

An Article on Idioms in the English Language and their National-Cultural Characteristics

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Abstract: This article explores idioms in the English language as linguocultural units that reflect national and cultural characteristics. Idioms are considered not only as fixed expressions with figurative meanings but also as carriers of historical experience, social values, traditions, and collective worldview of the English-speaking community. The study aims to analyze the relationship between idiomatic expressions and national culture by identifying semantic, structural, and cultural features embedded in English idioms. Using descriptive, comparative, and contextual analysis methods, idioms are examined in terms of their cultural motivation, imagery, and pragmatic usage. The findings demonstrate that English idioms are deeply rooted in everyday life, history, customs, and social practices, which makes them a significant component of linguistic identity. Understanding the national-cultural specificity of idioms contributes to more effective intercultural communication and improves the quality of language teaching and translation.

Keywords: idioms, English language, national-cultural characteristics, linguoculturology, phraseology, cultural identity, intercultural communication.



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Introduction

In modern linguistics, increasing attention is paid to the study of language as a reflection of culture and national identity. One of the most vivid linguistic phenomena that demonstrates the close relationship between language and culture is idiomatic expressions. Idioms constitute a significant part of the English lexicon and represent fixed combinations of words whose meanings cannot be fully understood through literal interpretation. Their figurative nature makes them a valuable source for exploring the cultural, historical, and social background of a language community. English idioms have been formed over centuries under the influence of historical events, everyday practices, traditions, and social values of English-speaking societies. As a result, many idiomatic expressions encode culturally specific images and concepts that may be unfamiliar or even incomprehensible to speakers of other languages. This national-cultural specificity often creates difficulties in language acquisition, translation, and intercultural communication, highlighting the necessity of systematic idiom analysis from a cultural

perspective. The relevance of the present study lies in the growing demand for intercultural competence in a globalized world, where effective communication requires not only grammatical accuracy but also cultural awareness. Investigating idioms as linguocultural units allows a deeper understanding of how national mentality and cultural experience are reflected in language. Therefore, this article aims to analyze English idioms in terms of their national-cultural characteristics and to identify the main cultural factors that influence their formation and usage. The results of the study may contribute to phraseological research, foreign language teaching, and translation studies.

Materials and Methods

The material of the present study consists of English idioms selected from authoritative lexicographic and linguistic sources, including monolingual idiom dictionaries, phraseological reference books, and contemporary English language corpora. Particular attention was given to idioms that demonstrate clear cultural motivation and reflect aspects of everyday life, history, traditions, social relations, and national values of English-speaking communities. Both traditional and modern idiomatic expressions were included in order to ensure the representativeness of the data. The research employs a qualitative methodological framework. The primary method used is descriptive analysis, which allows the identification of semantic and structural features of idioms. In addition, contextual analysis was applied to examine the usage of idioms in authentic discourse, enabling a more accurate interpretation of their pragmatic and cultural meanings. A comparative method was also used to contrast culturally marked English idioms with their possible equivalents or non-equivalents in other languages, which helped to reveal their national-cultural specificity. Furthermore, elements of linguocultural analysis were applied to determine the cultural codes, symbols, and images underlying idiomatic expressions. Idioms were classified according to thematic domains such as social relations, work, emotions, behavior, and traditions. The combination of these methods ensures a comprehensive examination of English idioms as linguocultural units and provides reliable grounds for drawing conclusions about their national-cultural characteristics.

Results

The analysis of the selected English idioms revealed that a significant number of them possess distinct national-cultural characteristics rooted in the historical, social, and everyday experiences of English-speaking communities. One of the key findings is that many idioms are based on culturally specific images related to traditional occupations, social institutions, and daily practices, which shape their figurative meanings. Such idioms cannot be fully interpreted without reference to the cultural background in which they emerged. The results also indicate that English idioms can be grouped into several thematic categories reflecting national culture, including social behavior, work and professional life, emotions and character traits, and traditions. Idioms associated with social behavior often emphasize values such as practicality, self-control, and individual responsibility, while those related to work reflect the importance of diligence, time management, and efficiency in English-speaking societies. Another important finding is that the figurative imagery of many idioms is closely connected with historical events, maritime life, sports, and domestic activities, which have played a significant role in the development of English culture. The contextual analysis showed that culturally marked idioms are actively used in both spoken and written discourse, serving not only expressive but also evaluative and pragmatic functions. Overall, the results demonstrate that English idioms function as linguocultural markers that convey national mentality and cultural norms. Their meanings are shaped by collective cultural knowledge, which explains the difficulties they may cause for non-native speakers and highlights the importance of cultural awareness in idiom interpretation and usage.

Discussion

The results of the study confirm the close interconnection between idiomatic expressions and national culture in the English language. The identified cultural motivation of idioms supports the view that phraseological units are not arbitrary linguistic formations but are shaped by collective historical experience and shared social values. The prevalence of idioms related to work, social behavior, and everyday activities reflects core cultural principles such as practicality, individualism, and rationality that are traditionally associated with English-speaking societies. The thematic classification of idioms demonstrates that national-cultural characteristics are most clearly manifested through figurative imagery. Images derived from maritime life, sports, domestic routines, and historical contexts reveal how specific cultural domains influence idiom formation. These findings align with linguocultural theories that regard idioms as symbolic representations of cultural codes and national mentality. From a pragmatic perspective, the frequent use of culturally marked idioms in authentic discourse indicates their importance in conveying evaluative attitudes and emotional nuance. However, the culturally embedded nature of idioms often creates interpretative challenges for non-native speakers, particularly in translation and foreign language learning. This suggests that idiom instruction should move beyond literal explanation and include cultural interpretation to ensure communicative competence. Overall, the discussion highlights that understanding English idioms requires an integrated linguistic and cultural approach. Interpreting idioms without considering their national-cultural background may lead to semantic loss or miscommunication. Therefore, the findings emphasize the necessity of incorporating linguocultural analysis into phraseological studies, language teaching, and intercultural communication research.

Conclusion

The present study has demonstrated that idioms in the English language function as important linguocultural units that reflect national and cultural characteristics. The analysis confirmed that idiomatic expressions are deeply embedded in the historical experience, social values, traditions, and everyday life of English-speaking communities. Their figurative meanings are shaped not only by linguistic factors but also by culturally specific images and collective knowledge. The findings show that English idioms convey national mentality through thematic domains such as social behavior, work ethics, emotions, and traditional practices. This national-cultural specificity explains why idioms often pose challenges for non-native speakers in comprehension, translation, and usage. Therefore, effective interpretation of idioms requires cultural awareness alongside linguistic competence. In conclusion, the study emphasizes the significance of integrating a linguocultural approach into idiom research, foreign language teaching, and intercultural communication. A deeper understanding of the national-cultural background of idioms contributes to more accurate communication and enhances the overall quality of language learning and translation practices.

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