

DIFFERENT TYPES OF PHRASEOLOGICAL VARIABILITY IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

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Abstract: *the aim of the following article is to support the latter view through a corpus-based analysis with examples in the English language. There are many different kinds of variations which involve the manipulation of the lexis by replacing or altering a word or words. Idiom variants are usually used to give a different meaning, to achieve stylistic effects in communication and sometimes to produce humor. This article focuses on grammatical variants and more specifically on three main groups of the grammatical variants.*

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There are certain types of grammatical variants and more specifically on three main groups of them which are [3]: a) morphological variants, b) syntactical variants, c) morphological-syntactical variants.

The morphological variant is more commonplace in the plurality of nouns. For example: go into deep water = go into deep waters, go round in a circle = go round in circles. There may also be a combination of the components. For example: pick a hole in somebody or something – pick holes in somebody or something.

The syntactical variants are subdivided into five classes in the English language [1]:

a) variants in which the preposition is shifted towards the end of the phrase and the pronoun occupies a final position. For example: 'take off one's hat to somebody' 'take one's hat off to somebody'.

It is typical of this class the identification of the expression from the context.

b) the variants when the noun enters in between the verb and its preposition: give something up as a bad job; give up something as a bad job.

c) Another type is the variants when an element from the middle of the verbal phraseological unit shifts to the end of the expression. For example: take away somebody's breath; take somebody's breath away; blow away the cobwebs; blow the cobwebs away;

d) even the formations of the type: make a nuisance oneself ; make oneself a nuisance;

e) a separate variant is considered the type of verbal phraseological collocations where the possessive pronoun is replaced by the 'of phrase', the genitive. The first type is much more spread than the second one: to turn somebody's stomach; turn the stomach of somebody;

The original forms of the truncated forms are well known and for that reason truncation is functional and necessary when the original forms are long: pay nature's debt / pay the debt of nature.

Though the use of the noun in singular is possible and quite normal it is so rarely employed in literature. These variants may have different constructions due to the changeable situation they are characterized by, yet may be similar as far as the pattern is concerned: play into the enemy's hands / play into the hands of the enemy.

The quantitative variants are all those verbal phraseological units with a different number of components made up either by dropping or adding some of the components. The most widespread is the process of making new quantitative variants by dropping one or more elements which belonged to the whole verbal phrase, 'truncation', as we mentioned earlier. The phraseological unit 'let the cat out of the bag' – in the course of time is reduced to 'let the cat out' [4]: "I've let the cat out of the bag already, and I might as well tell the whole thing now."

Now let's analyze and give the classification of synonymous phraseological units from our glossary. The phraseological unit Make eyes at has the following synonyms [2]:

1. Cast/throw/ cow/ sheep's eye(s) at – (V+N+prep.)
2. Look babies in somebody's eye(s) – (V+N+prep.+Pron.+N)
3. Make cow/sheep's/ eyes at – (V+N+N+prep.)

In phraseological unit Cast (throw) cow (sheep's) eye(s) at we can see lexical-grammatical variant: "...And all that we've got against the wife and her young man is that he made sheep's eyes at her when she poured him out his coffee!" The last synonym Make cow (sheep's) eyes at belongs to lexical variant, because instead of the word sheep's eyes we can use cow eyes: "And there was skinny Alison, always making cow eyes at him..."

The next synonymous phraseological group of Make money:

1. Coin / be coining/ money – (V/Ving+N)
2. Feather one's (own) nest – (V+pron.+(adj.)+N)
3. Line one's pocket(s) – (V+pron.+N)
4. Make (a) / one's / pile – (V+pron.+N)

In conclusion, phraseological units or idioms, show considerable variation in use as we saw earlier in this study. However, despite the previously mentioned variants there is a certain degree of fixedness in each phraseological unit and they do not allow unlimited variations.

References

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