

**IDIOMS IN MODERN LINGUISTICS: ANALYZING CULTURAL  
SPECIFICITY AND LEXICALIZATION IN ENGLISH AND RUSSIAN**

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**ABSTRACT:** *This article examines the role of idiomatic expressions in language, focusing on English and Russian. It discusses idioms as phraseological units with structural integrity and cultural significance, reflecting the history and traditions of their speakers. The study compares animal-related idioms in both languages, highlighting the challenges of literal translation and the importance of memorization. Using examples from literature and everyday speech, the article shows how idioms enrich language and how they often condense into single words in English. It concludes by emphasizing the importance of mastering idioms through immersion and interaction with native speakers for effective language learning and cultural understanding.*

**Keywords:** *Idiomatic expressions, phraseology, the English language, the Russian language, cultural specificity, lexicalization, figurative meaning, animal-related idioms, language learning, immersion, native speakers.*

In contemporary linguistics, linguists have conducted extensive research to explore the defining characteristics of idiomatic expressions. A thorough analysis of idioms as a distinct category of phraseological units reveals a common view that these units exhibit clear signs of structural integrity and lack motivation. Idioms are often seen as the heart of phraseology, comprising reinterpreted combinations of words that enhance speech with expressiveness and imagery. Some scholars suggest that the typical nature of everyday situations depicted in idioms, along with their stereotypical or "standard" characteristics and figurative foundations, transform them into symbols of cultural language: they acquire a conventional, standard, or symbolic meaning. [3, 21] Phraseology is known as the science that studies the origin and structure of



idiomatic expressions. Therefore, the study and use of phraseology occupies a special place in any language, as it is closely linked to syntax and word formation. Features such as stability of composition, consistency in the lexical structure, and reproducibility can be used to identify the strict word order of phraseological constructions. Therefore, idiomatic expressions are distinct combinations of words that, in their usage, form a complete and unified meaning. They are typically untranslatable into other languages and require replacement with expressions of a similar stylistic tone when translated. [8, 48]

It should be noted that these expressions reflect concepts such as work, everyday life, culture, traditions, customs, and the mentality of the speakers of the language. In particular, when considering the cultural aspect of idiomatic expressions, one can study and familiarize oneself with the history and development of a specific country. Therefore, it can be concluded that the main feature of an idiomatic expression is its national character. A vast number of expressions can be found in the works of world-class English literature authors such as W. Shakespeare, J. Milton, J. Swift, and many others.

It is widely recognized that both the Russian and English languages contain numerous proverbs and idiomatic expressions that were formed by earlier generations and have evolved over time, mirroring the history, traditions, and way of life of the Russian and English peoples. The following examples illustrate the distinctive features of these two great cultures:

**Christmas comes but once a year** - Не все коту масленица

**To have one's cake and eat it** - И волки сыты, и овцы целы

**A drop in the bucket** - Капля в море

**To kill two birds with one stone** – Убить двух зайцев

When analyzing idiomatic expressions, it has been observed that they are quite frequently used in everyday speech. For example, idiomatic combinations from the popular work of L. Carroll "Alice's Adventures in Wonderland" can be presented as examples:

**To smile like a Cheshire cat** - Улыбаться до ушей



**Mad as a hatter** - Сойти с ума, помешаться [4, 336]

It is important to highlight that many idioms in both English and Russian are related to animals. If translated word for word, they may seem nonsensical, which is why it is advisable to learn the entire expressions. This helps expand vocabulary when studying idiomatic phrases. A comparison of these idioms suggests that the same animals are not always used in Russian and English to express similar meanings. Therefore, memorization is crucial when learning most idioms, as their literal translation can be confusing and hard to grasp. For example:

**"A cock-and-bull story"** – this idiom does not mean that a chicken and a bull made up a story. It refers to a story that is too far-fetched or unbelievable. The Russian equivalent of this idiom is "курам на смех" (literally, "for the chickens to laugh at").

**"A dead duck"** – this expression does not refer to any tragic event. The literal translation is simply "a dead duck." In Russian, it translates as "гиблое дело" (a lost cause).

**"A rabbit's foot"** – "Заячья лапка" is just a good luck charm.

**"A cat burglar"** –in Russian, it is referred to as "форточник," meaning a thief who enters houses through windows or small openings.

When discussing the characteristics of English idiomatic expressions, it is clear that the structure of the English language plays a significant role in shaping complex idiomatic phrases. This is evident in how individual idiomatic units are condensed into single words. As a result, the English language is especially known for the lexicalization of idiomatic expressions, where the merging of lexical meanings leads to the phrase taking on a broader nominative role.

cup of tea («чашка чая») - особа; субъект;

an old cup of tea – старушка;

an unpleasant cup of tea - неприятный человек;

a storm in a teacup - Буря в стакане воды и т. д. [7, 240]

Idioms can appear in the form of idiomatic words and idiomatic word combinations. Due to their stability, idiomatic word combinations are related to words





by various criteria and are integrated with them into the lexical-phraseological system of any language. This includes the presence of semantic integrity in idiomatic combinations, which means their structural-semantic unmotivatedness according to the pattern of non-reinterpreted word combinations, semantic discreteness, a special organization of their phonetic and grammatical form based on the principle of repetition, as well as the fact that idioms designate constant semantic units – concepts that are stable within the framework of a given culture. [4, 23]

In conclusion, proficiency in a foreign language is undeniably important in the life of every modern individual, and it can be acquired through various methods. The most effective approach is immersion in the language environment, where learners can engage directly with native speakers. This experience allows students to enhance their language skills through real-world communication, while also gaining insight into the culture and daily life of the people who use the language. To truly master a foreign language and communicate effectively, it is essential to become fluent in conversational speech, which often includes idiomatic expressions that are crucial for understanding and using the language proficiently.

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