



CLASSIFICATION OF STABLE WORD COMBINATIONS IN THE CONTEMPORARY ENGLISH LANGUAGE

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ABSTRACT

This article deals with classifications of stable word combinations in contemporary English based on various approaches. V. V. Vinogradov, N. N. Asamova, I. V. Arnold, A. I. Smimitsky, A. V. Kunin were the well-known linguists to study stable word combinations in English. Stable word combinations are main objects of phraseology which studies the nature, peculiarities, origin and function in speech of stable word combinations. They are non-motivated word groups and cannot be freely made up in speech.

Stable word combinations are collection of words which have one specific meaning. Those words are fixed together and it might have a particular idiomatic meaning, or at least a specific meaning. They are characterized by stability, their fixed and ready-made nature and consist of more than one lexical unit. They are always reproduced as ready-made units and are structurally stable. As a rule, they possess stability of lexical components, and can be reproduced as single unchangeable collocations.

Stable word combinations are also called as set phrase (V.V. Vinogradov, semantic approach); idiom (N.N. Amosova, contextual approach); word-equivalent (A.I. Smirnitsky, functional

approach); phraseological unit (A.V. Kunin). The differences in terminology reflect the differences in the main criteria used to distinguish between free word-groups and set-expressions.

“Three major approaches to the study of phraseological units, such as: - semantic, functional and contextual approaches - are very popular in current linguistics. “Semantic approach determines that phraseological units are non-motivated (idiomaticity), and they are opposed to free-word combinations which are completely motivated. Functional approach shows that phraseological units are specific word-groups functioning like word-equivalents. Like words they possess



structural and semantic inseparability. Contextual approach describes the fact that phraseological units are used in specific contexts – non-variable, or “fixed”. By the way, non-variability is a stability of the lexical components within the semantic structure”¹

Classification based on a contextual approach was put forward by Amosova (1989). She divided them into three groups: “1) Phraseological units which are units of a fixed context. 2) Phrasemes which are always binary, one component has a phraseologically bound meaning, the other serves as a determining context small talk, small hos 3) idioms which are the new meaning created by the whole; here every element may have its original meaning weakened or completely lost. in the nick of the time - “at the exact moment”. Besides this “she distinguishes two types of phraseological units: 1) phrasemes (units of fixed context in which one of the components has specialized meaning dependent on the second component, e.g., small talk, fair sex); 2) idioms (idioms are semantically and grammatically inseparable units, e.g., play with fire)”.

Synchronic semantic classification of stable word

combinations was studied wildly by academic V.V. Vinogradov. He divided stable word combinations into groups of three. 1. Phraseological collocations or combinations in which one component is used in its direct meaning, while the other – figuratively: to have a bite, to look a sight, bosom friends; 2. Phraseological unities - meaning of the whole does not correspond to the meanings of its constituents but the metaphor, on which the shift of meaning is based, is clear and transparent: to know the way the wind is blowing, to lose one’s head, a fish out of water, a big bug; 3. Phraseological fusions or concretions which are demotivated, i.e. the meaning of the whole cannot be deduced from the meaning of its components, the metaphor, on which the shift of meaning was based, is obscure: tit for tat, neck and crop, at sixes and sevens.

”Thematic” classification of stable word combinations was suggested by L.P. Smith and W. Ball. They came up with the idea of categorizing stable word combinations according to their usages by sailors, fishermen, soldiers, hunters and associated with their occupations as well as the usage associated with domestic and wild animals and birds, agriculture and cooking, sports, arts.

On the other hand, there is also a classification which is based

¹ Kamala Guliyeva: “Different Approaches to the Objects of phraseology in linguistics” International journal of English linguistics 2011 vol. X no. XI



on the ability to perform the same syntactical functions as words (Ginzburg, 1979). From this sense, “he suggested three types of phraseological sets:

1. Phraseological fusions—completely non-motivated word-groups, characterized by the complete stability of the lexical components and the grammatical structure. to kick the bucket, red tape.

2. Phraseological unities—partially non-motivated, the meaning is perceived through the metaphoric meaning of the unit, characterized by high degree of stability of the lexical components. to show one’s teeth, to wash one’s dirty linen in the public.

3. Phraseological collocations—motivated word-groups, have specific lexical valency which results in their stability to take a liking/ fancy, to bear a grudge/ malice.

Classification of stable word combinations was formed according to their structural function by I.V. Arnold.

-verbal stable word combinations which function as verbs, for instance, to let one's hair down, to let the cat out of bag;

-substantive stable word combinations that are used as nouns: couch potato, nib in the bud, white lie;

-adjectival stable word combinations which are used to describe nouns: Down-To-Earth, barrel of lough, brand

new,

-adverbial stable word combinations that function as adverbs: high and low, around the clock;

-interjectional stable word combinations to express emotions and wishes: good heavens!, break a leg!

A.I. Smirnitsky grouped stable word combinations in the following way. The first group of stable word combinations are one-summit units that have one meaningful constituent: to give up, to be tired and the second group is two-summit and multi-summit units which have two or more meaningful constituents: black art, common sense, to fish in the troubled water. Moreover he classified a group of proper phraseological units or collocations - units with non-figurative meanings, stylistically neutral and in which grammatical and syntactical centres are in one and same place: get up, fall in love and a group of idioms or set expressions - units with transferred meanings based on a metaphor, stylistically coloured and in which grammatical and syntactical centres are in different components: take the bull by the horns, dead as a doornail.

Classification by A.V. Koonin includes: Nominative - word-groups with one meaningful word, coordinative phrases: well and good; word-groups with a predicative structure, such as as the crow flies; predicative phrases of the type see how



the land lies; Interjectional: a pretty kettle of fish! Communicative word-groups are represented by proverbs and sayings: familiarity breeds contempt; Nominative-communicative units include verbal word-groups which are transformed into a sentence when the verb is used in the Passive Voice: to break the ice – the ice is broken.

He also distinguished 3 types of changeability: synonymic variation (contextual synonyms): sugar/sweeten the pill, drop a bomb/brick, run riot/wild; pronominal variation: to give smb/him/her a run for his/her money, make a pig of oneself, to scratch one's back; synonymic and pronominal variation: give sb a ring/buzz, drown one's troubles/sorrows, save one's skin/neck.

Anna Jansone from Daugavpils University (Latvia) states that, “phraseological units reflect the wealth of a language displaying cultural paradigms of the speakers of a particular language...The field of phraseology (or idiomaticity) in any language is so varied and fascinating that one could spend an entire lifetime considering and analysing it from various viewpoints...”².

To sum up, it should be noted that stable word combinations include all

the combinations of two or more words functioning as a single unit, excluding free word combinations. It is a very interesting and at the same time young part of linguistics. However many linguists investigated it and tried to approach to it differently, there are some problems which remain unsolved now. In the article, we discussed the classification of stable word combinations.

² Anna Jansone. Phraseological units with the elements referring to “life” or “death” in English and Russian. p.1

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