

ADJECTIVAL PHRASEOLOGICAL UNITS IN REPRESENTING NATIONAL WORLDVIEW

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Abstract: *Adjectival phraseological units (APUs) are fixed expressions that incorporate adjectives and carry meanings beyond their literal components. These units are deeply embedded in cultural contexts and serve as linguistic reflections of a nation's worldview. By encapsulating collective values, beliefs, historical experiences, and social attitudes, APUs provide a unique insight into the cognitive and cultural fabric of a community. This article explores the role of adjectival phraseological units in expressing and shaping national identities and worldviews, highlighting their linguistic features, cultural significance, and challenges in cross-cultural understanding.*

Keywords: *adjectival phraseological units, national worldview, idioms, cultural identity, phraseology, intercultural communication*

Language is a fundamental medium through which culture and identity are expressed, preserved, and transmitted. Within language, phraseological units—stable, idiomatic expressions—serve as powerful carriers of cultural meaning. Adjectival phraseological units (APUs), in particular, are idiomatic expressions that include adjectives, representing evaluative or descriptive qualities often loaded with cultural significance. These units reveal much about a nation's worldview, embodying collective attitudes, values, and historical experiences.

The concept of worldview encompasses the shared cognitive framework through which a community interprets reality and its place within it. APUs, as fixed linguistic constructs, mirror this worldview by encapsulating cultural stereotypes, social norms, and emotional attitudes specific to a nation. For example, English expressions like “stiff upper lip” connote British emotional restraint and stoicism, while Russian phraseological units such as “крепкий орешек” (“tough nut”) emphasize resilience—a valued national trait born from historical hardships. Studying APUs enables linguists and cultural researchers to uncover hidden cultural layers embedded in language, thus enhancing cross-cultural understanding. These expressions often pose challenges in translation due to their cultural specificity, highlighting the importance of cultural literacy in intercultural communication.[2]

This article aims to analyze adjectival phraseological units as linguistic reflections of national worldviews. It discusses their characteristics, cultural roles, cognitive implications, and the challenges they pose in translation and intercultural dialogue. Understanding these units offers insight into how language shapes and is shaped by the cultural realities of a nation.



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Adjectival phraseological units are idiomatic or semi-fixed expressions containing an adjective that contributes significant evaluative meaning. Unlike free combinations of words, APUs have a fixed structure and their meaning cannot be deduced simply by understanding their components. For example, the English phrase “cold shoulder” means deliberate ignoring or rejection, rather than a literal cold part of the body. These units function as semantic wholes and carry culturally specific connotations. APUs encapsulate cultural values and attitudes specific to a nation. The English idiom “stiff upper lip” reflects the British ideal of emotional control and endurance under pressure, highlighting a national self-image of stoicism and dignity. In contrast, Spanish APUs such as “alma caliente” (hot soul) convey passion and emotional expressiveness, traits admired in Hispanic cultures.[2]

In Russian, the phraseological unit “крепкий орешек” (“tough nut”) symbolizes strength and resilience, reflecting historical experiences of hardship and survival. Similarly, Japanese APUs often emphasize harmony and subtlety, traits deeply embedded in the culture. Many APUs arise from a nation’s historical background and social realities. They embed collective memory and social norms within language, thus preserving cultural heritage. For instance, English expressions like “fair play” reflect ideals of justice rooted in historical legal traditions, while Middle Eastern APUs may incorporate references to hospitality and honor, central values in those societies. These expressions are dynamic; they evolve with social changes, adapting to new realities while preserving cultural continuity.[3]

APUs function as cognitive frames, shaping how speakers conceptualize and communicate complex ideas succinctly. By relying on familiar cultural schemas, these units facilitate efficient communication and reinforce social cohesion through shared knowledge. They also serve as markers of group identity, distinguishing insiders who understand the cultural references from outsiders. Due to their deep cultural embedding, APUs often resist direct translation. Literal renderings may confuse or lose intended meaning. For example, translating “stiff upper lip” literally into another language fails to convey its cultural significance. Translators and language learners must seek equivalent expressions or provide explanatory context to preserve meaning. In intercultural communication, misunderstanding of APUs can lead to misinterpretation or stereotypes. Awareness and study of these units are essential for effective cross-cultural dialogue.

Adjectival phraseological units serve as vital linguistic mirrors of a nation’s worldview. Through their fixed, idiomatic nature, they embody the collective values, historical memories, social norms, and emotional attitudes that define a community’s cultural identity. These expressions reveal how language and culture are inextricably linked, with APUs acting as cognitive and communicative tools that shape perceptions and interactions within a society.[4]

By encapsulating culturally loaded meanings, APUs foster a sense of belonging and cultural continuity. They enable speakers to succinctly express complex cultural ideas and emotions, reinforcing social cohesion and national identity. However, their cultural



specificity also presents challenges, especially in translation and intercultural communication, where literal interpretations often fall short of capturing their full meaning. Understanding adjectival phraseological units is therefore crucial for linguists, translators, and anyone involved in intercultural exchanges. It enhances appreciation of cultural diversity and facilitates more nuanced and respectful communication across language boundaries.

Future research into APUs across different languages and cultures will continue to shed light on the profound relationship between language and worldview. Such studies contribute to our broader understanding of how humans use language not only to communicate but to construct and maintain cultural realities.

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