

COMMUNICATIVE-PRAGMATIC ORIENTATION OF SPORTS PHRASEOLOGICAL UNITS (ON THE EXAMPLE OF PROFESSIONAL FOOTBALL)

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Annotation: The article is devoted to sports phraseological units using the examples of the vocabulary of professional football. Phraseological units from different categories related to professional football aimed at the pragmatic aspect of translation are given.

Key words: Football, Phraseological units, Sport discourse, Pragmatics, Communication

Football, as one of the most popular sports in the world, shapes not only cultural and social connections but also enriches language, particularly sports vocabulary. Idioms reflect the dynamics of the game, the mentality of fans, players, and coaches. These expressions, going beyond their literal meaning, often convey emotional and cultural nuances that are difficult to express otherwise. Studying football idioms provides an opportunity to better understand how language influences sports culture.

Sports phraseological units are not just colorful turns of phrase, but the most important communication tool of the professional sports world. Their communicative and pragmatic focus is manifested in the ability to:

1. Efficiently encode professional experience and knowledge.
2. Form and strengthen corporate identity and spirit.
3. Regulate emotions in a high-stress environment.
4. Carry out tactical communication with the outside world (media, fans).
5. Create dramaturgy and involve the audience.
6. Legitimize the status of a professional.

Understanding these functions allows us to penetrate deeper not only into the linguistic features of sports discourse, but also into the very essence of professional sports culture, where language becomes an extension of tactics, psychology and struggle - both on and off the field. Phraseological units are “players” in the field of communication, performing their clear pragmatic tasks.

Football discourse is a unique form of communication that encompasses not only sporting aspects but also cultural, social, and emotional elements. Key characteristics of football discourse are the following:

1. Specific vocabulary. The use of terms related to the game, rules, and tactics. For example, the phrase '*get the ball rolling*' literally is translated as 'дать мячу катиться'. In everyday life this expression means to start doing something. It can be considered an equivalent of the Russian phrase 'сдвинуться с мертвой точки'.

2. Emotional intensity. A high degree of emotional expression is tied to victories and defeats. '*Big Game Player*' – this is how British people refer to a player who spends most of the season underperforming but suddenly steps up and scores a decisive goal in a crucial moment. English commentators have used this term for players like Zlatan Ibrahimović and Bastian Schweinsteiger.

3. Communicative purpose. This purpose is to convey information, create a competitive atmosphere, and engage the audience. '*Get your head in the game*' means to focus and fully concentrate on a task or situation. This expression originates from sports, where athletes must be mentally engaged and be attentive during a game or competition. When someone tells you to 'get your head in the game,' they are urging you to stay present and direct your attention and energy toward completing the task at hand.

During the research we divided phraseological units into 5 categories connected with football. The first category is the category of gameplay tactics and it comprises 19 expressions. For example, '*to take the bus*', which in Russian means 'парковать автобус', implies that a team switches to a completely defensive strategy with little intention to attack. The phrase was coined by José Mourinho when he was coaching Chelsea, accusing Tottenham of 'parking the bus' in front of their goal. *To stay on feet*, or 'оставаться на ногах', is a phrase directed at players, urging them not to dive or prematurely tackle an opponent. This became an internet sensation when Ray Wilkins repeatedly used it while commentating on the 2011 Champions League match between Real Madrid and Tottenham.

The second category includes category of *team and players* and has also 19 expressions. An example from this category is the idiom '*foot like a traction engine*'. When someone says a player has a foot like a traction engine, they mean the player has a powerful strike. The phrase comes from the British satirical TV show **The Day Today**. Steve Coogan's character, Alan Partridge, a parody of a sports reporter, commented during a match: "*Blimey! Did you see that? He must have a foot like a traction engine!*" [1].

The third category, *playing style*, counts out 22 expressions. For instance, the phrase '*heavy metal football*', in Russian 'футбол в стиле хэви-метал', describes a playing style invented by German football coach Jürgen Klopp. This style is characterized by high intensity and speed, featuring rapid counterattacks. The term gained popularity when Klopp was coaching Borussia Dortmund.

The *attributes* category includes 9 expressions, such as ‘*back of the net*’ for example, which means a goal. The phrase is attributed to Alan Partridge, a TV character played by comedian Steve Coogan in the 1990s. Partridge, however, used it in a non-football context: “*My girlfriend's thirty-three. I'm forty-seven. She's fourteen years younger than me. Back of the net*” [1].

The final category, *proper names*, has only 2 expressions. One example is *Cruyff Turn*. The Cruyff Turn is the name of a dribbling technique popularized by Dutch player Johan Cruyff when he used it to bypass Swedish defender Jan Olsson during the 1974 World Cup. The move involves faking a pass and then dragging the ball behind the standing leg with a 180-degree turn.

Football idioms reflect sporting realities and social phenomena. This demonstrates how sports influence language, creating new meanings and associations. For example, ‘*to level the playing field*’ means to create a fair and equal situation where everyone has the same opportunities to succeed. The expression originated in sports, where officials work to ensure all teams have equal chances to win by eliminating unfair advantages. In a broader context, leveling the playing field means removing barriers, biases, or inequalities that might give certain individuals or groups an unfair advantage. The goal is to create conditions where everyone has a fair chance to succeed based on their skills and abilities. Thus, this expression is used not only in football but also in other contexts.

Idioms are divided into phraseological fusions (idioms) (*hairdryer treatment* – ‘головомойка от тренера’), phraseological unities where the meaning cannot be understood literally. For example, *box seat* for a theatergoer means ‘a seat in the box.’ In English football slang, however, it is used exclusively by experts when one team leads by a score of 2-0 or more. There are also phraseological combinations where meanings can be understood literally. Football is often called the beautiful game, so *anti-football* refers to a team's style of play that is cynical, defensive, and, in some cases, brutal. This term is believed to have been first used to describe the playing style of the Argentine club Estudiantes during the 1968 Intercontinental Cup final against Manchester United. Commenting on the 2010 World Cup final between the Netherlands and Spain, Johan Cruyff said: “*This ugly, vulgar, hard, hermetic, hardly eye-catching, hardly football style, yes it served the Dutch to unsettle Spain. If with this they got satisfaction, fine, but they ended up losing. They were playing anti-football*” [1].

Football idioms play a key role in creating an emotional backdrop and evaluative stance in sports media. They are used for:

1) Creating a competitive atmosphere: *barnstorming finish* in America, originally a noun meaning ‘barnstorming tour.’ It was understood literally: touring performers would stage shows in barns. Later, the term was adopted by pilots. In aviation, it came to refer to stunt flights for

entertainment, featuring loops, barrel rolls, etc. In English football, however, it describes the thrilling end of a match when one team manages to turn the game around at the last moment.

2) Expressing evaluative attitudes: *bottling team* is used to accuse a team of squandering a game from a winning position.

3) Capturing the audience's attention: the phrase heavy metal football, mentioned earlier.

4) Creating a comedic effect: especially in satirical or entertainment contexts. The English often mention Hollywood falseness. There's the Hollywood smile - white-toothed but fake - and the *Hollywood pass*, a beautiful, long-range pass that is ultimately aimless.

Phraseological units serve several important functions in communication:

- **Expressive function:** They allow speakers to convey emotions, feelings, and evaluations more vividly and figuratively. They add emotional coloring to speech and enhance its impact on the listener. *Batten Down The Hatches* – ‘prepare for trouble’ (expresses alarm).
- **Evaluative function:** They often contain an evaluative component, expressing positive or negative attitudes toward a subject, phenomenon, or situation. *A political football* – ‘политический футбол’ (negative evaluation of a situation).
- **Pragmatic function:** They are used to achieve specific communicative goals, such as persuasion, softening, emphasis, irony, etc. They help manage the listener's attention and reaction. *To blow the whistle on someone* – ‘to expose someone’ (goal is to draw attention).
- **Nominative function:** They are used to denote objects, phenomena, or situations that lack direct lexical representation. They allow complex concepts to be expressed concisely. *Fox in the box* – ‘poacher’ (briefly describes a striker).
- **Stylistic function:** They add a specific stylistic tone (colloquial, formal, humorous, etc.) to speech. They are used to create stylistic effects and align with a particular genre or register of communication. *Funny Old Game* – ‘strange game’ (in a colloquial style).
- **Characterizing function:** They can be used to describe a person's qualities, behavior, or social status. *YouTube footballer* – ‘a player who plays for media fame’ (characterizes behavior).

By semantics:

Sports metaphors: *To blow the whistle on someone* means to expose illegal activities and the people responsible for organizing them. Here, the meaning is transferred from football to other spheres.

Evaluative expressions: *All to play for* is mainly used before a match where something important is at stake, typically between evenly matched teams, or during a match that is currently tied, so any attack could be decisive. This expression highlights the drama of the situation.

By degree of expressiveness:

Highly expressive: *Back of the net* that was mentioned before.

Low expressiveness: *To know the score*, meaning to be informed.

Thus, it can be said that phraseology, as a linguistic discipline, is an important tool for understanding language phenomena related to fixed expressions. In the context of football, phraseological units are not only used for enriching language but also reflect the cultural, social, and emotional aspects of sports discourse. Football discourse, as a source of phraseological expressions, is characterized by specific vocabulary, high emotional intensity, and purposeful communication. Classifying phraseological units by structure, semantics, and degree of expressiveness allows for a deeper understanding of their functional features and role in language. The semantic peculiarities of football idioms highlight the connection between language and extralinguistic reality, demonstrating how sports realities are reflected in language and influence everyday communication. Idioms used in sports media play a key role in shaping the emotional backdrop, evaluative attitudes toward events and participants, and capturing the audience's attention. They become an essential means of expressing opinions and feelings, making them indispensable in sports communication. Moreover, football idioms can create a comedic effect and add humor to discussions about sports events, making them versatile and widely applicable in various types of discourse.

In conclusion, phraseological units related to football not only develop any language but also serve as an important tool for understanding cultural and social phenomena associated with sports. Their study allows for a deeper awareness of how language shapes our perception of the world and adapts to changing societal conditions and demands. The most diverse thematic category was gameplay, while the least diverse was proper names.

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