

PHRASEOLOGY – AS ONE OF THE MAIN TYPES OF LEXICOLOGY

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Key words: *lexicology, phraseology, idioms, phraseological units, phraseological fusions, phraseological combination.*

Lexicology was mainly based on historical principles. Nowadays, the following method of linguistic findings are widely used by lexicologists; distributional, transformational, analysis into immediate constituents, statistical, componential, comparative, etc. the choice of the method in each case depends on what method will yield the most reliable results in each particular case. Lexicology has some subdivisions such as:

1. Semasiology
2. Word formation
3. Etymology
4. Phraseology
5. Lexicography

Semasiology – deals with the meaning of the word;

Word formation – studies all possible ways of the formation of new words in English;

Etymology – studies the origin of words;

Phraseology – studies the set – expressions, phraseological units;

Lexicography – studies compiling dictionaries.

Phraseological units, or idioms, as they are called by most western scholars, represent what can probably be described as the most picturesque, colorful and expressive part of the language's vocabulary. If synonyms can be figuratively referred to and colors of the vocabulary, then the phraseology is a kind of picture gallery in which are collected vivid and amusing sketches of the nation's customs, traditions and prejudices, re – collection of its past history, scraps of folk songs and fairy – tales.

The vocabulary of a language is enriched not only by phraseological units. Phraseological units are word groups that cannot be made in the process of speech, they exist in the languages as ready – made units. They are compiled in special dictionaries. The same as words phraseological units express a single notion and are used in a sentence as one part of it. American and British lexicographers call such units “idioms”. Phraseological units can be classified according to the ways they are formed, according to the degree of the motivation of their meaning, according to their structure and according to their part – of – speech meaning.

A.V.Koonin classified phraseological units according to the way they are formed. He pointed primary and secondary ways of forming phraseological units¹.

Primary ways of forming phraseological units are those when a unit is formed on the basis of a free word – group:

a) The most productive in Modern English is the formation of phraseological units by means of transferring the meaning of terminological word – group, ex: “launched pad” in its terminological meaning is – “start maydonchasi”, in its transferred meaning – “boshlang’ich punkt”.

b) A large group of phraseological units was formed from free word – groups by transforming their meaning: ex: “granny farm” – qariyalar uyi.

c) Phraseological units can be formed by means of alliteration: ex: “a sad sack” – falokat oyoq ostida.

d) They can be formed by means of expressiveness, especially it is characteristic for forming interjections: ex: “My aunt!”, “Hear, hear!” etc.

e) They can be formed by means of distorting a word – groups: ex: “odds and ends”

f) They can be formed by using archaisms. ex: “in brown study” means “in gloomy meditation” where both components preserve their archaic meanings.

Secondary ways of forming phraseological units are those when a phraseological unit is formed on the basis of another phraseological unit, they are:

Phraseology studies the set – expressions, phraseological units.

Phraseological units or idioms as they are called by most scholars represent what can probably be described as the most picturesque, colorful part of the language vocabulary. Functionally and semantically inseparable units are usually called phraseological units.

Phraseological units cannot be freely made up in speech, but they are reproduced as ready – made units. The lexical components in phraseological units are stable and they are non -motivated, their lexical components can not be changed or substituted.

In phraseological units the individual components do not seem to possess any lexical meaning outside the word – group. Ex: Red tape (bureaucratic method), to get rid of, to take place, to take care.

Ex: To let the cat out of the bag. It has actually nothing to do with the “cat”, but means simply to let some secret become “known”.

Ex: To bark the wrong tree. The current meaning of constituents create a vivid picture of a foolish dog sitting under a tree and barking at while a cat has long since escaped.

But the actual meaning of the idioms is to follow a false scene, to look for somebody or something in a wrong place; to expect from somebody what he is unlikely to do.

The idioms are not frequently used in detective stories: The police are barking on the wrong tree as usual (i.e they suspect somebody who has nothing to do with the crime).

Puns are frequently based on the ambiguousness of idioms: “Isn’t our Kate a marvel! I wish you could have seen her at the Harrison’s party yesterday. If I had collected the bricks she dropped all over the place, I could built a villa” (to drop a brick – means to say unintentionally a quite indiscreet of tactless thing shocks and offends people). Together with the synonyms and antonyms, phraseology represents expressive resources of vocabulary.

V.H. Collins writes in his Book of English.

Idioms: “In standard spoken and written English today idiom is an established, an essential element that is used with care with ornaments and enriches the language”.⁵ Used with care is an Important warning, because speech, overloaded with idioms, loses its freshness and originality.

The idioms after all are ready – made speech and their continual repetition sometimes wears them out: they lose their colors and become trite clinches. Such idioms can hardly be said to “ornament” or enrich the language. On the other hand, oral or written speech lacking idioms, loses much in expressiveness, color and emotional force.

In modern linguistics there is considerable confusion about the terminology, associated with these word groups. Most Russian scholars use the term “phraseological units” (“фразеологическая единица”), which was first introduced.

The first thing that captures the eye is the semantic difference of the two word – groups, consisting of the same essential constituents.

In the second sentence the word – groups is carrying coal standing for real hard, black coal and carry from one place to another. The first context has nothing to do with the coal or with transporting it, and the meaning of the whole word – group is something entirely new.

Academician V. V. Vinogradov⁶ spoke of the semantic change in phraseological units as “a meaning, resulting from peculiar chemical

“To have a bee in one’s bonnet” It means “to have an obsession about something, to be eccentric or even a little mad”. Humorous metaphoric comparison with a person who is destructed by a bee continually fussing

⁵ A. V. Koonin “Phraseology in Modern English” M – 1972

⁶ V.V. Vinogradov “Lexicology and Lexicography” M – 1976
combination of words”.

under his car has become erased and half – forgotten and the speakers using the expression hardly think of bees or bonnets, but accept it in its transferred sense: “obsessed , eccentric”, that what is meant when phraseological units are set to be characterized by semantic unity. In the traditional approach phraseological units have been defined as word – groups, conveying a single notion (where, as in free – word groups , each meaningful component stands for a separate notion.) it is this feature that makes phraseological units similar to words: both words and phraseological units possesses semantic units.

Most Russian scholars today accept the semantic criterion of distinguishing phraseological units from free word groups as the major one and base the research work in the field of phraseology on the definition of a phraseological unit offered by professor A.V. Koonin⁷, the leading authority on problems of English phraseology:

“A phraseological units is stable word group , characterized by completely or partially transferred meaning”.

In actual fact the semantic change may affect either the whole word – group or only one of its components. The following phraseological units represent the first case:

To scate on thin ice (to put oneself in a dangerous position: to take risks);

To wear one’s heart on one’s sleeve (to expose, so that everyone knows; one’s intimate feelings);

To have one’s heart on one’s boots (to be deeply depressed , anxious about some-thing)

To have one’s heart in the right place (to be a good , honest and generous fellow).

A crow in borrowed plums (a person pretentiously and unsuitably dressed (with the Russian: Ворона в павлиньих перьях)).

At the same time, in free – word groups substitution does not present any danger and does not lead to any serious consequences. In the example “ the cargo ship is carrying coal to Liverpool” all the components can be varied: the ship (vessel), (boat) carries (takes), (brings) coal to (any port).

The second type of restriction is the restriction in introducing any additional components into the structure of a phraseological unit. In a free – word group such changes can be made without affecting the general meaning of the utterance:

“ This big ship is carrying a large cargo of coal to the port of Liverpool ”.

⁷ A. V. Koonin “ Phraseology in Modern English ” М – 1972

In the phraseological unit “to carry coals to Newcastle” no additional components can be introduced. Nor can one speak about the big white elephant (when using the white elephant in its phraseological sense) or about somebody “having his heart in his brown boots”.

The second type is represented by phraseological units, in which one of the components preserves its current meaning and the other is used in a transferred meaning:

- to lose one's temper
- to fly into a temper
- to fall ill
- to fall in love
- to stick to one's word
- shop talk, also (to talk shop)

The term “idiom”, both in his country and abroad, is mostly applied to phraseological units with completely transferred meanings, that is, to the one's in which the meaning of the whole unit does not correspond to the current meaning of the components. There are many scholars who regard idioms as the essence of phraseology and the major focus of interest in phraseology research.

The structural criterion also brings forth pronounced distinctive features, characterizing phraseological units and contrasting them to free – word groups.

Structural invariability is an essential feature of phraseological units, though, as we shall see some of them possess into a lesser degree than other. Structural invariability of phraseological units finds expression in a number of restriction.

First of all, restriction in substitution. As a rule, no word can be substituted for any meaningful component of a phraseological units without destroying its sense:

To carry coal to Manchester makes as little sense as В Харьков со своим самоваром;

The idioms “to give somebody a cold shoulder” means – to threat somebody coldly; to ignore to cut him; but a warm shoulder or a cold elbow make no sense at all.

Phraseological combinations are word – groups with a partially changed meaning. They may be said to be clearly motivated, that is, the meaning of its components.

- to be at one's wits' end;
- to be good at something;
- to have a bite;
- to come to a sickly end (coll);
- to look a sight (coll);

to take something for granted;
to stick to one's word;
bosom friend;

Phraseological units are word – groups with a completely changed meaning that is the meaning of the unit does not correspond to the meanings of its constituent parts. They are motivated units or, putting it another way, the meaning of the whole unit can be reduced from the meaning of the constituent parts – the metaphor, on which the shift of meaning is based, is clear and transparent.

to stick to one's guns – (to be true to one's views or convictions. The image is that of a gunner of gun crew who do not desert their guns even if a battle seems lost);

to sit on the fence – (to discussion, politics, etc. Refrain from committing one-self to either side);

to catch / clutch at a straw – (when in extreme danger, avail oneself of even the slightest chance of rescue);

to lose one's head – (to be at a loss what to do; to be out of one's mind);

to lose one's heart to smb – (to fall in love);

to look a gift in the mouth – (to examine a present critically; to find fault with smth one gained without effort);

the last drop / straw – (the final culminating circumstance that makes a situation unendurable);

a big bug / pot (sl) – (a person of importance);

a fish out of water – (a person situated uncomfortably outside his or proper environment);

Phraseological fusions are word – groups with a completely changed meaning but in contrast to the units they are demotivated, that is their meaning of the constituent parts: the metaphor on which the shift of meaning was based, has lost its clarity, and obscure. For example:

to come cropper - (to come to disaster) ;

neck and crop – (entirely, altogether, thoroughly; as in the example: he has thrown out neck and crop; she severed all relations with them neck and crop);

at sixes and sevens – (in confusion or in disagreement) ;

to set one's cap at smb - (to try to attract a man; spoken about the girls and women. The image which is now obscure, may have been that of a child trying to catch a butterfly with his cap or of a girl petting on a pretty cap so as to attract a certain person. In "Vanity Fair" there is a follows example: "Be careful Joe, that girl is setting her cap at you";

to leave smb in the lurch – (to abandon a friend when he is in a trouble) ;

to show the white feather – (to betray one’s cowardice. The allusion was originally to cock fighting a white feather in a cock’s plumage denote a bad fighter);

to dance attendance on smb – (to try and please or attract smb; to show exaggerated attention to smb);

It is obvious that this classification system does not take into account the structural characteristics of phraseological units. On the other hand, the borderline separating units, from fusions in vague and even subjective. One and the some phraseological units may appear motivated to one person (and therefore be labeled as a unity), and demotivated to another (and be regarded as a fusion).

It should be clear from the previous description that a phraseological unit is complex phenomenon with a number of important features, which can the fore be approached from different points view.

Hence, there exist a considerable number of different classification system devised by different scholars and based on different principles.

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