TYPES OF PHRASEOLOGICAL UNITS AND THEIR CLASSIFICATION

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Abstract

Phraseology is one of the most significant branches of linguistics that studies stable word combinations, idioms, and set expressions functioning as single semantic units. Phraseological units enrich a language, reflect national culture, and contribute to expressive communication. The present article examines the main types of phraseological units and their classifications proposed by prominent linguists. Special attention is paid to the semantic classification developed by V. V. Vinogradov as well as structural and functional approaches to phraseological studies.

Keywords: *phraseology, phraseological unit, idiom, classification, phraseological fusion, phraseological unity, phraseological collocation.*

Language is not merely a collection of individual words and grammatical rules. It also contains numerous fixed expressions that speakers use as ready-made linguistic units. Such expressions are called phraseological units. They possess stability, reproducibility, and semantic integrity, distinguishing them from free word combinations. The study of phraseological units has attracted the attention of many linguists, including Charles Bally, V. V. Vinogradov, A. V. Kunin, and N. N. Amosova. Their research has significantly contributed to understanding the nature and classification of phraseological expressions. Phraseological units are particularly important because they reflect cultural traditions, historical development, and the worldview of a speech community [1, p. 25].

The objective of this article is to analyze the main types of phraseological units and discuss the most widely accepted classifications used in modern linguistics. A phraseological unit is generally defined as a stable combination of words with a partially or completely transferred meaning. Unlike free word combinations, phraseological units are reproduced in speech as ready-made expressions and usually cannot be modified without affecting their meaning [2, p. 41]. For example, the English expression to kick the bucket means “to die.” The meaning of the whole expression cannot be understood from the meanings of the individual words. Therefore, it functions as a single semantic unit.

The main characteristics of phraseological units include: Stability of lexical composition; Semantic unity; Reproducibility in speech; Idiomaticity; Structural integrity. These features distinguish phraseological units from ordinary word combinations and make them a special object of linguistic study [3, p. 67].

One of the most influential classifications of phraseological units was proposed by the Russian linguist V. V. Vinogradov. He divided phraseological units into three major groups according to the degree of semantic cohesion between their components

[4, p. 112]. 1. Phraseological Fusions. Phraseological fusions are completely idiomatic expressions whose meanings cannot be deduced from the meanings of their individual components. Examples: to kick the bucket; red tape; at sixes and sevens. The semantic connection between the components is entirely lost, and the expression functions as an indivisible whole. Such units represent the highest degree of phraseological stability [4, p. 114].

Phraseological unities are expressions whose figurative meaning can still be understood through the meanings of their components. Examples: to burn one's bridges; to lose one's head; to wash one's dirty linen in public. Although the expressions have transferred meanings, the image created by the component words remains transparent and motivates the overall meaning [5, p. 78].

Phraseological collocations are stable combinations in which one component is used in its direct meaning while the other acquires a figurative meaning. Examples: make a decision; pay attention; meet the requirements. The meanings of these expressions are more predictable than those of fusions and unities. Nevertheless, they remain stable combinations accepted by linguistic convention [4, p. 116].

Phraseological units can also be classified according to their grammatical structure: Verbal Phraseological Units-These units are centered around a verb and function as predicates in sentences. Examples: break the ice; spill the beans; take the bull by the horns. Verbal phraseological units are highly productive in English and are frequently used in both spoken and written discourse [6, p. 54].

Nominal Phraseological Units. Nominal phraseological units function as nouns or noun phrases. Examples: a snake in the grass; a white elephant; the apple of one's eye. These expressions usually denote people, objects, or phenomena and often carry evaluative meanings [6, p. 58].

Adjective Phraseological Units-These units function as adjectives. Examples: as cool as a cucumber; as busy as a bee; as good as gold. Such expressions describe qualities and characteristics of people or things [3, p. 71].Adverbial Phraseological Units.Examples: by heart; at random; in a nutshell. They function as adverbials and provide information about manner, place, time, or degree [5, p. 81].

Functional Classification. From a functional perspective, phraseological units may be divided according to the role they perform in communication. Nominative Phraseological Units. These expressions serve primarily to name objects, actions, and situations. Examples: black market; generation gap; brain drain. Their primary function is naming rather than expressing emotion [7, p. 90].

Communicative Phraseological Units. Communicative phraseological units function as complete sentences. Examples: Actions speak louder than words. Time is money. Practice makes perfect. Most proverbs belong to this category because they convey complete thoughts and judgments [7, p. 93].

Interjectional Phraseological Units-These units express emotions and attitudes. Examples: Good heavens! Dear me! My goodness! They play an important role in emotional and expressive speech [2, p. 46].

A.V. Kunin’s Classification. A. V. Kunin proposed another influential classification based on functional and semantic criteria. According to Kunin,

phraseological units can be divided into: Nominative phraseological units; Nominative-communicative phraseological units; Interjectional phraseological units; Communicative phraseological units [8, p. 134]. Kunin emphasized the communicative potential of phraseological units and their role in actual speech. His classification is widely used in contemporary English phraseology studies because it combines semantic, grammatical, and functional aspects [8, p. 138].

The Importance of Phraseological Units. Phraseological units play a vital role in language and communication. They enrich speech, increase expressiveness, and contribute to stylistic diversity. Moreover, they reflect cultural values, traditions, and historical experiences of a nation [1, p. 31]. In foreign language learning, mastery of phraseological units is essential for achieving communicative competence. Learners who understand and correctly use idiomatic expressions can communicate more naturally and effectively. Furthermore, phraseological competence helps develop intercultural awareness because many phraseological units contain culturally specific information [6, p. 62]. Modern linguistics also recognizes the importance of phraseology in translation studies. Translating phraseological units often requires finding equivalent expressions rather than translating individual words. This process demands both linguistic and cultural knowledge [5, p. 85].

CONCLUSION

Phraseological units constitute an important component of the lexical system of any language. Their stability, semantic integrity, and idiomatic nature distinguish them from free word combinations. Different classifications have been proposed by linguists, among which Vinogradov’s semantic classification and Kunin’s functional classification are the most influential.

Phraseological fusions, unities, and collocations represent different degrees of semantic cohesion, while structural and functional classifications reveal grammatical and communicative features of phraseological expressions. Understanding these classifications contributes to a deeper comprehension of language structure, cultural identity, and effective communication.

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