PHRASEOLOGICAL TRANSFORMATIONS – A REFLECTION OF THE AUTHOR’S VIEW OF THE WORLD

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Abstract

The paper focuses on idioms of the English language as a reflection of the author’s view of the world in the writings of British postmodern writers. It is essential to be familiar with such linguistic routines of the language as idioms or phraseological units so as to be able to occasionally deviate from them if necessary. The paper aims to describe the transformations of phraseological units in some texts by Jasper Fforde. It proposes a comprehensive approach that integrates generally scientific, generally linguistic and phraseological methods and techniques of analysis.

Keywords: *idiom, phraseological unit, individually-author’s picture of the world, language world picture, transformation, postmodern literature*

Phraseological units are complex linguistic configurations. They are an important part of colloquial language. Such phrases range from the less complex to constructions which might be regarded as proverbs rather than phraseological units or idioms. What they all have in common is that their meanings are not deducible from the individual meanings of their components by the usual rules of compositional semantics. Idiomatic expressions have formed the object of several linguistic studies in the last decades: H. Burger et. al (1982), H. Burger (1998a), R. Moon (1998), D. Dobrovol’skij, E. Piirainen (2001), M. Everaert (2005), A. Langlotz (2007), P. Skandera (2007), A. Sabban (1998) and others.

The aim of the paper is to identify types of phraseological transformations in the postmodernist discourse of Jasper Fforde’s novels. We will use the terms phraseological unit (PU), idiom or idiomatic expression, defined conventionally: polylexemic expressions whose meaning cannot be deduced from the meaning of their parts.

Fiction in the 21st century, it might be argued, exists at a time when everything has already been said, written, invented, discussed, destroyed and reconstructed again – in the aftermath of modernism and the subsequent reconsideration of its experiments within postmodernism. Interest in the how (the telling, the process of narration), rather than the what (the story itself), is one of the general symptoms of this era (Bekhta, 2011: 287-300). Newness was the leading value of literary modernism, whereas postmodern literature obsessively revisits and rereads its own past. Narrative self-consciousness has always been a feature of the novel, but it has become more so in contemporary literature. This could either be a reflection of a wider cultural self-consciousness which can be pointed to in film, architecture, fashion and TV game shows or it could be a more specific response to developments in the theory of language and literature, which makes it more difficult to write a novel that does not reflect on its own role in the construction of reality (Currie 1998: 168-70). English works of Postmodernism are rhizomatous texts that have no center and are a nonlinear form of postmodernist writings, a nonlinear model of literature that destroys any hierarchy and order. Genre models of such works create special conditions for various versions of text reading. Rejecting early specified directions of reading, in particular, helps the reader overcome the contradictions between linearity of writing and nonlinearity of thinking (Bekhta 2004: 92-101). Jasper Fforde is a British postmodern novelist whose writing is characterized by heavy reliance on techniques like fragmentation, paradox, and questionable narrators. The novels quoted here, *The Eyre Affair* (2002), *Lost in a Good Book* (2003), *The Well of Lost Plots* (2004), *Something Rotten* (2005), *First Among Sequels* (2007), *One of Our Thursdays is Missing* (2011), *The Woman Who Died a Lot* (2012), represent symbioses of alternative history and comic fantasy. The author has gone where no fictioneer has gone before. The *Thursday Next* series is now a cult bestseller. As an author of postmodernist literature J. Fforde employs two basic plot devices. One is the “Alternative Universe” scenario. In J. Fforde’s novels, Thursday’s father is a “ChronoGuard” – a time-cop, entrusted with keeping a multitude of parallel universes straight. He and his comrades have not been entirely successful. Thursday inhabits a 1985 in which the Crimean war is still raging. She herself is a veteran of the doomed charge of the Light Brigade into the valley of death. The author’s other gimmick is that the world of fiction and the real world (“outland”) run into each other. Thursday’s uncle Mycroft has invented a “prose portal” – a kind of literary time machine. Characters such as Edward Rochester or Miss Havisham come out; detectives like Thursday go in.

Idioms are pervasive in all styles of language use. In the novels of the imaginative postmodernist author J. Fforde, idioms might appear not only in dictionary forms but they may considerably deviate from dictionary forms. Linguists have noted that there is hardly a type of variation of an idiomatic expression which would not be feasible given an appropriate context (Burger,

Buhofer, Sialm, 1982). For purposes of analysis it is essential not only to have a clear idea of the concept of the phraseological unit (PU) or idiom (we use both terms) as a separate entity, but also to establish terms to denote various forms of PUs and to reflect on their meaning and functions. A. Naciscione proposes the term *the base form* in the English language to indicate the form of the PU to which other forms of the PU can be related and with which they can be compared (Naciscione, 2001). In practice, the base form is the dictionary form and meaning, recorded as the head phrase. In its base form the PU is a static out-of-context formation which does not depend on discourse. Syntactically the base form never exceeds the boundaries of one sentence. Some PUs constitute a full sentence, including compound or complex sentences, but they never go beyond the limits of a sentence in their base form or core use. In text, PUs often appear in their standard form and meaning. A. Naciscione introduces the term *core use* to denote the basic, most common, essential form and meaning, which is the invariable of the PU available to a language user. In many ways core use resembles the base form. We exploit the base form which is the dictionary form to distinguish PUs with transformations. In the literature the terms transformation and variation are frequently used to denote the same thing. To categorize idioms with transformations we use R. Moon's taxonomy (Moon 1998), which represents the Transformational Grammar view and distinguishes between *transformations* of PUs and *lexical variation*. The term *transformation* was originally used to denote a formal linguistic operation on the constituents of a deep structure which is converted into a surface structure. They are categorized into the following sub-groups which are illustrated below:

Polarity This category represents PUs with reversed polarity. Negation is a very basic transformation. The typical case is where the canonical form is a negative imperative or modal (*Don't... , You can't...*). Tokens are transformed into positive predicates, although a negative evaluation may still be implied.

(1) *none of one's business* – something that is of no concern to another (Farlex)

“Are you married?”

“I can't see that's any of your business.”

“I'll take that as a no.” (Fforde, 2002).

(2) *not give somebody the time of day* – to feel unfriendly toward someone (Farlex).

We had a few ideas, but nothing that could be said in front of Schitt; since he was so willing to let us be killed that evening at Archer's place, not one of us would have given Goliath so much as the time of day. (Fforde, 2002).

In these two idioms we can see change of polarity in the idiom itself but the negative evaluation is still present.

- (3) *time is on one's side* – to have enough time to do something without having to hurry
 “Then you had better tell me your password. Time may not be on our side when the moment comes. Forewarned is forearmed.”
 “True,” I conceded. “To open the door, you have to say – ... ”(Fforde, 2002).

Passivization While some PUs are never passivized, there are others where the passive form is at least as common as the active form.

- (4) *to seal someone's fate* – to finally determine the fate of someone (Farlex).
 Havisham and I exchanged looks and shrugged as a man came running into the house in panic; he was still holding his pistol, and because of that, his fate was sealed. Havisham fired two shots into him and he fell stone dead next to us, a look of abject terror on his face. (Fforde, 2004).

Nonfinite uses PUs can be catenated as infinitives or *-ing* forms without destroying the gestalt. In some cases, nonfinite structures are commoner than finite ones.

- (5) *to cut (someone) some slack* – to give someone additional freedom (Siefring, 2004).
 Some saw him as a likeable rogue; I saw him as just plain revolting – although he was the blueprint of likeable debauchers in fiction everywhere, so I thought I should try to cut him a bit of slack. (Fforde, 2004).
 (6) *to say the least* – to put it mildly (Cowie, Mackin, McCaig, 2007).
 If I told him the truth he might feel it his duty to tell SO-1 that I had been involved in my father's work. With the world due to end and the trust in my father implicit, it was a sticky moment, to say the least. (Fforde, 2003).
 (7) *to make light of something* – to treat something as if it were unimportant or humorous (Farlex).
 (...) but apart from that his face was pleasant enough; without the scar he might have been handsome. I was being unsubtle. He instinctively brought up a hand to cover it.
 “Finest Cossack,” he murmured, making light of it.
 “I'm sorry.” (Fforde, 2002).

Pronominalization B. Fraser observes that some PUs can never be pronominalized, whereas others allow pronominalization where there is clear anaphoric reference (Fraser, 1970). Non-fixed nominal groups in PUs can be

pronominalized freely. In (8) we can note the use of an idiom and a proverb in wordplay:

- (8) *to have sth in your pocket* – to be certain to win or succeed at something + Might makes right - the stronger of two opponents will always control the situation (Farlex).

I pressed a finger to his tie. “Understand this, MrSchitt. You may have might in your back pocket but I have right in mine. Believe me when I say I will do anything to protect my family. Do you understand?” (Fforde, 2002).

Nominalization There are three specific forms. In the first, the PU is truncated and reduced to one of its clausal components, usually retaining allusion to the original whole.

- (9) *to not have a clue* – to be completely unable to guess, understand, or deal with something.

“Goliath are not used to being refused. We asked your uncle to build another Prose Portal. He told us to come back in a month’s time. We understand he left on retirement last night. Destination?”

“Not a clue.” (Fforde, 2003).

In the second kind of nominalization, verbs occur as verbal nouns or participial adjectives, or they are replaced by cognate nouns.

- (10) *to be lost for words* – to be unable to speak because you are so surprised (Siefring, 2004).

“We needed a replacement with good field experience but also someone who can ... well, how shall I put it – ?” Analogy paused, apparently at a loss for words. Bowden answered for him. “We need someone who isn’t frightened to use extreme force if deemed necessary.” (Fforde, 2002).

In the third kind, a different lexical item altogether is formed, often involving the inversion of the original lexical elements. However, we did not find PUs of this kind.

Transformation to adjectives Adverbial and nominal PUs may be transformed into adjectives simply through clausal positioning: the transformations are often hyphenated.

- (11) *out of the frying pan (and) into the fire* – from a bad situation to a worse situation (Farlex).

“Thanks,” I murmured. “Any later and I might have been worm food. Can you drop me at SpecOps HQ?”

The driver didn't say anything; there was a glass partition between me and him and all of a sudden I had that out-of-the-frying-pan-and-into-the-fire feeling. (Fforde, 2002).

As with nominalizations, other formations involve syntactic changes and inversion, and can be considered separate lexical items.

(12) *clear as crystal* – very clear; easy to understand (Farlex).

“When we reach that boy band, my dear, everything we have ever puzzled about becomes crystal clear – and we will kick ourselves that we hadn't thought of it earlier!”

“We will?”

“Sure. And you know the best thing about it? It's so devilishly simple.” (Fforde, 2003).

Transformation to Predicates Proverbs are frequently truncated or reduced to verbal groups and complementation, thus contextualizing something that is essentially or diachronically a statement of a universal truth or deontic. Such downgradings may become institutionalized as variations, or effectively supersede the proverbial form. Prohibitions in proverbs (*Don't* or *You can't*) are carried over in downgradings in the form of evaluations, so that use of the predicates in positive clauses continues to convey speaker/writer's disapproval (Moon, 1998).

(13) *don't count your chickens before they're hatched* – don't plan how to utilize good results of something before those results have occurred (Cowie, Mackin, McCaig, 2007).

(...) and when she returns, Rochester asks her to marry him; he has realized in her absence that the qualities of Jane's character far outweigh those of Miss Ingram, despite the difference in their social status.

– So far so good.

– Don't count your chickens. A month later the wedding ceremony is interrupted by a lawyer who claims that Rochester is already married and his first wife – Bertha – is still living” (Fforde, 2002).

To consider lexical and semantic deviations R. Moon's taxonomy is used again. Moon asserts that some PUs can take lexical variations from their base form. However, some PUs are more fixed than others, and some, for example *to take place* and *at all*, do not vary at all; still, variation is widespread (Moon, 1998: 120). Verb variation is the commonest type and points clearly to instability in the forms of PUs, however, it is not a uniform phenomenon. While in many cases the meaning of the whole is barely affected by variation, other variations reflect important syntactico-semantic distinctions (Moon, 1998:124). The following examples show verb variation without change in meaning.

Register difference is sometimes possible though. In some cases the verbs which alternate reflect hyponym distinction.

- (14) *to go hell for leather* → to go somewhere or do something very quickly (Farlex):

I didn't have time to answer. She took to her heels and ran off down the corridor toward the debating chamber. I followed; ... Thinking about it later, the pair of us running hell for leather down the corridors must have been quite a sight, but probably not that unusual, given the somewhat curious nature of fiction (Fforde, 2007).

- (15) *to cook someone's goose* → to do something that spoils someone's plans and prevents them from succeeding (Farlex):

"The position I had in mind would require a NUT-2, but we could probably make an exception."

"Ah," I replied, surprised yet somewhat relieved that Phoebe Smalls had also overcooked the goose in the insanity department. "Has the entry requirement been changed since Victor was heading up the department?" (Fforde, 2012).

- (16) *to hear something through the grapevine* → to hear news from someone who heard the news from someone else (Cowie, Mackin, McCaig, 2007):

"Why didn't you report this in straightaway? I had to find out about the break-in through the grapevine."

"Is there a grapevine?" asked Finisterre.

"I've heard there's one," I returned with a half smile.

"Very funny," said Smalls (Fforde, 2012).

The alternating verbs may not be synonymous in other contexts.

- (17) *to give somebody/something the green light* → to give permission for someone to do something or for something to happen (Cambridge Dictionaries online):

"... I want Iago in my office in ten minutes."

"He's doing that spinoff with Hamlet," said Mr. Fainset from across the room.

"Iago v. Hamlet? They got the green light for that?"

"Shylock bankrolled their appeal and got Portia to represent them..." (Fforde, 2011).

- (18) *to grind to a halt* → to slow down and stop (Farlex):

"Your driving reminds me of someone I once knew."

We screeched to a halt outside the Swindon Adelphi, and I hurried inside after telling Mrs. Hilly that I would accept a lift back – and would hear all her grievances (Fforde, 2012).

- (19) *to keep an ear to the ground* → to devote attention to watching or listening for clues as to what is going to happen (Farlex):

We all exchanged glances.

“Here’s the plan,” said Landen. “I’ll search hotels, Stig can check out boardinghouses, and Millon can put his ear to the ground. No one could move that amount of Tupperware around the city without arousing suspicions” (Fforde, 2012).

The copula *to be* alternates with other verbs:

- (20) *to be in the front line* → to be in an important position where you have influence, but where you are likely to be criticized or attacked (Cambridge Dictionaries online):

“Good afternoon, Next,” he said. “I heard you were recently suspended?”

“It’s an occupational hazard when you’re working in the front line,”

I replied pointedly – Jobsworth had always been administration. If he understood the remark, he made no sign of it (Fforde, 2007).

- (21) *to be in (a bit of) a jam* → to be in a difficult situation (Siefring, 2004).

Although we never really saw eye to eye with the local police force when we were SpecOps, we always used to help them out if they got into a jam, and the young ones never forgot it. Hard not to, really, when some lunatic plucks you from the jaws of a werewolf or something (Fforde, 2007).

Sometimes inverse cases occur when a verb is alternated by *to be*:

- (22) *to go nuts* → to become crazy, disoriented, or frustrated (Farlex).

“I thought you’d have to be a bit nuts to want to run SO-27,” mused Landen.

“Undoubtedly,” I replied, “but it’s not so much a question of how mad applications for the job might be as the style of madness” (Fforde, 2012).

Moon asserts that “In most of such cases the PUs are better analyzed as adjectival groups or adjuncts” (Moon, 1998: 125). The cases of varying nouns are broadly synonymous:

- (23) *as luck would have it* → by good or bad luck (Cambridge Dictionaries online):

Apart from one other person I had the breakfast room all to myself. As fate would have it, that one other person was Colonel Phelps (Fforde, 2002).

- (24) *a blind fury/rage* → a state of fury or rage so violent that it makes one lose one’s self-control (Farlex):

But the blow never fell. In my blind anger I had failed to see that his associates Chalk and Cheese were close by, and they did their job admirably, efficiently and yes, painfully, too. I fought like hell and was gratified that in the confusion I managed to kick Schitt-Hawse hard on the kneecap – he yelped in pain (Fforde, 2003).

- (25) *gales of laughter* → sudden, loud happy sounds made by people when they are very amused (Farlex)

“Well then!” said the Magistrate, leaning back on his chair as another peal of laughter and spontaneous applause broke out for no reason. “If you

bring a case to my court, Herr H, I expect it to be brought with all the details intact (Fforde, 2003).

Quite often the variation may take the form of singular or plural forms of the same noun or male or female noun equivalents:

- (26) *to go down like ninepins* → to be injured (Cambridge Dictionaries online):

There was a hiss and a yelp as he dropped it, then a cry of pain as Victor took the opportunity to thump him on the jaw with a speed that belied his seventy-five years. Müller went down like a ninepin and Victor leaped on the dropped gun (Fforde, 2002).

- (27) *to have more than one string to one's bow* → have another interest or skill that you can use if your main one can't be used (Farlex):

"That's your best advice? Perjure myself?"

Snell coughed politely.

"The astute lawyer has many strings to his bow, Miss Next. They've got Mrs. Fairfax and Grace Poole to testify against you. It doesn't look great, but no case is lost until it's lost. They said I couldn't get Henry V off the war crimes rap when he ordered the French POWs murdered, but I managed it – ... (Fforde, 2003).

- (28) *meek as a lamb* → shy, quiet, and docile (Farlex):

"You'll get used to married life," exclaimed one of the women, her mouth full of pins. "They all complain to begin with – but by the end of the afternoon they are as meek as lambs. Isn't that so, Mr Rustic?"

"Aye, Mrs Passer-by," said one of the men holding my arms, "like lambs, meek" (Fforde, 2004).

Nouns sometimes reflect either general or specific distinctions, and their variation may be represented with a hyponym or meronym:

- (29) *to catch someone's eye* → to establish eye contact with someone (Siefring, 2004):

His voice sounded the same. The warmth and sensitivity I had once known so well were still there. I looked up at him, caught his gaze and looked away quickly. I had felt my eyes moisten (Fforde, 2002).

A specific noun may alternate with a proform:

- (30) *to resort to something* → to turn to something that is not the first choice (Farlex):

"UltraWord™ benefits everyone, Next. Us in here and publishers out there. It's the perfect system!"

"Perfect? You need to resort to murder to keep it on track? How can it be perfect?"

"Murder happens all the time in fiction..." (Fforde, 2004).

There are many cases where the nouns are not synonymous outside the PU and may even belong to different semantic fields:

- (31) *quicker than you can say Jack Robinson* → almost immediately (Farlex):
 “I don’t often take apprentices,” she carried on, disregarding me completely, “but they were going to allocate you to the Red Queen... Half of all she says is nonsense and the other half is irrelevant. Mrs. Nakajima recommended you most highly, but she has been wrong before; cause any trouble and I’ll bounce you out of Jurisdiction quicker than you can say ketchup. How are you at tying shoelaces?” (Fforde, 2003).
- (32) *worth one’s salt* → someone who deserves respect (Farlex):
 “Goodness me no!” exclaimed the young man, smiling for the first time. “Holestitching has come a long way since Dickens. You won’t find a holesmith worth his thread trying the old “door opens and in comes the missing aunt/father/business associate, etc.”, all ready to explain where they’ve been since mysteriously dropping out of the narrative two hundred pages previously. The methodology we choose these days is to just go back and patch the hole, or more simply, to camouflage it” (Fforde, 2004).

In metaphorical PUs the nouns often appear to be the focus of the metaphor. In such cases variations do not have changed meanings but mental images of the metaphor may differ considerably. The distinctions are therefore greater than those between many verb variations.

Adjective and modifier variation As well as in previous cases adjective variation is broadly synonymous:

- (33) *too good to be true* → so good that it is hard to believe, or seeming very good but not real (Cambridge Dictionaries online):
 Cardenio had been missing for over four hundred years, but for it to surface now and quite out of the blue gave me mixed feelings. Yes, it would throw the literary world off kilter and send every single Shakespeare fan and scholar into paroxysms of litjoy, but on the other hand it worried me, too. My father always used to say that whenever something is too fantastic to be true, it generally is. I voiced my concerns to Bowden, who pointed out less pessimistically that the original manuscript of Marlowe’s Edward II surfaced only in the thirties (Fforde, 2003).
- (34) *made of sterner stuff* → very strong and determined (Cambridge Dictionaries online):
 Try to arrest me and I can make things very difficult for you – one footnoterphone call from me and the pair of you will spend the next eternity on grammasite watch inside the OED.”
 But Tweed was made of stern stuff, too.

“I’ve closed bloopholes in Dracula and Biggles Flies East,” he replied evenly. “I don’t frighten easily. Call off the Glatissant and put your hands on your head” (Fforde, 2003).

- (35) *to be as nice as pie* → to be friendly to you when you are expecting someone not to be (Farlex):

The red-haired gentleman had admitted to me that he’d done terrible things, but that wasn’t unusual. Out of their books, crazed killers could be as pleasant as pie.

“He murdered two women,” continued the first Man in Plaid, presumably in order to loosen our tongues. “He cut the throat of one and strangled the other” (Fforde, 2011).

Sometimes alternated adjectives may have quite different meanings in other PUs or collocations.

- (36) *to catch somebody red-handed* → to discover someone doing something illegal or wrong (Farlex):

“We’ve been following Byron2 for a month, but he’s smart. None of the forged scraps of ‘Heaven and Earth’ can be traced back to him.”

“Wiretap?”

“We tried, but the judge said that even though Byron2’s surgery to make his foot clubbed in an attempt to emulate his hero was undeniably strange, and then getting his half-sister pregnant was plainly disgusting, those acts only showed a fevered Byronic mind, and not necessarily one of intent to forge. We have to catch him inky-fingered, but at the moment he’s off on a tour of the Mediterranean. We’re going to attempt to get a search warrant while he’s away” (Fforde, 2003).

- (37) *to bet one’s bottom dollar* → to be quite certain (Cowie, Mackin, McCaig, 2007):

ToadNewsNetwork was the top news station, Lydia Startright their top reporter. If there was a top event, you could bet your top dollar that Toad would make it their top story. When Tunbridge Wells was given to the Russians as war reparations there was no topper story – except, that is, the mammoth migrations, speculation on Bonzo the Wonder Hound’s next movie or whether Lola Vavoom shaved her armpits or not. My father said that it was a delightfully odd – ... (Fforde, 2003).

Variation of quantifiers and grammatical and other prenominal modifiers is systematic and predictable as conventional distinctions in meaning or emphasis are maintained (Moon, 1998:127):

- (38) *as much as the next person* → as much as anyone would (Farlex):

He looked at the lights of Swindon again.

“I’m as big a fan of the Brontes as the next man. What will you have me do?”

“Agree to his terms whatever they are; keep our movements completely and utterly secret from Goliath; and I need a manuscript” (Fforde, 2002).

- (39) *another nail in the coffin* → something that will harm or destroy someone or something (Sieftring, 2004):

“Where to?” I asked.

“Probably to another book by the same author.” Jack sighed. “Kind of proves we won’t be long for the Well. It’s the next nail in the coffin.”

“Can’t we just jump into the next chapter and the discovery of the drug dealer shot dead when the undercover buy goes wrong?” (Fforde, 2004).

- (40) *to save somebody’s skin* → to save someone from failure or difficulties (Farlex)

Ernst Stricknene, questioned at length over calls made to Cindy Stoker from his office, decided to save as much of his skin as he could and talked at great length about his former boss. Kaine now had to face the biggest array of indictments ever heaped upon a public figure in the history of England (Fforde, 2005).

- (41) *to no avail* → without any benefit or result (Farlex):

It seemed as though anyone even remotely resembling someone from Racy Novel was immediately under suspicion. They were protesting their innocence and complaining bitterly about the unfair character profiling, but to little avail (Fforde, 2011).

Particle variation. Variation of a prepositional or adverbial particle involves no apparent shift in meaning because the variations *from/out of* and *round/around* are entirely conventional. Other variations, however, may reflect a shift in focus.

- (42) *in the back of someone’s mind* → remembered by someone, but not very important (Farlex):

If I had understood it correctly, the asteroid wouldn’t hit if we didn’t think it would. The trouble was, we thought very much that it would. ... I pushed these thoughts to the back of my mind and headed toward the stage, where I could see Landen standing at the side with Tuesday, chewing her nails (Fforde, 2012).

- (43) *as a matter of principle* → according to a moral rule or personal belief (Cambridge Dictionaries online):

“How do you nobble Smite Solutions?” asked Friday as Miles placed the TV screen, remote control and maps in the trunk of his car.

“Simple,” he said. “With a strategically placed righteous man.”

“A righteous man?”

“Or woman. It doesn’t matter which. Find one of those, place him or her near the sinful, and bingo – the Lord cannot smite the righteous on a matter of principle, so Goliath can kiss our arse and the downtown gets a serious smiting instead” (Fforde, 2012).

- (44) *to pop around (for a visit)* → to come by for a visit (Farlex):

It's quite lonely with Mycroft and Polly away at the fourteenth annual Mad Scientists Conference. If it wasn't for Joffy and his partner Miles popping round every day, Bismarck and Emma, Mrs. Beatty next door, Eradications Anonymous, my panel-beating class and that frightful Mrs. Daniels, I'd be completely alone (Fforde, 2005).

In linguistic literature conjunction variation is mentioned but it is not characteristic for J. Fforde's phraseological deviations or for his view of the world. It should be mentioned that there are cases of PUs where the variation consists broadly of some inserted or suppressed material. Such variations are called specificity and amplification (Moon, 1998). One version is simply a fuller version of the other, adding emphasis or precision. It should be mentioned that variations which are fixed in dictionaries are mentioned here. The extra data in most cases is adjectival or adverbial.

- (45) *to stop (dead) in one's tracks* → to suddenly stop moving or doing something (Farlex):

The manager punched in a long series of numbers, and then Friday punched an even longer series of numbers. There was a shift in the light to a greeny blue, the manager and all the customers stopped dead in their tracks as time ground to a halt, and a faint buzz replaced the happy murmur of shoppers (Fforde, 2007).

- (46) *(just) a stone's throw (from something)* → very close (to something) (Cowie, Mackin, McCaig, 2007):

"Are you sure we weren't followed?" asked Millon as we pulled up outside an empty industrial unit not a stone's throw from the city's airship field.

"Positive," I replied. "Have you got buyers for it?" (Fforde, 2007).

- (47) *to make (good) use of something* → to use something well (Farlex):

I made good use of the time by calling Landen and telling him all about the alternative Friday's offer: to replace our idle and mostly bedridden headbanger of a son with a well-groomed, upright and responsible member of society, and Landen had agreed with me – that we'd keep the smelly one we had, thank you very much (Fforde, 2007).

- (48) *to keep someone or something on (the) (right) track* → to make sure that someone or some process continues to progress properly (Cowie, Mackin, McCaig, 2007):

"Thirty-two readings ago, I was drugged for real and nearly didn't make it. It was all I could do to stay conscious long enough to keep the book on its tracks. I'm first-person narrative so everything's up to me" (Fforde, 2007).

Occasionally, there is a catenated verb or an expanded or augmented nominal group:

- (49) *to take steps (to prevent something)* → to do what is necessary to prevent something (Farlex):

“Well, I might decide to take drastic action if you don’t at least attempt to persuade Mr. Paige. And besides, I’m not really evil, I’m just written that way.”

“If I hear any more of this nonsense,” I replied, beginning to get annoyed, “I will have you placed under book arrest and charged with incitement to mutiny for what you’ve just told me.”

“Oh, crumbs,” he said, suddenly deflated, “you can can’t you?”

“I can. I won’t because I can’t be bothered. But if I hear anything more about this I will take steps – do you understand?” (Fforde, 2005).

- (50) *can’t stand (the sight of) someone or something* → (to be) unable to tolerate someone or something; disliking someone or something extremely (Cambridge Dictionaries online):

“We don’t know what to expect as regards the minotaur, so we have to be prepared.”

“Like boy scouts?”

“Can’t stand them, but that’s beside the point” (Fforde, 2004).

Truncation. Amplification and truncation are two sides of the same coin, but in the majority of cases, are attested as original forms. Many of them are traditional proverbs and sayings, downgraded from their canonical forms to lower-level grammatical units – a compound sentence to a single clause or a clause to a group. Quite often the reduced forms can be seen in terms of ellipsis, since in many cases an allusion to the original and fuller form remains. In most cases the truncated forms themselves have variations but sometimes the original fuller form has almost disappeared from the lexicon.

- (51) *Time and tide wait for no man* → things will not wait for you when you are late (Farlex):

I thought for a moment.

“How about the authorship of the Shakespeare plays?”

He smiled. “Good point. I’ll see what I can do.” He finished his drink.

“Well, congratulations again to the two of you; I must be off. Time waits for no man, as we say.”

He smiled, wished us every happiness for the future, and departed (Fforde, 2002).

- (52) *Don’t count your chickens before they’re hatched* → something that you say in order to warn someone to wait until a good thing they are expecting has really happened before they make any plans about it (Farlex):

Jane leaves to attend to Mrs. Reed, who is dying and when she returns, Rochester asks her to marry him; he has realised in her absence that the qualities of Jane's character far outweigh those of Miss Ingram, despite the difference in their social status."

"So far so good."

"Don't count your chickens. A month later the wedding ceremony is interrupted by a lawyer who claims that Rochester is already married and his first wife – Bertha – is still living. He accuses Rochester of bigamy, which is found to be true (Fforde, 2002).

- (53) *to think twice before doing something* → to consider carefully whether one should do something (Farlex):

There was a strange and pregnant pause. The danger was real and very clear, and even seasoned PROs like Bradshaw and Havisham were thinking twice about entering Perkins' lab (Fforde, 2004).

Reversals. Phraseological reversals are not characteristic for J. Fforde's phraseological deviations or for his own view of the world. This type of variation has no meaning distinction here.

- (54) *in the right place at the right time* → in the best position or place to take advantage of an opportunity (Cowie, Mackin, McCaig, 2007):

"Then," replied my father, "we will have to outsmart them! They will expect us to arrive at the right time and the right place – but we won't. We'll arrive at the right place but at the wrong time, then simply wait. Worth a try, wouldn't you say?"

I smiled. "Definitely!" (Fforde, 2003).

Register variation. Variations often reflect distinctions in formality. Variant words that are more or less synonymous in general meaning may belong to different registers but one variation may be more formal than the second.

- (55) *to be no bed of roses* → to be difficult or unpleasant (Cowie, Mackin, McCaig, 2007):

"If promising meant killing you," I replied in an exasperated tone, "I wouldn't have gone along with it!"

"SpecOps-17 work ain't no bed of roses, Thursday. I've had enough, and believe me, having this little nurk coiled up in my head is not as easy as it looks (Fforde, 2003).

- (56) *to be ten a penny* → to be common or of very little value (Farlex):

"We're working to a tight budget," replied Snudd coldly, "let's not forget that."

"What else?"

"I thought there could be several gangster's molls or a prostitute who wants to go straight and helps you out."

“A ‘tart with a heart’?”

“In one. They’re ten a penny in the Well at the moment – we should be able to get five for a ha’penny” (Fforde, 2004).

Conclusions

Reflecting on J. Fforde’s postmodernist discourse, we should admit that the novels sound not only hilarious and original, but also confusing to follow and conceptually difficult. They portray a fictional reality quite radically different from our normal world. The ontological differences between fact and fiction are also very perplexing; they make a reader exert himself to continue reading and to get used to moving from the actual text world to other text worlds. Considering phraseological transformations and variations in postmodernist discourse, we can assert that PU transformations and variations are not rare, though they make approximately 10% of the whole selection. These examples of transformations of PUs indicate not only the author’s diverse individual style but also the flexibility of the semantics and structure of PUs to satisfy the intended contextual effects. The above-mentioned examples of deviations highlight Jasper Fforde’s individual and peculiar worldview which is demonstrated in his literary worlds. PUs play an important role in the imaginary worlds and they can take forms that differ from their base forms: constituents of Pus, as well as their register and form, can be transformed and varied. At the same time, the role of the context is very important when creating the modified semantics of the PU constituents in literary English. Only with the help of context and extra linguistic factors is it possible to estimate the peculiarity of phraseological transformations and variations in postmodernist discourse. The nature of transformations and variations of PUs in English postmodernist texts is systematical. Further research will be devoted to the functions of PUs in postmodernist discourse.

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