequently, it resonates in four other modifications of the initial question and, finally, closes with the decisive assertion: “With my own eyes I saw Saul among the prophets”.

The whole sequence forms a kind of polylogue with rather cacophonous than polyphonic reverberation in Saul's mind, “further disconcerted by the murmurs of ridicule resonating among them with the facile repetitiveness that transmutes conversational statements into tiresome proverbs”. The formal register of this phrase adds to the ironic stance, explaining why “there were many opposed to accepting Saul the son of Kish as king”.

Deliberate modification of idioms makes the language more vivid and richer, introduces the element of humour, enables the author to play on words by using literal and figurative meanings, and draws the recipient's attention to the specific text [11, p. 17].

Different authors use different terms for this phenomenon: modification of idioms, deidiomatization, and decomposition of phraseological units or idioms. In this connection, they mention that idioms may be modified via rearrangement, insertion, deletion or substitution of words or semantic transformation, whereby the idiom remains in the original form, but the context creates a new interpretation [see: 5, p. 51–52; 6, p. 31–34]. I.R. Galperin qualifies

decomposition as a stylistic device and gives the following definition: “The stylistic device of **decomposition of fused set phrases** consists in reviving the independent meanings which make up the component parts of the fusion. In other words, it makes each word of the combination acquire its literal meaning which, of course, in many cases leads to the realization of an absurdity” [8, p. 189].

“Whoever said I was going to make sense?” answered God. “Show Me where it says I have to make sense. I never promised sense. Sense, he wants yet. I’ll give milk, I’ll give honey. Not sense. Oh, Moses, Moses, why talk of sense?” [9, p. 35].

Our feeling is that here two phraseological units are decomposed simultaneously and used contrastively. The phrase *to make sense* (meaning ‘1. to have a clear meaning; 2. to be a wise course of action’) seems to be deprived of its noun component, which, after two repetitions of the phrase, is used alone, echoed four more times, with one of its abstract meanings (it may be, for instance, ‘an ability to understand and make judgment’).

The other is the biblical expression *a land of milk and honey* (Ezekiel, 20:6) (1. *lit* an imaginary place where life is easy and pleasant with plenty of food; 2. any fertile land or territory. The allusion is to the land of natural fertility, ‘flowing with milk and honey’, promised by God to the Israelites). The nouns *milk* and *honey* are used here separately, i.e. in detachment from the original idiom, in their direct meanings. God promises here to provide the Israelites with something essential, something tangible, which is contrasted with something abstract, imperceptible, impalpable represented by the noun *sense*: “I’ll give milk, I’ll give honey. Not sense.”

This excerpt is connected with the period when Absalom rebelled against his father and gained control over Jerusalem and other parts of the kingdom. Consequently, David was forced to flee.

“I put him to work as my surrogate, to deal with people with complaints for which I had no patience. Once again he was the apple of my eye.

And in no time at all, it seemed, the apple of my eye was sweeping toward Jerusalem in a whirlwind of fire and in chariots of fiery horses, and I was fleeing my city with my large household as rapidly as I could move. How was he able to mount so large a rebellion so swiftly and fiercely? Why did he want to?” [9, p. 226–227].

In the initial part of the excerpt, the biblical expression *the apple of one’s eye* (Deuteronomy, 32:10) is used metaphorically in its original meaning (the phrase came to apply generally to any very precious or much loved person or thing). And here Absalom functions as David’s substitute “to deal with people with complaints for which I had no patience”.

And then a rapid change, signalized by the phrase “in no time at all”, and the idiom *the apple of one’s eye*, subjected to **stylistic and functional transposition**, is now used metonymically in an ironical sense. Absalom is shown here as an agent of the furious activity directed against his father, which is emphasized by the metaphorical phrases “sweeping toward Jerusalem”, “in a whirlwind of fire” and “in chariots of fiery horses”. The passage is closed by two rhetorical questions “How was he able to mount so large a rebellion so swiftly and fiercely? Why did he want to?”, – which get no answers but merely disclose King David’s utter despair.

It is quite interesting to note how Joseph Heller deals with some biblical expressions employing them as a model for creating similar ones of his own and **using them repeatedly in different contexts with certain structural and semantic modifications**.

“I was always full of surprises, wasn’t I? And I was smart enough to appreciate that for Solomon you had to spell everything out. I’ll let you in on a secret about my son Solomon: he was dead serious when he proposed cutting the baby in half, that *putz*. I swear to God. The dumb son of a bitch was trying to be fair, not shrewd.

“Do you understand what I’m saying to you about Joab?” I asked him with a look of intent scrutiny and waited for his leaden nod before I added for stress, “Do not let his hoar head go peacefully down to the grave.”

Solomon lifted his eyes from the clay tablet on which he was scratching his notes and asked, “What’s a hoar head?” [9, p. 21].

In this longish passage King David reasons about his slow-witted son Solomon for whom “you had to spell everything out”. He goes further and confides to the reader: “I’ll let you in on a secret about my son Solomon: he was dead serious when he proposed cutting the baby in half, that *putz*. I swear to God. The dumb son of a bitch was trying to be fair, not shrewd.” David’s attitude towards his son Solomon and his intelligence is expressed quite clearly: “that *putz*” (originates from Yiddish **pots** and used to mean ‘*sl* a fool; an idiot’) and “the dumb son of a bitch”.

Besides, King David alludes here to the well-known story about the two women who came before Solomon, each claiming that she was the mother of a child whose parentage was uncertain. Solomon offered to have the child cut in half, each woman to get a portion. One woman was willing to give up her claim so that the child might live: the sacrifice this woman was willing to make indicated that she was the true mother [4, p. 181]. But David interprets Solomon’s proposition of “cutting the baby in half” literally and qualifies his action as “trying to be fair, not shrewd” (i.e. free from injustice, or self-interest without showing, however, good practical judgment).

To emphasize the idea that Solomon had to be explained everything in the clearest or most detailed way the author uses repeatedly, and throughout the whole novel [9, pp. 212, 377, 395, 396], the key sentence with the phrase *the hoar head*: “Do not let his hoar head go peacefully down to the grave.” On the one hand, this sentence can be easily traced back to the Bible: “Do therefore according to thy wisdom, and let not his hoar head go down to the grave in peace” (1 Kings, 2:6). On the other hand, being used in different contexts, it undergoes either slight or radical structural and semantic modifications, but, basically, it is used euphemistically in the meaning ‘to kill’. In some cases it seems to be reduced to the phrase *the hoar head* [9, p. 396], used metonymically for ‘old age’.

In the Bible, we can find the biblical expression *to bring one’s gray hairs with sorrow to the grave* (Genesis, 42:38) meaning ‘to send somebody sorrowful to his grave’. In the same book, there is another similar usage: “... ye shall bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave” (Genesis, 44:29). But neither of them is used in the meaning ‘to kill’. Now compare the last usage with the following excerpt from J. Heller’s *God Knows*, in which King David complains again about Solomon’s slow thinking: “A dozen times I’ve tried to explain to him. Hold Shimei not guiltless, but his hoar head bring down to the grave with blood. He can’t even keep in mind what a hoar head is” [9, p. 377]. In our opinion, Heller models his key sentence on the phrases used in *1 Kings* 2:6 and *Genesis* 44:29. Its meaning, however, is spelled out at the end of the novel in the following passage:

“I think you are trying to tell me,” conjectures Solomon with a furrowed brow, “not to let the hoar head of Joab go down to the grave in peace.”



“Forget the hoar head!” I answer at the end of my patience, lifting my voice almost to a shout. “I want you to kill Joab. Don’t you understand? Blow the bastard away!” [9, p. 395–396].

Solomon appears to be all ears listening to his father with strained attention but he is able only to conjecture the meaning “with a furrowed brow”. At this point King David loses his temper and, at the top of his voice, explains to Solomon the meaning of the key sentence: “I want you to kill Joab. Don’t you understand? Blow the bastard away!” Incidentally, Joab is the nephew of King David, and his most successful general and staunchest ally, whom King David himself qualifies as “sturdy, loyal, valiant Joab” [9, p. 20].

According to some definitions humour is characterized as aesthetic quality capable of inducing a reaction of laughter and amusement in its recipients: readers, listeners or observers.

Humour does not exist as such, but emerges when a suitably qualified subject with certain sensitivity, called the sense of humour, comes into contact with a suitably qualified object. As the definitions show, humour is a subjective category since its perception is recipient-dependent [7, p. 113].

It is quite aptly noticed by Alan Warner that a great deal of American humorous writing depends upon burlesque and understatement [16, p. 173]. And phraseological units are not infrequently used as elements involved in creating a comic, grotesque or surrealistic picture of the world based on linguistic jokes, contrasts and paradoxes. Given their expressiveness and other characteristic properties, phraseological units, undoubtedly, serve as a typical means of stylization [11, p. 21]. As can be seen from the article, phraseological units, in our case mostly those of biblical origin, can be used as a kind of pivot for representing a certain biblical episode, as well as for creating or intensifying contrast, for characterizing somebody, and for self-characterization. Besides the so-called conventionalized humour arising from the very nature of phraseological units, a humorous effect can also be created by special usages and modifications of phraseological units.

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## **CERTAIN PROPERTIES, FUNCTIONS AND MODIFICATIONS OF PHRASEOLOGICAL UNITS FOR CREATING A HUMOROUS EFFECT (based on Joseph Heller's novel *God knows*, 1984)**

Alexander Soloshenko

*Uniwersytet Jana Kochanowskiego,  
ul. Słowackiego 114/ 118, Piotrków Trybunalski 97-300, Poland*

Word-groups known as phraseological units or idioms are characterized by a double sense: the current meanings of constituent words build up a certain picture, but the actual meaning of the whole unit has little or nothing to do with that picture in itself creating an entirely new image. Phraseological units perform a very important and specific function by enabling one to express one's thoughts concisely, vividly, and give one's utterance a semantic depth which would be difficult if not impossible to achieve by other means. They provide the speaker with "ready-made" expressions of wisdom, irony, jocularly, etc., which rarely become threadbare with wear. As can be seen from the article, phraseological units, in our

case mostly those of biblical origin, can be used as a kind of pivot for representing a certain biblical episode, as well as for creating or intensifying contrast, for characterizing somebody, and for self-characterization. Besides the so-called conventionalized humour arising from the very nature of phraseological units, a humorous effect can also be created by special usages and modifications of phraseological units.

*Keywords:* phraseological units, modifications, functions, double sense, humorous effect.

**ОПРЕДЕЛЕННЫЕ ОСОБЕННОСТИ, ФУНКЦИИ  
И МОДИФИКАЦИИ ФРАЗЕОЛОГИЧЕСКИХ ЕДИНИЦ,  
ИСПОЛЬЗУЕМЫЕ ДЛЯ СОЗДАНИЯ  
ЮМОРИСТИЧЕСКОГО ЭФФЕКТА  
(на основе романа “Бог Знает” Джозефа Хеллера , 1984)**

Александр Солошенко

*Университет имени Яна Кохановского,  
Словацкая улица, 114/118, Piotrkow Trybunalski 97–300, Польша*

Словосочетание, известные нам как идиомы или фразеологические единицы (ФЛ), характеризуются двойным смыслом: с одной стороны, определенную картину создают общепринятые значения составляющих компонентов этих единиц, а с другой стороны, фактическое значение целой ФЛ освещает совершенно другой образ, который лишь в незначительной степени связан с такой картиной или полностью отличный от нее. ФЛ выполняют специфическую и очень важную функцию, которая позволяет Говорящему или писателю выразить свое мнение кратко, экспрессивно, придавая своему утверждению необходимую семантическую глубину, которая вряд ли могла быть обеспечена другими средствами. Они снаряжают говорящего “готовым” материалом для выражения своего интеллектуального потенциала, иронии, остроумия и т. д., причем эти высказывания редко заяляются или становятся трафаретными. Данная статья посвящена некоторым особенностям и функциям ФО (в основном библейского происхождения). Помимо создания юмористического эффекта, ФЛ могут также использоваться как своего рода ось при описании определенных библейских эпизодов, для создания и усиления контрастов, для характеристики действующих лиц, а также для самохарактеризации. Как видно из исследования, юмористический эффект обеспечивается не только так называемым конвенционализированным юмором, присущим некоторым ФЛ, но и с помощью различных специфических форм употребления ФО и их модификаций.

*Ключевые слова:* фразеологические единицы, модификации, функции, двойной смысл, юмористический эффект.