

THE INTERFACE BETWEEN PHRASEOLOGY AND LEXICOLOGY

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Abstract: This study investigates the interface between phraseology and lexicology, emphasizing their structural, semantic, and cognitive interrelations. While lexicology traditionally focuses on single-word units, phraseology examines multi-word expressions such as idioms and collocations. The research adopts a qualitative, corpus-informed theoretical approach to demonstrate that phraseological units function as integral components of the lexicon. The findings reveal that idiomaticity, stability, and lexicalization form the core parameters connecting the two disciplines. The study also incorporates Uzbek linguistic scholarship to highlight cross-linguistic perspectives.

Keywords: phraseology, lexicology, idiomaticity, Uzbek linguistics, lexicalization, collocation

Introduction

Language is not merely a collection of isolated lexical items but a dynamic system composed of both individual words and prefabricated expressions. Traditionally, lexicology has been concerned with the study of words, their meanings, and relationships, whereas phraseology has focused on stable combinations of words such as idioms and collocations.

However, modern linguistic theory suggests that the boundary between these two domains is increasingly blurred. Phraseological units often behave like lexical items in terms of semantic unity and functional stability. This raises an important theoretical question: should phraseology be considered a subfield of lexicology or an independent discipline?

In Uzbek linguistics, scholars such as Yo'ldoshev and Rahmatullayev have also emphasized the importance of phraseological units in enriching the lexical system. Their work demonstrates that phraseology plays a crucial role not only in semantics but also in cultural representation.

The objective of this research is to:

- Examine the theoretical foundations of phraseology and lexicology
- Identify their points of convergence
- Analyze their interaction within linguistic systems

Methods

This study employs a qualitative theoretical analysis combined with corpus-informed observations. It synthesizes established linguistic theories from both Western and Uzbek traditions.

The research is based on:

- Classical linguistic works (e.g., Vinogradov, Kunin, Sinclair)
- Modern cognitive and corpus-based studies
- Uzbek linguistic literature on phraseology and lexicology

The analysis is conducted through three main lenses:

1. Structural analysis – examining formal properties
2. Semantic analysis – focusing on meaning construction
3. Cognitive analysis – exploring mental representation

Results

The analysis shows that phraseological units exhibit key characteristics of lexical items:

- Semantic unity
- Stability
- Reproducibility

For example, idioms such as “kick the bucket” function as single semantic units despite their multi-word structure [3]. This supports the argument that phraseological units should be included in the lexicon.

The findings confirm the existence of a continuum:

- Free combinations (fully compositional)
- Collocations (semi-fixed)
- Idioms (non-compositional)

This continuum demonstrates that phraseology bridges syntax and lexicon [4].

Collocations impose lexical constraints that cannot be explained solely by grammar. For instance, “strong tea” is acceptable, whereas *“powerful tea” is not [4].

Such patterns indicate that:

- Lexical compatibility is governed by phraseological norms
- Phraseology informs lexical selection

Uzbek phraseological units, such as “ko‘ngli ochiq” (generous) or “yuragi keng” (kind-hearted), function as semantic wholes [14].

These examples illustrate that:

- Phraseology reflects cultural and cognitive patterns
- It enriches the expressive capacity of the lexicon

Discussion

The findings support the view that phraseology and lexicology are deeply interconnected. Phraseological units challenge the traditional word-based definition of the lexicon [7].

According to cognitive linguistics, both words and multi-word expressions are stored in the mental lexicon [10]. This implies that:

- The lexicon is a network of constructions
- Phraseology is central, not peripheral

The tension between idiomaticity and compositionality is a key theoretical issue. While lexicology relies on compositional meaning, phraseology introduces non-compositional structures [9].

This duality highlights the need for an integrated model of lexical analysis.

The interface between phraseology and lexicology has practical implications:

- In translation, idioms require cultural and contextual adaptation
- In language teaching, phraseological competence is essential for fluency

Uzbek scholars emphasize that mastering phraseological units enhances communicative competence [13].

Comparative analysis shows that:

- Phraseological structures exist in all languages
- Their forms and meanings are culturally specific

Traditional lexicology has historically operated within a word-centered paradigm, where the lexicon is viewed as a repository of discrete lexical units. However, this model proves insufficient when confronted with phraseological data. As demonstrated by Vinogradov and later expanded by Kunin, phraseological units exhibit semantic indivisibility and functional stability, which align them more closely with lexical items than with syntactic constructions [1][8].

From a modern theoretical standpoint, the lexicon should be reconceptualized as a gradient and multi-layered system. According to Cruse, lexical units are not strictly defined by formal boundaries but by semantic cohesion and usage patterns [3]. This allows for the inclusion of multi-word expressions within the lexicon, thereby dissolving the rigid boundary between lexicology and phraseology.

Furthermore, Mel'čuk's theory of lexical functions reinforces this integration by demonstrating how meaning is systematically encoded not only in single words but also in

stable combinations [10]. This supports the argument that phraseological units are structurally embedded within the lexicon rather than external to it.

One of the most critical theoretical tensions at the interface of phraseology and lexicology lies in the opposition between compositionality and idiomaticity. Classical semantic theory, as outlined by Lyons, assumes that meaning is derived from the sum of its parts [9]. However, phraseological units often violate this principle.

Fillmore, Kay, and O'Connor introduce the concept of constructional idiomaticity, arguing that certain grammatical constructions possess meanings that are not predictable from their components [4]. This perspective shifts the focus from individual lexical items to form-meaning pairings at multiple levels, including phrases.

In this context, idiomatic expressions such as “spill the beans” or Uzbek equivalents like “tilini tishlamoq” cannot be decomposed semantically without loss of meaning. These units function as holistic semantic entities, reinforcing the idea that idiomaticity is not an anomaly but a systematic feature of language.

The study of collocations represents a crucial intersection between phraseology and lexicology. Sinclair's corpus-based approach demonstrates that language is largely composed of recurrent lexical patterns rather than freely generated combinations [13]. This insight fundamentally challenges the generative view of language.

Collocations such as “make a decision” or “heavy rain” illustrate that lexical selection is governed by probabilistic constraints rather than purely grammatical rules. Hausmann further categorizes collocations into base and collocate structures, where one element semantically determines the other [5].

From a lexicological perspective, this implies that:

- Lexical meaning includes combinatory potential
- Words cannot be fully understood in isolation
- Phraseological patterns are essential for describing lexical behavior

Thus, phraseology provides the empirical foundation for understanding lexical co-occurrence and restriction, bridging theoretical lexicology with real language use.

Cognitive linguistics offers a compelling framework for integrating phraseology into lexicology. Wray argues that a significant portion of language production relies on formulaic sequences stored in the mental lexicon [14]. These sequences reduce cognitive load and enhance processing efficiency.

Jackendoff further supports this view by proposing that the mental lexicon contains a continuum of stored units, ranging from morphemes to complex constructions [6]. This aligns with the idea that phraseological units are not peripheral but central to linguistic competence.

From this perspective:

- The distinction between word and phrase becomes cognitively irrelevant
- Language users rely on chunk-based processing

- Phraseology reflects usage-based learning mechanisms

This theoretical shift has profound implications for both lexicology and phraseology, suggesting that they are different manifestations of the same cognitive system.

The integration of Uzbek linguistic scholarship provides an important cross-linguistic dimension. Rahmatullayev emphasizes that Uzbek phraseological units are deeply embedded in cultural and historical contexts, often reflecting national worldview and values [12].

Similarly, Yoʻldoshev highlights that phraseology plays a key role in semantic enrichment and stylistic variation within the Uzbek lexicon [15]. For example:

- “yuragi keng” encodes both emotional and cultural connotations

These examples demonstrate that phraseological units:

- Serve as cultural carriers of meaning
- Extend the expressive capacity of the lexicon
- Require both linguistic and cultural competence for interpretation

Thus, the interface between phraseology and lexicology is not only structural and semantic but also culturally conditioned.

The theoretical integration of phraseology and lexicology has significant applied implications. In translation studies, phraseological units present challenges due to their non-literal and culture-specific meanings. As noted by Kasimova and Norboyev, effective translation requires not only lexical equivalence but also pragmatic and cultural adaptation [7].

In language teaching, the importance of phraseological competence is increasingly recognized. Learners who master collocations and idioms achieve higher levels of fluency and naturalness. This supports the pedagogical shift toward lexical and phraseological approaches.

Based on the above analysis, it is evident that phraseology and lexicology should not be treated as separate disciplines. Instead, they form a continuum within the broader lexical system.

An integrated model would:

- Include both single-word and multi-word units
- Account for semantic, structural, and cognitive dimensions
- Emphasize usage-based and corpus-driven evidence

Such a model reflects the complexity of natural language and provides a more accurate framework for linguistic analysis.

- The lexicon is a multi-layered system, not a list of isolated words
- Idiomaticity challenges classical compositional semantics

- Collocations reveal lexical constraints and probabilistic patterns
- Cognitive linguistics supports the inclusion of phraseology in the lexicon
- Uzbek data highlight the cultural dimension of phraseological meaning

This reinforces the importance of studying phraseology within lexicology at both universal and language-specific levels.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the interface between phraseology and lexicology is fundamental to understanding language structure and meaning. Phraseological units extend the boundaries of the lexicon by functioning as stable, meaningful units.

The research concludes that:

- Phraseology is an integral part of lexicology
- The lexicon includes both single words and multi-word expressions
- An integrated approach is necessary for linguistic analysis

Future research should focus on corpus-based and computational approaches to further explore this relationship.

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