



**DIFFERENT APPROACHES TO THE CLASSIFICATION OF PHRASEOLOGICAL UNITS
IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE**

Jalolova Shakhnoza Mukhammedjanovna
Ph, D of National University of Uzbekistan

Sharifova Ma'mura Bakhodir qizi
Master Student of National University of Uzbekistan

Abstract

Questions of linguistic and speech specificity of phraseological units, their systemic nature and role in reflecting national consciousness have long attracted the attention of many researchers. Scientists pay attention to the semantic characteristic and the role of phraseological units in terms of representing the linguistic picture of the world. This article provides further information about the notion and classification of phraseological units by different scholars.

Keywords: phraseology, phraseological units, contextual approach, phrasemes, idioms, fusions, nominative, communicative, interjactional

Introduction

Phraseology has been a neglected area of language description, at least in Western traditions of scholarship, for a long time. Phraseology is pervasive in all language fields and yet despite this fact – or perhaps precisely because of it – it has only relatively recently become established as a discipline in its own right. It is usually presented as a subfield of lexicology dealing with the study of word combinations rather than single words. These multi-word units (MWUs) are classified into a range of subtypes according to their degree of semantic non-compositionality, syntactic fixedness, lexical restrictions and institutionalization.

Main Part

The word “phraseology” has very different meanings. In Soviet linguistic literature the term has come to be used for the whole ensemble of expressions where the meaning of one element is dependent on the other, irrespective of the structure and properties of the unit (V.V. Vinogradov); with other authors it denotes only such set expressions which, as distinguished from idioms, do not possess expressiveness or emotional colouring (A.I. Smirnitsky), and also vice versa: only those that are imaginative, expressive and emotional.

N.N. Amosova overcomes the subjectiveness of the two last mentioned approaches when she insists on the term being applicable only to what she calls fixed context units, i.e. units in which it is impossible to substitute any of the components without changing the meaning not only of the whole unit but also of the elements that remain intact. O.S. Ahmanova has repeatedly insisted on the semantic integrity of such phrases prevailing over the structural separateness of their elements. A.V. Koonin lays stress on



the structural separateness of the elements in a phraseological unit, on the change of meaning in the whole as compared with its elements taken separately and on a certain minimum stability. All these authors use the same word "phraseology" to denote the branch of linguistics studying the word groups they have in mind. In English and American linguistics the situation is very different. No special branch of study exists, and the term "phraseology" is a stylistic one meaning, according to Webster's dictionary, 'mode of expression, peculiarities of diction, i.e. choice and arrangement of words and phrases characteristic of some author or some literary work.

According to the type of motivation and the other above-mentioned features Vinogradov classifies three types of phraseological units: phraseological fusions, phraseological unities and phraseological combinations.

- Phraseological fusions (e. g. tit for tat) represent as their name suggests the highest stage of blending together. The meaning of components is completely absorbed by the meaning of the whole, by its expressiveness and emotional properties. Phraseological fusions are specific for every language and do not lend themselves to literal translation into other languages.
- Phraseological unities are much more numerous. They are clearly motivated. The emotional quality is based upon the image created by the whole as in to stick (to stand) to one's guns, i.e. 'refuse to change one's statements or opinions in the face of opposition', implying courage and integrity. The example reveals another characteristic of the type, namely the possibility of synonymic substitution, which can be only very limited. Some of these are easily translated and even international, e. g. to know the way the wind is blowing.
- The third group in this classification, the phraseological combinations, are not only motivated but contain one component used in its direct meaning while the other is used figuratively: meet the demand, meet the necessity, meet the requirements. The mobility of this type is much greater, the substitutions are not necessarily synonymical.

It has been pointed out by N.N. Amosova and A.V. Koonin that this classification, being developed for the Russian phraseology, does not fit the specifically English features.

N.N. Amosova's approach is contextological. She defines phraseological units as units of fixed context. Fixed context is defined as a context characterized by a specific and unchanging sequence of definite lexical components, and a peculiar semantic relationship between them. Units of fixed context are subdivided into *phrasemes and idioms*.

- Phrasemes are always binary: one component has a phraseologically bound meaning, the other serves as the determining context (small talk, small hours, small change). In idioms the new meaning is created by the whole, though every element it has its original meaning weakened or even completely lost: in the nick of time 'at the exact moment'.
- Idioms may be motivated or demotivated. A motivated idiom is homonymous to a free phrase, but this phrase is used figuratively: **take the bull by the horns** 'to face dangers without fear'. In the nick of time is demotivated, because the word nick is obsolete. Both phrasemes and idioms may be movable (changeable) or immovable.



An interesting and clear-cut modification of V.V. Vinogradov's scheme was suggested by T.V. Stroyeva for the German language. She divides the whole bulk of phraseological units into two classes: unities and combinations.

Phraseological fusions do not constitute a separate class but are included into unities, because the criterion of motivation and demotivation is different for different speakers, depending on their education and erudition. The figurative meaning of a phraseological unity is created by the whole, the semantic transfer being dependent on extra-linguistic factors, i.e. the history of the people and its culture. There may occur in speech homonymous free phrases, very different in meaning (c / . jemandem den Kopf waschen 'to scold sb' – a phraseological unity and den Kopf waschen 'to wash one's head' – a free phrase). The form and structure of a phraseological unity is rigid and unchangeable. Its stability is often supported by rhyme, synonymy, parallel construction, etc. Phraseological combinations, on the contrary, reveal a change of meaning only in one of the components and this semantic shift does not result in enhancing expressiveness.

A.V. Koonin is interested both in discussing fundamentals and in investigating special problems. His books, and especially the dictionary he compiled and also the dissertations of his numerous pupils are particularly useful as they provide an up-to-date survey of the entire field.

A.V. Koonin thinks that phraseology must develop as an independent linguistic science and not as a part of lexicology. His classification of phraseological units is based on the functions the units fulfill in speech. They may be:

- Nominating (a bull in a china shop);
- Interjectional (a pretty kettle of fish);
- Communicative (familiarity breeds contempt);
- Nominating-communicative (pull somebody's leg).

Further classification into subclasses depends on whether the units are changeable more generally, on the interdependence between the meaning of the elements and the meaning of the set expression. Much attention is devoted to different types of variation: synonymic, pronominal, etc. After this brief review of possible semantic classifications, we pass on to a formal and functional classification based on the fact that a set expression functioning in speech is in distribution similar to definite classes of words, whereas structurally it can be identified with various types of syntagmas or with complete sentences.

The number of works of our linguists devoted to phraseology is so great that it is impossible to enumerate them; suffice it to say that there exists a comprehensive dictionary of English phraseology compiled by A.V. Koonin. This dictionary sustained several editions and contains an extensive bibliography and articles on some most important problems. The first doctoral thesis on this subject was by N.N. Amosova (1963), then came the doctoral thesis by A.V. Koonin. The results were published in monographs. Prof. A.I. Smirnitsky also devoted attention to this aspect in his book on lexicology. He considers a phraseological unit to be similar to the word because of the idiomatic relationships between its parts resulting in semantic unity and permitting its introduction into speech as something complete. The influence his classification exercised is much smaller than that of V.V. Vinogradov's. The classification of V.V. Vinogradov is synchronic. He developed some points first advanced by the Swiss



linguist Charles Bally and gave a strong impetus to a purely lexicological treatment of the material. Thanks to him phraseological units were rigorously defined as lexical complexes with specific semantic features and classified accordingly. His classification is based upon the motivation of the unit, i.e. the relationship existing between the meaning of the whole and the meaning of its component parts. The degree of motivation is correlated with the rigidity, indivisibility and semantic unity of the expression, i.e. with the possibility of changing the form or the order of components, and of substituting the whole by a single word. The classification is naturally developed for Russian phraseology but we shall illustrate it with English examples.

To sum up, We pointed out the essence of phraseological units. Phraseological devices are habitually described as non motivated word - groups that can't be freely made up in speech but are reproduced as equipped - made units. This term habitually utilized by linguistics could be very regularly dealt with as synonymous with the term idiom. Phraseological devices can be categorised according to different classifications and play an critical function in an English language.

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