IDENTIFICATION OF PHRASEOLOGICAL UNITS IN DISCOURSE

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Summary: PUs are known as complicated language units with endlessly varied manifestations in discourse. This calls for a systematic view of their actual use to gain a better insight into the discoursal dimension of text. The identification process needs, first and foremost, a profound understanding of the base form as an element of the system of language and its realization in discourse in either its core use or its instantial use.

Key words: phraseological units, language, discourse, realization, base, phonetic features, figurative meaning

The phraseological unit as a stable combination of words with a fully or partially figurative meaning is an extremely complex many-sided language unit. Stability and figurativeness are intrinsic features of any PU in all its innumerable varied representations in discourse. For purposes of analysis it is essential not only to have a clear idea of the concept of the PU as a separate entity, but also to establish terms for denoting various types of form of the PU and to reflect their meaning and function. I propose to introduce the term the base form in the English language to indicate the form of the phraseological unit to which other forms of the PU can be related and with which they can be compared. The base form is part of the system of a given language. It is certainly an archetypal conception. It is an abstraction which possesses all the most important characteristics of the given PU. In text it may be used with or without additional stylistic changes, depending on discourse needs and the thought expressed. In practice, the base form is the dictionary form and meaning, recorded as the headphrase. In its base form the PU is a static out-of-context formation which does not depend on discourse. Of course, here I do not take into account diachronic development that may bring about changes in the form and meaning of PUs, which naturally develop as all language does. According to Kunin's definition (1970: 210) the PU is

characterised by two categorial features: stability and figurative meaning. I believe the PU has a third distinguishing, categorial feature: that of cohesion. Cohesion and stability are not the same thing. Cohesion derives from phraseological meaning and the semantic, lexical, stylistic, and grammatical organisation of the PU. The PU is a cohesive formation, whether it operates in discourse or is viewed in isolation as the base form. When used in text, the intrinsic cohesive properties of the PU contribute to texture. Cohesion also explains the intricate semantic structure of the PU. It was already noticed in very early phraseological investigations in the 50's that one constituent of a PU cannot be explained without the other(s) or, put in different terms, the meaning of the PU cannot be directly derived from its constituent parts. The 80's and the 90's have produced profound analysis of the meaning of PUs. Melerovich argues that the semantic structure of PUs includes their inner form, motivation of phraseological meaning, and phraseological abstraction (Melerovich 1982). The image-bearing component of phraseological meaning has been further researched from the point of view of cognitive linguistics (Dobrovol'skij 1996, 1998). However, the cohesive relationships within a PU are manifold, in that they are present not only in the meaning of the PU, but are also realised through grammatical, lexical, and stylistic ties. Cohesion of the PU depends on all these types of interrelationships. Cohesion secures and explains stability. Why is the PU stable? Because it is cohesive at the level of structure, constituential make-up, and meaning, including stylistic elements. To sum up, the base form of the PU is cohesive in its own right. Hence I would reword the definition of the PU as follows: the phraseological unit is a stable, cohesive combination of words with a fully or partially figurative meaning. Cohesion is central to both an understanding of the base form of the PU and its use in discourse. This is in full compliance with the findings of cognitive science, as "human cognition is shaped fundamentally by processes of figuration".

The base form has been established as a standard unit in the system of language due to customary use, for example, the white feather, to fall into the trap, to rock the boat, to foot the bill, a running battle. It is the most common and typical form, which serves as a base for creation of identical, similar, or more complicated and original forms in discourse. It represents all cases of use, including innumerable stylistic manifestations in discourse. Only if the base form and meaning are established is it
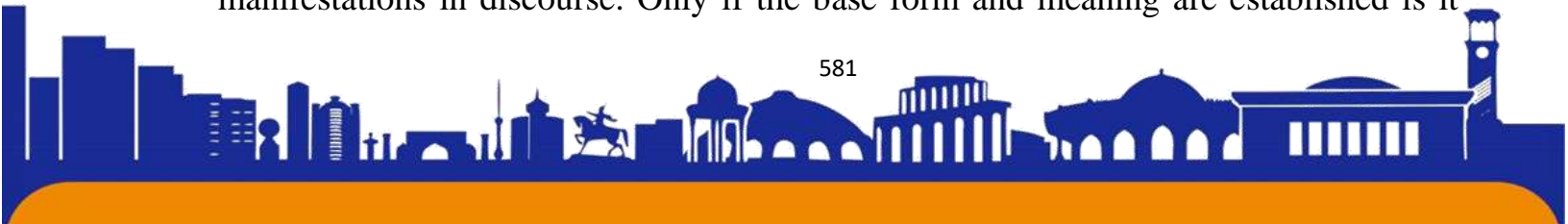
possible to interpret and judge. This may require some conscious cognitive processes in the case of L2 users, depending on their level. However, native speakers usually process figurative use unconsciously without ever realising it, in an online manner: "figurative thought functions automatically in people's online use and understanding of linguistic meaning" (Gibbs [1994] 1999: 18). As a base form, the PU is an integrated whole, a unit that is unbroken and intact. Syntactically the base form never exceeds the boundaries of one sentence. Some PUs constitute a full sentence, including compound or complex sentences, but they never go beyond the limits of a sentence in their base form or core use. Examples include the die is cast; what good wind brings you here?; well, I never (did)!; you can take a horse to the water but you cannot make him drink; the right hand does not know what the left hand is doing. It is important to know not only how phraseology is organised but also how it is stored and retrieved. The base form as the invariable form and meaning of the PU is part of the mental lexicon, which is the storehouse of all the PUs that a person knows, integrated into one's general store of knowledge. PUs become stored knowledge once they have been acquired. They are located in long-term memory. Cognitive psychology gives an insight into the processes whereby language material is stored and recalled. The learner needs a certain level of ability and skills to acquire new PUs and draw on particular knowledge which is stored in the system of language. Knowledge and understanding of the base form are essential for both research and practical applications, such as teaching and translation. Failure to identify the base form may lead to inaccuracy in theoretical conclusions. When discussing PUs in Shakespeare's plays, Sviridova (1968: 7) comes to he conclusion that to bite one's thumb at someone is an expression created by Shakespeare in Romeo and Juliet. In order to establish the base form of a PU recorded in the 16th century, a diachronic study is essential. Historical material shows that this PU was used before Shakespeare wrote this play, for example: I see Contempt marching forth, giving mee the fico with his thombe in his mouth. It is known that Shakespeare wrote his first sketch of Romeo and Juliet in 1597 (Buchan 1935: 119), that is, after Wits Miserie (1596). This clearly shows that the PU can by no means be attributed to Shakespeare. It is also important to avoid another mistake: to regard the first written record of a PU as its origin. It should be remembered that most PUs are created by the people who use the language, so that only a few PUs can be traced back to a specific author. For instance, although Chaucer's works contain rich phraseological material, none of these
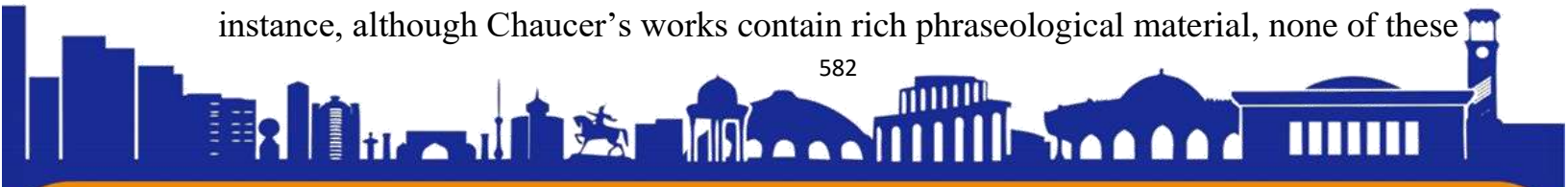
PUs can be attributed to Chaucer. He used the phraseology that was part of the language of his time. As to the PU to bite one's thumb at someone, it is perfectly clear from both the examples – in Shakespeare7 and Wits Miserie – that these PUs were by no means new to readers or audiences of the 1590s, as both of them have been used with stylistic changes. Taking into account the most typical features of the base form, its essential character could be summarised as follows:
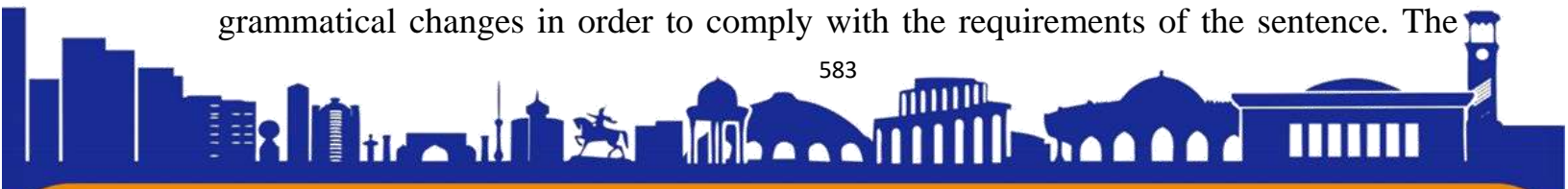
the base form

− a form of the PU outside discourse;

− the form to which other forms of the PU can be related;

− used as a base when assessing PUs used in discourse;

− the form in which PUs are stored in the long-term memory of the language user as reproducible language units;

− accessed when a discourse situation calls for it.

In conclusion, the PU is an archetypal conception in its base form. As a decontextualised unit of language, it is generic to all manifestations of a particular PU in discourse or a totality of discourses. The base form is a cohesive entity per se which secures the existence, development, and sustainability of the PU in discourse. PUs are stored in base forms as part of stored language information. It is possible to recall them because they are stable, cohesive, and figurative chunks of information.

In text, phraseological units often appear in their standard form and meaning. I introduce the term core use to denote the basic, most common, essential form and meaning which is the invariable of the PU available to a language user. The concept of core use implies the essential features of the entity. In their core form and meaning, PUs are used and understood by the majority of speakers. In many ways core use resembles the base form, and it never exceeds the boundaries of one sentence, just as the base form.

Core use constitutes the "perfect" example. Core use realises the cohesive relations inherent in the base form. Contextual changes are insignificant; they are grammatical changes in order to comply with the requirements of the sentence. The

base form remains largely intact and no act of creation is involved in the case of core use, for example,

to foul one's own nest

"Well," she said, "I must say, your husband has caused a marvellous lot of mischief, Mrs. Bostock. He's fouled his own nest, indeed he has; done a lot of damage to others and no good to himself."

D. H. Lawrence, Mr Noon

Man has invented a hundred brilliant ways of fouling his own nest – the grime, the pollution, the heat, the poisons in the air, the metals in the water.

The PU is marked per se; it is a stylistic item of language. Figurative meaning is an inherent feature of the base form of PUs, that is, the form and meaning stored in the long-term memory of the language user or in a dictionary, for example, to let the cat out of the bag. Figurativeness as one of the inherent features of the PU stipulates that at least one of the constituents must have a figurative meaning. Any figurative meaning is marked in contrast to the literal meaning. On the one hand, in its core use the PU operates without additional stylistic changes. It functions in a way that can be expected and predicted and has the same stylistic effect as the base form. On the other hand, in its base form a PU is not a stylistic void, as style is part of phraseological meaning. The stylistic features of the base form have a cohesive role; their main types are as follows:

types of figurative meaning:

– *metaphor, e.g., there's no smoke without fire; to break one's heart;*

– *metonymy, e.g., to wear the stripes; to lend a hand;*

– *hyperbole, e.g., to move heaven and earth; to feel like a million dollars;*

– *understatement, e.g., a bit of all right; to take a bit of doing;*

– *allusion, e.g., Hobson's choice; between Scylla and Charybdis;*

– *oxymoron, e.g., cold comfort; (as) clear as mud;*

– *euphemism, e.g., to be economical with the truth; to pay a call;*

– *periphrasis, e.g., when pigs fly; the eleventh hour;*

– *antonomasia, e.g., the Iron Lady; to meet one's Waterloo;*

– *antithesis, e.g., a big fish/frog in a little/small pond; for better for worse;*

– *transferred epithet, e.g., the Wailing Wall; the dark continent;*

– *irony, e.g., an eager beaver; like turkeys voting for Christmas;*

phonetic features:

– *alliteration, e.g., live and let live; chalk and cheese; assonance, e.g., there's no fool like an old fool; a cat has nine lives;*

– *onomatopoeia, e.g., scratch my back and I'll scratch yours; to crash and burn;*

grammatical features:

– *parallelism, e.g., easy come, easy go; an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth;*

– *interjections, e.g., hear, hear! bully for you!*

– *rhetorical questions, e.g., with friends like these, who needs enemies? what does the moon care if the dogs bark at her? register:*

– *formal, e.g., an olive branch; a litmus test;*

– *informal, e.g., to hold one's own; to go easy on something;*

– *slang, e.g., shit and get off the pot; to get one's arse in gear.*

THE LIST OF USED LITERATURE:

1. No established term exists for this form in English, as it is not singled out as a separate entity in contrast to discoursal forms. The usual term used in Russian is ishodnaya forma, meaning "the initial form". It was introduced by Kunin (see 1964, 1970). Sabban uses the term Grundform (basic form) in German (see Sabban 1998b, 1999).

2. For the formation of phraseological meaning and types of phraseological abstraction, see Melerovich (1982); Dobrovol'skij (1998).

3. For the concept of cohesion see Halliday and Hasan (1976:Ch. 1). For semantic and stylistic cohesion in PUs, see Ch. 3.1 of this work.

4. According to Halliday and Hasan a tie is the occurrence of a pair of cohesively related items (1976: 3).

5. To understand more about the mental lexicon and the processes in which human language is learned, produced, and processed, see Kess (1992:Ch. 3–4); Aitchison (2003). Moon reports some of the findings of psycholinguistic research in fixed expressions and idioms. Although some of the results are hypothetical and even contradictory, research in language acquisition suggests that language is learned, stored, retrieved, and produced in holophrases and other multi-word items, not just as individual words or terms (Moon 1998:Ch. 2).

6. See Eysenck for an account of the workings of long-term memory (1993:Ch. 4). For types of memory, see also Reber ([1985] 1995: 446–449).

7. See the analysis of Shakespeare's stylistic use of this PU in Ch. 5.4

8. Numerous studies have investigated the standard form and meaning of PUs. See the study of idioms in, for example, Häusermann (1977); Makkai (1978); Fernando and Flavell (1981); Strässler (1982); Moon (1988, 1992); Fernando (1996); Moon (1998). Fernando and Flavell extensively study the formation and nature of idioms. Strässler offers a pragmatic analysis and views idiomaticity as a cross-cultural phenomenon of language in use. Phraseology received much attention and was investigated on a wide scale in the former Soviet Union; see, for example, the works of Kunin and his followers (Kunin 1970). Core use of idioms in spoken discourse has been examined by McCarthy (1998:Ch. 7). Many articles explore various aspects of standard form and use of PUs in Granger and Meunier ([2008] 2009b).

9. The term prescriptive use, which was suggested by Kunin in English, does not seem to meet the needs, as in traditional grammar the aim of prescription is to describe the language not as it is used, but as it is thought the language ought to be used, even condemning certain usages (Baugh and Cable [1951] 2001:273–275; Wales [1989]
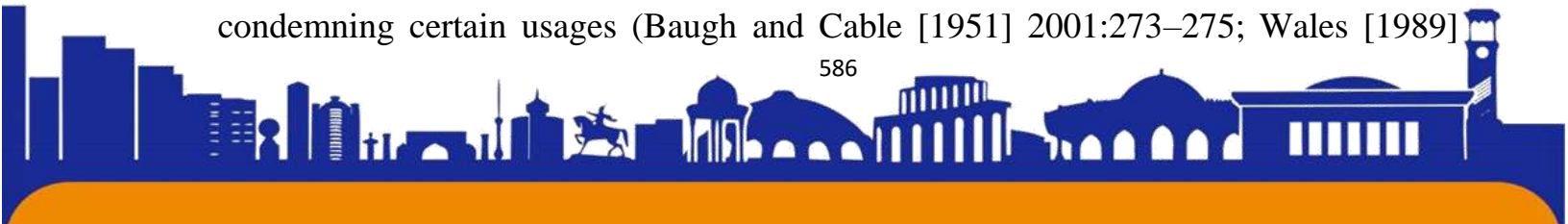
1995:317–318). Prescription is also defined as an authoritarian statement about the correctness of a particular use of a language (Crystal [1987] 1995:428). The term introduced by Kunin in Russian is uzual'noye upotrebleniye ("usual use").

10. For instance, to have a bird's-eye view; a nine-day wonder.

11. By style of the base form I understand the set of distinctive stylistic features characteristic of the PU. See Wales ([1989] 1995: 371).

12. It is not my aim to study the stylistic features of the base form and core use in more detail, as it is a special area of research in its own right.

13. For the intricate interaction of metaphor and metonymy, see, for example, Lakoff and Turner (1989: 100–106); Gibbs ([1994] 1999: 319–358, 2007: 19–31); Barcelona (1998, 2000a: 31–144); Steen (2005). Over the past decade metonymy has received sustained attention in cognitive research. "It is impossible to study metaphor without addressing metonymy" (Forceville and Urios-Aparisi 2009a: 12).