

CULTURAL IDENTITY REFLECTED IN ENGLISH AND RUSSIAN IDIOMS

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Abstract: This research examines the concept of cultural identity as reflected in English and Russian idioms through a comparative linguistic and psychological approach. Idioms serve not only as expressive elements of language but also as cultural markers that reveal national mentality, traditions, and value systems. The study aims to identify similarities and differences in how cultural identity is encoded in idiomatic expressions of both languages. Special attention is given to the influence of historical background, social norms, and environmental factors on the formation of idioms. By analyzing selected idioms, the research demonstrates how language reflects culturally specific ways of thinking and perception. The findings suggest that while some idioms share universal human experiences, many are deeply rooted in unique cultural contexts. Thus, idioms function as an important tool for understanding intercultural communication and cultural psychology, highlighting the intricate relationship between language and identity.

Key words: Idioms, cultural identity, phraseology, comparative analysis, language picture of the world, national mentality, metaphors.

Аннотация: Данное исследование рассматривает понятие культурной идентичности, отражённой в английских и русских идиомах, с использованием сравнительного лингвистического и психологического подхода. Идиомы выступают не только как выразительные элементы языка, но и как культурные маркеры, раскрывающие национальный менталитет, традиции и систему ценностей. Цель исследования - выявить сходства и различия в том, как культурная идентичность кодируется в идиоматических выражениях обоих языков. Особое внимание уделяется влиянию исторического контекста, социальных норм и факторов окружающей среды на формирование идиом. Анализ отобранных идиом демонстрирует, как язык отражает культурно обусловленные способы мышления и восприятия. Результаты показывают, что, несмотря на наличие универсальных человеческих переживаний, многие идиомы глубоко укоренены в уникальных культурных контекстах. Таким образом, идиомы выступают важным инструментом для понимания межкультурной коммуникации и культурной психологии, подчёркивая сложную взаимосвязь языка и идентичности.

Ключевые слова: Идиомы, культурная идентичность, фразеология, сравнительный анализ, языковая картина мира, национальный менталитет, метафоры.

Annotatsiya: Ushbu tadqiqot ingliz va rus tillaridagi idiomalar orqali aks etuvchi madaniy identiklik tushunchasini qiyosiy lingvistik va psixologik yondashuv asosida o'rganadi. Idiomalar nafaqat tilning ifodaviy vositalari, balki milliy mentalitet, an'analar

va qadriyatlar tizimini aks ettiruvchi madaniy ko'rsatkichlar sifatida ham xizmat qiladi. Tadqiqotning maqsadi - har ikkala tilda madaniy identiklikning idiomatik ifodalarda qanday kodlanishini aniqlash va ularning o'xshash hamda farqli jihatlarini ko'rsatishdir. Shuningdek, idiomalar shakllanishiga tarixiy omillar, ijtimoiy me'yorlar va atrof-muhitning ta'siri alohida tahlil qilinadi. Tanlangan idiomalar tahlili til orqali madaniyatga xos tafakkur va idrok shakllari qanday aks etishini ko'rsatadi. Natijalar shuni ko'rsatadiki, ayrim idiomalar umumiy insoniy tajribalarni ifodalasa-da, ko'pchiligi o'ziga xos madaniy kontekstlarga chuqur bog'langan. Shunday qilib, idiomalar madaniyatlararo muloqot va madaniy psixologiyani tushunishda muhim vosita hisoblanadi.

Kalit so'zlar: Idiomalar, madaniy identiklik, frazeologiya, qiyosiy tahlil, tilning dunyo manzarasi, milliy mentalitet, metaforalar.

Modern international relations increasingly rely on successful cross-cultural understanding. A primary method for decoding the distinct worldviews of English and Russian speakers is the comparative analysis of phraseology, specifically units describing human character.

In contemporary linguistics, phraseological units are viewed as "micro-texts" that encapsulate national character, moral norms, and sociocultural mentalities. While these expressions often stem from universal logical-psychological principles, they are simultaneously defined by unique national imagery and cultural codes.

By applying a linguoculturological analysis, this research explores how idioms serve as more than just stylistic tools; they reveal the mechanisms of figurative thinking and the immanent laws of language. While many idioms share universal meanings, their lexical composition and emotional nuances serve as a definitive reflection of a nation's specific historical and cultural identity.

The theoretical foundation of this research is grounded in both Russian and Western traditions of phraseology. The Russian school, represented by Viktor Vinogradov [1], Alexander Kunin [2], and Nikolai Shansky [3], emphasizes the structural and semantic classification of idioms, as well as their stability and reproducibility in language. Vinogradov's classification of phraseological units remains particularly influential, distinguishing between phraseological fusions, unities, and combinations. Kunin further developed a comprehensive theory of English phraseology, highlighting the importance of idioms in cross-cultural communication.

In Western linguistics, the field originated with the works of Charles Bally [4], who first explored the expressive and stylistic nature of phraseological units. Later contributions by A. P. Cowie [5], J. R. Firth [6], and John Sinclair [7] advanced the study through semantic, contextual, and corpus-based approaches, focusing on collocation, usage patterns, and meaning in context.

Linguocultural analysis serves as the primary methodology for this study, examining the intersection of language and national identity. By focusing on phraseological units (PUs), we treat these expressions as semantic repositories of cultural codes, historical heritage, and social stereotypes.

A core component of this study is the semantic classification of PUs based on their evaluative connotation: positive, negative, and neutral. This classification reflects socially established norms and emotional attitudes toward human character traits in both English and Russian.

Below are examples of Russian phraseological expressions (PEs) categorized into the same semantic subgroups:

Duplicity, hypocrisy: Играть двойную игру (to play a double game); носить маску (to wear a mask); на языке мёд, а на сердце лёд (honey on the tongue, ice in the heart); мягко стелет, да жёстко спать (lays it out softly, but it's hard to sleep); строить из себя святошу (to act like a little saint).

Meanness: Чёрная душа (a black soul); подложить свинью (to put a pig under someone / to play a mean trick); змея подколодная (a snake under a stone / a treacherous person); продажная шкура (a sell-out hide); наносить удар в спину (to stab in the back).

Arrogance, conceit: Задирать нос (to turn up one's nose); смотреть свысока (to look from high up / look down on); надуться как индюк (to swell up like a turkey); важная птица (an important bird / a big shot); строить из себя пуп земли (to act like the belly button of the earth / center of the universe).

Cruelty, ruthlessness, callousness: Каменное сердце (a heart of stone); ледяное сердце (an icy heart); ни тепла, ни радости (neither warmth nor joy); сухарь (a dry crust / a callous person); глух к чужой беде (deaf to others' misfortune).

The cross-cultural analysis conducted by Petrovsky [8] offers valuable insights into the cultural variations reflected in the proverbial themes of English and Russian languages. By examining the diverse themes addressed in proverbs, the study not only enhances our understanding of these specific linguistic traditions but also provides a glimpse into the cultural values, beliefs, and social priorities of the respective communities. Furthermore, the findings of this study have implications beyond linguistic and cultural analysis. Understanding the thematic differences in proverbs can contribute to intercultural communication and cultural awareness. By recognizing the core themes and values embedded in proverbs from different cultures, individuals can gain a deeper understanding of the perspectives and experiences of others. This knowledge fosters empathy, respect, and effective cross-cultural communication, bridging the gaps between diverse linguistic and cultural communities.

The cross-cultural analysis conducted by Petrovsky highlights the contrasting themes and topics addressed in English and Russian proverbs. English proverbs often draw upon nature and animal references, while Russian proverbs frequently focus on themes related to social relationships and the challenges of daily life. These thematic variations reflect the cultural values, beliefs, and social priorities of the respective linguistic communities.

In the context of modern globalization, the success of international relations depends largely on the ability of individuals to understand not only the words of a foreign language but also its underlying cultural context. One of the most effective methods for exploring a nation's worldview is the linguacultural analysis of phraseology. Idioms are essentially micro-texts that encapsulate historical experiences, ethical values, and national character. They serve as a mirror reflecting the unique language picture of the world inherent to each culture.

At the heart of comparing English and Russian idioms is semantic analysis and evaluation. Research indicates that phraseological units describing human character are primarily categorized into three groups: those with positive, negative, or neutral connotations. Interestingly, in both languages, the group expressing negative evaluation is the most extensive. Statistical data confirms this pattern: in both English and Russian,

over 65% of idioms regarding human character carry a negative tone. This phenomenon is explained by a universal psychological tendency to react more sharply to negative phenomena and the human instinct to rely on fixed rhetorical patterns to express social disapproval.

Linguistic examples vividly illustrate these cultural parallels and distinctions. In subgroups such as “Duplicity” or “Cruelty”, we see striking semantic similarities. For instance, the English expression “to play a double game” directly corresponds to the Russian “играть двойную игру”. However, national identity manifests in the specific imagery used; while English speakers might describe arrogance through the metaphor “proud as a peacock”, the Russian language frequently employs the idiom “задирать нос” (to turn up one's nose). These specific “cultural codes” transform language into a living memory of the people.

In conclusion, the linguocultural study of phraseology is more than a linguistic exercise; it is an in-depth exploration of mental structures. Comparing English and Russian idioms reveals universal human values while simultaneously highlighting the unique spirit of each nation. Mastery of these nuances is an essential prerequisite for successful intercultural communication, helping to bridge the gap between different mentalities and fostering genuine mutual understanding.

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