

# LINGUOCULTURAL FEATURES OF PHRASEOLOGICAL UNITS IN N.V. GOGOL'S WORK "THE INSPECTOR GENERAL"

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## Abstract

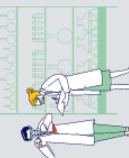
N.V. Gogol's "The Inspector General" serves as a profound satirical commentary on the bureaucratic inefficiencies and moral decay prevalent in Russian society during the early 19th century. The play follows the story of a lowly clerk, Khlestakov, who is mistakenly identified as an important government inspector. This misidentification prompts a series of comedic yet critical encounters with the town's corrupt officials, who are desperate to conceal their misdeeds. Through sharp humor and insightful dialogue, Gogol exposes the absurdity of authority and the pervasive culture of bribery, hypocrisy, and fear. The play not only entertains but also invites reflection on the socio-political landscape of the time, making it a timeless piece that resonates with contemporary issues of governance and morality.

**Keywords:** phraseological units, linguoculturology, linguistic and cultural identity, cultural concepts, structure and functions of phraseological units, research methodology, intercultural communication, teaching foreign languages.

## Introduction

Nikolai Vasilievich Gogol's work, "The Inspector General" (1836), stands as a cornerstone of Russian literature and a pivotal exploration of societal absurdities. Set against the backdrop of a provincial town in Russia, Gogol's play offers a biting satire of bureaucratic ineptitude and human folly. The plot revolves around the mistaken identity of Khlestakov, an underachieving civil servant who is misidentified as an important government inspector. This misunderstanding sets off a chain of events that unveils the corruption, greed, and moral degradation that pervade the town's administrative elite. Gogol's masterful blend of humor, irony, and social commentary not only entertains but also serves as a profound critique of the political landscape of his time.

The significance of "The Inspector General" extends beyond its immediate narrative. It engages deeply with themes of identity, the nature of authority, and the often absurd interactions between the individual and the state. Gogol's characters, most notably the comically corrupt officials, embody the flaws and vices prevalent in society, reflecting the author's keen observation of human nature. The play's farcical elements, combined with its serious undertones, invite audiences to reconsider their understanding of power dynamics and social responsibility. Moreover, Gogol's innovative use of dialogue and character development



provides a rich ground for linguistic and theatrical analysis, making it a subject of sustained scholarly interest.<sup>1</sup>

This article aims to explore the multifaceted dimensions of "The Inspector General," delving into its historical context, thematic explorations, and literary significance. By examining how Gogol crafts his narrative and characters, we will uncover the layers of meaning embedded within the text, providing insights into the enduring relevance of this work in contemporary discussions about governance, morality, and societal norms. Through a thorough analysis, we will illustrate how Gogol's incisive wit and penetrating observations reveal the timeless struggle between authority and individual agency, ultimately asserting "The Inspector General" as a vital commentary on the human condition.

### MAIN PART

Nikolai Vasilievich Gogol's "The Inspector General," first premiered in 1836, is a seminal work in Russian literature that deftly navigates the complexities of bureaucracy, corruption, and human folly. Set in a small provincial town, the play revolves around the confusion arising from the arrival of a government inspector. The protagonist, Ivan Alexandrovich Khlestakov, a low-ranking civil servant mistaken for the inspector, becomes the unwitting catalyst for a comic yet revealing examination of the deeper social issues that plague the Russian administrative system of Gogol's time. Through its rich characters, sharp wit, and incisive commentary, "The Inspector General" has secured its place not only as a poignant reflection of 19th-century Russian society but also as a timeless allegory with relevance that transcends its historical context.

Understanding the socio-political landscape of early 19th-century Russia is crucial to appreciating Gogol's intentions and thematic explorations in "The Inspector General." The Russian Empire was marked by a rigid feudal structure and a bureaucratic system that was often characterized by inefficiency, corruption, and a detachment from the realities faced by ordinary citizens. The civil service, a symbol of state authority, was riddled with graft, dishonesty, and a lack of accountability, leading to widespread public disdain.

Gogol was writing during a period of growing discontent with the government, a mood exacerbated by the failures of the Decembrist revolt of 1825 and the increasing voice of the intelligentsia advocating for reform. These societal pressures influenced Gogol's outlook and motivated his exploration of moral decay within the administrative apparatus of his homeland. "The Inspector General" serves as both a critique of this bureaucratic malaise and an exploration of the human condition within a flawed system, showcasing Gogol's unique ability to blend social commentary with farcical comedy. The narrative unfolds when the news of a government inspector arriving incognito in a small town sends the local officials into a frenzy. They fear exposure of their corrupt dealings and mismanagement. In the midst of this chaos, Khlestakov, a young and inept civil servant, is mistakenly identified as the inspector. Relishing

<sup>1</sup> Brodiansky, N. (1952). Gogol and his Characters. *The Slavonic and East European Review*, 36-57.

this newfound authority, Khlestakov exploits the townsfolk's fear and ingratiates himself with them, leading to a series of humorous and absurd encounters.

As the officials scramble to appease Khlestakov and conceal their misconduct, they unwittingly reveal their vices and weaknesses. Gogol utilizes this central misunderstanding to highlight the pervasive hypocrisy and moral bankruptcy of the bureaucratic elite. Through exaggerated characterizations—the pompous Mayor, the sycophantic officials, and the gullible townspeople—Gogol paints a vivid tableau of human folly, ultimately culminating in a crisis of identity and authority.

Characters in “The Inspector General” are vividly drawn and serve as embodiments of various societal archetypes, each revealing different facets of human nature and the failings of bureaucracy.

**Khlestakov:** As the protagonist, Khlestakov symbolizes both the absurdity of misjudgment and the opportunism that can flourish in a corrupted system. Initially portrayed as a cowardly and bemused individual, his transformation into the so-called inspector reveals the ease with which authority can be manipulated by an individual lacking integrity. His charm and wit make him a surprisingly likable character, inviting audiences to empathize with his predicament while also critiquing the moral void surrounding him.

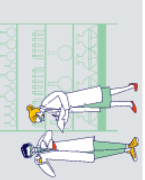
**The Mayor:** The Mayor embodies the archetype of the corrupt official, a man preoccupied with appearances rather than substance. His desperate attempts to impress Khlestakov showcase his cowardice and moral vacuity. The Mayor’s eventual realization of his own flaws serves as a commentary on the self-deceptions prevalent within the bureaucratic class.

**The Town Officials:** Each official in the play represents a specific facet of bureaucratic dysfunction. Characters like the Postmaster, the Schoolmaster, and the Doctor are defined by their self-serving agendas and sycophantic behaviors. Their eagerness to appease Khlestakov exposes a pervasive culture of fear and sycophancy, reflecting the broader failings of the system they serve.<sup>2</sup>

**Marya and Anna:** Female characters like Marya (the Mayor's daughter) and Anna (the Mayor's wife) provide a glimpse into the impact of corruption on personal lives. Their interactions with Khlestakov highlight the interplay between personal desires and societal expectations, offering a lens through which to examine the play’s critique of male-dominated authority.

Gogol’s “The Inspector General” is rich with themes that reflect not only the specific context of Russian society but also universal human experiences. A central theme of the play is the corruption inherent in bureaucracies. Gogol explores how power can corrupt those who wield it, as seen in the actions of the Mayor and his officials. Their portrayal reveals a systemic decay where self-interest overrides any sense of duty or public service. This theme prompts audiences to reflect on the ethical implications of authority and the urgent need for accountability within societal structures. The theme of mistaken identity permeates the play, highlighting the notion that perception often supersedes reality. Khlestakov’s rise to power and subsequent fall expose

<sup>2</sup> Муратова, Н. (2023). СОМАТИЧЕСКИЕ ФРАЗЕОЛОГИЗМЫ В ХУДОЖЕСТВЕННОМ ТЕКСТЕ. *Инновационные исследования в современном мире: теория и практика*, 2(25), 115-117.



how easily individuals can navigate and manipulate social expectations. This theme resonates with contemporary discussions about the nature of identity in an increasingly superficial world, where outward appearances can mask underlying truths.

Fear drives the actions of the town's officials, resulting in absurd behaviors and nonsensical decisions. The officials' inability to communicate effectively, both with each other and Khlestakov, underscores a breakdown in civic cohesion. Gogol uses this theme to demonstrate how fear can create a culture of mistrust, further exacerbating the problems within the bureaucratic system. The absurdity of the characters' actions and the situations in which they find themselves reflect Gogol's critique of authority structures. Through comedic exaggeration, Gogol illuminates the often ridiculous nature of power dynamics, forcing audiences to confront the limitations and contradictions inherent in governance.<sup>3</sup>

Gogol employs a unique blend of realism and grotesque comedy in "The Inspector General." His use of vivid imagery and sharp dialogues enhances the satirical elements, offering a rich sculpting of characters and situations. The pacing and structure of the play build tension and anticipation, leading to a climactic finale that leaves audiences both amused and contemplative. The dialogue is sharp and witty, characterized by a distinct Russian vernacular that brings authenticity to the characters. This specificity not only adds to the humor but also helps ground the play in its cultural context. The intermingling of comedy and social critique is emblematic of Gogol's style, drawing audiences into a world that is simultaneously absurd yet reflective of their own realities.<sup>4</sup>

In summation, N.V. Gogol's "The Inspector General" transcends its original context to become a timeless commentary on the human condition, bureaucracy, and the absurdities of power. Through his masterful characterizations and sharp wit, Gogol exposes the vulnerabilities and moral failings of individuals within an oppressive system, compelling readers and audiences to confront their own societal realities. The play's enduring relevance lies in its ability to provoke critical thought about authority, identity, and the ethical responsibilities of citizenship. As contemporary societies continue to grapple with similar issues of governance and integrity, Gogol's insights remain profoundly pertinent. "The Inspector General" not only entertains but also encourages a deep reflection on the nature of power, ultimately urging us to question the systems we inhabit and the roles we play within them.<sup>5</sup>

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Nikolai Gogol's "The Inspector General" remains an essential text that continues to resonate with audiences today. Through its sharp satire and vivid characterizations, the play not only critiques the bureaucratic inefficiencies and moral corruption of 19th-century Russia but also offers timeless insights into the nature of power and human behavior. Gogol's ability

<sup>3</sup> Gogol, N. (2005). *Diary of a Madman, The Government Inspector, & Selected Stories*. Penguin UK.

<sup>4</sup> Gogol, N. (2005). *Diary of a Madman, The Government Inspector, & Selected Stories*. Penguin UK.

<sup>5</sup> Orlich, Ileana Alexandra. "NIKOLAY GOGOL'S THE GOVERNMENT INSPECTOR: STALINIST AESTHETICS AND SUBVERSIVE STAGING IN THE SOVIET THEATRE." *Cinematographic Art & Documentation* 08 (2011): 43-48.

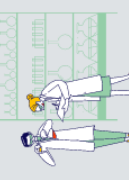
to blend humor with serious social commentary invites readers and viewers alike to reflect on their own societal contexts, recognizing the oftentimes absurd realities of governance and human interactions.

The enduring impact of "The Inspector General" lies in its capacity to provoke thought and inspire discussion. As contemporary societies grapple with similar issues of corruption, inefficiency, and moral ambiguity, Gogol's exploration of these themes serves as a pertinent reminder of the vital importance of accountability and integrity within systems of authority. The play's complex characters, from the bumbling officials to the cunning Khlestakov, highlight the dichotomy between appearance and reality, prompting us to consider the masks that individuals wear in various facets of life.

Moreover, Gogol's innovative narrative techniques and rich linguistic style contribute to the work's lasting appeal, ensuring that it remains a fundamental part of the literary canon. As we analyze and engage with "The Inspector General," we reaffirm the power of literature to illuminate societal issues, foster critical thought, and inspire change. Ultimately, Gogol's masterpiece serves as both a cautionary tale and an enduring reflection of the human condition, solidifying its place as a vital work for audiences past, present, and future.

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