

PHRASEOLOGICAL UNITS REFLECTING HUMAN
EXPERIENCE: A LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS

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Summary: This article examines a selection of English phraseological units with a focus on expressions that reflect universal human experiences, such as determination, perception, and personal conduct. The study investigates the grammatical structure, etymology, semantic characteristics, and contextual usage of three phrases: "In the long run", "Take heart", and "Bear in mind". Through literary examples and linguistic analysis, the article demonstrates how these fixed expressions contribute to expressive communication and enrich the vocabulary of English language learners.

Key words: phraseological units, idioms, etymology, semantic analysis, fixed expressions, English language, linguistics.

Phraseology, as a branch of modern linguistics, is dedicated to the study of stable, reproducible expressions that function as integral units within a language system. Phraseological units — encompassing idioms, proverbs, collocations, and fixed word combinations — are fundamental to natural and fluent communication. Their significance lies not only in their frequency of use but in their capacity to convey layers of meaning that single words cannot easily express. Scholars such as A.V. Kunin and A.I. Smirnitsky have contributed greatly to the theoretical framework that underpins phraseological research, classifying these units by structure, formation, and semantic transparency.

The present article continues in this analytical tradition by examining three phraseological units drawn from everyday English: "In the long run", "Take heart", and "Bear in mind". These expressions have been selected because they represent a range of grammatical forms — adverbial, imperative verbal, and complex verbal — and because they appear across a wide variety of literary and communicative contexts. Each phrase is analyzed from grammatical, etymological, and semantic perspectives, and their usage is illustrated through authentic literary examples.

Comparative Analysis of Phraseological Units

1. "In the long run"

"In the long run" is a widely used English adverbial phrase meaning over an extended period of time, or considering the ultimate outcome of something. It is typically employed to draw a distinction between short-term situations and long-term consequences, implying that patience and time will reveal the true result of events or decisions.

Grammatically, the phrase is a prepositional phrase functioning as an adverbial modifier. Its structure is: [*Preposition (in) + determiner (the) + adjective (long) + noun (run)*]. It can appear at the beginning, middle, or end of a sentence, where it modifies the entire clause by adding a temporal perspective. For example: "In the long run, hard work pays off."

Etymologically, the phrase originates from horse racing, where the "long run" referred to a race over a long distance that would eventually reveal the true stamina and quality of a horse. Over time, this sporting metaphor was adopted into general use to describe any situation where the final result only becomes apparent after a prolonged period. The expression has been documented in English since at least the early eighteenth century, appearing in both informal and formal registers.

Semantically, the phrase functions as a marker of temporal perspective and consequence. It signals that the speaker is adopting a forward-looking viewpoint, discouraging focus on immediate or temporary setbacks in favor of a broader, more patient evaluation. It often carries an implied message of reassurance or strategic reasoning.

For example, "*And in the long run, after so many centuries, he had come to believe that whatever he did, however strange it might seem to others, was right*" [3, 47]. In this passage, "in the long run" is used to convey that the character's sense of moral certainty has developed gradually through long experience. The phrase emphasizes the accumulated weight of time and reflection, suggesting that prolonged exposure to life's challenges has ultimately shaped his convictions. It functions adverbially to modify the entire proposition, indicating that his belief did not arise suddenly but through an extended process.

Furthermore, "*It is more important than all other considerations, because in the long run, your own moral purity is the foundation of everything else you will ever build*" [5, 203]. Here, "in the long run" is used to establish a hierarchy of values over time. The speaker argues that moral integrity, while perhaps undervalued in immediate terms, ultimately proves to be the most important foundation of a person's life. The phrase amplifies the argument by appealing to the wisdom of time and outcome, lending a philosophical weight to the statement.

2. "Take heart"

"Take heart" is an English phraseological unit meaning to feel encouraged, to find comfort or renewed hope in a difficult situation. It is most commonly used as an imperative expression — an instruction or encouragement given to someone who is discouraged, afraid, or despairing — and implies that there is reason for optimism despite present difficulties.

Grammatically, the phrase is a verb phrase in imperative form: [*verb (take) + noun (heart)*]. The noun "heart" is used here not in its anatomical sense but as a

metaphor for courage and emotional strength. The structure is simple and direct, which accounts for its frequent use in motivational and emotional contexts. It may also appear in declarative form: "She took heart from his words."

Etymologically, "take heart" draws on the ancient conceptual metaphor that places courage, emotion, and vitality in the heart. In Old and Middle English literature, as well as in classical traditions inherited through translation, the heart was consistently associated with bravery, love, and the seat of one's inner strength. The phrase thus literalizes a deeply rooted cultural metaphor: to "take" heart is to receive or internalize courage. This expression has been in common use since at least the sixteenth century.

Semantically, "take heart" functions as an expression of encouragement and emotional reinforcement. It conveys the idea that courage is available to the individual — that one can actively choose to embrace hope and press forward despite adversity. The phrase often implies both an awareness of difficulty and a belief in the possibility of overcoming it.

For instance, "*He bade her take heart, and said that her courage would not go unrewarded, and that help was nearer than she perhaps supposed*" [2, 134]. In this context, "take heart" is used as a direct encouragement issued by one character to another who is in a state of distress or fear. The phrase carries an implicit promise: that emotional resilience will be recognized and that circumstances will improve. It functions as both a pragmatic speech act and a moral reassurance, connecting the idea of inner fortitude to the expectation of external relief.

Moreover, "*Take heart, dear friend; the world is large, and there is yet room in it for honest men and honest deeds*" [4, 89]. In this sentence, "take heart" opens the utterance as a direct imperative, immediately establishing a tone of comfort and forward-looking optimism. The speaker broadens the emotional scope by referencing the world's vastness, suggesting that the listener's troubles, however significant they feel, are not the final word on the matter. The phrase serves as both a personal encouragement and a philosophical reminder of possibility.

3. "Bear in mind"

"Bear in mind" is a common English phraseological unit meaning to remember, to keep in one's thoughts, or to give careful consideration to something. It is often used as a polite instruction or reminder, asking the listener or reader to remain aware of a particular fact or consideration that may be relevant to a decision or course of action.

Grammatically, the phrase is a complex verb phrase in imperative or declarative form: [*verb (bear) + prepositional phrase (in mind) + complement (that-clause or noun phrase)*]. In the imperative, it functions as a directive: "Bear in mind that circumstances may change." In the declarative, it works as a main predicate: "She bore in mind everything he had told her." The structure is versatile and appears in both formal and informal registers.

Etymologically, "bear in mind" draws on the older sense of the verb "bear" meaning to carry or to hold. To "bear" something "in mind" is therefore to carry it within one's consciousness — an almost physical metaphor for the act of remembering. This expression reflects a broader pattern in English phraseology where cognitive processes are described in terms of physical actions. Its usage can be traced to Early Modern English, and it appears consistently in literary, legal, and philosophical texts from the seventeenth century onward.

Semantically, "bear in mind" serves as a cognitive directive. It signals that the information being introduced is important and should not be overlooked in the process of reasoning, decision-making, or action. The phrase often precedes a qualifying condition or cautionary note, gently redirecting attention to a relevant factor the listener might otherwise neglect.

For example, *"Bear in mind that he had known her for many years, and that his judgment of her character, however harsh it might appear to others, was not without foundation"* [1, 312]. Here, "bear in mind" is used to introduce a mitigating context before a potentially critical or contentious judgment is made. It functions as a pragmatic instruction, directing the reader to hold a relevant fact in their consciousness before evaluating the conclusion that follows. The phrase tempers the harshness of the judgment by grounding it in accumulated personal knowledge, and it invites the audience to adopt a more informed and nuanced perspective.

Furthermore, *"You must bear in mind that courage alone is never enough — it must be paired with wisdom, and wisdom with patience, before any great thing can be accomplished"* [6, 57]. In this sentence, "bear in mind" introduces a complex moral observation about the relationship between courage, wisdom, and patience. The phrase positions what follows as a guiding principle — something the listener must actively carry in their awareness. It gives the statement a reflective, instructional quality, suggesting that the idea is not merely informative but practically significant for how one should approach life's challenges.

Conclusion

The analysis conducted in this article demonstrates that phraseological units such as "in the long run", "take heart", and "bear in mind" are far more than convenient shorthand in the English language. Each expression encapsulates a rich history of usage, a well-defined grammatical function, and a depth of semantic meaning that exceeds the sum of its individual components. Their origins in lived human experience — whether in sporting tradition, ancient cultural metaphor, or the physicality of cognition — speak to the way that language evolves to meet the needs of communication across generations. For students and scholars of linguistics alike, the study of such phraseological units offers an invaluable window into both the structural mechanics and the expressive soul of the English language.

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