

## Key Principles for the Classification of Precedent Phenomena in Linguistics

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### ABSTRACT

*This article explores the fundamental principles behind the classification of precedent phenomena and their role in linguistic consciousness and communicative practice. Various approaches to the definition and typology of precedent units are analyzed. The classification criteria origin, frequency, functionality, and cultural relevance are discussed. The article highlights the importance of precedent phenomena in intercultural communication and pragmalinguistics.*

**Keywords:** Precedent phenomenon, precedent unit, cultural code, classification, intercultural communication, linguistic worldview.

### INTRODUCTION

The concept of “precedentedness” has firmly established itself in modern linguistics, primarily through the works of Yu.N. Karaulov, V. M. Telia, E. M. Vereshchagin, and others. Precedent phenomena are cultural signs recognized and recalled by language users. These units are widely used in everyday speech, media, political, and advertising discourse.

Despite their prevalence, there is no single, unified classification of precedent phenomena. This is due to the diversity of such units and the various approaches researchers take. This article aims to synthesize and systematize the core principles for classifying precedent phenomena in linguistics.

THE CONCEPT OF PRECEDENTNESS AND PRECEDENT  
PHENOMENA

Precedentness refers to a unit's ability to trigger stable associations in the mind of a language speaker, typically linked to well-known cultural, historical, or literary references. According to Yu. N. Karaulov, a precedent text or name is something that "every cultured person knows" and uses to appeal to shared background knowledge.

Examples:

- Precedent names: "Hamlet," "Sherlock Holmes," "Napoleon"
- Precedent texts: "To be or not to be," "I loved you"
- Precedent situations: The fall of the Berlin Wall, Gagarin's spaceflight
- Precedent utterances: "Everyone chooses for themselves"

*Classification criteria for precedent phenomena*

Among the numerous classification approaches, four main criteria are commonly accepted:

*Source of origin*

This criterion categorizes units based on where they come from:

- Literary (Pushkin, Shakespeare)
- Historical (Lenin, Hitler)
- Mythological/Religious (Prometheus, Moses)
- Cinematic/Media (James Bond, Harry Potter)
- Folkloric (Koschei the Deathless, Aldar Kose)

*Level of intertextual recognition*

This criterion distinguishes:

- Widely known – recognized across the general public
- Local – known within specific social or professional groups

*Functional and communicative role*

Precedent units serve different functions:

- Appellative (drawing attention)
- Emotive (expressing emotion)
- Identificational (signaling group belonging)
- Manipulative (influencing the addressee)

*Manner of discourse integration*

Ways these units appear in texts:

- Direct quotation
- Allusion
- Parody, stylization, irony
- Typologies by Karaulov and Telia

Yu.N. Karaulov classifies precedent phenomena as:

- Precedent names
- Precedent texts
- Precedent utterances
- Precedent situations

V. M. Telia adds the notion of "secondary cultural signs," emphasizing that precedent units gain their status only after becoming embedded in collective memory.

## RELEVANCE IN THE MODERN WORLD

Globalization and the rise of digital communication have expanded the scope of precedentness. New forms include memes, quotes from video games, blogs, and TV shows. So-called hybrid phenomena now combine features from different sources.

For instance, "This is Sparta!" mixes mythological, cinematic, and media codes. These modern examples demand revised and flexible classification systems.

## SIGNIFICANCE IN INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

Precedent phenomena reflect national mentalities, historical memory, and cultural codes, playing a critical role in intercultural dialogue. However, their interpretation can be challenging across languages.

Example:

The Russian phrase “He’s a real Oblomov” evokes the image of a lazy, passive person. For a foreigner unfamiliar with the novel, the reference is likely to be lost, diminishing its communicative value.

*Methodological approaches to the study of precedent phenomena*

Different methodologies offer varying perspectives on precedent units:

*Linguocultural approach*

This links language and culture. Precedent phenomena are seen as carriers of cultural memory, representing values, norms, and national identity.

*Pragmalinguistic approach*

This focuses on the conditions and purposes of using precedent units in discourse, including speaker intention (e.g., irony, persuasion).

*Cognitive approach*

Precedent phenomena are viewed as elements of a mental model, creating cognitive connections between prior experience and new information.

*Precedent phenomena in media and digital discourse*

The digital age has given rise to new forms of precedentness:

- Internet memes: visual-text cultural symbols
- Hashtags: markers of precedent situations (#MeToo, #StayHome)

- Influencer quotes: creating “new precedent units” within youth culture

Examples like “This is a fiasco, bro!” illustrate how digital expressions can become cultural allusions.

#### CLASSIFICATION BY EMOTIONAL-EVALUATIVE PARAMETER

Precedent units often carry emotional connotations, contributing to the evaluative function of language:

- Positive (Gandhi – peace, Mother Teresa – kindness)
- Neutral (historical facts)
- Negative (Hitler – evil, Quasimodo – deformity)

Such emotional value affects modality and interpretation.

#### *Cross-cultural specificity of precedent phenomena*

One phenomenon may have contrasting connotations in different cultures:

Precedent unit	Perception in Culture A	Perception in culture B
Robin Hood	Hero of justice (English)	Outlaw (Eastern cultures)
Che Guevara	Freedom icon (Latin America)	Radical extremist (USA)
Don Juan	Seducer (European)	Immoral figure (Islamic societies)

These contrasts highlight the need for cultural adaptation in translation and communication.

#### *Prospects for future research*

Emerging trends suggest several promising directions:

- Dynamic (temporal) classification models
- Studies on children's and youth precedentness
- Analysis of hybrid genres (vlogs, digital storytelling)
- Creation of precedent unit corpora for computational linguistics

## CONCLUSION

1. Precedent phenomena are essential to the linguistic and cultural worldview of any language community.
2. Their classification must consider origin, function, emotional tone, and discourse context.
3. Modern approaches-cognitive, pragmalinguistic, mediallyinguistic-enable deeper analysis.
4. Understanding these units contributes to the comprehension of cultural codes and intertextuality in language.

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