



## THE CLASSIFICATION OF PHRASEOLOGICAL UNITS AND THEIR TRANSLATIONAL PROBLEMS

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### Annotation

This article is devoted to the study of phraseological units which discusses specific features of phraseologies. In addition, it gives information about different approaches to the classification of phraseological units by scholars.

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Phraseology means the branch of linguistics dealing with stable word combinations characterized by certain transference of meaning. Despite differences of opinion, most authors agree upon some points concerning the distinctive features of phraseological units, such as: Integrity (or transference) of meaning means that none of the idiom components is separately associated with any referents of objective reality, and the meaning of the whole unit cannot be deduced from the meanings of its components; Stability (lexical and grammatical) means that no lexical substitution is possible in an idiom in comparison with free or variable word-combinations (with an exception of some cases when such substitutions are made by the author intentionally). The experiments conducted in the 1990s showed that, the meaning of an idiom is not exactly identical to its literal paraphrase given in the dictionary entry. That is why we may speak about lexical flexibility of many units if they are used in a creative manner. Lexical stability is usually accompanied by grammatical stability which prohibits any grammatical changes; Separability means that the structure of an idiom is not something indivisible, certain modifications are possible within certain boundaries. Here we meet with the so-called lexical and grammatical variants. For examples: "as hungry as a wolf (as a hunter)", "as safe as a house (houses)" in English, «как (будто, словно, точно) вводу опущенный», «оседлать своего (любимого) конька», «раскидывать умом (мозгами) Раскинуть (пораскинуть) умом (мозгами)» in Russian. Expressivity and emotiveness means that idioms are also characterized by stylistic colouring. In other words, they evoke emotions or add





expressiveness. On the whole phraseological units, even if they present a certain pattern, do not generate new phrases. They are unique. Phraseology deals with a phraseological subsystem of language and not with isolated phraseological units.

Phraseology is concerned with all types of set expressions. Set expressions are divided into three classes: phraseological units (e.g. red tape, mare's nest, etc.), phraseomatic units (e.g. win a victory, launch a campaign, etc.) and borderline cases belonging to the mixed class. The main distinction between the first and the second classes is semantic: phraseological units have fully or partially transferred meanings while components of, phraseomatic units are used in their literal meanings. Phraseological and phraseomatic units are not regarded as word- equivalents but some of them are treated as word correlates. Phraseological and phraseomatic units are set expressions and their phraseological stability distinguishes them from free phrases and compound words. Phraseological and phraseomatic units are made up of words of different degree of wordness depending on the type of set expressions they are used in. (cf. e.g. small hours and red tape). Their structural separateness, an important factor of their stability, distinguishes them from compound words (E.g. comparing blackbird and black market). Stability of use means that set expressions are reproduced ready-made and not created in speech. They are not elements of individual style of speech but language units.

Lexical stability means that the components of set expressions are either irreplaceable (e.g. red tape, mare's nest) or partly replaceable within the bounds of phraseological or phraseomatic variance: lexical (e.g. a skeleton in the cupboard - a skeleton in the closet); grammatical (e.g. to be in deep water – to be in deep waters); positional (e.g. head over ears - over head and ears), quantitative (e.g. to lead somebody a dance- to lead somebody a pretty dance), mixed variants (e.g. raise (stir up) a hornets' nest about one's ears- arouse (stir up) the nest of hornets). Semantic stability is based on the lexical stability of set expressions. Even when occasional changes are introduced the meaning of set expression is preserved. It may only be specified, made more precise, weakened or strengthened. In other words in spite of all occasional phraseological and phraseomatic units, as distinguished from free phrases, remain semantically invariant or are destroyed. For example, the substitution of the verbal component in the free phrase to raise a question by the verb to settle (to settle a question) changes the meaning of the phrase, no such change occurs in to raise (stir up) a hornets' nest about one's ears. An integral part of this approach is a method of phraseological identification which helps to single out set expressions in Modern English. When as a result of a change in the semantic structure of a polysemantic word some of its meanings disappear and can be found only in certain collocations. The





noun mind, e.g., once meant 'purpose' or 'intention' and this meaning survives in the phrases to have a mind to do something, to change one's mind, etc. When a free word-group used in professional speech penetrates into general literary usage, it is often felt as non-motivated. To pull (the) strings (wires), e.g., was originally used as a free word-group in its direct meaning by professional actors in puppet shows.

In Modern English, however, it has lost all connection with puppet-shows and therefore cannot also be observed in the phraseological unit to stick to one's guns, which can be traced back to military English, etc. Sometimes extra-linguistic factors may account for the loss of motivation, to show the white feather - 'to act as a coward', e.g., can be traced back to the days when cock-fighting was popular. When a word-group making up part of a proverb or saying begins to be used a self-contained unit it may gradually become non-motivated if its connection with the corresponding proverb or saying is not clearly perceived. A new broom, e.g., originates as a component of the saying new brooms sweep clean. New broom as a phraseological unit may be viewed as non-motivated because the meaning of the whole is not deducible from the meaning of the components. In Modern English, however, it functions as a non-motivated self-contained phraseological unit and is also used to denote the T.V. set. Achilles heel - 'the weak spot in a man's circumstances or character' can be traced back to mythology, but it seems that in Modern English this word-group functions as a phraseological unit largely because most English speakers do not connect it with the myth from which it was extracted.

The vocabulary of a language is enriched not only by words but also by phraseological units. Phraseological units are word-groups that cannot be made in the process of speech, they exist in the language 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». We can mention such dictionaries as: L. Smith «Words and Idioms» L. Smith «Words and Idioms» 1976, V. Collins «A Book of English Idioms» V. Collins «A Book of English Idioms» 1981 etc. In these dictionaries we can find words, peculiar in their semantics (idiomatic), side by side with word-groups and sentences. In these dictionaries they are arranged, as a rule, into different semantic groups. 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 out primary and secondary ways of forming phraseological units. 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-groups, e.g. in cosmic technique we can point out the following phrases: «launching pad» in its terminological meaning is «стартовая площадка», in its transferred meaning - «отправной пункт», «to link up» - «стыков как омических кораблей, соединение», in its transformed meaning it means - «знакомиться»;
- b) a large group of phraseological units was formed from free word groups by transforming their meaning, e.g. «granny farm» - «пансионат для старых людей», «Trojan horse»
- c) phraseological units can be formed by means of alliteration, e.g. «a sad sack» - «несчастный случай», «culture vulture» - «человек интересующийся искусством», «fudge and nudge» - «уклончивость».
- d) they can be formed by means of expressiveness, especially it is characteristic for forming interjections, e.g. «My aunt!», «Hear, hear!» etc e) they can be formed by means of distorting a word group, e.g. «odds and ends» was formed from «odd ends», f) they can be formed by using archaisms, e.g. «in brown study» means «in gloomy meditation» where both components preserve their archaic meanings, g) they can be formed by using a sentence in a different sphere of life, e.g. «that cock won't fight» can be used as a free word-group when it is used in sports (cock fighting), it becomes a phraseological unit when it is used in everyday life, because it is used metaphorically, h) they can be formed when we use some unreal image, e.g. «to have butterflies in the stomach» - «», «to have green fingers, etc. i) they can be formed by using expressions of writers or politicians in everyday life, e.g. «corridors of power» (Snow), «American dream» (Alby) «locust years» (Churchill), «the winds of change» (McMillan).

Secondary ways of forming phraseological units are those when a phraseological unit is formed on the basis of another phraseological unit; they are: a) conversion, e.g. «to vote with one's feet» was converted into «vote with one's feet»; changing the grammar form, e.g. «Make hay while the sun shines» is transferred into a verbal phrase - «to make hay while the sun shines»; analogy, e.g. «Curiosity killed the cat» was transferred into «Care killed the cat»; contrast, e.g. «cold surgery» - «a planned before operation» was formed by contrasting it with «acute surgery», «thin cat» - «a poor person» was formed by contrasting it with «fat cat»; shortening of proverbs or sayings e.g. from the proverb «You can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear» by means of clipping the middle of it the phraseological unit «to make a sow's ear» was formed with the meaning «помиляться». borrowing phraseological units from other



languages, either as translation loans, e.g. « living space» (German), « to take the bull by the horns» (Latin) or by means of phonetic borrowings «meche blanche» (French), «corpse d'elite» (French), «sotto voce» (Italian) etc. There are different combinations of words. Some of them are free, e.g. to read books (news papers, a letter, etc.) others are fixed, limited in their combinative power, e.g. to go to bed,, to make a report. The combinations of words which are fixed (set-expressions) are called phraseological units.

Prof. A.V. Koonin considers phraseology to be an independent linguistic science and bases his classification of phraseological units on the functions they fulfill in speech. He distinguishes: 1) Nominative phraseological units: A grass widow (соломенная вдова), Indian summer (бабье лето), maiden speech (первая речь новогочле на парламента), pin-up girl (фотография красотки), sheet anchor (последнее прибежище, единственная надежда). 2) Interjectional phraseological units: By George! Come, come! Like hell! Myfoot! (черта с два). Bless me! Draw it mild! (не преувеличивай!) 3) Communicative phraseological units: (Don't) teach your grandmother to suck eggs (неучи учёного! Яйцакурицу научат!) That's all Hookey Walker!(все это вздор); Wallshaveears (и стены имеют уши); You can't serve God and Mammon (Syrian "mammon" mean "riches"). 4) Nominative-communicative phraseological units: To carry the day – взять верх, выйти победителем; To put one's foot in the mouth – влипнуть, опростоволоситься; To hand smb. a lemon – обмануть, обмануть кого-либо; To set the Thames on fire – сделать что-либо необычное. We should not confuse with phraseological units stable combinations of words that have their literal meaning, and are not of phraseological character: the back of the head, the blue sky, to read a book. In these word-combinations we can change every element, any substitution is permitted. E.g. to go early – “go” may be preceded by any noun or followed by any adverbial. In semi-fixed combinations we deal with certain limitations (to go to bed, to go to school, to give a smile). 2.3If substitution is only partial and the elements are constant (fixed) we deal with a set expression. In: “as busy as a bee”, “time and again”, “green love” we see the extreme of restrictions. Here no substitution is possible because it can destroy the integral meaning of the whole, to say nothing of stylistic and emotional coloring. The expression “a square head”, for example, is a derogatory name, for a Scandinavian. Thus, “to cut bread” and “to cut a poor figure” are entirely different: the substitution of “cut” and “figure” are impossible. Only “poor” may be substituted for “miserable”, “grand”, “ridiculous”. A peculiar classification of phraseological units in the English language belongs to A.I. Smirnitsky. He classifies phraseological units from the point of view of semantic relationship between the components, from the point of view of





their structure into one-summit and many-summit phraseological units. One-summit phraseological units are composed of a notional and a form word, as in “in the soup”, “in the pink” “on the rocks”. Many-summit phraseological units are composed of two or more notional words; “to take the bull by the horns”, “to wear one’s heart on one’s sleeve”, “to know which side one’s bread is buttered”.

A.I. Smirnitsky classifies phraseological units into traditional phraseological units and idioms. Phraseological units (“to fall in love”, “to take to drinking”) are stylistically neutral and devoid of metaphorical expressiveness when compared to idioms (“to take the bull by the horns”, “to pay through the nose”, “to be born on the wrong side of the blanket”. The traditional and oldest principle for classifying phraseological units is thematic. It is widely used in numerous English and American guides to idiom, phrasebooks, collections of “unusual” word-combinations. Thus, L.P. Smith gives in his classification groups of idioms used by sailors, fisherman, soldiers, hunters, etc. In some cases the origin of these units is given though the general principle and is not etymological. This principle of classification deserves attention but it does not take into consideration the linguistic characteristics of these units.

Translating a phraseological unit is not an easy matter as it depends on several factors: different combinability of words, homonymy, synonymy, polysemy of phraseological units and presence of falsely identical units, which makes it necessary to take into account of the context. Besides, a large number of phraseological units have a stylistic-expressive component in meaning, which usually has a specific national feature. The afore-cited determines the necessity to get acquainted with the main principles of the general theory of phraseology. The following types of phraseological units may be observed: phrasemes and idioms. A unit of constant context consisting of a dependent and a constant indicator may be called a phraseme. An idiom is a unit of constant context which is characterized by an integral meaning of the whole and by weakened meanings of the components, and in which the dependent and the indicating elements are identical and equal to the whole lexical structure of the phrase. Any type of phraseological units can be presented as a definite micro-system. In the process of translating phraseological units functional linguistic are selected by comparing two specific linguistic principles. These principles reveal elements of likeness and distinction. Certain parts of these systems may correspond in form and content (completely or partially) or have no adequacy. The main types of phraseological conformities are as follows: Complete conformities. Partial conformities. Absence of conformities. Complete conformities. Complete coincidence of form and content in phraseological units are rarely met with. “Black frost” сильный мороз “To bring oil to fire” – подлить масло огонь. “To lose one's head”- потерять





голову. Partial conformities of phraseological units in two languages assume lexical grammatical and lexico-grammatical different with identity of meaning and style i.e. their figuratively close, but differ in lexical composition morphological number and syntactic arrangement of the order words. One may find: Partial lexic conformities by lexic parameters “lexical composition”. To get out of bed on the wrong foot (idiom) – встать сливочного. To have one's heart in one's boots. (idiom) -душа в пятки ушла. To lose one's temper -выйти из себя, потерять терпение. To dance to somebody's pipe. (idiom) - плясать под чью-то дудку. Partial conformities by the grammatical parameters

When translating units of this kind it is advisable to us the following types of translation: A verbatim word for word-translation Translation by analogy Descriptive translation, A verbatim translation is possible when way of thinking (in the phraseological unit) does not bear a specific national feature.

To call things by their true names (idiom)

The arms race (phraseme)

Cold war (idiom)

To pull somebody's leg (idiom)

Descriptive translation. Descriptive translation i.e. translating phraseological units by a free combination of words is possible when the phraseological unit has a particular national feature and has no analogue in the language it is to be translated into. As we have discussed, phraseological units are one of the important things in order to make the speech colourful.

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