

Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine

Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv

Educational and Scientific Institute of Philology

Department of English Philology and Intercultural Communication

Bachelor's thesis

**ETHNIC COMPONENT IN ENGLISH IDIOMS (BASED ON BRITISH
AND AMERICAN DICTIONARIES)**

Valeriia Kovtun

4th-year student of the Education Program

‘English Studies and Translation
and Two Western European Languages’

of the 2nd group

Field of science: 03 “Humanities”

Specialty: 035 “Philology”

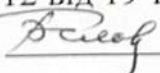
Supervised by

Tetiana Biletska, PhD

«Допущено до захисту»

Протокол засідання кафедри англійської філології
та міжкультурної комунікації

Протокол № 12 від 19 травня 2026 року

Зав. кафедри  д. філол. н., проф. Алла БЄЛОВА

KYIV – 2026



ABSTRACT

Kovtun V. O. Ethnic component in English idioms (based on British and American dictionaries). – Bachelor's thesis.

The bachelor's thesis is devoted to the study of English idioms with an ethnic component as a means of reflecting cultural perceptions, historical experience, and nationally determined stereotypes within phraseology. The research examines how English phraseology reflects the interaction between language and culture, as well as how it consolidates images of different peoples and civilizations within the language picture of the world.

The relevance of the study is determined by the fact that idioms represent an important element of the language system, performing both communicative and culturally representational functions. Through fixed expressions, language preserves historically formed perceptions of other cultures, social relations, and national characteristics, which makes idioms a significant subject of linguocultural analysis.

The study considers different types of idioms with an ethnic component, including units containing ethnonyms, historical and topographical references, as well as idioms associated with British and American national mentality. The research material is based on English phraseological dictionaries and online sources, which were used to compile a corpus of idioms.

The results of the analysis show that idioms with ethnonyms constitute the most productive group and often carry negative connotations, which indicates the preservation of historically formed stereotypes in language. It is also demonstrated that idioms with an ethnic component function as carriers of cultural memory and reflect specific features of the national worldview and cultural perception.

Keywords: phraseology, idiom, ethnic component, ethnonym, culture, stereotype, language picture of the world.

АНОТАЦІЯ

Ковтун В.О. Етнічний компонент в англійських ідіомах (на матеріалі британських та американських словників). – Бакалаврська робота.

Бакалаврська робота присвячена дослідженню англійських ідіом з етнічним компонентом як засобів відображення культурних уявлень, історичного досвіду та національно зумовлених стереотипів у межах фразеології. У роботі розглядається, як фразеологія англійської мови відображає взаємодію мови та культури, а також закріплює у мовній картині світу образи різних народів і цивілізацій.

Актуальність дослідження зумовлена тим, що ідіома є важливим елементом мовної системи, який одночасно виконує як комунікативну, так і культурно-репрезентативну функцію. Через сталі вирази мова фіксує історично сформовані уявлення про інші культури, соціальні відносини та національні особливості, що робить їх важливим матеріалом для лінгвокультурологічного аналізу культури.

У роботі розглянуто різні типи ідіом з етнічним компонентом, зокрема одиниці, що містять етноніми, історичні та топографічні референції, а також ідіоми, пов'язані з британською та американською національною ментальністю. Матеріалом дослідження слугували англійськомовні фразеологічні словники та онлайн-джерела, на основі яких було сформовано корпус ідіом.

У результаті аналізу встановлено, що ідіоми з етнонімами є найбільш продуктивною групою та часто мають негативну конотацію, що свідчить про закріплення в мові історично сформованих стереотипів. Також доведено, що ідіоми з етнічним компонентом виконують функцію носіїв культурної пам'яті та відображають специфіку національного світосприйняття і культури.

Ключові слова: фразеологія, ідіома, етнічний компонент, етнонім, культура, стереотип, мовна картина світу.

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INTRODUCTION

Idioms are an integral part of every language, through which it is possible to convey messages more effectively and vividly. They also preserve stereotypes, social attitudes and historical interpretations, offering insight into mentalities of different nations. Since unlike free word combinations, idioms often contain meanings that cannot be interpreted literally, studying idioms allows one to look into how language often indirectly reflects intercultural relationships, various customs, and collective cultural memory in addition to linguistic processes. Idioms with ethnic elements are especially important in this context because they often convey stereotypical depictions of countries, historically influenced assessments of other cultures, and culturally specific views on social behaviour.

The increasing interest in the relationship between language, culture, and ethnic representation in contemporary linguistics determines **the relevance** of the current study. Despite the fact that English phraseology has been thoroughly examined from semantic, stylistic, and structural viewpoints, idioms with an ethnic component still need more thorough and systematic research. Examining how ethnonyms, historical allusions, and culturally relevant imagery operate inside English phraseological units and how they reflect perspectives of other countries as well as self-representation is still necessary especially because many idioms retain remnants of colonial past, historical conflicts and intercultural stereotypes that continue to shape language consciousness even in contemporary usage.

The theoretical foundation of the present research is based on studies in phraseology, cognitive linguistics, ethnolinguistics, and linguoculturology, which examine language as a reflection of collective cultural experience and national worldview. The development of phraseological theory is closely connected with the works of Anthony Cowie, Charles Bally, Fernando Chitra, and Rosamund Moon, who studied semantic stability, idiomaticity, and figurative meaning in phraseological units. The cognitive and cultural nature of idioms was further

explored by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson through the theory of conceptual metaphor, while Wilhelm von Humboldt and Anna Wierzbicka examined the connection between language, culture, and national worldview. The issues of stereotypes and ethnic representation in language were also addressed in the works of Teun van Dijk and Wolfgang Mieder. These approaches provide the theoretical basis for analysing English idioms with an ethnic component as carriers of historically shaped cultural associations and collective perceptions.

The aim of the research is to analyse English idioms with an ethnic component and to identify the cultural, historical, and semantic features reflected in such phraseological units.

The following **objectives** were established in the paper:

- to define the notion and characteristic features of idioms with an ethnic component;
- to investigate the relationship between phraseology, culture, and national mentality;
- to classify English idioms according to the type of ethnic or cultural component they contain;
- to examine idioms reflecting British and American mentality and culturally specific self-representation
- to investigate idioms with historical and topographical references;
- to identify the stereotypes and cultural associations encoded in English phraseology;
- to determine the prevalence of positive and negative connotations within idioms with ethnonyms.

The object of the research is English idioms containing an ethnic component.

The subject of the research is the semantic peculiarities of English phraseological units with an ethnic component.

The material of the research consists of English phraseological units selected from printed and online dictionaries of idioms and phraseology, including sources such as Cambridge Dictionary, Merriam-Webster Dictionary, Collins Dictionary, and The Free Dictionary. The empirical corpus includes 82 idioms containing ethnonyms, historical and topographical references, and culturally marked imagery connected with different nations.

The research methods that were employed in the paper: descriptive analysis to identify and describe the structural, semantic, and stylistic features of English idioms with an ethnic component; semantic and contextual analysis to examine the figurative meanings of idioms and analyse how ethnic stereotypes and cultural associations are reflected in different contexts; comparative analysis to compare idioms containing different ethnic references and determine some common tendencies; quantitative analysis to calculate the proportion of idioms with positive, negative, and neutral connotations and identify the most productive thematic groups; and the method of classification, which enabled the division of the collected idioms into categories according to the type of ethnic component, including ethnonyms, historical references, and topographical references.

The scientific novelty of the research lies in the comprehensive classification and analysis of English idioms with an ethnic component, including idioms reflecting national mentality, idioms containing ethnonyms, and idioms with historical and topographical references. The study also explores the semantic tendencies associated with different ethnonyms and examines the prevalence of evaluative connotations within ethnonymic phraseology.

The theoretical value of the research consists in its contribution to the study of the relationship between language, culture, and ethnic representation in English

phraseology. **The practical value** lies in the possibility of using the obtained results in courses on lexicology, phraseology, intercultural communication, linguoculturology, and the practice of English language teaching.

The structure of the bachelor's thesis includes an introduction, two chapters, conclusions to the chapters, general conclusion, references, and appendices.

The results of the research were also presented at the All-Ukrainian Scientific Readings with the participation of young scholars "Philology of the 21st Century: New Research and Prospects," where a report devoted to the peculiarities of English idioms with an ethnonym as an ethnic component was delivered.

1. THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS OF PHRASEOLOGY AND IDIOMS

1.1 Phraseology as a branch of linguistics and phraseological units

Before analysing idioms with an ethnic component, it is important to recognise phraseology (from Greek φράσις *phrasis*, “way of speaking” and -λογία *-logia*, “study of”), which narrowly speaking relates to idiomatic expressions. More broadly, it refers to phrasemes, or phraseological units, which comprise word combinations such as idioms and collocations [Autelli 2021, p. 36]. Phraseology holds a vital place in linguistic studies as it shows how language accumulates and conveys collective experience in a stable, conventionalised form. Even though phraseology is widely accepted, different linguists have different definitions of it.

Bally, who is often considered to be the founder of phraseology theory, viewed phraseology as the study of stable word combinations that function as ready-made expressive units in language, differing from free combinations by their emotional and stylistic value [Bally 2007, pp. 88-89]. As phraseological units frequently express sentiments, emotions, and subjective opinions, Bally’s method emphasises the close connection between phraseology and the speaker's attitude.

Cowie defined phraseology as the branch of linguistics concerned with conventionalized and institutionalized multi-word expressions — variously termed phraseological units, word-combinations, or phrasal lexemes — which function as ready-made units in language [Cowie 1998, pp. 1–3]. Furthermore, he underlines that many phraseological units are figurative in nature since their meanings cannot be entirely inferred from the meanings of their constituent parts.

Thus, phraseology can be regarded as an important branch of linguistics that studies stable and recurrent word combinations functioning as single semantic units. Overall, it sheds light on the relationship between language, thought, emotion and culture and serves as a basis for additional examination of other linguistic phenomena like English idioms with an ethnic component.

Idioms, phrasal verbs, and other multi-word lexical units, often referred to as phraseological units, or phrasemes, are examples of set or fixed expressions that are studied in phraseology. The meanings of these expressions' individual components can be either more specific or in some other way unexpected when taken as a whole. For example, in "*spill the beans*," its constituents separately signify the following: spill (to drop) + beans (food). However, together it means "to reveal a secret," which is not that obvious to decipher.

Phraseological units share several defining features:

1. Conventionalisation and Stability

Phraseological units are established, recurrent word combinations that exist in the language as recognised constructions. They are socially acknowledged as stable lexical items and are often used in everyday speech. Their internal structure and word order are typically fixed, and arbitrary changes might result in ungrammaticality or a loss of idiomatic meaning [Sinclair 1991, pp. 110-115].

2. Non-compositionality

Semantic integrity, or the ability of a phraseological unit to transmit a meaning that cannot be entirely inferred from its constituent parts, is one of its most crucial characteristics [Moon 1998, p. 8; Fernando 1996, p. 3]. Semantic opacity is demonstrated by numerous idiomatic phrases, such as "*hit the sack*," meaning "to go to bed."

3. Pragmatic and Stylistic Function

Phraseological units are more than simply lexical items; they frequently convey meaning that is expressive, stylistic, or communicative. Many convey cultural nuances or pragmatic meanings that are not conveyed by literal phrasing [Wray 2002, pp. 12-15]. As for the classification of phraseological units, Burger mainly distinguishes between structural, referential and communicative phrasemes [Burger 2015, pp. 39-50].

- Structural phrasemes establish grammatical relations, often acting as functional word combinations (e.g., "*concerning*," "*as well as*," "*on behalf of*," "*with regards to*").

- Referential phrasemes represent the most complex group, which refers to objects, processes, or situations. They are further divided into two sub-categories: nominal and propositional units. The latter ones function at the sentence or text level and include proverbs which are complete sentences that express generalised wisdoms and norms (e.g., “*all that glitters is not gold*”). Nominal units can be further split into:
 1. Idioms are fixed expressions where the meaning is entirely figurative and incomprehensible from the constituent parts (e.g., “*to kick the bucket*”).
 2. Semi-idioms are expressions where some elements are figurative and others literal (e.g., “*to plant a seed*”).
 3. Collocations are fixed combinations with a weak idiomaticity degree, whose meaning is literal (e.g. “*to do homework*”).
- Communicative phrasemes are used to describe communicative acts, including greetings, clichés, famous quotations and routine formulae (e.g. “*Kind regards,*” “*How are you?,*” “*To be, or not to be? That is the question*”).

Another classification of phraseological units may be achieved by taking into consideration grammatical structure. Rather than treating multi-word units only as “meanings,” this approach views them as syntactic building blocks that function similarly to certain parts of speech [Gläser 1986, pp. 44–60; Fiedler 2007, pp. 34-38]:

1. Nominal phraseologisms (“*the apple of one's eye,*” “*a red herring*”)
2. Verbal phraseologisms (“*to commit a crime,*” “*to break the ice*”)
3. Adjectival phraseologisms (“*spick and span,*” “*as fit as a fiddle*”)
4. Adverbial phraseologisms (“*in the long run,*” “*by and large*”)
5. Sentence phraseologisms (“*Every cloud has a silver lining.*” “*A watched pot never boils.*”)

Phraseological units in speech frequently express sentiments, attitudes, and judgements beside their denotative meaning. They may reflect the speaker's social

and ideological stance that is strongly linked to the connotative meaning of such expressions. Understanding English phraseological units, especially idioms, improves vocabulary, makes it easier to understand figurative language and grasp English humour. Furthermore, as phrasemes represent culturally specific forms of thought and expression, familiarity with them aids in the development of language and cultural competence.

1.2 The notion of idiom and its features

While phraseological units as a whole constitute a broad and heterogeneous group of fixed expressions, idioms occupy a central position within this system due to their semantic complexity and figurative nature. As it was mentioned earlier, idioms are a unique kind of phraseological unit that differs from other stable word combinations in the fact that their meaning is not entirely predicted from its constituent parts. There are different approaches to defining the notion of idiom.

The word “idiom” originates from the Greek word *idiōma*, which denotes a “peculiarity” or “property” particular to a specific entity. The *Longman Dictionary* defines this “peculiarity” as “a special meaning that is different from the ordinary meaning of each separate word [LD].” Fillmore, Kay, and O'Connor, in their turn, assert that idioms are a linguistic category that is inherently unpredictable. They contend that even a complete understanding of a language's formal systems does not guarantee an understanding of its idioms [Fillmore et al 1988, p. 504). In other words, even if a person is completely fluent in a language's syntax, grammar, and vocabulary, they may not be familiar with a particular idiom because, instead of being freely built in accordance with grammatical rules, idiomatic expressions are learned as ready-made units.

This point of view is elaborated by other scholars, stating that idioms are conventionalised lexical units, whose meanings are predetermined and must be learned as lexical wholes as opposed to being produced by syntactic and semantic

rules [Fernando & Flavell 1981, pp. 17-19]. This perspective is consistent with phraseology's lexicalist heritage, which views idioms as stored lexical entries.

Differentiating idioms from the more general category of phraseological units, it is possible to conclude that an idiom must have at least two elements with several possible meanings (polysemy). The “reciprocal selection” of these meanings is what distinguishes the idiom; the constituents effectively constrain each other, triggering distinct subsenses that are exclusive to that combination [Weinreich, 1969, p. 42]. At the same time, according to Crystal, components' meanings of an idiom, which serves as a distinct syntactic and semantic unit, cannot be used to infer their total meaning. The constituents' syntactic variability is frequently limited, prohibiting typical changes present in other settings. Therefore, one cannot freely alter the quantity or order of words in an idiom without affecting the idiomatic meaning [Crystal 1980, p. 236].

A more philosophical idea of the idiom is presented by Roberts, who states that idiom is the point where linguistic execution and mental intent meet. Idioms serve as the “inner design” that enables precise idea expression, the basic architecture of communication, rather than as merely decorative embellishments. This viewpoint states that idioms offer the most straightforward and accurate portrayal of a speaker's meaning, challenging the widespread belief that they are opaque or confusing [Roberts 1944, pp. 302-303].

Overall, there are various approaches to defining an idiom. However, one of the most universal explanations of the notion implies the difficulty to deduce the meaning of an idiom from the meanings of its individual pieces. Therefore, phraseological units with fully transferred meanings, ones in which the meaning of the entire unit deviates from the present meanings of its constituent parts, are typically referred to as idioms.

From a structural point of view, idioms are usually defined by a particular level of **fixedness**. Restrictions on syntactic variation and lexical substitution are examples of this fixedness. According to Cowie, altering specific parts of idioms

frequently results in grammaticality or a loss of idiomatic meaning because idioms are typically stored and retrieved as prefabricated units [Cowie 1998, pp. 6-7]. For example, the idiom “*break the ice*” meaning “to initiate social interaction” cannot normally be changed to “crack the ice” without losing its established figurative sense, despite the semantic similarity between break and crack.

However, idiomatic fixedness is not absolute. As long as the essential structure is maintained, many idioms permit a little amount of grammatical flexibility, such as tense changes, pluralisation, or the addition of modifiers. For example, “*a cold shoulder*,” which means “intentional unfriendliness or ignoring,” can be modified in a sentence as “I kept getting cold shoulders from Bill.”

Semantically wise idioms are distinguished by their **non-compositionality**, which means that the sum of the meanings of its constituent parts cannot be used to determine the expression's overall meaning. Idiomatic meaning is frequently prompted by metaphor, even though the original metaphor may be entirely or partially unknown to speakers of the present language. Idioms frequently mirror common conceptual metaphors that organise human experience, including moral judgement, social interactions, and emotions [Lakoff & Johnson 1980, pp. 44–46; Kövecses 2000, pp. 1-3]. This explains why, instead of being neutral descriptions, idioms usually contain evaluative or emotionally charged meanings.

Pragmatically, idioms play an important role in shaping discourse and interpersonal communication. They are frequently employed to convey opinions, sentiments, or sarcasm, which strengthens speech’s expressive capacity and points out its subjective nature. Moreover, idioms can be rather difficult for translators and non-native speakers to understand as their pragmatic meaning may not be easily convertible between languages [Baker 2011, pp. 67–71].

All things considered, idioms differ from other fixed expressions in their evaluative and context-dependent use, semantic opacity, and structural rigidity. They serve as integrated semantic units rather than unrestricted word combinations

since their meaning is lexically limited rather than compositionally derived. These characteristics support their examination as a distinct subject of linguistic inquiry, especially in studies pertaining to cultural meaning.

1.3 Classification of idioms

Since idioms are a unique semantic category as well as a subtype of phraseological units, classifying them poses a methodological problem. When the emphasis turns to idioms in particular, a more detailed internal classification is required.

Fernando presents a significant model that distinguishes idioms based on the level of semantic transparency, according to which there are three primary categories of idioms: literal, semi-literal, and pure.

- **Pure idioms**, such as “*to pull someone’s leg*,” which means to tease or to joke with someone, or “*to throw in the towel*” — to give up, are completely non-compositional statements whose overall meaning cannot be deduced from their constituent parts.
- **Semi-idioms** have at least one literal component and one or more figurative components (e.g., “*to foot the bill*,” “*to see the light*”).
- **Literal** idioms are semantically transparent even if they are structurally fixed (e.g., “*of course*,” “*in any case*”) [Fernando 1996, pp. 31–37].

Makkai identifies five major types of "lexemic idioms" (units that function like single words). This approach moves away from a purely descriptive list by offering a structural hierarchy that differentiates between various degrees of phrasal complexity—from basic phrasal verbs to more complicated "tournure" idioms:

I. Phrasal verbs — verbs followed by a particle that creates a new, non-compositional meaning (e.g. “*to carry on*,” meaning “to continue,” “to take off,” meaning “to depart”).

II. Tournure idioms — complex phrases of at least three words that include “extra” functional elements (like “it” or articles) which have figurative meaning in the context:

- With compulsory “it”: “*to wing it*” (to improvise)
- With compulsory articles: “*to bite THE bullet*” (to accept hardship)
- With irreversible binomials, which means that the order is fixed: “*fish and chips*,” “*high and low*,” “*bread and butter*”
- Headed by “be”: “*to be in the doldrums*” (to be in a state of stagnation).

III. Phrasal compounds — noun phrases in which the two components combine to form a single, novel idea (“*red tape (bureaucracy)*”, “*loan shark*”).

IV. Incorporating verbs — verbs created by “incorporating” an adjective or noun into the verb itself; if spoken literally, these verbs would constitute a complete phrase (e.g. “*to browbeat*,” meaning “*to bully*”, “*to whitewash*,” meaning “*to cover up*”) [Makkai 1969, pp. 46–58].

Furthermore, the difficulties concerning classification of idioms are pointed out by Kövecses, who compares idioms to a “mixed bag” which involves:

- metaphors (e.g. “*to burn bridges*”);
- metonymies (e.g. “*to lend a hand*”);
- pairs of words (e.g. “*pros and cons*”);
- idioms with it (e.g. “*to call it a day*”);
- similes (e.g. “*as dry as a bone*”);
- sayings or proverbs (e.g. “*A leopard cannot change its spots*”);
- phrasal verbs (e.g. “*to look up to (someone)*”; “*to carry out*”);

- grammatical idioms (e.g. “*to be bound to*”) [Kövecses & Szabó 1996, pp. 326–327].

Similarly to the previous approaches, McCarthy and O’Dell identify similes, binominals, proverbs, while also adding the following categories:

- clichés, which are frequently used phrases that have lost some of their original meaning but are still crucial for social “glue” (for example, “*it goes without saying*,” “*at the end of the day*”)
- fixed statements that serve as conversational formulae (“*long time no see*,” “*fat chance!*”)
- loan phrases — mostly Latin or French phrases that have become idiomatic within English (for example, “*carte blanche*,” “*persona non grata*,” “*status quo*”) [McCarthy & O’Dell 2017, pp. 8–10]

On the other hand, to classify idioms it is also possible to take into consideration syntactic flexibility. Certain idioms serve as institutionalised lexical units and are completely fixed terms that are resistant to change, substitution, or syntactic transformation (e.g. “*spick and span*,” “*in short*”). Some are “decomposable” or partially fixed idioms, meaning that their parts figuratively add to the total meaning and hence permit restricted syntactic processes like passivisation or modification (e.g., “*to rock the boat*” — “She really rocked the political boat”). Lastly, there are syntactically-flexible expressions that are often presented by phrasal verbs can be moved around significantly in a sentence (e.g. “*to call off*,” “*to look up*”) [Fraser 1970, pp. 39–42; Nunberg et al 1994, pp. 495–497].

All in all, idioms differ in their fixedness, structure, syntactic flexibility, and semantic transparency, demonstrating a multifaceted and complicated nature that defies simple classification. Idioms are both conventionalised lexical units and sites of systematic conceptual and grammatical patterns, which makes their

classification both difficult and crucial for comprehending how meaning is organised in language.

1.4 The concept of an ethnic component in language

Idioms undeniably play an important role within a language by shaping perceptions and conveying judgements about the world through linguistic means. According to Roberts, when a language is at its most idiomatic, it becomes a clear medium that enables the full and explicit articulation of ideas, making it the most effective [Roberts 2014, pp. 291–293]. In other words, speakers rely on established, conventionalised expressions that convey meaning precisely and efficiently. Therefore, the integration of idiomaticity into language allows speakers to successfully convey difficult concepts, cultural nuances, and different perspectives using expressions that are both cognitively rich and widely understood.

The core of the language picture of the world lies in the notion that language actively constructs and interprets reality rather than merely reflects it. Wilhelm von Humboldt, who maintained that language as a formative organ of thinking influences speakers' perceptions of the world, is credited with developing this method [Humboldt 1999, pp. 54–60]. Sapir further claimed that people are “at the mercy of the particular language” of their society that structures dimensions like time, space, and social connections in culturally particular ways. Within this theoretical framework, language is viewed as a system of fixed, culturally formed information about reality that is passed down through linguistic units [Sapir 2008, pp. 145–148].

From the standpoint of cognitive linguistics, idioms are strongly connected with conceptual metaphor theory. Metaphorical mappings based on ordinary interactions with the environment and bodily experience are the source of many idioms. For instance, phrases like “*to defend a position*” or “*to attack an*

argument” are based on the conceptual metaphor “argument is war” [Lakoff & Johnson 1980, pp. 4–7]. These terms are not arbitrary; rather, they represent more profound intellectual frameworks that influence how language portrays the world. Idioms thus show how more tangible and lived experiences shape abstract domains.

Idioms also perform as carriers of cultural memory and social values, serving as a “mirror of culture.” They maintain conventional images, historical allusions, and critical viewpoints [Wierzbicka 1999, pp. 273–275]. For example, expressions like “*to carry coals to Newcastle*,” which means “to do something completely pointless or redundant” and derives from the fact that Newcastle was the primary source of coal back in the 16-17 centuries, thus it was unnecessary to transport more coal to it. Thus, idioms convey culturally distinctive knowledge by requiring an understanding of certain historical and geographical settings. However, many idioms are based on fundamental human experiences, like basic emotions or bodily reactions. Such idioms may be culturally specific too. For instance, a British person may “*keep a stiff upper lip*,” an expression that reflects a particular cultural virtue of restraint. This mix of culturally marked imagery and universal cognitive foundations demonstrates the dual character of the language picture of the world: it is both nationally specific and shared by all people.

In addition, idioms’ evaluative dimension is a crucial aspect of the linguistic representation of the world. Idiomatic statements often reflect the axiological system of a linguistic group by expressing positive or negative evaluations [Boers 2021, pp. 42–45]. Calling someone a “*snake in the grass*,” for example, implies mistrust and condemnation whereas saying that someone has a “*heart of gold*” shows admiration. Idioms reinforce social norms and cultural expectations by interpreting and judging reality in addition to describing it.

Furthermore, idioms emphasise culturally significant areas including routine tasks, natural phenomena, social interactions, and material objects by using associations that are ingrained in the idioms themselves as part of their conventionalised meaning [Deignan 2005, pp. 167–170]. For example, when

speakers use the expression “*cold feet*,” they automatically activate the culturally entrenched association between physical coldness and emotional fear or hesitation. As these metaphorical correspondences are retained in collective language memory, it is possible to quickly and effortlessly access complicated meanings without the need for analytical work. In this sense, idioms serve as stores of stable connections that help create and preserve a common linguistic worldview and mould automatic categorisation patterns.

Thus, idioms are a crucial part of the language picture of the world as they incorporate semantic, cognitive, and cultural aspects of meaning. They encode evaluative attitudes rooted in a certain culture, retain collective experience, and represent conceptual metaphors. Therefore, the analysis of idioms reveals the underlying frameworks and value systems that influence speakers' perceptions and interpretations of reality.

Language cannot be examined apart from the cultural and ethnic context in which it operates because, as it was mentioned earlier, it reflects the cultural experience, beliefs, and worldview of the people who use it. The term “ethnic” or “ethnocultural component” refers to this cultural aspect of language, which includes linguistic components that contain collective experience and culturally unique knowledge of a particular linguistic community [Underhill 2012, p. 15].

Ethnolinguistics, which studies how language encodes cultural knowledge, develops a similar viewpoint. Lexical items and set expressions frequently have culturally distinctive meanings that cannot be well described by universal semantic components. Rather, they are linked to common cultural models among linguistic community members [Goddard & Wierzbicka 2004, pp. 153–156]. As phraseological units frequently rely on cultural associations rather than literal interpretation, this point is especially pertinent to them.

Furthermore, the use of **ethnonyms** —names that relate to certain ethnic or national groups — are one of the most explicit manifestations of an ethnic component in language, for example, “French” or “Latino” [Edwards 2009, pp.

24–27]. Ethnonyms serve not only as neutral names of peoples but also as bearers of cultural meanings and historical connotations ingrained in language [Leerssen 2007, pp. 17–21]. They can be found in phraseological units and idiomatic expressions in various languages, where they may represent societal attitudes or culturally entrenched stereotypes of other groups, which is of special interest for this paper. According to Hermans, ethnonyms act as “cultural signatures” that trigger a collective memory of that group’s perceived characteristics, when used in an idiom [Hermans 2007, pp. 78–81].

Therefore, the culturally determined semantic layer found in linguistic units such as idioms, which conveys the collective knowledge, cultural values, and historical experience of a speech community and may be expressed by ethnonyms, is characterised as an ethnic component of language. Since idioms frequently contain culturally specific images and associations that reflect how speakers conceptualise the world around them, the study of this component is very essential in phraseology.

Languages reflect and extend the shared worldview of the linguistic community, transmitting cultural norms from one generation to the next. Thus, language, and phraseology in particular, is an essential tool for the development and maintenance of a **cultural identity** [Cowie 1998: 8–9]. For example, an expression “*as American as apple pie*” functions as a cultural symbol that refers to something perceived as typically American. Although apple pie is not uniquely American historically, it has become a cultural emblem of American identity [CD].

Closely connected with the expression of national identity in phraseology is the presence of **stereotypical representations** of nations and cultures. Stereotypes are simplified, conventionalised representations of social groups that proliferate throughout a speech community and frequently get ingrained in idiomatic expressions. Lippmann asserts that stereotypes serve as cognitive shortcuts that organise social experience and that these simplified representations are often encoded in linguistic terms [Lippmann 2017, pp. 59–62].

Stereotypes in phraseology can manifest as metaphorical models that link specific characteristics to distinct national personalities or cultures. For example, “*Dutch courage*” (“artificial bravery induced by alcohol”) and “pardon my French” (“apologising for vulgar language”) are examples of English phraseology with an ethnic component. These idioms preserve historically established prejudices that were prevalent within specific cultural and political contexts rather than necessarily reflecting empirical reality. Stereotypes frequently endure because they are reinforced in discourse, particularly through idiomatic language [Allport 1979, pp. 187–190].

Therefore, phraseological units perform a dual function in relation to the national worldview. On the one hand, they transmit and preserve aspects of collective cultural identity, such as social values, historical memory, and culturally favoured behavioural patterns. On the other hand, they could also contain stereotyped depictions of other countries, which are a reflection of long-standing cultural perception patterns.

1.5 Sources of ethnic and cultural elements in English idioms

English idioms reflect the worldview and collective experience of English-speaking groups, and they receive their ethnic and cultural components from a range of sources, which are essential in order to interpret how idioms encode national identity, stereotypes, and social norms.

The depiction of **national character and cultural stereotypes** is a significant source of an ethnic component in English idioms. Phraseological units frequently carry culturally distinctive behavioural models that represent how a linguistic community perceives typical or acceptable personal traits [Wierzbicka 1997, pp. 163–166]. Many idioms in English convey qualities like emotional restraint, self-control, and poise that are typically connected to British cultural identity. The significant cultural focus on privacy and individual autonomy in English society is reflected in expressions such as “*an Englishman's home is his*

castle.” Such phrases show how idioms act as verbal representations of collective identity and maintain culturally held views of national mindset.

The use of **ethnonyms, toponyms, and culturally marked proper names**, which serve as clear linguistic indications of ethnic or national reference, is another important source of an ethnic component in idioms. Names of individuals or places that represent historically formed cultural perceptions that are common within a linguistic community are included into many idioms [Callies 2021, pp. 245–248]. Ethnonym-based idioms in English are frequently the result of past interactions across borders, and as such, they convey opinions on other groups. For instance, during the seventeenth-century Anglo-Dutch battles, English speakers stereotyped the Dutch as big drinkers, giving rise to the expression “*Dutch courage*,” which describes bravery brought on by alcohol [Lundberg 2016]. Thus idioms serve as transmitters of ethnocultural knowledge inside the language by condensing historically created ethnic stereotypes and cultural connotations into fixed linguistic patterns that speakers may easily recognise.

Traditions and customs can also produce an ethnic component in English idioms. Many idioms have their roots in socially significant practices that are standardised in metaphorical language, preserving aspects of cultural experience [Cook 2016, pp. 104–107]. It is possible to trace a direct connection to old British institutions and customs. For example, the phrase “*not cricket*” refers to actions that are unjust or inappropriate and is derived from the cultural significance of cricket, which has historically represented values of integrity, justice, and gentlemanly manners in British society. Therefore, idioms incorporate aspects of collective cultural experience into the language’s phraseological structure by preserving remnants of culturally particular customs and behaviours.

History is also a major source of an ethnic component in English phraseology since many expressions originate from particular historical events and locations that have cultural significance and eventually acquire stable figurative meanings [Piirainen 2012, p. 165]. Such idioms preserve culturally influenced historical interpretations by converting specific historical occurrences into

symbolic ideas. For instance, “*cross the Rubicon*” relates to Julius Caesar's crossing of the Rubicon in 49 BCE and signifies an irreversible decision. Therefore, historical events may produce an ethnic component through idioms that reflect how these cultures are typically understood and encoded in English historical and cultural consciousness.

Overall, representations of national character and mentality, culturally significant proper names and ethnonyms, customs or social norms rooted in the mentality of English-speaking societies, and significant historical events are some of the interrelated cultural sources from which an ethnic component of English idioms arises. The identification of these sources provides the basis for the practical analysis in the following chapter, where idioms will be examined according to their relation to national character and mentality, ethnically marked names and references, and cultural traditions embedded in English phraseology.

Conclusion to Chapter I

This chapter's theoretical review shows that phraseology is a significant area of linguistic study that focuses on stable multi-word entities whose function and meaning cannot be entirely explained by the meanings of their constituent parts. The examination of academic methods reveals that phraseological units are distinguished from free word combinations by essential characteristics such as conventionalization, non-compositionality and pragmatic function. Idioms are a particularly important subgroup within the larger system of phraseology since their meanings are usually heavily reliant on shared cultural and cognitive associations among members of a speech community.

The analysis of idioms' structural, semantic, and pragmatic features demonstrates that these units serve as both carriers of culturally imprinted knowledge and expressive linguistic instruments. The multifaceted nature of idioms and the intricacy of their semantic structure and structural patterns are highlighted by a number of classifications put forth in linguistic research. Idioms'

function in reflecting culturally distinct ways of conceptualising reality is also revealed by the examination of idioms within the framework of the language picture of the world.

The concept of an ethnic component in language, which describes linguistic components that carry culturally conditioned attitudes, beliefs, and values typical of a specific speech community, has received special attention. Idioms that represent national worldviews, culturally distinct behavioural models, and historically formed opinions of other peoples and social behaviours are examples of how this component appears in English phraseology. The examination of the primary sources of ethnic and cultural features reveals that these aspects might originate from references to customs and social structures, the usage of ethnonyms and culturally significant proper names, and depictions of national character.

Thus, the theoretical framework developed in this chapter establishes the foundation for the practical analysis that follows. It provides the required framework for analysing how these aspects are realised in English idioms in the following chapter by elucidating the linguistic character of idioms and explaining the mechanisms via which ethnic and cultural meanings are incorporated in phraseological units.

2. IDIOMS CONTAINING ETHNIC ELEMENTS IN ENGLISH

In order to determine how culturally unique meanings are embedded and realised in idioms, this chapter offers the analysis of English idioms with an ethnic component, which concentrates on idioms that contain explicit or implicit cultural markers, such as ethnonym and references to national character, customs, and historical events, based on the theoretical framework presented in Chapter 1. Particular attention is paid to the ways in which these idioms encode collective perceptions, culturally shaped behavioural models, and historically formed stereotypes within the English-speaking linguistic community.

2.1 Idioms reflecting national character and mentality

Idioms that reflect national character and mentality are a group of phraseological units that encode culturally specific forms of behaviour, value systems, and collective self-perception. Thus, it is important to mention that this section will focus on idioms that characterise American and British mindset from an internal viewpoint, i.e., how English-speaking communities create verbal representations of themselves. In contrast to the next part, which will deal with idioms which incorporate ethnonyms to characterise and assess other countries and cultures through comparison.

However, it is also worth pointing out that it is rather difficult to precisely identify idioms that reflect American or British mentality since “mentality” is a relatively broad and abstract cultural notion with no obvious linguistic bounds. Therefore, the current division focuses on some particularly striking and culturally distinctive examples that best capture the essence of cultural practices and norms characteristic for American and British societies rather than attempting to provide an exhaustive distinction. These idioms contain implicit cultural components which are expressed through different imagery, references and notions traditionally associated with the aforementioned nations. In other words, such expressions show

how English-speaking societies have historically conceptualised and evaluated their own cultural norms and behavioural patterns.

2.1.1 British culturally-specific idioms

Idioms reflecting British mentality is a distinct group of phraseological units, which conveys culturally specific notions and worldview of British society. These idioms serve as a form of cultural self-representation, showing how British people linguistically encode their own beliefs, habits and dispositions.

Emotional constraint and understatement are key components of the British mindset, and idiomatic speech regularly reflects these traits. For example, the idiom *“keep a stiff upper lip”* refers to remaining composed under taxing circumstances. It is closely linked to Victorian moral doctrine, which promoted discipline and dignity and avoided overt emotional expression. Therefore, this phrase reflects the inclination of the Brits toward discrete emotional expression and reserved demeanour.

Another idiom that indicates British propriety while also referring to a sport historically associated with Britain is *“not cricket,”* which means something dishonest or unethical. The origin of the idiom could be traced to 19th-century sportsmanship, where the game of cricket symbolised honourable conduct and gentlemanly behaviour — qualities widely appreciated in British society of the period. In addition, the idiom *“an Englishman’s word in his bond [TFD]”* reflects similar traits too, implying that honesty and reliability are a cornerstone of English character.

Furthermore, indirectness and non-confrontational attitude are closely linked to the British mentality, too. For example, the idiom *“send someone to Coventry”* describes intentional social banishment by silence, a culturally specific kind of punishment that avoids direct conflict while upholding social norms. This phrase demonstrates a communication style where meaning is frequently expressed

implicitly rather than explicitly through verbal conflict, which is characteristic of British people.

Furthermore, such an idiom as “*an Englishman's home is his castle* [TFD]” reflects an important role privacy and personal boundaries play in British society. This phrase points out respect for personal autonomy as a socially established norm while reflecting the notion of the house as a protected private area. This example also shows that idioms about British mentality may incorporate not only notions linked to the Brits like the game of cricket or the English historical city of Coventry but also include the ethnonyms “English” or “British,” which express their worldview more directly and immediately.

However, the idiom “*English disease* [OLD]” is a rather unusual example, as it mostly reflects an external European image of Britain rather than an internal self-representation. The ethnonym “English” here is used to refer to the issues stereotypically associated with England during the 1970s, such as frequent strikes, powerful trade unions, and industrial decline. In the 1980s, the expression also began to refer to the violent behaviour of English football hooligans, while more recently it has sometimes been applied to express excessive nostalgia and idealisation of the past. As a result, “English” may symbolise economic stagnation, labour unrest, brutal conduct or even longing for the past, illustrating how certain aspects of British social and industrial life became ingrained in both British culture and how other European countries viewed Britain.

Lastly, common cultural practices that have evolved into symbolic markers of national identity also form the British mentality. Thus, there are a number of idioms with references to tea, for example. The idiom “*not my cup of tea*,” which means a particular thing you do not enjoy, and “*a storm in a teacup*,” which denotes a tendency toward emotional moderation and scepticism about overreaction, show that strong British tea culture left traces in language via fixed expressions.

All in all, idioms that convey British mentality encode such values as emotional restraint, privacy, and propriety while using the eponymous ethnonyms or integrating the concepts widely associated with the Brits like, for instance, tea or cricket. These expressions show how self-description patterns rooted in common language are used to linguistically establish British identity.

2.1.2 American culturally-specific idioms

Idioms representing American mentality outline culturally distinctive ideals of American society, such as individualism, frontier ideology, competitiveness, and public display of accomplishment. These expressions convey culturally specific behaviour shaped by American historical and social development, especially attitudes toward work, risk, and individualism.

The idea of self-made success amid precarious circumstances is an irreplaceable part of American culture, which was influenced by early industrial work realities, and is reflected in the idiom “*American dream [CDO]*,” which encapsulates a core ideological belief in the United States that anyone, regardless of background, can achieve prosperity and social upward mobility through hard work, determination, and integrity. In a similar vein, the idiom “*pull oneself up by one's bootstraps*” expresses the fundamental notion in American society that progress may be attained by your own efforts without outside help. In addition, a model of social mobility “*from rags to riches*,” which symbolises the ultimate American Dream underdog story, is deeply ingrained in people’s minds in the US, too. The proof can be found in the idiom “*from log cabin to White House*,” which is connected to Abraham Lincoln, who gives an example of how it is possible to go from rural poverty to political leadership.

The American disposition to take risks and make high-stakes decisions that derived from gambling and frontier uncertainty is another culturally distinctive aspect. For example, the idiom “*to go for broke*,” which originated in Hawaiian

Pidgin English and popularised during WWII, means wagering everything on one roll in the hopes of winning. Moreover, an integral part of American society is their large-scale entertainment culture, famelust and massive performances. Thus, the expression “*to hit the big time*,” which originated during the time of American Vaudeville, relates to both commercial success and public acclaim.

Lastly, similarly to British idioms, culturally famous imagery is frequently employed to reflect national identity. “*As American as apple pie* [CDO]” symbolically connects American culture with simple home food conveying the idea of belonging, while directly using the ethnonym “American.”

All things considered, idioms that convey the ideas of American mentality demonstrate how their worldview focused on independence, competitiveness, success and risk-taking are reflected in language through idioms, most of which have historical foundation.

2.2 Idioms containing ethnonyms

Idioms with ethnonyms are the most productive group of phraseological units containing an ethnic component in English. Their development is closely associated with past intercultural interactions, where English (and later American) speakers compared other countries with their own cultural standards to interpret and assess them. Such idioms frequently reflect particular historical contexts like the Anglo-Dutch wars, Anglo-French rivalry or colonial encounters, for example. However, ethnic stereotypes are also fixed in these expressions, linking specific countries to some qualities like excess, dishonesty, complexity, or otherness. Therefore, idioms with ethnonyms provide a particularly beneficial area for studying how language not only reflects intercultural relationships but also conveys evaluative judgements of other groups across time.

Idioms with “Dutch”

Idioms with “Dutch” form the largest group among idioms with ethnonyms and clearly illustrate how historical conflict shapes a linguistic meaning. Most of these idioms originated during the Anglo-Dutch wars of the 17th century, when England and the Netherlands were major rivals, and as a result, the ethnonym “Dutch” gradually acquired strongly negative connotations in English.

Analysing their meanings, several clear semantic patterns appear. “*Dutch courage* [OED],” “*Dutch feast* [OED],” “*Dutch agreement* [UIC],” and “*Dutch headache* [ODCIE]” are examples of a large group associated with excessive drinking and lack of self-control, which comes from a long-standing English belief that the Dutch are heavy drinkers. These phrases reinforce a stereotype by creating an impression of illogical or uncontrollable behaviour connected with the Dutch.

Some other pejorative meanings can be traced in the idioms “*in Dutch* [OED]” (to be in trouble), “*that beats the Dutch* [ODI]” and “*I’m a Dutchman* [ODI]” (to express disbelief), which demonstrate how the ethnonym is linked to something unexpected or undesired. Similarly, phrases like “*Dutch reckoning* [TFD],” “*Dutch comfort* [TFD],” and “*Dutch gold* [CEDO]” suggest deceit, dishonesty, or low quality. There is also an idiom about the language: “*double Dutch* [CDO]” reflects the perception of the Dutch language as incomprehensible, turning linguistic difference into a metaphor for confusion.

However, not every idiom in this category is derogatory. Expressions like “*Dutch auction* [NAID],” “*to go Dutch* [ODI],” and “*Dutch treat* [MWD]” are not the result of conflict or hostility, but rather of real economic and social processes in the Netherlands. For instance, a Dutch auction is an example of a trading strategy that has been proven to work in Dutch markets: the price starts high and progressively drops until a buyer accepts it. “*To go Dutch*” and “*Dutch treat*” refer to dividing expenses, which has frequently been associated with the idea that Dutch society is pragmatic, economically sound, and focused on financial justice. However, another interpretation is also possible: everyone paying for

themselves could be perceived as a lack of generosity or even greediness, which only demonstrates the subjective nature of such idioms.

Furthermore, the idiom “*Dutch uncle* [NAID]” makes an interesting example. On the one hand, it refers to a person who gives very stern and direct advice, which stems from the stereotype that the Dutch are too serious and straightforward. But on the other hand, the idiom usually implies edifying comments, as if coming from a strict but well-meaning relative. Therefore, sometimes the meaning of an idiom may vary depending on the context.

Overall, we identified 21 idioms with “Dutch,” 15 of which carry negative connotations and only 6 are neutral or positive. This disparity demonstrates that historical rivalry had a significant influence on the semantic development of these idioms, which led to a primarily unfavourable portrayal of the ethnic group.

Idioms with “German”

There aren't many idioms that include the ethnonym “German,” and those that do tend to represent more particular and context-dependent biases about Germans.

For example, the idiom “*from the East German judge* [LDEI]” originated in the context of international sporting competitions during the Cold War, and alludes to an exceptionally poor or harsh assessment. This word became commonplace during this time because judges from Eastern Bloc nations, notably East Germany, were occasionally viewed in the West as politically biased or unduly demanding. Another idiom “*German goiter* [TFD],” meaning a beer belly, is based on a different type of association, which presents a well-known stereotype that connects German culture with overconsumption of beer. The phrase itself conjures up a comical but rather derogatory image by equating an inflated stomach with a medical disease (goiter).

Overall, 2 idioms with “German” that were analysed have negative connotations, which shows that while this ethnonym in English phraseology is not very productive, it nevertheless conveys clear evaluative implications, mostly associated with discipline, and cultural practices like drinking beer.

Idioms with “French”

Similarly, idioms containing the ethnonym “French” are shaped by a long and complex history of conflict and linguistic contact between England and France, which dates back to the Norman Conquest of 1066, after which French became the language of the ruling elite, administration, and high culture in England for several centuries. Furthermore, mutual stereotypes and cultural friction developed as a result of the two nations’ many conflicts, most notably the Hundred Years’ War (1337–1453).

This combination of status and rivalry is mirrored in the semantics of the idioms. For instance, the expression “*French leave* [CEDO]” conveys a negative impression of inappropriate social behaviour — leaving without saying goodbye, yet “*excuse my French* [MWD]” is a blatant illustration of how semantic change is influenced by historical context. The statement was originally used to literally apologise for switching to French, which may not have been understood by all listeners. But when anti-French feeling increased and English superseded French in most fields throughout the time, the statement experienced an ironic translation. At the same time, some idioms maintain positive connotations. The expression “*French kiss* [MWD]” reflects long-standing associations of France with romance and sensuality.

All in all, we examined 4 idioms using the word “French,” 2 of which were negative and 2 of which were neutral or positive. This suggests a comparatively balanced evaluative pattern. The dual character of Anglo-French relations, which are marked by intensive cultural exchange and mutual influence in addition to rivalry and competition, can account for this balance.

Idioms with “Spanish”

Idioms with “Spanish” are a smaller group that reflects political rivalry and tense maritime connections between England and Spain, particularly in the 16th–17th centuries. Such idioms may express coercion and trickery stereotypically associated with the Spanish.

For example, the idiom “*(old) Spanish practices/customs* [CEDO]” dates back to the period of animosity between Protestant England and Catholic Spain and refers to irregular or unfair procedures. As in the English worldview, Spain was frequently linked with corruption and bureaucratic inefficiency. However, now the ethnonym “Spanish” in this idiom most often refers to some irregular activities specifically in the work environment.

Similarly, the idiom “*to walk Spanish* [TFD],” which means to make someone leave, is thought to have originated in naval settings where English seamen frequently clashed with Spanish ones. The phrase probably conveys the idea of coercive or violent methods, which may be connected to maritime discipline or prisoner treatment by Spanish pirates. Thus, it once again conveys the negative view of Spain as an authoritarian nation.

In contrast, “*castles in Spain* [MWD]” has different origins, unrelated to political turmoil. It is a product of a mediaeval European literary tradition (also found in French “*châteaux en Espagne*”) in which Spain was pictured as a far-off and somewhat unreachable place, particularly during the Reconquista, when a significant portion of Spain was ruled by Muslims and culturally isolated from the rest of Christian Europe. Consequently, “*castles in Spain*” grew to express unattainable aspirations rather than being a stereotype of Spanish people.

All in all, the group with “Spanish” constitutes only 3 idioms, all of which have negative connotations. These idioms encode the meaning of intercultural distance, coercion and rivalry, spreading some stereotypes about the Spanish..

Idioms with “Irish,” “Welsh” and “Scotch”

Idioms that contain the ethnonyms “Irish,” “Welsh,” and “Scotch” can be examined collectively because they represent intra-British connections, or views developed within the British Isles as a result of the English domination, historical injustice, and cultural stereotyping. Nevertheless, these ethnonyms operate differently in phraseology in terms of evaluation and semantic development despite this common context.

Idioms with “Irish” are the most semantically rich within this group. They reflect some prejudices, for instance, “*to get one’s Irish up* [CEDO]” and “*Irish hint* [TFD]” refer to the stereotypes of Irish people seen by the English as impetuous and unduly straightforward respectively. While “*Irish apricots* [TED]” alludes to reliance on the potato during difficult times, “the luck of the Irish” has a positive connotation, referring to good fortune. But its origin can be understood rather cynically. Irish immigrants made up a large number of prosperous miners in the US of the 19th century, which led to some people giving credit for their success to simple “luck” rather than competence, although this nuance has mostly faded in modern usage.

The idiom “*to Welsh* [CDO],” on the other hand, has an unmistakably negative meaning: to avoid making a promise or paying an obligation. It first appeared in British slang in the 19th century to describe someone who refused to cover their losses, most likely attributing it to long-standing social prejudice against the Welsh as a marginalised and economically disadvantaged population in Britain. “Welsh” seems to have been used to link the group to dishonesty despite the lack of any supporting evidence. As a result, the idiom represents the projection of social bias onto language rather than actual cultural characteristics.

The older English version of “Scottish,” “Scotch,” is still used in fixed expressions. For instance, the legal verdict “not proven,” which is unique to law in Scotland, is called a “Scotch verdict [CEDO].” Originally referring to light rain or fog typical of Scotland’s weather, “*Scotch mist* [CDO]” gradually took on a metaphorical meaning of anything nebulous or unreal.

All in all, 3 out of 7 idioms of this combined group that consists of idioms that refer to English neighbours on the British Isles — idioms with “Irish,” “Welsh,” and “Scotch” — carry negative connotations. Thus, in this case the focus is more on some stereotypes, historical allusions and cultural peculiarities of the aforementioned nations.

Idioms with “Greek”

The idioms that contain the ethnonym “Greek” are essentially different from those of other groups since they are based on classical education, literary tradition, and intertextual references to antiquity rather than explicit ethnic stereotyping. The reason for this may be traced back to the time when Ancient Greek language and culture constituted the heart of European literature, especially from the Renaissance onwards.

Thus, idioms with “Greek” are often linked to literature. For instance, “*it's (all) Greek to me* [CDO],” which describes something incomprehensible, was popularised in English by William Shakespeare in his *Julius Caesar* (1599). Greek is used in this context to symbolise a language that is thought to be unintelligible to the typical English speaker, making it a common metaphor for anything cryptic or challenging to comprehend. Another example is the idiom “*beware of Greeks bearing gifts* [TFD]” that has a distinct literary origin in Virgil's *Aeneid*. Rather than being a stereotype of Greeks, it alludes to a story about the Trojan Horse and conveys a moral lesson about deceit and hidden peril.

Furthermore, the idiom “*when Greek meets Greek, then comes the tug of war* [TFD]” is based on a well-known notion that Greek warriors are equal rivals in classical stories, similarly to, for example, Achilles and Hector in Homer's *Iliad*. The idea that confrontation between equals will be fierce and unresolved is evident in this idiom. The phrase “*Greek calends* [MWD]” shows a similar dependence on classical knowledge. The idiom indicates a period that will never come because the calends were a part of the Roman calendar and did not exist in Greek timekeeping.

All in all, 4 idioms with “Greek” have been analysed, 2 of which have negative connotations and 2 have neutral ones. However, in English phraseology, this ethnonym serves mainly as an intertextual identifier with roots in classical antiquity, education, and literary culture rather than containing actual ethnic evaluation or referring to some contact between England and Greece.

Idioms with “Roman”

Quite similarly to the ethnonym “Greek,” idioms with “Roman” are mostly derived from actual historical evidence, classical literature, and the heritage of Ancient Rome. These expressions have mostly symbolic implications because “Roman” in them refers to the Roman Empire rather than a contemporary country.

A group of idioms refers to some historical narratives. For instance, “*to fiddle while Rome burns* [CDO]” is linked to Emperor Nero who was allegedly playing the lyre while the Great Fire of Rome destroyed the city in 64 AD. This story was reflected in European culture as an illustration of carelessness during a disaster. Similar to this, the idiom “*Roman holiday* [MWD],” which means a kind of entertainment derived from suffering, comes from Lord Byron’s *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage*. It portrays spectators enjoying the agony of gladiators, which is a clear allusion to Roman public events like those which took place in the Colosseum.

Other idioms reflect realities and grandeur of the Roman Empire. “*All roads lead to Rome* [CDO]” comes from the vast Roman road system, which was designed to link every province to the capital and establish Rome as the empire’s administrative hub. The phrase “*Rome wasn’t built in a day* [CEDO]” points out Rome’s centuries-long growth and development as one of the most influential cities in Europe at the time. The idiom “*when in Rome, do as the Romans do* [CDO]” is attributed to Ambrose of Milan and suggests an adjustment to regional traditions while travelling, especially the ones connected to religion, which was always at the heart of life in the Roman Empire.

Lastly, phrases like “*toey as a Roman sandal* [CEDO]” are informal and have no discernible historical foundation, with “Roman” functioning primarily as an intensifier or exotic allusion rather than a significant ethnonym.

All things considered, out of 7 idioms with “Roman” that were included, 4 have negative connotations and 3 have positive or neutral. However, this group of idioms is rooted in literary heritage, historical knowledge, and the legacy of the Roman Empire rather than some ethnic components. Therefore, the ethnonym serves as a reference to a shared European cultural memory and civilisational ideal.

Idioms with “Indian”

Idioms containing “Indian” are shaped by colonial contact between European settlers and indigenous peoples of North America. The name “Indian” itself is a consequence of historical misnaming. Therefore, rather than referring to India, these idioms carry culturally constructed ideas of Native Americans, which revolve around miscommunication, unequal power dynamics, and colonial past.

The relations between Native Americans and European settlers were evidently marked by misunderstanding and inequality, which, of course, has found its outlet in phraseology. For example, the idiom “*Indian giver* [MWD]” comes from a misinterpretation of gift exchange, where giving was seen as a continuous relationship rather than a one-time transaction. Unaware of this custom, European settlers perceived it as returning a gift, which resulted in the stigma of unreliability or ill faith connected with Indians. Moreover, “*too many chiefs and not enough Indians* [TFD]” is another derogatory phrase that serves as a reflection of a colonial hierarchical worldview, according to which the role of indigenous people is reduced to simple labour without a possibility to get involved in leadership. In a similar manner, “*Indian sign* [TFD],” which refers to a curse or spell, conveys the idea that indigenous cultures are mysterious or superstitious, supporting the image that was created by colonial imagination rather than true portrayal.

However, not all idioms with “Indian” carry negative meanings. For instance, “*Indian summer* [CDO]” describes a time of mild autumn weather. Its origin is unclear, but the idiom is most likely based on Native Americans’ custom to use this period for hunting and gathering fruit and vegetables, which European colonizers paid attention to. Other versions also include the story that it was the indigenous people who taught European settlers that nice weather usually comes after the first frost.

Overall, there are 5 idioms containing “Indian,” 3 of which have negative meanings and two of which are neutral or positive. Therefore, pejorative meanings formed by colonial misinterpretation and sense of superiority by European settlers towards Native Americans predominate in this group.

Idioms with “Chinese”

Confusion, incomprehensibility, and complexity are the most common connotations of idioms that contain the ethnonym “Chinese.” Such semantic tendencies can be connected to the 18th and 19th century European impression of China as geographically remote and culturally foreign. In this case, linguistic and cultural difference was frequently reinterpreted as difficulty or opacity, which became conventionalised in phraseology.

For example, idioms such as “*Chinese whispers* [MWD]” refer to the distortion of information during transmission while “*Chinese puzzle* [CEDO]” and “*like Chinese arithmetic*” both indicate something that is excessively complex or nearly incomprehensible. Moreover, “*Chinese wall* [LD]” represents an obstacle difficult to overcome and also an informational barrier between companies, gaining a meaning in the business context, too.

Another group of idioms reflects the notion of distance and temporal remoteness. Drawing on the historical reality of lengthy maritime journeys between Europe and East Asia, the phrase “*on a slow boat to China* [TFD]” symbolically conveys the impression of extended duration.

However, not every idiom with “Chinese” is derogatory. In the expression “*for all the tea in China* [CDO],” China serves as a symbol of wealth and great worth. Britain’s extensive tea commerce with China throughout the 18th and 19th centuries, when tea was a highly prized commodity and China was linked to abundant economic resources, is the historical reason for this usage. The ethnonym functions here as an exaggerated indicator of worth rather than a sign of otherness.

In addition, “*not a Chinaman’s chance* [ODI]” is a significant example that is frequently associated with the American Gold Rush of the 19th century, when Chinese labourers endured incredibly difficult and unfair working conditions with little possibility of success. Another work-related idiom containing the ethnonym “Chinese” and having a pejorative meaning is “*Chinese overtime* [TFD],” which means overtime pay that is less than a normal one. Furthermore, the idea of both confusion and racist colonial-era assumptions about Chinese workers is combined

in the idiom “*Chinese fire drill* [MWD].” As a result, these expressions convey a historically rooted sense of disadvantage, illustrating how idioms can preserve both cultural attitudes and remnants of socioeconomic realities.

Apart from that, “*to have more chins than a Chinese phone book* [TFD]” is another pejorative expression that describes an overweight person, capitalising on the fact that Chinese phone books are big because of the country's large population and small number of surnames, which leads to a lot of duplicate listings. Importantly, the idiom does not present a historical stereotype about Chinese people themselves, but rather uses “Chinese” as a symbol of large quantity, although it may still be considered culturally insensitive due to its generalised assumptions.

In total, the analysis includes 12 idioms with “Chinese,” 9 of which carry negative connotations and only 3 are neutral or positive. This distribution shows that negative or evaluative connotations prevail. These meanings are primarily influenced by cultural distance, a lack of direct interaction, and views of otherness.

Idioms with “Mexican”

The meanings of idioms with the ethnonym “Mexican” are influenced by borderland interaction, social inequality, and the development of stereotypes in American English, reflecting the contact between the United States and Mexico in the late 19th and particularly the 20th centuries.

A common idea expressed by idioms with “Mexican” pertains to poor conditions, which can be linked to early 20th-century stereotypes of Mexican workers and immigrants in the American Southwest as economically disadvantaged. For instance, a “*Mexican athlete* [TFD]” is someone who tries but is not selected for a team, whereas a “*Mexican breakfast* [TFD]” means a cigarette and coffee or water instead of a fulfilling meal. Therefore, these idioms do not allude to any actual cultural practices but rely on derogatory humour in which the ethnonym serves as a symbol of deficiency.

Moreover, “*Mexican overdrive* [UD],” which refers to shifting an automobile into neutral while travelling downhill to save gasoline, originates from

lorry-driver slang and conveys the idea of improvised or non-standard solutions. On the other hand, the idiom may imply a stereotype about frugal habits or reckless driving associated with the Mexican. The expression is widely used in the context of races, encoding resourcefulness in a dismissive way.

In contrast, the idiom “*Mexican standoff* [OED]” has a rather neutral meaning, describing a scenario in which no party may act without risk, leading to a standstill. The origin of the expression is frequently associated with depictions of armed conflicts in the American West, especially in cinema and popular culture, rather than a specific historical incident involving Mexico. The idiom has lost most of its ethnic connotation over time due to semantic generalisation, and it now serves as a common English term for a deadlock situation.

All in all, this group consists of 4 idioms: 3 have negative meanings and 1 is neutral. These expressions show how the ethnonym “Mexican” in English phraseology is frequently employed in colloquial registers to convey ideas of inadequacy, poor conditions, or deviation from norms.

Idioms with “Jew”

The ethnonym “Jew” represents one of the most overtly evaluative and historically sensitive groups and is shaped by long-standing anti-Jewish stereotypes in European countries, especially in the areas of commerce, moneylending, and trade. In other words, idioms with “Jew” originate from social discrimination and economic exclusion, particularly during the medieval and early modern periods.

For instance, “*to Jew* [TFD]” and “*to Jew someone down* [CEDO]” both express deceit, hard negotiation, or pressuring someone to lower a price. Their origins are connected to the restrictions imposed frequently by Christian authority that limited Jewish communities in Europe to financial jobs like moneylending. Over time, this economic position was adversely misinterpreted among people, leading to the creation of a stereotype that linked Jews to excessive frugality, greed, or dishonesty. In a similar vein, “*worth a Jew’s eye* [OED]” refers to anything of very high value but does so through a negative link with perceived

Jewish concern for material worth, only reinforcing a stereotypical picture of the Jewish.

All things considered, idioms with “Jew” constitute 3 idioms, all of which are negative, making it one of the most uniformly evaluative groups. This shows that the use of “Jew” in English idioms has been heavily and quite unanimously influenced by historical exclusion and discrimination towards Jewish community.

Idioms with other ethnonyms

The last group of idioms is miscellaneous as it includes ethnonyms like “Turk,” “Russian,” and “Italian” that are represented by just one or two idioms. This limited productivity can be explained by the considerably weaker or more indirect historical contact between England (and later the United States) and these nations. Thus, these ethnonyms only occur in isolated, context-specific phrases and did not experience significant phraseological development.

For instance, the idiom “*Young Turk* [CEDO]” comes from The Young Turks, a political organization that promoted constitutional reform in the Ottoman Empire in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. It means a progressive or rebellious reformer, which directly reflects the historical context, showing how a particular political movement can give rise to an expression that is more broadly applicable.

Furthermore, “*Russian roulette* [CDO]” is thought to have started in early 20th-century descriptions of Tsarist Russian military culture and later became popular in Western literature. It depicts a deadly game of chance employing a pistol. Here, the ethnonym “Russian” conveys a sense of severe danger and fatalism, which is then symbolically applied to any circumstance featuring hazardous ambiguity. A different mechanism can be observed in “*Roman hands and Russian fingers* [TFD],” which is a phonetic pun on “roaming hands and rushing fingers,” meaning inappropriate sexual contact. Thus, the expression is not based on history or some cultural practices and does not encode true ethnic meaning.

Lastly, the idiom “*(fine) Italian hand* [CEDO]” refers to a handwriting style that originated from Italian script traditions, which were influenced by Roman cursive, and is connected to calligraphy. Over time, the phrase came to represent skill, sophistication, or deft manipulation, especially in social or political contexts.

All in all, 3 out of 4 idioms in this miscellaneous group have negative connotations and 1 is positive. These idioms show how some specific historical events, cultural narratives or even phonetic coincidence can lead to the appearance of ethnonyms in phraseology, which underlines a lack of consistent interaction that could produce stereotypes and a small number of cultural practices that have been recognised by English-speaking people enough to become embedded in vocabulary in the form of idioms.

2.3 Idioms with historical and topographical references

It is also possible to distinguish another group of idioms with an ethnic component, which are idioms containing historical and topographical references. In general, a lot of phraseological units have some historical foundation, but this paragraph will focus on the ones which are specifically associated with historically significant locations, cities, regions, states, or events. This group partially overlaps with idioms that have ethnonyms since many place names are strongly linked to specific countries, civilisations, or ethnic groups. For example, the inclusion of such phrases as “*Rome wasn't built in a day*” and “*castles in Spain*” in the ethnonymic classification were semantically justified because the toponyms Rome and Spain are directly connected with the broader cultural images represented by the ethnonyms Roman and Spanish. Since both rely on historically moulded cultural associations, the distinction between topographical and ethnonymic references becomes blurry in certain situations.

As a result, ethnonyms or culturally-specific imagery associated with a nation, which were analysed in the previous paragraphs, are not the only ways to communicate an ethnic component of idioms. It can also be traced through the

references that are defined by geography and history. In these expressions, toponyms serve not only as geographical markers but also as emblems of historically developed meanings. For example, “*Rome was not built in a day*,” demonstrates the grandeur and resilience of Roman civilisation and turns the city into a metaphor for slow progress and enormous labour. Similarly, medieval European views of Spain during the Muslim-Christian conflict on the Iberian Peninsula are reflected in the expression “*castles in Spain*,” which presents the country as something far away, exotic, and hard to reach. Eventually, the idiom adopted the meaning of unattainable dreams or fantastical plans.

Many of the idioms in this group have their roots in actual historical events that have evolved into cultural symbols. For instance, the phrase “*cross the Rubicon*” refers to an irrevocable choice and is derived from Julius Caesar’s crossing of the Rubicon in 49 BCE. Similarly, “*meet one’s Waterloo*” originated from Napoleon Bonaparte’s fall at the Battle of Waterloo and came to signify a catastrophic or fatal defeat of France during the Napoleonic Wars. In these cases, the place name itself gradually gains a stable figurative meaning in language and becomes inextricably linked to the historical event.

Another subgroup includes idioms that reflect the historical identity of particular cities or regions. For example, the phrase “*carry coals to Newcastle*” alludes to an unnecessary or needless action and is derived from the economic significance of Newcastle upon Tyne as a major coal-producing center. Similarly, “*to send someone to Coventry*” implies social marginalisation by avoidance and indifference and is associated with the town of Coventry, where during the English Civil War, Parliamentarian supporters treated captured Royalist prisoners with cold silence. Originally referring to regions outside of “the Pale,” the English-controlled area around Dublin, the expression “*beyond the Pale*” eventually took on the figurative sense of something that was socially inappropriate or unacceptable.

The Bible and religion have also had a strong impact on English phraseology. It is possible to refer to this concept as theological geography. For instance, the idiom “*a road to Damascus*” means a sudden and life-changing switch in someone’s beliefs and relates to Paul the Apostle’s conversion on the road to Damascus. Another example is “*from here to Timbuktu*” that uses Timbuktu, a real city in northern Mali, Africa, as a symbol of distance and remoteness in European imagination, something requiring a long, tedious journey.

All things considered, idioms with historical and topographical references are a part of the analysis of idioms with an ethnic component because they encode culturally significant representations associated with specific countries, cities, civilisations, and religious places even in the absence of explicit ethnonyms. Geographical names in these expressions function not only as references to specific places, but also as symbols of broader cultural associations connected with the peoples, certain civilizations, and belief systems. In other words, these idioms preserve remnants of national memory and historically shaped perception inside phraseology.

Conclusion to Chapter 2

The practical part of the thesis proved that idioms serve as a crucial linguistic mechanism for maintaining and conveying culturally specific imagery, stereotypes, and historically moulded perspectives, which is communicated through an ethnic component, which can be represented both directly through ethnonyms themselves and indirectly through references to traditions, culturally marked notions, and historically significant locations and occurrences.

The first group of idioms with an ethnic component consists of idioms expressing American and British national characters and mentalities. Such phraseological units encode customs, value systems and cultural practices, with

which the English-speaking societies are associated. British idioms predominantly denote stereotypes of restraint, privacy, indirectness, and polite manners in contrast to American idioms, which are more closely associated with concepts of individualism, ambition, and self-made success. However, the analysis shows that it is rather challenging to identify idioms that convey national mentality because mentality is a broad and flexible term.

Idioms containing ethnonyms constitute the most productive group of phraseological units with ethnic component. Such expressions reflect cultural stereotypes and social prejudice shaped by historically formed relations between nations, including wars, colonialism, migration, economic rivalry, and perceptions of cultural otherness. The analysis of 82 idioms (Appendices 1-3) demonstrated that the ethnonym “Dutch” was the most productive (26%), mainly due to Anglo-Dutch rivalry in the 17th century, and was associated with deceit, disorder, and excess. The second most frequent ethnonym was “Chinese” (15%), reflecting distance, incomprehensibility, exhausting labour, and cultural otherness. Idioms with “Roman” (9%) and “Greek” (5%) were primarily connected with classical antiquity and grandeur, while expressions containing “Indian” (6%), “Irish” (5%), “French” (5%), “English” (5%), “Mexican” (5%), and “Jew” (4%) reflected colonial stereotypes, directness, romance, propriety, poverty, and greed. Other ethnonyms, including “Spanish” (4%), “German” (2%), “Scotch” (2%), “Russian” (2%), “American” (2%), “Welsh” (1%), “Turk” (1%), and “Italian” (1%), demonstrated narrower but culturally marked semantic associations.

Importantly, approximately 66% of the analysed idioms carried negative connotations (Appendix 4), confirming the tendency of ethnonymic phraseology to preserve simplified or pejorative portrayals of other nations. The preponderance of negative evaluation may also be explained by the fact that historical prejudice, intercultural rivalry, and stereotypes, which are reflected in idioms with ethnonyms, have been strong enough to become conventionalised within the

language over time. Nevertheless, some expressions showed semantic ambivalence or gradual weakening of their original negative meanings, reflecting broader cultural shifts in attitudes toward national identity.

Idioms with topographical and historical reference represent the third group. These phrases preserve culturally significant connections associated with certain nations, towns, civilisations, religious centers, and historical events, even though they do not always overtly contain ethnonyms. Geographical names become symbolic transmitters of cultural interpretation and collective historical memory. The investigation also revealed that, since both categories rely on common cultural connections associated with specific peoples and civilisations the distinction between historical-topographical and ethnonymic idioms is frequently ambiguous.

All in all, idioms with an ethnic component provide a highly significant and culturally revealing layer of English phraseology that contributes to the linguistic creation and maintenance of collective cultural perception in addition to reflecting historical experience, interethnic interaction, and value systems. Phraseology becomes a storehouse of cultural memory where language and culture are inextricably linked through metaphorical reinterpretation, stereotype construction, and symbolic reference.

CONCLUSION

Idioms with an ethnic component make up a very important and culturally informative layer of English phraseology. The theoretical research showed that phraseological units are not simply fixed lexical combinations, but intricate language structures that preserve national stereotypes, culturally moulded associations, collective historical experience, and systems of evaluation. Idioms serve as significant cultural memory bearers and represent how language communities conceptualise themselves and other countries thanks to their semantic purity, figurative nature, and pragmatic expressiveness. The study of phraseology within the framework of cognitive linguistics, ethnolinguistics, and linguoculturology revealed the close relationship between language, mentality, and culture, proving that idioms participate in the construction of the linguistic picture of the world and preserve culturally specific models of perception.

The analysis of an ethnic component in language demonstrated that ethnonyms, historical references, and nationally specific symbols frequently acquire stable figurative meanings and become embedded into phraseology. It was established that an ethnic component in English idioms originates from several interconnected sources, including representations of national mentality, historical events, intercultural relations, stereotypes, and customs. Therefore, idioms may preserve both self-representations of English-speaking communities and historically formed perceptions of other nations.

The practical analysis of English idioms with an ethnic component made it possible to distinguish three principal groups of phraseological units: idioms reflecting British and American mentality, idioms containing ethnonyms directly, and idioms with historical and topographical references. The first group demonstrated that phraseology often serves as a form of cultural self-representation. British idioms reflected culturally specific values traditionally associated with British society, such as emotional restraint, privacy, moderation,

indirectness, and propriety, while American idioms primarily encoded ideas of individualism, ambition, and self-made success. However, the analysis confirmed that identifying idioms which genuinely reflect national mentality remains methodologically difficult because mentality itself is a broad and fluid concept.

The second and most productive group consisted of idioms containing ethnonyms. The analysis of 82 phraseological units demonstrated that English ethnonymic phraseology preserves historically shaped cultural perceptions and stereotypes connected with particular nations (Appendices 1-3). Among all analysed ethnonyms, “Dutch” proved to be the most productive (26%), mainly due to Anglo-Dutch political, military, and colonial rivalry in the 17th century. The second most productive ethnonym was “Chinese” (15%), reflecting associations with cultural distance, incomprehensibility, and exhausting labour. Other ethnonyms revealed culturally specific semantic tendencies connected with classical civilisation, colonial history, romance, propriety, poverty, greed, sophistication, fatalism, success, etc. A particularly significant result of the research is that approximately 66% of the analysed idioms carried negative connotations (Appendix 4), confirming the tendency of ethnonymic phraseology to preserve simplified, ironic, or openly pejorative portrayals of other nations. This predominance of negative evaluation shows how idioms with ethnonyms that were often shaped not by objective representation, but by historical prejudice, intercultural rivalry, and strong stereotypes, may become conventionalised within the language over time.

The third analysed group included idioms with historical and topographical references. Although such expressions do not always contain ethnonyms directly, the research demonstrated that they may still be considered idioms with ethnic and cultural components because they preserve culturally significant associations connected with particular countries, cities, civilizations, and historical events. Idioms like “*meet one's Waterloo*” show how actual historical and geographical

facts are converted into symbolic figurative meanings and incorporated into the collective memory of language.

All things considered, the conducted research confirmed that English idioms with an ethnic component function as linguistic repositories of historical memory, collective stereotypes, cultural values, and nationally marked perceptions of reality. Through ethnonyms, historical references, culturally specific symbols, and metaphorical imagery, phraseology reflects both international relations and cultural self-identification. Therefore, the study of idioms provides important insight into the interaction between language, culture, and national consciousness and demonstrates that phraseology remains one of the most culturally expressive levels of language that may still shape our world perception today.

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APPENDIX 1

Idioms with “Dutch”

1. **Dutch courage** — bravery induced by drinking alcohol.
2. **Double Dutch** — talk or writing that is nonsense or that you cannot understand.
3. **In Dutch** — in trouble, out of favour, under suspicion.
4. **To go Dutch** — share the cost of something equally.
5. **Dutch treat** — a meal or other entertainment for which each person pays their own way.
6. **Dutch uncle** — a man who gives frank and direct advice to someone in the manner of a parent or relative.
7. **Dutch auction** — an auction or sale that starts off with a high asking price that is then reduced until a buyer is found.
8. **Dutch comfort** — solace in the idea that something could be worse than it is, comfort that actually makes things worse.
9. **Dutch reckoning** — a bill or other account of charges that is not itemised or detailed in any way and that is usually irregularly high.
10. **Dutch feast** — a gathering at which the host gets drunk before their guests do.
11. **Dutch concert** — a so-called concert in which all the singers sing at the same time different songs.
12. **Dutch agreement** — an agreement made between two people who are drunk.
13. **Dutch nightingale** — a frog (humorous/ironic usage).

14. **Dutch gold/Dutch metal** — an alloy of copper and zinc in the form of thin sheets, used as an imitation of gold leaf.
15. **Dutch act** — a suicide.
16. **To do a Dutch** — to run away, to desert.
17. **That beats the Dutch** — that is extraordinary or startling.
18. **I'm a Dutchman** — a phrase used to your disbelief or as a way of underlining an emphatic assertion.
19. **Dutch headache** — hangover.
20. **Dutch bargain** — an agreement for a sale in which one of the people involved gets an advantage over the other person (often done in an intoxicated state).
21. **The Dutch have taken Holland** — a sarcastic phrase said in response to outdated news.

Idioms with “German”

1. **From the East German judge** — an expression used to describe a score or evaluation that is significantly lower than those given by others, typically implying that the judge is unnecessarily harsh, biased, or motivated by political/personal prejudice.
2. **German goiter** — a large distended belly, as might result from heavy consumption of beer; a beer belly.

Idioms with “French”

1. **Pardon/Excuse my French** — an expression used to apologize for using offensive language.
2. **French leave** — an unauthorized or unannounced absence or departure.
3. **French kiss** — an open-mouth kiss usually involving tongue-to-tongue contact.
4. **French letter** — informal for condom.

Idioms with “Spanish”

1. **(Old) Spanish practices/customs** — irregular practices among a group of workers to gain increased financial allowances, reduced working hours, etc.
2. **To walk Spanish** — to force one to leave a place.
3. **Castles in Spain** — a conception or image created by the imagination and having no objective reality.

Idioms with “Irish,” “Welsh” and “Scotch”

1. **To get one’s Irish up** — to become angry or outraged.
2. **Irish hint** — a straightforward statement.
3. **Irish apricots** — potatoes.
4. **The luck of the Irish** — extremely good luck or fortune.

5. **To Welsh** — to avoid doing something you have promised to do, especially not to pay a debt.
6. **Scotch mist** — a mixture of fog and light rain
7. **Scotch verdict** — a verdict in criminal cases of “not proved,” rather than “not guilty.”

Idioms with “Greek”

1. **It's (all) Greek to me** — a way of saying that you do not understand something that is said or written.
2. **Beware of Greeks bearing gifts** — be skeptical of a present or kindness from an enemy. The phrase refers to the Trojan horse, a gift to the Trojans from which Greek soldiers emerged and conquered Troy.
3. **Greek calends** — a time that will never arrive.
4. **When Greek meets Greek, then comes the tug of war** — one does not win easily in a match against an equal.

Idioms with “Roman”

1. **Toey as a Roman sandal** — very anxious.
2. **Roman holiday** — a time of debauchery or of sadistic enjoyment; a destructive or tumultuous disturbance, riot.
3. **When in Rome (do as the Romans do)** — when you are visiting another place, you should follow the customs of the people in that place.

4. **Roman hands and Russian fingers** — a pun of “roaming hands and rushing fingers,” referring to a tendency to make sexual contact that is unwanted or unsolicited.
5. **All roads lead to Rome** — an expression said to mean that all the methods of doing something will achieve the same result in the end.
6. **Rome wasn’t built in a day** — an expression said to mean that it takes a long time to do a job or task properly, and you should not rush it or expect to do it quickly.
7. **To fiddle while Rome burns** — to enjoy yourself or continue working as normal and not give any attention to something important and unpleasant that is happening that you should be taking action to prevent.

Idioms with “Indian”

1. **Indian summer** — a period of calm, warm weather that sometimes happens in the early autumn.
2. **Indian giver** — a person who gives something to another and then takes it back or expects an equivalent in return.
3. **(There are) too many chiefs and not enough Indians** — there are too many people trying to manage or organize something, and not enough people willing to actually do the work.
4. **Indian file** — a line of persons, animals, or things ranged one behind the other, either stationary or moving.
5. **Indian sign** — a curse or spell placed upon a person that causes persistent misfortune or a loss of volition.

Idioms with “Chinese”

1. **Chinese compliment** — a pretended deference or mock respect.
2. **Chinese whispers** — a situation in which a piece of information is passed from one person to the next and is changed slightly each time it is told.
3. **Not a Chinaman’s chance** — not even a very slight chance.
4. **Chinese fire drill** — 1) a state of great confusion or disorder; 2) a prank in which a number of people jump out of an automobile stopped at a red traffic light, run around to the opposite side, and jump back in often in a different seat before the light changes to green.
5. **Chinese overtime** — overtime pay which is calculated at less than an employee's normal hourly rate (usually one-half), rather than one-and-a-half times it, as is usually paid in traditional overtime arrangements.
6. **Chinese puzzle** — 1) an intricate puzzle, especially one consisting of boxes within boxes; 2) a complicated problem.
7. **Chinese wall** — 1) a strong barrier, especially a serious obstacle to understanding; 2) a method of preventing information from being shared, for example between people working for the same company but representing different interests.
8. **To have more chins than a Chinese phone book** — to be exceptionally or exceedingly fat, i.e., having multiple rolls of fat (chins) on one's neck.
9. **On a slow boat to China** — on a course or trajectory that will take a very long amount of time, especially with the conclusion or destination being uncertain.
10. **(Would not do something) for all the tea in China** — an expression used to say that nothing could persuade you to do something.

11. **All Lombard Street to a China orange** — “very long odds” or an expression of extreme certainty in a bet.

12. **Like Chinese arithmetic** — said of something that is very complex or difficult for one understands or works with.

Idioms with “Mexican”

1. **Mexican athlete** — someone who tries out for a sports team but is ultimately not selected.

2. **Mexican breakfast** — a breakfast substitute consisting of a cigarette and a cup of coffee or a glass of water.

3. **Mexican overdrive** — taking an automobile out of gear or shifting into neutral while on a decline in an effort to improve fuel economy.

4. **Mexican standoff** — a confrontation between two or more parties in which no participant can proceed or retreat without being exposed to danger; a stalemate.

Idioms with “Jew”

1. **To Jew** — to cheat, swindle, or defraud someone, especially in a business deal.

2. **To Jew someone down** — to get or bargain for better terms from someone in a business transaction, esp. in a petty or niggardly way.

3. **Worth a Jew’s eye** — something valued highly; a very high price.

Idioms with “English”

1. **An Englishman’s home is his castle** — an expression said to mean that people have the right to do what they want in their own home, and that other people or the state have no right to interfere in people’s private lives.

2. **English disease** — an expression that has been used by people in Europe about various different aspects of English life. In the 1960s and 1970s it meant the poor productivity of English factories and the many strikes by workers. In the 1980s it was used to refer to the bad behaviour of English football supporters, and more recently nostalgia (= preferring to look back to the past) has been described as the English disease.
3. **To talk for England** — to talk a lot, usually excessively or continuously.
4. **An Englishman's word is his bond** — an expression reflecting the stereotype of honesty and reliability associated with English gentlemanly culture.

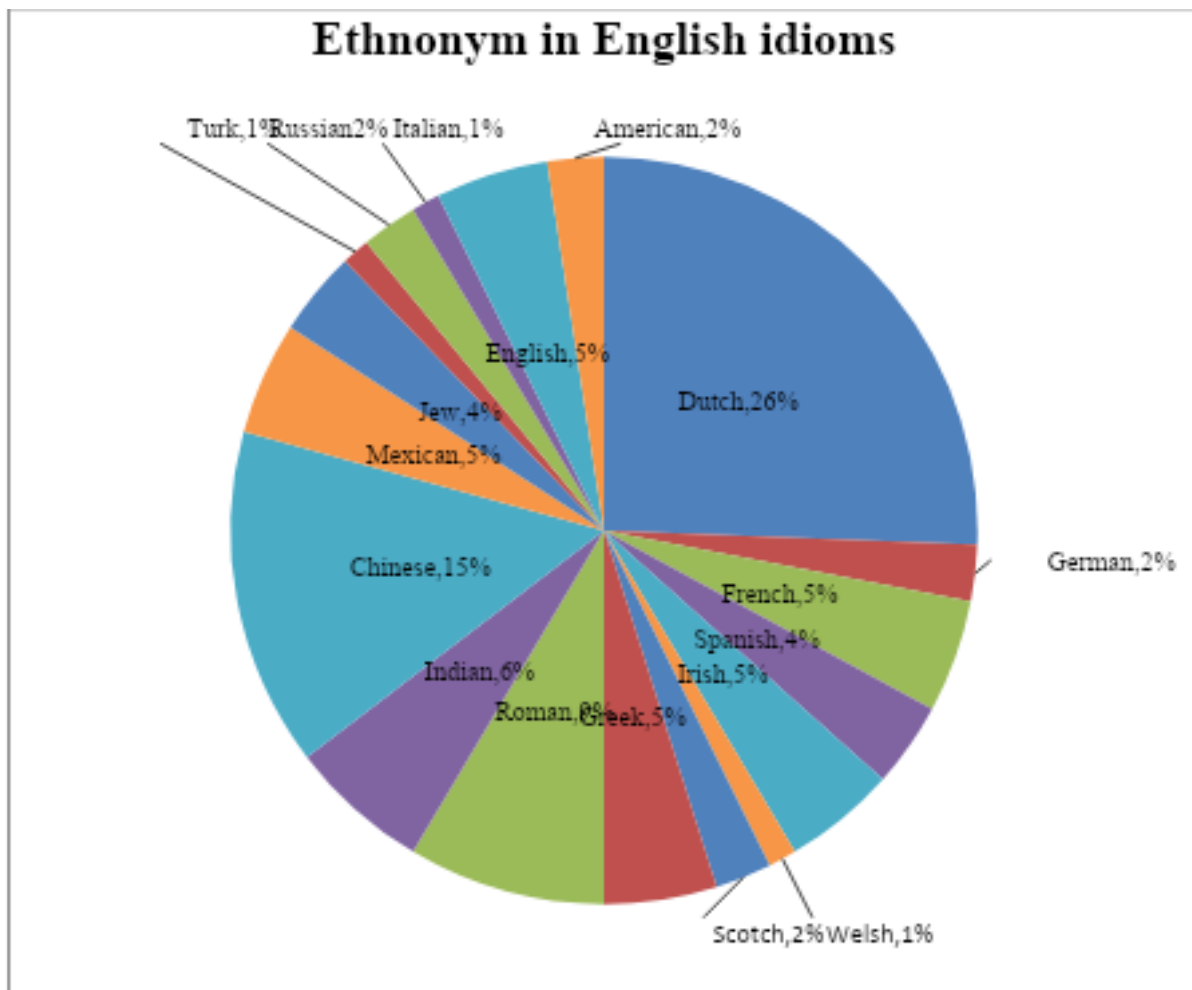
Idioms with “American”

1. **As American as apple pie** — very typical and normal in America.
2. **American dream** — the belief that everyone in the US has the chance to be successful and happy if they work hard.

Idioms with other ethnonyms

1. **Young Turk** — a progressive, revolutionary, or rebellious member of an organization, political party, etc, especially one agitating for radical reform.
2. **Russian roulette** — the action of taking very serious risks with something important.
3. **Roman hands and Russian fingers** — a pun of “roaming hands and rushing fingers,” referring to a tendency to make sexual contact that is unwanted or unsolicited.
4. **(Fine) Italian hand** — 1) a medieval script, used in early printing and later considered a standard of fine handwriting; 2) subtlety, or craftiness.

APPENDIX 2



APPENDIX 3

Quantitative data on idioms with an ethnic component and their evaluative meaning

№	Ethnonym (a total number of idioms)	Idioms with a negative connotation	Idioms with a positive/neutral connotation	Common stereotypes/associations
1	Dutch (21)	16	5	Alcohol intoxication; trouble; disbelief; deceit; splitting the bill; discord
2	German (2)	2	0	Excessive discipline; beer
3	French (4)	2	2	Obscenity; romance
4	Spanish (3)	3	0	Bureaucratic inefficiency; violence; distance
5	Irish (4)	2	2	Directness; luck
6	Welsh (1)	1	0	Dishonesty
7	Scotch (2)	0	2	Rainy weather
8	Greek (4)	2	2	Classical literature; incomprehensibility
9	Roman (7)	4	3	Classical literature; grandeur
10	Indian (5)	3	2	Colonial past; misunderstanding; mild weather
11	Chinese (12)	9	3	Distance; complexity; overtime work; otherness

12	Mexican (4)	3	1	Poor conditions
13	Jew (3)	3	0	Deceit; greed
14	Turk (1)	0	1	Progress
15	Russian (2)	2	0	Fatalism
16	Italian (1)	0	1	Sophistication
17	English (4)	2	2	Reliability; privacy; economic stagnation
18	American (2)	0	2	Success
	Total (82)	54	28	

APPENDIX 4

Connotations of idioms with an ethnic component

■ Positive/neutral ■ Negative

