

Mapping the Landscape of Fixed Expressions: an Examination of A.V. Kunin's Dictionary and its Methodological Foundation

Atayeva Gulchekhra Bakhtiyorovna

Doctoral student foreign languages department Tashkent State Transport University
Tashkent, Uzbekistan

Abstract: Phraseological dictionaries are essential tools for understanding and utilizing fixed expressions in language. A.V. Kunin's dictionary stands as a monumental work in this field, providing a comprehensive collection of phraseological units in Russian, along with detailed descriptions and contexts. This article explores the methodology behind Kunin's dictionary, examining its principles of selection, classification, and semantic analysis. We delve into how Kunin defined and categorized phraseological units, highlighting the innovative approaches that contributed to the dictionary's enduring legacy. By understanding Kunin's approach, we gain valuable insights into the theoretical and practical complexities of phraseography and the documentation of fixed expressions.

Keywords: phraseological units, A.V. Kunin's "Phraseological Dictionary, semantic classification, grammatical classification.

Introduction

The study of phraseology, the branch of linguistics concerned with fixed expressions, is greatly aided by the existence of comprehensive dictionaries. Among these, A.V. Kunin's "Phraseological Dictionary of the Modern Russian Literary Language" is a seminal work, renowned for its extensive coverage and detailed analysis of phraseological units. This dictionary is not just a list of expressions; it's a carefully crafted resource that sheds light on the nuances of meaning, usage, and origin of these fixed language components. This article explores the key elements that comprise the structure of Kunin's dictionary, including its principles of selection, its methods of organization, and the theoretical underpinning of its descriptive analyses. Understanding the methodology of this dictionary gives valuable insights into the complexities involved in cataloging, analyzing, and organizing phraseological units.

Methods

This article utilizes a descriptive and analytical approach, drawing primarily on a close reading of A.V. Kunin's "Phraseological Dictionary of the Modern Russian Literary Language," along with scholarly works that analyze Kunin's methods and theories. We explore the fundamental principles that informed the creation of the dictionary, focusing on the criteria Kunin used for identifying and selecting phraseological units. We also examine the ways in which these units are classified and described in the dictionary, paying particular attention to the methods employed for semantic analysis, grammatical description, and providing contextual examples. We investigate the methodological underpinnings of Kunin's work, linking these aspects to the broader trends in phraseology during the time of his work.

Results

Kunin's Definition of Phraseological Units

At the heart of Kunin's methodology lies his specific definition of a phraseological unit. He identified phraseological units as:

- **Fixed Combinations:** Multi-word expressions with a fixed word order, typically resistant to variations in form or substitution.
- **Semantic Units:** Expressions that, as a whole, function as single units of meaning, often exhibiting a degree of non-compositionality where the overall meaning cannot be fully deduced from the meaning of individual words.
- **Reproducible Elements:** Expressions that are typically stored in the mental lexicon as whole units and are used frequently in everyday language.
- **Structural integrity:** Expressions that retain their structural form even if the meaning of individual parts become outdated.

Principles of Selection

Kunin's dictionary adopted rigorous criteria for including phraseological units:

1. **Frequency of Usage:** The most fundamental principle was the unit's frequent use in contemporary Russian language, both in literature and in everyday speech. He emphasized the inclusion of expressions that are actively used by native speakers.
2. **Idiomaticity:** The degree to which an expression exhibited idiomatic meaning, i.e., non-compositionality. Kunin prioritized the inclusion of units with figurative and non-literal meanings.
3. **Stability of Structure:** Phraseological units had to demonstrate a stable, unchanging form. Expressions where the words could be easily rearranged or substituted were less likely to be included.
4. **Cultural Significance:** Kunin considered the cultural and historical relevance of an expression, including those that reflect Russian traditions, customs, or beliefs.

Methods of Classification

Kunin developed a multi-layered system for classifying phraseological units:

1. **Semantic Classification:** He grouped units based on their overall meaning, creating categories for expressions that convey similar semantic ideas (e.g., expressions of emotion, action, and situation).
2. **Grammatical Classification:** He classified units based on their grammatical function, including:
 - **Verbal Units:** Phraseological units functioning as verbs (e.g., *повесить нос* (to hang one's nose) - to be dejected).
 - **Nominal Units:** Phraseological units functioning as nouns (e.g., *белая ворона* (white crow) - an oddball).
 - **Adjectival Units:** Phraseological units functioning as adjectives (e.g., *как рыба в воде* (like a fish in water) - very comfortable).
 - **Adverbial Units:** Phraseological units functioning as adverbs (e.g., *в два счёта* (in two counts) - very quickly).
1. **Structural Classification:** Kunin also described the internal structure of phraseological units and classified them by the presence of prepositions, conjunctions, or other structural components.
2. **Stylistic Classification:** He also classified units by their register of usage like colloquial, formal, etc.

Methods of Semantic Analysis

Kunin's dictionary offers in-depth semantic analysis:

1. **Definition of Meaning:** Kunin provided concise definitions for each unit, clearly expressing its core meaning, often differentiating between its literal and figurative sense.
2. **Contextual Examples:** He included multiple contextual examples from various sources (literature, newspapers, etc.) that illustrate how each unit is used in different situations.
3. **Synonyms and Antonyms:** Where relevant, Kunin provided lists of synonymous or antonymous phraseological units, showing their connections within the lexicon.
4. **Grammatical Information:** He also included a description of the grammatical forms, conjugations, declensions associated with the phraseological units.
5. **Etymological Notes:** Occasionally, he included notes on the origin and historical evolution of specific phraseological units.

Discussion

Kunin's methodology reflects his deep understanding of the complexities of phraseology and the importance of detailed linguistic analysis. The principles he employed ensured a balanced approach, selecting units that are actively used and have significant meaning within Russian linguistic culture. Kunin's approach also highlights the need for combining a theoretical awareness of phraseology with a strong empirical focus, which involves collecting and analysing a vast amount of authentic data to gain insights into the complexities of fixed expressions.

The methodology employed by Kunin, though developed decades ago, is still relevant in phraseographical research and serves as a foundation for contemporary dictionaries. The meticulous approach toward selection, organization and semantic analysis has set a high standard for those who are working on similar projects.

Conclusion

A.V. Kunin's "Phraseological Dictionary" remains a landmark in phraseography due to its comprehensive approach, rigorous selection criteria, and detailed semantic analyses. His methodology is more than just a collection of steps; it's a well-defined system that reflects a deep understanding of phraseological units. Kunin's influence on phraseology is undeniable and his methods continue to provide the foundation of theoretical principles and practical methods, demonstrating that meticulous, systematic analysis is essential for cataloging the rich world of fixed expressions. Future projects that aim to document phraseological units can use the model that Kunin has provided, which will allow for the creation of dictionaries that are not only comprehensive, but also informative and insightful.

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