



Phraseology as a Linguistic Unit

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Annotation: Phraseological units are characterized by regular use (stability of use) in the language, although the frequency of use of different units can vary significantly.

The phraseological unit has a special semantic structure, inherent only to it as a separate unit of language.

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As can be seen from the above, the features of a phraseological unit relate both to its formal side (structure) and to its semantics. They are integral to the phraseological unit and act in unity. But does this mean that all these signs are equivalent? A similar conclusion can be drawn if we consider the phraseological unit exclusively in statics. Meanwhile, such an approach, as rightly noted by many researchers [2; 6; 1], is incompatible with the dynamic nature of this unit, it can only distort the true essence of the matter. To get the correct answer to the question posed, it is necessary to study the phraseological unit in the conditions of its functioning and take into account its “behavior” in speech, which will make it possible to determine the role of various features of this unit in its formation and development.

Such a study shows that the semantic features of the phraseological unit in the Russian language prevail over the structural ones. This conclusion is based on a comprehensive scientific analysis of various factors that determine the life of a phraseological unit and is confirmed by numerous facts.

In this regard, we consider separately the above features of the phraseological unit.

The most important and characteristic structural feature of a phraseological unit as a complex language formation is its separate form, which is opposed to the whole form of the word. However, if separate formatting can delimit a phraseological unit from a word, then it cannot delimit it from stable non-phraseological phrases that have a fixed lexical composition and unity of meaning.

It is also important to note that this feature, which is considered mandatory and integral to a phraseological unit, is not absolute in Russian.

Another sign of a phraseological unit is the stability of its structure, that is, the fixedness of the lexical composition. In the specialized literature, quite a lot has been written about the fact that structural stability cannot serve as a criterion for identifying phraseological units, because it is also characteristic of many non-phraseological phrases with a fixed lexical composition. Here it is important to note something else: if we take into account the “behavior” of a phraseological unit in speech, the wide structural-grammatical and lexical changes (normative and occasional) that this unit undergoes in a language, then it should be recognized that the indicated stability is of a very relative nature. Phraseologisms of the Russian language are characterized by great mobility and



ability to change, and instability of the structural organization of elements. Such a phenomenon, in all likelihood, is associated with the peculiarities of the structure of this language and reflects analytical trends in the development of Russian phraseology.

It should be noted that structural stability is not a prerequisite for the transition of a given phrase to the class of phraseological units. The stability of the latter is a consequence, not a cause of phraseology. This fact cannot be refuted by the fact that in some cases a phraseological unit is based on a stable phrase (for example, a terminological one), because structural stability in itself cannot lead to phraseology.

Another sign of a phraseological unit is associated with the concept of sustainability – is “reproducibility in the finished form”. Indeed, phraseological units, unlike free phrases, are not created in speech according to a certain pattern but are reproduced. Speaking of such stable phrases, F. de Saussure [5, 122] points out: “Such turns cannot be improvised; they are handed over ready according to tradition”. However if the reproducibility of a phraseological unit is not in doubt, it is also indisputable that it is not a defining feature of this unit, since it does not reflect the specifics of its stability. On this occasion, L. V. Kunin [4, 77] notes that “the understanding of stability as “reproducibility in the finished form” refers not only to phraseological units but also to words of any structure, as well as to some types of formations intermediate between variable combinations of words and phraseological units or compound words that are ready-made signs”.

Critical remarks about the insufficiency of the concept of “reproducibility in the finished form” to determine the stability inherent in phraseological units were also expressed by other scientists [7, 121].

An important feature of a phraseological unit is the regularity or stability of use, due to which it becomes the property of a given language community. The same feature distinguishes phraseologism as a language unit from individual authors and other speech-related expressions.

However, it should be noted that the regularity or stability of use also cannot claim to be the main, leading feature of a phraseological unit, because it is characteristic of all units of the language. This is all truer because this feature, although integral to the phraseological unit, is not the cause of its occurrence. The regularity or stability of use in itself cannot lead to the phraseology of this phrase. This is primarily evidenced by the fact that in any language there are a large number of phrases that are stable both in structure and in use, which, however, are not phraseological units.

When determining the stability of using a phraseological unit, it is necessary first of all to consider the historical and chronological factors. The stability of the use of a phraseological unit must be tested by time, that is, this unit must go through a certain path of historical development, at least one generation long, in order to establish itself in the language and really become the property of the language community.

Since the emergence of phraseology as a linguistic discipline in linguistics, many definitions of its object have been put forward, in which the semantic criterion is recognized as the main one. For example, V.V. Vinogradov [2], etc. But these signs, although they occur in phraseological units, are again not decisive. Many of them are not applicable to all structural-semantic groups of phraseological units, others are inherent in set phrases in general. Moreover, there is a fairly widespread opinion that free phrases also have “semantic integrity”. It follows from this that the main feature of a phraseological unit should be not only semantic but also differential.

What semantic feature has this property?

The following statement by V. G. Gak [3, 239] helps us answer this question: “The nature of the interdependence of the meanings of the components of phrases makes us divide phrases into



idiomatic (that is, phraseological) and non-idiomatic. In non-idiomatic phrases, both free and fixed, the meaning of the components does not change and the meaning of the whole follows exactly from the constituent parts.

As can be seen from the above quotation, its author bases the distinction between phraseological and non-phraseological formations not in general on the stability of phrases, but on the nature of their stability, which makes it possible to draw a clear line between them.

Thus, the concept of phraseological stability is associated primarily with the semantic transformation of a given phrase and characterizes a phraseological unit as a special linguistic sign, qualitatively different from all others.

From the foregoing, we can conclude that semantic transformation is the main feature of the phraseological units of the language, which makes it possible to distinguish these units from both free and stable non-phraseological phrases.

The indisputable proof of the leading role of this feature is the fact that of all the separately formalized language formations, it is inherent only in phraseology as a unit of language. This is in no way contradicted by the presence of individual author's phrases with a figurative, figurative meaning because such phrases refer to speech, therefore, they are not units of the language.

Thus, phraseology is a process of semantic transformation leading to the formation of qualitatively new language units. Depending on whether this process extends to the entire phrase or only to a part of it, the semantic transformation can be complete or partial.

A direct consequence of the semantic transformation leading to the phraseology of these phrases is the emergence of semantic dependence between their components.

The question of the correlation of structural and semantic features of a phraseological unit should be decided taking into account the specifics of the language under study. This approach to the study of the features of a phraseological unit in Spanish is based on the primacy of semantic features over structural ones.

On the basis of the selected main feature of the phraseological unit, the following definition can be given.

Phraseologism is a separate unit of language, characterized by a complete or partial semantic transformation of the components.

This definition of a phraseological unit does not exclude the presence of other features, both semantic and structural, which must be taken into account when studying phraseology. But all of them ultimately follow from the main, leading one.

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