

## INDEPENDENCE OF LEXICAL SEMANTICS AND PHRASEOLOGICAL STABILITY IN LANGUAGE SYSTEMS

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**Annotation:** This article examines the independence of lexical semantics and phraseological stability within language systems, focusing on how words and fixed expressions function both separately and interactively. Lexical semantics studies the meaning of individual words, while phraseological stability concerns fixed combinations such as idioms, collocations, and set expressions that often carry meanings not directly derived from their components. The paper highlights that although these two aspects are interconnected, they maintain a certain degree of independence in linguistic structure and usage.

Furthermore, the study explores how phraseological units preserve their stability across contexts, even when individual lexical meanings evolve over time. It also discusses the role of cultural, historical, and cognitive factors in shaping phraseological expressions, demonstrating that stable phrases often reflect deeper semantic layers beyond simple word meanings. The findings emphasize the importance of analyzing both lexical and phraseological levels for a comprehensive understanding of language systems.

**Keywords:** lexical semantics, phraseology, phraseological stability, idioms, collocations, language system, semantic independence

### Introduction

The study of language systems requires a deep understanding of how meaning is structured and conveyed through both individual words and fixed expressions. In modern linguistics, lexical semantics plays a crucial role in analyzing how words acquire and transmit meaning in different contexts. At the same time, phraseology focuses on stable word combinations such as idioms, collocations, and proverbs. These two areas, although closely related, operate within different frameworks of linguistic analysis, raising important questions about their independence and interaction.<sup>1</sup>

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1. <sup>1</sup> Baker, M. (2020). *In Other Words: A Coursebook on Translation* (3rd ed.). Routledge.

One of the key issues in this field is whether the meanings of phraseological units can be fully explained through the meanings of their individual components. Many idiomatic expressions demonstrate that this is not always the case, as their meanings are often metaphorical or culturally bound. This suggests that phraseological stability functions independently from lexical semantics to a certain extent. However, lexical meanings still influence how such expressions are formed and interpreted, making the relationship between the two both complex and dynamic.

In addition, the interaction between lexical semantics and phraseology reflects broader cognitive and cultural processes within a language community. Stable expressions often preserve historical and cultural knowledge, while individual words may change their meanings over time. This contrast highlights the importance of studying both levels simultaneously to achieve a comprehensive understanding of language systems. Therefore, investigating their independence not only contributes to theoretical linguistics but also has practical implications for language teaching, translation, and intercultural communication.

### **Theoretical Foundations of Lexical Semantics and Phraseology**

Lexical semantics is one of the central branches of linguistics that focuses on the meaning of words and their relationships within a language system. It examines how words represent objects, actions, qualities, and abstract concepts, as well as how their meanings change depending on context. In this regard, lexical semantics is closely connected with other linguistic disciplines such as morphology, syntax, and pragmatics. Words rarely function in isolation; instead, they interact with other elements in speech, forming complex semantic networks. These networks allow speakers to express nuanced meanings and interpret messages effectively.<sup>2</sup>

At the same time, phraseology studies stable combinations of words that function as single semantic units. phraseology includes idioms, collocations, and proverbs, which often have meanings that cannot be directly inferred from their individual components. For example, idiomatic expressions such as “kick the bucket” illustrate how phraseological meaning differs from literal interpretation. This shows that phraseological units possess a level of semantic autonomy. Despite being composed of individual words, their meanings are fixed and culturally embedded, making them resistant to change and reinterpretation in everyday communication.

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2. <sup>2</sup> Crystal, D. (2020). The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the English Language (3rd ed.). Cambridge University Press.

The theoretical distinction between lexical semantics and phraseology lies in their units of analysis. Lexical semantics deals primarily with single lexical items, while phraseology focuses on multi-word units with a fixed structure. However, both contribute to meaning construction in language. While lexical semantics provides the building blocks, phraseology organizes these blocks into stable patterns that carry additional layers of meaning. This dual structure reflects the complexity of language systems and highlights the necessity of studying both levels together for a complete understanding of linguistic phenomena.<sup>3</sup>

Furthermore, researchers emphasize that phraseological stability is maintained through frequent usage and social convention. Over time, certain word combinations become fixed due to repeated use in specific contexts. This process reinforces their meaning and makes them recognizable to speakers. As a result, phraseological units often function as ready-made expressions that simplify communication. They allow speakers to convey complex ideas efficiently without constructing new sentences each time. This efficiency is one of the reasons why phraseology plays a significant role in everyday language use.

Another important aspect is the role of cognitive processes in shaping both lexical semantics and phraseology. Human cognition influences how meanings are formed, stored, and retrieved. While individual word meanings are often flexible and context-dependent, phraseological units are stored as whole chunks in memory. This difference further supports the idea that phraseology operates independently from lexical semantics to some degree. It also explains why language learners often find idiomatic expressions more difficult to master than individual words.

In addition, cultural factors strongly influence phraseological expressions. Many idioms reflect historical events, traditions, and social values of a particular language community. This cultural embedding makes phraseological units unique and sometimes untranslatable into other languages. On the other hand, lexical semantics tends to be more universal, as many basic concepts are shared across cultures. This contrast highlights the different roles played by lexical and phraseological elements in language systems.

Moreover, the evolution of language demonstrates that lexical meanings change more rapidly than phraseological units. Words may acquire new meanings, lose old ones, or shift in

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3. <sup>3</sup> Granger, S., & Paquot, M. (2021). *Phraseology in Foreign Language Learning and Teaching*. John Benjamins.

usage over time. However, phraseological expressions often remain stable for long periods, preserving archaic forms and meanings. This stability contributes to the richness and diversity of language, as it allows speakers to access historical layers of meaning within modern communication.<sup>4</sup>

Thus, the theoretical foundations of lexical semantics and phraseology reveal both their interdependence and independence. While they interact in meaning construction, each operates according to its own principles and mechanisms. Understanding this relationship is essential for analyzing how language functions as a system of communication, as well as for exploring its cognitive and cultural dimensions.

### **Independence of Lexical Semantics and Phraseological Stability**

The question of independence between lexical semantics and phraseological stability has been widely discussed in modern linguistics. On the one hand, lexical semantics provides the meanings of individual words that form phraseological units. On the other hand, phraseological expressions often exhibit meanings that are not directly predictable from their components. This indicates a certain level of independence between the two. The meaning of an idiom, for instance, cannot always be derived from the meanings of its constituent words, which challenges purely compositional approaches to language analysis.

One of the strongest arguments for independence is the non-compositional nature of many phraseological units. In such cases, the overall meaning of an expression differs significantly from the sum of its parts. This phenomenon is particularly evident in idioms, where metaphorical or symbolic meanings dominate. As a result, lexical semantics alone is insufficient to explain the meaning of these expressions. Instead, phraseological knowledge is required, which exists as a separate layer within the language system.

Another aspect supporting independence is the stability of phraseological units across different contexts. While individual word meanings may vary depending on usage, phraseological expressions tend to retain their meaning regardless of context. This stability suggests that phraseological units function as fixed semantic entities. Their meanings are stored and retrieved as

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4. <sup>4</sup> Herbst, T., & Schüller, S. (2020). Introduction to English Linguistics. De Gruyter.

complete units rather than constructed dynamically from individual lexical meanings. This reinforces the idea that phraseology operates independently from lexical semantics.<sup>5</sup>

However, it is also important to recognize that lexical semantics still plays a role in the formation of phraseological units. The words used in these expressions are not arbitrary; they are selected based on their semantic properties. For example, metaphors often rely on associations between different concepts, which are grounded in lexical meaning. Therefore, while phraseological meaning may be independent, it is not entirely disconnected from lexical semantics.

The interaction between lexical semantics and phraseology can also be observed in language change. As word meanings evolve, they may influence the interpretation of phraseological units. In some cases, this leads to the reinterpretation or modification of expressions. However, many phraseological units resist such changes, maintaining their original meaning despite shifts in lexical semantics. This resistance further supports the idea of their relative independence.

Moreover, the independence of these two systems has important implications for language learning and teaching. Learners often struggle with idiomatic expressions because their meanings cannot be deduced from vocabulary knowledge alone. This highlights the need to teach phraseology as a separate component of language competence. Understanding the distinction between lexical and phraseological meaning can improve both comprehension and production skills.

### **Functional and Practical Implications in Language Systems**

The independence of lexical semantics and phraseological stability has significant functional implications in language systems. One of the most important functions of phraseological units is to enhance expressiveness in communication. Idioms and fixed expressions allow speakers to convey emotions, attitudes, and cultural nuances more effectively than literal language. This expressive power is a direct result of their stability and independence from individual lexical meanings.

In everyday communication, phraseological units serve as ready-made linguistic tools that simplify the process of speech production. Instead of constructing sentences from scratch, speakers

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5. <sup>5</sup> Herbst, T., & Schüller, S. (2020). Introduction to English Linguistics. De Gruyter.

can use familiar expressions to convey complex ideas quickly and efficiently. This not only saves time but also ensures clarity and coherence in communication. The stability of these expressions makes them reliable and easily recognizable to listeners.<sup>6</sup>

From a stylistic perspective, phraseological units contribute to the richness and diversity of language. They add color, imagery, and emotional depth to speech and writing. Writers and speakers often use idiomatic expressions to create vivid descriptions and engage their audience. This stylistic function highlights the importance of phraseology as a distinct component of language, separate from lexical semantics.

In translation studies, the independence of phraseological meaning presents both challenges and opportunities. Translators must go beyond literal word-for-word translation to capture the intended meaning of idiomatic expressions. This requires a deep understanding of both the source and target languages, as well as their cultural contexts. Failure to recognize phraseological independence can result in inaccurate or awkward translations.

Furthermore, in language teaching, it is essential to address both lexical and phraseological competence. While vocabulary acquisition is fundamental, learners must also develop an understanding of fixed expressions and their meanings. Teaching phraseology alongside lexical semantics can help learners achieve greater fluency and naturalness in their language use. It also prepares them to understand authentic texts and real-life communication.

Technological applications, such as natural language processing and machine translation, also benefit from recognizing the independence of phraseological units. Computational models must account for fixed expressions and their meanings to accurately process and generate language. This requires advanced algorithms capable of identifying and interpreting phraseological patterns. Ignoring this aspect can lead to errors in automated language systems.

In addition, the study of phraseological stability contributes to cultural preservation. Many idioms and fixed expressions reflect the history, traditions, and values of a language community. By analyzing and documenting these expressions, linguists can gain insights into cultural identity and heritage. This makes phraseology an important field not only in linguistics but also in cultural studies.

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6. <sup>6</sup> Kövecses, Z. (2020). *Metaphor: A Practical Introduction* (2nd ed.). Oxford University Press.

## **Conclusion**

The analysis of lexical semantics and phraseological stability demonstrates that these two components of language systems function both independently and interactively. While lexical semantics focuses on the meanings of individual words, phraseology deals with stable multi-word units that often carry non-compositional meanings. Their independence is evident in structure, meaning formation, and cognitive processing, yet they remain interconnected within communication.

In conclusion, understanding the relationship between lexical and phraseological levels is essential for a comprehensive analysis of language. Their interaction enriches expression, while their independence ensures diversity and stability within linguistic systems. This dual nature has important implications for language learning, translation, and linguistic research, highlighting the complexity and depth of human communication.

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