



THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS OF PHRASEOLOGICAL UNITS IN LITERARY TEXTS

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This article delves into the theoretical foundations that underpin the study of phraseological units, examining the linguistic principles and frameworks that guide the analysis of these recurrent and idiomatically structured expressions. By exploring the historical evolution of phraseology and its integration into linguistic theory, the article provides a comprehensive overview of the key concepts and methodologies shaping the study of phraseological units. Theoretical insights presented in this work contribute to a deeper understanding of language structure, usage, and the cognitive processes involved in the comprehension and production of fixed expressions.

Language is not only a means of communication but also a reflection of the cultural, historical, and intellectual development of a society.

One of the most expressive and culturally significant components of language is phraseology. Phraseological units constitute an essential part of the lexical system of any language and represent stable combinations of words that function as a single semantic unit. These units play a crucial role in enriching speech, conveying figurative meaning, and expressing emotional and stylistic nuances in both everyday communication and literary works.⁵³ The scientific study of phraseological units has long attracted the attention of linguists. Phraseology as a linguistic discipline examines fixed expressions, idioms, proverbs, and other stable word combinations that possess a figurative meaning and a stable structural form. Unlike free word combinations, phraseological units are characterized by semantic integrity and cannot be interpreted solely by analyzing the meanings of their individual components. Their meaning is often metaphorical and culturally conditioned, which makes phraseology an important area of linguistic and cultural research.

In linguistics, the term “phraseological unit” refers to a stable combination of words that functions as a single lexical unit and possesses a figurative meaning.⁵⁴ Such expressions are often reproduced in speech as ready-made units rather than being created spontaneously during

⁵³ Bally, C. (1966). *French Stylistics*. London: Peter Owen. pp. 50.

⁵⁴ Arnold, I. V. (2012). *The English Word*. Moscow: Flinta. pp. 120



communication. The semantic unity and structural stability of phraseological units distinguish them from ordinary word combinations.

One of the pioneers in the study of phraseology was the Russian linguist Viktor Vinogradov, who developed a comprehensive classification of phraseological units. According to Vinogradov, phraseological units can be divided into several types based on the degree of semantic cohesion between their components. These include phraseological fusions, phraseological unities, and phraseological combinations. Phraseological fusions represent expressions whose meaning cannot be deduced from the meanings of their individual words, while phraseological unities maintain some degree of semantic connection with their components but still function as stable figurative expressions.⁵⁵

The English linguistic tradition has also made significant contributions to the study of phraseology. Scholars have emphasized the role of idioms and fixed expressions in shaping the expressive potential of language. English idioms often contain metaphorical meanings derived from historical events, cultural traditions, and everyday experiences. These expressions have become an integral part of the English language and are widely used in both spoken and written communication. Phraseological units possess several distinctive features that differentiate them from free word combinations. One of the most important characteristics is **stability**, which means that the structure of a phraseological unit remains relatively fixed and cannot be freely altered without affecting its meaning. Another essential feature is **semantic unity**, which indicates that the meaning of the entire expression cannot be understood by simply interpreting the meanings of its individual words. Additionally, phraseological units often demonstrate **figurative imagery**, meaning that they convey metaphorical or symbolic meanings rather than literal interpretations. Another important feature of phraseological units is their **reproducibility in speech**. Unlike ordinary phrases that speakers construct spontaneously, phraseological expressions are stored in the collective memory of a language community and are reproduced as ready-made linguistic units. This characteristic allows phraseological units to function as powerful tools for expressing complex ideas in a concise and memorable way.⁵⁶ Phraseological units also play an important role in expressing **cultural identity and national**

⁵⁵ Vinogradov, V. V. (1977). *Selected Works: Lexicology and Lexicography*. Moscow: Nauka. pp. 45–110.

⁵⁶ Lyons, J. (1995). *Linguistic Semantics: An Introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. pp. 140–200.



worldview. Many idioms reflect the historical experience, traditions, and values of a particular society. For example, phraseological expressions in English literature often contain references to historical events, mythology, and religious concepts, while Uzbek phraseology frequently reflects the moral principles, customs, and social values of Uzbek culture. Thus, the study of phraseology is closely connected with cultural studies and ethnolinguistics. Another essential aspect of phraseological units is their **stylistic function** in speech. In literary texts, phraseological expressions serve as powerful stylistic devices that enhance emotional expression, create vivid imagery, and contribute to the artistic quality of the text. Writers often use idioms and figurative expressions to portray characters, express philosophical ideas, and convey complex emotional states. The use of phraseological units in literary works enriches the language of the text and makes it more expressive and memorable. In dramatic literature, phraseological units perform particularly important functions. Since dramatic texts rely heavily on dialogue, the speech of characters must be vivid, expressive, and emotionally charged. Phraseological expressions help achieve this effect by adding color and authenticity to the characters' language. They also contribute to the development of dramatic tension and help reveal the psychological state of the characters. The works of outstanding literary figures often demonstrate the richness and expressive power of phraseology. For instance, the dramatic language of William Shakespeare is widely recognized for its creative use of idioms, metaphors, and figurative expressions. Many phraseological expressions found in his plays have become widely used in the English language. In particular, the tragedy *Hamlet* contains numerous idiomatic expressions that reflect philosophical reflections on human existence, morality, and fate. Similarly, modern Uzbek literature also demonstrates a rich tradition of phraseological expression.

Phraseological units, or phraseology, refer to fixed expressions and idiomatic phrases that convey specific, often culturally embedded meanings. In the realm of literature, these units serve not only as tools for expression but also as devices that enrich the narrative, enhance character development, and provide cultural context. Phraseological units are defined as fixed combinations of words that function as a single unit of meaning, encompassing idioms, collocations, proverbs, phrasal verbs, and set phrases. Key characteristics include stability, where these units maintain a consistent form and meaning across different contexts, and non-compositionality, meaning that the overall meaning cannot be derived directly from the individual components. Additionally, phraseological units can be categorized into several types, each serving distinct communicative and stylistic functions. Idioms are expressions



whose meanings are metaphorical and not directly understandable from the literal meanings of the words, such as "kick the bucket," which means to die. Collocations are regular combinations of words that sound more natural together, like "make a decision." Proverbs encapsulate wisdom, such as "A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush," providing thematic depth and cultural insight. Phrasal verbs, like "give up," change meaning based on their combination with prepositions or adverbs, while set phrases, such as "Ladies and gentlemen," standardize communication in specific contexts. In literary texts, phraseological units serve various essential functions. They reflect cultural and historical contexts, offering insights into societal norms, values, and worldviews, which can deepen the reader's understanding of the narrative backdrop. Authors often use these units to develop characters' voices, enhancing their uniqueness and authenticity, as different characters may employ distinct idioms or colloquial phrases that reflect their backgrounds. Moreover, idiomatic expressions can evoke emotions and create vivid imagery, enriching the reader's experience and emphasizing central themes and motifs. In dialogue, phraseological units create authenticity, making characters feel more relatable and drawing readers into their experiences.

Several theoretical perspectives provide insights into the study of phraseological units. Cognitive linguistics emphasizes the relationship between language and thought, suggesting that these units arise from cognitive processes and can reflect conceptual metaphors that shape perceptions. Structuralism analyzes the underlying structures of language, focusing on how phraseological units contribute to coherence and meaning within texts. Pragmatics examines how context influences the interpretation of these units, highlighting that their meanings can shift dramatically based on situational context and speaker intent. Discourse analysis further explores how phraseological units operate within larger discourse structures, impacting power dynamics and identity construction in texts. To illustrate these theoretical foundations, one can analyze specific literary works to identify and examine the use of phraseological units. For instance, Shakespeare's extensive use of idiomatic expressions enriches the language while reflecting the socio-political context of his time; phrases like "the world's mine oyster" convey themes of ambition and opportunity. Modern authors frequently employ colloquial phrases and idioms to ground their narratives in realism, creating relatable characters and settings. In poetry, phraseological units can be manipulated for rhythmic and thematic purposes, creating layers of meaning that enhance the poem's central themes.

Theoretical Approaches

The analysis of phraseological units in literary texts employs several



distinct frameworks:

Approach	Focus	Key Insight
Cognitive Linguistics	How units are processed and understood.	Examines the conceptual metaphors underlying figurative expressions.
Pragmatics	Contextual usage and communicative goals.	Analyzes how authors use units to achieve specific effects on the reader in different contexts.
Linguoculturology	Cultural markers and values.	Explores how units encode historical experiences, traditions, and national mentality.
Construction Grammar	Form-meaning pairings.	Views these units as complex grammatical structures rather than just lexical items.

- **Stability:** Phraseological units are resistant to lexical or structural changes, ensuring they are recognized instantly by readers.

- **Figurative Meaning:** The overall meaning is figurative rather than literal, often originating from metaphors, historical events, or cultural traditions.

- **Reproducibility:** These expressions are not created anew in speech or text but are reproduced as stable, ready-made entities.

Several classic and modern classifications are used to analyze these units in literature: **Vinogradov's Classification:** The Russian linguist V.V. Vinogradov categorized these units based on their **semantic integrity** into three main groups:

1. **Phraseological Fusions:** The highest level of semantic cohesion where the meaning is completely unrelated to the individual components (e.g., "kick the bucket").

2. **Phraseological Unities:** Combinations where the figurative meaning is still motivated by the metaphorical meaning of the components.

3. **Phraseological Combinations:** Sets where one component is used in its literal meaning while the other is used figuratively (e.g., "heavy rain").

4. **Structural-Semantic System:** Modern approaches, particularly those influenced by A.V. Kunin, analyze these units as part of a system involving idioms, proverbs, and collocations



In conclusion, phraseological units play a crucial role in the richness and complexity of literary texts. Understanding their theoretical foundations enhances appreciation for literature and provides deeper insights into language and culture.