

COMPARATIVE STUDY OF IDIOMATIC STRUCTURES, MEANINGS, AND CULTURAL BACKGROUNDS IN ENGLISH AND RUSSIAN

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Abstract: This study investigates idiomatic expressions in English and Russian by examining their structural formats, interpretative meanings, and cultural references. The comparative exploration aims to reveal how deeply idioms are interwoven with cultural narratives, social habits, and linguistic frameworks. The article emphasizes the role of idioms in intercultural dialogue and translation practices.

Keywords: idiomatic expressions, comparative linguistics, english-russian phraseology, cultural semantics, figurative language, intercultural pragmatics, structural analysis, lexical idioms, translation theory, language and identity.

Introduction. Idioms serve as culturally colored linguistic constructs that contribute significantly to the expressiveness and identity of a language. Both English and Russian utilize a rich variety of idiomatic phrases, often shaped by distinct societal experiences and historical trajectories. The contrast in grammatical systems and cultural symbolism between these languages provides fertile ground for comparative linguistic research. This paper addresses the ways in which idioms are structurally configured, semantically interpreted, and contextually embedded in each linguistic tradition. Idiomatic expressions are more than just stylistic embellishments—they serve as essential tools for conveying culturally embedded meanings and emotional nuances. In many cases, they encapsulate societal norms, shared beliefs, and historical references that are otherwise difficult to express through literal language. Both English and Russian are rich in idiomatic expressions, but the manner in which they develop and function within each linguistic framework differs significantly.

The contrast between English, a predominantly analytical language, and Russian, a highly inflected Slavic tongue, creates a unique landscape for examining how idioms are formed, used, and understood. Furthermore, the sociocultural environments in which these languages have evolved have left indelible marks on their phraseological inventories.

Analysis and results. This paper aims to conduct a cross-linguistic comparison of English and Russian idioms by focusing on their structural features, figurative meanings, and underlying cultural messages. The study emphasizes the significance of idioms in achieving authentic language proficiency and intercultural understanding, making it particularly relevant for language educators, learners, and translators.

✓ **Formal Characteristics**

From a structural standpoint, idioms in English and Russian range from rigid combinations to more syntactically flexible units. English tends to favor fixed syntagmatic patterns with limited morphological variation, while Russian phraseology often demonstrates morphological agreement and grammatical adaptability due to its inflectional nature. Examples such as 'barking up the wrong tree' versus 'напрасно старается' illustrate these distinctions.

✓ **Interpretive Dimensions**

The figurative interpretation of idioms often poses challenges for non-native speakers. Many idioms cannot be deduced from their individual elements, necessitating cultural and contextual awareness. While both English and Russian idioms can express universal themes—such as failure, deception, or luck—they frequently diverge in metaphorical imagery. For instance, English may use sports metaphors, while Russian draws heavily from agricultural or historical folklore.

✓ **Cultural Resonance**

The cultural essence of idioms reflects unique societal behaviors and historical moments. English idioms may derive from industrial or colonial experiences, whereas Russian expressions are frequently rooted in Orthodox traditions, folklore, or the Soviet past. This cultural embedding not only enriches the lexicon but also makes idiom comprehension heavily context-dependent.

✓ **Application in Language Practice**

In both pedagogical and translational settings, idioms represent a complex area requiring targeted strategies. Educators should integrate cultural literacy and thematic exposure to enhance idiomatic proficiency. Translators must often replace source idioms with functional equivalents rather than direct translations to preserve meaning and stylistic tone.

Conclusion. By contrasting idiomatic forms and their cultural connotations in English and Russian, this article demonstrates the intricate link between language and cultural thought. Recognizing the structural flexibility, interpretive challenges, and cultural specificity of idioms is key to mastering both understanding and usage in multilingual contexts. The comparative examination of English and Russian idiomatic expressions underscores the intricate bond between language, cognition, and culture. Although idioms in both languages may share thematic similarities—such as expressing human emotions, actions, or social norms—their structural patterns and metaphorical imagery often reflect fundamentally different cultural experiences.

English idioms frequently stem from industrial, literary, and maritime traditions, while Russian idioms are deeply intertwined with folklore, Orthodox heritage, and Soviet-era symbolism. These cultural nuances shape the way idioms are constructed, interpreted, and applied in everyday communication.

For language professionals, this analysis highlights the importance of cultural competence alongside linguistic knowledge. A nuanced understanding of idioms not only aids in more accurate translations but also fosters deeper intercultural empathy and communication. As globalization continues to bridge linguistic communities, awareness of idiomatic and cultural diversity becomes increasingly essential in education, diplomacy, and media.

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