

THE CONCEPT OF “HAPPINESS” IN ENGLISH AS EXPRESSED IN
PHRASEOLOGICAL UNITS MENTIONED IN JACK LONDON’S “MARTIN EDEN”

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Abstract. *This article examines the concept of happiness and its representation through phraseological units in Jack London’s novel “Martin Eden.” The novel provides rich material for exploring how linguistic elements reflect the protagonist’s transition from pursuing social status and recognition to seeking inner harmony and self-identity. In this context, happiness is interpreted not only as emotional satisfaction but also as a philosophical process of self-realization.*

Keywords: *concept, phraseology, idiom, metaphor, self-realization, cultural values.*

Phraseological units represent the cultural heritage of every language, encapsulating the historical experience, worldview, and national mentality of its speakers[3, 78-82]. They function not only as expressive tools of language but also as powerful linguistic phenomena that preserve cultural memory. Through phraseological expressions, a nation’s values, emotions, aspirations, and social views are vividly reflected.

Phraseological units are stable lexical combinations that convey a holistic meaning. Idioms, figurative expressions, and metaphors are integral components of this category[1, 43-47]. Linguists regard phraseology as a cultural element, describing it as a medium through which culture and society influence language. The notion of happiness is expressed differently across cultures through various phraseological units. Happiness, one of the highest human emotions, occupies an important role in society. Therefore, studying this concept from a linguistic perspective requires profound cultural and social analysis[4, 130-135]. The relevance of this study lies in the fact that the concept of “happiness” is manifested not only at the lexical level but also through phraseological units, serving as an essential tool for reflecting national mentality. This is especially evident in Jack London’s “Martin Eden”, where the concept is explored through the protagonist’s inner world, dreams, and attitude toward life within a rich linguo-cognitive framework.



English phraseological units present “happiness” in distinct artistic, emotional, and metaphorical forms. Expressions such as on cloud nine, over the moon, in seventh heaven and feel blessed constitute the central idiomatic repertoire associated with happiness in English[7, 159-163]. These units illustrate not only the semantic richness of the language but also reveal how happiness is culturally conceptualized[6, 18-29].

A concept refers to a culturally, emotionally, and cognitively meaningful mental construct represented in language through various expressive means, including phraseological units. Although “happiness” is universal, its interpretation varies according to a society’s historical, religious, and sociocultural values[2, 688-690].

In English, happiness is frequently associated with lexical synonyms such as luck, fortune, contentment, and joy, each representing different degrees or facets of emotional or externally influenced states.

Jack London’s “Martin Eden” is a philosophical novel illuminating complex contradictions among human aspirations, labor, love, and social position[5, 253-258]. For Martin, happiness is initially associated with material prosperity and social recognition. Expressions such as to make one’s fortune and rise in the world reflect his view of happiness as social elevation. However, as the narrative progresses, phraseological units demonstrate the protagonist’s shifting perspective from external success toward inner fulfillment.

The expression to be on top of the world appears at the height of Martin’s literary fame, yet this success ultimately fails to satisfy him. The idiom a broken heart symbolizes his emotional suffering after his relationship with Ruth ends. Through such units, London reveals that happiness is linked not only to external achievements but also to inner emotional harmony [8, 76-86].

Phraseological units unveil the philosophical depth of “Martin Eden.” The recurring expression the pursuit of happiness defines the protagonist’s life goal. Over time, Martin’s pursuit transforms — from seeking material goals to seeking spiritual tranquility. This resonates with the cultural principle of the American Dream [9, 36-39].

Jack London’s use of fool’s paradise emphasizes false happiness and self-deception. Martin initially believes wealth and fame will ensure happiness, yet they fail to bring true fulfillment. Later, the phrase at peace with oneself signals the shift toward inner serenity, illustrating that true happiness lies within [10, 54-59].

Ultimately, the novel contrasts two realms of happiness: external (social status, wealth, recognition) and internal (spiritual satisfaction, inner peace, self-awareness). Through phraseological expressions, Jack London reveals the essence of genuine happiness by portraying the protagonist’s psychological crisis.

In the novel’s closing, the statement “he was tired of life, yet at peace with himself” encapsulates happiness as inner contentment rather than social success.



Thus, phraseological units help explore happiness as a multilayered concept intertwined with self-understanding and one’s place in society [11, 16].

In this novel, phraseological units become a key means of expressing the author’s philosophical outlook. Each stage of Martin Eden’s life is metaphorically depicted through expressions such as rise in the world, to make one’s fortune, broken heart, fool’s paradise, and at peace with oneself. Through these units, Jack London interprets happiness as a complex concept that holds different meanings for each individual. Happiness is not material achievement, but rather self-realization, loyalty to one’s own values, and the attainment of inner peace.

In conclusion, phraseological units in “Martin Eden” serve as powerful tools for expressing the social, psychological, and philosophical dimensions of happiness. They illuminate the struggle to pursue happiness, the tension between dream and reality, and most importantly the individual’s inner freedom. Consequently, Jack London’s novel stands as one of the most profound and realistic portrayals of the happiness concept in English literature.

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