

# PHRASEOLOGICAL UNITS WITH THE CONJUNCTION OR IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

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**Abstract.** This paper presents the results of research devoted to the phraseological units with the conjunction or, analyzed from the viewpoint of their semantic integrity, structure and means, providing their stability and cohesion.

**Keywords:** *Phraseological unit, Disjunctive conjunction, Phraseological derivation.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Word-groups consisting of two or more elements the combination of which has a specialized meaning of the whole are called set expressions, idioms, or phraseological units. The most important characteristic features of such word-groups are stable and fixed nature which is determined according to the statistical probability of co-occurrence for their constituent words in variable contextual environment (Арнольд, 1986, 165).

Phraseological units are contrasted by free phrases and word. Free word groups permit substitution of any of their elements. If substitution is only pronominal, or restricted to a few synonyms for one of the members only, or impossible as it may destroy the meaning or the euphonic and expressive qualities of the whole, that is if elements of the phrase are always the same and make a fixed context for each other, the word-group has a phraseological status (Арнольд, 1986, 168).

On the one hand, the main point of difference between a word and a set expression is the divisibility of the latter into separately structured elements which is contrasted to the structural integrity of words. On the other hand, phraseological units are regarded as word equivalents because they are not created in speech but introduced into the act of

communication ready-made and represent one member of the sentence (Арнольд, 1986, 175, 167).

The syntactical integrity does not mean that there are no syntactical ties within set expressions themselves which can be proved by the possibility of syntactic transformations (however limited) or inversion of elements and the substitution of the element which is structurally necessary but free to vary lexically without destroying the phraseological unit as such. Another convincing manifestation of syntactic ties within set expressions is the fact that some of them permit to break the sequence of elements and insert some additional words which. Splitting the phraseological unit does not destroy it either. Finally, some set expressions are subjected to morphological change (Арнольд, 1986, 176).

Set expressions are extremely varied structurally, functionally, semantically and stylistically. Those of them which have one and the same word as a core component and which realize various types of meanings from phraseological clusters (Архангельский, 1964, 64). Phraseological cluster can be made of set expressions not only with the national common core component, but also with the core component, represented by formal words, such as conjunctions, in particular the disjunctive conjunction or.

The objective of this article is to consider phraseological units with the conjunction or in the framework of their structure, the degree of amalgamation and means, contributing to their stability and cohesion.

## 2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research is based on the English-Russian phraseological dictionary of A. Kunin. The tasks of the study are:

- picking up the phraseological units with the disjunctive conjunction or;

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- classification of the phraseological units with the disjunctive conjunction or according to their semantic integrity;

- singling out various structural models of the phraseological units with the disjunctive conjunction or;

- determining the semantic relations between notional words joined into the phraseological units by the disjunctive conjunction or;

- stating the phonetic peculiarities of the phraseological units with the disjunctive conjunction, or.

The methods applied in this study are selected in accordance with the objective and tasks of research. Structural types of set expressions are revealed with the help of the analysis into immediate constituents. The degree of their semantic blending is established taking into account the motivation of the phraseological unit, which is the relationship between the meaning of the whole and the meaning of its components, which in its turn is stated on the basis of the definitions from the dictionary. Explanatory dictionaries also facilitate the establishment of semantic groups of words to which the constituent national elements of the discussed set expressions belong to.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The analysis of the above mentioned phraseological dictionary reveals 40 phraseological units with the conjunction or which are joined into a separate microsystem. Other disjunctive conjunctions, namely either... or, whether... or, if... or, did not appear in English set-expressions.

Conjunction or can be called the core component of these phraseological units, because they are based on the same principle as free word combinations with the disjunctive connection. Being the subtype of coordinative relations, it presupposes the equality of elements united by the conjunction into a syntactic construction. Thus, it is impossible to state which of the homogeneous components is principal and which the subsidiary is. So the status of the main element in such word-groups is ascribed to the conjunction or, the semantic properties of which differentiate disjunctive constructions from other syntactic structures with coordinative connection.

The conjunction as a part of speech indicates the relations between coordinated elements. Syntactic relations between words and sentences reflect the relations between

the phenomena and situations in the objective reality, expressed by these words and sentences. The relation, conveyed by the conjunction or, belongs to the logical type, found between several mutually exclusive elements. That is why the disjunctive conjunction or is also known as alternative.

According to the semantic integrity, established by the degree of motivation correlated with the rigidity and indivisibility, set expressions with the conjunction or can be divided into three classes, such as: phraseological fusions, phraseological unities and phraseological combinations.

Phraseological fusions represent as their name suggests the highest stage of blending together. The meaning of components is completely absorbed by the meaning of the whole by its expressiveness and emotional properties (without rhyme or reason, make a spoon or spoil the horn, common or garden).

Phraseological unities are clearly motivated and their emotional quality is based upon the metaphorical image created by the whole (black or white, by hook or by crook, come hell or high water, fish or cut bait, rain or shine, hit or miss, neck or nothing, by fair means or foul, through fair or foul, stand or fall, make head or tail of something, not for love or money, root hog or die, sink or swim).

Phraseological combinations are motivated, but at the same time semantically inseparable. The meaning of the unit of this class is a blend of the meanings of its constituents which thus can't be altered or omitted (a thing or two, a word or two, know a thing or two, tell somebody a thing or two, more or less, first or last, little or nothing, now or never, once or twice, one or two, one time or another, one way or another, somehow or other, something or other, sometime or other, sooner or later, there or thereabouts, two or three, whether or no (not), or so, end or mend, make or break).

Some linguists consider set expressions to be unsystematic units. They are never built according to certain rules. The appearance of such rules would deny their random nature (Кунин, 2005, 85) and contradict the most important feature of phraseological units which consists in their unpredictability in the structural and semantic aspects. The process of their creation is not regulated consciously. But there is also the opinion that phraseological units like elements of other levels in the language system are built according to definite patterns (Гвоздарев, 1977, 173). T. Asten believes that phraseological derivation does exist and the models of it have been developing

with the history of the language and indicate the potential phraseological system. Phraseological patterns prove that the development of phraseology of the language has a regular character, because the formation of the majority of set expressions is not accidental, but based on particular models (Астех, 2005, 26).

Analysis of phraseological units with or confirms this opinion, as almost all of them consist of two components joined the disjunctive conjunction with one exception represented by or so, where the first component of the construction is free to vary. The majority of phraseological units with or contain nothing but coordinated homogeneous elements: (once or twice, one or two, a thing or two, a word or two, two or three, first or last, more or less, sooner or later, there or thereabouts, sometime or other, somehow or other, something or other, little or nothing, common or garden, whether or no (not), rain or shine, by hook or by crook, by fair means or foul, through fair or foul, one way or another, not for love or money, without rhyme or reason, black or white, now or never, make or break, fish or cut bait, hit or miss, end or mend, neck or nothing, sink or swim, stand or fall, one time or another, root hog or die, make a spoon or spoil a horn).

Only several phraseological units contain components following and/or preceding the homogeneous elements joined with the conjunction (come hell or high water, tell somebody a thing or two, know a thing or two, make head or tail of something, marriage makes or mars a man).

In most cases homogeneous constituents of disjunctive constructions in phraseological units are represented by lexemes (once or twice, one or two, a thing or two, a word or two, two or three, first or last, more or less, sooner or later, there or thereabouts, sometime or other, somehow or other, something or other, little or nothing, common or garden, whether or no (not), rain or shine, black or white, now or never, make or break, hit or miss, end or mend, neck or nothing, sink or swim, stand or fall, tell somebody a thing or two, know a thing or two, make head or tail of something, marriage makes or mars a man).

These lexemes can belong to the same or different parts of speech, thus making the following patterns:

- [noun or noun] rain or shine;
- [verb or verb] make or break, hit or miss, end or mend, sink or swim, stand or fall;
- [adjective or adjective] black or white, common or garden;

[adverb or adverb] once or twice, now or never, first or last, more or less, sooner or later, there or thereabouts;

[numeral or numeral] one or two, two or three;

[pronoun or pronoun] something or other.

[noun or numeral] a thing or two, a word or two;

[adverb or pronoun] sometime or other, somehow or other;

[adjective or pronoun] little or nothing;

[noun or pronoun] neck or nothing;

[conjunction or particle] whether or no (not).

Thus, the most productive models are [verb or verb] and [adverb or adverb].

In some phraseological units with or homogeneous components are nouns with preposition (by hook or by crook), which can be omitted in the second component (through fair or foul, not for love or money, without rhyme or reason). In some phraseological units one or both homogeneous components can be represented by the combinations of notional words (fish or cut bait, one way or another, one time or another, root hog or die, make a spoon or spoil a horn, come hell or high water). In the set expression by fair means or foul one can observe the combination of adjective and noun with preposition in the first component of the disjunctive construction and the omission of the notional and formal words in the second component.

Phraseological units have their own specific features, which enhance their stability and cohesion. Among them are their euphonic qualities and semantic features (Арнольд, 1986, 177, 178).

Euphony is achieved through phonetic repetition which serves to produce alliteration and rhythm. Alliteration is defined as repetition of vowels and/or consonants in the beginning of words: now or never [n], without rhyme or reason [r], neck or nothing [n], sink or swim [s], through fair or foul [f], make a spoon or spoil the horn [sp], marriage makes or mars a man [m]. Rhyme is a repetition of consonants and vowels in the end of words: make or break [eik], end or mend [end], by hook or by crook [uk].

Various semantic relations are singled out between homogeneous components of the disjunctive constructions in the phraseological units, in particular, synonymy (by hook or by

crook); tautology (there or thereabouts); antonymy (first or last, more or less, sooner or later, black or white, stand or fall, through fair or foul). In the latter case the phraseological unit may contain not only systematic but also occasional antonyms (rain or shine, sink or swim, hit or miss, make head or tail of something), as well as words the contrary meanings of which are due to the generalized semantics of the verb make (marriage makes or mars a man, make or break).

In paired phraseological units with coordinated connection of disjunctive type two words with direct meanings are combined to acquire a new sense. In tautological set expressions, the repetition emphasizes the semantic feature which cannot be underlined otherwise (Попова, 1986, 99). So, there or thereabouts expresses vagueness, approximation. Synonyms are combined into phraseological units due to the partial coincidence in their meaning, which is thus intensified, whereas differentiating semantic features are also preserved. Antonymous lexemes in the paired set expressions denote things referring to the same class, but opposed to each other (Попова, 1986, 101).

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS

Phraseological units with the conjunction or are made up by definite structural patterns of different productivity. These set expressions possess various degrees of integrity facilitating their further classification. Their cohesion and stability are achieved through special phonetic and lexical features.

##### Conflict of interests

Authors declare no conflict of interest.

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