Western European Journal of Modern Experiments and Scientific Methods
Volume 3, Issue 12, December 2025
https://westerneuropeanstudies.com/index.php/1
ISSN (E): 2942-1896 Open Access| Peer Reviewed

SPECIFIC FEATURES OF BORROWED PHRASEOLOGICAL UNITS IN ENGLISH AND RUSSIAN LANGUAGES

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Annotation: This article investigates the phenomenon of borrowed phraseological units (PUs) in the modern usage of English and Russian. Drawing on comparative and contrastive phraseological studies, it explores structural, semantic, and functional features of such borrowings, including their origins, integration processes, and cross-cultural significance. Particular attention is paid to mechanisms of borrowing (calques, literal translation, calqued idioms), adaptation into the recipient language, semantic equivalence versus non-equivalence, and the role of cultural context in acceptability and usage. The study shows that, while many borrowed PUs undergoes full integration and function like native idioms, a substantial portion remains semi-transparent or marked as "foreign," which affects their acceptability, interpretation, and translation. The article underscores the importance of cultural and linguistic competence in the use and translation of phraseological borrowings, and discusses implications for phraseology, translation studies, and intercultural communication.
Key words: borrowed phraseological units; idioms; calques; English–Russian phraseology; semantic equivalence; interlingual borrowings; translation; cultural linguistics.

Phraseological units (idioms, fixed expressions, colloquialisms) are among the most stable and expressive elements of any language: they often encode not only meaning but cultural and historical values, worldviews, and mental attitudes. In the contexts of globalization, cross-cultural contact, and language borrowing, many languages — including English and Russian — acquire phraseological units from other languages, leading to what can be termed borrowed phraseological units. Despite a longstanding tradition of studying lexical borrowings, the borrowing of phraseological units attracts less attention, partly because phraseological borrowings behave differently from single-word borrowings. In phraseology, borrowed units may be literal calques, semi-calques, or loan translations whose components are translated and reassembled in the recipient language; sometimes their imagery remains transparent, sometimes becomes opaque; sometimes they integrate fully into the native phraseological system, sometimes remain marginal. The present article seeks to examine the specific features of such borrowings in English and Russian — how they enter the language, how they adapt (or fail to), how they interact with native phraseological systems, and what semantic, structural, and cultural consequences arise.

The study of borrowed phraseological units draws on the theories of phraseology, semantics, and comparative linguistics. According to general definitions, a phraseological unit (PU) is a fixed (or relatively fixed) combination of words whose meaning is not entirely compositional (i.e., cannot be derived solely from the meanings of its constituent words).

Borrowed phraseological units, then, are those PUs that have entered a language not through native coinage, but by being borrowed — as whole units, or via translation/calquing of foreign expressions. The process is more complex than lexical borrowing, because phraseological borrowings must satisfy constraints of idiomaticity, conventionalization,

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semantic transparency, morphological and syntactic conformity to the recipient language, and cultural relevance. As described in comparative research, borrowed PUs may reflect "semantic equivalents," "semantic analogues," or only partial correspondences between source and target languages. Some typologies further divide English phraseological units by origin: native (inherited), intralingual borrowings (from other English variants, colloquial or dialectal), interlingual borrowings via literal or figurative calque, and foreign-form borrowings (remaining in source-language form or transliterated)

Though English is a historically "donor" language for many languages worldwide, it has itself repeatedly adopted phraseological units from other languages — especially during periods of intense cultural contact and lexical influx (e.g., the Middle English period, Renaissance borrowing from Latin, French, etc.).

As one study explains, English phraseological units by origin can be divided into four groups: native English PUs; interlingual borrowings (from foreign languages via translation or calque); intralingual borrowings (from other variants or dialects of English, including American English); and foreign-form borrowings (PUs preserved in foreign form or with foreign morphology). Reasons and motivations for borrowing into English often stem from historical contact: religious, cultural, scientific, or political. For instance, many English idioms derive from Biblical, Greek, or Latin sources. Borrowed phraseological units may convey a semantic or stylistic nuance that native idioms lack, or serve as literate, rhetoric-rich, or learned expressions.

Borrowed PUs often undergo a "two-stage" process: first, occasional or nonce usage (e.g., literal translations in writings), and second, potential integration into the phraseological system, when repeated use establishes them as conventionalized idioms. However, not all borrowed PUs become fully conventionalized — many remain rare, stylistically marked, or perceived as foreign or elevated. When PUs are borrowed via calque or literal translation, their metaphorical imagery may remain transparent or shift; translation into other languages (e.g., Russian) then becomes challenging if the calque is too foreign, culturally marked, or semantically ambiguous. As a general observation, borrowed idioms may widen the expressive capacity of English, but may also complicate translation and comprehension for non-native speakers. Thus, borrowed phraseological units in English illustrate how even a donor language remains receptive to external influence, reflecting the historical and sociocultural dynamics of language development.

While borrowing into Russian has long been documented at the lexical level (loanwords, calques, neologisms), the phenomenon of **borrowed phraseological units** — especially recent ones — has drawn increasing attention. A particularly important recent study is Alien in Its Own: Borrowings in the New Russian Phraseology by Valeriy M. Mokienko (2024), which analyses how Russian phraseology has been enriched by foreign idiomatic expressions since the 1990s.

According to Mokienko, social and political changes after the collapse of the Soviet Union opened Russian to many spheres of life — politics, economics, banking, international relations — previously less lexicalized in Russian idiomatics. As a result, calques and direct borrowings from English (and other languages) became a way to express newly relevant concepts. .Examples include phraseological expressions with military or political imagery: *star wars*, *nuclear umbrella*, *scorched earth tactics*, as well as idiomatic constructions containing "carpet" such as *call someone to the carpet*, *be on the carpet*, *go to the carpet*.

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These units often originate as periphrastic "transfers" — literal translations of foreign idioms or calqued expressions — and their imagery remains transparent (or at least recognizable), which supports their adoption.

Mokienko notes several specific features:

Because they often come as calques or literal translations, their imagery can be more transparent than that of native Russian idioms, which may make them stylistically marked or "foreign-sounding."

Borrowed PUs often belong to spheres that were previously underrepresented in traditional Russian idiomatics (politics, business, modern international life), reflecting changes in social reality.

The adoption of such PUs tends to be more rapid compared to lexical borrowings, because the phrase becomes useful immediately (especially if there is no adequate native equivalent). This aligns with general observations about phraseological borrowing dynamics.

Nonetheless, not all borrowed PUs are fully integrated; some remain occasional, stylistically marked, or subject to resistance from purists (see discussion below). Mokienko remarks on the "wary attitude" toward lexical borrowings, but phraseological borrowings tend to be less persecuted — perhaps because their figurative imagery remains clear and recognizable.

Thus, modern Russian phraseology shows a significant influx of borrowed idiomatic expressions, shaped by cultural contact, sociopolitical change, and communicative need.

Having considered borrowing into each language separately, we now compare cross-linguistic features and draw conclusions about the specificity of borrowed PUs in English and Russian.

A crucial issue in comparing borrowed PUs is whether the borrowed unit has a **semantic equivalent** in the recipient language, or whether it remains a **semantic analogue** (similar but not identical in meaning), or a **partial/non-equivalent** expression. According to the component theory of seme organization in comparative phraseology, researchers analyzing over 1,750 phraseological units in English and Russian found that semantic analogues predominate, whereas exact semantic equivalents are relatively rare.

In other words, many borrowed PUs do not map neatly onto existing native idioms: their imagery may shift, their connotations may change, or some semantic components may be lost or modified. This complicates translation and cross-cultural communication.

For example, a Russian borrowed idiom like *nuclear umbrella* (ядерный зонтик) might carry connotations and historical/political associations specific to the source cultural context (Cold War, geopolitics) — associations which might be unfamiliar or less salient to Russian speakers. Its use may thus feel foreign, or stylized, rather than a "natural" Russian idiom.

Borrowed phraseological units represent a dynamic and culturally significant facet of language evolution. Both English and Russian — despite differing histories and sociolinguistic trajectories — have integrated foreign phraseological expressions into their lexicons, albeit via different mechanisms, motivations, and contexts.

In English, borrowed PUs often stem historically from Latin, Greek, biblical, or European languages; they gradually became conventionalized idioms, reflecting cultural inheritances and literary tradition. In Russian, the more recent influx of borrowed PUs (since the 1990s) often responds to rapid social and political transformation, globalization, and

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contacts with Western discourse, especially in domains such as politics, economics, media, and international relations.

Comparative research shows that while some borrowed units find semantic and functional equivalents, many remain only loosely analogous or partially equivalent, with connotative and cultural differences that complicate translation and intercultural understanding. The process of integration is uneven: some borrowed idioms become naturalized, others remain stylistically marked or peripheral.

For linguists, translators, educators, and language learners, this highlights the necessity of examining not only single-word borrowings but also phraseological units, and of combining semantic, structural, historical, and cultural analyses. Future research would benefit from building corpora of borrowed PUs, conducting sociolinguistic and diachronic studies, and exploring translation practices and attitudes toward phraseological borrowings.

Ultimately, borrowed phraseological units reveal the fluidity of language, the permeability of linguistic boundaries, and the ongoing interplay between language, culture, and society.

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