Volume 4, Issue 4, April – 2026 **ISSN (E):** 2938-379X

LINGUISTIC STUDY OF PHRASEOLOGICAL UNITS AND THEIR CLASSIFICATION

Khaydarova Guzalkhon
Uzbek State World Languages University, Uzbekistan, Tashkent
oqituvchi123@mail.ru

Abstract
Phraseology is a significant branch of linguistics that studies fixed expressions such as idioms, collocations, proverbs, and other multi-word units. These expressions, commonly referred to as phraseological units (PUs), play a crucial role in enriching language, making it more expressive, figurative, and culturally embedded.

Web of Teachers: Inderscience Research
webofjournals.com/index.php/1

Introduction

Phraseological units are characterized by stability, reproducibility, and semantic unity, meaning that their overall meaning is often not predictable from the meanings of individual components. For example, the idiom “kick the bucket” means “to die,” which cannot be deduced from the literal meanings of the words.

The study of phraseological units has developed significantly in modern linguistics, incorporating approaches from semantics, structural linguistics, cognitive linguistics, and pragmatics. One of the central aspects of phraseology is the classification of phraseological units, which helps scholars understand their structure, meaning, and function.

The Development of Phraseology as a Linguistic Discipline

Phraseology emerged as an independent field of study in the 20th century, particularly through the works of scholars such as V.V. Vinogradov and A.V. Kunin. Initially, research focused on compiling idiom dictionaries and distinguishing phraseological units from free word combinations.

Over time, linguists recognized that phraseological units form a distinct subsystem of language, characterized by:

fixed structure
semantic integrity
idiomatic meaning
cultural specificity

Modern linguistic studies have expanded phraseology to include cross-cultural analysis, cognitive interpretation, and corpus-based research, making it a multidisciplinary field.

Definition and Features of Phraseological Units

A phraseological unit can be defined as a stable combination of words with a unified meaning that is often figurative and cannot be freely altered.

Key Features:

1. Stability – The structure of the expression is fixed and resistant to change.
2. Idiomaticity – The meaning is not literal.

Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.

3. Reproducibility – The unit is used as a ready-made expression.
4. Semantic Unity – The expression functions as a single lexical unit.

For example:
spill the beans (reveal a secret)
break the ice (start a conversation)
These features distinguish phraseological units from free word combinations.
Approaches to the Study of Phraseological Units
The study of phraseological units involves several linguistic approaches:

1. Structural Approach

This approach examines the grammatical structure of phraseological units, identifying patterns such as:
verbal phrases (take into account)
nominal phrases (a piece of cake)
adjectival phrases (as cold as ice)

2. Semantic Approach

The semantic approach focuses on the meaning of phraseological units, especially the relationship between literal and figurative meanings.

3. Functional Approach

This approach analyzes how phraseological units function in communication, such as:
naming objects
expressing emotions
conveying complete thoughts

4. Cognitive Approach

Modern linguistics emphasizes the cognitive basis of phraseology, linking idioms to conceptual metaphors and human experience.
Classification of Phraseological Units
One of the most important aspects of phraseology is classification. Linguists have proposed various systems based on different criteria, including semantic, structural, functional, and etymological features.

1. Vinogradov's Semantic Classification

V.V. Vinogradov's classification is one of the most influential systems, based on the degree of semantic transparency.
He distinguishes three main types:
a) Phraseological Fusions (Idioms Proper)
These are completely non-motivated units whose meaning cannot be deduced from their components.
Examples:
kick the bucket (to die)

Web of Teachers: Inderscience Research
webofjournals.com/index.php/1
Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.

red herring (misleading clue)
b) Phraseological Unities
These units have partially motivated meanings, where the figurative meaning can be inferred to some extent.
Examples:
burn bridges (destroy relationships)
lose one's head (panic)
c) Phraseological Collocations
These are semi-fixed expressions where one component is used figuratively.
Examples:
make a decision
take responsibility
This classification highlights the degree of idiomaticity in phraseological units.

2. Kunin's Functional Classification
A.V. Kunin предложил классификацию based on the function of phraseological units in speech.
a) Nominative Phraseological Units
These units name objects or phenomena.
Examples:
a white elephant (useless possession)
b) Nominative-Communicative Units
These can function both as phrases and complete sentences.
Examples:
break the ice → the ice is broken
c) Communicative Units
These include proverbs and sayings expressing complete ideas.
Examples:
Actions speak louder than words
d) Interjectional Units
These express emotions.
Examples:
Oh my God!
Good heavens!
This classification emphasizes the communicative role of phraseological units.

3. Structural Classification
Phraseological units can also be classified according to their grammatical structure:
Verbal idioms – to call it a day
Nominal idioms – a blessing in disguise
Adjectival idioms – as busy as a bee
Adverbial idioms – by and large

Web of Teachers: Inderscience Research
webofjournals.com/index.php/1
Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.

Prepositional idioms – in spite of
This classification helps analyze how phraseological units function syntactically.

4. Semantic Classification
Semantic classification groups phraseological units based on meaning types:
Metaphorical – in hot water (in trouble)
Symbolic – cross the Rubicon (irreversible decision)
Figurative – cut corners (do something poorly)
Ironic – as clear as mud (not clear at all)
This approach is particularly useful in language teaching and learning.

5. Thematic (Etymological) Classification
This classification groups phraseological units based on their origin or thematic field:
Animal-based idioms – a dark horse
Military idioms – fight a losing battle
Nature-related idioms – under the weather
Professional idioms – learn the ropes
Such classification reflects cultural and historical aspects of language.

6. Functional-Communicative Classification
According to this classification, phraseological units are divided into:
Nominative units – naming objects
Communicative units – expressing complete thoughts
Interjectional units – expressing emotions
This system combines both semantic and functional features.
Importance of Classifying Phraseological Units
The classification of phraseological units is essential for several reasons:
1. Linguistic Analysis
It helps linguists understand the structure and meaning of idioms.
2. Language Teaching
Classification simplifies the learning of idiomatic expressions, especially for foreign language learners.
3. Translation Studies
Understanding different types of phraseological units is crucial for accurate translation.
4. Cross-Cultural Communication
Phraseological units reflect cultural values and worldview, making them important in intercultural studies.
Challenges in Studying Phraseological Units
Despite their importance, phraseological units pose several challenges:
Non-compositional meaning – difficult to interpret literally
Cultural specificity – meanings depend on cultural context
Variability – some units allow limited variation

Web of Teachers: Inderscience Research
webofjournals.com/index.php/1
Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.

Translation difficulties – lack of direct equivalents
These challenges make phraseology a complex but fascinating field of study.

Conclusion

The linguistic study of phraseological units reveals their essential role in language as carriers of meaning, culture, and stylistic richness. Phraseological units are stable, idiomatic expressions that function as single semantic units and contribute to the expressiveness of language.

The classification of phraseological units—whether semantic, structural, functional, or thematic—provides valuable insights into their nature and usage. Systems developed by scholars such as Vinogradov and Kunin remain fundamental in modern phraseological research.

In conclusion, phraseological units represent a unique intersection of language, culture, and cognition. Their study not only enhances linguistic theory but also improves language teaching, translation, and intercultural communication.

References

1. Vinogradov, V.V. Lexicology and Lexicography. Moscow: Nauka, 1977.
2. Kunin, A.V. English Phraseology. Moscow: Vysshaya Shkola, 1972.
3. Gläser, R. Phraseology: Problems and Perspectives. John Benjamins, 1998.
4. Crystal, D. The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the English Language. Cambridge University Press, 2008.
5. Aitchison, J. Words in the Mind. Oxford: Blackwell, 2003.
6. Carter, R. Vocabulary: Applied Linguistic Perspectives. Routledge, 2012.
7. Asatullayeva, M. Classification of Phraseological Units in English and Uzbek Languages, 2024.
8. Amirkulova, N. General Characteristics of Phraseological Units, 2023.
9. Alisoy, H. Semantic Classification of Phraseological Units, 2024.
10. Davlyatova, E. Types of Phraseological Units, 2023.

Web of Teachers: Inderscience Research
webofjournals.com/index.php/1

Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.