

COGNITIVE AND PRAGMATIC ASPECTS OF PHRASEOLOGICAL COMPETENCE IN ENGLISH PHILOLOGY STUDENTS

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Abstract. *Phraseological competence is a crucial component of communicative competence in foreign language learning, particularly for English philology students. This study investigates the cognitive and pragmatic dimensions of phraseological competence and examines how these aspects influence students' ability to use idiomatic and fixed expressions effectively in both spoken and written communication. The research employs qualitative methods, including theoretical analysis, comparative analysis of phraseological units, and discourse analysis. Findings indicate that cognitive awareness of conceptual metaphors and pragmatic understanding of context significantly enhance learners' phraseological competence. Integrating cognitive and pragmatic strategies into teaching methodologies is recommended to improve language proficiency and intercultural communicative skills.*

Keywords: *phraseological competence, cognitive linguistics, pragmatics, English philology students, idioms, communicative competence.*

In modern linguistics and foreign language pedagogy, phraseological competence is regarded as an essential component of overall communicative competence. Phraseological units, such as idioms, collocations, and fixed expressions, enrich communication by adding expressiveness, stylistic variety, and cultural depth to both spoken and written language [Azimova & Abdulhakimova, 2025].

Recent studies in cognitive linguistics emphasize that phraseological units are not merely memorized lexical chunks but are cognitive constructions that reflect underlying conceptual structures in the human mind. Idioms often reveal metaphorical patterns, linking language with thought processes [Tursunova, 2025]. Understanding these patterns enables students to comprehend not only literal but also implied meanings, improving both retention and contextual use of idiomatic expressions. Pragmatic aspects of phraseological competence concern how such units function in real communicative contexts.

Research demonstrates that phraseological units help convey speaker intentions, modify politeness, express humor, and manage interpersonal relationships [Valieva & Ibrokhimova, 2025].

This dual perspective—cognitive and pragmatic—offers a comprehensive approach to teaching and learning idiomatic expressions in English.

Despite its significance, many English philology students struggle to use phraseological units accurately. Common difficulties include misunderstanding metaphorical meaning, inappropriate context usage, and challenges in translation. Therefore, this study examines the cognitive and pragmatic aspects of phraseological competence to determine effective strategies for enhancing English philology students' communicative abilities. This research adopts a qualitative methodology, integrating theoretical, comparative, and discourse-based analyses to examine the cognitive and pragmatic dimensions of phraseological competence.

Theoretical analysis: Relevant literature on phraseology, cognitive semantics, and pragmatics was studied to develop a solid conceptual framework [Estaji & Hashemi, 2022].

Comparative analysis: Selected English phraseological expressions were analyzed to uncover underlying conceptual metaphors and structural patterns that support understanding.

Discourse analysis: Classroom conversations, literary passages, and spoken interactions were examined to assess the pragmatic functions and contextual appropriateness of the phraseological units [Valieva & Ibrokhimova, 2025].

Data were collected from authentic sources, including English literary texts, online corpora, and student classroom interactions, ensuring applicability to both academic settings and everyday communication.

The analysis of data revealed that phraseological competence in English philology students is influenced primarily by two interrelated dimensions: cognitive processes and pragmatic sensitivity. Both are crucial for the proper comprehension, retention, and use of idiomatic expressions in various communicative contexts.

Cognitive Processes. Cognitive processes play a central role in learners' ability to understand and internalize idiomatic language. Key mechanisms include conceptual metaphor, mental imagery, and associative thinking. Idioms such as "spill the beans" or "on cloud nine" exemplify metaphorical mappings between abstract concepts and more concrete experiences.

Learners who actively recognize these metaphorical relationships demonstrate superior comprehension, as they are able to form mental representations that make the meaning of idioms more memorable and accessible [Tursunova, 2025]. Cognitive awareness allows students to draw connections between idiomatic expressions and related vocabulary, phrases, or contextual scenarios. For example, understanding "breaking the ice" involves recognizing the metaphorical link between physical actions and social interactions. Students with well-developed cognitive skills tend to recall idioms more quickly and use them flexibly in both speech and writing, adapting them to new contexts without losing their intended meaning. This indicates that cognitive mechanisms not only support comprehension but also facilitate creative language use.

Pragmatic Sensitivity. While cognitive processes underpin comprehension, pragmatic sensitivity ensures that phraseological units are used appropriately in social and communicative contexts. Idioms often convey subtle nuances of politeness, humor, emphasis, or emotional tone.

For instance, using the expression "kick the bucket" in a formal academic discussion may be perceived as inappropriate despite its correct grammatical structure. Learners who lack pragmatic awareness may produce idioms that are technically correct but contextually awkward, leading to misunderstandings or a reduction in communicative effectiveness [Valieva & Ibrokhimova, 2025]. Pragmatic competence also includes the ability to recognize cultural and situational cues. For example, the idiom "once in a blue moon" conveys rarity, but its use in casual conversation versus a professional presentation requires careful adjustment. Students with strong pragmatic skills can navigate these distinctions, selecting idiomatic expressions that match the tone, audience, and purpose of communication.

Integration of Cognitive and Pragmatic Dimensions. The findings suggest that the most effective learners are those who integrate cognitive and pragmatic perspectives.

Students who understand both the underlying metaphorical structures of idioms and their context-dependent functions show higher accuracy, appropriateness, and fluency in language use.

They can modify idiomatic expressions to suit different communicative situations, thereby enhancing expressiveness and naturalness in both oral and written discourse. The study highlights that the interplay between cognitive and pragmatic skills contributes to long-term retention of idiomatic knowledge. Learners who combine these dimensions are more likely to transfer idiomatic competence to unfamiliar contexts, demonstrating not only comprehension but also productive mastery. This integration reinforces the importance of teaching strategies that emphasize both the cognitive mechanisms behind idioms and their pragmatic usage in real-life communication.

The research underscores that phraseological competence is not merely a matter of memorizing fixed expressions. Instead, it is a dynamic skill that relies on learners' ability to perceive, interpret, and apply idiomatic meanings through both cognitive and pragmatic lenses.

Effective instruction should therefore foster metaphorical awareness, mental visualization, and context-sensitive usage to support students' overall communicative competence.

The findings of this study indicate that developing phraseological competence cannot rely solely on rote memorization. Cognitive linguistic perspectives highlight that an understanding of metaphorical structures enables learners to internalize idiomatic meanings more deeply and to use them creatively in both speech and writing [Tursunova, 2025]. Recognizing the conceptual mappings underlying idioms helps students form mental representations that make language learning more meaningful and memorable. Pragmatic competence plays a complementary role by guiding learners in the socially and contextually appropriate use of phraseological units. Without this awareness, students may produce grammatically correct expressions that fail to convey the intended nuance or tone in real-life interactions. Integrating cognitive and pragmatic elements in instruction is therefore essential for fostering both accurate comprehension and effective communication. Practical approaches that support this integration include contextualized exercises using authentic texts, discourse-focused activities that emphasize social and communicative functions, and tasks aimed at identifying metaphors to enhance conceptual awareness. Such strategies help learners connect theoretical knowledge with practical usage, promoting a more holistic development of phraseological competence.

Combining cognitive and pragmatic training not only improves learners' accuracy and appropriateness in using idiomatic expressions but also contributes to greater fluency, expressiveness, and confidence in communication, ultimately strengthening the overall communicative competence of English philology students [Azimova & Abdulhakimova, 2025].

Phraseological competence integrates cognitive and pragmatic dimensions, both of which are essential for proficient and contextually appropriate language use. Cognitive aspects facilitate understanding of metaphorical and conceptual structures, while pragmatic aspects ensure appropriateness and effectiveness in communication. Developing phraseological competence requires systematic instruction that emphasizes both dimensions. Incorporating cognitive and pragmatic strategies into teaching not only improves idiomatic usage but also strengthens intercultural communicative skills.

Future research could explore technology-enhanced learning, including digital corpora, idiom databases, and AI-based platforms, to further enhance students' phraseological competence.

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