

*Journal of Language Pedagogy and
Innovative Applied Linguistics*
March 2024, Volume 2, No. 3, pp: 20-28
ISSN: 2995-6854
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The Problem of Semantics of Structural Phraseological Units

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Abstract

This article deals with the issue of semantics of structural phraseological units in modern English language as well as author tries to exemplify several notions from prominent scholars who contributed in the sphere of linguistics.

Key Words: *primordial, interlingual, phraseological units, proverbs.*

Paper/Article Info

Reference to this paper should be made as follows:

Nazarova, G. (2024). **The Problem of Semantics of Structural Phraseological Units.** *Journal of Language Pedagogy and Innovative Applied Linguistics*, 2(3), 20-28.
<https://doi.org/10.1997/czh8wt57>

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1997/czh8wt57>



Phraseological semantics closely contiguous to lexical, but nevertheless, it has peculiar row of characteristic features. The subjects of discussion are types of meanings in the sphere of phraseology, phraseological recomprehension, phraseological abstraction, inner form of phraseologisms, aspects of phraseological meanings. During the analysis of phraseological units' meanings, it is necessary to articulate semantic elements, no more than that or another aspects of phraseological meanings.

Phraseological units' semantic structure is wider than its meanings, as its not confined only by significative, denotative and connotative aspects, but also defined by inner form, with construction of all formation as a whole, types of grammatical meanings, for example, number and cases, monosemy and polysemy, also with systemical linguistic and speech connections.

The term "national – culture meaning" is used conditionally, as it means denotative – significative meaning of a word, which has fully national – cultural content. Unequivalent typological study of languages, and serving to different cultures refer to these group of words. Unequivalents, as known, are words, serving for expression of notions, which are not observed in another culture and don't have equivalent in the limits of language, which they belong [1].

National – cultural component of meanings in phraseological units with some facts of cultures, social and common life of nation. Acquaintance

with phraseology opens a new view to some tradition and customs. For example, nautical phraseological units open less know for us life of England as naval power.

National – cultural component of meanings in phraseological units contains in preconditions of its origin, in other words, its inner form, which have been discussed the previous paragraphs and further paragraphs.

It's also proposed that idioms in general have a lot in common with literary quotations, some of which exist as idiomatic ready-made units with their own specialized meaning. To be or not to be (Shakespeare), to cleanse the Augean stables (mythology), a voice crying out in the wilderness (the Bible), and other quotations with specialized meaning and idiomatic value differ little from proverbs and sayings, which can also be considered quotations from English folklore and are part of this branch of literary studies.

The concept of phraseological units as idiomatic word-groups that operate as word equivalents has also been questioned. The following are the key issues of contention:

1. When used to distinguish phraseological units from other more or less idiomatic word groups, the criteria of function is viewed as unreliable. In some utterances, the same word-groups may function as an inseparable group, while in others, they may function as a separable group, with each component performing its own syntactic function. This1 Definitions are reproduced from V. H. Collins. A Book of English Idioms[2].

The form of the phrase in which the word-group is utilized appears to account for some of the debatable points. Thus, in the sentence *She took care of everything*, the predicate is perceived as a single unit, whereas in the sentence *Great care was taken to keep the children happy*, the predicate is clearly separable into two components: the verb *take* serves as the predicate, and the noun *care* serves as the object. The word-functional group's unity appears to have disrupted.

2. It is also argued that the function criterion serves to identify a relatively small group of phraseological units comparable to phraseological fusions in traditional semantic classification, but that it does not provide an objective criterion for the majority of word-groups that fall somewhere between free word-groups and highly idiomatic phraseological units.

In Modern English, phraseological units are also handled from a contextual standpoint. It is proposed that phraseological units should be defined by certain types of context, based on the notion that individual meanings of polysemantic terms may be observed in certain circumstances and may be understood as reliant on those contexts. Variable contexts are made up of free word groupings, whereas phraseological units have a fixed structure.

The stability of the word-group is referred to as non-variability. Within the limitations of the lexical valency of the term under examination, replacement of one of the components is allowed in changeable situations including polysemantic words. It has

been noticed, for example, that in word groups like *tiny town*, the word *town* may be replaced by a variety of other nouns, such as *room*, *audience*, and the adjective *little* by a variety of other adjectives, such as *huge*, *big*, and so on. The meaning of *little* is unchanged by the substitution of nouns, which means 'not huge' in all word groupings. The meaning of *town* is unaffected by the change of adjectives.

The so-called free word-groups are distinguished by the diversity of their lexical components. The variable members of other word groups, such as *tiny business* and *small farmer*, offer as a hint to the meaning of the adjective *small*. *Small* means 'not huge' when paired with the phrases *town*, *room*, etc., but *small* simply denotes 'of limited size' or 'with limited capital' when used with the nouns *business*, *farmer*, etc. Traditional collocations are a term used to denote word groupings of this sort. In contrast to word groups with changeable members, phraseological units do not enable replacement. In the phraseological unit *tiny hours*, for example, 'the early morning hours from roughly 1 a.m. to 4 a.m.' Prof. N. N. Amosova proposed this technique in her book *англиско роеологи*. Y, 1963, and subsequently extended in "English Contextology," L., 1968 [3].

Small only signifies 'early' in conjunction with *hours*, hence there is no variable member. Only in this fixed non-variable context does the phraseological unit *tiny beer small* have the meaning 'weak.' As can be seen from the examples above, a non-variable context indicates that one of the member-words has a specialized

meaning. The specialized meaning of one of the lexical components is interpreted as the meaning of the word solely in the provided phrase (e.g. tiny hours), i.e. it cannot be found in the word alone or in any of the variable word-groups in which the word is employed. As a result, lexical component stability and specialized meaning are seen as interdependent properties of phraseological units with distinct semantic structures.

Unilateral dependency may be seen in the two requirements for phraseological units: specialized meaning of the components and non-variability of context.

Because specialized meaning of member-words or idiomatic meaning of the entire word-group is never observed outside defined situations, specialised meaning demands total stability of the lexical components.

Phraseological units are separated into phrasemes and idioms based on whether one of the components of the full word group has specialized meaning.

Phrasemes are two-member word groupings in which one of the parts has a specialized meaning that is dependent on the second component, as in little hours; the second component (hours) serves as the only hint to the first component's specific meaning because it is only encountered in the given context (small hours). The term that acts as a clue to one of the component's specialized meaning is frequently employed in its main meaning (cf., for example, small hours, and three hours, pleasant hours, etc.

Idioms are distinguished from phrasemes by the idiomaticity of the entire word-group (for example, red tape — 'bureaucratic procedures') and the inability to assign meaning to individual elements of the group. Idioms are components that are conceptually and grammatically inseparable.

They may consist of uncommon word combinations that are generally unallocable when taken literally, such as mare's nest (a mare — 'a female horse,' a mare's nest — 'a fraud, a finding that proves untrue or useless'). The phrase's idiomaticity is indicated by its unusual collocability, or logical incompatibility of member-words.

Idioms made composed of words that are ordinarily brought together are homonymous with matching variable word-groups, such as to let the cat out of the bag — 'to reveal a secret,' and the key to the idiomatic meaning is located outside the phrase itself.

The following are the primary criticisms of the contextual approach: 1. The absence of context variation does not always suggest that the component or components of the word-group have specialized meaning. In rare circumstances, total lexical component stability is discovered in word-groups including words with a small or specialized lexical valency range, such as shrug one's shoulders.

Traditional collocations are word groupings with a particular amount of idiomaticity. Traditional collocations, on the other hand, have a different requirement than phraseological units. Traditional collocations are seen as word groupings with partially changeable parts in the contextual

approach; the degree of idiomaticity is ignored..

As a result, word-groups like *clench fists (teeth)* and *cast(throw, hurl) something in someone's teeth* may both be referred to traditional collocations on the basis of substitutability of one of the member-words, despite a visible difference in idiomatic meaning.

When we compare the three ways outlined above, we can see that they have a lot in common because the primary characteristics of phraseological units, namely stability and idiomaticity or lack of motivation, appear to be essentially the same. However, it should be highlighted that the criteria outlined in the three methods are only adequate for identifying extreme examples, such as extremely idiomatic non-variable and free (or variable) word-groups.

According to the semantic approach, *red tape*, *mare's nest*, and other phrases belong to phraseology and are classified as fusions since they are fully unmotivated. Because of their grammatical inseparability and function in speech as word-equivalents, they are also considered phraseological units in the functional approach.

Because of the difficulty of any change in the 'fixed context' and their semantic inseparability, the contextual

approach classifies *red tape*, *mare's nest*, and other phraseological units as idioms.

The status of the vast majority of word-groups, however, cannot be determined with certainty using these criteria because, in most cases, we are dealing with a degree of idiomaticity and stability rather than total idiomaticity and stability. There are yet to be proposed objective criteria for idiomaticity and stability.

To win a triumph, for example, is a phraseological combination according to the semantic method since it is almost entirely driven and allows for some flexibility to win, to obtain a victory. It is not a phraseological unit, according to the functional approach, because the degree of semantic and grammatical inseparability is inadequate for the word-group to operate as a word-equivalent.

According to the contextual approach, *little hours* is a phraseme since one of the components is employed literally. It is a phraseological unit if we categorize it using the functional method since it is syntactically inseparable and so operates as a word-equivalent. As can be seen from the above, the status of partially motivated word-groups is determined differently depending on which of the phraseological unit criteria is used.

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