SÉRIE “Filologie”


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PRECEDENT SITUATIONS IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE DISCOURSE: RECEPTION AND INTERPRETATION

Abstract. This article is about reception and interpretation of precedent situations peculiarities in foreign language discourse. The semantic filling of precedent situations is examined in this article, the means of their actualization and pragmatical functions are discovered. It is established that precedent situations are actualized in German discourse per precedent names / expressions and attributes nominations of precedent situations.
It is proved that precedent situation is special because it is actualized by using precedent name, precedent statements or the attributes names of precedent situations. Precedent situation is effective or real, which can serve as a model for other situations or be one whose repetition is undesirable. In other words, precedent situation is a positive or negative standard of comparison. Precedent phenomena which include precedent situation are close to those social archetypes that determine individual ethnic character. It is shown that precedent phenomena are certainly inscribed in ideological context of the epoch, and in this sense they are closely related to life ideology phenomenon.

The literary material which is analyzed in this article shows that PS in the discourse are used to characterize a similar situation as a standard of comparison, irony, opposition; PS can break away from the source situation and exist separately, becoming PN. In foreign language discourse PP are actualized by appropriate signs and reproduced in the context, while retaining their differential features. It is noted that adequate understanding of a literary work can be said about when the cultural spaces of the interlocutors are equal. The same applies to dialogue between the author and the reader. When the reader’s and especially the researcher’s thesaurus is rich enough, the researcher can expand the content of the text, adding to it what was not originally put in it.

**Keywords:** precedent situation, precedent name, precedent expression, pragmatical function, discourse, interpretation, reception.

**Introduction.** Culture events or phenomena during man’s perception are reflected in his mind. Phenomena of material and spiritual world reflected in the consciousness reflects and determines the specifics of the national character, ethnic and linguistic identity. D. Gudkov defines similar “cultural objects” as precedents [1]. The value orientation of linguistic and cultural community, determining the value structure of each individual, is reflected in the system of this community precedents, and on the other hand, it is determined by this system [1].

The problem of precedent was posed by Yu. Karaulov in 1986, when he introduced the term “precedent text” [2]. Later, the terms “precedent statement” [3], “precedent name” [1; 4], “precedent phenomenon” [5; 6], “precedent situation” [6], a precedent cultural sign [7], a precedent genre [8] appeared. To precedent phenomena (PP) D. Gudkov refers a special group of verbal or verbalized phenomena that belong to the national level of precedent and differ slightly in their characteristics from other precedents of this level. <...> To PF he includes precedent texts (PT), precedent statements (PSt), precedent names (PN) and precedent situations (PS) [1]. The term “precedent phenomenon” is considered by the scholars to be the broadest in the meaning, as it corresponds to each of these terminological units.

Precedent phenomena are close to those social archetypes that determine
individual ethnic character. PP are the components of a common core of knowledge and ideas for all members of the linguistic and cultural community. They confirm the existence of an “invariant part in the structure of the linguistic personality” [2].

The PP system is a system of standards of national culture, figurative substitution of a person’s features or object by some realia-person, natural object, thing, which become a sign of their dominant feature, from the point of view of everyday cultural experience; realia, which is as “standard”, becomes a taxon of culture, because it does not speak about the world, but about the cultural worldview [1].

In our investigation we will use PP definition proposed by O. Selivanova in her terminological encyclopedia:: „The precedent phenomenon is a component of knowledge, determination and content of which are well known to the representatives of a certain ethnocultural community, relevant and used in cognitive and communicative terms. Understanding the texts which contain PP is based on addressees background and encyclopedic knowledge. <...> PP can have universal and national-specific status (examples of the first are world wars, political events, cataclysms; world-famous people and heroes of literary works, movies; works of the world literature treasury etc.)” [9].

Precedent phenomena are certainly inscribed in ideological context of the epoch, and in this sense they are closely related to life ideology phenomenon, which V. Voloshinov defined as the whole set of life experiences and directly related life impressions[10]. Life ideology is the element of orderly and unrecorded internal and external speech, which interprets every action and state of a man. It is ideology of life that draws the literary work into a specific social situation; “in each epoch of its historical existence, the work must get in touch with changing ideology of life, to penetrate it, to absorb new juices that come from it. Only to the extent that the work is able to enter into such an inseparable connection with life ideology of this epoch it can be alive in this epoch (of course, in certain social group). Without this connection, it stops to exist or stops to be experienced as ideologically significant” [10].

The purpose of this article is to identify the peculiarities of precedent situations reception and interpretation in German language discourse. Achieving this goal involves solving the following tasks: 1) identify and interpret precedent situations in German language discourse; 2) to establish the ways of actualizing precedent situations in German language discourse; 3) to determine precedent situations pragmatic functions.

Results and Discussion. Precedent situation is a certain “standard”, “ideal” situation associated with a set of certain connotations, differential features of which are a part of the cognitive base [6]. It is often possible to talk not only about using precedent verbalized situations, but also plots. If the verbalization of precedent
situation takes place through the mention of precedent fact that captures this situation, the presentation of precedent plot involves a detailed telling about some events. Precedent situation is special because it is actualized by using PN, PSt or the attributes names of PS. Precedent situation is effective or real, which can serve as a model for other situations or be one whose repetition is undesirable. In other words, PS is a positive or negative standard of comparison. Here are some examples.

1) Die ultimative Forderungen der Mercedes-Manager an die Arbeitnehmer, die Lohnkosten zu senken, eskaliert zu einem Machtkampf mit der IG Metall: Die will unter allen Umständen einen Präzedenzfall verhindern, der das gesamte Tarifgefüge ins Rutschen bringen könnte[11].

In this text, which is taken from the magazine „Spiegel“, one precedent situation is mentioned (einen Präzedenzfall), which they want to prevent. This lexical unit refers us to the most precedent situation that took place in the plant Mercedes-Benz in 1973. At the time, Jürgen Hubbert was a representative of the unions that demanded the manager of „IG Metall“ Franz Steinküller to give a five-minute break every working hour.


As we can see from the continuation of the same article, the conditions of the strikers were met, and this situation was named “Steinkühler-Pinkelpause“.


However, in a few decades a new situation arises (Steinkühler-Pinkelpause), which reminds the events of 1973. We can talk here about the double nomination of the precedent situation. We must note that ein Präzedenzfall is a common name that can be used to describe any precedent situation, and a precedent name Steinkühler-Pinkelpause specifies it. This name contains the name of the manager whom the request was addressed to (Steinkühler), as well as the request itself (Pause).

The reader who does not know this situation can hardly guess what precedent case is discussed in the first lines of the article. The author, anticipating such a problem, makes a small excursion into history, giving a brief summary of this situation. And then when the precedent name Steinkühler-Pinkelpause appears (the second time this name is used without quotation marks), the reader understands unmistakably what it means. We can talk about the precedent at the level of a social group.

4) Dämonenvon Vietnam

In this example, which is the beginning of an article about the war in Iraq, we see an appeal to precedent situation through PP. In this case, we can talk about the precedent name toponym – *Vietnam*, however, the very combination of this precedent name and another lexical unit *Dämonen* directs the reader to the content of the article. After reading the title of the article, the reader begins to imagine the horror that is associated with the word Vietnam in his imagination. Demons are evil spirits who do not want to leave, and they seem to be forced to fight for it, preventing people from doing their unnecessary work, meaning war. *Dämonenvon Vietnam, ein Gespenst* demons, ghosts, that which cannot be seen, that which appears from the past. In this case, it is a comparison of the war in Iraq with the war in Vietnam.

5) *Das Comeback eines Krieges.* <...> Amerika diskutiert die Frage: Irak gleich oder ungleich Vietnam, mit all ihren schmerzhaften Konsequenzen. <...> Der Irak ist Bushs Vietnam. <...> Er will verhindern, dass die Dämonen der Vergangenheit auch dieses Unternehmen belasten, das er inzwischen ausschließlich als Befreiungsschlag für das irakische Volk betrachtet[12].

*Das Comeback eines Krieges* (return of one war) is also a comparison of the new war in Iraq with the war in Vietnam. However, this new war is considered differently by different people. Some are debating whether the Iraq war is similar to the Vietnam War (*Irak gleich oder ungleich Vietnam*), others call Iraq as Bush's Vietnam (*Der Irak ist Bushs Vietnam*), who believes that this war is a war of liberation for the Iraqi people (*Befreiungsschlag für das irakische Volk*). The question is, do the Iraqi people need such a release? Referring to the precedent situation *Vietnam War* through PN *Vietnam* is a parallel with the current actions of the Americans and a hint at the futility of such a step (the use of PN *Irak* and *Vietnam* in a metaphorical comparative construction: *Der Irak ist Bushs Vietnam*, is particularly accurate). However, only the slogans “from above” remain loud, and ordinary American soldiers do not return home as heroes, and the following fragment of the text show this:

6) *Sie kommen in Leichensäcken.*

Alle im Irak-Krieg gefallenen amerikanischen Soldaten müssen nach den Vorschriften der Amerikanischen Streitkräfte zuerst in die Dover Air Force Base im US-Staat Delaware gebracht werden, nicht später als 48 Stunden nach ihrem Tod. <...> Kleinlaster transportieren sie über das weite Rollfeld hinüber zum nahen Leichenschauhaus. Dort spricht einer der sechs Priester ein kurzes Gebet, bevor die Identifizierung beginnt, dann das Herrichten für die letzte Reise zu den trauernden Familien.

The following attributes are given in this fragment as gefallenenSoldaten, Leichens chauhaus, einer dersechs Priester, einkurzes Gebetsprechen actualize PS: service in the cathedral during the memorial service. However, a comparison of the actions carried out by im Leichenschauhaus with the atmosphere in the cathedral (eineAtmosphärewieineinerKathedrale), perceived as a bitter irony: what is happening imLeichenschauhaus (EinerdersechsPriestersprichteinkurzesGebet, bevordieIdentifizierungbeginnt) is no comparison with what is happening in the cathedral. The infusion of direct quotation into indirect speech testifies to the fact of distancing from the conversation content: the similarity of this situation, the precedent is seen only by one of the interlocutors (Chaplain Grot), while in reality journalists do not even get permission to use the camera during interviews (ohneKamerasichbewegendarf). This article simultaneously addresses to the completely opposite worlds of demons and the church, evil and good, intentions and results. Precedent situations in different contexts appear differently, exacerbating one or another side of their existence. PS in the above examples are activated by PN and various attributes of such situations.

One of the attributes of nonverbal PS can be verbalized and given an “independent life” (it seems to be separated from the original situation and has the status of PN). Let's demonstrate what has been said in the following example:

7) DennwennsichjemandinÖsterreicheinHausgelbstreichenlässt, dannsagter: „IchmöchteSchönbrunner-Gelb!“[12].

Here we find a precedent name Schönbrunner-Gelb. Schönbrunn is a castle in Vienna, which was painted yellow for a long time. As we know from history, this castle during different periods had different colors. It was gray-white, red-terracotta, and even gray-green, and from 1830 to the present day this castle is yellow. For most people, this architectural monument is imagined in yellow. This color has a special name Schönbrunner-Gelb, which became, in our opinion, PN. This PN can be used in new contexts while activating PS: painting the castle in Vienna in yellow. The famous architectural monument “made" advertising this paint color.

Direct nomination of a previous situation or a fact by a noun Präzedenzfall as if direct reception of a new situation or a fact in advance as being interpreted by the standards of PS. For example:

8) In Washington wird diese Woche verhandelt, ob die Guantanamo-Gefangenen gegen ihre Haft klagen dürfen – eine 54 Jahre alte Entscheidung dient als Präzedenzfall.


Damals wie heute gelangte der Rechtsstreit schließlich vor das Oberste Bundesgericht [12].
From the first lines of the journal article, excerpts of which are given in example 6, we come across the noun Präzedenzfäll. If in other cases we proved the appeal to a precedent situation in the discourse, then in this case it is known from the beginning. This is the event when the arrested foreigners filed a lawsuit because of their arrest. It was in 1950, the trial in Saxony was named „JohnsongegenEisenträger“ (Eisenträger is the name of the person who led these arrested). Eventually Eisenträger and 26 of his colleagues were released from custody. People accused of links to al-Qaeda now want to defend their rights. The appeal to PS implies that the situation may have the same solution as in 1950.

Political events that have caused a great deal of resonance in the world are becoming universally precedent. For example:

9) Wolfgangs Brief in ihren Händen haltend, dachte Renate daran, daß ihr Verlobter fürchtete, sie könnte unter den Demonstranten sein und Schaden erleiden. Es war derselbe Wolfgang, der ihr noch am Anfang des Jahres die Frage gestellt hatte, warum sich das Volk der DDR nicht gegen das Unrecht auflehnte und seine elementaren Menschenrechte forderte. Bisher hatte es kein zweites Peking gegeben, aber niemand wußte, was die Zukunft bringen würde[13].

While waiting for permission to leave for West Germany, Renata communicated with Wolfgang by the letters. Through precedent name Zweites Peking (the second Beijing), which we find in Example 9, there is the appeal to precedent fact that took place in history of China. It was a student protest in Beijing in June 1990. Then the government of China brutally cracked down on student demonstrations. Using the very precedent name Zweites Peking, Renata described the situation at that time in the Eastern Germany. There has not been “the second Beijing” yet, but no one knows what will happen in the future. Doubts about invariability of the situation are already appearing, and there is no certainty about any definite future.

There is a situation when the non-verbal precedent is perceived inadequately, i.e. interpreted differently by the interlocutor. This characterizes him as not belonging to the relevant reference group due to his worldview (this is a child who perceives the world according to his thesaurus). Let’s examine the following example:

10) Sie nahm ein buntes Buch aus dem Regal und blätterte darin. Die zahlreichen Illustrationen wecken ihr kindliches Interesse.

„Warum brennt der Baum dort auf dem Berg? Der Mann mit dem Bart muß schnell die Feuerwehr rufen“, sagte Janine aufgeregt.

Renate warf einen Blick auf das Bild und erläuterte: „Damals gab es noch keine Feuerwehr. Außerdem ist dieser brennende Busch ein ganz besonderer Busch, denn obwohl Flammen aus ihm herausschlagen, verbrennt der Busch selbst nicht“[13].

A girl, her friend's daughter, came to visit Renata. The girl took a book from
the shelf and unfolded it in a picture of a tree on fire. This non-verbal sign appeals to PS, which is taken from the Bible. This is an unburned mound. The picture appeals to PS. The girl does not know this situation, so she advises to call firefighters (Der Mann mit dem Bart muß schnell die Feuerwehrrufen), typical reaction to fire. For a little girl, this situation is not precedent, due to her age and upbringing. Although Renata, who lived in the GDR, where religion was not promoted at the time, was even more forbidden, she still read, understood and even kept the Bible. This fact testifies to the high spirituality and education of an ordinary girl from East Germany.

There are concepts, feelings, relationships and situations which are not subject to time. The relationship between man and woman belong to “eternal”, the most complex and incomprehensible phenomena during the Universe existence. The work of Heinz Konsalik “Bittersüßes 7. Jahr” is about that. Briefly about the content of the work: Peter and Sabina Sacher have been together for seven years, Peter is a successful architect, a wealthy gentleman, Sabina has everything that women usually dream of – jewelry, fur, cars, vacation. However, there was a feeling that they live next to each other, not together, each with their own interests and troubles, and everything is fine from the outside, but in fact wie ein Damoklesschwert über Sabine und Peter hing [14]. Sabina, having read the advice of a psychologist in one of the newspapers, offers to go on vacation separately for six weeks, without telling each other where anyone is going, not to call or write. After such a six-week vacation, they return home and decide how to live: together or separately. Peter first refuses and then agrees. However, he does not want to leave his wife unattended and seeks help from his friend lawyer Portz.

11. Dr. Portz sah das Problem ernster, als es nach außen hin den Anschein hatte. Er kratzte sich den Kopf. Männer, die sich beim Nachdenken den Kopf kratzen, brüten große Probleme aus. Als sich Caeser nachdenklich den Kopf gekratzt hatte, so sagt man, entschloss er sich, bei Cleopatra zu bleiben. Vielleicht wäre ein ganzer Teil Weltgeschichte anders verlaufen, wenn sich Caeser nicht gekratzt hätte[14]. Sabina, having read the advice of a psychologist in one of the newspapers, offers to go on vacation separately for six weeks, without telling each other where anyone is going, not to call or write. After such a six-week vacation, they return home and decide how to live: together or separately. Peter first refuses and then agrees. However, he does not want to leave his wife unattended and seeks help from his friend lawyer Portz.

In this fragment through precedent names Caeser и Cleopatra there is an appeal to precedent situation that took place in ancient Rome1. Here a parallel is drawn

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1Emperor Gaius Julius Caesar – an ancient Roman statesman and politician, military leader, writer. Cleopatra VII Philopator – Queen of Egypt, who received the throne with his brother Ptolemy after the death of their father. Educator of Ptolemy, along with high dignitaries raised in Alexandria, the capital of Egypt, rebellion against Cleopatra. She ran to neighboring Syria. Later, having gathered an army, she went to the Egyptian border. In the Roman Empire there was also a power struggle between Julius Caesar and Pompey. After losing the battle, the lastran to Alexandria. But the dignitaries of Egypt, trying to serve before Caesar, punished Pompey. And three days later they raised the head of Pompey to Caesar, who arrived in Alexandria. The Roman emperor was shocked by this gift and ordered to stop hostilities and disband the troops, and then to appear before him for explanation and reconciliation. Ptolemy complained bitterly about his sister, but did not persuade Caesar to prefer him. The emperor also wanted to listen to Cleopatra. The queen understood perfectly well that when she appeared in Alexandria, she would be killed immediately. So she arrived in the city at night on a fishing boat with a devoted servant. He wrapped his mistress in a piece of bright cloth, threw the bale on his shoulder and safely reached the rooms of Caesar, where he raised a precious burden at the feet of the emperor. Caesar was struck by Cleopatra and made his choice in her favor. The next day, Ptolemy realized that his sister had outwitted him and seized the throne. The Alexandrian War began, which lasted eight months, and was called the “War of Cleopatra” after which the capital of Egypt swore allegiance to Caesar. Cleopatra ruled the state independently, relying on the Roman army [15].
between Caesar and Cleopatra and Peter and Sabina, alluding to the fact that Peter will make his choice in favor of Sabina, as Caesar did. At the same time, the situation with the importance of men’s decision-making is ironic: Männer, diesichbeim Nachdenkenden Kopfkratzen, brütengro ße Probleme aus. Thinking on his friend’s family problem, Portz makes a comparison with Caesar, who is also said to have scratched his head when making a decision: the first man thinks on the fate of two people, and the second one decided the fate of states. And, using the conditional mood, the author, ironically, suggests that the history could have changed if Caesar had not scratched his head and had made other decision (Vielleicht wäre eine ganzer Teil der Weltgeschichte anders verlaufen, wenn sich Caesar nicht gekratzt hätte). The irony is created by the effect of hyperbole, which arises from comparing historical events and people with ordinary events and people, scratching their heads and making historical decisions.

The next piece of text is also related to precedent situation of Caesar and Cleopatra. Let's show it on an example:

12. SabinelagufihremBettundeschlief. < ... > dann zog er Sabine Sacher vom Bett, legte sie auf eine große Reisedecke und rollte sie in die Decke ein. Er hatte sie bei Sabines Gepäck gefunden. Wie einen Seesack verschnürte er das Bündel und hängte an oberen Bindfadenknoten ein großes Schild: < Bitte nicht werfen! Wertvolles Porzellan! > ... Im Hafen trug er mit einem Gepäckträger selbst die wertvolle: < Vase > aufs Schiff und stellte sie sich zwischen einigen Koffern in eine Ecke.

So schaffte man einst Cleopatra zu Caesar, eingehüllt in einen Teppich, dachte Ferro zur Beruhigung. Was Caesar konnte, kann auch Bornemeyer, wenn Männer lieben, ändern sich Zeiten nie![14].

This fragment of the literary work appeals to precedent situation: transportation of Cleopatra to Caesar. Cleopatra’s faithful servant took her to the emperor, wrapped in a piece of cloth, and in H. Konsalik’s “Bittersü ßes 7. Jahr”, Bornemeyer, whose task was to follow Sabina as if he were a faithful servant, but in love with her, brings her to Nice in the same way: legtesieaufeinegro ße Reisedecke und rolltesie in die Decke ein – Soschafftemaneinstdie ersten Cleopatra zu Caesar, eingehüllt in einen Teppich. At that time, Peter is in Nice, they meet at a masquerade ball, pretend not to recognize each other, but at the same time decide to be together. Making such a decision means continuing the history of their family. The decision made by Caesar after meeting with Cleopatra, influenced the development of the history of at least two empires and two destinies: his and Cleopatra’s. In turn, Bornemeyer compares himself to Caesar – Was Caesar konnte, kann auch Bornemeyer. The irony, as in example 11, is based on hyperbolization through comparison: who is Caesar and who is Bornemeyer. It should also be noted that the centuries and ages are changing, and the role of women in solving issues, regardless of their complexity and importance, remains key.

Aber auch Trotz.
Sie begann zu grübeln.

Es gibt erwiesenermaßen auf der Welt nichts Gefährlicheres als eine grübelnde Frau. Was Helden nicht wagten, was Philosophen nicht erdachten, was selbst Politikern nicht einfiel (gibt es noch eine Steigerung?), das gebiert der Haß im Hirn einer grübelnden Frau.


Männer – lasst eure Frauen nie grübeln!

Sabines Grübelei war allerdings einfacherer Natur und frei von zerstörerischen Elementen. Sie dachte nur an Rache[14].

Example 13 demonstrates the stereotype of a man's attitude to a woman as a subject who does not tend to think, to puzzle over something. And if it suddenly happens, then you should expect unpredictable consequences, especially for men. To enhance the expression, the author uses an adverb erwiesenermaßen (as proven), substantivized adjective of the highest degree of comparison and pronoun nichts Gefährlicheres (nothing more dangerous). The syntactic construction of the second sentence with an inserted rhetorical question is a means of highlighting the irony expressed by the logical and semantic technique: Was Helden nicht wagten, was Philosophen nicht erdachten, was selbst Politikern nicht einfiel (gibt es noch eine Steigerung?), das gebiert der Haß im Hirn einer grübelnden Frau. (What the characters did not dare, what the philosophers did not invent, what did not occur to politicians (Need to list more?) gives birth to hate in the brain of a woman who thinks). An ironic effect is due to the hyperbolization of the power of female thought.

The literary material analyzed above shows that PS in the discourse are used to characterize a similar situation as a standard of comparison, irony, opposition; PS can break away from the source situation and exist separately, becoming PN.

**Conclusions.** Adequate understanding of a literary work can be said about when the cultural spaces of the interlocutors are equal. The same applies to dialogue between the author and the reader. However, this is possible only theoretically. In fact, there are two possible limits of reception. In cases when the cultural space of the reader is poorer than that of the author of the text, precedent phenomena become lacunae that lead either to misunderstanding or to wrong understanding the content of the text. When the reader’s and especially the researcher’s thesaurus is rich enough, the researcher can expand the content of the text, adding to it what was not originally put in it. This is often the case when interpreting works are written in other historical epoch, when the interpreter can use new cultural and historical experience in
interpreting the content, as well as when interpreting a literary text is by representatives of other culture, which can be a source of adding new meanings to the text born in other culture.

Thus, the PP system is a system of standards of national culture, which is inscribed in ideological context of the epoch. In the discourse PP are actualized by appropriate signs and reproduced in the context, while retaining their differential features. It is revealed that PS are actualized in the German-language discourse by precedent names / statements and attributes nominations of precedent situations. In perspective of further research, we include the reception of precedent situations by different reference groups.

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