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A Corpus-Based Comparative Study of Animal Idioms Applied in Contemporary Journalistic Texts

Marta Lacková 

University of Žilina, Žilina, Slovakia

✉ marta.lackova@fhv.uniza.sk

Abstract. The present paper deals with lexical and semantic features of selected animal idioms as reflected in the actual use in the journalistic style. They are investigated within the textual corpora English Web 2020 (enTenTen20) and Russian Web 2011 (ruTenTen11) with the help of the search tool Sketch Engine. The analysis of the semantic properties of the animal idioms demonstrates that they contain both positive and negative elements of meaning related to pragmatic tools of influence and persuasion, which are actually influential on the receiver's understanding of the surrounding reality; the contexts where they appear are divided into several categories for each studied language showing their positive/negative connotations. The outcomes demonstrate that their contemporary extent includes not only their definitions from dictionaries of idioms; it is broadened and subsequently reflected in the modification in the receiver's mental picture of the world. Moreover, the evaluative function of idioms together with their discourse roles are described in terms of strong adjectives, possessive pronouns, modal verbs, and imperatives utilization.

Keywords: concordance, lemma, semantics, lexical, context

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Особенности использования идиом с компонентом животное в современном публицистическом тексте

Марта Лацкова 

Жилинский университет, Жилина, Республика Словакия

✉ marta.lackova@fhv.uniza.sk

Аннотация. Настоящая работа посвящена лексическим и семантическим особенностям фразеологизмов с компонентом *животное*, использованным в публицистическом тексте. Материал исследования получен из текстовых корпусов English Web 2020 (enTenTen20) и Russian Web 2011 (ruTenTen11) с помощью инструмента поиска Sketch Engine. Анализ семантических свойств фразеологизмов с животными демонстрирует, что они содержат как положительные, так и отрицательные элементы значения, связанные с прагматическими инструментами воздействия и убеждения, которые оказывают реальное влияние на понимание получателем окружающей действительности. Контексты, в которых они появляются, делятся на несколько категорий для каждого изучаемого языка, это отражается в коннотации. Результаты исследования показывают, что современное использование фразеологизмов расширяет их семантику, отражая модификации в картине мира носителя языка. Оценочная функция фразеологизмов, а также их дискурсивные роли описываются с точки зрения использования прилагательных, притяжательных местоимений, модальных глаголов и императивов.

Ключевые слова: согласованность, лемма, семантика, лексика, контекст

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Introduction

Over the last six decades corpus linguistics has become an advanced discipline counting on corpora, which are defined as a collection of texts, written or spoken, stored on a computer, as a means of studying language. It is a field that concentrates on a set of methods, or procedures when studying language [1]. It provides a researcher with new perspectives on various features of real-life communication. As an influential trend in linguistics, corpus linguistics provides a direct empirical basis for the language behaviour instead of relying on intuition or tradition.

Taking into account the manifestation of journalistic style in the textual corpora, we start from the assumption that the mass media display a huge impact on the general public and the semantic extensions introduced via them (implicit/explicit content, propositional/individual content, causal/intentional content) naturally become a constituent of everyday communication acts [2]. As a result, after a certain period of time of media impact, the participants in these communication

acts change not only their point of view but also the ways they express their attitudes and emotions [3].

The issue of application of influential means of linguistic character in the framework of journalistic style has been provoking discussions and requires a closes interdisciplinary investigation, in our case within corpus and comparative linguistics, which makes it possible to enhance the validity of research results.

Therefore, the primary aim of our research is an overview of lexical and semantic aspects of animal idioms manifestation within the journalistic subcorpora of the monolingual synchronic annotated textual corpora English Web 2020 (enTenTen20) and Russian Web 2011 (ruTenTen11). At the same time, we will concentrate on the changes in the extent of the studied idioms and how they affect a conceptual worldview of members of the communication channel. We agree with the presupposition [3] that the changes in the meaning relate to psycholinguistic factors such as the change of conceptual (cognitive, mental) worldview that is realized through a language worldview. Its formation is directly conditioned by the peculiarities of the journalistic style, which are summarized as follows [4]: mostly written form, communicative function, topicality, monological nature, variability, conceptuality, publicity, consistency, official nature.

Literature review

Within lexicological studies, different terminology has been applied to denote multi-word vocabulary phenomena. We could mention here: routine formulae [5], lexical stems [6], lexical phrases [7], formulaic sequences (8) together with more conventional terms such as fixed expressions, collocations, multi-word units and idioms [9]. For the needs of our research, we will utilize the term “idiom” since its essence enables us to investigate both the semantic and pragmatic aspects of the linguistic units. Therefore, the term idiom is defined as a string of more than one word whose syntactic, lexical and phonological form is to a greater or lesser degree fixed and whose semantic and pragmatics functions are opaque and specialised, also to a greater or lesser degree [10].

When discussing idioms, research literature traditionally concentrates on the universality of opaque idiomatic expressions, their semantics, syntax, and cross-linguistic differences. They are of relatively rare occurrence in everyday communication; yet, journalists and people working in the media find them to be a valuable source of expressive power in order to attract and influence the receiver of the information. These idioms have come under the scrutiny of sociolinguistics experts who assess the social importance of the moment of use and placement of selected linguistic units. As a way of example, P. Drew and E. Holt stress the non-random occurrence of idioms within communication acts; moreover, they contribute to the claim of our study that corpora can be a useful tool for studying the nature of human interaction [11]. M. McCarthy implies that idiomatic expressions do not simply represent

colourful alternatives to their literal counterparts, they have the capacity to encode significant cultural messages and perform discourse roles that are observable in real data [12].

Moving to the field of corpus linguistics, idioms have been of considerable interest within the branch of study and scholars have investigated the linguistic phenomenon from various perspectives. Beginning with M. McCarthy [12. P. 28] who outlined various functional and formal types of idiomatic expression that were discovered via manual searching of the CANCODE spoken corpus. M. McCarthy [12. P. 32] claims that his typology provides a wide range of idiomatic expressions as presented in native-speaker communication from both the functional and formal standpoints. Furthermore, H. Allami, M. Karlsson and R.H. Shahroosvand studied the conventional and nonconventional application of idioms in general and academic English corpora; the results of the study showed that there is a higher proportion of formulaic language in interactive and informal discourse [13].

On the subject of individual components of idioms, K. Stathi presented a detailed corpus-based analysis of adjectival modification of idioms in German; she focused on the role of the adjective modifier in the overall interpretation and interplay between the meaning of the adjective and the meaning of the idiom [14].

When it comes to the semantics of idioms, Ch. Hümmer investigated the interrelation between meaning and use in idiomatic multi-word units, she demonstrated that the contextual behavior of idioms is at the same time motivated and arbitrary [15]. E. Gehweiler, I. Höser and U. Kramer concentrated on the types of changes (focusing on meaning) in German idioms [16]; in this respect, they discussed the realization of polysemy and homonymy in idioms together with the external factors that can trigger them, and the development of archaisms and neologisms and their influence on the modification of semantic elements of idioms. Next, Ch. Fellbaum emphasizes that numerous semantically opaque idioms utilize specific valence patterns that carry the idiom as a compensation for semantic transparency [17].

The grammar of idioms has been investigated by corpus linguists, too. A. Firenze gives a detailed description of the disagglutination processes of the determiners within contemporary German idioms [18]. Surprisingly, the corpus data demonstrate that idioms are not as frozen as it has often been assumed; substitutions of various kinds are possible without loss of the original idiomatic sense.

Numerous papers have been devoted to the investigation of idioms both from the comparative and corpus linguistics viewpoints ± K. Aharodnik, A. Feldman J. Peng devoted their attention to the design of a Russian annotated corpus of idioms [19]. Other scholars concentrated on the aspects of idioms within two languages: G.C. Pastor focused on constructional idioms of insanity in English and Spanish from semantic, grammatical, and informative aspects in order to create a multi-linguistic prototype of the given structures [20]; G. Gizatova addressed the principles creating

the first English-Russian idioms dictionary based on corpus data [21]. M.C. Blanco provides a contribution to the contrastive studies within Construction Grammar and constructional idioms through the language pair German-Spanish, employing five comparison parameters he developed a multi-level corpus-based description procedure how to determine and analyze equivalent idioms at the lexicographical level across languages [22].

Marginally, the investigation of idioms containing a name of an animal has been touched upon. V. Zemtsova analyses them for the needs of translation from the point of view of cognitive linguistics [23]. Her findings illustrate that mapping systems behind the conceptual metaphor humans are animals reveal human features vividly from animals' behavioural, emotional, and somatic traits. Ngoc, Vũ paid attention to the semantics of animal idioms in English; the scholars emphasize that the idioms in question are created on the grounds of interaction between a man and nature, and therefore, this specific field of phraseology is to be of great interest for an investigator [24].

In addition to this, D.O. Dobrovol'skij discusses the usage of parallel corpora in the study of idioms, his results support the hypothesis that the application of corpus-driven data significantly improves cross-linguistic descriptions and enables it to identify the discrete linguistic features of idioms that were understood equivalent [25].

Several scholars attempted to study functions of idioms in the journalistic styles from different perspectives. O.V. Balonkina emphasizes that it is the journalistic discourse where the biggest number of contexts with idioms is found [26]. S. Martins, M.F. Lopes da Silva discuss the role of idioms in headlines and prove that idioms represent an important for the construction of the sense of the journalistic text [27]. In their comparative study, F.G. Mukhametzyanova et al. highlight that the idioms application in headlines contributes to the attraction of the recipient's interest without revealing the content of the article text [28].

Eventually, the direct application of an animal idiom in a journalistic text is connected with mental processes of individuals within the communication act. In the given context, cognitive approaches to the language and speech in discourse together with mental processes of conceptual worldview manifestation have been researched by numerous scholars. M.G. Zelentsova applies discursive-cognitive method of the English economic discourse in order to determine the cognitive and communicative scope of economy in the framework of international English speaking communication [29]. M. Chernikov, L. Perevozchikova & E. Avdeenko examine the principles of the manipulative discourse that carries out a kind of discourse indoctrination of the manipulative plan [30]. Political discourse has become a focal point of a number scientific papers as well aiming to decipher messages essential and meaningful for people worldwide [31].

Methodology

For the needs of this study we decided to investigate, classify, and compare lexical and semantic characteristics of animal idioms within two typologically distinct languages — the English language and the Russian language. We believe that diverse social, cultural, and historical factors that are in the background of these two languages development might lead to interesting findings in the explored area of idioms, too. Arising from well-known differences between them from etymological and structural angles, we suppose that also the lexicosemantic and pragmatic characteristics of the applied idioms in the contemporary journalistic texts will be diverse.

As a preliminary step of our investigation, we consulted the Oxford Dictionary of Idioms (1999¹) and Большой толковый словарь русского языка (Concise Dictionary of the Russian Language) (2014)² where we searched for all idioms containing a name of an animal (e.g.: *ant, bee, beaver, cat, camel, dog, donkey, duck, elephant, fish, goose, gorilla, horse, leopard, pigeon, rat, sheep; муравей, пчела, бобр, кошка, верблюд, собака, осел, утка, слон, рыба, гусь, горилла, лошадь, леопард, голубь, крыса, овца*). Subsequently, we considered their collocations, concordances, and word sketches in the framework of the English and Russian monolingual synchronic annotated textual corpora English Web 2020 (enTenTen20) and Russian Web 2011 (ruTenTen11). As a corpus-based study, the objective was to identify repetitive patterns in which the candidate idioms occur in order to inspect their discourse roles, semantic peculiarities, and pragmatic factors lying in the background of their functioning.

For the purpose of searching for, sorting, and classifying the chosen animal idioms in the corpora English Web 2020 (enTenTen20)³ and Russian Web 2011 (ruTenTen11)⁴, we utilized corpus linguistics methods together with statistical procedures that are joined in the specialized tool for searching in textual corpora — Sketch Engine. The Sketch Engine programme has been widely applied for lexicological needs, even for building a lexical minimum for chosen age groups [2]. We find it important to emphasize that corpora allow the scholar to inspect linguistic units in the discourse context; yet, the linguistic samples offered by the corpora do not immediately demonstrate linguistic aspects in their most universal way; that means we proceeded to the classification and generalization of linguistic phenomena, too.

¹ Siefring, J. (1999). *The Oxford Dictionary of Idioms*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

² Kuznetsov, A.S. (2014). *Bolshoi tolkovyi slovar russkogo iazyka. (Concise Dictionary of the Russian Language)*. Sankt-Peterburg: Norint.

³ English Web 2020 (enTenTen20). [Online] URL: <https://app.sketchengine.eu/> (accessed: 11.02.2024).

⁴ Russian Web 2011 (ruTenTen20). [Online] URL: <https://app.sketchengine.eu/> (accessed: 11.02.2024).

Despite recent advances in the recognition of syntactic patterns within textual corpora, an automatic retrieval of idioms applying the conventional search tool Sketch Engine is only partially possible since the concordance does not offer the option “idiom”. We generated lists of recurring patterns and we had to manually sort them out and decide which items to be classified as idioms and which not — we needed the contexts to fully research the studied idioms. As a way of example, it was necessary to differentiate the application of the idiom *rabbit hole* from a free word combination as it is illustrated in this line taken from the English corpus:

(1) They spiral down a rabbit hole holding each other’s hands [wboc.com].

In the subsequent instance taken from the Russian corpus, we deal with the animal itself, not with the semantics of the idiom *белый слон*:

(2) А Вы, в процессе сбора информации, приходите к выводу, что ему на этом самом вокзале необходим слон — самый обычный белый слон с большими ушами и длинным хоботом [center-nlp.ru].

We understand the computerised corpus and computational tool to be an activating point for a qualitative analysis that made it possible to investigate the immediate discourse where the key idioms exist together with wider pragmatic contexts where they are utilized for certain purposes typical of the journalistic style.

The choice of idioms for a more expanded analysis was motivated by their frequency. The fundamental criterion is that we chose solely statistically significant animal idioms in this context; it means, we excluded lemmas that display frequency pre million < 0.01 (some idioms low in frequency are quite opaque in terms of their meaning). The subsequent 38 animal idioms fulfil the criterion (22 English idioms and 16 Russian idioms): *rabbit hole*; *elephant in the room*; *cold turkey*; *crocodile tears*; *a can of worms*; *kill two birds with one stone*; *chicken out*; *let the cat out of the bag*; *all your eggs in one basket*; *like a fish out of water*; *hold one’s horses*; *bull in a china shop*; *800-pound gorilla*; *bring home the bacon*; *eager beaver*; *look a gift horse in the mouth*; *beat the dead horse*; *ants in one’s pants*; *be a guinea pig*; *get your ducks in a row*; *eyes like a hawk*; *слон в посудной лавке*; *белый слон*; *на безрыбье и рак — рыба*; *где собака зарыта*; *устать как лошадь*, *медвежья услуга*, *на птичьих правах*, *подложить свинью*, *покупать кота в мешке*; *собаку съесть на чём-либо*; *вернёмся к нашим баранам*; *как рыба в воде*; *комар нооса не подточит*; *не твоё собаачье деело*; *сделать слона из мухи*; *крокодиловы слезы*. It is evident from the list that only one idiom (*crocodile tears* — *крокодиловы слезы*) is overlapping in both the languages.

Except for the methods from the sphere of corpus linguistics, we utilized the scientific methods of data collection, semantic analysis, and synthesis

after the examination of theoretical information about idioms, their structure and meaning. Simultaneously, we find the procedure of cognitive features identification through the analysis of linguistic corpora to be relevant for the needs of our research.

Results and discussions

This section exemplifies outlines, and summarizes the results of the quantitative and qualitative analyses together with the semantic and lexical implications emerging from them. The Sketch Engine tool enabled us to select the appropriate set of idioms to include in the analysis. In order to build a maximally comprehensive picture of the semantic and pragmatic behaviour of animal idioms, we classify them in the following three positions of the frequency scale:

- idioms with high frequency: from *rabbit hole* to *all your eggs in one basket* in English; from *медвежья услуга* to *белый слон* in Russian;
- idioms with frequency in the middle of the scale: from *like a fish out of water* to *beat the dead horse* in English; from *где собака зарыта* to *покупатькота в мешке* in Russian;
- idioms with low frequency: from *ants in one's pants* to *eyes like a hawk* in English; from *комар носа не подточит* to *сделать слона из мухи* in Russian.

The number of concordances of 38 idioms in question together with their frequency per million tokens in English Web 2020 (enTenTen20) and Russian Web 2011 (ruTenTen11) are stated in Tables 1 and 2. It was proved by the statistical data from the table that the idioms with animal names and their constituent parts are distinctive by a diverse level of institutionalization in the contemporary English and Russian languages; the more frequent an idiom appears to be, the more impact on the receiver it is able to produce. Therefore, the differences in actual discourse utilization of the idioms depend also on pragmatic factors that define communication acts at the contemporary stage of the languages development (Table 1, Table 2).

Moving to the discourse characteristics of the studied sample, we identified the contexts below as typical of the journalistic style where the animal idioms are realized; the contexts illustrate that the semantic extent of some of the idioms has been extended. The classification is a demonstration of the semantic value of these idioms which might be both positive and negative in its essence; yet, the prevailing number of idioms with the keywords *worms* and *ants* in English and the keywords *медведь* and *свинья* in Russian have negative evaluative connotations. They play a very important role both in English and Russian phraseology as reflected in the corpora, although differences in the statistical representation of individual areas across the investigated languages can be observed. Matching the characteristics of the given animal with a person/situation give the expressive power to the language; at the same time, the imagination of the information receiver is provoked, making vivid associations.

Table 1

The number of concordances of the studied idioms together with their frequency per million tokens in English Web 2020 (enTenTen20)

English idiom	Number of concordances	Frequency per mil. tokens
rabbit hole	22 988	0.53
elephant in the room	17 828	0.34
cold turkey	13 583	0.26
crocodile tears	5 342	0.13
a can of worms	4 552	0.11
kill two birds with one stone	3 558	0.09
chicken out	3 542	0.09
take the bull by the horns	3 358	0.08
let the cat out of the bag	2 686	0.07
all your eggs in one basket	2 215	0.05
like a fish out of water	1 884	0.03
hold one's horses	1 751	0.03
bull in a china shop	1 663	0.03
800-pound gorilla	1 439	0.03
bring home the bacon	1 285	0.03
eager beaver	1 193	0.03
look a gift horse in the mouth	1 138	0.03
beat the dead horse	1 124	0.03
ants in one's pants	521	0.02
be a guinea pig	516	0.02
get your ducks in a row	289	0.02
eyes like a hawk	106	0.01

Source: compiled by Marta Lacková.

Table 2

The number of concordances of the studied idioms together with their frequency per million tokens in Russian Web 2011 (ruTenTen11)

Russian idiom	Number of concordances	Frequency per mil. tokens
слон в посудной лавке	21 452	0.51
на безрыбье и рак — рыба	16 752	0.32
устать как лошадь	12 952	0.20
белый слон	8 752	0.16
медвежья услуга	4 519	0.11
где собака зарыта	2 954	0.08
на птичьих правах	1 752	0.03
подложить свинью	1702	0.03
покупать kota в мешке	1 659	0.03
собаку съесть на чём-либо	1 523	0.03
вернёмся к нашим баранам	498	0.02
как рыба в воде	475	0.02
не твоё собачье дело	325	0.02
комар носа не подточит	107	0.01
сделать слона из мухи	97	0.01
крокодиловы слезы	93	0.01

Source: compiled by Marta Lacková.

In both the languages, the political context is the most typical one where the animal idioms occur (23 % of the studied idioms in English; 31 % of the studied idioms in Russian), as it is illustrated also in the corpora examples, the animal idioms might help to mask the real attitudes towards the political situation:

(3) The permanent war state is the 800-pound gorilla in US society and political life. [softpanorama.org]

(4) Как говорится, на безрыбье и рак — рыба. Оппозиция второй свежести. Всю оппозицию в нашей стране условно можно разделить на две части: системную и внесистемную [sibsolidarnost.ru].

When speaking about the field of economics, there appears to be a gap in the real application of animal idioms between the English and Russian languages; the problems connected with economic situation are of higher importance for the speakers of the Russian language (8 % of the studied idioms in English; 22 % of the studied idioms in Russian):

(5) Retailers will always look a gift horse in the mouth, so the BRC attributes it all to the timing of Easter [economicsuk.com];

(6) Чтобы найти тех, кто работает в регионе на птичьих правах и тех, за кого не платят налоги в бюджет, силовикам за полгода пришлось проверить более пяти тысяч строек, рынков и других объектов [kuzbassfm.ru].

A very similar situation is noticeable when taking into account agricultural topics; the total percentage of animal idioms appearance is low, it is below 10 %

in both the languages, yet it reaches a higher percentage in the Russian language since the language reflects the lifestyle of its bearers (3 % of the studied idioms in English; 7 % of the studied idioms in Russian):

(7) Changes to this federal rule may open a can of worms for farmers. Would farm ponds, drainage ditches, culverts, dams and dry creek beds fall under the EPA lens? [senate.gov];

(8) Сделать слона из мухи в нашей ферме, это модно и престижно! [vituson.ru].

Exactly the opposite trend has been noted in the sphere social aspects; the occurrence of animal idioms is three times higher in English than in Russian (18 % of the studied idioms in English; 6 % of the studied idioms in Russian); they contribute to the uncovering of people's feelings and viewpoints on the current social situation:

(9) The bosses cry crocodile tears over the prospects of unemployment for their workers and, in large scale cases, the destruction of communities [anarkismo.net];

(10) Министерство образования России — как слон в посудной лавке. [patriotrus.ru].

Various aspects of immigration are being discussed worldwide; surprisingly, animal idioms have not been applied widely in order to deal with these phenomena, their occurrence in the journalistic style reaches only a negligible number in Russian (11 % of the studied idioms in English; 2 % of the studied idioms in Russian):

(11) To beat a dead horse, immigration and border security regularly rank at the top of Texans' list of the biggest problems facing the state, but mostly for Republicans, and especially for conservative Republicans [utexas.edu];

(12) Ольга неторопливо и с наслаждением вдыхала букет арманьяка, потом окунула в него губы — она чувствовала себя во Франции как рыба в воде, и, глядя на нее, трудно было поверить, что ее детство прошло в многоэтажке на окраине Ливана. [knigoved.ru].

The percentage of animal idioms occurrence within psychology and personal development topics proves an increasing interest in these areas (18 % of the studied idioms in English; 12 % of the studied idioms in Russian); the users of language find it appropriate to express needs connected with mental health in metaphorical ways, too:

(13) Sari Eckler Cooper, a psychotherapist and sex therapist, recommends you get your ducks in a row well before the visit [ihavenet.com];

(14) Вердикт инстинкта будет зависеть не только от свойств оцениваемого мужчины, но и от сравнения с другими мужчинами-претендентами на роль сексуального партнера. Принцип на безрыбье и рак — рыба — работает [menways.ru].

The boom of information technologies has the capacity to be extensively mirrored in the application of animal idioms; they contribute to the modification of the ways speakers of both the studied languages perceive and interpret the real and virtual world (17 % of the studied idioms in English; 21 % of the studied idioms in Russian):

(15) Unless you have eyes like a hawk's, you will need to use Text Zoom or your own equivalent at times [jottings.ca];

(16) Впрочем, вернёмся к нашим баранам. DSG (Direct Shift Gearbox — коробка прямого включения) — это всефольксвагеновская автоматическая роботизированная коробка передач с двумя многодисковыми сцеплениями [saratovinform.ru].

Environmental problems affect every inhabitant of the Earth, according to our investigation, users of the studied languages prefer direct communication about the topic, the application of animal idioms is recorded in less than 10 % of occurrences (9 % of the studied idioms in English; 5 % of the studied idioms in Russian):

(17) Conversely, by tackling black carbon, we can kill two birds with one stone and protect both health and the climate [innovations-report.com];

(18) Разве я проливаю крокодиловы слезы по поводу экологической катастрофы? [rinet.ru].

The studied animal idioms find their realization for the description of sports activities to a statistically interesting extent in the Russian language, the speakers of the English language prefer other transferred means of expression ideas on the topic (0, 1 % of the studied idioms in English; 5 % of the studied idioms in Russian):

(19) В армспорте Евгений как рыба в воде. На его счету несколько побед во всероссийских соревнованиях по армрестлингу [lukoil-zs.ru].

Eventually, the remaining percentage of animal idioms occurrence is described as non-classified since it covers a range of diverse phenomena speakers of the languages are faced on daily basis (11 % of the studied idioms in English; 5 % of the studied idioms in Russian):

(20) I ask that you hold your horses back as this is not the final race in the National Court as more are coming for you and your client [pacii.org];

(21) Белый слон считается вестником удачи, ему приписывают чудодейственные целительные свойства [triakom-tour.ru].

Trying to reveal the pragmatic influence of the studied animal idioms on the reader we took into account the premise that some everyday words are the foundations of primary cognitive metaphors [10: 8], these would include also denominations of animals. We classified the animal idioms according to their pragmatic functions as appeared in the framework of the textual corpus; they fall into the following categories:

- expressions evaluating people's actions and personal states:

(22) Don't hesitate on the job you want — make sure you take the bull by the horns before someone else does and takes the job YOU wanted [medicaljobs.org];

(23) То ли американцы решили таким образом подложить свинью главному конкуренту, то ли Toyota просто заинтересовалась новым видом батарей для автомобилей с гибридным бензиново-электрическим двигателем, которые недавно проанонсировала FHI [director-info.ru];

- expressions evaluating things and events: *land prices* substituted by *the elephant in the room*;

(24) Davis let the cat out of the bag when he said that people suspected him of being an FBI agent in disguise [reformation.org];

- *портфолио* substituted by *покупать кота в мешке*;

(25) Роль портфолио может выполнять хороший сайт, на котором будут размещены и примеры статей, и отзывы, и расценки. В общем же, без портфолио никуда не деться, потому что заказчик покупать кота в мешке не хочет [clx.ru];

- expressions modifying brand names:

(26) Below are some of the clues I was given for the Pacific Coast Eager Beaver Treasure Hunt [joekincheloe.us];

(27) Заказчик имеет возможность проверить готовую работу через Яндекс XML, а не покупать кота в мешке, как на других биржах [wm-rabota.ru];

- locative expressions: *down the rabbit hole*; *fall into the rabbit hole*; *как рыба в воде*.

Apart from lexical units that traditionally associate with the inspected animal idioms, there appears a number of words that reflect recent developments in human society; the trend is noticeable in both the languages:

(28) If you need further proof of this, hit YouTube and watch Ted Talks for a while. Chances are, you'll find yourself going down a bit of an internet rabbit hole with these [topwritingreviews.com];

(29) Впрочем, вернёмся к нашим баранам: нужен новый синтезатор [lib.ru]

To clarify the modifications of meanings of animal idioms in the journalistic discourse, we need to observe not only the animal idioms themselves but also lemmas located in the positions from -3 up to +3 to the left and right from them.

The powerful evaluative character of these multi-word units is evident also in the above-mentioned list of animal idioms; even the opaque type shows these characteristics. Their appraising value is supported by the occurrence of strong adjectives in the position the first lemma to the left from the idiom: *giant*, *huge*, *biggest*, *massive*, *gigantic*, *enormous* before *rabbit hole*; *massive*, *gigantic*,

enormous before *the elephant in the room* or the adjectives on the other side of the evaluation scale: *little, old, blind* before *bull in a china shop*. A number of these adjectives modifying the studied idioms can be understood as supportive for discourse functions such as persuasion: *copious* before *crocodile tears*. Furthermore, synonymous verbs evoking emotions and sympathy in the reader are employed in the lemma position: *cry, weep, shed* before *crocodile tears*. The expressive function of these adjectives and verbs allows the reader to distinguish the features that make the situation unique.

Except for persuasive functions, the animal idioms have the capacity to perform nominative and informative functions within the English textual corpus:

(30) Mr. Speaker, the Conservative government is like a fish out of water when it comes to the Canada pension plan [openparliament.ca].

The pragmatic power of the animal idiom might become even stronger when it is applied as a modifying element of another noun, the process of conversion, typical of English word-formation, is realized in these instances:

(31) The cold turkey strategy to support you quit smoking is great if you use the aids listed above due to the fact those aids will assist you if your physique starts to go via withdrawal symptoms, which are frequently linked when you stop smoking [skyrock.com].

I.R. Galperin elicits the brain-washing function as one of primary functions of journalistic style [32]; the aim of such brain-washing influence is the subconscious control over readers' consciousness with the help of diverse linguistic means that would attack both emotional and cognitive processes of the recipient. Moreover, a strong effect is reached via lexical units that cause certain associations. In the framework of the studied idioms, the influence is achieved due to the application of modal verbs *can't, must, should* in English:

(32) You can't be a bull in a china shop; you must be able to monitor your own feelings and emotions, as well as the feelings and emotions of others [pmiwdc.org]; You should never put all your eggs in one basket [fachisthers.com]

and modal verbs *хочу, могу, должен* in Russian:

(33) Меня это повергло в легкий шок — как можно покупать кота в мешке? [finglobalist.ru].

Possessive pronouns within the animal idiom create a strong bind between the member of the communication act and the act itself:

(34) Next time you have ants in your pants don't blog about it, please! [lolengine.net].

The expressive power of the animal idiom *look a gift horse in the mouth* is increased via the utilization of strong adverbs *never* and *always* with it.

Marginally, whole syntactical structures where the animal idioms are set, namely imperative structures in English:

(35) Don't chicken out next time and instead go with your gut instinct and hold a session [justagwailo.com]

and interrogative structures in Russian: *можете ли вы подложить свинью приятелю?* [pozdr.ru], generate a persuasive effect with the direct impact on the receiver of the presented information.

Our findings illustrate that some of the studied idioms are closely related to a greater syntactic flexibility, e. g. within the animal idiom *ants in one's pants* there appears a modification of the possessive pronoun according to the members of the communication acts — *ants in your pants* appears in 174 concordances; *ants in my pants* in 134 concordances; *ants in her pants* in 33 concordances, *ants in his pants* in 107 concordances.

The observed idioms display a considerable variation in the transparency of the intended expression, too. Some of them are easier to be decoded, minimal contextual cues are needed, while others provide no direct clues as to their meaning in the given context: *open a can of worms*;

(36) A husband who could bring home the bacon was held in high esteem by the community for his forbearance [bleedingspresso.com].

The investigation of the content of the demonstrated idioms implies that they support on the one hand the ability of human mind to deduce literal meanings from the opaque idioms, and on the other hand, they provoke the readers to figurative interpretations as it is evident in these two instances:

(37) Although the three countries have denied that the trilateral was targeted at any third country — an all-too-obvious reference to China — Beijing will be the elephant in the room when officials of the three countries will hold the talks [jdslinka.org].

(38) Посторонний шум появился сразу же после первого включения, просто тогда он был еле слышен. Таким образом, вам была оказана медвежья услуга, соответственно, ни о какой гарантии и речи быть не может [climaticum.ru].

Journalists utilize the fact that readers do not ignore the secondary meanings of individual words within the given idiom, they are at least available for potential activation to create associative connections with the described situation. On the other hand, few of the studied idioms share the underlying metaphorical concepts of the human mind from which information is released involuntarily.

Conclusions

Based on the corpus-driven data, our aim was to demonstrate the interdependencies of the journalistic context and modifications in the conceptual extend of animal idioms. The analysis of the semantic properties of the studied idioms shows that apart from their metaphorical meaning, they contain elements of meaning related to pragmatic tools of influence and persuasion. The contemporary intent and extent of the given idioms includes not only their traditional definitions from dictionaries of idioms, but also it is related to the informational and psychological influence on the receiver. It is possible to divide the contexts where they appear into several categories that indicate their positive or negative connotations. The broadening of the extent of the idioms is subsequently reflected in the modification in the receiver's mental picture of the world.

We underline the evaluative function of idioms together with their discourse roles in concord with scholars who have made attempts to demonstrate functions of idioms in naturally-occurring data [10:84]. The actual context made it possible to observe relevant aspects of semantic and pragmatic meaning and to state that the greatest expressiveness is characterized by the application of strong adjectives, possessive pronouns, modal verbs, and imperatives.

One of the implications of our research is that the investigated phraseological units contribute to our perception of cultural and national phenomena of the development of the English and Russian languages.

When considering the limitations of the research, the number of animal idioms that could be handled here is limited. The objective was to elaborate a manageable amount of information that is to be presented within this study.

Better information on actual usage of idioms in the journalistic context might be beneficial for teachers of the English language and people working in the sphere of mass media. Possible future perspectives of the research might include the study of similarities in the animal idiomatic concepts across languages.

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Information about the author:

Marta Lacková, PhD in Philology, Senior Lecturer Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Humanities, Žilina University (8215/1, Univerzitna str., Žilina, Slovak Republic, 01001); *Research interests*: comparative and corpus linguistics, discourse analysis; *e-mail*: marta.lackova@fhv.uniza.sk
ORCID: 0000-0002-5784-7523; Scopus AuthorID: 36508726100.

Сведения об авторе:

Лацкова Марта, кандидат филологических наук, старший преподаватель кафедры английского языка и литературы факультета гуманитарных наук; Жилинский университет (01001, Республика Словакия, г. Жилина, ул. Университна, д. 8215/1); *сфера научных интересов*: сравнительная и корпусная лингвистика, дискурс анализ; *e-mail*: marta.lackova@fhv.uniza.sk
ORCID: 0000-0002-5784-7523; Scopus AuthorID: 36508726100.