

Theoretical foundations of the semantic-pragmatic analysis of phraseological units

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Abstract: This article examines the theoretical foundations of the semantic-pragmatic analysis of phraseological units. It explores the semantic components of phraseological meaning, their synonymic and antonymic relationships, and similarities and differences between phraseological units in English and Uzbek. From a pragmatic perspective, the study highlights the contextual meaning, expressive and emotional functions, and the role of phraseological units in modern literary discourse and real-life communication. The article also discusses the significance of phraseological research for language learning, translation, and intercultural communication, suggesting directions for future studies.

Keywords: Phraseological units, semantic analysis, pragmatic analysis, context, expressiveness, emotionality, translation, intercultural communication.

Introduction: Phraseological units play a significant role in linguistics, as they represent fixed expressions with meanings that go beyond the sum of their individual words. These units are an essential component of any language, reflecting cultural, historical, and social aspects of communication. Due to their idiomatic nature, phraseological units often pose challenges for learners and translators, making their study particularly relevant in the field of linguistics (Baker, 2011).

The semantic and pragmatic analysis of phraseological units is crucial for understanding how meaning is constructed and interpreted in different contexts. From a semantic perspective, phraseological units exhibit unique lexical and structural characteristics that distinguish them from free word combinations. Pragmatically, these expressions serve various communicative functions, conveying emotions, attitudes, and cultural nuances in discourse. Analyzing phraseological units from both semantic and pragmatic

angles allows for a deeper exploration of their role in effective communication.

This study aims to explore the theoretical foundations of the semantic-pragmatic analysis of phraseological units. It highlights the importance of investigating their meaning, usage, and function in modern linguistic discourse. It will also contribute to a better understanding of phraseology as a dynamic and context-dependent linguistic phenomenon, shedding light on its implications for language learning, translation, and intercultural communication.

Theoretical Background

Phraseological units possess distinct semantic features that set them apart from free word combinations. One of the key characteristics of phraseological units is their idiomatic meaning, which often cannot be deduced from the meanings of their individual components. This idiomatic nature makes phraseological units an essential part of linguistic expression, enriching the language with figurative and culturally embedded

meanings. Additionally, figurative meaning plays a crucial role in phraseology, as many phraseological units originate from metaphors, historical events, or cultural traditions (Dobrovol'skij & Piirainen, 2005). Another important aspect is connotation, which refers to the emotional, stylistic, and cultural associations that phraseological units carry. Depending on the context, these expressions can evoke positive or negative connotations, making them powerful tools in both formal and informal discourse.

From a pragmatic perspective, phraseological units acquire meaning not only through their lexical components but also through their usage in specific contexts. The same phraseological unit may convey different shades of meaning depending on the speaker's intention, the social setting, and the communicative goal. The contextual meaning of a phraseological unit determines its interpretation and appropriateness in different situations. Additionally, these expressions serve various functions in communication, such as expressing emotions, reinforcing arguments, or establishing solidarity between speakers. The stylistic functions of phraseological units further highlight their role in shaping discourse, as they contribute to tone, formality, and expressiveness in speech and writing.

Linguists have approached the study of phraseological units from different theoretical perspectives. The semantic approach focuses on classifying phraseological units based on their meaning and internal structure. This approach helps identify degrees of idiomaticity, distinguishing between full idioms, semi-idioms, and phraseological collocations. The cognitive approach examines how phraseological units reflect human thought processes, conceptual metaphors, and cultural models. By analyzing the mental representations behind these expressions, cognitive linguistics provides insights into how phraseological meaning is constructed and processed. Lastly, the functional approach emphasizes the role of phraseological units in communication, considering how they contribute to discourse coherence, rhetorical effect, and speaker intention. By integrating these linguistic approaches, researchers can gain a comprehensive understanding of phraseology as a dynamic and context-dependent phenomenon.

Semantic Analysis of Phraseological Units

The meaning of phraseological units is composed of several semantic components that contribute to their overall interpretation. These components include the literal meaning of individual words, the figurative or idiomatic meaning that emerges when these words are combined, and the connotative meaning, which

reflects emotional, stylistic, and cultural aspects. Phraseological units often exhibit semantic integrity, meaning that their overall meaning cannot be directly inferred from their constituent parts (Moon, 1998). This characteristic makes phraseology a distinct and complex area of linguistic study.

Phraseological units also demonstrate synonymic and antonymic relationships, which contribute to their semantic richness. Synonymous phraseological units convey similar meanings but may differ in stylistic or emotional nuances. For example, in English, "kick the bucket" and "pass away" both refer to death, but the former is informal and idiomatic, while the latter is more neutral and polite. In contrast, antonymic phraseological units express opposing meanings, such as "to burn bridges" (to end a relationship permanently) and "to mend fences" (to repair a broken relationship). Understanding these relationships helps in determining the expressive potential of phraseological units in communication.

A comparative analysis of phraseological units in Uzbek and English reveals both similarities and differences based on cultural and linguistic factors. Some phraseological units have direct equivalents in both languages due to shared human experiences and universal metaphors. For example, the English phrase "the last straw" and the Uzbek equivalent "sabzi palak bo'ldi" both refer to a final event that causes a breaking point. However, cultural differences lead to unique phraseological units that have no direct counterpart in the other language. For instance, the Uzbek expression "tepaga qarab tupurma" (literally "do not spit while looking up") conveys the idea that bad actions can backfire, while English expresses a similar concept with "what goes around comes around." These differences highlight how phraseology is deeply rooted in the traditions, values, and worldviews of a given speech community.

By analyzing the semantic structure of phraseological units, linguists gain insight into how meaning is constructed, interpreted, and transmitted across different languages and cultures. This, in turn, contributes to more effective teaching, translation, and cross-cultural communication.

Pragmatic Analysis of Phraseological Units

The meaning and function of phraseological units are not fixed but rather depend on their contextual usage (Wray, 2002). In different communicative situations, the same phraseological unit can undergo semantic shifts or acquire additional meanings. For example, the English idiom "break the ice" originally referred to literal ice-breaking but now commonly means initiating a conversation in a tense or unfamiliar setting.

Similarly, in Uzbek, “ko’ngli o’sgan” (literally “one’s heart has grown”) is used figuratively to mean that someone has become more confident or content. The ability of phraseological units to adapt to different contexts makes them highly dynamic elements of language.

Phraseological units also serve various pragmatic functions, including inheritance, expressiveness, and emotionality:

- **Inheritance:** Many phraseological units carry historical and cultural significance, reflecting the beliefs, traditions, and moral values of a society. For instance, the Uzbek expression “ko’z tegmasin” (literally “may the evil eye not affect you”) is rooted in folk beliefs, while the English phrase “a blessing in disguise” reflects a positive perspective on misfortune.
- **Expressiveness:** Phraseological units enhance speech by adding vivid imagery, humor, or rhetorical effect. For example, “to hit the nail on the head” is more impactful than simply saying “to be correct”. In Uzbek, “tishi o’tmaydi” (literally “his teeth cannot bite it”) is more expressive than saying “he cannot handle it”.
- **Emotionality:** Many phraseological units convey strong emotions, whether positive or negative. The phrase “over the moon” in English expresses extreme happiness, while “burning with envy” conveys jealousy. Similarly, the Uzbek phrase “yuragi yorildi” (literally “his heart burst”) expresses deep sorrow or disappointment (Dobrovol’skij & Piirainen, 2005).

In modern literary texts and real-life communication, phraseological units are frequently used to create stylistic effects, develop characters, and add authenticity to dialogue. In literature, writers utilize phraseology to reflect a character’s background, emotions, or social status. For instance, Shakespeare often used idiomatic expressions, many of which have become common in English today (“all that glitters is not gold”). In contemporary Uzbek literature, phraseological units enrich poetic and narrative styles, preserving linguistic heritage while adapting to modern themes.

In everyday conversation, phraseological units contribute to natural and effective communication. They help speakers sound more fluent, emphasize their emotions, and establish cultural connections. Social media, advertisements, and political speeches also frequently incorporate phraseological expressions to make messages more persuasive and memorable.

By analyzing phraseological units pragmatically, linguists gain deeper insights into how language is shaped by culture, social interaction, and evolving

communicative needs. Understanding their pragmatic functions enhances language teaching, translation, and intercultural communication.

CONCLUSION

The semantic-pragmatic analysis of phraseological units highlights their complexity and functional significance in communication. Semantically, they possess idiomatic and figurative meanings, while pragmatically, they adapt to context, enhance expressiveness, and convey emotions. These aspects make phraseological units essential for effective language use.

Understanding phraseological units is crucial for language learning, translation, and intercultural communication. Future research could explore their cognitive processing, comparative studies across languages, and their evolving role in digital communication. By further studying phraseology, linguists and educators can deepen insights into language dynamics and cultural identity.

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