

A Cliché Is A Ready-Made Expression Of Thought Formed By Language

Hasanboyeva Nafiza Olimjonovna

Doctoral student and lecturer at the Department of French Language Theory and Practice
Andijan State Institute of Foreign Languages

French language.

xasanboyeva79@inbox.ru

Annotation: This article explores speech clichés as ready-made formulas of thought formed within a language, analyzing their connection to human cognition, perception processes, and national mentality. The semantic and structural characteristics of clichés are examined, and expressive versus cognitive approaches to them are compared. Drawing on the views of Z. Hamavand, J. Shults, and A. Polger, the author highlights the role of clichés as linguistic units and discusses their compositional and non-compositional properties. It is emphasized that clichés are deeply embedded in the background knowledge, serving as psychological and communicative ready-made units, and their usage and interpretation are closely tied to the conceptual structure of a given language.

Keywords: cliché, linguistics, cognitive approach, expressive approach, phraseological unit, mentality, semantic composition, pragmateme, language concept, ready-made formula.

“Every person possesses a certain amount of accumulated knowledge in their mind about the relationships between objects and phenomena. This knowledge is reinforced through human practice and becomes stable. It is precisely these stable connections that allow us to understand them even without explicitly stating them- that is, to 'hold them in the mind’”.

Speech clichés are semantically cohesive expressions. Psychologically, they appear as “images of the result,” meaning their primary function is to reflect a situation that is already understood. In this process, we grasp that a particular event has already been perceived or has occurred.

Clichés are not only naming tools; they also serve as linguistic means to generalize and typify images, scenes, concepts, and other phenomena. They are embedded in background knowledge and are closely linked to mentality. Analysis of these expressions shows that differences in their formation often do not stem directly from the concepts, representations, or specific events themselves, but from how they are connected to other scenes and events. These connections are perceived both in the process of speech-based thinking and by participants in communicative acts.

In other words, mentality manifests not only in elements that directly reflect a particular situation in speech but also in “hidden and indirectly expressed” meanings that are embedded in clichés. Thus, both the explicit (open) and implicit (hidden) meanings of an expression are significant.

Consequently, clichés with diverse structures and etymologies play a crucial role in preserving national mentality as linguistic signs. In this regard, they may be more effective than individual words. This is because, on one hand, the strong interconnection of their semantic components makes them more stable than words and prevents rapid semantic shifts. Words, in contrast, are more flexible and changeable.

On the other hand, clichés are characterized by their compactness, imagery, and expressiveness. They are easier to memorize and assimilate than larger speech segments. The figurative moral content and distinct rhythmic structure embedded in their semantic and grammatical makeup provide a foundation for studying these expressions as cognitive and linguistic reflections of national mentality.

J. Shults, in his article *"Cliché as Reification: Nurturing Criticality in the Undergraduate Creative Writing Classroom,"* suggests two approaches to understanding clichés. He argues that in analyzing a cliché, “the main focus should not be on the means of expression but on the underlying thought.” In other words, clichés can be viewed as either an expressive (stylistic) problem or a cognitive problem.

J. Shults proposes viewing clichés as a cognitive issue. This approach emphasizes that a cliché is not just a repetitive phrase but often expresses an idea so obvious or trivial that repeating it becomes redundant.

In the expressive approach, the main problem is expressing an old idea in a new way; in the cognitive approach, the value of that "old idea" itself is questioned.

That is, "the problem is that the idea embedded in the cliché never reaches the level of genuine expression." Therefore, the cliché is not merely simplicity; to move beyond it, one must analyze its role in the thinking process more deeply.

According to Z. Hamawand: "*Although a cliché appears to have a compositional structure externally, in reality, it does not... Due to frequent usage, clichés are stored in the minds of speech participants as unified wholes. Speakers can easily recall them, and listeners quickly grasp their meaning. Like idioms, clichés exist in the mental lexicon in a ready-made form.*"

He also puts forward several key points:

First, clichés are non-constructive (non-compositional) linguistic units and, therefore, are stored in memory differently from compositional expressions.

Second, clichés are non-constructive because the individual lexical elements that comprise them do not contribute to the overall meaning in a predictable way (which also highlights the pre-established and familiar nature of the cliché).

An example of a non-compositional cliché in French is: "Poser un lapin" – literally "to place a rabbit," but it actually means "to stand someone up" (not show up for a scheduled meeting). This expression is non-compositional because the individual meanings of "poser" (to place) and "un lapin" (a rabbit) do not help in predicting the overall meaning. A literal translation would not reveal the true sense of the phrase.

These examples support Hamawand's view: clichés do not rely on the specific, independent meanings of their components but are used as fixed expressions in speech. In other words, because these expressions are stored as ready-made units in the minds of speakers and listeners, recalling and understanding them requires little effort.

However, Alain Polguère identifies one of the main features of clichés as their multi-word (polylexical) structure. He categorizes them as polylexical expressions and gives examples such as: "Je suis à vous" (I'm at your service)

Communicative equivalents like "Oui?" (Yes?) or "Merci!" (Thank you!) These shorter expressions, according to Polguère, do not qualify as clichés because they consist of a single lexical unit and lack phrase-level combinations.

Nonetheless, Polguère argues that the meaning of a cliché results from the combination of the meanings of its lexical components - making clichés semantically compositional. For example:

Sans aucun doute (Without a doubt)

Quoi de neuf? (What's new?)

Avec Plaisir! (With pleasure!) can all be understood through literal translation.

On the other hand, expressions like:

Vous parlez d'or ("You speak of gold" – meaning "Your words are precious")

Chaud devant! ("Hot ahead!" – meaning "Watch out!")

are multi-word expressions that are not semantically compositional. These are ready-made formulas tied to specific communicative contexts and are classified as pragmatemes.

Language not only guides how something should be expressed but also dictates what should be said. Therefore, word choice is crucial. Clichés possess the characteristic of conveying a pre-formed conceptual meaning, which sets them apart from compositional phraseological units such as collocations.

For example, the collocation *lancer un regard* (to cast a glance) is semantically compositional, as the speaker intends the meaning of "looking," which is represented by "regard." The idiomatic nature of the collocation is determined by the fixed pairing with the verb "lancer."

In contrast, clichés are frozen at a deeper level than mere lexical combinations, reflecting a conceptual structure predetermined by the language. Thus, a cliché is not a simple phrase but a complete utterance (*énoncé*). The speaker does not create it but reproduces it because it is linguistically required.

As Redfern notes: “Even though we have the capacity to reinterpret ideas - to adapt, change, and question them—clichés are primary thoughts that are unexamined, often not even thoughts at all, but automatic responses. They exist as elements of common knowledge and serve to maintain the status quo.”

Clichés, being common property, cannot be the basis for creative thinking. Therefore, one cannot generate complex or diverse ideas relying on clichés. If that were possible, clichés would lose their essence, as their primary function is to be instantly recognizable expressions.

Based on the points above, we can propose the following general definition of a cliché:

A cliché is a polylexical, non-free expression that is semantically compositional and represents a lexical meaning pre-formed by language.

It is important to note that conceptual meaning goes deeper than the semantic level and is not tied to the semantic elements of a particular language. For example, the phrase *Après vous* (“After you”) is semantically compositional, but the speaker uses it because of the pre-prepared conceptual meaning provided by the language. Therefore, from a linguistic standpoint, both semantically compositional clichés like *Après vous* and non-compositional ones like *Chaud devant!* are used by the speaker as indivisible units.

References

1. Крюков А.Н. Фоновые знания и языковая коммуникация / А.Н. Крюков // Этнопсихоллингвистика. - М.: Наука, 1988. - С.19 – 34, 30 с.
2. Moutaouakil Ahmed. Reflexions sur la théorie de la signification dans la pensée linguistique arabe / Publications de la Faculté des Lettres et des Sciences Humaines. Rabat, 1982. - 340 p., 54 p.
3. Schultz, J. “Cliché as Reification: Nurturing Criticality in the Undergraduate Creative Writing Classroom” in *New Writing: The International Journal for the Practice and Theory of Creative Writing*. 12: 1: 79–90, 2014., 80-85 p.
4. Hamawand, Z. A Cognitive Account of Linguistic Meaning. *Equinox*, 2016.P 264., 115 p.
5. Alain Polguère, « Il y a un traître par minou : le statut lexical des clichés linguistiques », *Corela* [En ligne], HS-19 | 2016, mis en ligne le 08 juin 2016, consulté le 02 octobre 2016. P 13., 2 -4 p.
6. Mel’čuk Igor, « Lexical Functions : A Tool for the Description of Lexical Relations in the Lexicon », in Leo Wanner (ed.), *Lexical Functions in Lexicography and Natural Language Processing*, Amsterdam/Philadelphia, John Benjamins, 1996, pp. 37-102.
7. Dr Craig Jordan-Baker. On Cliché: Expression, Cognition and Understanding. *Journal of Creative Writing Studies*, Vol 2.2016. P 1-15., p 7.