

COMPOUNDS EXPRESSING EMOTIONAL UNITS IN RUSSIAN AND THEIR LINGUISTIC AND CULTURAL CHARACTERISTICS

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Abstract. This article explores compound words in the Russian language that express emotional states and attitudes. Through the lens of linguistics and cultural semantics, we analyze how these compounds are formed, their syntactic and morphological structures, and their role in expressing culturally specific emotions. The study also highlights the influence of Russian worldview and national character on the language's emotional vocabulary.

Key words: compound words, emotional vocabulary, cultural linguistics, semantics, emotion expression, language and culture, metaphor, worldview.

Аннотация. В этой статье рассматриваются сложные слова в русском языке, которые выражают эмоциональные состояния и отношения. Через призму лингвистики и культурной семантики мы анализируем, как эти соединения образуются, их синтаксическую и морфологическую структуру и их роль в выражении культурно-специфических эмоций. В исследовании также подчеркивается влияние русского мировоззрения и национального характера на эмоциональный словарь языка.

Ключевые слова: сложные слова, эмоциональный словарь, культурная лингвистика, семантика, выражение эмоций, язык и культура, метафора, мировоззрение.

Introduction. Emotions are a fundamental part of human experience, shaping perception, behavior, and communication. However, the ways in which emotions are expressed linguistically differ significantly across languages and cultures. In the Russian language, emotional expression is particularly rich and diverse, with compound words playing a notable role in conveying complex emotional states and social attitudes.

Compound words in Russian (сложные слова) are formed by combining two or more lexical units into a single word, often resulting in expressions that are both vivid and culturally loaded. These compounds can encapsulate entire emotional experiences,



personality traits, or value judgments in a single term – something that may require full sentences in other languages. For example, words like *душегуб* (soul-killer) or *сердцебиение* (heart-beating) reflect not just a state or action, but an emotional and cultural attitude toward it. The study of these emotional compounds provides insight into the Russian worldview, revealing how language encodes feelings, moral values, and social relationships.

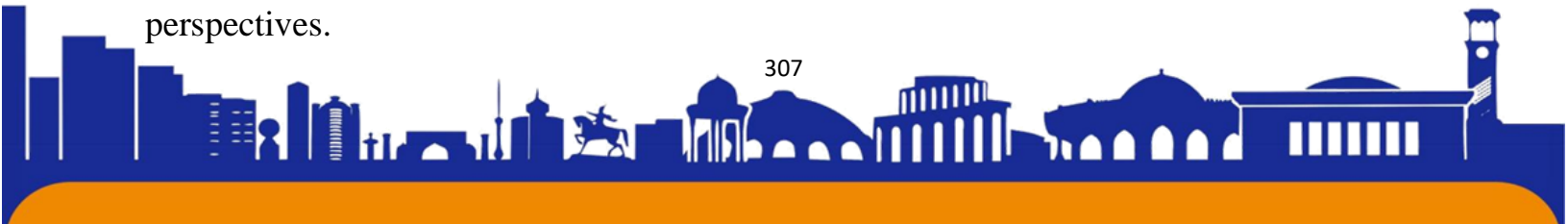
Furthermore, it highlights the cultural significance of emotional depth and expression in Russian society, where concepts such as *душа* (soul), *сердце* (heart), and *чувство* (feeling) occupy central positions in the national consciousness.

Literature review and methodology. The study of emotional language has attracted considerable attention across various fields, including linguistics, psychology, cultural studies, and cognitive science. Scholars such as Anna Wierzbicka (1992, 1999) have emphasized the cultural relativity of emotional concepts, arguing that languages encode culture-specific emotional meanings through lexical choices and grammatical structures. In her work on Russian emotional lexicon, Wierzbicka highlights how key concepts like *душа* (soul) and *сердце* (heart) are central to Russian identity and emotional expression.

Other studies (e.g., Pavlenko, 2008; Zaliznyak et al., 2005) have examined how emotional meanings are shaped through metaphor and metonymy in Russian, often embedded in compound or prefixed forms. These works show that Russian exhibits a strong tendency toward emotionally saturated vocabulary, with many compounds expressing evaluative or affective meanings. For instance, the use of emotionally expressive compound nouns like *душегрейка* (soul-warmer) or *сердцеломка* (heart-breaker) reveals the language's deep connection to bodily and spiritual imagery.

From a structural point of view, Vinogradov (1947) and more recently, Plungian (2011), have explored Russian word formation processes, including compounding, and their semantic productivity. These studies provide a foundation for analyzing how compound words function not just morphologically, but also semantically and pragmatically in emotional discourse.

Despite growing interest in emotional vocabulary, specific attention to compound words expressing emotions in Russian remains relatively underexplored. This paper aims to fill that gap by combining morphological analysis with cultural and cognitive perspectives.



Results. This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach, combining elements of structural linguistics, cultural linguistics, and cognitive semantics to analyze Russian compound words that express emotional units. Data Collection. The data set includes:

Lexical entries from authoritative Russian dictionaries (e.g., Ozhegov, Ushakov, Efremova). Examples from literary texts (e.g., Dostoevsky, Chekhov, Tolstoy). Selected contemporary media and online discourse, where neologisms and expressive compounds are common. Approximately 80 compound words with explicit or implicit emotional content were selected for detailed analysis. Analysis Procedure. Each compound was analyzed based on:

Morphological structure – Type of compound (noun-noun, adjective-noun, verb-based, etc.)

Semantic content – Primary and secondary emotional meanings, metaphorical imagery.

Cultural associations – Traditional, literary, or religious connotations.

Pragmatic usage – Context of use: formal vs. informal, ironic vs. sincere, etc.

Comparative insights were also drawn with emotional compounds in English, to highlight cultural specificity. This study is limited to written sources and may not fully reflect regional or spoken variation in emotional compounds. Further research including sociolinguistic interviews or corpus-based statistical analysis would provide a broader perspective.

Emotion is a universal human experience, yet the linguistic expression of emotion varies significantly across cultures. In Russian, emotional expressions are often embedded in compound words that convey subtle nuances of feelings, social attitudes, and psychological states. These linguistic units serve not only communicative functions but also reflect cultural identity and social values.

This paper focuses on Russian compound words (сложные слова) that encapsulate emotional meaning. We examine their formation, semantic structure, and cultural implications, offering insights into the interplay between language and emotion in the Russian sociolinguistic context.

Linguistic relativity theory (Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis) – which suggests language influences thought and perception. Cognitive linguistics – focusing on how emotion concepts are structured and expressed in language.



Discussion. Cultural linguistics – analyzing the reflection of cultural schemas in language. The study also incorporates morphological analysis to understand compound formation in Russian. Types of Emotional Compounds in Russian. Russian compounds expressing emotion can be categorized into:

a) Noun-noun compounds. These often express personality traits or social labels based on emotional behavior. Example: душтрепка (from *душа* - soul, and *трепать* - to shake) – something emotionally tormenting. сердцедер (heart + tear) – overly sentimental person or content.

b) Adjective-noun compounds. Used for characterizing emotions or emotional objects. Example: горевестник (grief + herald) – one who brings bad news. сладкоголосый (sweet + voiced) – a voice with an emotionally pleasant tone.

c) Verb-based compounds (neologisms and colloquial forms). Modern Russian, especially online discourse, produces playful or expressive compounds: плакаться-жаловаться – to whine/complain emotionally. радоносец (joy + bearer) – one who brings happiness (ironically or sincerely).

Linguistic Characteristics. Morphological richness. Russian allows a high degree of compounding, thanks to inflection and flexible word order.

Prefixation/suffixation in compounds. Emotional nuance is often enhanced via diminutives or augmentatives (*душонка, миленький*).

Phonosemantic qualities. Sound symbolism often mirrors the emotional tone (e.g., hard consonants for anger, soft vowels for affection).

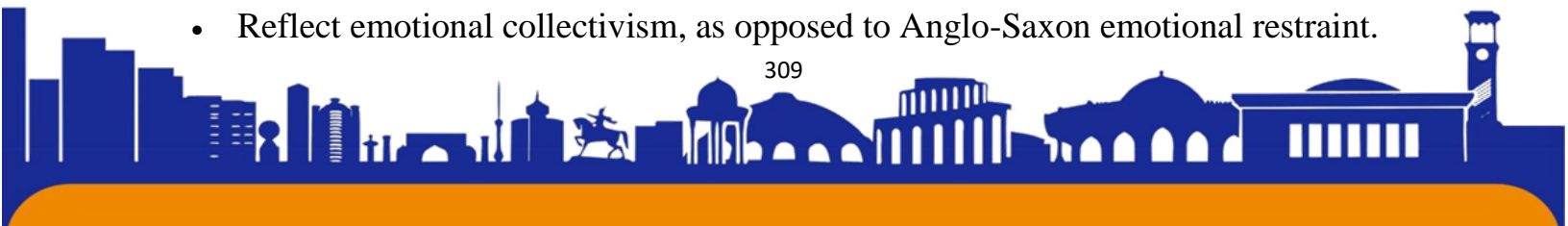
Cultural Characteristics. Emotion and collectivism. Russian culture traditionally values emotional openness and collectivist expression. Emotional compounds often highlight social interaction (e.g., жалобщик, душевный).

Emotional intensity. Russian tends to emphasize depth of feeling; many emotional compounds express extremes (e.g., бездушный - soulless, душевный - soulful).

Religious and literary influence. Orthodox Christianity and Russian literature (Dostoevsky, Tolstoy) influence emotional vocabulary with spiritually loaded compounds (e.g., грехоносец – sin-bearer).

Cross-Cultural Comparison. Compared to English, Russian emotional compounds tend to be more expressive and poetic.

- Rely more on metaphoric and symbolic imagery.
- Reflect emotional collectivism, as opposed to Anglo-Saxon emotional restraint.





Compound words expressing emotional meanings in Russian represent a unique linguistic phenomenon that reflects both the structural richness of the language and the deep emotional and cultural values embedded within it. Through the combination of morphemes – such as *душа* (soul), *сердце* (heart), *грусть* (sadness), *радость* (joy) – these compounds are capable of conveying highly nuanced emotional states and social attitudes in a compact and often metaphorical form.

Conclusion. The analysis shows that emotional compounds in Russian are not only linguistically productive but also culturally significant. They often reflect key aspects of the Russian worldview, such as the importance of the soul (*душа*), emotional sincerity, and collective emotional experience. This cultural embeddedness distinguishes Russian from languages like English, where emotional expression through compounding is generally less vivid or symbolic.

Moreover, emotional compounds serve important pragmatic functions: they convey evaluation, irony, affection, or criticism, often in a highly expressive or poetic style. Their use in literature, media, and everyday speech illustrates their flexibility and continuing relevance in modern Russian discourse.

In sum, the study of emotional compounds in Russian provides valuable insight into the relationship between language, emotion, and culture. It also opens opportunities for further comparative research in Slavic linguistics and cross-cultural semantics, particularly in the areas of metaphor, emotion conceptualization, and linguistic creativity.

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