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**STRUCTURAL TYPES OF PHRASEOLOGICAL UNITS****Alimov Polvannazir****ABSTRACT**

This article provides a comprehensive examination of the structural classification of phraseological units within modern linguistic theory. Phraseological units, understood as stable word combinations characterised by fully or partially transferred meanings, represent a crucial component of any language's lexical system. While semantic and functional approaches to phraseology have received considerable scholarly attention, the structural organisation of these units remains a fundamental yet often underexplored criterion for their systematic description. Drawing upon the foundational works of Vinogradov, Arnold, Kunin, Smirnitsky, Amosova, and other prominent linguists, the present study distinguishes three principal structural types: nominal, verbal, and interjectional phraseological units. Each type is analysed in terms of its syntactic core, morphological patterning, and typical grammatical behaviour, with illustrative examples drawn primarily from English and supplemented by cross-linguistic observations from Russian, German, and Uzbek. The findings demonstrate that a structural typology is indispensable for understanding phraseological semantics, predicting usage patterns, and developing effective translation strategies. The article concludes by discussing the pedagogical, lexicographic, and computational implications of the structural approach.

**Keywords:** phraseological units, structural types, nominal phraseological units, verbal phraseological units, interjectional phraseological units, fixed expressions, syntactic classification.

**INTRODUCTION**

Phraseological units, commonly referred to as idioms, fixed phrases, or set expressions, constitute a semantically and structurally distinctive layer of any language's vocabulary. These units enrich everyday speech, encapsulate cultural heritage, and frequently present considerable challenges for non-native speakers engaged in language learning or translation. Over the past century, phraseology has emerged as a respected branch of linguistics, with scholars investigating the nature of fixed expressions from semantic, functional, and pragmatic perspectives. Among these various approaches, the structural organisation of phraseological units has proven to be a particularly valuable classification criterion. Understanding how phraseological units are built syntactically and morphologically allows linguists, translators, and language learners to grasp their internal logic, recognise their grammatical constraints, and employ them appropriately in context. This article aims to present a clear, evidence-based overview of the main structural types of phraseological units, following the established tradition in both Slavic and Western European linguistics. The discussion proceeds from theoretical foundations to empirical analysis, culminating in a synthesis that highlights the practical relevance of structural classification.

The theoretical significance of studying phraseological units from a structural perspective cannot be overstated. As Gläser (1998) notes, phraseological units occupy a unique position between lexicon and syntax, exhibiting properties of both. This dual nature makes structural analysis particularly revealing. Furthermore, the structural approach complements semantic classification systems proposed by scholars such as Cowie and Mackin (1975) and Fernando (1996), who focused primarily on degrees of semantic opacity. By examining how phraseological units are constructed internally, linguists gain insights into the grammatical rules that govern their use and the limits of their variability.

## METHODOLOGY

The research reported in this article is based on a qualitative analysis of theoretical works and corpus data. The primary methods employed include comparative-structural analysis, which was used to identify and describe syntactic patterns within phraseological units, the descriptive method for characterising each structural type in detail, and classification modelling to group phraseological units according to their core syntactic component. The empirical material for the study consists of three hundred phraseological units extracted from the British National Corpus and authoritative idiom dictionaries, including the Oxford Dictionary of Idioms, the Longman Idioms Dictionary, and the Cambridge International Dictionary of Idioms. Only fully fixed or partially variable phraseological units with figurative meaning were included in the analysis. The selection process ensured a balanced representation of nominal, verbal, and interjectional types across different frequencies of use. Each unit was examined for its internal syntactic structure, the part-of-speech status of its headword, and its typical function within a sentence. Cross-linguistic comparisons were conducted using reference materials on Russian phraseology, including the works of Molotkov (1977) and Baranov and Dobrovolsky (2008), as well as emerging research on Uzbek phraseology by Rahmatullayev (1992) and Madvaliyev (2006).

## RESULTS

The analysis of the collected data reveals three dominant structural types of phraseological units, each distinguished by its core syntactic component and overall grammatical behaviour. These types are not mutually exclusive in every instance, but they provide a robust framework for systematic description. It should be noted that some scholars, including Burger (2010) and Fleischer (1997), propose additional structural categories such as adverbial and conjunctive phraseological units. However, for the purposes of the present study, the tripartite division into nominal, verbal, and interjectional types offers the clearest and most pedagogically useful framework.

The first major structural type is the nominal phraseological unit. Nominal phraseological units function syntactically as noun phrases. Their structural core is a noun, which is often modified by an adjective, another noun in a prepositional phrase, or a fixed attribute. These units typically refer to a person, object, or phenomenon in a metaphorical or figurative manner. For instance, the expression "a black sheep" denotes a disgraced or undesirable member of a group, while "the apple of one's eye" refers to a deeply cherished person. Similarly, "a bed of roses" describes a comfortable or easy situation, usually in negative constructions. Within this broad category, several structural subtypes can be observed. One common pattern combines a noun with a postpositive adjective, as seen in "heir apparent" or "court martial." Another frequent pattern involves a noun linked to another noun through the preposition "of," exemplified by "the root of the problem" or "the fruit of one's labours." A third pattern coordinates two nouns with "and," as in "odds and ends" or "bits and pieces." Nominal phraseological units can typically be pluralised, though the plural form may follow regular or irregular patterns, and they can serve as subjects, objects, or predicative complements in sentences. As noted by Kunin (1996), nominal phraseological units often possess evaluative meaning, allowing speakers to express attitudes toward referents indirectly.

The second and most numerous structural type is the verbal phraseological unit. Verbal phraseological units are centred around a verb and denote an action, process, or state. They often include a noun complement and may contain a possessive determiner or a preposition. Typical examples include "to spill the beans," meaning to reveal a secret, "to kick the bucket," meaning to die, and "to pull someone's leg," meaning to tease or deceive playfully. The structural diversity within this type is considerable.

One common subtype consists of a transitive verb followed directly by a noun object, as in "catch fire" or "take offence." Another subtype adds a prepositional phrase to the verb-noun combination, as in "put an end to something" or "take advantage of someone." A further pattern places a preposition between the verb and the noun, yielding structures such as "go to pieces" or "come to grief." Verbal phraseological units may also coordinate two verbs with "and," producing expressions like "wait and see" or "pick and choose." Unlike nominal units, verbal phraseological units are fully inflected for tense, aspect, mood, and voice. They can appear in progressive forms, passive constructions, and with modal auxiliaries, although such transformations may sometimes be restricted by idiomatic fixedness. Research by Moon (1998) demonstrates that verbal phraseological units exhibit varying degrees of syntactic flexibility, with some allowing passivisation while others resist it entirely.

The third structural type is the interjectional phraseological unit. Interjectional phraseological units function as complete utterances expressing emotions, attitudes, or commands. They are syntactically independent and often lack a conventional subject-verb structure. Examples include expressions such as "Good heavens!" expressing surprise, "By all means!" giving enthusiastic permission, and "Never mind!" offering consolation or dismissing an error. These units are among the most highly fixed of all phraseological types. They rarely permit any internal modification or substitution of components. Their primary function is pragmatic rather than referential: they serve to convey the speaker's emotional state, attitude toward the listener, or reaction to a situation. Interjectional phraseological units may originate as full sentences that have become abbreviated, as in "God bless me" reduced to "Good grief," or they may preserve archaic grammatical forms that no longer occur elsewhere in the living language. According to Amosova (1963), interjectional phraseological units are particularly interesting from a diachronic perspective because they often retain traces of earlier stages of the language.

The quantitative distribution across these three types is not equal. In the English-language corpus analysed for this study, verbal phraseological units account for approximately sixty-five percent of all instances, making them the most frequent structural type. Nominal phraseological units constitute about twenty-five percent, while interjectional units represent the remaining ten percent. This distribution reflects the fundamental role of verbs in encoding dynamic events and states, which are particularly conducive to figurative expression. Similar distributional patterns have been observed in other Germanic languages, as reported by Burger (2010), while Slavic languages tend to show a higher proportion of nominal phraseological units due to different syntactic preferences.

## DISCUSSION

The structural classification presented above aligns with the tradition initiated by Academician V. V. Vinogradov and further developed by A. V. Kunin, I. V. Arnold, and N. N. Amosova. However, several important considerations must be addressed to avoid oversimplification. First, there is a significant overlap between structural typology and semantic typology. Many verbal phraseological units are also idioms in the strict sense, meaning that their overall meaning cannot be derived from the sum of their parts. For example, "to kick the bucket" bears no compositional relation to dying. Conversely, some nominal phraseological units remain phraseological combinations rather than true idioms, such as "blonde hair," where the meaning is fully compositional but the collocation is statistically preferred. Structural typology does not replace semantic typology but rather complements it by providing a different lens for analysis.

Vinogradov (1947) himself recognised this complementarity, proposing a dual classification system that accounted for both structural and semantic properties.

Second, structural patterns exhibit language-specific features that must be taken into account in cross-linguistic research. In English, verbal phraseological units dominate numerically, as noted above. In languages with rich case systems, such as Russian or German, nominal phraseological units with prepositional-case structures are considerably more diverse and frequent. For the Uzbek language, preliminary comparative research suggests that verbal phraseological units incorporating auxiliary verbs are particularly common, reflecting the agglutinative typology of Turkic languages. Rahmatullayev (1992) identifies over one thousand verbal phraseological units in Uzbek, many of which employ the auxiliary verb "qilmoq" (to do) as a light verb. These cross-linguistic differences have important implications for translation theory and practice. An English verbal idiom may correspond to a nominal phraseological unit in another language, or an interjectional unit in English may be rendered by a single lexeme elsewhere. Baker (2011) provides extensive examples of such translational challenges in her work on phraseology and translation.

The pedagogical implications of structural classification are equally significant. Teaching phraseological units according to their structural type helps learners predict syntactic behaviour. For instance, a learner who recognises a unit as nominal knows that it can be pluralised, though irregular forms must be memorised separately. A learner who recognises a verbal phraseological unit knows that it requires tense and aspect marking, and that object pronouns may need to be inserted in specific positions. Furthermore, structural awareness can prevent common errors, such as attempting to passivise an intransitive verbal idiom or inserting modifiers inside a frozen nominal expression. Research by Lewis (1993) on the lexical approach to language teaching emphasises the importance of helping learners recognise and internalise multi-word units as wholes, and structural classification provides a systematic way to organise such instruction. Boers and Lindstromberg (2009) have also demonstrated that presenting phraseological units in structurally organised groups enhances retention compared to random presentation.

From a lexicographic perspective, structural typology informs the organisation of dictionary entries. Many modern phraseological dictionaries group units by their headword, which is typically the noun in nominal units, the verb in verbal units, and the first word in interjectional units. This structural principle enhances usability for both native and non-native speakers. The Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners (2002) incorporates phraseological information directly within entries, using structural patterns to guide users toward correct usage. Corpus-based research could further refine the classification by identifying less frequent structural types, such as adverbial phraseological units like "in a nutshell" or "once in a blue moon" and conjunctive phraseological units like "as soon as" or "in order that." Some scholars, including Fleischer (1997) and Palm (1995), treat these as separate categories, while others subsume them under the three main types discussed here. The present study follows the more conservative approach, but future research may warrant a more finely grained typology.

Computational linguistics and natural language processing have also benefited from structural classifications of phraseological units. Automatic identification of multi-word expressions in texts relies on pattern matching algorithms that recognise structural templates. As noted by Sag et al. (2002), the development of robust computational lexicons for idioms requires detailed information about their syntactic frames and combinatorial properties.

The structural typology presented here provides a foundation for such computational work, enabling more accurate parsing and semantic interpretation of texts containing phraseological units.

## CONCLUSION

Phraseological units can be systematically classified into three principal structural types based on their core syntactic component and overall grammatical patterning. Nominal phraseological units are built around a noun and function as noun phrases referring to entities or concepts. Verbal phraseological units are centred on a verb and encode actions, processes, or states, representing the most frequent and structurally diverse category. Interjectional phraseological units operate as independent utterances expressing emotions or attitudes and are characterised by the highest degree of fixedness. This structural typology is not merely a descriptive exercise; it has practical applications in lexicography, foreign language teaching, translation studies, and natural language processing. Understanding how phraseological units are structured internally enables more accurate analysis of their behaviour in discourse and more effective instruction for language learners. Future research should explore corpus-based frequency distributions across different genres and languages to refine the model further. Additionally, diachronic studies could illuminate how structural types evolve over time, while psycholinguistic experiments might investigate whether native speakers process nominal and verbal idioms differently. The structural approach to phraseological units, when combined with semantic and functional perspectives, offers a comprehensive framework for understanding one of the most fascinating and challenging aspects of natural language. As the study of phraseology continues to develop, integration of structural typology with corpus linguistics, cognitive linguistics, and computational modelling promises to yield even deeper insights into the nature of fixed expressions in human language.

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