

SCTMG 2020**International Scientific Conference «Social and Cultural Transformations in the
Context of Modern Globalism»****AXIOLOGICAL PHRASEOLOGICAL UNITS AS
REPRESENTATIVES OF VALUES AND MEANINGS OF THE
CULTURE**

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Abstract

The following work studies language as a representative of the values and meanings of the culture. The phraseology of languages is not only the reflection of the world view and historical experience of nations who use this phraseology. It's also a specific way to encode the culturally significant values and their meanings. Phraseological units represent the meanings of culture. Therefore, the study of phraseological units allows us to understand the worldview of German culture more fully and deeply. The research aims to determine the values and meanings of German culture by analyzing its axiological phraseological units. Using the method of non-standardized interviews with German culture bearers, we identified 149 axiological phraseological units. The analysis of the context and components of these axiological phraseological units helped us find the most relevant values of German culture now. They are Anerkennung (recognition), Gesundheit (health), Arbeit (work), Sicherheit (safety), Nachhaltigkeit (sustainability), Sparsamkeit (economy), Erfolg (success), Freizeit (free time), Gerechtigkeit (righteousness), Gemeinschaft (community), Familie (family), Freiheit (freedom). To find the meanings of the culture, we did one more non-standardized interview with the representatives of German culture. It showed that, according to respondents, the German axiological phraseological unit Doppelt halt besser (Better safe than sorry) fully reflects the meaning of Sicherheit (safety) value. The government and law enforcement agencies in Germany have been developing more and more security measures. And the aim is justified. Thus, the value content of the axiological phraseological units reflects the meanings of German culture values.

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Keywords: German, axiological unit, phraseological unit, worldview, value contents.



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1. Introduction

The following work studies a language as one of the most important mechanisms to communicate culture. In this research, we found phraseological units that serve as important bearers of culturally significant meanings. Phraseological units have one important value: the meaning of a phraseological unit is not equal to the meanings of words that constitute it. That's why only the bearers of a particular culture can understand the meanings of phraseological units. The study of these meanings allows finding the deeper meanings of culture. In particular, the research of deep meanings of culture encoded in the axiological phraseological units of the German language is critical for understanding German culture.

Already in the XIX century, Humboldt (2000) studied the relationships between a language and culture. He said, "a language is a spirit, and a spirit is a language" (p. 47). After that, scientists studied languages from different sides. Grimm (1848) analyzed a language from a historical perspective. Such researchers as Steinthal (1855), Baudouin de Courtenay (1963), Wundt (1911) studied a language from a psychological perspective. Meillet (1938), Saussure (1999), and Fortunatov (1956) used a sociological approach. Psychological and sociological approaches towards the study of languages appeared by the XX. At the beginning of the XX century, linguists tried to treat a language as an independent thing that exists without human intervention. White (1959) defined such an approach as "extrasomatic". In the middle of the XX century, linguistics saw the appearance of different disciplines: grammar, phonetics, lexicology, morphology, syntax. At the same time, scientists started to analyze language in the context of communication. Charles Morris is considered as a founder of a pragmatic approach. However, at the end of the XX century, scientists returned to a joint study of language and culture. They include Teliya (1996), Wierzbicka (2001), Vereshagin and Kostomarov (2005), Maslova (2007), Ter-Minasova (2008).

A culturological approach aims to study language as a reflection of the surrounding world. There appear such concepts as a "linguistic world view" and a "cultural worldview." The opinions of scientists in this case differ. For example, Maslova (2007) thinks that a human sees the surrounding world through language. Wierzbicka (2001) believes that it's possible to create a cultural worldview without language. Ter-Minasova (2008) states that both worldviews influence each other. In our research, a cultural worldview is the reflection of a real vision of the world, where the system of values plays one of the critical roles.

Despite that, we can find thoughts about such value notions as good, beauty, and righteousness in the classical philosophy of Socrates and Plato as well as Hegel's theory of "Absolute Spirit," the real discussion of values and their theory emerged only in the 1860s. A German philosopher Lotze (1856) is considered a founder of an axiological approach due to its book "Microcosm". Later, values were studied by such scientists as Rokeach (1973) and Schwartz (1987). Rokeach (1973) studied values from the point of things that are common for all people constituting a particular culture. In our research, the notion of culture is related to the notion of a nation, while a value is defined as a generally accepted norm that appeared in some culture and unites people with a common origin, traditions, and language.

The value content of phraseological units reflects cultural values. Here, phraseological units become the texts of culture. From early childhood, we have heard from our parents and grandparents that "an hour in the morning is worth two in the evening" or that "the longest way round is the shortest way home." Thus, we absorb the culture of our nation. Studying phraseological units, we must note their

figural nature and idiomaticity. Some scientists argue that only idiomatic units belong to phraseology. For example, Teliya (2004) writes that these are “proverbs, sayings, popular expressions, and idioms” (p. 23). To denote such phraseological units, which encapsulate value content, there appeared a notion of “axiological phraseological unit”. This notion has special importance for German culture as the phraseology of German language, according to Burger (1998), contains structural phraseological units, e.g. in Bezug auf (in respect of), sowohl ... als auch (both...and), and communicative phraseological units, e.g. routine phrases Guten Morgen! (Good morning!) Ich meine... (I think...) and many other. Thus, phraseology in German culture includes both figurative units and other types of collocations. That’s why we use the notion of an axiological phraseological unit to interpret figurative units carrying culturally significant meanings. An axiological phraseological unit is a figurative unit that encapsulates and conveys the meaning of value. Its encoding specificity is that the meaning of a phraseological unit is not equal to the sum of the words in it. The value content of an axiological phraseological unit consists of the meaning and value of this unit. That means, we can trace culturally significant values and their meanings in the value content (meanings) of axiological phraseological units. And meanings of values are, first of all, the covert ideas of culture bearers about values.

2. Problem Statement

The importance of axiological phraseological units is that they have deep value content leading us to the values of a nation and meanings of its culture. However, the problem is that the values of different nations can be similar, while their meanings can be different. In other words, there are contradictions between the value content of a particular notion (expressed in a phraseological unit) within a native culture and the value content of the other notion in another culture.

Relevant phraseological units encapsulate the values and meanings that only native speakers can understand. That’s why the analysis of deep meanings of culture encoded in axiological phraseological units of a language is critically important for the understanding of another culture and the cultural studies as a whole.

3. Research Questions

The object of research is the axiological phraseological units encapsulating the value contents of German culture and leading us to the values and meanings of the culture.

4. Purpose of the Study

The research aims to determine the values and meanings of German culture by analyzing its axiological phraseological units.

5. Research Methods

Within this research, we did two sets of interviews. They aimed at finding the most relevant axiological phraseological units. The interviews were carried out in a relaxed atmosphere. The standardization of interviews influences the degree of freedom in the behavior of an interviewee. He or

she doesn't need to urgently come up with the phraseological units used in everyday life. Instead, these units emerge in the course of talking by themselves without any effort from an interviewee. We should also note trusting relationships between the participants of the interview that are part of this method. A relaxed atmosphere allows an interviewee to say what he or she thinks or cares about in that particular period while supporting his or her words with a set expression. A supportive environment meant a natural environment for an interviewee. This could be a workplace after a working day when a person is relaxed and doesn't think about duties. Or, it could be a cafe or home. To maintain the atmosphere at the interview, we didn't use recording devices. When people see a recorder, a microphone or a camera, they don't say what they think and try playing to the camera. We recorded phraseological units afterward. As a result, we could interview 130 participants and collected 149 phraseological units that emerged 2 or more times.

After we obtained the phraseological units, we started to describe their meanings and value contents. However, during the description, there was a good deal of questions related to some meanings, and we decided to conduct another set of interviews. In choosing the interview method, we were concerned with the quality of information collection. The rejection of a quantitative approach is explained by the fact that we don't need a massive collection of data to analyze a phraseological unit and the value content of German culture encapsulated in it. Here, we should deeply understand the meaning of the value content. We use a qualitative approach to analyze numbers and a quantitative approach to find meanings (Dey, 1993). For the first time, a quantitative approach was mentioned by Znaniecki (1968) wrote that a system of culture can be studied only through a humanistic coefficient. The nature of the study the research question itself has made us choose a qualitative approach. One of the common methods within a qualitative approach is the method of an interview. To analyze the obtained interviewee answers with more quality, we used a standardized in-depth interview with fixed open and closed questions. Open questions are those that need a comprehensive response. In a closed question, an interviewee should choose an answer. Yadov (2007) indicates that in closed questions we can see general norms of a nation's culture, while closed questions show its meaning. A standardized interview is the easiest way to compare answers. It means that the answers and not the questions or their understanding should be different. Two criteria were taking into account during the selection of interviewees. The first one is that each interviewee must be a representative of German culture. The second criterion identified the extent to which an interviewee was interested in exploring German culture. Three respondents participated in the interview. Another important criterion for the interview was the level of education of the interviewees. This is critical because the questions in our research are not easy. A school student or an uneducated person could have trouble answering them. Thus, all our interviewees have higher education. Another important criterion is the knowledge of the culture. A first interviewee is a person with higher education. A second interviewee is a person with higher education who is interested in the native culture. A third interviewee is a person with higher education who studies the native culture. The criterion of the level of cultural knowledge is important because an interviewee who studies his or her own culture has a professional trait. Besides, each interviewee was born and studied in Germany. Their native language is German.

Thus, we conducted two series of interviews. First, the non-standardized interviews helped us identify the relevant phraseological units of the German language. Then, we analyzed these units to determine the values of German culture. Finally, we used standardized interviews to study the meanings of culture in detail.

6. Findings

The contained phraseological units that are related to several values, such as the proverb *Morgenstunde hat Gold im Munde* (The early bird catches the worm). This proverb is related to both *Arbeit* (work) and *Erfolg* (success) values. However, the second series of interviews showed that respondents classify this proverb as having the *Erfolg* value. As a result of the interviews and the analysis of the phraseological units, we determined several values.

1. *Arbeit* (work). The sample of the axiological phraseological units contains quite a lot entries related to the topic of *Arbeit*: *Arbeit bringt Brot, Faulenzen Hungersnot* (Work brings bread, laziness brings hunger), *wo Arbeit das Haus bewacht, kann Armut nicht hinein* (The need can't enter a house protected by work), *schmutzige Arbeit, blankes Geld* (Work is black, money is white), *wer nicht arbeiten will, der lass' das Brot auch liegen still* (One who doesn't want to work, won't see bread). The value of *Arbeit* is very important for Germans, which hasn't changed much. As previously, work is important for stability and confidence in the future.

2. *Anerkennung* (recognition). Social recognition doesn't only work as a drug (*Anerkennung wirkt wie eine Droge*). A medical sociologist, Johannes Siegrist, believes that emotional stress appears when there is a gap between big effort and small recognition (*Anerkennung*). Most interviewees need to "be in one's element" (*voll in einem Element fühlen*) at work.

3. *Sparsamkeit* (economy). Germans like to think about the way they can save money. The verb *sparen* (to save) is the most widespread in German. You can hear it too often. It also used a lot in supermarkets and bank leaflets. The most famous bank in Germany is called *Sparkassen*. *Sparen ist verdienen* (To save – means to gain), *Sparschaft bringt Barschaft* (Economy brings money). *Der eine ist des Geldes Herr, der andere sein Sklave*. – One is the master of money, while the other is its slave. One interviewee said that it's necessary to «*sparen mit Kopf und Verstand*» (literally, use head and understanding to save). The reasonable use of money is an inherent characteristic of German culture.

4. *Erfolg* (success). Most phraseological units convey the idea that you need to work hard to get good results: *ohne Fleiß, kein Preis* (Without effort, there is no prize), *ohne Mühe kein Erfolg* (There is no success without effort). All respondents agreed with the *Mühe kein Erfolg* proverb. During the interviews, we found out that enjoyable work is an important constituent of success, and it's not so important whether it brings big money.

5. *Familie* (family). The changes in the axiological phraseological units indicate changes in the meanings of German culture values. For example, the phraseological unit *Die Axt im Haus erspart den Scheidungsrichter* (literally, the ax at home saves money on a divorce attorney), instead of «*Die Axt im Haus erspart den Zimmermann*» (literally, the ax at home saves money on a carpenter). This indicates changes in the *Familie* (family) value. In this phraseological unit, we see the reflection of frequent divorces in Germany, while previously it manifested the need to save the family money. At the beginning

of the XX century, family relationships were still authoritarian with a father being the head of a family. Now, family relationships became egalitarian. This is reflected in the changes of values of axiological phraseological units.

6. *Gesundheit* (health). In German culture, one needs to do sports and keep to a healthy diet to be healthy. Many phraseological units in German culture reflect the meaning of “movement is life”: *jeder Gang macht schlank* (Every walk makes you slimmer), *fit gesund sein wie ein Fisch im Wasser* (To be fit like fish in water), *wer rastet, der rostet* (The one who rests, becomes rusty), *ein rollende Stein setzt kein Moos an* (Moss is not an obstacle for a rolling stone). However, the value of sport is slightly overestimated. In fact, neither of our interviewees does sport. Germans have a desire to do sports than really do it. Sport is a cult of health here. The popular saying *Mach fit, sei fit* (Do sports and be fit) is a perfect example.

7. *Freizeit* (free time). The analysis of the axiological phraseological units and the value contents showed that currently, Germans don't accurately separate the working time and free time, which contradicts existing stereotypes. The saying *Dienst ist Dienst und Schnaps ist Schnaps* (Work is work and schnaps is schnaps) lost its importance. In his book “Cross-cultural management: doing business with Germans”, Kavalchuk (2011) said that Germans separate two spheres of life: “They work in their working time and live in their free time” (p. 48). However, the meaning of *Freizeit* value has changed quite recently and is still changing. This is related to the globalization of the world, the necessity and the readiness to stay in touch. Thus, after analyzing the phraseological units and their value contents, we made a conclusion that Germans spent their free time on family, friends, and work, while many interviewees noted that they would actually like to do sports.

8. *Gerechtigkeit* (righteousness). Different factors including the culture of other nations change the priorities of the culture, the values of the nation, the language and the phraseology. Some phraseological units of the German language are still alive but, probably, will die soon. For example, not all our interviewees know the proverb *recht und billig* (literally, right and cheap), while recently it was known to everybody. It's a very old proverb and we don't know its origins. Until the XVIII century, the word *billig* was a synonym to law. The natural feeling of righteousness implemented in law is double-right. Here we see that the value of *Gerechtigkeit* for Germans is directly related to law. This is supported by other phraseological units: *sich an die Buchstaben des Gesetzes halten* (To keep to a law), *nach dem Buchstaben des Gesetzes handeln* (To act according to a law), *sich nach dem Buchstaben des Gesetzes richten* (To be guided by a law). However, not all our interviewees classify these sayings as related to the *Gerechtigkeit* value. Thus, we suppose that the essence of this value has changed, and its legal constituent is not so important anymore.

9. *Sicherheit* (safety). Safety is one of the most important issues in Germany. The government and law enforcement agencies have been developing more and more security measures. Better safe than sorry (*Doppelt halt besser*). According to the interviewees, this proverb best reflects the value content of *Sicherheit*. This is a desire to anticipate, to double-check. *Sicher ist sicher* – You can't be too careful, there is no need to risk, it's better to secure yourself. Our interviewees confirmed that this is especially true for the current security system in Germany.

10. Freiheit (freedom). Almost all interviewees agree that Freiheit geht über Silber und Gold (Freedom is dearer than gold or silver). According to the interviewees, freedom is one of the main values and means “making your own decisions with an open mind, having different opportunities to travel, manage your life, and participate in public activities.” All interviewees said “yes” when answering the question of whether the ideology of safety in Germany can limit personal freedom. That is, the more safety measures are implemented, the more limited the freedom of citizens is. Is that true? Yes, because means justify the aim. This indicates that currently, the value of Sicherheit (safety) in Germany is higher than the value of Freiheit (freedom). In the new world reality, Germans must choose between two important values, and they choose Sicherheit.

11. Nachhaltigkeit (sustainability). Ecological sustainability has been an important issue for Germans for many years. First of all, they associate the term Nachhaltigkeit with ecology. The proverb Wer über die Zukunft nicht nachdenkt, wird auch keine haben (The one who doesn't think about the future, hasn't got future) clearly reflects the attitude towards ecology, and our interviewees agreed with that. Also, reading various articles and works about sustainability, we noted that the majority of them are devoted to ecology. There are thousands of articles devoted to the protection of the environment and a thousand pieces of advice on how to protect the world starting with yourself. Here are the examples of advice that we heard from our interviewees: Mehrwegflaschen und – becher aus Glas kaufen (Buy products from recycled glass), Gemüse und Obst regional und saisonal kaufen (Buy seasonal fruits and vegetables), Duschen statt baden (Shower instead of bath), Zu Ökostrom-Anbieter wechseln (Use green energy) and many more. Many of these pieces of advice are used in Germany as set expressions. Germans know them, try to follow them, and write books about them. Despite that these are not phraseological units, they have a figurative constituent and carry the meaning of culture.

12. Gemeinschaft (community). The next important problem for Germans is the problem of the community. There are lots of phraseological units used in German culture regarding community: «an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth» (Auge um Auge, Zahn um Zahn) or «cheek to cheek» (Wange an Wange), «hand in hand» (Hand in Hand), «side to side» (Seite an Seite). Though this value is not new, it gains new power now. The book Next Germany says that in the country there are “I-value” and “we-value”, and it's not clear which way Germans will choose (Brühl, Koppel, Schomburg, & Schuldt, 2017). Also, German culture is individualistic. However, our interviewees unanimously said that the saying “side to side” clearly indicates the importance of Gemeinschaft (community). In 2015 more than 1 million refugees entered Germany. This was a year of refugees. Although Germany is a financially and economically developed country and Germans succeed, the social climate became rougher, and fears augmented. That's why we suppose that Germany will choose the we-value (Wir-Werte), which is supported by our interviewees unanimously.

As people don't think about such meanings and values in their everyday life, they take the culture and values of their nation for granted. We can understand the meaning in one phrase. In this respect, phraseological units are full of meaning. However, often, they contain only the indication of that meaning. And that's why it is important to know the historical, social, and cultural context to uncover the meaning. While studying the phraseological units in German, i.e. their everyday use, etymology, and interpretation, we found the most relevant meanings of German culture:

- success is work that brings joy;
- the recognition by the team workers and superiors is the first step to enjoyable work;
- the economy is rational planning which is not connected to success;
- contrary to the perception, Germans work in free time (no strict division between working time and free time);
- free time is for work, family, sport or friends;
- the ideology of sport is extolled (the real desire to do sports is higher than sports itself);
- a healthy person is a rich person;
- the freedom is dearer than gold or silver, but the limitation of freedom in the name of security is justified;
- the need in security – better safe than sorry;
- everybody contributes to ecological sustainability;
- we-value means power in unity;

Thus, the value contents of the axiological phraseological units reflect the values and meanings of German culture. The phraseology of languages is not only the reflection of the world view and historical experience of nations who use this phraseology. It's also a specific way to code the culturally significant values and their meanings. The specificity of encoding is that the meaning of a phraseological unit is not equal to the sum of meanings of its words. That's why the extraction of value contents of the phraseological units allowed us to fully and deeply understand the worldview of German culture.

7. Conclusion

The axiological phraseological units of the German language encapsulate value contents. They have led us to the meanings of German culture. As values and meanings of culture influence the worldview of a nation, the same way a nation chooses its values and meanings of culture. Important values are encapsulated in the culture here and now. That's why we considered the use of axiological phraseological units by native speakers and uncovered important values and meanings of German culture. Values and meanings don't have importance by themselves. However, they indicate the direction of thought of a particular representative of a culture. That's why we could understand the behavior and actions of German culture bearers after we studied the values and meanings of German culture. Besides, the importance of studying actual values and meanings of culture (in our case by means of phraseological units) is important for cultural studies as a science.

The problem of meaning is one of the key issues in understanding the culture of a nation. The secret of meanings of culture can't always be uncovered. Due to this research, we could determine both the values and meanings of culture. Axiological phraseological units have one important value: the meaning of a phraseological unit is not equal to the meanings of words that constitute it. Native speakers use axiological phraseological units to encapsulate meanings that only the bearers of a particular culture can understand. That's why the study of these meanings allows finding the deeper meanings of culture, which is important for cultural studies.

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