



# Idiomatic Word Formation Based on Dictionary Examples

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## OPEN ACCESS

SUBMITTED 23 April 2025

ACCEPTED 19 May 2025

PUBLISHED 21 June 2025

VOLUME Vol.05 Issue06 2025

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**Abstract:** The article examines the phenomenon of idiomatic word formation in the Russian language, its theoretical aspects, examples from explanatory and phraseological dictionaries, and studies by Russian linguists. It analyzes the processes of semantic transformation of words, their consolidation in the language, and the influence of context on the perception of idiomaticity. Modern trends in the development of idiomatic formations, their lexicographic fixation, and the role of metaphorization are considered.

**Keywords:** Idiomaticity, word formation, phraseology, semantics, metaphor.

**Introduction:** Modern Russian studies pay considerable attention to the study of idiomatic processes in language, as well as the ways of reflecting such phenomena in lexicographic sources. The term "idiomatic word formation" implies such linguistic formations that go beyond the usual transparent morphological structure and acquire a special phraseological or semi-phraseological meaning. At the same time, in the language they function as units close in status to phraseological units or stable word combinations [5, p. 675]. In this paper, we will consider how Russian linguists interpret the concept of idiomatic word formation, what examples are given in the largest dictionaries of the Russian language (for example, in the explanatory dictionaries of D. Ushakov, S. Ozhegov and modern phraseological dictionaries), and also analyze the results of studies devoted to this issue. Idiomatic word formation in Russian is considered as a set of ways of forming words, in which a familiar morphological structure is formally observed, but the semantics of the

resulting word is fully or partially fixed by the tradition of use and is not reduced to a simple sum of the meanings of its components. Simply put, with this mechanism, a word arising from suffixes, prefixes or combined roots acquires a stable meaning, which does not follow directly from the addition of the meanings of morphemes. In Russian linguistics, the term "idiomatic" has long been discussed in connection with phraseological units. Classical definitions, given back in the middle of the 20th century, associate "idiomatic" with the fact that individual components of a linguistic unit lose their original semantic independence. However, in phraseological units this usually concerns combinations of words, while in idiomatic word formation a similar process occurs within a single lexeme. For example, in the word "crazy" we see a suffix-prefix structure (the prefix "su-"; the root "-ma-" from "um", a change within the root), but the meaning "crazy" (moreover, phraseologically colored) is not directly derived from the simple combination "um + a + shed". Among the Russian scientists who paid special attention to this area, we can name V.V. Vinogradov, who emphasized the importance of the "semantic alloy" in derivative words [4], as well as N.N. Amosova, who studied phraseological units proper, but periodically touched on idiomatic formations within a word [1]. S.I. Ozhegov played a significant role in formulating the principles of distinguishing between idiomatic and motivated (transparent) words, since in his dictionary one can find notes to some lexemes, indicating a difficult motivational connection between the generating and derivative words [11].

Some researchers (for example, E. A. Zemskaia and her colleagues) point out that idiomaticity can accumulate even within the framework of a regular word-formation process, if a particular word is often used in a figurative sense, turning from a "transparent" derivation into a lexeme with a phraseologically fixed meaning [4, p. 111]. Such studies are especially relevant for the dynamics of modern language, where new word-formation models are constantly appearing, including those borrowed from social networks, youth slang, and professional jargons. Pre-revolutionary Russian lexicography, especially related scientific research, mainly focused on describing "noticeable" cases of morphological opacity of words, often associating such phenomena with folk etymology or what today would be called "school" mistakes and rethinking. Thus, V.I. In his Explanatory Dictionary of the Living Great Russian Language (the first edition was published in parts in 1863–1866), Dal often included ethnographic observations in articles, pointing out oddities or special transfers of meaning [5]. For example, in articles devoted to words such as

"svyatki," "maslenitsa," and "govenie," he pointed out that these were not just a combination of morphemes, but entire complexes of cultural and linguistic tradition, which essentially gave them partial phraseological fixation.

In the Soviet period, especially in the 1930s–1950s, when the Soviet school of lexicography was actively forming (primarily at Moscow and Leningrad Universities), more and more attention was paid to questions of phraseology. Following this, interest in borderline cases also grew: stable combinations within one word, phraseologically reworked affixes, changed roots, etc. It was already noted then that some prefixes (for example, "iz-", "pre-", "s-", "za-") can acquire a non-standard, purely idiomatic meaning. For example, in such verbs as "izvesti" (meaning "to destroy"), "prebyt" (meaning "to be"), "sbudit's" (about dreams or forecasts), etc., one can observe what, by modern standards, can be called partial or complete idiomatization. Subsequent studies in the second half of the 20th century continued to refine the criteria that make it possible to distinguish transparently motivated word formation from idiomatic. In particular, the theory of "semantic transformations" within a word was actively developed. Thus, G. A. Zolotova, N. A. Lukyanova, V. N. Telia and other scientists contributed to the understanding of how figurative meaning is formed at the morpheme level, and how this is reflected or not reflected in dictionary entries [7; 9; 12].

Dictionaries as the basis of lexicographic practice not only register new words, but also set standards for their use, indicate features of lexical meaning, stylistic and grammatical marks. For idiomatic word formation, it is important how lexicographers describe: firstly, whether they explain the internal form, whether they indicate transparency or opacity of structural elements; secondly, whether they indicate that the word has a figurative or highly specialized meaning that does not directly arise from the sum of morphemes; thirdly, for example, the marks "colloquial," "vernacular," "fam." (familiar), etc., which may indirectly indicate that the lexeme has an idiomatic character; and finally, they show that the word is used not in the literal sense, but in a rethought, "fused" one. Explanatory dictionaries by V. I. Dahl, D. N. Ushakov, S. I. Ozhegov, as well as more modern editions of the "Big Academic Dictionary of the Russian Language" from the Institute of Russian Language of the Russian Academy of Sciences, phraseological dictionaries edited by A. I. Molotov, V. N. Telia and others actively include in their volumes words that can be characterized as idiomatic in their word-formation structure. However, there is usually no uniformity in the notes. In some cases, it is indicated: "Peren.", "Joke.", "Iron.", etc., which directly hints at the

impossibility of a literal (direct) interpretation. In other situations, lexicographers leave the user to guess that, for example, a prefix or suffix does not have the usual, "school-understandable" meaning, and the word is perceived as a single whole without parsing.

For clarity, let us turn to specific examples recorded in well-known explanatory and phraseological dictionaries. The word "zatverzhit" (to hold back), at first glance, is a transparent formation from the prefix "za-" and the verb "zatverzhit" (to hold back). However, in some contexts the word acquires specific figurative meanings, for example, "to hinder development", "to prevent the opportunity to prove oneself". In the dictionary of S. I. Ozhegov, several meanings of the verb "zatverzhit" (to hold back), one of which can well be considered as partially idiomatic: "to hold back the development of the organism" (in a medical or general biological context) [11, p. 444]. Here "za-" not only indicates an action to the side (as in "zakryt", "zamknut"), but already carries a functional load associated specifically with suspension or inhibition.

Or consider the word "дожигать" (to live to see), which, of course, seems logical in modern language: "до-" indicates reaching a limit. But if you look into historical dictionaries, you can find that in the 19th century and earlier, the use of "дожигать" (to live to see) with the addition "до чем" (to what) was not always perceived as a simple combination of a prefix and a root, but had the meaning "to endure", "to reach some result" [13, p. 165]. This was slightly different from the simple idea of completing an action. Thus, an element of idiomaticity is included here: the speaker could mean not only the achievement itself, but also the figurative "to suffer through". In another example, "засучать" (to get bored), on the one hand, it can be transparent: "за-" + "to get bored" (to start getting bored or to get bored more deeply). However, in a colloquial context, it can acquire additional emotional and evaluative shades that go beyond the simple sum of "напускать" (to start getting bored). Thus, in some dialects, "to get bored" can also mean "to feel languor, sadness, turning into melancholy", and this meaning is not fully motivated by the prefix "za-". Whereas, the word "bezobraznichat". If we break down this word: prefix "bez-", root "-obraz-", suffix "-nich-", ending "-at". Formally, it means "to behave without (some) image", but the history of the word and its semantics are closely connected with the idea of "inappropriate behavior", hooliganism, violation of accepted norms. Ushakov's dictionary gives the interpretation: "to act inappropriately, to hooligan" [14, p. 1141]. As a result, "bezobraznichat" is understood as a single, long-stable form, the meaning of which is largely idiomatic. And

finally, we can give an example of the word "obaldet". The root "-балд-" does not exist in the Russian language as an independent one, and only in folklore or colloquial expressions do we encounter "балда" (often meaning "head", "stupid person"). The prefix "o-" here gives the verb a specific expressive-evaluative meaning: "to be amazed", "to lose the ability to think" (sometimes in a positive sense - "to be amazed"). In lexicographic descriptions, this word is indicated as colloquial, often used in contexts of strong emotions, and in essence it is idiomatic, since the connection between "o-" and "балд-" cannot be considered purely morphologically transparent [8, p. 898]. There are many similar examples: "crazy", "to go berserk", "to work oneself to death" (meaning "to immerse oneself in work until oblivion"), "to have fun" (in youth slang – "to have a good time"), etc. Each of them, being recorded in dictionaries, demonstrates certain aspects of idiomaticity.

In order to understand where the "usual" word formation ends and the "idiomatic" begins, linguists must pay attention to the following criteria: a) the impossibility of deriving the meaning from the sum of morphemes, when the speaker, familiar with the basic meanings of prefixes and suffixes, still cannot understand the meaning of the new word without referring to the living language or dictionary, then we are most likely talking about idiomaticity; b) a change in the form of the root or suffix, not explained by phonetic laws. It should be noted here that often in idiomatic formations the root is distorted, or contains elements that have lost their original meaning, as in "обалделер"; c) fixed figurative meanings - the word is used mainly in a figurative, metaphorical sense, and this meaning is stable and manifests itself in many contexts (not only in colloquial speech, but sometimes in literary texts). In a number of dictionaries, we can see how different authors place different emphasis when describing the same word. For example, in the Explanatory Dictionary of the Russian Language edited by D. N. Ushakov, there may be a note "colloquial" [14], while in the Dictionary of the Russian Language by S. I. Ozhegov, there may be an explanation such as "used usually in a figurative sense" [11]. Sometimes, in new dictionaries (for example, in the Large Explanatory Dictionary of the Russian Language edited by Kuznetsov), instead of directly indicating idiomaticity, they use the formulation "used in the meaning of..." [8], hinting that a literal interpretation does not work.

Such diversity in lexicographic practice indicates that idiomaticity does not have a clear boundary: for some authors, a word may still seem transparent (albeit with some figurative connotation), while for others, it may already be phraseologically "fused". In the course of

numerous studies conducted in the light of modern science, several conclusions were made that help to systematize knowledge about idiomatic word formation. Thus, it was established that many words gradually move to idiomatic status. At first, they may have a relatively transparent internal form, but as figurative use is consolidated, speakers lose the sense of morphological motivation. At a certain point, the word begins to be perceived as a single unit. According to N. D. Arutyunova, V. N. Telia and other researchers, metaphor is the key mechanism that leads to idiomaticity. Through metaphor, figurative meanings "grow" to the word, and then are consolidated in the language as a fact of convention [2; 12]. It was revealed that colloquial and vernacular speech is often richer in idiomatic formations than the official business or scientific style. However, when such units move from the colloquial sphere to the literary-normative sphere, a re-evaluation or elimination of the "lowered" connotation may occur, and the word becomes established as quite standard. An example is the verb "свихнутся" (meaning "to lose one's mind, to get into a difficult psychological situation"). Previously, this was considered a vivid colloquialism, but now it is sometimes encountered in journalism and popular literature. According to a number of experts (E. A. Zemskaya, A. I. Molotkov, O. N. Trubachev), the most reliable way to establish that a word has acquired the status of an idiomatic one is to find a stable fixation of the transfer of meaning in several authoritative dictionaries [6; 10; 13]. If it is mentioned everywhere for decades and is accompanied by a note indicating that the meaning cannot be derived from the composition, then the language has successfully integrated this formation.

In works on cognitive linguistics (for example, T. V. Bulygina, A. D. Shmeleva) it is emphasized that idiomaticity should be studied not only at the level of word-formation models, but also within the framework of conceptual schemes that a native speaker uses to understand these words [3, p. 78]. Sometimes the speaker is not aware of the morphological structure at all, perceiving the word as an "atomic" unit. Consequently, research confirms that idiomatic word formation is a dynamic and multi-level process directly related to the cultural and speech experience of native speakers, as well as to the activities of lexicographers. Thus, idiomatic word formation is one of the complex and at the same time fascinating aspects of the Russian language. It demonstrates how language, on the one hand, follows certain patterns (models of prefixes, suffixes, roots), and on the other hand, constantly rethinks and redesigns its own resources, giving birth to new units

whose meaning cannot be reduced to a simple sum of morphemes. The results of the research indicate the gradual, multifaceted and contextual determinacy of idiomaticity. In addition, most of the new words that arise as a result of mixing languages, slang vocabulary and the official Russian language almost immediately demonstrate signs of idiomaticity: roots and affixes are "glued together" in such a way that without a cultural background and tradition of use it is difficult to understand them.

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