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**ЗАЧЁТНОЕ ЗАДАНИЕ**

**THE THEORY OF PHRASE**

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CONTENTS

[INTRODUCTION 2](#_Toc532499800)

[1. The Term “Phrase” and Its Different Definitions 3](#_Toc532499801)

[2. Typology of Phrases 5](#_Toc532499802)

[3. Phrases as Clause Elements 7](#_Toc532499803)

[CONCLUSION 10](#_Toc532499804)

[SOURCES 11](#_Toc532499805)

# INTRODUCTION

Phrase (word-combination, word-group) is one of the basic units of language and (along with sentence) is one of two main units of syntax. Traditionally the phase is defined as a group of two or more notional words functioning as a whole. Besides notional words, a phrase may contain one or more function words.

The theory of phrase in linguistics has a long tradition going back to the 18th century. There’s no common terminology in the works of Russian, British and American scholars discussing word-combinations; and different terms (for example, *cluster of words*, *word-combination*, *word group*, *phrase*) are used to express the same idea.

This brief work is intended to give a fast and simple overview of some of the most common definitions and typologies of phrase, used by Russian and Western linguists.

# 1. The Term “Phrase” and Its Different Definitions

Practical investigations of phrase date back as early as the 18th century. The first theoretical conceptions of phrase appeared between 19th and 20th centuries. To date, there are different definitions of the phrase in Russian and Western linguistics.

**Russian Linguists’ Definitions**

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| --- | --- |
| **Linguist(s)** | **Definition of the term “phrase”** |
| **F.F. Fortunatov**, **A.A.Shakhmatov**, **A.M. Peshkovskiy**, the beginning of the 20th century | Phrase is any syntactically arranged group of words. |
| **V.V. Vinogradov**, 1950s | Phrase is a group of notional words which are syntactically unequal that is one dominates the other, e.g.: *to make notes*, *an interesting book*. |
| **L.S. Barkhudarov**, **D.A. Shtelling**: Грамматика английского языка, 1960, p. 23 | Phrase is a group of syntactically connected notional words, connected by means of subordination, coordination and predicative relation, being part of a sentence but not being the sentence itself. |
| **Boris Ilyish**: The Structure of Modern English, 1971, p. 171 | The term “phrase” denotes “every combination of two or more words which is a grammatical unit but is not an analytical form of some word (as, for instance, the perfect forms of verbs). The constituent elements of a phrase may belong to any part of speech.” |
| **V. V. Burlakova**: Теоретическая грамматика современного английского языка, 1981, p. 100 | Phrase (word combination) is any syntactically organized group of syntagmatically connected words. |
| **M.Y. Blokh**: A Course in Theoretical English Grammar, 2000, p. 15 | The term “phrase” denotes word-group, combination of two or more notional words. Phrase is located at the phrasemic level. |

**Western Linguists’ Definitions**

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| --- | --- |
| **Linguist(s)** | **Definition of the term “phrase”** |
| **Henry Sweet**: A New English Grammar, 1900, Part I, p. viii | “When words are joined together grammatically and  logically without forming a full sentence, we call the combination a **word-group**. Thus *man of honour*, *the roundness of the earth*, *the round earth*, *going away*, *his going away* are **word-groups**.”  “I reject “phrase” altogether as a grammatical term, because of the endless confusions that arise between  the various arbitrary meanings given to it by various grammarians and its popular meaning.”  The author prefers to speak of word-groups, but defines this notion in the same way as the phrase used to be defined. According to H. Sweet, the relations between the elements of a word-group are based on grammatical and logical subordination. |
| **Leonard Bloomfield**, 1930s | A **word combination** is any syntactically organized group of words in its linear structure. |
| **Randolph Quirk**: A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language, 1985, p. 60 | **Phrases** are the constituents which function as elements of clause structure. |

In Russian linguistics, the narrow approach, which was put forward by V.V. Vinogradov, is used by most linguists: only a combination of two notional words, one of which dominates the other, is considered to be a word-combination (phrase). In Western linguistics, a much broader approach, put forward by L. Bloomfield, traditionally prevails.

# 2. Typology of Phrases

There are various classifications of phrases by different Russian and Western linguists.

**Russian Classifications**

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| --- | --- |
| **Linguist(s)** | **Classification** |
| **L.S. Barkhudarov** | Classification is based on the structure of phrases:  **Elementary** – if there is only 1 type of syntactic relation between its constituents  **Compound** – if there’s more than 1 type of syntactic connection between its constituents |
| **V.V. Burlakova** | Phrases are divided into **Kernel**, **Non-kernel** and **Unipicked** phrases.  **Kernel phrases** – one element dominating all the other constituents. The kernel – is the element within the group whose syntactic function can’t be identified at the level of analysis in terms of sentence-parts. Kernel phrases are divided into regressive and progressive. In regressive kernel structures an agent stands in preposition to the kernel (ex. So quickly. So – a kernel, quickly – a head). In progressive kernel structures – the agent stands in postposition to the kernel (ex. A girl of 16. A girl – a kernel).  **Non-kernel phrases** – are traditionally coordinate phrases, when there isn’t any component of the phrase, whose syntactic phrases we can’t define. Are divided into: Dependent (can’t be identified as grammatical units without any context. (ex. soft sweet sensible)) and Independent (when syntactic functions of grammatical units can be defined without any additional context (ex. Ladies and gentlemen!).  **Unipicked phrases** – only one component can establish syntactic relations with the elements of a higher level (noun, adjectival, verb). |
| **M.Y. Blokh** | M.Y. Blokh suggests dividing notional phrases into two groups on the principal of constituent rank: **equipotent** (of equal rank – a nice spring day) and **dominational** (the modifier and the modified words). Further on, equipotent phrases are subdivided into **coordinative** (books, notebooks and what not) and **cumulative** (pleased, or almost so) – on the bases of the character of nomination – logically consecutive connections and connections, realized by coordinative conjunctions.  **Dominational** phrases are subdivided into **consecutive** and **cumulative**. Consecutive are presented by predicative phrases which do not form a sentence (semi-predicative constructions and predicative complements) and completive phrases (objective, attributive, adverbial). |

**Western Classifications**

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| --- | --- |
| **Linguist(s)** | **Classification** |
| **Otto Jespersen** | **Junction** – indicates attributive relations between words (ex. *A silly man*)  **Nexus** – indicates predicative relations (ex. *The dog barks*). Nexus divided into independent and dependent. Nexus is independent when he gives a complete bit of information. |
| **Leonard Bloomfield** | According to the theory worked out by the American linguist L. Bloomfield, phrases can be classified into two groups: **endocentric** and **exocentric**. **Endocentric** — all phrases where one or any of constituent elements can function in a larger structure like the whole group (ex. *Poor John*). Are divided into ordinate (serial) and subordinate (attributive). **Exocentric** are the phrases where none of the constituent elements can substitute the whole group in a larger structure (ex. *Beside John*). |
| **Harold Whitehall** | Harold Whitehall classifies phrases (“word-groups” in his terminology) according to their function and their structure. He distinguishes two main types of word-groups: **headed** (endocentric) and **non-headed** (exocentric).  Non-headed word-group:  1) is always a prepositional phrase. For instance, *a book of poems*, *this book of mine*, *a basket from Naples*, *the cloth on the table*.  2) a “subject-predicate word-group” is a predicative combination of elements. *I saw* or *the horses ran*. |
| **Randolph Quirk** | Randolph Quirk distinguishes **phrases as clause elements**. A clause is a group of related words that contain a subject and a predicate.  C:\Users\Admin\Desktop\2018-12-13_184659.jpg |

# 3. Phrases as Clause Elements

A phrase is a group of words which is not centered on a verb. The head is the most important word in a phrase. All the other words in a phrase depend on the head. Words which are part of the phrase and which come before the head are called the pre-head. Words which are part of the phrase and which come after the head are called the post-head.

In a noun phrase, the head is a noun, and there may be pre-head and post-head items, also called premodifiers and postmodifiers.

There are five main types of phrase in English, as below.

**Noun Phrase**

A noun phrase (NP) can be a single noun or a group of words built around a single noun, for example:

* **Animals** need water.
* Who ate **the last sandwich**?
* **All passengers with tickets** can board now.

**Verb Phrase**

A verb phrase (VP, also called a “verb group”) consists of a main verb and its auxiliary verbs (including modals), for example:

* We **have been working**since 9am.
* I **will be going** to France next week.
* It **may have been being repaired**.

**Adjective Phrase**

An adjective phrase can be a single adjective or a group of words built around a single adjective, for example:

* He has **clever** ideas.
* It was a **very big** meal.
* The students were **really bored with the film.**

**Adverb Phrase**

An adverb phrase can be a single adverb or a group of words built around a single adverb, for example:

* Please do it **now**.
* He spoke **very softly**.
* They did it **as fast as possible**.

**Prepositional Phrase**

A prepositional phrase consists of a preposition followed by its object (usually a noun phrase), for example:

* They were arguing **about money**.
* The window was **behind a large brown sofa**.
* They resumed **after an unusually large meal**.

# CONCLUSION

The difference between a phrase and a sentence lies in the fact that the first one is a **non-communicative**, and the second one is a **communicative** **unit** of language: *studying a lot* – *Studying a lot?*

There are two main understandings of the term “phrase”.

1. A phrase is a combination of two or more notional words connected by means of subordination: *cold weather*, *fruit salad*, *writing letters*, *Peter’s book*.

2. A phrase is a combination of two or more notional words, connected by means of subordination, coordination and predicative relation if it cannot function as a sentence (L.S. Barkhudarov).

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