

# THE ROLE OF THE AXIOLOGICAL PHRASE GESTALT IN COGNITIVE STRUCTURE OF RUSSIAN AND GERMAN PHRASEOLOGICAL UNITS IN THE PROCESS OF INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

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**Abstract:** The purpose of this research is to study the axiological phrase gestalt as an integral image in the cognitive component of the phraseological unit from the point of view of its semantics and structure. The article reveals the concept and gives the definition of the axiological phrase gestalt; the components of its structure are described. Axiological phrase gestalt defines the axiological vector of the object or phenomenon of reality displayed in the phraseological meaning. The decisive role of the axiological phrase gestalt in the cognitive structure of phraseological units is obvious in the process of interpreting the images of Russian and German axiological phraseological units, which is characterized by the complexity of presenting a speech-thinking situation in all its integrity in the process of perceiving phraseological units in the context of intercultural communication.

**Keywords:** intercultural communication; axiological phrase gestalt; value; anti-value; axiological vector of phraseological unit

## Introduction

In the current conditions the interaction of cultures or intercultural communication takes place in different areas of human life. All nations are open to perceive other nations' cultural background as well as ready to share their own cultural features with other peoples (Andreyeva & Korneva, 2020).



Communication is impossible without language. According to O.A. Leontovich, language is an integral part of the spiritual culture of mankind. Communication suggests a creative intuitive act which is based on an innate and indispensable human need for communication (Leontovich, 2005, p. 72-73).

Knowing the world around, a person first creates an idea about it, and then with the help of language, an event or phenomenon reflected in the person's consciousness receives a name. Speaking about the process of cognition, E.S. Kubryakova notes: "It is difficult to say whether the problem of reflecting knowledge in the head of a person is solvable at all today at the modern level of development of science, but the formulation of this problem is clearly ripe" (Kubryakova, 1997, p. 78). N.F. Alefirenko, referring to I.M. Sechenov, draws attention to the two-stage nature of the cognitive process. At the first stage of the cognition process, the formation of thought takes place, at the second – the transformation of subject-sensory figurative structures into various kinds of abstraction (Alefirenko, 2003).

One of the levels of mental abstraction is gestalt. G. Lakoff, the founder of the theory of linguistic gestalts, and M. Johnson believe that gestalts are categories used by people in order to understand the world (Lakoff & Johnson, 1998, p. 150). The same point of view is shared by E.V. Sidorov, defining gestalt as a unit of the cognitive level of a linguistic personality (Sidorov, 2006).

Cognition of the world through language, in particular phraseology, occurs through images. The word gestalt is translated from the German language as "image, form", and the verb *gestalten* means "not just 'to give something a form', but 'to give something a meaningful form'" (Alefirenko, 2008, p. 58-59). Z.D. Popova and I.A. Sternin consider gestalt as a holistic image, irreducible to its components, combining sensory and rational elements, as well as combining dynamic and static aspects of the displayed object or phenomenon (Popova, 2001). N.F. Alefirenko rightly notes: "Gestalt lies directly beyond the verge of what is being expressed, although it is directly related to it. It models a kind of stereotypical

representation of a particular subject of reality, which is an intermediate link between reality and the concept” (Alefirenko, 2008, p. 57).

## **Materials and Methods**

The purpose of this research is to study the axiological phrase gestalt as an integral image in the cognitive component of the phraseological unit from the point of view of its semantics and structure.

Research objectives:

1. To expand the concept and define the axiological phrase gestalt.
2. To describe its constituent structures.
3. To interpret the images of Russian and German axiological phraseological units, in the cognitive structure of which the decisive role of the axiological phrase gestalt is obvious.

Materials of the research are Russian and German axiological phraseological units based on dictionaries.

The research methods are the following: descriptive method, analysis of lexicographical interpretations and etymology of Russian and German phraseological units; the method of component analysis to research the structure of meaning of studied units; the method of conceptual and interpretative analysis.

## **Results**

The analysis performed allows us to draw the following conclusions:

1. Axiological phrase gestalt is a holistic image in the cognitive structure of a phraseological unit, which determines the axiological vector (value or anti-value characteristics) of the object or reality phenomenon displayed in the phraseological meaning.
2. In the structure of the axiological phrase gestalt the following are distinguished:
  1. The image of a phraseological unit as a connecting link between reality and the concept;
  2. The cultural code in which the image of the phraseological unit is realized;
  3. Background information, including the origin of the phraseological unit;
  4. Semantics of phraseological units;
  5. Axiological vector of a phraseological unit (positive or negative).

So, for example, applying the descriptive method and the method of conceptual and interpretative analysis, we determined that the axiological phraseological gestalt underlying the Russian and German phraseological units *родиться под счастливой звездой* – *unter einem glücklichen Stern geboren sein* (*be born under a lucky star*) with the meaning ‘to be lucky in everything’ contains the image of a star (*звезда* – *Stern*).

This image is a connecting link between reality and the concept, and it goes back to the most ancient mythological form of world awareness. Using the method of component analysis and analysis of lexicographical interpretations and etymology of Russian and German phraseological units, it can be argued that in the indicated phraseological units the prepositions *под* – *unter* (*under*) correspond with the spatial code of culture, the component *счастливый* – *glücklich* (*happy*) – with anthropic, and *звезда* – *Stern* (*a star*) corresponds with the natural-landscape code of culture.

As the researchers note, “in the form of a phraseological unit, the *star* component acts not only as a symbol of fate, but also as a talisman, the magical power of which is determined by the brightness of the glow emanating from it, perceived as a divine power, the abode of which is high in the heavens, and the beneficial effect is manifested on earth” (Zykova, 2006, p. 586-587).

The semantics of the above phraseological units determines their positive axiological vector. The phraseological units reflect the value “Happiness”.

Besides, this example demonstrates that in the process of intercultural communication, conventional values and anti-values are fixed in the language, which allow one to penetrate into the structure of the image, sometimes even without knowing the specific historical facts. In many languages, a star is associated with happiness, good luck (*звездный час, достать звезду с неба, путеводная звезда, die Sterne vom Himmel holen wollen*).

## **Discussion**

Gestalt in phraseology has already attracted the attention of researchers. N.F. Alefirenko in the monograph “Phraseology and Cognitive Science in the Aspect of Linguistic Postmodernism” raises a number of strategically important questions for cognitive phraseology: “(1) how, in fact, the gestalt differs from the image, (2) by what means is its integrity ensured and (3) on what basis is it said about its structural organization” (Alefirenko, 2008, p. 55). The author introduces the concept of “phraseological gestalt”, defining it as “a kind of integral structure reflecting the entire configuration of the contact of the concept with the discourse environment generating the phraseme: from the moment the need arises for an indirectly derived nomination of the experienced denotative situation to its full implementation” (Alefirenko, 2008, p. 58). N.F. Alefirenko considers it expedient to single out “phraseological gestalts” in cognitive phraseology, since they “represent stereotypical situations

that are repeated in speech-thinking activity” and constitute “the figurative-onomasiological part of the linguistic consciousness of each ethnocultural community” (Alefirenko, 2008, p. 58-59).

According to V.N. Telia, a figurative gestalt structure, which is associated with the form of organization of meaning in accordance with the image-motive, can be an internal form of phraseological unit (Telia, 1996, p. 150). This point of view confirms the integrity of the gestalt and the complexity of its structural organization.

Researchers have presented other varieties of gestalts. V.A. Ermolaeva writes about “communicative gestalt” (Ermolaeva, 2008). N.A. Sidorova considers the “axiological communicative gestalt”, “correlated with values as linguocultural formations that determine the content and structure of speech communication ...” (Sidorova, 2009).

Axiological phraseology offers access to both conventional values and anti-values, and to national characteristics, culture, traditions and customs of the Russian and German peoples (Andreyeva, Korneva & Fakhrutdinov, 2019; Andreyeva, Korneva & Sakhbullina, 2019). Since axiological phraseological units are “units of the meaning of the language, fixing values and anti-values” and having an axiological vector (Bayramova, 2009, p. 28), it is advisable to single out the concept of axiological phrase gestalt when interpreting them. In our opinion, the axiological phrase gestalt can be interpreted as a holistic image in the cognitive structure of the phraseological unit, which determines the axiological vector (value or anti-value characteristics) of the object or phenomenon of reality displayed in the phraseological meaning.

Axiological phrase gestalt is directly related to cognitive procedures that coincide with the macrocomponents of the phraseological unit meaning. Cognitive procedures include: denotative processing, operating with knowledge about the properties of the signified, evaluative – interpretation of the signified from the perspective of the value picture of the world, motivational – operations with imaginary or speculatively imaginable gestalt structures, emotive –

emotional-evaluative reaction to the figurative gestalt structure as an imprint of the experienced emotions (Sidorova, 2009).

Exploring the structure of the gestalt, N.F. Alefirenko distinguishes between “figure” – “the image itself” and “communicative-cognitive background” – “that discursive space in which this phraseme arose” (Alefirenko, 2008, p. 57). Thus, in the structure of the axiological phrase gestalt the following are distinguished: 1) The image of the phraseological unit as a connecting link between reality and the concept; 2) The cultural code in which the image of the phraseological unit is realized; 3) Background information, including the origin of the phraseological unit; 4) Semantics of phraseological units; 5) Axiological vector of a phraseological unit (positive or negative).

All these components create a holistic image, irreducible to its components. An axiological phrase gestalt is an image in a holistic image that determines the axiological vector of a phraseological unit. As a cognitive and axiologically significant means of language, axiological phrase gestalt correlates with cultural codes, within which images of Russian and German axiological phraseological units are distinguished.

As known, culture determines the process of communication (Kondrateva, Sabirova & Plotnikova, 2018) Background information and cultural code help uncover an image that reflects the semantics of the phraseological unit. Semantics determines the axiological vector of a phraseological unit – its value or anti-value.

So, for example, all these components are contained in the structure of the axiological phrase gestalt, which underlies the Russian and German phraseological units, *колосс на глиняных ногах* – *Koloss auf tönernen Füßen (sein)* (*the colossus with feet of clay*) book, often ironic. or neglected – smth. seemingly majestic, powerful, but essentially weak.

The image of phraseological units is realized within the framework of the anthropomorphic-biblical cultural code. In the Old Testament (Book of the prophet Daniel 2: 31-35 – Daniel 2:

31-35) it is said about the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar, who saw in a dream a huge, terrifying metal idol

Тебе, царь, было такое видение: вот, какой-то большой истукан; огромный был этот истукан, в чрезвычайном блеске стоял он пред тобою, и страшен был вид его – Du, König, hattest einen Traum, und siehe, ein großes und hohes und hell glänzendes Bild stand vor dir, das war schrecklich anzusehen (You, king, had such a vision: here, some a large idol; this idol was huge, it stood in extreme splendor before you, and the sight of it was terrible) ...

The body of the idol was made of gold, silver and iron, but the legs were made of clay. When a stone rolled down from the mountain, he struck the colossus on the feet of clay and smashed to smithereens

Ты видел его, доколе камень не оторвался от горы без содействия рук, ударил в истукана, в железные и глиняные ноги его, и разбил их – Das sahst du, bis ein Stein herunterkam, ohne Zutun von Menschenhänden; der traf das Bild an seinen Füßen, die von Eisen und Ton waren, und zermalmte sie (You saw him, until the stone broke away from the mountain without the assistance of your hands, struck the idol, his iron and clay feet, and broke them)).

The dream turned out to be prophetic: the Babylonian kingdom collapsed like an idol on feet of clay.

The idiom itself in the form of *коLOSS на глиняных ногах* – *Koloss auf tönernen Füßen (sein)* (*colossus with feet of clay*) is not recorded in the Bible, it was formed on the basis of an image. The French thinker D. Diderot was the first to use this expression when characterizing Russia in the era of Catherine II (Walter, 2009, p. 96-97).



The component composition of phraseological units determines their semantics. Initially, any statue was called *коLOSS* – *Koloss* (*a colossus*) (<Greek kolossos – “statue”), but since the time of the creation of the Colossus of Rhodes, statues or structures of only enormous sizes have been called colossus (Winged words). Components *глиняные ноги* – *tönerne FüÙe* (clay feet) testify to their fragility, as the structure standing on them can collapse at any moment. The biblical image of an idol on feet of clay forms the meaning of phraseological units: ‘something outwardly great, strong, grandiose, but in fact weak from the inside, easily vulnerable’, which makes all the power of this “colossus” ghostly. The semantics of phraseological units determines their negative axiological vector. Phraseologisms reflect the anti-value “Lie”.

Thus, in the structure of the axiological phrase gestalt, which underlies the Russian and German phraseological units *коLOSS на глиняных ногах* – *Koloss auf tönernen FüÙen (sein)* (*the colossus with feet of clay*) a holistic image is created that determines the axiological vector of phraseological units and contributes to their perception.

Speaking about the role of gestalt, N.F. Alefirenko emphasizes that “until the gestalt is formed, that is, until the situation is presented in our consciousness in its entirety, it is very difficult for us to free ourselves from the sensation of a speech-thinking lacuna” (Alefirenko, 2008, p. 56). Indeed, the interpretation of images of Russian and German axiological phraseological units can be associated with real historical events, beliefs, features of the internal form of phraseological units, etc.

Let us consider the structure of the axiological phrase gestalt underlying the Russian phraseological unit *как швед под Полтавой* (as a Swede near Poltava). The specific image of the phraseological unit is realized within the framework of the anthropomorphic-spatial cultural code. As noted by D.B. Gudkov, the image of phraseological unit goes back to a real historical event, which in the Russian cultural consciousness is perceived as one of the most significant in national history. In 1709, near the city of Poltava,

the Russian army led by Peter I defeated the Swedish troops led by King Charles XII. This battle predetermined the outcome of the Northern War. The Swedish army was completely defeated. In the form of a phraseological unit, the defeat of the Swedes appears as a standard of collapse in general (Gudkov, 2006, p. 317-318).

In the internal form of phraseological unit *как швед под Полтавой* (as a Swede near Poltava), there is a comparison. The Swede component acts collectively, indicating the scope of the battle. The image of the phraseological unit and background information determine the semantics of the phraseological unit: ‘be broken; suffer a crushing defeat, a complete collapse’ (Gudkov, 2006, p. 317). The negative axiological vector of the phraseological unit is due to its meaning. The expression represents the anti-value “Failure, defeat”.

The axiological phrase gestalt underlying the German phraseological unit *einen Türken bauen*, col. (*literally* build / create a Turk) has a complex structure. The specific image of the phraseological unit is realized within the framework of the anthropomorphic cultural code. The phraseologism is very often used, as L. Roerich testifies, among workers of the press, television, cinema. When an interview is done with a dummy, an understudy, it is called *einen Türken bauen*. According to one version of the origin of the phraseological unit, warships of all countries arrived in Kiel for the opening ceremony of the canal (today Nord-Ostsee-Kanal). The musicians performed national anthems in honor of the representatives of each country. When it was necessary to perform the Turkish anthem, it turned out that the orchestra did not have its notes. And the musicians, not embarrassed, sang the melody of the song “Guter Mond, der so stille geht” (“Good moon that walks so quietly”). This is how the expression *einen Türken bauen* (Maltseva, 2002, p. 60) appeared.

The component composition of the phraseological unit does not allow revealing its semantics: “to mislead, to deceive” (Maltseva, 2002, p. 60), “to show off” (Binovich, 1975, p. 582) without knowledge of cultural information. At the same

time, this information does not explain the literal meaning of the phraseological unit ‘build / create a Turk’. Perhaps the component *Türke* figuratively nominates the Turkish anthem. Mention should also be made of the connection between the phraseological unit and the verb *türken*. In the German Dictionary of Gerhard Varig (Wahrig. Deutsches Wörterbuch), the verb *türken* has the following meanings: ‘verfälschen, nachmachen’ (Wahrig, 2007) (forge, falsify), ‘fingieren’ (Wahrig, 2007) (invent). The semantics of a phraseological unit determines its negative axiological vector. The phraseological unit contains the anti-value “Deception”.

The above example demonstrates the necessity and complexity of presenting a speech-thinking situation in all its integrity in the process of perceiving Russian and German phraseological units. In this case, the axiological phrase gestalt plays a decisive role in the cognitive structure of phraseological units.

## **Conclusion**

Interpretation of images of Russian and German axiological phraseological units can be associated with myths and legends, real historical events, beliefs, peculiarities of the internal form of phraseological units, etc., which makes it necessary and difficult to represent a speech-thinking situation in all its integrity in the process of perception of phraseological units. At the same time, the decisive role of the axiological phrase gestalt in the cognitive structure of phraseological units in the process of intercultural communication is obvious.

The practical significance of the work lies in the fact that its results and materials can be used in the theory and practice of teaching a number of linguistic disciplines, such as: Stylistics, Interpretation of literary text, Intercultural communication, as well as in the professional activities of translators.

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