

FOOD IDIOMS IN ENGLISH AND RUSSIAN: A LINGUACULTURAL APPROACH

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Abstract: This article explores the linguacultural significance of food idioms in English and Russian. Idioms, as a reflection of national culture and mentality, reveal much about the values, humor, and everyday life of a society. By comparing common food-related idioms in both languages, the paper uncovers similarities and differences in the metaphorical use of food and explains how these expressions reflect the linguistic worldview of each culture. This study aims to contribute to the understanding of intercultural communication and to improve language teaching practices by incorporating cultural elements through idioms.

Keywords: Food idioms, linguaculture, English, Russian, metaphor, intercultural communication

Introduction: Language is not only a means of communication, but also a reflection of a people's culture, mentality, and lifestyle. Idioms, especially food-related ones, offer a unique insight into everyday values and historical experiences. In both English and Russian, food idioms serve as powerful linguistic tools to express emotions, judgments, and evaluations. This study aims to analyze food idioms in English and Russian, identifying their common features and cultural specifics, which will be useful for both linguacultural studies and language teaching.

Literature Review: Many scholars, including Lakoff and Johnson (1980), have emphasized the importance of metaphor in understanding idiomatic expressions. In Russian linguistics, researchers such as Telia (1996) have studied phraseology as a culturally marked phenomenon. Food idioms are widely studied in English-language phraseology, yet comparative studies between English and Russian are relatively limited. This paper builds on previous research while focusing on the linguacultural implications of these idioms.

Methodology: The research uses a comparative and descriptive method. Around 20 commonly used food idioms from both English and Russian were collected from dictionaries, corpora, and native speakers. Each idiom was analyzed for its literal

meaning, metaphorical interpretation, and cultural background.

Main Part – Analysis and Results:

1. Similar idioms with similar meanings:

“The apple of one’s eye” (Eng) — “зеница ока” (Rus)

Both idioms denote someone very precious and beloved, although only the English version uses a food image.

“To butter someone up” (Eng) — “подмаслить кого-то” (Rus)

Both idioms reflect the same metaphor: using fat (butter) to make something smoother — in this case, relationships.

2. Idioms with different metaphors but similar meanings:

“Piece of cake” (Eng) — “проще пареной репы” (Rus)

Both mean something very easy, but cultural references differ: sweet cake in English vs. boiled turnip in Russian.

“Spill the beans” (Eng) — “выдать все как на духу” (Rus)

Here, the idiom in English uses food (beans) metaphorically, while Russian uses a religious-cultural metaphor.

3. Culture-specific idioms:

“Cool as a cucumber” (Eng)

Highlights the Western ideal of emotional restraint. No exact Russian equivalent exists.

“Без хлеба и щей — не обед” (Rus)

This idiom reflects the traditional importance of bread and cabbage soup in Russian cuisine, with no equivalent in English

Conclusion: Food idioms reveal deep cultural meanings and differences between English and Russian speakers. While some idioms show universal human experiences, others are deeply rooted in national customs and everyday life. For language learners and teachers, incorporating such idioms can improve not only vocabulary, but also cultural awareness and sensitivity. Understanding the cultural layer behind idioms enhances communication and makes language study more engaging and authentic.

References:

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