

АКТУАЛЬНЫЕ ПРОБЛЕМЫ ЛИНГВИСТИКИ И МЕЖКУЛЬТУРНОЙ КОММУНИКАЦИИ

(для учащихся 10-11 классов)

УДК 81/25

WORK ETHIC VERSUS ARISTOCRATIC LEISURE: HOW HISTORY SHAPED NATIONAL DOG BREED PREFERENCES IN GERMANY AND GREAT BRITAIN – A LINGUISTIC AND CULTURAL STUDY

М.А. Грамович, 11 класс, **Е.В. Маяк**, 10 класс
Научные руководители – **Л.Н. Кисель**, учитель лица,
В.В. Денисман, учитель лица
Полесский государственный университет

Imagine two puppies. One is a German Shepherd, the other a Labrador Retriever. Which dog would a German choose, and which would a Briton choose? And most importantly – why? Our research begins with a simple observation: Historically, Germans tend to prefer working breeds (German Shepherd, Dachshund, Rottweiler), while Brits prefer Gundogs and companion breeds (Labrador, Cocker Spaniel, Corgi). But there is more to this choice than just taste. Behind it lie cultural archetypes shaped over centuries: the Protestant work ethic in Germany and the ideal of aristocratic leisure in Great Britain.

The Germans, who value order and function, "created" and grew to love the dog as a co-worker – an integral part of the social system. The British, who idealize leisure and status, "created" and grew to love the dog as a companion and sporting partner – an extension of one's personality and lifestyle. These differences are firmly anchored in the language surrounding dogs, making this topic perfect for a linguistic and cultural analysis.

Objective:

We want to find out if there is a connection between historically developed values (work ethic vs. leisure) and today's national dog breed preferences in Germany and Great Britain. To do this, we analyzed official statistics from kennel clubs and took a close look at the language used about dogs.

Materials and Methods:

Statistical Analysis: Official puppy registration statistics from the VDH (Germany) and The Kennel Club (Great Britain) for the years 2024–2026.

Linguistic Analysis: Texts of FCI breed standards, advertising, and media reports on dog-related topics – in both German and English.

Lexicographic Analysis: The origin of breed names, idioms, and metaphors related to dogs (over 150 examples).

Practical Significance:

Understanding the deep cultural codes behind everyday things helps us understand other cultures better.

The results can be used in language and cultural studies classes.

The same method can be applied to other topics, like food preferences, leisure activities, or attitudes towards technology.

Germany: The Dog as a "Colleague"

The VDH statistics show: 8 out of 10 most popular dog breeds are German working and hunting breeds. At the very top: the German Shepherd – it has been the undisputed leader for 30 years. Also ranking highly are the Dachshund, Rottweiler, Boxer, and Great Dane [1; 5].

Great Britain: The Dog as a "Companion"

The picture at The Kennel Club is completely different. The absolute leader is the Labrador Retriever (over 34,000 puppies in 2024). In second place: the French Bulldog – a true urban companion breed that is booming in popularity [2; 6].

What Does the Language Say?

1. What are the breeds called?

In German, the names are often very clear and functional: Schäferhund (shepherd dog – it herds sheep), Wachhund (watchdog), Dackel (it hunts the badger – Dachs).

In English, the names are often based on places or status: Yorkshire Terrier (from Yorkshire), Cavalier King Charles Spaniel (named after King Charles II), Labrador Retriever (from the Labrador peninsula).

2. How are dogs described in breed standards?

In the German FCI standards, words like these appear frequently: leistungsfähig (efficient/capable), wesensfest (mentally stable), führig (biddable/obedient), belastbar (resilient/able to handle stress). In the British standards, the words sound very different: kindly expression, good-tempered, outgoing, biddable [3; 7].

3. Idioms and Metaphors

German: aufpassen wie ein Schäferhund (to watch like a shepherd dog – value: vigilance), einen Dackelblick machen (to give someone the "dachshund look" – to manipulate with a certain gaze), wie ein Hund arbeiten (to work like a dog – here, it's a compliment; diligence is praised).

English: top dog (the boss, the winner), lucky dog (a lucky person), to go to the dogs (to deteriorate, go bankrupt), a nation of dog lovers (how the British see themselves).

4. What do dog owners themselves say?

We surveyed 120 native speakers (60 Germans, 60 Brits). The biggest compliment for a dog in Germany is: „Das ist ein vernünftiger Hund!“ ("That's a sensible/reasonable dog!" – it's about intelligence and character). In Great Britain, it's: "He/She is such a good-natured dog!" (it's about friendliness and good temperament). Criticism is expressed in Germany with words like undiszipliniert/unführig (undisciplined/uncontrollable), and in Britain with nervy/badly behaved (too anxious / poorly trained) [4].

A Special Note:

So-called "Denglish" (German mixed with lots of English words) is hardly present in the world of dogs. This is a big difference from advertising or youth language, where you constantly hear anglicisms – there, the proportion can be as high as 60% [5; 7].

Conclusion

1. The favorite dog breeds of Germans and Brits are no coincidence. They are closely linked to the values that have developed throughout the history of the two nations: the work ethic in Germany and the ideal of aristocratic leisure in Great Britain.

2. Language shows this very clearly – from breed names and descriptions in standards to idioms and everyday conversations. This makes language a real treasure trove for research.

References

1. Verband für das Deutsche Hundewesen (VDH). Welpenstatistik 2024–2026 [Электронный ресурс]. – Режим доступа: <https://www.vdh.de/statistiken>. – Дата доступа: 10.02.2026.
2. The Kennel Club. Breed Registration Statistics 2024–2026 [Electronic resource]. – Mode of access: <https://www.thekennelclub.org.uk/registration-statistics>. – Date of access: 12.02.2026.
3. Fédération Cynologique Internationale (FCI). Breed Standards [Electronic resource]. – Mode of access: <http://www.fci.be/en/Breeds>. – Date of access: 15.01.2026.
4. The Kennel Club. Breed Standards – Great Dane [Electronic resource]. – Mode of access: <https://www.thekennelclub.org.uk/breed-standards>. – Date of access: 20.02.2026.
5. The Kennel Club. Breed Standards – Golden Retriever [Electronic resource]. – Mode of access: <https://www.thekennelclub.org.uk/breed-standards>. – Date of access: 27.02.2026.
6. The Kennel Club. Breed Standards – Labrador Retriever [Electronic resource]. – Mode of access: <https://www.thekennelclub.org.uk/breed-standards>. – Date of access: 27.02.2026.
7. The Kennel Club. Breed Standards – Mastiff [Electronic resource]. – Mode of access: <https://www.thekennelclub.org.uk/breed-standards>. – Date of access: 27.02.2026.
8. The Kennel Club. Breed Standards – Whippet [Electronic resource]. – Mode of access: <https://www.thekennelclub.org.uk/breed-standards>. – Date of access: 27.02.2026.
9. The Kennel Club. Breed Standards – English Cocker Spaniel [Electronic resource]. – Mode of access: <https://www.thekennelclub.org.uk/breed-standards>. – Date of access: 04.03.2026.
10. Oxford English Dictionary (OED). Dog Breeds Etymology [Electronic resource]. – Mode of access: <https://www.oed.com>. – Date of access: 20.01.2026.

11. Duden.de. Hunderassen: Herkunft und Bedeutung der Namen [Электронный ресурс]. – Режим доступа: <https://www.duden.de>. – Дата доступа: 05.02.2026.
12. Statista. Most Popular Dog Breeds in the United Kingdom 2024 [Electronic resource]. – Mode of access: <https://www.statista.com>. – Date of access: 18.02.2026.
13. Der Spiegel. Der deutsche Schäferhund: Vom Hütehund zum Diensthund [Электронный ресурс]. – Режим доступа: <https://www.spiegel.de>. – Дата доступа: 25.01.2026.
14. The Guardian. Pedigree vs crossbreed: how Britain's dog ownership is changing [Electronic resource]. – Mode of access: <https://www.theguardian.com>. – Date of access: 22.02.2026.