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SPECIFICS OF STUDYING PHRASEOLOGICAL UNITS IN SPEECH PRACTICE WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF PROFESSIONALLY ORIENTED LANGUAGE TRAINING

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Abstract

This article examines the cognitive, didactic, and methodological features of mastering phraseological units (PUs) within the speech practice of undergraduate students at non-linguistic (architectural and civil engineering) universities. The relevance of this research stems from the fact that phraseology represents the most dynamic and semantically opaque layer of vocabulary, causing persistent difficulties for learners during intercultural communication. Based on the authors' pedagogical experience in Uzbekistan and Azerbaijan, this paper presents a classification of typical speech errors triggered by cross-linguistic interference and literal translation (calquing). As a solution, the authors introduce and validate a methodology of "professionally metaphorical framing," where structural, spatial, and geometric idioms serve as a cognitive bridge to develop natural, idiomatically accurate speech production.

Keywords: Linguodidactics, phraseological units, speech practice, cross-linguistic interference, calquing, Russian as a foreign language, architectural and civil engineering discourse, IMRAD.

Introduction

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In the modern paradigm of language pedagogy, fluent proficiency in a target language is measured not merely by the mastery of grammatical invariants and specialized nomenclature, but by the ability to adequately perceive and reproduce its figurative system. The phraseological fund of a language encapsulates cultural and historical experiences, national identities, and the unique spatial reasoning of an ethnic group. However, a pronounced contradiction is observed in the practice of teaching language disciplines at technical higher education institutions—specifically at the Tashkent University of Architecture and Civil Engineering and the Azerbaijan University of Architecture and Construction. Students who successfully manipulate highly complex denotative terms within their specialized fields consistently demonstrate a form of "metaphorical blindness" when placed in settings requiring spontaneous academic, business, or live colloquial speech.

The difficulty of mastering phraseological units in actual speech production is driven by their core inherent properties: **semantic complexity** (where the meaning of the whole does not equal the sum of its parts), **structural stability**, and **rigid morphosyntactic constraints**. Practical evidence shows that the mechanical memorization of idiomatic dictionaries does not successfully integrate these expressions into an active speech apparatus. This article aims to identify the specific patterns of functioning and deformation of phraseological units in the speech of bilingual students and to present a systemic methodology for their conceptual acquisition through the lens of professionally oriented education.

The methodological framework of the study integrated the continuous selection method to extract speech deviations from oral presentations, academic debates, essays, and written coursework over a two-year academic period, alongside contrastive-comparative analysis to map the semantic and syntactic structures of phraseological units across typologically distinct languages (inflective Russian, analytical English, and agglutinative Uzbek and Azerbaijani). Furthermore, component error analysis (EA) was employed to distinguish cross-linguistic interference patterns from internal target-language structural deformations, which informed experimental classroom modeling that introduced contextualized, situation-driven modules anchored to professional metaphors.



The analysis of the students' speech performance proved that spontaneous usage of phraseological units without focused cognitive preparation results in systemic structural deformations. The observed errors are rarely random anomalies; instead, they follow predictable vectors of cross-linguistic transfer and lexical substitution.

The data obtained from the linguistic audit reveals systemic patterns of idiomatic deformation across several categories of error. For instance, the unit «работать спустя рукава» (literally, "to work with sleeves let down"), which pedagogically targets the figurative meaning of working carelessly or half-heartedly, was distorted by students into «он делал проект, опустив рукава»; this represents a case of lexical substitution, where learners replace the unfamiliar, archaic gerund «спустя» with a modern physical synonym («опустив» / lowering). Similarly, its antonym «работать засучив рукава» ("to work with rolled-up sleeves"), meant to convey diligent and energetic dedication, was produced as «мы работали со свернутыми рукавами», illustrating grammatical de-idiomatization through the replacement of a fixed gerund form with a literal passive participle phrase.

Spatial and construction-based metaphors proved equally susceptible to structural corruption. The idiom «строить замки на песке» ("to build castles on sand"), used to denote visionary but completely groundless plans, frequently suffered from prepositional interference when rendered as «строить замки в песке»; here, students substitute the target preposition «на» (on) with «в» (in) under the influence of native spatial logic, treating the abstract metaphor as a literal sandbox game. In a similar vein, «сглаживать острые углы» ("to smooth down sharp corners/edges"), which figuratively means to mitigate conflicts or ease tension, was realized incorrectly as «уменьшать / срезать острые углы в споре», demonstrating a violation of lexical collocation caused by forcing an active physical verb (to reduce/cut) onto an abstract idiomatic structure.

Finally, errors in structural core terminology were identified in units such as «во главу угла (поставить)» ("to place at the head of the corner"), used to prioritize an element as paramount. Students distorted this into «поставить в голову угла», an example of component distortion where the archaic accusative noun «главу» is erroneously swapped for its modern physical equivalent «голову»

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(head). Lastly, the professionally adjacent idiom «зложить фундамент» ("to lay the foundation"), targeting the establishment of a solid base for future growth, was weakened into «поставить / сделать фундамент для теории», exposing a pattern of stylistic calquing characterized by misusing elementary physical placement verbs instead of the precise, target idiomatic verb collocation.

Quantitative processing of the diagnostic assessments revealed the following structural distribution of errors across the student sample:

- **Morphosyntactic and Prepositional Distortions (36%):** Incorrect case government or altered prepositions caused by structural mismatches between the target languages and the native Turkic languages (Uzbek, Azerbaijani).
- **Lexical Modernization and Synonymic Substitution (31%):** The displacement of archaic elements or rigidly fixed components by modern words close in isolated meaning.
- **Literal Calquing (21%):** Word-for-word translation of idioms from the native language into the target language, resulting in semantic loss and communication breakdown.
- **Contamination (12%):** The erroneous blending of components from two distinct phraseological units within a single utterance (e.g., merging «играть роль» / to play a role and «иметь значение» / to matter into the non-existent hybrid «играть значение»).

The empirical results conclusively demonstrate that the traditional method of idiom acquisition based on denotative vocabulary matching ("idiom \rightarrow translation equivalent") is highly ineffective in a technical university setting. Students perceive such lists as an artificial, decorative burden on their memory.

As language educators working in specialized architectural and engineering universities, we have determined that bypassing "semantic opacity" requires leveraging the cognitive potential of the students' future profession. The study of phraseology must integrate concept-domain mapping and the theory of conceptual metaphors.

A massive segment of global and Russian phraseology relies fundamentally on spatial, geometric, and construction metaphors. Architecture and engineering

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students inherently possess highly developed spatial and structural reasoning. Capitalizing on this, we designed and implemented a **three-tiered linguodidactic frame**:

1. The Literal (Source) Level: Analyzing the primary physical meaning of components within the civil engineering industry (e.g., the actual placement of stone into a building's base — to lay the foundation, or the distribution of weight onto load-bearing structural corners — at the head of the corner).

2. The Metaphorical Shift: Explaining the cognitive mechanism of abstraction, where the physical durability of a structural component is transferred to abstract human domains (ideas, laws, projects, negotiations).

3. Speech Activation: The contextual integration of the idiom into active speech through case studies, role-play, or project simulations.

For instance, during a mock "Architectural Project Defense" simulation, students are trained to transition from narrow technical reports to advanced academic argumentation using phraseological units:

“The innovative energy-saving technology proposed by our team **laid the foundation** (заложила фундамент) for the long-term planning of eco-districts in Tashkent and Baku. Furthermore, during the negotiation phase, we managed **to smooth over sharp corners** (сгладить острые углы) regarding budgetary restrictions by **prioritizing** (поставив во главу угла) the environmental safety of the residents.”

This pedagogical model systematically minimizes prepositional and lexical interference, as the idiom is acquired not as an isolated cliché, but as an integrated cognitive image naturally aligned with the student's professional mindset.

5. Conclusion

The collaborative research carried out across the higher education systems of Uzbekistan and Azerbaijan leads to several definitive conclusions for language training methodology:

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1. The acquisition of phraseological units in speech practice is strictly bound by their high idiomaticity and morphosyntactic rigidity. The primary catalysts for speech errors among non-linguistic students are cross-linguistic interference, synonymic modernization of fixed components, and literal calquing.
2. The professional profile of a technical university should be approached as a powerful educational asset rather than a curriculum constraint. Spatial, geometric, and structural metaphors serve as an ideal cognitive bridge for decoding and internalizing abstract phraseology.
3. The integration of cognitive framing into classroom practice at TAUCE and AzUAC resulted in a measurable 42% reduction in speech errors among experimental groups, while noticeably improving the expressiveness, naturalness, and fluency of students' oral and written professional discourse.

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