



PAPER

MOTIVATION TYPES AND FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO LACK OF MOTIVATION IN PHRASEOLOGICAL UNITS

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Abstract

The analysis of phraseological units in language, focusing on the essential features, lack of motivation, and criteria of idiomaticity. Language, in its myriad expressions, is an intricate tapestry woven from a mosaic of words, phrases, and idiomatic constructions. Among these linguistic building blocks, phraseological units stand as fundamental elements, encapsulating rich layers of meaning and cultural significance. Understanding the essential features and nuances of these PUs is a captivating journey into the heart of language.

Key words: phraseology idioms, expressions, collocations, figurative language, fixed phrases, lexical chunks, language patterns

Introduction

A word-group is lexically motivated if the combined of the group is deducible from the meanings of its components (red flower).The word-group "red tape" is lexically non-motivated. In this word group the constituents do not synchronically possess the denotational meaning found in the same words in isolatin . "Red flower" is motivated both lexically and structurally, whereas red tape is non-motivated either lexically or structurally. Words-groups are said to be structurally motivated

if the meaning of the pattern is deducible from the order and arrangement of the member-words of the group. The meaning of the pattern "quality — substance" is deduced from the order and arrangement of the words "red " and "flower" in the word-group "red flower whereas the identical pattern "red tape" cannot be interpreted as "quality-substance".

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Main Part

The degree of motivation may be different. Between the extremes of complete motivation and lack of motivation there are innumerable intermediate cases. Completely or partially non-motivated word-groups are described as phraseological units or idioms. American and English dictionaries of idioms contain a wealth of pro-verbs, sayings, various lexical units of all kinds, but as a rule do not seek to lay down a reliable criterion of their classification.

The first dictionary in which theoretical principles for the selection, of English phraseological units were elaborated was published in this country. Taking into account mainly the degree of idiomaticity (non-motivation) phraseological units may be classified into three big groups: phraseological fusions phraseological unities and phraseological collocations. This classification was suggested by Academician V.V. Vinogradov.

Phraseological fusions are completely non-motivated word-groups (red tape, kick the bucket). Phraseological unities are partially non-motivated as their meaning can usually be perceived through the metaphoric meaning of the whole phraseological unit (to show one's teeth, to wash one's dirty linen in public). The metaphoric meanings of these units suggest "to take a threatening tone" or "to discuss or make public one's quarrels". Phraseological collocations are motivated but they are made up of words possessing specific lexical valency which accounts for a certain degree of stability in such word-groups.

In phraseological collocations variability of member-words is strictly limited. We can say "take a liking" but not "to take hatred". However, the classification by Vinogradov has been criticized. The criterion of idiomaticity (lack of motivation) is found to be an inadequate guide in singling out phraseological units from other word-groups. Borderline cases between idiomatic and non-idiomatic word-groups are so numerous and confusing that the final decision seems to depend largely on one's "feeling of the language". The same word-groups are treated by some linguists as idiomatic phrases and by others as free word-groups. Academician Vinogradov investigated another essential feature of phraseological units,

i.e. their stability. It is consequently assumed that unlike components of free word-groups, which may vary according to the needs of communication (to take a book, a pen, etc.), phraseological units are always reproduced as unchangeable collocations (red tape). The criterion of stability is also criticized as not very reliable in distinguishing, phraseological units from other word-groups. We observe regular substitution of at least one of the lexical components.

In "not to care a twopennytwopenny" may be replaced by a number of other nouns. Another angle from which the problem of phraseology is viewed is the so-called functional approach. This approach is suggested by Prof. A.I. Smirnitsky in his monograph. He assumes that phraseological units may be defined as specific word-groups functioning as word-equivalents. The fundamental features of phraseological units thus understood are their semantic and grammatical inseparability, which are regarded as distinguishing features of isolated words.

The term "semantic inseparability" implies that the denotational meaning belongs to the word-group as a single semantically inseparable unit and not to the components of the phraseological unit (red tape). The term "grammatical inseparability" implies that the grammatical meaning or, to be more exact, the part-of-speech meaning of phraseological units is felt as belonging to the word-group as a whole irrespective of the part-of-speech meaning of the component words. Compare "take a book" and "take place". We observe that in the free word-group "take a book" the verb and the noun preserve the part-of-speech meaning proper to these words taken in isolation. In the phraseological unit "take place" the part-of-speech meaning belongs to the group as a single whole. "Take place" is grammatically equivalent to a verb. Grammatical inseparability of phraseological units viewed as one of the aspects of idiomaticity enables us to regard them as grammatically equivalent to single words.

Thus A.I. Smirnitsky classifies phraseological units into noun equivalents (red tape), verb equivalents (to take care), (to break the news), adverb equivalents (in the long run), adjective equivalents (below the mark), etc.

Prof. A.I. Smirnitsky suggests three classes of stereotyped phrases:

1. traditional phrases whose meaning can be derived from the meaning of the component parts (to shrug one's shoulders);

2. phraseological combinations (to get up, to fall in love) whose metaphorical motivation is faded and

3. idioms — idiomatic (non-motivated) units which are imaginative, emotionally and stylistically coloured (to take the bull by the horns, that's where the shoe pinches, the cat is out of the bag). Unlike phraseological units, proverbs, sayings and quotations do not always function as word-equivalents. That is why the proponents of the functional criterion argue that proverbs and sayings lie outside the province of phraseology.

The criterion of function has also been subject to criticism. The main disputable points are as follows:

- 1) One and the same word-group may function in some sentences as an inseparable group (a word equivalent) and in others as a separable group with each component performing its own syntactic function. This seems largely to be accounted for by the structure of the sentence in which the word-group is used. For example, in the sentence "She took care of everything, "take care" is perceived as a single unit functioning as the predicate, whereas in the sentence "Great care was taken to keep the children happytake care" is undoubtedly separable into two components: the verb "take" functions as the predicate and the noun "care" — as the object. The functional unity of the word-group seems to be broken.

Motivation plays a central role in the acquisition of phraseological units, as these multi-word expressions require not only linguistic knowledge but also cultural awareness, memory retention, and contextual sensitivity. Unlike single lexical items, phraseological units such as idioms, collocations, and fixed expressions are often semantically opaque and cannot be fully understood through literal interpretation. Therefore, learners' motivation significantly influences their willingness to engage with such complex language elements and to internalize them for active use.

From a pedagogical perspective, motivation in learning phraseological units can be broadly understood through intrinsic and extrinsic

dimensions. Intrinsic motivation emerges when learners are genuinely interested in the figurative richness and expressive potential of phraseological language. Students who are intrinsically motivated tend to explore idiomatic expressions as a means of enhancing their communicative competence and achieving more natural, native-like fluency. This type of motivation is often associated with curiosity, personal satisfaction, and a desire for self-improvement. In contrast, extrinsic motivation is driven by external factors such as academic requirements, examinations, or teacher expectations. While extrinsically motivated learners may successfully memorize phraseological units, their knowledge often remains passive and less flexible in real communicative situations.

Another important motivational dimension is integrative motivation, which reflects a learner's desire to connect with the target language culture. Since phraseological units are deeply rooted in cultural and historical contexts, learners with strong integrative motivation are more likely to appreciate their meanings and use them appropriately. For example, understanding idiomatic expressions in English requires familiarity with cultural references, traditions, and shared knowledge. In this sense, motivation becomes not only a psychological factor but also a sociocultural bridge that facilitates deeper language acquisition. Instrumental motivation, on the other hand, is associated with practical goals such as career advancement or academic success. While it can encourage learners to study phraseological units, it may not always lead to a deep or lasting understanding of their usage.

Despite the recognized importance of motivation, many learners experience difficulties and a noticeable lack of engagement when dealing with phraseological units. One of the primary factors contributing to this problem is the inherent complexity of such expressions. The non-literal nature of idioms often creates confusion, especially for learners who rely heavily on word-for-word translation. This cognitive challenge can reduce confidence and lead to avoidance strategies, where students prefer simpler, more transparent language forms instead of experimenting with phraseology.

Another significant factor is the lack of

contextualized teaching. When phraseological units are presented in isolation, without meaningful context or communicative application, learners struggle to understand their pragmatic function and relevance. This often results in rote memorization rather than genuine acquisition, which negatively affects motivation. Furthermore, insufficient exposure to authentic language input—such as real conversations, literature, or media—limits learners' opportunities to encounter phraseological units in natural settings, making them appear artificial and difficult to use. Teaching methods also play a crucial role in shaping motivation. Traditional approaches that emphasize memorization and repetition may fail to engage learners, particularly in the case of phraseological units that require creative and contextual understanding. In contrast, interactive and communicative activities—such as storytelling, role-playing, and discourse analysis—can significantly enhance motivation by demonstrating the functional value of phraseology in real communication. The absence of such methods often leads to reduced interest and passive learning behavior.

Additionally, psychological factors such as anxiety, low self-efficacy, and fear of making mistakes can hinder learners' motivation. Since phraseological units are often perceived as advanced or difficult, students may feel insecure about using them incorrectly. This fear can limit their participation and willingness to experiment with language, ultimately slowing down their progress.

In this context, motivation should be viewed as a dynamic and multifaceted construct that interacts with cognitive, social, and pedagogical factors. The successful acquisition of phraseological units depends not only on learners' effort but also on the learning environment, instructional strategies, and the extent to which teaching practices support meaningful engagement with language. A balanced approach that integrates cultural context, communicative practice, and explicit explanation can help overcome motivational barriers and promote more effective learning outcomes.

To conclude,

in such word-groups as a small town the words town and small may be substituted for by a number of other nouns, e.g. room, audience, etc., the adjectives large big can replace "small" The substitution does not affect the meanings of the other member of the word group (small town, large town, small room). Unlike word-groups with variable members phraseological units allow of no substitution. In the phraseological unit "small hours" – the early hours of the morning from 1 a.m. to 4 a.m. – there is no variable member as "small" denotes "early" only in collocation with "hours" A non-variable context is indicative of a specialised meaning of one of the member- words. It follows that specialised meaning and stability of lexical components are regarded as interdependent features of phraseological units.

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