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METHODOLOGICAL JOURNAL**<http://mentaljournal-jspu.uz/index.php/mesmj/index>**THE ROLE OF PHRASEOLOGICAL UNITS IN ENHANCING THEMATIC AND
IDEOLOGICAL EXPRESSION IN LITERARY TEXT (ON THE MATERIAL OF
ENGLISH PROSE)****U.D. Yulchiyeva***Doctoral Student, Gulistan State Pedagogical Institute**E-mail address: umida126@mail.ru**Gulistan, Uzbekistan*

ABOUT ARTICLE

Key words: phraseological unit, idiom, proverb, literary text, theme, idea, occasional transformation, foregrounding, strong position of the text, sustained image, intertextuality, allusion, literary translation, English prose.

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Abstract: The article is devoted to the role of phraseological units in strengthening the thematic and ideological expression of a literary text. Relying on the theory of phraseological stability developed by V.V. Vinogradov and A.V. Kunin, on the theory of foregrounding (I.V. Arnold, G. Leech, M. Short) and on the discourse-oriented approach of A. Naciscione, the study treats a phraseological unit not as a decorative element of style but as a condensed carrier of image, evaluation and cultural memory that the author places in the service of the theme and the idea of the work. On the material of English prose by C. Dickens, J. Austen, T. Hardy, J. Steinbeck and G. Orwell, five types of occasional transformation of phraseological units are identified: extension with metalinguistic commentary, contamination, allusive use in the title, parody of the proverb pattern, and structural deviation leading to new phraseologisation. It is shown that phraseological units perform five text-forming functions – thematic-nominative, evaluative-ideological, characterological, compositional-cohesive and intertextual – which are realised at three levels of the text: the micro-level of the utterance, the macro-level of the character and the episode, and the mega-level of the title and the text as a whole. The strongest thematic effect is observed when a unit occupies a strong

position of the text and its image is sustained throughout the work. Special attention is paid to the preservation of these functions in English–Uzbek literary translation and to the use of the results in teaching English literature at university level.

Introduction. A literary text is organised as a system in which every linguistic choice is, directly or indirectly, subordinated to the expression of the author's theme and idea. The theme answers the question of what the work is about, while the idea expresses the author's attitude to the depicted reality and the conclusion the reader is invited to draw. Among the linguistic units that serve these two categories, phraseological units occupy a special place. Unlike a single word, a phraseological unit arrives in the text already charged: it carries a figurative image, a ready-made evaluation and a layer of cultural memory accumulated through generations of use. For this reason a writer can, with one idiom or proverb, say more about a character or a conflict than with a paragraph of neutral description.

The expressive potential of phraseology has been recognised in linguistics since the classical works of V.V. Vinogradov and A.V. Kunin [21; 23], and in the stylistic tradition since the studies of I.R. Galperin and I.V. Arnold [20; 22]. Nevertheless, in the practice of literary analysis phraseological units are still frequently treated as ornamental. Students and even novice translators tend to notice an idiom, identify its dictionary meaning and move on, without asking what the unit contributes to the work as a whole. This creates a methodological contradiction. Phraseology as a linguistic discipline defines its object through stability and reproducibility, whereas in fiction a phraseological unit becomes most expressive precisely when the author breaks that stability – extends, fuses, parodies or restructures it. It is the deviation from the base form that turns the unit into a device of foregrounding and makes it work for the theme and the idea of the text [10; 13].

The question, therefore, is not whether phraseological units are expressive – this is well established – but how exactly, through which mechanisms and at which levels of the text, they strengthen thematic and ideological expression. Answering this question has practical value in the Republic of Uzbekistan, where Presidential Resolution PQ-5117 of 19 May 2021 set the task of raising the quality of foreign-language education to a new level [1]. A teacher of English literature or a translator working between English and Uzbek must be able to read a phraseological unit functionally, as part of the author's design, rather than lexically. The Uzbek phraseological tradition, systematised in the explanatory phraseological dictionary of Sh. Rahmatullayev [17], provides a solid basis for such comparative work, since the Uzbek language

possesses a rich stock of figurative units capable of rendering the imagery of English phraseology.

Literature review. The theoretical foundation of the study is the theory of phraseological stability. V.V. Vinogradov distinguished phraseological fusions, phraseological unities and phraseological combinations according to the degree of semantic cohesion of their components [21]. This classification remains important for literary analysis because the degree of motivation determines how easily a unit can be revived by the author: a motivated unity, whose image is still transparent, lends itself to extension and play far more readily than an opaque fusion. A.V. Kunin defined the phraseological unit as a stable combination of words with a fully or partially transferred meaning and developed the concept of occasional, context-bound transformation [23]. In Kunin's view, the usual (dictionary) use of a unit and its occasional use in a particular text are two sides of the same phenomenon: the occasional variant is perceived as expressive only against the background of the reader's knowledge of the usual form.

R. Moon's corpus study of fixed expressions and idioms in English demonstrated that most such expressions exist in numerous variants and that a large proportion of them are evaluative, expressing the speaker's attitude rather than neutral information [12]. C. Fernando, applying M.A.K. Halliday's metafunctional framework, showed that idioms perform ideational, interpersonal and relational functions, i.e. they not only name a situation but also express attitude and organise discourse [5]. Paremiological research adds an important dimension: W. Mieder and N.R. Norrick describe the proverb as a traditional, didactic and evaluative statement whose authority rests on its recognisable fixed form [11; 14]. It is precisely this authority that writers exploit when they imitate or distort proverbial patterns.

The most direct theoretical support for this study comes from A. Naciscione, who distinguished the base form of a phraseological unit from its instantial stylistic use in discourse and introduced the notions of the sustained phraseological image and phraseological stylistic cohesion [13]. According to Naciscione, the image of a phraseological unit may be extended across a stretch of text far exceeding the unit itself, and in this way the unit becomes a cohesive and thematic thread. The cognitive side of this phenomenon has been described by A. Langlotz, whose model of idiomatic creativity explains variation as the activation of the idiom's underlying conceptual image [9], and by R.W. Gibbs, who argued that idioms are not dead metaphors but remain conceptually motivated for speakers [6]. G. Nunberg, I.A. Sag and T. Wasow showed that idioms whose parts carry identifiable figurative meanings can be internally modified [15] – a linguistic precondition for the author's transformations.

In the stylistic tradition, I.R. Galperin described the decomposition of set phrases as a stylistic device in which the literal meanings of components are revived [22]. I.V. Arnold formulated the principles of foregrounding in decoding stylistics – convergence, coupling and defeated expectancy – and emphasised the special role of the strong positions of the text: the title, the opening and the ending [20]. G. Leech and M. Short treated deviation from linguistic norms as the main mechanism of foregrounding in fiction [10; 18]. The broader place of phraseology among linguistic disciplines is outlined in the collections edited by A.P. Cowie and by S. Granger and F. Meunier [3; 7].

Thus, the literature provides a theory of the phraseological unit, a description of its occasional transformations and a theory of foregrounding. What remains less developed is a systematic account connecting these to the thematic and ideological level of the literary work, as well as practical recommendations for preserving this level in translation. The present article seeks to close this gap.

The aim of the article is to identify the types of occasional transformation of phraseological units in English literary prose, to determine the text-forming functions these units perform, and to describe the textual levels at which they strengthen the thematic and ideological expression of the work. To achieve this aim, the following objectives were set: to select phraseological units occupying thematically significant positions in the chosen works; to establish their base forms and the type of transformation; to determine their functions in the text; to correlate the functions with the levels of the text; and to formulate recommendations for translation into Uzbek and for the teaching of English literature.

Materials and methods. The material of the study is formed by phraseological units selected from five works of English prose: *A Christmas Carol* by C. Dickens [4], *Pride and Prejudice* by J. Austen [2], *Far from the Madding Crowd* by T. Hardy [8], *Of Mice and Men* by J. Steinbeck [19] and *Animal Farm* by G. Orwell [16]. The works were chosen according to three criteria. First, they represent different periods of English and American prose – from the Victorian novel to the political fable of the twentieth century – which makes it possible to observe the phenomenon across historical and stylistic boundaries. Second, they belong to different genres: the Christmas tale, the novel of manners, the pastoral novel, the novella and the allegory. Third, in each of them phraseological material occupies a strong position of the text – the title, the opening or the climactic formula – and is therefore directly connected with the theme and the idea of the work.

Units were selected by continuous reading of the texts. A unit was included in the analysis if it met two conditions: (a) its base form is registered in phraseological or

paremiological sources, or it is a recognised allusion to a precedent text; (b) in the literary text it appears in a position or in a form that makes it thematically or ideologically significant. Units used in their usual form and without any bearing on the theme were registered but excluded from the detailed analysis, since the aim of the study is to reveal the mechanisms of thematic enhancement rather than to describe the phraseological stock of the works as a whole.

The analysis was carried out in several consecutive stages, which are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Stages and methods of the analysis

Stage	Content of the stage	Method applied
1. Identification	Establishing that a word combination is a phraseological unit or an allusion; determining its base form and dictionary meaning	Method of phraseological identification (A.V. Kunin); dictionary definition analysis
2. Contextual analysis	Determining the meaning of the unit in its immediate context and in the wider context of the episode and the work	Contextual analysis; interpretive (decoding) analysis
3. Stylistic analysis	Identifying the type of occasional transformation and the stylistic effect it produces	Stylistic analysis based on the theory of foregrounding
4. Intertextual analysis	Tracing the source of allusive units and the relation between the precedent text and the new text	Intertextual and comparative analysis
5. Functional generalisation	Systematising the functions of units and the textual levels of their realisation	Functional-stylistic generalisation; classification
6. Translational projection	Assessing how the identified functions can be preserved in Uzbek translation	Comparative-typological analysis of English and Uzbek phraseology

Source: compiled by the author.

The combination of these methods makes the procedure reproducible: any unit can be passed through the same six stages, and the result of each stage is recorded before the next one begins. This is important for teaching purposes as well, since the stages can be turned into a step-by-step algorithm for students' independent analysis of literary texts.

Results and discussion. The analysis revealed that in all five works the phraseological units that contribute most to thematic and ideological expression appear not in their base form but in an occasionally transformed one. Five types of transformation were identified. They are summarised in Table 2 and discussed below.

Table 2. Types of occasional transformation of phraseological units and their thematic effect

Type of transformation	Source text	Base form → occasional use	Thematic and ideological effect
Extension with metalinguistic commentary	Dickens, <i>A Christmas Carol</i>	<i>as dead as a door-nail</i> → the narrator questions and discusses the simile itself	Death and memory are placed at the centre of the narrative; the ironic narrator is established; Marley's return is prepared
Contamination	Dickens, <i>A Christmas Carol</i>	<i>tight-fisted</i> + <i>keep one's nose to the grindstone</i> → <i>a tight-fisted hand at the grindstone</i>	Avarice and the exploitation of labour are fused in one image – the social theme of the work
Allusive use in the title	Hardy; Steinbeck	Gray's <i>far from the madding crowd</i> ; Burns's <i>the best-laid schemes o' mice an' men</i>	The title encodes the idea of the work and sets up irony or foreboding
Parody of the proverb pattern	Austen, <i>Pride and Prejudice</i>	Pattern of a universal maxim → <i>It is a truth universally acknowledged...</i>	Social convention about marriage and money is exposed through ironic generalisation
Structural deviation and new phraseologisation	Orwell, <i>Animal Farm</i>	<i>All animals are equal</i> → <i>...but some animals are more equal than others</i>	The betrayal of revolutionary ideals is condensed into a grammatical paradox that later entered the language

Source: compiled by the author on the basis of [2; 4; 8; 16; 19].

1. Extension with metalinguistic commentary.

At the opening of *A Christmas Carol* the narrator states that old Marley was as dead as a door-nail, and then pauses to reflect on the simile itself: he admits that he does not know, of his own knowledge, what is particularly dead about a door-nail, and suggests that a coffin-nail might be the deadliest piece of ironmongery in the trade [4]. The stable comparison is thus revived – in Galperin's terms, decomposed [22] – and extended over several sentences. The narrator then returns to the point and insists that Marley was dead, adding that this must be distinctly understood, or nothing wonderful can come of the story.

The effect is thematic, not merely comic. The insistence on Marley's death, repeated and examined, establishes death and memory as the frame of the whole story, and at the same time creates the playful, confiding voice of the narrator. The reader is prepared for the paradox on which the plot rests: the man who is emphatically dead will return. The idiom thus performs a prognostic function and becomes, in Naciscione's terms, a sustained phraseological image serving as a thematic thread [13]. The opening is one of the strong positions of the text [20],

and it is significant that Dickens chose to occupy it with a phraseological unit rather than with a neutral statement.

2. Contamination.

In the portrait of Scrooge, Dickens exclaims that he was a tight-fisted hand at the grindstone [4]. Two units are fused here: tight-fisted ('mean with money') and keep one's nose to the grindstone ('work hard without rest'). The noun hand activates a third meaning – a hired worker – and so the image combines the miser and the exploiter. The contamination compresses into one phrase the social theme of the novella: the connection between individual avarice and the hardship of those who work for it, embodied later in the figure of Bob Cratchit.

The contamination does not stand alone. It is immediately followed by a chain of seven participles and adjectives – squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous – and by a series of similes: Scrooge is hard and sharp as flint and solitary as an oyster [4]. The phraseological unit thus becomes the nucleus of a convergence of stylistic devices, which, according to Arnold, is the most powerful form of foregrounding [20]. The characterological function (portraying Scrooge) and the ideological function (criticising a social order based on greed) are realised simultaneously. Remarkably, the name Scrooge itself later became a common noun in English denoting a miserly person, which shows how a character built on dense phraseological imagery can in turn enrich the phraseological and lexical stock of the language.

3. Allusive use in the title.

The title is the strongest position of a literary text [20], and a phraseological or quotational allusion placed there works on the whole work. Hardy's *Far from the Madding Crowd* borrows a line from Thomas Gray's *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard*, where the phrase evokes the quiet life of rural people removed from the frenzied strife of the world [8]. The novel, however, depicts violent passions, rivalry, deception and tragedy within that very rural world. The title therefore establishes an ironic distance between the idyllic expectation it creates and the reality of the plot, and this distance becomes part of the idea of the novel: human passions are the same everywhere, and distance from the crowd does not guarantee peace.

Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men* alludes to Robert Burns's poem *To a Mouse*, whose proverbial lines say that the best-laid schemes of mice and men often go wrong [19]. Readers who recognise the allusion receive, before the first page, the idea of the book: the dream of George and Lennie to own a small farm is doomed. Here the phraseological allusion performs a prognostic function and turns the title into a compressed statement of the idea. At the same time, the equation of mice and men anticipates a key motif of the novella – Lennie's fatal

tenderness towards small animals – so the allusion works at the macro-level of character as well as at the mega-level of the whole text.

Both cases confirm that the intertextual function of phraseology cannot be separated from the thematic one: the imported meaning of the precedent text becomes a lens through which the entire new text is read.

4. Parody of the proverb pattern.

The first sentence of *Pride and Prejudice* – It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife – is built on the model of a universal maxim [2]. It uses the solemn, generalising form of proverbial wisdom, whose authority, as Mieder and Norrick show, rests on the traditional and impersonal character of the proverb [11; 14]. Yet what is presented as universal truth is, in fact, the calculation of a particular society, and the real subject of the sentence is not the wealthy man but the families who regard him as a prize.

The discrepancy between the authoritative form and the mercenary content produces irony – an instance of defeated expectancy [20]. The theme of the novel – marriage as an economic transaction and the individual's struggle for a marriage based on esteem and affection – is announced in the opening strong position through a phraseological model rather than through a direct statement. It is characteristic that the sentence has itself become a widely reproduced formula, often transformed in journalism and advertising, which illustrates that a literary text is not only a user but also a source of phraseology.

5. Structural deviation and new phraseologisation.

In *Animal Farm* the seventh commandment All animals are equal is eventually replaced by the formula All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others [16]. The adjective equal, which by its semantics does not admit comparison, is used in the comparative degree. This grammatical deviation, in Leech and Short's sense [10], makes the logical absurdity visible and embodies the idea of the book: the corruption of revolutionary ideals and the hypocrisy of power, which preserves the slogans of equality while destroying their substance.

The same structural principle organises the whole text. The sheep's slogan Four legs good, two legs bad – itself a proverb-like formula of the new order – is later turned into Four legs good, two legs better [16], and other commandments are altered by the addition of qualifying phrases. Thus the transformation of fixed formulas becomes the compositional backbone of the allegory: each distortion marks a stage in the degeneration of the revolution. The phraseological image is sustained across the text and performs a compositional-cohesive function. The final formula later detached itself from the novel and entered general usage as a

phraseological unit denoting unjust privilege, which confirms that an occasional unit of high ideological density can undergo phraseologisation and become part of the language.

The analysis of the examples made it possible to generalise the functions that phraseological units perform in strengthening thematic and ideological expression. They are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Text-forming functions of phraseological units in the literary text

Function	Content	Illustration from the material
Thematic-nominative	The unit names or signals the central theme of the work	<i>as dead as a door-nail</i> – theme of death and memory (Dickens)
Evaluative-ideological	The unit expresses the author's attitude and the idea of the work	<i>more equal than others</i> – critique of power (Orwell)
Characterological	The unit creates a condensed portrait of a character	<i>a tight-fisted hand at the grindstone</i> – Scrooge (Dickens)
Compositional-cohesive	The sustained image of the unit binds parts of the text together	Transformations of the commandments and slogans in <i>Animal Farm</i>
Intertextual	The unit connects the text to a precedent text and imports its meanings	Titles alluding to Gray and Burns (Hardy, Steinbeck)

Source: compiled by the author on the basis of [5; 13; 20].

The functions rarely appear in isolation. The characterological function in Dickens is inseparable from the ideological one, and the intertextual function in titles necessarily becomes thematic. It is this convergence of functions in a single unit that explains why phraseological units have a disproportionately strong effect on the ideological perception of a text: a single unit simultaneously names, evaluates, characterises and connects.

The functions are, in turn, realised at different levels of the text. The distinction of these levels is important both for analysis and for translation, since the loss of a unit at a higher level affects the interpretation of the whole work. The levels are described in Table 4.

Table 4. Textual levels of the thematic and ideological actualisation of phraseological units

Level	Scope of influence	Characteristic mechanisms
Micro-level	Utterance, sentence	Contamination, substitution of components, decomposition of the set phrase
Macro-level	Character, episode, chapter	Sustained phraseological image; repetition and variation of the unit in the portrait of a character

Level	Scope of influence	Characteristic mechanisms
Mega-level	Title, opening, ending; the text as a whole	Allusion in the title; parody of the proverb pattern in the opening; formula that crystallises the idea of the work

Source: compiled by the author.

The analysis shows that the thematic effect of a phraseological unit grows with the level at which it operates. A unit transformed at the micro-level enlivens the style; a unit sustained at the macro-level shapes the image of a character; a unit placed at the mega-level – in the title or the opening – becomes a key to the idea of the whole work. The strongest effect is observed where both conditions are met: the unit occupies a strong position of the text and its image is sustained throughout it, as in the case of Marley's death in *A Christmas Carol* or the commandments in *Animal Farm*.

Implications for English-Uzbek literary translation. The results have direct consequences for translation. If a translator replaces a transformed English unit with a neutral paraphrase or with the base form of an Uzbek equivalent, the thematic function is lost even when the lexical meaning is preserved. The translator should therefore identify not only the meaning of the unit but also its function and level, and then choose a strategy that preserves the function. The main strategies and their consequences are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Translation strategies and the preservation of the thematic function of phraseological units

Strategy	Example (English → Uzbek)	Effect on the thematic function
Full phraseological equivalent	<i>to kill two birds with one stone</i> → <i>bir o'q bilan ikki quyonni urmoq</i>	Image, evaluation and function are preserved; the strategy is optimal where an equivalent exists
Analogue with a different image	<i>Don't cry over spilt milk</i> → <i>O'tgan ishga salovat</i>	Meaning and evaluation are preserved, the image is nationally adapted; acceptable at the micro-level
Calque preserving the deviation	<i>more equal than others</i> → a literal rendering keeping the comparative of «teng»	The grammatical paradox, and therefore the idea, is preserved; recommended for mega-level formulas
Descriptive translation	<i>a tight-fisted hand at the grindstone</i> → a neutral description of a stingy, hard-driving master	Meaning is conveyed, but the image and the convergence are lost; the characterological function is weakened
Calque with commentary	Title allusions (<i>Of Mice and Men</i>) → literal title with a translator's note on Burns	The intertextual link is restored for the reader; recommended for allusive titles

Source: compiled by the author on the basis of [17; 23].

As the table shows, the choice of strategy should depend on the level at which the unit operates. At the micro-level, a nationally adapted analogue drawn from the rich Uzbek phraseological stock [17] is usually sufficient and even desirable, since it makes the text natural for the Uzbek reader. At the mega-level, however, where the unit carries the idea of the whole work, the translator should preserve the author's transformation itself – even at the cost of a certain unusualness in the target text – because the deviation is the message. The loss of such a unit in translation deprives the reader of the key to the work.

Implications for teaching. The results can be used in university courses of English literature, stylistics and translation. The six-stage procedure presented in Table 1 can be offered to students as an algorithm of independent analysis, and the analysis of a phraseological unit should begin with the question «What does this unit do for the theme and the idea of the text?» rather than stop at the identification of its dictionary meaning. Comparative tasks in which students look for Uzbek equivalents and assess what is gained and lost in each strategy develop both phraseological and translational competence.

The limitations of the study should also be noted. First, the material is restricted to five works of English prose, which is sufficient for a qualitative typology but not for quantitative conclusions about the frequency of each transformation type. Second, the recognition of occasional transformations depends on the reader's knowledge of the base form; readers with limited phraseological competence may not perceive the effect at all, and this factor requires separate study. Third, the analysis concerns prose; poetry and drama may display different correlations between level and function.

Conclusion. The study has shown that phraseological units strengthen the thematic and ideological expression of a literary text most effectively in their occasionally transformed form. Five types of transformation were identified in English prose: extension with metalinguistic commentary, contamination, allusive use in the title, parody of the proverb pattern and structural deviation leading to new phraseologisation.

Phraseological units perform five text-forming functions – thematic-nominative, evaluative-ideological, characterological, compositional-cohesive and intertextual – which, as a rule, converge in a single unit. These functions are realised at the micro-, macro- and mega-levels of the text, and the thematic effect increases with the level: a unit in a strong position, sustained across the text, becomes a key to the idea of the entire work.

In translation into Uzbek, the strategy should be chosen according to the level of the unit: nationally adapted analogues are appropriate at the micro-level, whereas at the mega-level the author's transformation itself must be preserved, if necessary with a translator's commentary.

Thus, the phraseological unit in fiction is not an ornament but a compressed instrument of meaning through which the author conveys theme, evaluation and idea economically and memorably. Literary texts, in turn, enrich the phraseological stock of the language, as the examples from Dickens, Austen and Orwell demonstrate. Further research may be directed at a comparative study of the thematic functions of phraseological units in English and Uzbek literary prose, including the works of Abdulla Qodiriy and Oybek, and at an empirical analysis of how these functions are preserved or lost in existing English–Uzbek literary translations.

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