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## LINGUISTIC ASPECTS AND COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF ENGLISH AND RUSSIAN PHRASEOLOGICAL UNITS

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**Abstract:** This article provides a detailed analysis of the linguistic nature of phraseological units in English and Russian. It explores their structural, semantic, and cultural characteristics and highlights similarities and differences between the two languages. Special attention is given to idiomaticity, stability, and national-cultural specificity. The study is based on comparative and descriptive methods.

**Keywords:** phraseological units, idioms, comparative linguistics, English language, Russian language, semantics, translation

**Аннотация:** Данная статья посвящена подробному анализу лингвистической природы фразеологических единиц в английском и русском языках. Рассматриваются их структурные, семантические и культурные особенности, а также выявляются сходства и различия между языками. Особое внимание уделяется идиоматичности, устойчивости и национально-культурной специфике.

**Ключевые слова:** фразеологические единицы, идиомы, сравнительная лингвистика, Английский язык, Русский язык, семантика, перевод.

**Annotatsiya:** Ushbu maqola ingliz va rus tillaridagi frazeologik birliklarning lingvistik xususiyatlarini batafsil tahlil qiladi. Ularning tuzilishi, semantikasi va madaniy jihatlari o‘rganilib, ikki til o‘rtasidagi o‘xshashlik va farqlar aniqlanadi. Alohida e‘tibor idiomatiklik va milliy-madaniy xususiyatlarga qaratilgan.

**Kalit so'zlar:** frazeologik birliklar, idiomalar, qiyosiy tilshunoslik, ingliz tili, rus tili, semantika, tarjima

**Introduction.** Phraseological units, or idioms, represent an essential component of any natural language. They reflect not only linguistic structures but also cultural traditions, historical experiences, and national worldview. In both English and Russian, phraseology plays a crucial role in communication, making speech more expressive and emotionally rich.

This study aims to analyze the linguistic aspects of phraseological units and to conduct a comparative analysis between English and Russian idioms.

**Linguistic Features of Phraseological Units.** Phraseological units, also known as fixed expressions or idioms, are distinguished by a set of interrelated linguistic features that set them apart from free word combinations. These features include stability, idiomaticity, and reproducibility, each of which plays a crucial role in their functioning in speech.

1. **Stability:** Stability implies that the structure of a phraseological unit is fixed and resistant to grammatical or lexical modifications. Unlike free phrases where substitution of components is possible (e.g., *a tall building* → *a high building*), phraseological units do not allow such changes without losing their meaning or idiomatic integrity. For instance, in the English idiom *kick the bucket*, the verb *kick* cannot be replaced with *hit* or *push*, nor can the noun *bucket* be substituted with *pail*, as this would destroy its idiomatic meaning. Similarly, in Russian, the idiom *буть баклуши* (to idle) cannot be altered to *буть баклушки* without losing its established form and meaning.

2. **Idiomaticity:** Idiomaticity refers to the non-compositional nature of phraseological units, meaning that their overall meaning cannot be deduced from the literal meanings of their constituent parts. This semantic opacity often creates challenges for language learners and translators. For example, the English expression *to spill the beans* does not refer to actual beans but means ‘to reveal a secret’. Likewise, the Russian idiom *точить ляды* (to sharpen balusters) means ‘to engage in idle talk’, bearing no direct connection to the literal meaning of its components. Idiomaticity is often graded: some units are fully idiomatic (e.g., *raining cats and dogs*), while others retain partial transparency (e.g., *to break the ice*).

3. **Reproducibility:** Unlike free phrases that are generated anew in speech, phraseological units are reproduced as ready-made units stored in the mental lexicon. This feature aligns them with other fixed expressions such as proverbs, sayings, and clichés. Their reproducibility ensures efficiency in communication, as speakers retrieve entire units rather than constructing them syntactically each time.

In addition to these core features, phraseological units often exhibit expressivity and emotional coloring, serving not only to convey information but also to express attitudes, evaluations, or cultural connotations. They frequently employ stylistic devices such as metaphor (*to be in the same boat*), hyperbole (*to kill two birds with one stone*), or

simile (*as cool as a cucumber*), which enhance their vividness and pragmatic impact.

## COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF ENGLISH AND RUSSIAN PHRASEOLOGICAL UNITS

A comparative analysis of phraseological units in English and Russian reveals both typological parallels and divergences shaped by structural, semantic, and cultural factors. These differences and similarities are essential for understanding the nature of each linguistic system and for effective cross-cultural communication.

### Similarities

Despite belonging to different language families (Germanic and Slavic), English and Russian share a number of phraseological parallels, largely due to universal cognitive mechanisms and shared human experiences:

- **Universal themes:** Both languages possess idioms expressing fundamental human experiences such as life, death, emotions, interpersonal relations, and work. For example, English *to work like a horse* and Russian *работать как лошадь* reflect a similar conceptual metaphor of labor as strenuous physical effort.
- **Equivalent meanings with structural parallels:** Some idioms exhibit structural and semantic equivalence, often resulting from common biblical, ancient, or European cultural sources. For instance, *break the ice* and *расколумь лёд* are nearly identical in both form and meaning. Similarly, *to cast pearls before swine* correlates directly with *метать бисер перед свиньями*, both originating from the Gospel of Matthew.
- **Borrowed idioms:** English has influenced Russian phraseology through translation borrowings, especially in political, technical, and popular culture contexts. Examples include *the elephant in the room* → *слон в комнате*, and *blue moon* → *раз в голубую луну*, though the latter remains less naturalized.

### Differences

- **Cultural specificity:** Many idioms are deeply rooted in national traditions, historical events, folklore, and everyday life. Russian idioms frequently derive from folk customs, fairy tales, and historical practices: *отложить дело в долгий ящик* (to postpone indefinitely) refers to a 17th-century Tsar Alexei Mikhailovich's petition box. English idioms, in contrast, often reflect maritime culture (*to be on the rocks*, *to sail close to the wind*) or legal traditions (*to be in the dock*), given Britain's historical context.
- **Structural and stylistic differences:** English phraseological units tend to be more concise, often consisting of verb + object structures (*cut corners*, *call it a day*). Russian idioms frequently include additional

grammatical elements such as reflexive verbs (*разбить себе лоб*), prepositional cases (*втирать очки*), or extended similes (*как снег на голову*). Moreover, Russian phraseology often exhibits greater syntactic flexibility, allowing for insertion of particles or pronouns, whereas English idioms are typically more syntactically fixed.

- **Imagery and symbolism:** While both languages use metaphor, the source domains often differ. English idioms frequently draw from navigation, hunting, and commerce, whereas Russian idioms heavily rely on rural life, domestic activities, and folk rituals. For example, English *to be in deep water* contrasts with Russian *быть в безвыходном положении* (to be in a hopeless situation), illustrating different conceptualizations of difficulty.

**Cultural and National Specificity.** Phraseological units function as cultural markers, encoding the collective memory, values, and worldview of a linguistic community. The cultural specificity of idioms makes them particularly challenging for translation and cross-cultural understanding.

**Russian Phraseological Units.** Russian idioms are deeply rooted in the nation’s literary heritage, folklore, Orthodox Christian traditions, and historical experiences. Many units originate from fables by Ivan Krylov (*а Васька слушает да ест*), works by Alexander Pushkin (*оставить у разбитого корыта*), and folk tales (*молочные реки и кисельные берега*). Others reflect historical realities, such as *во всю Ивановскую*, referring to Ivan the Great’s Bell Tower in the Moscow Kremlin, where decrees were proclaimed loudly.

Moreover, Russian idioms often contain archaic vocabulary and grammatical forms (*бить челом, темна вода во облацех*), preserving linguistic elements no longer used in free speech. This archaicity contributes to their stylistic markedness and cultural depth.

**English Phraseological Units.** English idioms reflect the historical development of British society, including its maritime dominance, legal system, and sporting culture. Nautical expressions such as *to be on the rocks*, *to know the ropes*, and *to weather the storm* mirror the significance of seafaring in British history. Idioms like *to be above board* and *to have the law on one’s side* reveal the influence of legal and commercial practices.

Additionally, English idioms often incorporate references to Shakespeare, the Bible, and classical literature. For instance, *a wild-geese chase* originates in Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet*, while *the writing on the wall* comes from the biblical Book of Daniel. These intertextual layers add cultural richness but also complexity for non-native speakers.

Implications for Translation and Language Learning. The cultural specificity of phraseological units necessitates translation strategies that go beyond literal equivalence. Common approaches include:

- Full equivalence: when an idiom has a direct counterpart in the target language (*cast iron* → *чугунный* in figurative use).
- Partial equivalence: when meaning matches but imagery differs (*to kill two birds with one stone* → *убить двух зайцев одним выстрелом*).
- Descriptive translation: when no equivalent exists, the meaning is conveyed through non-idiomatic language.
- Calquing: literal translation used sparingly, often for stylistic effect or when the idiom becomes naturalized.

Understanding the cultural and national specificity of phraseological units is therefore essential not only for accurate translation but also for developing cultural competence in language acquisition. Without such knowledge, learners may misinterpret idioms or misuse them in inappropriate contexts.

Conclusion. In conclusion, phraseological units are an important linguistic and cultural phenomenon. The comparative analysis of English and Russian idioms demonstrates both universal and culture-specific features. Understanding these differences is essential for translators, linguists, and language learners.

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