

# **EXPRESSING ELDERLY AGE THROUGH IDIOMATIC EXPRESSIONS IN THE ENGLISH AND RUSSIAN LANGUAGES**

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**Abstract.** Any language is considered to be the means to reflect cultural and national mentality of its speakers as well as to reproduce the images of national pictures of the world incarnating them through alphabetical units. Currently, the research of the peculiarities of phraseology through the phraseological units characterized with heightened sociality and interaction with the society is one of the most perspective tendencies in modern linguistics. Phraseological units expressing a human age can be referred to such units as being one of the language features existing among any nation and at all times they can impart a lot of interesting facts about the past and present of any nation. This article reveals distinctive features of phraseological units expressing elderly age in English and Russian from comparative aspect so that it will be possible to identify universal and unique language phenomena between the two languages.

**Keywords:** language, cultural mentality, national mentality, national pictures of the world, phraseological units, social interaction, human age, comparative linguistics, universal phenomena, cultural reflection

## **Introduction**

Idiomatic expressions are a vital part of language that reflect cultural attitudes and perceptions towards various life stages, including old age. This article scrutinizes idiomatic expressions related to elderly age in English and Russian, focusing on their differences, origins, and representations in fiction. By analyzing these expressions, we can gain insights into how each culture views aging and the elderly.

## **Methods**

This study employs a qualitative analysis of idiomatic expressions related to elderly age in both English and Russian. The research involved:

1. Literature review: A comprehensive review of existing literature on idiomatic expressions, focusing on those that pertain to aging.
2. Data collection: Compilation of idiomatic expressions from various sources, including dictionaries, literature, and online databases.
3. Analysis: Comparison of idiomatic expressions in both languages, examining their meanings, cultural connotations, and usage in fictional contexts.

## **Results**

The analysis's findings show that in both Russian and English the phenomenon of "old age" is unique in terms of dimensional and temporal extension. In the Russian language the onset of old age is expressed through lexemes like year, summer, century, and age, which are

expressed in 16 phraseological units: выйти из годов (лет); с лет вышедши; из лет вон; на склоне лет; в годах; на закате лет (дней); на старости лет; быть в возрасте; быть в годах (летах); приходиться в возраст; годы ушли (уходят, кончились); аредовы веки пить; мафусаилов век жить; идти под гору; отжить свой век; глубокая старость.

Similar phraseological units were identified in the English language: aging; as old as Methuselah; as old as Adam; as old as the hills; one's day is over; one's race is completed; decline into the vale of years; in the days of old; ripe old age; decline of life; evening of life; the afternoon of life; the end of the chapter; autumn or winter of one's years; advanced age; these are examples of similar phraseological units.

The expressions "getting old", "growing old", and "to be old" share the same semantics. In Russian phraseology, temporal signs are conveyed through nouns like century, year, and age, as well as verbs like "get out", "come", "leave," "become obsolete," and "off."

Old age is reflected in expressions such as "great age" in Russian and "decline into the vale of years" in English. These expressions reveal a hidden assimilation of the phenomenon "old age" to a specific physical space. As people age they may experience social and physical limitations leading to expressions such as "на покой уйти; ехать с ярмарки; выйти в тираж; мало, на что годиться; сходить со сцены; уйти на заслуженный отдых". In English, phraseological units include expressions like "served one's time", "retired from the scene", "take a back seat", "be on the shelf", and "miss one's market", "It's time to move on from old songs". The phrase "not worth an old song" refers to something useless, outdated, or "like an old song." Expressions like "retire from the scene", "take a back number", "be on the shelf" and "have served one's time" refer to aging, incapacity, or retirement. In English, idiomatic expressions related to old age often convey a mix of wisdom, frailty, and nostalgia. Notable examples include:

1. **"Over the hill"**: Suggests that a person has passed their prime, often implying a decline in vitality.
2. **"Old as the hills"**: Indicates someone is very old, emphasizing their long existence.
3. **"Set in one's ways"**: Refers to an elderly person who is resistant to change, implying rigidity.
4. **"Golden years"**: Describes the retirement phase of life, suggesting it should be a time of enjoyment.

These expressions reflect a duality in the perception of aging, acknowledging both the wisdom that comes with age and the physical decline associated with it.

In Russian, idiomatic expressions about old age also convey respect and resignation. Examples include:

1. **"Старый как мир" (Old as the world)**: Similar to the English counterpart, suggesting someone is very old.
2. **"На старости лет" (In old age)**: Describes actions or events occurring later in life, often with a sense of inevitability.
3. **"Старый волк" (Old wolf)**: Refers to an experienced person, implying that age brings wisdom.
4. **"Старость не радость" (Old age is no joy)**: Reflects a negative view of aging, suggesting that it is accompanied by suffering.

These expressions indicate a cultural recognition of the challenges of aging while also acknowledging the wisdom gained through experience.

### **Differences in Idiomatic Expressions**

The differences between English and Russian idiomatic expressions related to elderly age can be attributed to cultural attitudes towards aging:

1. **Connotations of Aging:** English idioms often balance wisdom with decline, while Russian idioms emphasize the hardships of old age more explicitly.
2. **Cultural Context:** English expressions often romanticize the "golden years," while Russian idioms highlight the burdens and difficulties associated with aging.
3. **Use of Nature Metaphors:** Both languages utilize nature metaphors, but English expressions evoke timelessness, whereas Russian idioms focus on the inevitability of aging.

### **Discussion**

The origins of these idiomatic expressions can often be traced back to historical, cultural, and literary contexts.

#### **English Origins**

Many English idioms related to aging have roots in literature and folklore. For example, the phrase "over the hill" may have originated from the idea of reaching a peak and then descending, symbolizing the decline that follows the prime of life. Similarly, "golden years" reflects a cultural narrative that celebrates retirement as a rewarding phase, often depicted in literature and media.

#### **Russian Origins**

Russian idioms about aging often draw from proverbs and folk tales that reflect societal values. The expression "Старость не радость" can be traced back to traditional beliefs about the burdens of old age, emphasizing the hardships faced by the elderly. Additionally, the phrase "Старый волк" reflects the cultural appreciation for cunning and experience, often celebrated in Russian literature.

#### **Representation in Fiction**

Fictional works in both languages often utilize these idiomatic expressions to convey themes related to aging.

#### **English Fiction**

In English literature, characters often embody the idiomatic expressions associated with aging. For instance, in *The Old Man and the Sea* by Ernest Hemingway, the protagonist Santiago represents the "golden years" through his resilience and wisdom, despite his physical decline. The phrase "over the hill" is echoed in the struggles he faces, symbolizing the challenges of aging.

#### **Russian Fiction**

Russian literature frequently explores the complexities of aging through idiomatic expressions. In Anton Chekhov's short stories, characters often reflect the sentiment of "Старость не радость," grappling with the realities of old age and its associated difficulties. The use of idioms like "старый волк" highlights the wisdom gained through experience, often juxtaposed with the struggles of aging.

### **Conclusion**

Idiomatic expressions related to elderly age in English and Russian reveal significant cultural differences in the perception of aging. While English idioms often balance wisdom



with decline, Russian expressions tend to emphasize the hardships associated with old age. The origins of these idioms reflect historical and cultural contexts, and their representation in fiction underscores the complexities of aging. Understanding these expressions provides valuable insights into how different cultures view the elderly and the aging process.

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