



## PHRASEOLOGICAL UNITS IN ENGLISH LANGUAGES

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### ABSTRACT

We have identified the criteria of referring the PU to the class of phraseological units with the component of relationship; have given the semantic and etymological characteristics of the PU; have researched and described their significative-denotative meaning; evaluative, emotionally - expressive and functional-stylistic components of connotation; have revealed a system of paradigms of the PU with the component of relationship. The relationship between the phraseological meaning and the material form of the PU is carried out by means of formal semantic elements - semes. The semantic peculiarity of the PU consists in the specific of semes combination. It is necessary to distinguish between integral and differential semes. The integral seme is a common one and serves to unite the PU in certain phraseo-semantic groups, the differential seme is an additional semantic feature, which performs a distinctive function [2].

The scientific novelty consists in the fact that the first time is used an attempt of the PU with the components of relationship analysis from the point of view of semantics, as well as their functioning in mass media. George Lakoff and Mark Johnson say about the importance of using the metaphors in real life in the book "Metaphors We Live By": "Many of our activities (arguing, solving problems, budgeting time, etc.) are metaphorical in nature. The metaphorical concepts that characterize those activities structure our present reality" [1].

**Key words:** *Phraseology, phraseological units, communicative function, neutrally-nominal, deictic function, deixis.*

### Annotation

The article deals with the problem that is little studied in the comparative aspect – the phraseological units (PU) with the components of relationship in mass media in English language. The study is the first experience of identifying and analysis of the FE with the components of relationship on the significative-denotative and connotative levels in two unrelated languages.

### Аннотация

В статье рассматривается проблема, которая мало изучена в сравнительном аспекте - фразеологизмы (ПУ) с компонентами взаимоотношений в средствах массовой информации на английском языке. Исследование является первым опытом выявления и анализа СЭ с компонентами отношений на значимо-денотативном и коннотативном уровнях в двух не связанных между собой языках.

**Phraseology** is a branch of lexicology studying **phraseological units** (set expressions, phraseologisms, or idioms (in foreign linguistics)). Phraseological units differ from free word-groups semantically and structurally:

- 1) they convey a single concept and their meaning is idiomatic, i.e. it is not a mere total of the meanings of their components;
- 2) they are characterized by structural invariability (no word can be substituted for any component of a phraseological unit without destroying its sense (*to have a bee in one's bonnet* (not *cap* or *hat*));
- 3) they are not created in speech but used as ready-made units.

Unlike a word, a phraseological unit can be divided into separately structured elements and transformed syntactically (*On the instant he was thinking how natural and unaffected her manner was now that the ice between them had been broken.* (Th. Dreiser, 'An American Tragedy'). *I... found this man in a kind of seizure, and went for help. This broke the ice between us, and we grew quite chatty, without either of us knowing the other's name.* (H. Pollitt, 'Serving My Time')

The problem of functions is one of the most urgent issues in phraseology. Phraseological units (PUs) have a definite 'programme' of functioning which is predetermined by their essence itself, as Alexander V. Kunin puts it [3]. Some PU functions are constant, i.e. inherent in all phraseological units in any case of their realization, other PU functions are variable, characteristic only of some classes of phraseological units. We maintain, after A.V. Kunin, that communicative, cognitive and nominative functions are constant functions of phraseological units.

**The communicative function** of phraseological units consists in their ability to serve as a communicative or message means. Communication presupposes a mutual exchange of statements, and message presupposes the transfer of information without a feedback with the reader or the listener. The communicative PU function is usually connected with the cultural identity of the utterance [4].

**The nominative function** of phraseological units is their relation to objects of the real world, including situations, and also replacement of these objects in speech activity by their phraseological denominations. The filling of lacunas in the lexical system of the language is characteristic of the nominative function of phraseological units. This function is peculiar to the overwhelming majority of phraseological units, as they do not usually have lexical synonyms. The nominative function embraces neutrally-nominal and nominal function [3].

**The neutrally-nominal function** is the basic one for phraseological units, e.g. *brown paper*. In realization of such phrases in communication the fact of a designation of the object is important, and not the stylistic use of the phrase.

**The nominal function** is also characteristic of semantically transferred phraseological units, such as idiomaticisms and idiophraseomatism, but it is not neutral, it is stylistically marked, e.g.: *new broom, desperate remedies, tales out of school, crocodile tears, Pandora's box*, etc. The function which is closely connected with the nominative one is **the cognitive function**, i.e. the socially-determined reflection of objects of the real world mediated by consciousness, promoting their cognition. The social determinacy is shown in the fact that, though potential phraseological units are created by separate individuals, these individuals are part of the society, and the realization of the cognitive function by them is possible only on the basis of previous/ background knowledge. Cognitive and nominative functions are realized within the limits of the communicative function, forming a dialectic unity, and all the other functions are

realized within the limits of the given functions. The hierarchy of the functional aspect of the phraseological system is seen in it.

Among **the semantic functions** voluntative (from Latin *voluntas* - will), deictic, resultative, etc. functions are found out.

**The voluntative function** is the function of will expression, e.g.: *wish smb well* with the meaning of 'to wish good luck, success to smb, to treat smb benevolently': *I wish Jane Fairfax very well; but she tires me to death* (J. Austen).

**The deictic function** consists in an indication of spatial or time localization of the action, phenomenon, event which is relative to the reference point, relevant within the limits of one or another speech situation. Besides, personal deixis exists: a person, a place or time can be the reference point. According to this fact three types of deixis are singled out: personal, spatial and time ones, e.g.: *Time and tide wait for no man; It is too late to lock the stable door when the horse is stolen; Don't swap horses when crossing a stream; Strike while the iron is hot*.

**The resultative function** consists in a designation of the reason which has caused an action or a condition expressed by a phraseological unit, e.g.: *come a cropper* with the meaning of 'to fail, to get to a trouble': *Gerald: I may as well tell you at once that I've had very bad luck. I wanted to make money and I've come an absolute cropper* (W.S. Maugham).

The major function of any unit of language including the phraseological unit is **the pragmatic function**, i.e. purposeful influence of a language sign on the addressee. The pragmatic orientation is peculiar to any text which influences phraseological units used in the text, and that is promoted by their considerable pragmatic potential. Phraseological units strengthen the pragmatic orientation of the text or of its part - a context. From this point of view the sub-types of the pragmatic function are stylistic, cumulative, directive, evaluative and summarizing functions.

**The stylistic function** is a special, in comparison with the neutral way of expression, purposefulness of language means to achieve a stylistic effect with preservation of the general intellectual content of the statement. The stylistic function realizes connotative features of a phraseological unit in speech [5]. In the language there is only stylistic colouring. The idea about it is given by marks and comments in stylistic dictionaries which, unfortunately, are still far from being perfect. Comparison of a phraseological unit with its variable prototypical combination of words also helps to reveal stylistic colouring.

Developing, on the Russian material, the phraseological theory in its functional-semantic aspect, S.G. Gavrin singles out some functions of phraseological units [6]. These functions are also characteristic of English phraseological units: a) the expressively-figurative function (*pull one's leg; put the cart before the horse*); b) the emotionally-expressive function (*damn your eyes!; My foot!*); c) the function of speech concision by omitting some components (*Don't teach your grandmother!* instead of *Don't teach your grandmother to suck eggs!*).

**The function of speech laconization**, e.g.: *Give a dog a bad name and hang him* meaning 'once someone has acquired a bad reputation, it is almost impossible for him to shake it off, and even his most innocent actions will be misunderstood' (DOEI). It is evident, that the definition is almost four times as long as the proverb itself. The semantic compression, characteristic of phraseological units, is one of the instances of language economy [7].

All those functions, and also **the function of hyperbolization and intensity** are sub-types of the stylistic function: *make a mountain out of a mole hill*. Especially active in the function of hyperbolization are the phraseological units with a somatic component in their structure: *din into smb's ears, from ear to ear, under one's nose, up to the ears, over ears, over head and ears, up to the eyes, cry one's eyes out, set one's eyes at flow, pipe one's/ the eye, be all eyes, be all ears, with all the eyes in one's head, strain one's ears, have one's*

*hands full, not to stir a finger, not to lift a hand, e.g.: I will not lift a finger to save this reptile (B. Shaw).*

**The cumulative function** is highly peculiar to proverbs (which are regarded as communicative phraseological unit as they are generalizing the life experience of the people. With the cumulative function 'one more function is closely connected - directly managing, directing, influencing, and, in a certain way, bringing up, forming a person. To exemplify **the directive function** the following proverbs can be given: *Never say die; Look before you leap; Don't cry out before you are hurt; Let every tailor stick to his goose; etc.*

**The summarizing function** of a phraseological unit consists in the fact that it may serve as a short resume of the previous statement, e.g.: *that's flat* (coll.) meaning 'it is definitively solved, resolutely and irrevocably': *Well, I will not marry her: that's flat* (G.B. Shaw). The summarizing function in a context is characteristic of many proverbs, e.g.: *Ill gotten, ill spent; In for a penny, in for a pound; After supper, mustard; As the call, so the echo; All's well that ends well;* [5].

The pragmatic character is also revealed in **the evaluative function**. A kind of the pragmatic function is **the contact-establishing function** consisting in creation of an easy dialogue between the author and the reader or the listener, and also among the characters themselves, e.g.: *Introducing a luxury car that will not take you for a ride* (The New Yorker). The given advertising heading concerns a car, and two meanings of the phraseological unit 'take smb for a ride' are played up –

- 1) to kill, finish off smb;
- 2) to inflate, deceive smb.

English proverbs are often employed in **the function of confirmation** of a thought. It is also one of the sub-types of the pragmatic function, e.g.: *It is an ill bird that fouls its own nest* - meaning 'only the bad bird defiles the nest': *Augustus: ...Do you mean to say, you scoundrel, that an Englishman is capable of selling his country to the enemy for gold? - The Clerk: Not as a general thing I would not say it, but there's men here who would sell their own mothers for two coppers if they got the chance. - Augustus:... It's an ill bird that fouls its own nest* (G.B. Shaw).

Interjectional phraseological units can carry out **the compensatory function** which is realized in the description of strong sincere emotional experience, affect, when one's speech is complicated and an interjectional phraseological unit is the only content of the whole remark [Polishchuk 1988: 20], e.g.: *oh dear* meaning 'my God': *Jimmy: They did not say much. But I think she's dying. - Cliff: Oh, dear* (J. Osborne).

**The text-building function / context-building function** is characteristic of phraseological units in their context realizations. For the first time the question concerning text-building functions of phraseological units was raised by Irina I. Chernysheva [8]. The proposition that phraseological units can serve a binding means of not only contexts, but also of context fragments seems relevant. This function has a diverse embodiment[9]

There are three classification principles of phraseological units. The most popular is the synchronic (semantic) classification of phraseological units by V.V. Vinogradov. He developed some points first advanced by the Swiss linguist Charles Bally and gave a strong impetus to a purely lexicological treatment of the material. It means that phraseological units were defined as lexical complexes with specific semantic features and classified accordingly. His classification is based upon the motivation of the unit that is the relationship between the meaning of the whole and the meanings of its component parts. The degree of motivation is correlated with the rigidity, indivisibility and semantic unity of the expression that is with the possibility of changing the form or the order of components and of substituting the whole by a single word though not in all the cases.

According to Vinogradov's classification all phraseological units are divided into phraseological fusions, phraseological unities and phraseological combinations.

Phraseological fusion is a semantically indivisible phraseological unit which meaning is never influenced by the meanings of its components [10].

It means that phraseological fusions represent the highest stage of blending together. The meaning of components is completely absorbed by the meaning of the whole, by its expressiveness and emotional properties.

*Once in a blue moon – very seldom;  
To cry for the moon – to demand unreal;  
Under the rose – quietly.*

Sometimes phraseological fusions are called idioms under which linguists understand a complete loss of the inner form. To explain the meaning of idioms is a complicated etymological problem (*tit to tat* means "to revenge", but no one can explain the meaning of the words *tit* and *tat*).

Phraseological unity is a semantically indivisible phraseological unit the whole meaning of which is motivated by the meanings of its components [10].

In general, phraseological unities are the phrases where the meaning of the whole unity is not the sum of the meanings of its components but is based upon them and may be understood from the components. The meaning of the significant word is not too remote from its ordinary meanings. This meaning is formed as a result of generalized figurative meaning of a free word-combination. It is the result of figurative metaphoric reconsideration of a word-combination.

*To come to one's sense – to change one's mind;  
To come home – to hit the mark;  
To fall into a rage – to get angry.*

Phraseological unities are characterized by the semantic duality. One can't define for sure the semantic meaning of separately taken phraseological unities isolated from the context, because these word-combinations may be used as free in the direct meaning and as phraseological in the figurative meaning.[11]

The considerable contribution made by Russian scholars in phraseological research cannot be exaggerated. We have already mentioned the great contribution made by Academician V. V. Vinogradov to this branch of linguistic science.

The classification system of phraseological units devised by this prominent scholar is considered by some linguists of today to be outdated, and yet its value is beyond doubt because it was the first classification system which was based on *the semantic principle*. It goes without saying that semantic characteristics are of immense importance in phraseological units. It is also well known that in modern research they are often sadly ignored. That is why any attempt at studying the semantic aspect of phraseological units should be appreciated.

Vinogradov's classification system is founded on the degree of semantic cohesion between the components of a phraseological unit. Units with a partially transferred meaning show the weakest cohesion between their components. The more distant the meaning of a phraseological unit from the current meaning of its constituent parts, the greater is its degree of semantic cohesion. Accordingly, Vinogradov classifies phraseological units into three classes: *phraseological combinations, unities and fusions* (R. *фразеологические сочетания, единства и сращения*).

*Phraseological combinations* are word-groups with a partially changed meaning. They may be said to be clearly motivated, that is, the meaning of the unit can be easily deduced from the meanings of its constituents.

E. g. *to be at one's wits' end*, *to be good at something*, *to be a good hand at something*, *to have a bite*, *to come off a poor second*, *to come to a sticky end* (coll.), *to look a sight* (coll.), *to take something for granted*, *to stick to one's word*, *to stick at nothing*, *gospel truth*, *bosom friends*.

*Phraseological unities* 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 deduced from the meanings of the constituent parts; the metaphor, on which the shift of meaning is based, is clear and transparent. [4]

E. g. *to stick to one's guns* (~ to be true to one's views or convictions. The image is that of a gunner or guncrew who do not desert their guns even if a battle seems lost); *to sit on the fence* (~ in discussion, politics, etc. refrain from committing oneself to either side); *to catch/clutch at a straw/straws* (~ 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 lock the stable door after the horse is stolen* (~ to take precautions too late, when

the mischief is done); *to look a gift horse in the mouth* (= to examine a present too critically; to find fault with something one gained without effort); *to ride the high horse* (~ to behave in a superior, haughty, overbearing way. The image is that of a person mounted on a horse so high that he looks down on others); *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 usual or proper environment).

*Phraseological fusions* are word-groups with a completely changed meaning but, in contrast to the unities, they are demotivated, that is, their meaning cannot be deduced from the meanings of the constituent parts; the metaphor, on which the shift of meaning was based, has lost its clarity and is obscure.

E. g. *to come a cropper* (to come to disaster); *neck and crop* (entirely, altogether, thoroughly, as in: *He was 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 and attract a man; spoken about girls and women. The image, which is now obscure, may have been either that of a child trying to catch a butterfly with his cap or of a girl putting on a pretty cap so as to attract a certain person. In *Vanity Fair*: "*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 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 denoted a bad fighter); *to dance attendance on smb.* (to try and please or attract smb.; to show exaggerated attention to smb.).

## CONCLUSION

It is obvious that this classification system does not take into account the structural characteristics of phraseological units. On the other hand, the border-line separating unities

from fusions is vague and even subjective. One and the same phraseological unit may appear motivated to one person (and therefore be labelled as a unity) and demotivated to another (and be regarded as a fusion). The more profound one's command of the language and one's knowledge of its history, the fewer fusions one is likely to discover in it.

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