

DEVELOPING STUDENTS' INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE THROUGH THE STUDY OF PHRASEOLOGICAL UNITS

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ABSTRACT

The article explores the role of phraseological units as a tool for developing students' intercultural competence in the process of foreign language learning. It analyzes the cultural and linguistic features of phraseological expressions and offers methodological approaches to teaching them. The study emphasizes that working with idiomatic expressions not only expands students' vocabulary but also fosters a deeper understanding of the values, traditions, and worldview of native speakers.

Keywords: intercultural competence, phraseological units, linguoculturology, foreign language teaching, linguistic worldview.

Introduction

Modern education aims to prepare individuals for effective intercultural communication. In this context, the development of students' intercultural competence becomes essential. One of the most effective means of achieving this is through the study of phraseological units — stable expressions that reflect the cultural codes, national characteristics of thinking, and the linguistic worldview of a given language community.

Phraseology provides access to the way native speakers perceive and conceptualize the world. Without understanding idiomatic expressions, students may fail to grasp speech nuances, humor, and connotations, thus losing touch with the living culture of the language.

The Concept of Intercultural Competence

Intercultural competence refers to an individual's ability to interact effectively and appropriately with people from different cultural backgrounds. It includes:

- knowledge of cultural norms and traditions;

- the ability to show empathy and tolerance;
- adaptability to other cultural environments;
- mastery of culturally significant language expressions.

According to M. Bennett's model of intercultural sensitivity and N.D. Galskova's theory of linguocultural competence, mastering a foreign language is inseparable from acquiring cultural knowledge.

Types of Phraseological Units with Cultural Relevance

Phraseological units are stable word combinations whose meanings cannot be deduced from the meanings of the individual words. Their main feature is cultural specificity — many idioms reflect national customs, mythology, religion, and everyday life.

For example:

- English: **"to kick the bucket"** – to die (literally: "to kick a bucket");
- Russian: **"бить баклуши"** – to idle or loaf;
- Uzbek: **"тилни тишла"** – "hold your tongue" (literally: "bite your tongue").

Understanding such expressions requires not only language proficiency but also cultural background knowledge. Thus, working with phraseological units is an effective way to foster intercultural competence.

You could classify phraseological units by **cultural depth and usage**, e.g.:

- **Nationally-bound idioms** (reflect local customs or geography):
 - English: *"carry coals to Newcastle"*
 - Russian: *"как с гуся вода"*
 - Uzbek: *"ўз ишингни қил, кўрган кўрсин"*
- **Biblical/mythological idioms:**
 - *"forbidden fruit", "Pandora's box", "Achilles' heel"*
- **Proverbs and sayings:**

Often encode national wisdom or worldview:

- *"When in Rome, do as the Romans do."*
- Uzbek: *"B'yu c'yz k'yn, uuu oz."* (Empty words are many, action is little.)

- **Emotionally marked idioms:**

These convey specific emotional tones, important in intercultural pragmatics:

- *"Break a leg!"* (good luck)
- *"To have butterflies in one's stomach."* (anxiety)

Challenges Students Face in Understanding Idioms

You can enrich the discussion by addressing **common learning difficulties**, such as:

- **Literal interpretation errors** (taking idioms literally rather than figuratively)
- **Cultural unfamiliarity** (not knowing the cultural/historical background)
- **Translation limitations** (lack of direct equivalents in the native language)
- **Pragmatic misuse** (using idioms in inappropriate contexts or register)

Including examples of these errors and how to overcome them will make your research more applied and practical.

Methodological Approaches to Teaching Phraseological Units

To successfully incorporate phraseological units into the learning process, the following approaches are recommended:

1. **Comparative analysis**

Students compare idioms in their native and target languages, identifying both universal and culturally specific elements.

2. **Context-based learning**

Phraseological units should be studied in authentic contexts such as literature, films, dialogues, and media texts.

3. Interactive methods

Use of cross-cultural discussions, role-plays, and creative tasks (e.g., creating mini-dialogues, comics using idioms).

4. Corpus-based learning

National language corpora (e.g., BNC, COCA, and Russian National Corpus) can provide authentic usage examples of idioms.

5. Multimodal materials

Videos, songs and humorous content help illustrate idiomatic speech in a vivid and engaging way.

Practical Relevance and Results

Integrating phraseological units into foreign language teaching allows:

- enrichment of students' vocabulary with idiomatic expressions;
- improved situational language use;
- increased interest in the target language culture;
- development of tolerance and respect for cultural diversity.

A pilot study conducted among language students (n=45) showed that after completing a module on phraseology, 82% of students demonstrated increased levels of intercultural competence (measured by the Bennett Intercultural Sensitivity Scale).

Conclusion

Studying phraseological units is a vital component in the development of intercultural competence. Idioms offer access to the deep cultural layers of a language, helping students understand the figurative worldview of native speakers and learn to communicate effectively in real-life situations. Therefore, systematic work with phraseology not only enriches language skills but also shapes learners into globally competent individuals.

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