

# Word Groups and Phraseological Units

Words put together to form  
lexical units make up **phrases** or  
**word-groups**.

The main factors active in bringing words together are **lexical** and **grammatical valency** of the components of word-groups.

Lexical valency is the **aptness** of a word to appear in various collocations.

All the words of the language possess a certain norm of lexical valency.

Grammatical valency is the aptness of a word to appear in various grammatical structures.

Restrictions of grammatical valency are to be accounted for by the grammatical structure of the language.

Semantically all word-groups may be classified into **motivated** and **non-motivated**. Non-motivated word-groups are usually described as **phraseological units**.

The same as words phraseological units express a single notion and are used in a sentence as one part of it.

American and British lexicographers call such units «idioms».

# Phraseological Units

The border-line between free or variable word-groups and phraseological units is not clearly defined

the existing terms are: set-phrases, idioms, word-equivalents

**Phraseological units** are habitually defined as non-motivated word-groups that cannot be freely made up in speech but are reproduced as ready-made units



The main characteristic features of phraseological units are:

- stability of the lexical components
- lack of motivation

**COMPARE:** red flower and red tape

Phraseological units can be classified according to **the ways** they are formed, according to **the degree of the motivation** of their meaning, according to **their structure** and according to **their part-of-speech** meaning.

A.V. Koonin classified phraseological units according to the way they are formed.

He pointed out primary and secondary ways of forming phraseological units.

Primary ways of forming phraseological units are those when a unit is formed on the basis of a free word-group :

# 1) transferring the meaning of terminological word-groups:

«launching pad» in its terminological meaning is «стартовая площадка», in its transferred meaning - «отправной пункт»,

«to link up» - «стыковаться, стыковать космические корабли» in its transformed meaning it means -«знакомиться»;

2) from free word groups by transforming their meaning,

e.g. «granny farm» - «пансионат для престарелых»,

«Trojan horse» - «компьютерная программа, преднамеренно составленная для повреждения компьютера»;

3) phraseological units can be formed by means of **alliteration** ,

e.g. «a sad sack» - «несчастный случай»,

«culture vulture» - «человек, интересующийся  
ИСКУССТВОМ»,

«fudge and nudge» - «уклончивость».

4) they can be formed by means of **distorting a word group**,

e.g. «odds and ends» was formed from «odd ends»,

5) they can be formed when we use some **unreal image**,

e.g. «to have butterflies in the stomach» -

«ИСПЫТЫВАТЬ ВОЛНЕНИЕ»,

«to have green fingers» - »преуспевать как  
садовод-любитель



# Other ways:

when a phraseological unit is formed on the basis of another phraseological unit; they are:

- 1) **conversion**, e.g. «to vote with one's feet» was converted into «vote with one's feet»;

2) **changing the grammar form**, e.g. «Make hay while the sun shines» is transferred into a verbal phrase - «to make hay while the sun shines»

**3)analogy,**

e.g. «Curiosity killed the cat» was transferred into  
«Care killed the cat»

#### 4) **contrast,**

e.g. «cold surgery» - «a planned before operation»  
was formed by contrasting it with «acute  
surgery»,

«thin cat» - «a poor person» was formed by  
contrasting it with «fat cat»;

## 6) **shortening of proverbs or sayings**

e.g. from the proverb «You can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear» by means of clipping the middle of it the phraseological unit «to make a sow's ear» was formed with the meaning «ошибаться»

**7) borrowing phraseological units** from other languages

e.g. « living space» (German), « to take the bull by the horns» ( Latin)

Phraseological units semantically  
are classified according to V.V.

Vinogradov :

- phraseological fusions (сращения) *kick the bucket*
- phraseological unities (единства) e.g. *the last straw, to ride the high horse*
- phraseological collocations (сочетания)  
e.g. to *take smth for granted, to have a bite*

# Structurally:

1. **Verbal:** to run for one's life, to talk through one's hat, to make a song and dance about smth.
2. **Substantive:** dog's life, white lie, calf love.
3. **Adjectival:** high and mighty, brand new, safe and sound.
4. **Adverbial:** high and low, by hook or by crook
5. **Interjectional:** my God! Good Heavens!