

STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS OF PHRASEOLOGICAL UNITS AND METAPHORICAL IDIOMS IN ENGLISH

Mahmudova Charos Muxsin qizi

Linguist (pedagog-researcher), UzSWLU

Abstract: *The study of PUs reveals the intricate relationship between language, culture, and communication, enhancing our understanding of meaning across different contexts. Phraseological units (PUs) are distinct from free word groups due to their semantic complexity, stability, and structured formations. Characterized by fixed meanings and grammatical classifications, PUs often emerge from metaphor and metonymy. Their meanings can be absolute or allow for limited flexibility, reflecting cultural and linguistic diversity.*

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INTRODUCTION

Every phraseological unit needs to follow the grammatical rules of the language in which it is used. These units can be divided into three groups according to their national characteristics: 1) International phraseological units, whose meanings are derived from common user-shared universal concepts. "The alpha and omega of something," "to discover America," "to cross the Rubicon," "the heel of Achilles," "the Trojan horse," "Pandora's box," "Herculean pillars," "I came, I saw, I conquered," and "The Ten Commandments" are a few examples. 2) Neutral concepts with elements that don't represent any particular national characteristics make up locally unmarked phraseological units. These include simple word combinations that form new phrases, like "a snake in the grass," "to burn one's fingers," and "to break one's heart." 3) Phraseological units with local markings, such as "to catch the Speaker's eye," "to set the Thames on fire," "to carry coals to Newcastle," "something is rotten in the state of Denmark," "to dine with Duke Humphry," and "to cut off with a shilling," reflect the national and cultural ideas of a given nation.

Certain phraseological combinations, like "as pale as paper," "measure twice, cut once," and "to know something as one knows his ten fingers," can be translated into several languages that share similar cultural or regional characteristics. Free word groups and phraseological units may appear to be similar at first glance, but they are actually very different. The blurry line separating the two is a significant obstacle to their differentiation. They have unique grammatical and lexical valencies. For instance, V+N—"to grow roses (or wheat)" means "to cultivate," V+V—"to grow to like" means "to begin," V+A—"to grow old (or tired, dark)" means "to become," and V+D—"to grow quickly (or rapidly)" means "to increase." Grammatical valency is the ability of a word to fit into different grammatical structures, which can result in different meanings for polysemous words. However, only "propose" can be followed by an infinitive verb form, such as "to propose to do something," when a word's grammatical valency does not correspond sufficiently within the same part of speech, as in "to propose (or suggest) a plan."

When words can be used in different lexical contexts, such as V+N—"to deliver letters" means "to distribute letters," "to deliver a blow" means "to strike a blow," or "to deliver a lecture" means "to give a lecture"—this is known as lexical valency. As demonstrated in A+N, grammatical valency is limited by lexical valency; for example, "Blind people" (+) is acceptable but "Blind sugar" (-) is not, or "A smiling girl" (+) is acceptable but "a smiling crocodile" (-) is not.

However, in some situations, some seemingly ridiculous combinations can have figurative meanings, such as "Look at him. A crocodile with a smile."

Koonin asserts that phraseological units differ from free word groups in the following ways: 1) Phraseological units are semantically complex, meaning that their meanings can be fully or partially metaphorical (for example, "to burn one's finger," which conveys a figurative meaning based on the analogy of an action); 2) They show structural dissolubility and semantic togetherness (for example, "to kick the bucket" means "to die"); 3) The constituents of phraseological units cannot be substituted, unlike those of free word groups. It is unpredictable how phraseological units are formed. Noun phrases, verbal phrases, adjectival phrases, and particular semantic phrases like metonymic and metaphoric formations are among the different grammatical structures of phraseological units. When we look at the unique properties of phraseological units, we discover that they have a significant fixed stability, which is known as macrostability. Several microstabilities are included in this macrostability, including: 1) Usage stability, in which phraseological units are pre-established in the language as pre-made expressions that do not naturally arise in speech; people are unable to modify or produce their own phraseological units. Future generations will be able to access these units in dictionaries; 2) meaning stability, emphasising that metonymy and metaphor are the main ways in which phraseological units can be transferred entirely or in part.

Phrases like "bull in a China shop," "to make a mountain out of a molehill," "like a fish out of water," and "Tide and time wait for no man" are examples of fully transferred expressions. On the other hand, phrases like "as brave as a lion" and "as sly as a fox" are instances of partially transferred meanings. Sometimes a phraseological unit's meaning can change; for instance, "to give up the ghost" used to mean "to die," but now it refers to a car that has broken down. 3) There are two types of lexical stability: a) absolute lexical stability, in which substitutions are not allowed, as in "to pay through the nose" (to pay a substantial amount of money), "Tommy Atkins" (to refer to a British soldier), they may occasionally take on grammatical forms, as in "He kicked the bucket" (He died). b) Limited substitutions are possible, as demonstrated by expressions such as "to close (shut) one's eyes to something," "not stir (to raise) a finger," and "close (near) at hand."

Alternative word and phrase combinations served as the prototypes for the majority of phraseological units (PUs) in the English language, which developed through simple changes in meaning. The basic figures of speech that cause these meaning changes are metonymy, metaphor, and exaggeration. As exemplified by the expression "to put one's eggs in one basket," which expresses the danger of putting everything at risk, a metaphoric shift basically entails transferring qualities from one object to another based on perceived similarities. Hyperbole, a rhetorical device that exaggerates statements to intensify their

meanings, can also have an impact on the meaning of PUs. Combinations that convey completely unrealistic meanings are the basis for hyperbolic metaphors. "Innocent as a babe unborn," "make a mountain out of a molehill," "pull the devil by the tail," and "come down on somebody like a tonne of bricks" are a few examples. However, some metaphors, like "to do one's long rest" or "to join the majority," can be softer and less offensive, helping to soften unpleasant situations.

As we continue this conversation, we can also look at expressions that show a partial change in meaning and include verbal and adjectival simile characteristics, like "(as) gaudy as a peacock," "(as) bold (or brave) as a lion," "(as) mute as a fish," and "fight like cats and dogs." The literal meanings of a phraseological unit's constituent parts can be used to construct the shift in meaning when the language lacks a variable prototype. A number of phraseological units derive their literal meanings from impractical ideas.

In conclusion, phraseological units play a crucial role in language, adhering to grammatical rules while reflecting cultural and national characteristics. They can be categorized into international units, neutral concepts, and locally marked expressions, each showcasing different aspects of linguistic diversity. The distinction between free word groups and phraseological units highlights the complexity of language, as they exhibit unique grammatical and lexical valencies. Understanding these nuances, including grammatical and lexical valency, enhances our grasp of meaning and context in language use. Ultimately, the study of phraseological units reveals the intricate relationship between language, culture, and the shared human experience, fostering deeper communication and appreciation across different linguistic backgrounds.

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