Lecture 5

Phraseology

Phraseological units are word-groups that cannot be made in the process of speech, they exist in the language as ready-made units. They are compiled in special dictionaries. Like words, phraseologocal 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 can be classified according to the ways they are formed, according to the degree of motivation of their meaning, according to their structure and according to their part-of-speech meaning.

I. Ways of forming phraseological units.

A.V. Koonin classified phraseological units according to the way they are formed. He pointed out primary and secondary ways of forming phraseological units.

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

a) the most productive in Modern English is the formation of phraseological units by means of transferring the meaning of terminological word-groups, e.g. in cosmic terminology we can point out the following phrases: launching pad – in its direct meaning стартовая площадка in

its transferred meaning – отправной пункт;

b) a large group of phraseological units was formed from free word groups

by transferring their meaning (simile, contrast, metaphor), e.g. granny

farm – пансионат для престарелых, as old as the hills – старый как

мир, Troyan horse – компьютерная программа предварительно

составленная для повреждения компьютера;

c) phradeological units can be formed by means of alliteration, e.g. a sad

sack – несчастный случай, culture vulture – человек, интересующийся искусством;

d) by means of rhyming, e.g. by hook or by crook - by any possible means,

high and dry – left without help;

e) by using synonyms, e.g. to pick and choose – to be terribly choosy, really

and truly – quite honestly;

f) by means of expressiveness, e.g. My aunt! Hear, hear!

g) by means of distorting a word group, e.g. odds and ends was formed

from odd ends;

h) by using archaisms, e.g. in brown study means in gloomy meditation

where both components preserve their archaic meanings;

i) by using a sentence in a different sphere of life, e.g. that cock won‘t fight can be used as a free word-group when it is used in sports (cock fighting)but it becomes a phraseological unit when it is used in everyday life;

j) when we use some unreal image, e.g. to have butterflies in the stomach –

испытывать волнение;

k) by using expressions of writers or politicians in everyday life, e.g.

corridors of power (Snow);

Secondary ways of forming phraseological units are those when a

phraseological unit is formed on the basis of another phraseological unit:

a) conversion, e.g. to vote with one‘s feet was converted into vote with one‘s feet;

b) changing the grammar form, a sentence, e.g. Make hay while the sun

shines was transferred into Make hay while the sun shines;

c) analogy, e.g. Curiosity killed the cat was transferred into Care killed the cat;

d) contrast, e.g. thin cat – a poor person was formed by contrasting it with fat cat – a rich person;

e) shortening of proverbs or sayings, e.g. by means of clipping the middle of the proverb You can‘t make a purse out of a sow‘s ear the phraseological unit to make a sow‘s ear was formed with the meaning to make a mistake;

f) borrowing phraseological units from other languages, either as translation loans, e.g. living space (German), or as phonetic borrowings sotto voce (Italian).

II. Semantic classification of phraseological units

Phraseological units can be classified according to the degree of motivation of their meaning. This classification was suggested by acad. V.V. Vinogradov for Russian phraseological units. He pointed out three types of phraseological units:

a) fusions where the degree of motivation is very low, we cannot guess the meaning of the whole from the meanings of its components, e.g. on

Shank‘s mare (on foot); in Russian: бить баклуши;

b) unities where the meaning of the whole can be guessed from the

meanings of its components, but it is transferred (metaphorically or

metonimically), e.g. to play the first fiddle (to be a leader in something), old salt (experienced sailor);

c) collocations where words are combined in their original meaning but

their combinations are different in different languages, e.g. cash and carry – self-service shop, in a big way (in great degree).

III. Structural classification of phraseological units

Prof. A.I. Smirnitsky worked out a detaiked structural classification of phraseological units, comparing them with words. He points out one-top units which he compares with affixed words because affixed words have only one root morpheme. he points out two-top units which he compares with compound words because in compound words we usually have two root morphemes.

Among one-top units he points out three structural types:

a) units of the type to give up (verb + postposition type);

b) units of the type to be tired;

c) prepositional-nominal phraseological units. These units are equivalents of unchangeabl words: prepositions, conjunctions, adverbs, e.g. on the doorstep – quite near, on the nose – exactly, in the course of – during.

Among two-top units A.I. Smirnitsky points out the following structural

types:

a) attributive-nominal, e.g. a month of Sundays, grey matter;

b) verbal-nominal, e.g. to read between the lines; to speak BBC;

c) phraseological repetitions, e.g. now or never, part and parcel

IV. Syntactical classification of Structural classification of phraseological units

Phraseological units can be classified as parts of speech. This classification was suggested by I.V. Arnold. Here we have the following groups:

a) noun phraseological units denoting an object, a person, a living being, e.g. bullet train, a latchkey child;

b) verb phraseological units denoting an action, a state, a feeling, e.g. to break the log-jam, to get on somebody‘s coattails, to be on the beam;

c) adjective phraseological units denoting a quality, e.g. loose as a goose, dull as lead;

d) adverb phraseological units, e.g. with a bump, in the soup;

e) preposition phraseological units, e.g. in the course of, on the stroke of;

f) interjection phraseological units, e.g. Catch me! Well, I never!

In I.V. Arnold classification there are also sentence equivalents: proverbs, sayings and quotations, e.g. The sky is the limit, What makes him tick, I am easy.

Proverbs are usually metaphorical, e.g. Too many cooks spoil the broth, while

sayings are, as a rule, non-metaphorical, e.g. Where there is a will there is a way –Кто хочет, тот добьется.