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Bachelor's thesis
Culturally specific idioms in American English

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ABSTRACT

The present paper investigates use of culturally specific idioms in American English, focusing on their etymology, frequency, and connotations. This research is valuable because idioms are a source of information on cultural heritage, societal norms, and historical contexts. By studying them, we can gain a deeper understanding of a community's shared knowledge and what they hold important. This research aims to categorize these idioms based on their origins and analyze their usage patterns using the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA). Methods employed include etymological analysis, frequency corpus analysis, and examination of connotative meanings. The analysis revealed that idioms originating from professional spheres and leisure activities are more frequently used than those from historical contexts and everyday life. This finding suggests that contemporary language use is heavily influenced by professional jargon and leisure-related expressions. Additionally, a significant number of idioms carry negative connotations, reflecting societal attitudes and historical conflicts. For instance, idioms that originated from historical contexts often carry negative stereotypes or refer to sensitive historical events, making them less frequent in modern usage. These findings shed light on how the language develops and changes with the passage of time and reveal the influence of cultural and historical factors on linguistic expressions. This research contributes to the fields of lexicology, phraseology, and ethnolinguistics. Additionally, this research is not only relevant for academic purposes but also for practical applications in language teaching and cross-cultural communication. The findings can aid in developing educational materials and teaching strategies that emphasize the cultural aspects of language.

Key words:

Culturally specific idioms, connotations, etymology, frequency of usage, Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA).

АНОТАЦІЯ

У цій роботі досліджується використання культурно-специфічних ідіом в американському варіанті англійської мови, з акцентом на їхню етимологію, частотність та конотації. Це дослідження цінне тим, що ідіоми є джерелом інформації про культурну спадщину, суспільні норми та історичний контекст, в яких ці ідіоми були створені. Досліджуючи їх, ми можемо отримати глибше розуміння колективних знань спільноти і їх цінностей. Це дослідження має на меті класифікувати ці ідіоми на основі їхнього походження та проаналізувати моделі їхнього вживання за допомогою Корпусу сучасної американської англійської мови (СОСА). Використані методи включають етимологічний аналіз, частотний корпусний аналіз та вивчення конотативних значень. Аналіз показав, що ідіоми, які походять з професійної сфери та сфери дозвілля, вживаються частіше, ніж ті, що походять з історичного контексту та повсякденного життя. Це свідчить про те, що сучасна мова перебуває під значним впливом професійного жаргону та виразів, пов'язаних з дозвіллям. Крім того, значна кількість ідіом має негативну конотацію, що відображає суспільні настрої та історичні конфлікти. Наприклад, ідіоми, що виникли в історичному контексті, часто є носіями негативних стереотипів або посиляються на чутливі історичні події, що робить їх менш поширеними в сучасному вжитку. Ці висновки проливають світло на те, як мова розвивається і змінюється з плином часу, і показують вплив культурних та історичних чинників на мовні вирази. Це дослідження робить внесок у галузі лексикології, фразеології та етнолінгвістики. Крім того, це дослідження є актуальним не лише для академічних цілей, але й для практичного застосування у викладанні мов та міжкультурній комунікації. Отримані результати можуть допомогти у розробці навчальних матеріалів і стратегій викладання.

Ключові слова:

Культурно-специфічні ідіоми, конотації, етимологія, частота вживання,
Корпус сучасної американської англійської мови (COCA).

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INTRODUCTION

Currently, significant attention is being directed toward studying the relationship between language and culture. Language and culture are closely interconnected, influencing each other in various ways. Some theories even propose that they are inseparable; one cannot fully understand a culture without learning its language, and vice versa. Language is intertwined with all aspects of human life in society. Scholars widely agree that phraseology is the branch of linguistics most intimately connected to culture, as it reflects the entire society within the language. Phraseological units, such as idioms and proverbs, are particularly informative about both the historical development of a language and broader historical trends. This is because these expressions are deeply influenced by the traditions, habits, and imagery of a culture. Despite extensive research in this area, numerous topics remain open for discussion, and many hypotheses continue to be explored by linguists worldwide. This complex issue was studied and explored by following scholars: Douglas Biber, Stig Johansson, Geoffrey Leech, Susan Conrad, Edward Finegan, Brent Berlin, Gail Brenner, Paul Kay, Eugene Nida, Luisa Maffi, Wallace Chafe, Bruce Fraser, Charles Hockett, Adam Makkai, Mona Baker, Wilson James Ball, Iryna Korniienko, Yurii Kovalyuk and many others. In this paper, we will try to analyze those connections more deeply.

Topic of the research is culturally specific idioms in American English: their etymology, connotations and frequency of usage.

Relevance for the study lies in the fact the understanding of how idioms are created and developed in the process of language development is important for the study of linguistics. It can provide lots of useful information that can help find patterns in language and probably even predict the further changes that can take place in the future in the language system. Culturally specific idioms on other hand may help to learn about the cultural heritage, historical contexts and social dynamics of certain groups of people. Through the study of culturally specific idioms, researchers

can gain a deeper understanding of the cultural identity, social structures, and collective memory of a community.

The main purpose of the research is to investigate the frequency, connotations, and origins of American culturally specific idioms.

The following **objectives** were determined in this paper:

- To investigate the concept of idiomaticity and idioms and determine the main characteristics of them.
- To define the concept of culturally specific units and culturally specific units as a part of it; determine its main characteristics.
- To investigate the formation of idioms in American English.
- To explore the historical origins and cultural contexts of American culturally specific idioms.
- To propose the classification of culturally specific idioms based on the etymology.
- To investigate the connotations of American culturally specific idioms, including positive, negative, and neutral meanings.
- To analyze the frequency of usage of American culturally specific idioms.
- To identify language change and patterns in the usage of American culturally specific idioms over time.
- To examine the social and linguistic factors influencing the language change and patterns that take place within the language.

The object of the paper is culturally specific idioms in American English.

The subject of the research is exploring the frequency, connotations, and origins of American culturally specific idioms.

In the present paper there were used such **methods** of scientific research as: corpus analysis to examine the frequency and usage of culturally specific idioms in the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA), qualitative and quantitative analysis, comparative analysis, contextual analysis, etymological analysis,

connotative analysis; descriptive method, methods of typological and lexicological analysis, deductive and inductive methods of investigation and generalizing the retrieved facts and data, the overall selection (used in gathering the research material).

The practical value. The theme of this paper can be used as an aid for lectures of lexicology, phraseology or even ethnolinguistics and it also can be used as a topic for discussion for English major students.

The structure of the work consists of the following parts: introduction, two chapters, conclusions and references.

1. CULTURALLY SPECIFIC IDIOMS IN AMERICAN ENGLISH

1.1. Idioms in English: definition and characteristics

To begin with, we would like to state that the topic of phraseological units in English, such as idioms, has remained the object of scrutiny for many scholars all over the world, both in countries where English is the native language and where English is considered to be the foreign one. Such deep interest lies in the fact that phraseological units in general and idioms in particular reflect the relationships between language and culture, which was the topic that has been examined by linguists for many decades. It is also the reason why those units are studied by many branches of linguistic science, namely sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, lexicology, semantics and many others. Moreover, it gave a boost for the emergence of phraseology as an independent branch of linguistics. It was developed only in the second half of the 20th century, however, by that time significant research on this aspect of language, its functions and the peculiarities of usage had already been done and had contributed to the understanding of the linguistic picture of the world. Nevertheless, there are lots of questions to be learnt in the area. This is what we tried to do in this bachelor paper as well.

Even though effective communication can be conducted without the usage of phraseological units, namely idioms, they are still an important part of the language system. In the English language idioms are commonly and frequently used. They are the part not only of written language, but it is also commonly used in oral speech, in particular in everyday conversations. However, the frequency of usage can vary depending on the type of communicative situations. There have already been few attempts to do the corpus related idiom studies to gain insights on the topic. Namely, here we can mention Douglas Biber, Stig Johansson, Geoffrey Leech, Susan Conrad and Edward Finegan Finegan's and the research that they conducted together basen on the 40-million-word Longman Spoken and Written English Corpus (Biber, 2006, p. 213-216) and Liu who conducted his research based on Corpus of Spoken,

Professional American English (Liu, 2003, p. 671-700). These fundamental works detected that, while not all idioms are actively used by natives, the big number of them can be found from 20 to 50 times per a million words. There are, however, infrequent idioms as well. Moreover, no-native English speakers often struggle to understand and translate those phraseological units. The majority of phraseological units, in particular idioms, are untranslatable, which creates the challenges for both linguists, translators and those who learn English as a second language.

Additionally we would like to state that there can be variation in the frequency of usage of idioms depending on the variant of language we talk about (Kovaliuk, 2023, p. 17). According to the comparative analysis that was conducted by Yurii Kovaliuk, idioms are more frequently used in American English in comparison with British English. There are various methods of the research on frequency of usage, however the most common one currently is the usage of corpora (Tognini-Bonelli, 2001, p. 67). In course of our work we will use the Corpus of contemporary American English, as it is the most widely-used corpus of English and it is based on the text of various genres that can help to explode various discourses (Davies, 2008). Among prominent scholars who specifically made a research based on the COCA we would like to mention Rafatbakhsh and Ahmadi, as they managed to not only examine the frequencies of idioms but to categories them based on a specific semantic category (Rafatbakhsh & Ahmadi, 2019, p. 3). Corpus-driven researches use the huge bases and technologies that retrieve the data from it. Such type of researches can help to see the patterns and to create various hypotheses based on the theoretical knowledge about the subject and intuitive searches on this database (McEnery & Hardie, 2011, p. 6; Meyer, 2014, p. 14 ; Barth & Schnell, 2022, p. 126).

Another peculiarity to mention is that according to Gail Brenner, native English speakers use idioms without analyzing them and considering the components of it. This is the cause for confusion regarding the definition in dictionaries (Brenner, 2011, p. 4-5) . He stated that idioms are two or more words combined that, as a unit,

have a particular meaning that varies from the literal meaning of the words used separately. Those units are considered to be more effective than when they are used separately. Moreover, idioms are used with purpose as a communicative device and not randomly.

The relationships between language and culture are indeed complicated. According to Yanxiang Deng and Runqing Liu, a language is directly influenced by culture, while culture cannot exist without a language at all (Deng & Liu, 1989, p. 3). In fact, a language carries parts of culture as a part of it. Idioms are the elements that reflect the cultural and national peculiarities of life of people the most. Its creation was determined by unique traits of the mentality of different nations. Moreover, it was influenced by traditions and norms of the country where the idioms originate from, as well as realities, routine and history. For instance, the American idiom “*brownie points*” originates from the practice in scouting organizations where scouts earn points for good deeds or accomplishments, much like earning merit badges. This idiom is a great example of how a language and culture can interact, which resulted in the creation of new phraseological units. Additionally, according to Eugene Nida “Idioms usually carry more impact than non-idiomatic expressions because of their close identification with a particular language and culture” (Nida, 2001, p. 139).

Defining idioms is a complicated task, since there are several definitions of this notion. It varies depending on scholars that have studied them and which aspect of idioms those scholars have researched on. Traditionally, scholars define idioms as fixed expressions that have figurative meanings. This meaning can be not clear from the literal meanings. However, there were many different definitions that were suggested by such famous scholars as Wallace Chafe, Bruce Fraser, Charles Hockett, Adam Makkai, Eugene Nida, Mona Baker and many others.

One definition that can be considered relevant for our research was provided by Henry Watson Fowler and David Crystal. In the Dictionary of Modern English Usage they stated that idioms are phrases where the words together have a meaning

that is different from the dictionary definitions of the individual words (Fowler & Crystal, 2010, p. 261). The Collins English Dictionary defines idioms as “an expression such as a simile, in which words do not have their literal meaning, but are categorized as multi-word expressions that act in the text as units” (Definition of idiom, 2020). According to Jennifer Seidl, an idiom is ‘ a series of words that together mean something different from the idiomatic meanings of the words of the idiom when they stand alone. The way the words are put together is often strange, illogical, and even grammatically incorrect’ (Seidl & McMordie, 1978, p. 4). In the Oxford English Dictionary, one can find such definition of the notion “idiom” “An idiom is a form of expression, construction, phrase, etc., peculiar to a language; a peculiarity of phraseology approved by usage, and often having a meaning other than its grammatical or logical one” (Idiom, N. Meanings, Etymology and More | Oxford English Dictionary, 2023). We are sure that the last definition is the most relevant in the course of our research, however other definitions that have been mentioned are also suitable and can be used to define this notion.

Idioms are universal categories, since they exist in the vocabulary of every language. They, however, vary significantly across different languages and cultures. Those units can also differ in the regards of frequency of usage, cultural significance and many other aspects.

In addition, in the course of our research it would be useful to mention various features of English idioms. First of all we would like to discuss syntactic features that were proposed by Mona Baker. According to her, idioms are stable expressions which means that we as speakers cannot make any changes in them, in the regard of the composition of words, delete a word or words from the idiom, replace words within the idiom or change the grammatical structure of it (Baker, 2011, p. 69). There can be only little or no variation of this form which is the reason why we usually use the words fixed or stable in the definition of these units, even though there are few exceptions when some idioms are more flexible than others.

Those features were also highlighted by Wilson James Ball in his “Practical Guide to Colloquial Idiom”, as well as it was mentioned that:

- Idioms can not be made by false analogy. According to Wilson James Ball, idioms are developed over a long period of time and the origin of them usually lies in some historical events, realities, culture or just everyday life of the folk that brought it into the language. This is the reason why when we dig deeper into the origins and etymology of idioms, we can see logic behind it (Wall, 1974, p. 2).
- One should use idioms in the right context and those idioms should have the same meanings for everyone. It is explained by the fact that when used not in appropriate or wrong context idioms can be the source of misunderstandings. Even though there are rare cases when there can be variations of the meanings of idioms based on different aspects, such as regional variants of language or individual experiences, the meanings of idioms typically remain the same for all the speakers of the language.
- One cannot normally just guess the meaning of idioms. This difficulty is caused by the fact that idioms have figurative meanings that are different from the literal ones.

Idioms are non-motivated words that are semantically inseparable. That means that they should be treated as single units and they cannot be separated without losing the intended meaning.

As to semantic features, linguists usually mention the semantic integrity and stability. Moreover, idioms can be replaced by one word or word combination. At the same time, unlike other units in language, idioms are non-productive which means that they cannot be used in word-formation. All idioms have connotations, which are shades of meanings in other words. When we talk about a connotative meaning it also includes emotional and imaginative associations of the term.

Idioms are tied to specific cultures, offering a glimpse into the history, culture, and perspective of their speakers. This is because most idioms have evolved from cultural practices, beliefs, and other aspects over time. As cultures transform, the language used to describe them also evolves: some idioms become obsolete while new ones emerge to take their place (Office et al., 2015, p. 5).

In conclusion, we would like to state that an idiom is a term that has a lot of definitions that are used in linguistic discourse. In this part of our work, we discussed the definitions that were provided by the most prominent linguists that worked in the sphere, such as Gail Brenner, Eugene Nida, Henry Watson Fowler, David Crystal, Mona Baker, Wilson James Ball and definitions that were provided by multiple reliable internet sources, such as Oxford English Dictionary, Collins English Dictionary. While highlighting different properties of those phraseological units, those definitions have a lot of characteristics in common, such as their figurative meanings, cultural significance and fixed and stable structure. It is important to say that all of the definitions mentioned below may be used in various linguistic researches, however, in the course of our work we would use the definition provided by the Oxford English Dictionary as it is the most relevant in this particular work.

1.2. Culturally specific idioms

As it was previously mentioned language and culture are interconnected notions and this is why the complicated connection between two of them has been discussed for many decades. Cultural connotations of English idioms is also an important topic that can shed some light on these connections.

A cultural connotation is a term that is commonly used in the sphere of linguo culturology. There are a lot of points of view on how to define this term, but we are sure that the most correct definition was given by Iryna Korniienko (2018, p. 129). According to her, cultural connotation is an interpretation of the denotative aspect of meaning in the categories of culture. Connotation refers to the additional meanings or associations that a word, phrase, or concept carries beyond its literal definition.

Cultural connotations specifically relate to the cultural context in which a word or concept is used. These connotations can include emotions, values, stereotypes, and other cultural elements associated with the word or concept. In the context of idioms, for instance, the denotative meaning might be straightforward, but the cultural connotation could add depth and richness to understanding.

Here we also would like to define the term “culturally specific idioms” in English, as it is the term that will be used in the whole course of our discussion.

To begin with, Mona Baker was the scholar who first defined this term in her “In other words. A course on translation”. In this fundamental work she stated that culture-specific concepts are concepts that are usually familiar and understandable to the native speakers, but can be confusing and incomprehensible by non-native speakers (Baker, 2011, p. 21). According to Mona Baker, those terms are usually connected with the culture, traditions, peculiarities of historical development of the country, religion and many other important aspects of everyday life of native speakers. The translation to source-language is either complicated or even impossible due to the fact that the concept simply does not exist in the target culture. Later in her work she mentions that culture-specific idioms are non-equivalent that means that they cannot be translated word-by-word or with the usage of a descriptive method of translation due to different worldviews of representatives of different cultures. An example of such an American idiom can be “Monday-morning quarterback” which cannot be easily understood by those who do not know anything about American culture, in particular American football traditions, thus it would be hard to translate the sentence with this idiom, for example, to the Ukrainian language. What is even more, this concept most likely will not be understood by even native-speakers who are outside of the United States of America.

Another scholar who tried to define this term is Irine Goshkheteliani who in the article “Idioms in Cross-cultural Communication” stated that idioms are idioms only specific to these nationalities in whose language these idioms emerged

(Goshkheteliani, 2013, p. 20). She mentioned that there are lots of idioms that are universal for many languages and can be crossed all over the globe as they reflect universal experiences that can be common for a big number of peoples. The great example of such an idiom can be an English idiom “to go in one ear and out the other” which can be translated to many languages, for instance, we can translate this idiomatic phrase to Ukrainian as “в одне вухо – влетіло, в друге – вилетіло” or to German as “zum einen Ohr rein und zum anderen wieder raus” and all the connotations that exist in the source language would be easily expressed in the target language. Such phraseological units show the connections between the cultures, however, as the contrast to them, there are culturally-specific idioms defining national and cultural specifics of the folks.

Yurii Kovalyuk, a Ukrainian scholar who has been working in the sphere of culturally specific idioms, stated that each national variety of English incorporates culturally specific idioms (Kovalyuk, 2015, p. 58). That means that used in a not-relevant context, a culturally specific idiom can sound strange or indistinct. By a not-relevant context he meant cases when idioms that are specific for one ethnic group were used in the conversation with representatives of other groups that may not know about this lexical unit. Moreover, like Mona Baker, Yurii Kovalyuk confirms that non-equivalent idioms are synonyms to culturally specific idioms that can be useful in the course of our discussion. As a definition, he stated that culturally specific idioms are phraseological units that contain culturally specific information about some specific group, such as an ethnos or a nation. (Kovalyuk, 2015, p. 58)

According to Peter Newmark, all culturally specific items, including culturally specific idioms, are a part of socio-linguistics, as they are connected with social and cultural background (Newmark, 2010, p. 173).

Based on everything written there, we have concluded that the main trait that differentiate culturally specific idioms from those that are not culturally specific is a cultural connotation in it or its absence.

1.3. Formation of idioms in American English

The emergence of American variants of English were firstly recognised a half of a century before the Revolution. The variants of English that started to emerge there were not only different in the regard of tone, accent or coinages, but even the ways some new units were brought to the language had its peculiarities (Paulsen, 2022, p. 90). There are lots of factors that made an impact on the process of koineization. Among them are demographical, cultural, social, political, occupational and many others. Unfortunately at the end of the day we may never find out what has caused this or that discrepancy between various variants of the English language. Moreover, it is quite possible that we will not be able to trace causes of changes that are occurring at the moment or may emerge later as the language will continue to evolve. However, when we talk about the idioms that emerged within the language, there are a few things that we can analyze and trace, one of them is the way these idioms emerged. By that we mean the etymology and formation patterns. Needless to say that there are cases where both etymology and formation patterns of some specific phraseological units are unexplainable. However, if we talk about the American variant of the English language, it is not that common that we cannot find the explanation to some alteration that took place within the language system, partially due to the fact this particular variant of the language is not that old in comparison to, for example, the British variant of American English, partially due to the close attention that many scholars paid to newly emerged variants of language or due to the fact that there are more possibilities to trace the changes in language then ever before.

Later in the course of our work, we will return to the etymology of idioms within the American variant of English, but in this part we will concentrate on the formation of idioms as it will be useful when we will discuss the former one. Moreover, we believe that understanding of idiom formation patterns can provide us with valuable insights within our work.

In linguistics idioms are considered to be units that emerged by indirect (figurative) nomination also known as a secondary nomination which means that those units were created from already existing linguistic units by certain semantic changes that took place within the language (Fazilov, 2023, p. 94). According to Nasiba Umarkhanova, metaphor is the main method of secondary nomination (Umarkhanova, 2023, p. 59). Even though this category is mostly referred to while discussing stylistics, it is also commonly used to define formation patterns of different categories in linguistics, in particular idioms. We believe that the most suitable definition of metaphor was provided by Hadumod Bussmann. According to him, metaphor is the usage of words in transferred meaning and can also be defined as an implied comparison with the aim of identification (Bussmann, 2006, p. 744). Often this figure of speech is explained as a shortened comparison. An example of an American culturally specific idiom based on metaphor is an idiom “a fat cat” that is based on similarity. The metaphorical usage of “fat cat” is based on a comparison between the characteristics of a wealthy individual and those of a well-fed, contented cat. In general metaphorical nomination of idioms is based on a principle that can be summed up as ‘as if’.

According to Katarzyna Coombs-Hoar, among other devices that are used in the secondary nomination are simile, metonymy, synecdoche, alliteration, assonance, aphorism, allusion and cliché, even though she does not deny the crucial role of the metaphor in the process of idiom formation (Coombs-Hoar, 2022, p. 25).

According to the Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms, simile is an imaginative comparison of two unlike things with the usage of such words as “like”, “as”, “than” (Childs & Fowler, 2006, p. 218). Those figures of speech are indeed powerful tools not only in stylistics but in the secondary nomination and formation of idioms. While simile-based sayings might seem easy to understand because they compare things directly, they actually have hidden meanings and cultural backgrounds that can make them more complicated. Take the American idiom “*sure as death and taxes.*” On the

surface, it means something is very certain, like death or having to pay taxes. But it also reflects how we view these unavoidable parts of life. Alicia Galera Masegosa stated that it is common for simile-based idioms to bear a hyperbolic component (Masegosa, 2010, p. 8). It's like adding a little spice to language to make it more colorful and engaging. By exaggerating, these idioms become more memorable and impactful, helping to convey emotions or experiences in a vivid way.

As to metonymy-based idioms, they are based on a figure of speech in which one linguistic unit is used in the meaning of another linguistic unit. The Penguin Dictionary of Literary terms and Literary theory defines metonymy as a figure of speech in which the name of an attribute or a thing is substituted for the thing itself and it is based on the principle of contiguity (Cuddon, 2014, p. 510). Zoltán Kövecses and Peter Szabo stated that metonymy is a cognitive process in which one conceptual entity, the vehicle, provides mental access to another conceptual entity, the target within the same domain, or we say, an idealized cognitive model (Kövecses & Szabo, 1997, p. 338). A great example of an American culturally specific idiom that is based on the metonymy is “*cannot fight the City Hall*”. In this phraseological unit, “City Hall” is used as a symbol or representation of government authority or bureaucracy. So, when someone says “*you can't fight City Hall*” they mean that it's difficult or impossible to challenge or overcome the power and influence of government institutions or officials. The use of “City Hall” here represents a broader concept of authority and bureaucracy rather than just the physical building itself.

Among those idioms that are based on metonymy, scholars also divide the idioms that are based on synecdoche. According to The concise Oxford dictionary of literary terms : (defines over 1,000 literary terms from absurd to zeugma), a synecdoche is a type of metonymy “by which something is referred to indirectly, either by naming only some part or constituent of it” (Baldick, 2004, p. 254). For example, in the American variant of English we have an idiom hard hat that is used to define the working class individual who can have conservative points of view and is

based on synecdoche. In this case, the term “hard hat” refers to a specific type of helmet worn by construction workers for safety. However, in the idiom “hard hat,” it's used to represent the entire working class associated with blue-collar jobs, especially those in industries like construction, manufacturing, or manual labor. So, the term "hard hat" is used as a symbol for a larger group or class of individuals, making it a synecdoche.

Additionally, we would like to talk about alliteration and assonance as a powerful tool that is used to create idioms. Alliteration is “the use in speech or writing of several words close together which all begin with the same letter or sound” (Alliteration Definition and Meaning | Collins English Dictionary, 2019). On the other hand, assonance is the usage of the same vowel sounds with distinct consonants, or the same consonant with different vowels in consecutive words or stressed syllables, as in a line of verse (Assonance Definition and Meaning | Collins English Dictionary, 2024). The repetition of different phonetic units is a powerful tool not only in primary but also secondary nomination. They contribute to the effectiveness of these indirect references by making them more evocative and expressive. This repetition can make the language of the speaker rhythmic and memorable. For example, here we can mention such phraseological units as “*sure cure*”, “*snail mail*” or “*publish or perish*”. While the usage of those devices may not directly aid in understanding the literal meaning of idioms, they make them more memorable and catchy, enhancing their impact and ensuring they are easily recalled. It makes idioms more effective as linguistic expressions, aiding in communication and expression.

Aphorism is “tersely phrased statement of a truth or opinion or a brief statement of a principle” (Nordquist, 2019). Often those statements express the common wisdom in a memorable way. They are commonly used in the formation of various fixed expressions, including idioms. An example of an idiom based on the aphorism is an American “*culturally specific idiom life is just a bowl of cherries*”

which tells us that life can be really nice, like enjoying a bowl of delicious cherries. This means of idiom formation is most widely used in literature and mass culture, as it can be used to create a rhythm and express important ideas that the author may want to express.

As to allusion, it is a reference to some person, place, or event outside of the discourse in which this reference is used (Quinn, 2009, p. 20). Allusion can refer to the place, person, thing, situation that can be either real or made up. The usage of this can make the idea that the speaker expresses more powerful. A big part of idioms are based on allusions. In American English idioms that are based on allusion often originate from literary works or from the historical event and refer to some well-known facts that the majority of native speakers of American English know about. For example, an American idiom “*Catch-22*” which has a meaning of a dilemma with no solution, refers to a paradoxical situation that was described in the book “*Catch-22*” written by an American writer Joseph Heller. This novel is often included in the curriculum of American schools, so many native English speakers are familiar with its storyline and the paradoxical situation it describes.

According to the Oxford English Dictionary Online, cliché is a phrase or expression seen as unoriginal or dull because it has been used too much (“Cliché, N. & Adj. Meanings, Etymology and More | Oxford English Dictionary,” 2023). The idioms that are based on clichés often derive from phrases or expressions that were first popularized in literature, gradually becoming part of everyday language due to their widespread use and resonance with readers, however there are lots of idioms that have its roots in other spheres. For example, an American culturally specific idiom “to touch a base” originates from the American leisure, namely baseball and is overly used by Americans.

To conclude, we would like to state that such means of the secondary nomination as metaphor, simile, metonymy, synecdoche, alliteration, assonance, aphorism, allusion and cliché had a crucial role in the process of idiom formation and

it is important to differentiate the idioms that are based on different means of secondary nomination as it can help us to gain insights into the development of phraseological units in particular and language itself in general.

CONCLUSION TO CHAPTER 1

In this we dwelled on the theoretical investigation on the topic of idioms and idiomaticity that had been done by various scholars that worked on different fields of linguistics and tried to learn more about various aspects of those phraseological units. We managed to determine that in the course of our further work it would be the most suitable to define an idiom as a ‘a form of expression, construction, phrase, etc., peculiar to a language; a peculiarity of phraseology approved by usage, and often having a meaning other than its grammatical or logical one’. Among the characteristics of idioms that will be applicable in our research, we would like to mention the fact that they cannot be made by false analogy, should be used in the right context and their meanings cannot normally be guessed from the context. In the English language idioms are commonly and frequently used. Based on different research, the majority of idioms can be found from 20 to 50 times per a million words. However, there are highly frequent or infrequent idioms as well. The majority of phraseological units, in particular idioms, are untranslatable and it may be difficult for non-native speakers to understand them from the context.

Idioms reflect the relationship between language and culture, as idioms reflect the cultural and national peculiarities of life of people the most. Moreover, they were influenced by traditions and norms of the country where the idioms originate from, as well as realities, routine and history.

Additionally, we discussed the culturally specific idioms as a part of idioms in general. Culturally specific idioms are idioms that have cultural connotations that specifically relate to the cultural context in which a word or concept is used. These connotations can include emotions, values, stereotypes, and other cultural elements associated with the word or concept. Culture-specific idioms are non-equivalent that means that they cannot be translated word-by-word or with the usage of a descriptive method of translation due to different worldviews of representatives of different cultures. As a counterpart for those units we discussed universal idioms that can be

crossed all over the globe as they reflect universal experiences that can be common for a big number of peoples.

Last but not least, we discussed the formation of idioms in American English. Idioms are units that have emerged by indirect nomination. Among devices that are used in the secondary (or indirect) nomination we can name metaphor, simile, metonymy, synecdoche, alliteration, assonance, aphorism, allusion and cliché.

2.LEXICO-SEMANTIC PECULIARITIES OF CULTURALLY-SPECIFIC IDIOMS IN AMERICAN ENGLISH

2.1. Classification of culturally specific idioms in American English by etymology

One of the effective ways to research idioms is to classify them, because if we have some systems on how to classify, divide and differentiate idioms, then there could be better ways to understand, analyze and learn them. The classifications can not only help us to highlight some distinctive features of some groups of idioms or even some patterns within different groups, but also gather new pieces of information about them and even develop new hypotheses in the field.

Here we would like to mention some of the most popular classifications that are commonly used by linguists while studying idioms in general.

First of all, all idioms can be divided depending on what they consist of. One of those classifications was proposed by Zoltan Kövecses. He divided all idioms into: metaphors; metonymies; pairs of words; similes; sayings; phrasal verbs; grammatical idioms. Zoltan Kövecses's classification is quite comprehensive, covering various forms of idiomatic expressions (Kövecses 2001). This approach to classification provides a systematic framework for categorizing different types of idiomatic expressions and it can additionally help to get deeper into the etymology of those idiomatic expressions and gain insights into the development of language.

Another approach to the classification of idioms was proposed by Chitra Fernando (1996, p. 32). She suggested the division of idioms into subclasses: pure idioms, semi-idioms and literary idioms. Jennifer Seidl and W McMordie (1978, p. 5) divided idioms into idioms with irregular form and clear meaning, idioms with regular form, but unclear meaning and idioms with irregular form and unclear meaning. These approaches also can provide useful insights into the development of language and idiomatic expressions within the language.

Moreover, the etymological classification of phraseological units has been commonly used for many decades in the sphere. Scholars divide idioms depending on the sources of idioms: from daily routine, religion, the Bible, literature, languages, and history.

We believe that the last method of classifying idioms can help to reveal the historical background of the development of American idioms, as well as cultural realities that influenced its development. Moreover, the research can help to understand the original connotations of certain idioms and their semantic meaning.

Thus, we would like to propose our own system of classification of idioms. We believe that the best way to classify culturally specific idioms in American English is by classification based on etymology due to the reasons mentioned previously.

Depending on its *etymology*, we would like to suggest such a division of American culturally specific idioms (*Appendix 2*):

1. **Idioms that originate from various periods of American history.** Even though the history of both the USA and American varieties of the English language is not that long in comparison to the length of the history of Great Britain and the British variant of English, historical events contributed a lot to the development of language and strongly influenced it. We consider that this category is very broad; for this specific reason we would like to divide it into four subcategories, namely:

A. ***Those that originate from real historical events or real historical realities.*** For example, here we can mention the Gold Rush period in the USA, when hundreds of thousands of Americans were influenced by the news of the discovery of gold and thus traveled all over the country to mine this valuable material. This influenced not only the lives of people in the country, but the variety of the English language that existed at that time there. For instance, an expression to *hit pay dirt* means “to make a valuable discovery or large profit”, which basically refers to a miner’s finding gold or other precious metals while sifting soil, was connected with this event.

Another period that gave a boost to the development of idioms is the period of the existence of slavery in the USA. The forced migration of African peoples to the Americas, their lives within the community, the realities they lived in as well as struggles that they faced found its reflection in the phraseological units as well. For example, an idiom *to sell somebody down the river* means to betray somebody. The etymology can be traced back to the times when the slaves were sold down the Mississippi river to work on cotton plantations. Another example of such an idiom is *to get off the plantation* which means to behave unexpectedly or independently. This phraseological unit originates from the fact that slaves could not leave the plantations without an agreement of their master, if the rule was broken, it could cost an enslaved person life. Thus, this idiom has a negative connotation.

The Civil war brought to the language several phrases as well. For example, the idiom *all wool and a yard* that is used to denote the high quality of something was originally used to describe the Civil War uniform. Such a historical reality as the song “Dixie” that was used by the Confederate army as their anthem is used in the idiom *to whistle Dixie*. The song was originally used to cheer up the soldiers, however, as we know the Confederate lost the war, thus, this phraseological unit means “to engage in some hopeful unrealistic talks that have nothing in common with the reality”.

Additionally here we can mention idioms that originated from the political life, for example, *brain trust*, the word-combination that was firstly used by the American President Franklin D. Roosevelt in order to refer to the group of his advisers is now used to talk about knowledgeable people who are used unofficially for some pieces of advice to not only presidents, but also other people who may need that. However, we do not think that all idioms that originated from politics can be suitable in this category, thus it will be later mentioned in another part of our classification.

B. Idioms that originated from old American traditions. Many American traditions have its roots in historical events, cultural practices, or societal norms that have evolved over time. A big amount of those traditions came from the Native

Americans. For example, the idiom *happy hunting ground* that is used to define the place where all wishes come true is connected with the Native American that reflects old traditional beliefs that existed within another culture.

Scouting, one of the most popular American traditions, became the source for idioms as well. Namely we can talk here about *brownie points* that were real points that were given to the Girl Scouts, Brownies, for good achievements, that is now used to denote “credit for a good deed”.

C. Idioms that originated from the peculiarities of relationships between Americans and other nations or countries over history. Those idiomatic units can also reflect the stereotypes that existed in America and many other aspects of life within multicultural society. Some of those are even considered to be offensive these days due to these specific reasons, even though they are still in common use. For example, the idiom *Chinaman's chance* is connected with stereotypes about Chinese immigrants, who came to the USA to achieve the American dream, yet usually failed. As a consequence, the phrase is now used to say that there are no chances at all. On the other hand, the idiomatic unit *Indian giver* reflects the complicated relationships between the original settlers and Native Americans. Indians did not understand the concept of gifts and thus tried to get the presents that they gave to settlers back, mostly by stealing them, thus this phrase is used to describe sb who gives and takes the presents back.

There are also examples of American phraseological units with positive connotations that belong to this group. During the Gold Rush, it was believed that the most successful miners were Irish, thus now Americans use the phrase “*Luck of the Irish!*” to wish good luck.

2. Idioms that originated from everyday life. As we know from the beginning of their history America has been a melting pot, where different ways of living mix together to create a unique lifestyle of its citizens. Also, the citizens of the USA managed to create their own habits and own manner of living different from

everything else we have all over the world. This category is also quite broad, thus we decided to divide it into a few subcategories, such as:

A. Idioms that originated from religious life. In spite of widespread belief that Americans are not very religious people, religious life has an enormous effect on the habits that Americans have and on the language they use. Here we are not only talking about the idioms that have its roots from the Bible or other religious texts or books, but also about some realities of American religious life. For example, we have such an idiom as *Bible belt*, which is used to denote the part of the United States of America, mainly the Southern part of it, where the Church plays a significant role in the life of common people. Another great example we can name is *Sunday best* which originates from the practice to wear the best clothes on Sunday when you have to go to the church. While the practice is common even in our culture, the idiom that defines one's best clothes and is connected with this habit exists only in the American variant of English language.

B. Idioms that originated from the American educational system. Education is an important part of a person's life. We spend almost the whole life constantly learning and getting some indeed vital skills, thus there is no wonder why this sphere is so productive when it comes to idiomatic expressions.

For example, in the 20th century it was a common practice among American universities, that both students, university teachers, scientists and scholars were demanded to do some research all the time to get successful in their professional life. Such pressure on all people involved in the educational process resulted in the emergence of an idiom *publish or perish* which basically refers to these attempts to succeed in quantity and not quality of scientific research.

Another practice that was pretty common among American students was to bring some small presents to teachers at school, college or university, usually apples or other fruits. They did so to flatter their teachers, thus this practice resulted in such idioms as *to polish an apple* and *an apple polisher*.

American universities that firstly specialized in agriculture were referred to as *cow universities* due to the specificity of what the students studied there. However, with the passage of time the meaning of this idiomatic expression became wider (due to metonymy) and thus this combination of words is used to refer to also universities that provide education of the low quality.

It is a very well-known fact that a big amount of Americans are indeed invested in different sport activities. Those games that are played at schools, universities and colleges are not an exception. An idiom *old college try* originates from American college football and originally was used as a phrase to encourage players to try to succeed even when it was not possible to do so. The expression was popularized by movies about college games and now is used in the meaning of doing one's best.

The last idiom we would like to mention here is *to play hooky*, which originated from the regional variety of American English that was used in the New York City. Hooky in the New York slang meant hide-and-seek and as an idiomatic expression it is used to say that somebody is absent from school without any permission or any reasonable explanations.

C. Idioms that originated from the names of traditional beverages and food.

The national cuisine is an important part of every country's culture. In the United States of America one of those dishes that are considered to be national is an apple pie. It is eaten on every holiday and can be found on almost every table. This dish indeed became something that was closely associated with the country itself and this is the reason why we now have few idioms connected with this food. For example, firstly used by American soldiers the phrase *for mom and apple pie* evolved into the idiom that is used to denote the traditional values that are sacred for Americans and something somebody is ready to sacrifice a lot, such as one's family and motherland. Another idiom that can be mentioned here is *as American as an apple pie* to denote

patriotism and love to the country. Those two idioms are actually connected as it is believed that the second evolved from the first one.

As for beverages in the New World, here we can talk about cider that was traditionally prepared in the area from the time when the first settlers came to the country. Traditionally it was cooked with apples that grew there. It resulted in the creation of such an idiom as *all talk and no cider* that is used to describe the person who tends to talk a lot, but does not do much.

There are also several idioms that originated from the characteristics of food or drinks. For example, an American idiom *to cut the mustard* means to accomplish something or to get some unexpected results. The etymology of the idiom is not fully traced, however, it is believed that it is connected with the hardship that people face while harvesting and collecting this type of food.

D. Idioms that originated from common stereotypes about different parts of the USA. The population of the United States of America is diverse, as the development of every region was influenced by the unique sets of historical and societal factors, thus of course even within the country there are typical stereotypes about people who live in this or that state. A language that is tightly connected with society reflects all of these beliefs. For instance, people who live in the Southern United States are commonly considered to be very friendly, polite and welcoming and this resulted in a plethora of idioms connected with this stereotype. *Southern hospitality*, which means kindness, warmth, or *Southern belle*, which means a girl who was raised well and is expected to grow up into a lady, are examples of idioms that originated from these stereotypes.

Some of the toponyms that denote the names of the city also became a source of the fixed expressions as some of the cities or its citizens have peculiarities that were noticed by native speakers who visited these cities. The New York City is famous for its quick rhythm of life, thus time there runs very quickly. Once such a peculiarity of the city was noticed, the idiom *New York minute* that means a very brief

span of time emerged. Some cities are or used to be famous due to the sport or cultural events or festivals that have taken place there. There are also those that are famous for having nothing interesting in it. Those are cities that are absolutely unremarkable and are considered to be prototypical. For example, Peoria is a city that is famous for being the typical American city. Some people even say that this town is a representative of America as a whole. This is why it was used by politicians, artists and common people to talk about the country in general. Later the context where it was used became narrower and started to be used to talk about theater. Today all of these associations resulted in an idiom *to play in Peoria* which means to be acceptable to the average consumer.

3. Idioms that originated from artistic life. Here we can name those idioms that were created by particular people, namely artists and were later incorporated in the mainstream language. It includes both coinages from literary works, such as verses, poems, novels, dramas and many others and those that were created in mainstream culture, such as films, movies, music, advertisement and so on. Within this group we would like to highlight such categories as:

A. Idioms that originated from literature.

In the British variant of English one of the most prominent figures who contributed to the development of idiomatic expressions was William Shakespear. Lots of idioms that were used by him as either play of words or metaphor. If we talk about American literature, its development started only in the 17th century and for years there were no prominent figures who contributed to the development of language as much as it did Shakespear, however there were still some famous artists who gave rise to idioms that originated from literature.

To begin with, I would like to mention one of the fireside poets, American writers who wrote their works in New England, namely Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. In his poem "The Theologian's Tale: Elizabeth" (1863) he used a metaphor *ships that pass in the night* that later became well-known to us idiom that is

used to define people who met briefly for a short time without seeing each other ever again.

Another prominent example is Benjamin Franklin who wrote many interesting works including *Poor Richard's Almanac* (1732). Even though he is more famous as a politician, he also managed to contribute to the development of language. Idiom *to have an ax to grind* was coined by him and is used in the meaning of having a selfish motive or goal. This phrase was firstly used to give the color to the text, however it is currently used in the mainstream language.

Famous American playwright Clifford Odets coined the phraseological unit *another country heard from* (1876). It was used during the election night in one of the scenes to say that the results from one of the parts of the country had arrived. Theatergoers adapted the phrase for their needs and thus it is now used to say that some unexpected person arrived or started to speak.

Walter Mitty is a character of a short story “The Secret Life of Walter Mitty” (1939) written by famous writer James Thurber. In this story he happened to be a person who is quite ordinary or ineffectual. Moreover, he used to dream about something rather than do something to achieve great results. It is how this name entered the language and how it is used even now to define this type of people.

Novel “Catch-22” (1961) is considered to be one of the most important novels of the 20th century. It was written by Joseph Heller and revolves around a bureaucratic rule imposed by the military that states a soldier's request to be relieved from dangerous combat duty on the grounds of insanity must be denied; however, if a soldier is aware of the insanity of war and therefore requests to be relieved from duty, this awareness is considered a sign of sanity. This concept became wider and currently the phrase *Catch-22* is used to define any no-win dilemma or paradox.

Moreover, there are whole genres that contributed to the idiomaticity of the American variant of English. For example, we can here mention *shaggy-dog stories* that are an extremely long-winded anecdote that used to be a popular genre in the

USA especially during the 20th century. Now the name of this genre is used to define just long jokes.

B. Talking about mainstream culture, we can mention *idioms that originated from American showbiz*. Here we mostly refer to the music, movie and show industry.

To begin with, we would like to talk about those idioms that originated from various TV shows and films. For example, here we can mention the 1932 comedy-drama film “*Blessed Event*” whose name became an idiom that is used to define the birth of a baby. “*Dog-and-pony show*” was used to be a famous variety show as well, however the meaning of this word-combination became wider and now is used to denote an elaborate display or presentation. Talking about TV, we can mention cartoons as well, as it is also an important part of mainstream culture. In Milton Caniff's popular cartoon strip *Terry and the Pirates* the phrase *a dragon lady* was used to define women who tend to be moody. It was picked-up by youth and incorporated in the every-day conversations.

Advertisement slogans have become also an important source for the development of language. Phrases that were specifically tailored to sell and popularize some products were so impressive and likable that they managed to continue to be used even after the products that were connected with these phrases ceased to exist. Dr. Keck's Sure Cure for Catarrh was advertised by the phrase *sure cure*, that is now used to define just a remedy or pills that can help you to get better. An example of a world-famous brand that contributed to the development of American variants of English is Palmolive Soap. In 1923 they started to use a new slogan which went like “She's fifty but she still has her schoolgirl complexion”, later the phrase *schoolgirl complexion* began to be commonly used by native speakers with the idiomatic meaning of fresh, glowing, young skin. In 1928 the Chillicothe Baking Company used the slogan “The greatest forward step in the baking industry since bread was wrapped” to advertise their products. Currently the idiom *greatest thing*

since sliced bread is used to define something of an excellent quality outside of the context in which it was created.

As to music, different songwriters and musicians not only contributed to the popularization of previously not commonly used idioms, but managed to come up with their own coinages. For example, originating as the title of a song by Lew Brown (lyrics) and composer Ray Henderson, the phrase *life is just a bowl of cherries* gained its idiomaticity and now is used sarcastically to say that while life can seem perfect, there can be difficult and unpleasant situations in it as well.

4. Idioms originating from American leisure activities have become deeply ingrained in American culture. Sports like basketball, baseball, and football and many others are a big part of American pastimes. The citizens of the USA not only invented their own sports that are played all over the world but also managed to develop a whole new culture connected with sports and cheering on their favorite team. Another thing that we can mention talking about American leisure is the gambling culture. The gambling culture in America has a rich and varied history. Despite the fact that these activities share common ground, the idioms derived from them have very different etymologies. So, to understand them better, we've split them into two subcategories: those from American sports and those from gambling.

A. American idioms that originated from the sport and games sphere. To begin with, we would like to mention baseball, as it is considered to be among the biggest contributors to American culture and the most popular sport in the USA. Baseball is deeply connected with American rich history, traditions and culture. As it comes to its contribution to language, we can mention lots of idiomatic expressions among many other constructions that evolved in language due to this game. For example an idiom *Monday-morning quarterback* originates from this sphere. As we know, major baseball games usually are to be conducted on weekends, mostly on Sundays, for all the fans to be able to see the game, thus this idiom is used to refer to the person who tries to deal either with a problem or with some task already after it

has already been dealt with. Originating from baseball statistics, an idiom *to bat one thousand* has also become commonly used by native speakers. Even though in the original meaning, it was used to say that somebody gets a hit during every time they try to do that, the nominative meaning has become wider and now is used to say that somebody achieves high results in any sphere. Here we would also like to mention the idioms that are connected with baseball rules. In this game the runners have to touch base of the field from time to time, but Americans now use the expression *to touch base* not only to talk about this action, but also to say that somebody makes contact with somebody else.

Another example of sports that influenced American variants of English are of course martial arts, as it remains the sport that is popular among both young and senior citizens. Not only the rules of these sports and its peculiarities influenced the American variant of English, but also the sportsmen and their images in society, culture, media. They managed to become not only an important part of sport's history, but also make such an important contribution to culture that their footprint in culture will be traced long after they are gone. John Arthur Johnson, who was the first black world heavyweight champion, is among those figures. His life path inspired artists to create different forms of art, among which was a movie "*Great white hope*", the title of which entered the language as an idiomatic expression that is used to define something that is expected to succeed. Another example of an idiom that originated from martial arts is *to throw in a towel*, which refers to sportsmen getting emotional when they see that they are losing and thus throwing a towel away from them. It is now commonly used in the American variant of English to say that somebody admits defeat.

B. American idioms that originated from the leisure and gambling culture.

Even though gambling was invented in China, when one talks about it these days, one cannot help but think about the USA, in particular about Las Vegas, the biggest gambling center in the world. The first casino there was opened less than a century

ago, enriching the city, its citizens and the language of firstly local people and later English speakers all over the country. Now those expressions that were invented there have not only become other variants of English, but also a part of other language systems.

In particular here we can talk about idioms that originated from the game of poker and its rules. For example, an ace which is considered to be the highest card in most of the games, became a source for a plethora of idioms. Here we can mention such idioms as *to hold all the aces* which means to have all chances to succeed; *to have an ace in the hole*, which is used to say that the person has all the advantages in their hands; *to ace it* which was created by the usage of anthimeria and denotes achieving of high results, succeeding; *to ace out* which is used to express an opposite idea, namely losing.

Gambling culture is tightly connected with the jazz culture in the United States. Roaring twenties and jazz culture primarily existed only in America. This epoch influenced the whole generation of Americans, thus it created its footprint in the culture and language. The category of idiomatic expressions that originated from jazz culture could also become a part of idioms that originated from mass culture, but we determined that to our mind it is more connected with this group of idioms. An example of the idiom that originated from the sphere is *the jig is up* where the trick or deception has been exposed. The jig was used to refer to a special dance that people danced while musicians played the jazz, however in this phrase it changed its meaning and gained its idiomaticity.

5. American idioms that originated from the professional spheres. The way Americans organized different spheres of their life was unique since day one, when the first settlers arrived on the continent. Different factors influenced that; among them we can mention the United States being a melting pot, absorbing the best things from different cultures, the influence of the indigenous folks, and outer factors like the control of empires that lasted almost two centuries or relationships between other

countries that shaped some aspects of life. Since the day America gained its independence, there appeared an even bigger discrepancy between the professional life in the USA and Britain. Americans managed to create distinctive professional spheres among which we can name legal, financial, business, military, medical spheres as well as the sphere of technologies. All these spheres became a great source for creation of linguistic realias that are specific for the USA only among which are idioms that came to the language from them. We would like to break up this category into five more narrow subcategories, namely:

A. Idioms that originated from the legal sphere. Based on British law tradition, the American legal system has a lot of peculiarities, starting from how its courts are set up to how legal processes work and what principles of fairness they follow. One of those idioms is *an ambulance chaser* that is used to refer to the attorney who works with the insurance companies and benefits from the accidents. It originates from a common stereotype about the lawyers who try to make a fortune out of one's misluck. Another example suitable here is a term kangaroo court that may seem to be Australian but in fact originated in Texas. It can be traced back to the Gold Rush when the word kangaroo was used to refer to people who illegally took other people's property with the usage of courts. The meaning of the phrase became much wider and is used to refer to unlawful courts. Some phrases were incorporated by different institutions that are a part of the US law system. In 1927 F.B.I. created a slogan *crime does not pay* to encourage the citizens of the USA to follow the law, it was later popularized by different artists as a part of products of mass culture, such as comics, cartoons, films and so on and now is used to say that bad deeds never bring benefits to those that do them.

B. Idioms that originated from business and financial spheres. Those are idioms that are connected with the peculiarities of American corporate life and provide us with valuable insights into it.

For Americans it is very important to move forward the career ladder, thus for big companies it is vital to motivate top workers to stick to them rather than to change the working place. It became crucial when job hopping became common in various spheres. For these specific reasons big companies started to encourage their top employees to work by offering different benefits such as higher salaries while disabling them to leave the company. This realia was quickly observed by the corporate workers and was defined as *golden handcuffs* that is commonly used in the American variant of English to refer to this specific situation. On the other hand, the idiom *golden parachute* is used to refer to money offered by the company as compensation when making employees redundant.

Some of the idiomatic units that can be considered to be a part of this category originated from culture products, where the corporate world was depicted. In “Peter: A Novel Of Which He Is Not The Hero” Francis Hopkinson Smith depicted a character who achieved high results in the sphere of finances while remaining old-fashioned and sticking to old methods which was the reason why he was laughed at. He reacted to that by *laughing all the way to the bank* meaning that he benefited from what he was doing or succeeded while not being taken seriously. It was quickly picked up by corporate workers and is used commonly even now.

There are also phrases, fixed expressions from professional vocabulary that evolved and became idioms. For example, the bottom line is a line in the document where we can see the final result of financial operations of the company, the final revenue. The meaning of the phrase became wider and now means the final result.

C. Idioms that originated from the military sphere. Those are mostly idioms that originated from slang created in the army by soldiers as well as professional vocabulary used by servicemen. For example, the idiom *earn one's stripes* was firstly used by soldiers to say that somebody got a higher position by either hard work or brave deeds. The meaning of the phrase became wider and is used to say that somebody gained a position through hard work and accumulated experience. *All*

present and accounted for was a fixed expression used in the US armed forces to say that all the soldiers are on the duty, now it is used to say that all members or items are there outside of the military context.

D. Idioms from the sphere of technology and transport. With the advancement of the tech sphere more and more neologisms entered our language becoming a part of everyday vocabulary. New technologies changed the world around us, taking an important role in our lives. No wonder people found in those things something that resonated with their life. That resulted in the emergence of the idioms that are connected with the semantic field of technology and transport.

Those are idioms that have the name of different inventions in it, as well as phrases that are used in the sphere of technologies. Some of those can even reflect the way some of those invented functioned back the time it was invented. For example, an idiom *asleep at the switch* can be traced back to the time when railways were operated manually and not with the usage of automatic technology. There was the hired worker whose task was to switch cars for the tracks and whom this idiom is connected with. Firstly, a phrase was used to say that such a hired worker was doing his job in an inappropriate way and thus made a mistake, but now it is used in the meaning of just being inattentive.

The last but in least subcategory that we want to mention here is **idioms that originated from American political life**. These idioms have already been mentioned in the course of our work as they can be suitable in both categories. Those are both idioms that were created by famous political figures which were mentioned previously or that were created as a reaction towards the actions of the political figures by the society. For instance, in the 1920s it became a very common situation in American political life that political figures or even parties were paid to by wealthy businessmen. The goal was to gain financial benefits from those donations in the future. Those people were later defined by the idiom *fat cats* that means wealthy people who are very influential and are involved in political life. Another realia that

entered the language was the practice of the members of Congress to come back to their voters after being elected usually to gain some benefits. Firstly this practice was referred to as to *mend one's fences*. Later, the meaning of the phrase became wider and now is used to say that one tries to improve relationships with somebody already outside of the political discourse.

We believe that the classification mentioned below is the most suitable for exploring the origins and semantic fields of idioms. Further investigation can provide us with the knowledge that is vital for organizing and exploring these phraseological units. It presents a variety of American culturally-specific idioms that exist and can help scholars while further studying idioms.

2.2. Culturally specific idioms with positive and negative meanings

To begin with, we would like to define what the notion “connotation” is. It is quite a complicated task since there is no consensus on its definition, function and role. It is tightly connected with the notion of denotation, which is literal meaning of the word. Basically it is the meaning that we see in the dictionaries. When it comes to the term of connotation, it is not so easy to define the term, since there is no consensus on how to view this term as it is used in different branches of linguistics and viewed under different angles.

Meyer Howard Abrams and Geoffrey Galt Harpham in their major work “A Glossary of Literary Terms” defines the term as the secondary or associated signification of the linguistic unit, while denotation is the primary significance of the linguistic unit (Abrams 2013: 446). According to them, the connotation also includes feelings that are implied or carried by the word, which can be caused by different factors such as the historical development of language. We believe that even though this definition is mostly used in stylistics or literary studies, it can be suitable in the course of our work.

Connotation is also a complicated term since it is commonly agreed that it consists of at least three different components: stylistic, emotive and evaluative. We

believe that in the course of our work we need to pay attention to emotive and expressive components. When idioms and not only culturally specific ones are used, they usually carry some “feelings” or “emotions” even though in some cases it is hard to define it, especially for those who are not native speakers. The emotive component of a linguistic unit is the linguistic expression of those emotions reflected in the person’s speech.

Additionally, we would like to add that the connotation can be divided depending on the frequency of usage of certain shades of meanings. It is obvious that linguistic units can be used in various contexts with various connotations and thus Lilia Ukrainets suggested that we should also divide the connotations into two groups (Ukrainets 2013: 74):

- Usual ones - those that are commonly understood and established in the language;
- Occasional ones - those that are used by some specific groups and are not understood by the majority of speakers.

It is crucial information, since although some linguistic units can have the same denotative meanings, their connotative meanings of them may be completely different. More interestingly, in two languages or even variants of language there can be the same linguistic units that have completely equal denotative meanings and name the same notions/things, however, have completely opposite connotative meanings in the same contexts.

Moreover, we would like to say that the connotations of words could not be discussed without their lexical meanings. We should always take into consideration both emotive and lexical aspects of words or phrases as well as their linguistic functions.

In the previous part of our bachelor paper we described the classification of culturally specific idioms in American English based on their etymology. However, we believe that the classification based on the connotative meaning of the

phraseological units can also take place. We propose division of idioms into idioms with positive, negative evaluative meanings (by the usage of an idiom with such meanings the speaker can express an attitude (either positive or negative) towards an object) and idioms that have non-evaluative meanings (by the usage of an idiom with such meanings the speaker can not express an attitude towards an object).

We believe that such division can have high value for scholars, because idioms are used to nominate something indirectly, so this is why their connotative meaning is crucial.

Moreover, we would like to suggest that the group of culturally specific idioms with negative evaluative meanings is the biggest one in American English. In the course of our research we discovered that in American English phraseological units are polarizing towards negativity. It is similar to what was found about other variants of language, however there are some differences in the percentage.

In order to determine whether the idiom has a positive or negative connotation we had to consider lots of factors, such as the meaning that was provided by the dictionary, components of the idiom itself, cultural and historical contexts from which the idiom originated. Additionally, we would like to say that in all cases it was useful to take a look at the context in which the idiom is used as it can help to understand not only the connotation of idioms, but also the tone of the sentences itself. However, we believe that the determining whether idioms have positive or negative connotations may be subjective as there are various factors that need to be considered, thus we think that in some cases the connotations that we determined may be different from the connotations that were determined by other scholars.

We analyzed each group of the most common culturally specific idioms that we defined in part 2.1 (*Appendix 1*) and got the following results:

Within idioms that originated from historical contexts the majority of idioms have negative connotations (52.2% of all the most common idioms in this group) (see chapter 1 in *Appendix 4*). Interestingly, the majority of those idioms are idioms that

reflect the relationships between America and other countries within different historical periods. It is explained by the fact that those idioms originated from conflicts, culture clashes or some negative stereotypes. For example, an idiom *Chinaman's chance* that has already been mentioned in the course of our work has very negative connotations and reflects stereotypes that existed not so long ago. Moreover, these days it is considered to be inappropriate to use this idiom in your speech since it has a racial slur in it.

However it is worth mentioning that the American variant of English is not unique in the regard that the idioms that reflect the relationships between the country and other nationality have mostly negative connotations. It is a common thing for the English language in general and even languages that are part of other language families. For example, in the Ukrainian language we have such phraseological units as *на вовка помовка, а москаль кобил вкрав* or *мудрий як лях по шкоді* that also have negative connotations and reflect a long history of complicated relationships between different nations.

39.1% percent of idioms within the group have positive connotations. The majority of those idioms are connected with the major events in American history that the people in the country are proud of such as the Civil War or WWII.

Among the group mentioned only 8.7% of idioms have neutral connotative meanings and those are American idioms that denote neutral concepts that are not supposed to have either positive or negative meaning. For example, an idiom *Indian file* which is used to define a line of people or things standing one after another has neutral connotations.

Within idioms that originated from everyday life we got the following results: 56.8% of idioms within this group have negative meanings which is more than in the group we discussed previously (see chart 2 in *Appendix 4*). Those are not only those idioms that reflect some negative beliefs connected with a specific class or group of things, but those that show the challenges that common Americans had to deal with.

These expressions often bring up problems or things that bother people in their daily routines. For instance, think about the phrase "snail mail." When Americans say this, they are referring to regular mail, which used to be really slow in the past. Back then, waiting for important letters or packages could be frustrating because it took so long. So, these kinds of sayings remind us of the annoyances or difficulties Americans have experienced in our everyday lives and thus carry negative connotations.

Only 27.3% of idioms within this group have positive connotations. These idioms often reflect aspects of daily life that are perceived favorably or evoke feelings of contentment or satisfaction. For example, think about the phrase "fine and dandy." When someone says, "I'm feeling fine and dandy," they're expressing that they're doing well and feeling happy. It's a lighthearted way to convey contentment and satisfaction, even in the midst of life's challenges.

15.9% of idioms within this group are neutral. These expressions don't carry strong positive or negative connotations; instead, they simply describe common situations or concepts without adding any judgment or emotion.

Among idioms that originated from artistic life the situation is quite different (see chart 3 in *Appendix 4*), since we have the equal percentage of negative and positive connotations within the group. Interestingly, the majority of idioms with positive meanings have its etymology in American showbiz, while those idioms that originated from American literary works are mostly negative.

We believe that this is due to the fact that literature often explores the complexities of human experiences, emotions, and relationships. Many literary works have themes of conflict, struggle, and adversity, reflecting the darker aspects of life. In their works American authors tried to highlight the problems that existed at the time, often writing about societal norms that they considered unrightful, injustices or the absurdities of the common life of Americans.

As to mass culture, those products that are oriented on a big group of people are usually created to entertain people. They often celebrate achievements,

innovations, and joyful aspects of life, thus idioms originating from the American showbiz mostly carry positive connotations. Additionally, we would like to highlight that there is a big number of those idioms that are commonly used due to the popularity of American showbiz and its huge influence on the country and even the whole world. Moreover, those idioms became part not only of the American variant of English, but English in general due to this specific reason.

A significant part of idioms belong to those that have neutral connotations. These idioms often describe common activities, behaviors, or situations without carrying strong emotional or evaluative judgments.

As to idioms that originated from American leisure (see chart 4 in *Appendix 4*) the majority of idioms within this category belong to the category of idioms with neutral connotations. Idioms related to leisure often describe common activities, routines, or experiences that people engage in during their leisure time. These idioms may simply reflect everyday language used to describe leisure activities and experiences that should not have strong emotional or evaluative connotations. For example, the idiom "touch base with" originates from the language of baseball, where players are required to physically touch each base to gain scores. In its literal sense, "touching base" refers to making contact with a base. When used figuratively, "touch base with" means to make contact or renew communication with someone, often to exchange information, update on progress, or simply reconnect. Used in a figurative meaning, it carries neutral connotations as it denotes the activity that does not carry neither negative nor positive connotation as well.

Talking about the rest of the idioms within the group, we would like to mention that idioms with positive connotation often are used to denote success, luck or power, while idioms with negative connotations often are used to denote struggles, loses, exhaustion and other things that are peculiar for leisure in general.

Last but not least, we would like to mention the results that we got while analyzing the connotation of idioms that originated from the professional spheres (see

chart 5 *Appendix 4*). The majority of idioms that belong to those that have neutral connotations. Idioms originating from professional spheres, such as legal, business, military, technology, and political domains, often aim to denote some professional terms that commonly do not have neither negative nor positive connotations. Neutral connotations allow some of these idioms to have a professional tone and be used not only in everyday conversation but also in the professional sphere. However, there are those that after gaining the figurative meaning become informal and thus cannot be used in formal conversations including the context where they originated from.

To conclude, we would like to say that such analysis as we did in this part can provide scholars with valuable insights and help to see patterns within different groups that can lead to even more valuable explorations in the future. Moreover, we believe that those peculiarities that were discussed in this part can also help to predict further development of language. Overall, we figured out that the majority of American culturally specific idioms have negative connotations. However, there are groups where neutral connotations prevail as well.

2.3. Idiom frequency corpus analysis

In this part of the present paper we will analyze the most commonly used American culturally specific idioms based on the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) which consists of more than one billion words of text. The reason why we have decided to choose this corpus for our bachelor's paper is the size, reliability and availability of this corpus. It is based on text of various genres that were collected starting from 1990 that were created by native speakers of the American variant of English and can provide valuable insights into contemporary American English. All the information that we managed to find was collected from <https://www.english-corpora.org/coca/>.

There are many approaches on how to classify idioms based on frequency. We believe that the approach to consider idioms with a frequency per million that is more than 0.30 highly frequent is the most suitable as it was proposed by Sabrina Xerri.

Those with a frequency between 0.10 and 0.29 per million words are rather frequent, while those with a frequency below 0.09 per million words are regarded as rather infrequent (Xerri, 2018, p. 8). In other words idioms should be used at least 296 times in the corpus that we have chosen in the course of our work to be considered highly frequent. Idioms that are found from 99 to 295 times in the corpus are rather frequent and those that are used up to 98 times are considered to be infrequent.

Among American culturally specific idioms that originated from historical contexts only 9.1 percent of idioms are highly frequent, 18.2 of idioms are rather frequent and 72.2 percent are infrequent. There are several reasons for such results. First of all, here we would like to talk about the changes that took place within the society. Idioms that were commonly used in the past can be considered impolite or offensive. For example, idioms that originated from the peculiarities of relationships between Americans and other nations or countries over history often carry negative connotations and in some cases reflect the negative stereotypes of attitude towards certain groups, thus some idioms are not socially acceptable any more. For example, the idiom “Indian giver” refers to negative stereotypes about Native Americans and is now considered offensive. Other idioms are not commonly used any more due to sensitive historical contexts it refers to. For example, the idiom “to get off the plantation” refers to the era of slavery in the United States and the usage of the idiom can be offensive and traumatizing. Among other historical contexts that became a source of lots of idioms that now are avoided as it can cause offense we can name Native American History, The Civil Rights Movement, WWI and many other historical events.

Among idioms that originated from everyday life of Americans the 9.3 percent of idioms are highly frequent, 32.6 percent of idioms are rather frequent and 58.1 percent are infrequent. The reason why the number of rather frequent and highly frequent idioms is higher in the comparison to previously mentioned idioms is the fact that the idioms of this category often describe common experiences, emotions, or

situations that are universally understood and relevant across various contexts. Those idioms refer to commonly understood ideas and feelings and thus may be relevant in everyday conversation. Additionally, these idioms are often more straightforward and memorable, making them easier for people to recall and incorporate into their speech.

Among idioms that originated from the artistic life of Americans, 9.5 percent of idioms are highly frequent, 23.8 percent of idioms are rather frequent, while 66.7 percent of idioms of this group are infrequent. Among those idioms that are highly frequent or rather frequent are those that originated from the literature, film, music and other forms of popular culture that are still commonly known and discussed among various groups of Americans. For example, the American idiom “Catch-22” originates from the novel that is a part of school and college curriculum in the United States of America. Some of those idioms that originated from the artistic life of Americans used to be within rather frequent or highly frequent idioms, but due to various reasons are not commonly used any more. For example, the once commonly used idiom “dragon lady” becomes infrequent due to negative and offensive connotations that it carries.

Among idioms that originated from American leisure, 17.9 percent of idioms are highly frequent, 35.7 percent of idioms are rather frequent and 46.4 percent of idioms are infrequent. Those idioms are more frequently used than the groups that were analyzed previously. The reason is the fact that leisure plays a central role in American culture which makes idioms that originated from this sphere familiar and relevant. Leisure and sport are commonly discussed by different media and also leave their footprint on other parts of culture while also popularizing the idioms that originated from this sphere. Idioms that originated from leisure activities also often are used to denote common themes of competition, teamwork, achievement, and social interaction which is why there are in general more possible contexts where these idioms can be used.

Among culturally specific idioms that originated from the professional spheres, 28.1 percent of idioms are highly frequent, 22.8 percent of idioms are rather frequent and 49.1 percent are infrequent. The reason why the number of idioms that are highly frequent is the fact that lots of those idioms refer to widely known terms or ideas. Additionally, lots of those idioms are still commonly used in the professional discourse in the original meaning that existed before some term coined idiomaticity. Moreover, those idioms are straightforward and easy to understand.

As a result, we can see that the professional sphere is a source of the highest percentage of highly frequent idioms (28.1%), followed by American leisure (17.9%), artistic life (9.5%), and everyday life (9.3%), with historical contexts having the fewest in this category (9.1%). Everyday life became the source for the biggest percentage of rather frequent idioms (32.6%), followed by American leisure (35.7%), artistic life (23.8%), and the professional sphere (22.8%), while historical contexts again have the least (18.2%). In the infrequent category, historical contexts have the highest percentage of idioms (72.7%), followed by everyday life (58.1%), artistic life (56.7%), and the professional sphere (49.1%), with American leisure becoming the source for the lowest percentage of infrequent idioms (46.4%).

To conclude we would like to say that while analyzing the frequency of usage of American culturally specific idioms based on the Corpus of Contemporary American English we learnt a lot about the idiomaticity of American idioms. The most frequent are the idioms that originated from American leisure due to various reasons, one of which is the central role that sport and leisure takes in the life of each and every American. A big part of idioms that are highly frequent or rather frequent are those that originated from the professional sphere as they often reflect the situations that are well-known for common Americans and denote commonly understandable ideas. Idioms that originated from everyday life are used less often in comparison to groups that were mentioned previously. Nevertheless, the frequency is quite high, as those idioms are very memorable and refer to relevant situations and

experiences. Among idioms that originated from the artistic life of Americans highly frequent or rather frequent are those that originated from the literature, film, music and other forms of popular culture that are still commonly known and discussed among various groups of Americans. The least frequently used group is idioms that originated from historical contexts due to various changes within language and the society. We believe that the further research of the topic can give even more interesting insights.

CONCLUSION TO CHAPTER 2

In this chapter we discussed lexico-semantic peculiarities of culturally-specific idioms in American English, namely we focused on various methods of the classification of idioms. In this part we proposed our own approach to classify idioms based on the etymology that can help to trace the patterns within the idioms that originated from different sources. Overall we got 5 groups (Idioms that originated from American historical contexts, idioms that originated from everyday life of Americans, idioms that originated from artistic life, idioms that originated from American leisure culture, idioms that originated from the American professional life) that can be further divided into smaller groups. We gathered the most common American culturally specific idioms divided based on their etymology in APPENDIX 1 and made further research based on that. Overall this list of idioms itself presents a variety of American culturally-specific idioms that exist.

Additionally, we dwelled on the connotative and denotative meaning of idioms and analyzed the connotations of idioms from groups that we discussed in the previous chapter. Namely we discovered that the biggest part of American idioms have negative meanings, however the results within the groups may vary portraying different patterns that can be useful in further investigation of language. Different cultural factors influenced the connotations that idiom may have, such as historical contexts, social changes, stereotypes that exist within society, how the society functions, values, worldviews that this society has and every this factor can be important in the formation of the idioms and the peculiarities of its usage.

Last but not least we conducted the idiom frequency corpus analysis based on the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA). Our approach to classifying idioms based on frequency, has helped us to categorize idioms into highly frequent, rather frequent, and infrequent groups. Our research helped us to find lots of useful pieces of information about the patterns that exist within language and may later help to understand the way the language will develop in the future. While the majority of

idioms in American English are rather frequent, there is also a significant part of idioms that are highly frequent or infrequent due to various reasons that were discussed in our work.

Lastly, we examined the social and linguistic factors influencing these patterns of language change. Factors such as media influence, changes in the worldview of people, their values and the impact of other factors were explored to learn about their role in shaping the usage of idioms.

CONCLUSIONS

The overall aim of our bachelor paper is to investigate culturally specific idioms in American English, their etymology, connotations and frequency of usage. More precisely, the aim is to determine the origins of the idioms, analyze their connotative meaning and determine how the etymology influenced the shades of meaning that culturally specific idioms may have, to determine the frequency of usage of culturally specific idioms and to find factors that lead to such results.

First of all, we created our own system of classification of idioms and determined that among culturally specific idioms in American English 14,4% of idioms originated from American historical contexts, 18.6% of idioms originated from everyday life, 17.4% of idioms originated from American leisure, 12.6% of idioms originated from artistic life of Americans and 37.1% of idioms originated from the professional spheres. Thus, we managed to determine that the biggest amount of idioms have their roots in professional life mostly from the business or financial sphere as this part of culture is an important part of the life of Americans. Additionally, those idioms refer to common experiences and ideas and thus can be widely used. Overall, those findings demonstrate the huge roles that various parts of culture have in the lives of Americans as well as help to determine the historical events, everyday activities, sports, leisure, artistic works and professional experiences of Americans that are so rooted in the culture that it became a part of the language as well.

After collecting and classifying the most common American culturally specific idioms, we investigated the connotations of the idioms that are part of these groups. Among idioms that originated from historical context the majority of phraseological idioms have negative connotative meanings as they reflect the complicated relationships between the USA and other countries and usually originated from conflicts, negative events or stereotypes about certain groups of people. Among idioms that originated from everyday life in America we found the highest ratio of

idioms that have negative connotative meanings that can be explained by the fact that those idioms usually were created to refer to some negative aspects of everyday life such as challenges or problems that every American has faced in their routine. Interestingly, among idioms that originated from artistic life we have found the same amount of idioms with positive and negative meaning. Those that came to language from literary works usually have the negative connotations as they reflect the complicated concepts, ideas and usually refer to the darker aspects of life, while those that have its roots in American showbiz usually have positive meanings due to the fact that the products mass culture are usually created to entertain people. Idioms that are related to leisure mostly have neutral connotations as they usually describe common activities and experiences as well as the idioms that came to the language from the professional sphere.

Last but not least we conducted the idioms frequency research based on data from the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA). We managed to find out that the most frequently used idioms originated from the professional sphere as they are relevant and practical in everyday communication. Among the most frequently used idioms that originated from the professional spheres we can name idioms that originated from the sphere of business and finances which is also the most numerous group. Those idioms mostly have either positive or negative meaning as they reflect various aspects of the sphere. Idioms that originated from the legal sphere are the least present in the group and less frequently used as those idioms mostly refer to the ideas or concepts that are not commonly known about. Overall, those findings demonstrate the difference between lives of Americans and other native English speakers, such as the role of job and leisure in the life of common people, as well as they reveal the cultural contexts that influence the formation and usage of idioms in American English

Our findings show that there are several factors that shape the language change. Among those we can name the changes that took place within the society. For

example, native speakers avoid using the idioms that originated from historical contexts and reflect stereotypes about particular nationalities as the attitude towards those idioms in the society changed. The popularity of particular sports such as baseball or box influences the frequency of usage of idioms that have their roots in them. Similarly idioms that originated from the artistic life of Americans are influenced by the popularity of the product that gave life to them. Among the most frequently used phraseological units from those groups are those that originated from works that are commonly talked about.

Overall, we believe that those findings reflect the way language and culture interact and influence each other. We managed to determine the major factors that influence different aspects of idiomaticity that can be a basis for a further investigation on the topic.

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APPENDIX 1

The most common American culturally specific idioms divided based on their etymology

Idioms that originated from historical realities:

1. all wool and a yard - not fake, of excellent quality (originally about the Civil War uniforms);
2. get off the plantation - to deviate from what is expected or customary; to behave unexpectedly or independently;
3. hit pay dirt - make a valuable discovery or large profit (refers to a miner's finding gold or other precious metals while sifting soil);
4. sell down the river - to betray (from slaves being sold down the Mississippi River to work as laborers on cotton plantations);
5. underground railroad - a secret network for moving and housing fugitives (alludes to the network that secretly transported runaway slaves through the northern states to Canada);
6. up the river - to or in prison (This phrase originally referred to Sing-Sing Prison, on the Hudson River about 30 miles north of New York City);
7. whistle Dixie - engage in unrealistic, hopeful fantasizing (from the song "Dixie" and the vain hope that the Confederacy, known as Dixie, would win the Civil War).

Idioms that originated from American traditions:

1. a brass ring - a chance to achieve wealth or success (connected with the practice of giving a free ride to the person who succeeded in picking a ring out of a box while riding a merry-go-round);
2. bread-and-butter letter - a letter of thanks for hospitality, sent by a departed guest;

3. brownie points - credit for a good deed (originated with the points earned for various achievements by the youngest group of the Girl Scouts, called Brownies);
4. feather in one's cap - an act or deed to one's credit; a distinctive achievement (from the practice of putting a feather on a soldier's cap for every enemy he kills, an early practice of some Native American tribes);
5. happy hunting ground - a place where one can find or do what one wishes without restriction (from the Native American idea of an afterlife where hunters find unlimited game).

Idioms that reflect the relationships between America and other countries:

1. Chinaman's chance - an extremely slim chance, a hopeless undertaking;
2. double Dutch - a language that cannot be understood, gibberish;
3. Dutch treat - an outing or date in which each person pays his or her own expenses;
4. Indian file - a line of persons or things ranged one behind the other;
5. Indian giver - one who takes or demands back one's gift to another;
6. Indian summer - a period of mild, sunny weather occurring in late autumn, usually following a seasonable cold spell;
7. Luck of the Irish! - Good luck!
8. Mexican standoff - a confrontation where no strategy exists that allows any party to achieve victory;
9. not for all the tea in China - not at any price;
10. To beat Dutch - to do something remarkable or startling.

Idioms that originated from peculiarities of common life of Americans:

1. a company man - a male worker more loyal to management than to his fellow workers;
2. a fat city - a condition or circumstance marked by considerable prosperity or having a superior advantage;

3. come with the territory - to accompany specific circumstances (the phrase originally meant that traveling sales personnel had to accept whatever problems or perquisites they found in their assigned region);
4. fine and dandy - all right, excellent;
5. garden variety - ordinary or common;
6. good-time Charlie - affable, convivial fellow;
7. hard hat - a working-class ultraconservative;
8. horse sense - sound practical sense (American West);
9. horse trading - negotiation marked by hard bargaining and shrewd exchange (American West);
10. idiot box - a television set;
11. in a pig's eye - under no condition;
12. Joe Six-pack - a lower-middle-class male;
13. snail mail - ordinary postal service, as opposed to electronic communications;
14. to crash the gates - to gain admittance, as to a party or concert, without being invited or without paying;
15. wait for the other shoe to drop - await a seemingly inevitable event.

Idioms that originated from American religious life:

1. act of God - an unforeseen and uncontrollable natural event, such as a hurricane, fire, or flood;
2. cross my heart and hope to die - attest to the truth of something; solemnly assure someone that the truth has been spoken;
3. Sunday best - One's finest clothes.
4. Idioms connected with American educational system:
5. cow university - an agricultural college; any small, relatively unknown rural college;
6. crack a book - to open a book to study or read;
7. hit the book - study with concentrated effort;

8. old college try - one's best effort;
9. play hooky - to be absent from school or some other obligation without permission;
10. polish the apple - try to win favor through flattery;
11. publish or perish - to produce published work or fall into disfavor.

Idioms with traditional food and beverages:

1. all talk and no cider - much discussion but no action or result;
2. cut the mustard - to perform satisfactorily;
3. hard liquor - distilled alcoholic beverages, such as gin or whiskey
4. hem and haw - be hesitant and indecisive;
5. hot dog - a person who performs showy, often dangerous stunts, especially but not exclusively in sports; also, a showoff;
6. to hit the booze/sauce - to drink alcoholic beverages;
7. toss one's cookies - to vomit.

Idioms that are used to refer to American geographical objects or are refer to regional stereotypes:

1. Bible belt - an area noted for religious fundamentalism; specifically, parts of the American South and Midwest;
2. Bronx cheer - a sound of derision or contempt made by blowing through closed lips with the tongue between them;
3. get out of Dodge - leave a place with an uncomfortable or dire circumstance;
4. la-la land - Los Angeles;
5. New York minute - a very short time;
6. one-horse town - A small and unimportant place;
7. Philadelphia lawyer - a shrewd attorney, adept at dealing with legal technicalities;
8. play in Peoria - to be acceptable to the average consumer or constituent;
9. Southern belle - a girl who was expected to grow up into a lady;

10. Southern charm - charm;
11. Southern hospitality - politeness, charm, kindness, helpfulness, and charity;
12. Sun belt - the southern and southwestern United States;
13. to be from Missouri - to be extremely skeptical.

Idioms that originated from American literary works:

1. a conventional wisdom - A widely held belief on which most people act (from John Kenneth Galbraith's essay The Affluent Society);
2. an ax to grind - a selfish aim or motive (from Poor Richard's Almanac by Benjamin Franklin);
3. another county heard from - an unexpected person has spoken up or arrived on the scene (from Clifford Odets's play, Awake and Sing);
4. as all getout - to the ultimate degree (from Joseph C. Neal's Character Sketches);
5. Catch-22 - a no-win dilemma or paradox (from by Joseph Heller' novel Catch-22);
6. shaggy-dog story - a long drawn-out anecdote with an absurd or anticlimactic ending (from a well-known series of such stories, which involved a talking dog);
7. ships that pass in the night - Individuals who are rarely in the same place at the same time (from Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's poem "The Theologian's Tale");
8. Walter Mitty - A person, generally quite ordinary or ineffectual, who indulges in fantastic daydreams of personal triumphs (from James Thurber's short story, The Secret Life of Walter Mitty).

Idioms that originated from American showbiz:

1. a blessed event - the birth of a baby (originated from the name of comedy Blessed Event);

2. a dragon lady - a woman who is often angry or cruel especially when people do not do what she wants (from Milton Caniff's popular cartoon strip Terry and the Pirates);
3. dog-and-pony show - an elaborate presentation to gain approval for a product or policy (from traveling variety show);
4. double in brass - serve in two capacities (from traveling circus);
5. greatest thing since sliced bread - an excellent new invention (from the advertising slogan used in 1928 by the Chillicothe Baking Company);
6. life is just a bowl of cherries - these are happy circumstances in life, life is wonderful (originated from the song by an American songwriter Lew Brown);
7. life of Riley - an easy life (from a popular song of the 1880s, "Is That Mr. Reilly?" by Pat Rooney);
8. never give a sucker an even break - Don't allow a person who's easily duped a fair chance (from the quote of showman P.T. Barnum);
9. real McCoy - the genuine thing (from the nickname of sportsman and actor Norman Selby)
- 10.schoolgirl complexion - Fresh, glowing, unblemished skin (from an advertising campaign for Palmolive Soap);
- 11.sure cure - a remedy that won't fail (from an advertising slogan (Dr. Keck's Sure Cure for Catarrh));
- 12.three-ring circus - a situation of complete confusion (from a name of show by impresario P.T. Barnum)
- 13.top banana - the principal person in a group, organization, or undertaking (came to language as an allusion to Frank Lebowitz, a burlesque comedian who used bananas in his act).

Idioms that originated from sports and games spheres:

1. a box score - a detailed summary of actions or an event;
2. all over but the shouting - the outcome is a certainty;

3. also-ran - loser, failure, unsuccessful individual;
4. at the drop of a hat - immediately, without delay;
5. Bat one thousand - have a perfect record;
6. behind the eight ball - in trouble or an awkward position, out of luck;
7. body English - movements of the body that express a person's feelings
8. daily dozen - physical exercise;
9. great white hope - something or someone that is expected to succeed;
10. in there pitching - exerting one's best effort, trying actively;
11. Monday-morning quarterback - a person who criticizes or passes judgment from a position of hindsight;
12. play hardball - act aggressively and ruthlessly;
13. the bigger they come, the harder they fall - persons in important positions lose more when they fail;
14. touch base with - to make contact or renew communications with.

Idioms that originated from the leisure and gambling culture:

1. according to Hoyle - in keeping with established rules; on the highest authority;
2. ace in the hole - a hidden advantage or resource kept in reserve if needed;
3. across the board - applying to all the individuals in a group;
4. after hours - after normal working hours, after closing time;
5. even money - equal odds that something will occur;
6. it takes two to tango - the active cooperation of both parties is needed for some enterprises;
7. only game in town - the only choice, which one must accept for want of a better one;
8. the jig is up - the trick or deception has been exposed;
9. to ace it - to accomplish sth with success;
10. to ace out - to defeat, to get better of;

11. to ante up - to pay what is due, contribute;
12. to be all in - to be out of money (in card games, especially poker);
13. to hold all the aces - have all the advantages;
14. to jazz up - enliven, make more interesting.

Idioms that originated from legal sphere of American life:

1. ambulance chaser - an attorney who seeks to profit from someone's injury or accident; also, an inferior lawyer;
2. cease and desist - stop, leave off doing something;
3. confidence game/confidence trick/con game - a swindle in which the victim is defrauded after his or her trust has been won;
4. crime does not pay - Lawbreakers do not benefit from their actions (from a slogan of the F.B.I.);
5. dead to rights - in the act of committing an error or crime, red-handed;
6. get one's comeuppance - to receive the treatment one deserves, especially punishment or retribution;
7. kangaroo court - a self-appointed tribunal that violates established legal procedure;
8. take the Fifth - to refuse to answer on the grounds that one may incriminate oneself;
9. to cop a plead - to plead guilty or confess to a crime in exchange for a lighter sentence.

Idioms that originated from business and financial sphere:

1. a bottom line - the ultimate result, the upshot; also, the main point or crucial factor;
2. cutthroat competition - destructive competition;
3. dime a dozen - so plentiful as to be valueless;
4. dollars to doughnuts - It's a virtual certainty;
5. drop dime - Inform on or betray someone;

6. for two cents - for nothing; for a petty sum;
7. free enterprise - an undertaking on one's own behalf;
8. golden handcuffs - financial benefits that an employee will lose upon resigning;
9. Golden handshake - generous severance pay to an employee, often as an incentive for early retirement;
10. golden parachute - a generous severance agreement for an executive in the event of sudden dismissal owing to a merger or similar circumstance;
11. hang out one's shingle - open an office, especially a professional practice;
12. land-office business - a thriving, expanding, or very profitable concern or volume of trade;
13. laugh all the way to the bank - exult in a financial gain from something that had either been derided or thought worthless
14. on a dime - In a very small space;
15. sell a bill of goods - to deceive, swindle, take unfair advantage of;
16. straw boss - a junior supervisor with some responsibility but little authority;
17. to be busted - to become bankrupt;
18. to bleed someone white - to extort money, take someone's last penny;
19. to corner the market - to buy all or most of a commodity or stock so that its price goes up;
20. to get off the dime - to take action, especially following a time of indecision or delay;
21. to take at face value - to accept for its outward appearance.

Idioms that originated from the American military sphere:

1. a basket case - a person or thing too impaired to function;
2. absent without leave - away without permission or explanation;
3. active duty - full-time service;

4. all present and accounted for - all members or items of a group are here or their whereabouts are known;
5. at close quarters - crowded, in a confined space;
6. earn one's stripes - gain a position through hard work and accumulated experience;
7. to bite the bullet - to behave bravely or stoically when facing pain or a difficult situation;
8. to bite the dust - to suffer defeat or death.

Idioms that originated from technology and transport sphere:

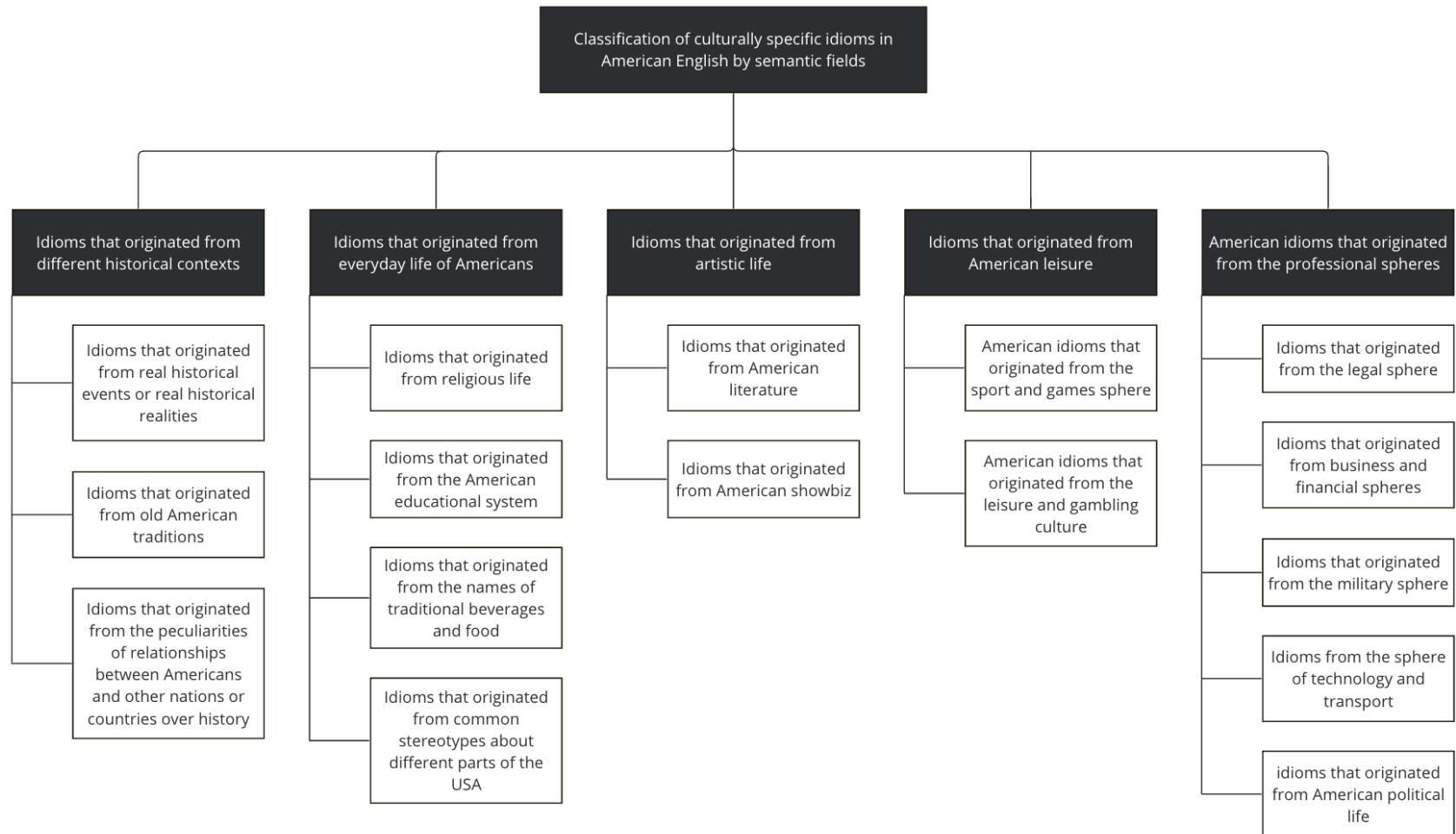
1. a backseat driver - a person who interferes in affairs without having knowledge;
2. all systems go - everything is ready for proceeding;
3. asleep at the switch - inattentive, not doing one's job;
4. Highway robbery - a risky job;
5. to get mileage out of - to make use of, obtain service from.

Idioms that originated from American political life:

1. a fat cat - a wealthy, influential person, esp. one who is a heavy contributor to a political party or campaign;
2. brain trust - a group of experts who serve as unofficial but vital advisers;
3. can't fight City Hall - to be unable to overcome bureaucratic rules;
4. conspiracy of silence - a tacit or explicit agreement to keep something secret;
5. credibility gap - distrust of a public statement or position;
6. glass ceiling - an unacknowledged discriminatory barrier to advancement, especially for women and minorities;
7. John Hancock - one's signature;
8. lame duck - an elected officeholder whose term of office has not yet expired but who has failed to be re-elected and therefore cannot garner much political support for initiatives

9. mend one's fences - improve poor relations; placate personal, political, or business contacts;
- 10.pocket veto - the implied veto of a bill by the President of the United States or by a state governor or other executive who simply holds the bill without signing it until the legislature has adjourned;
- 11.sound bite - short, striking, quotable statement well suited to a television news program;
- 12.sure as death and taxes - bound to occur, inevitable;
- 13.the buck stops here - I'll take full responsibility;
- 14.to hit the bricks - go out on strike.

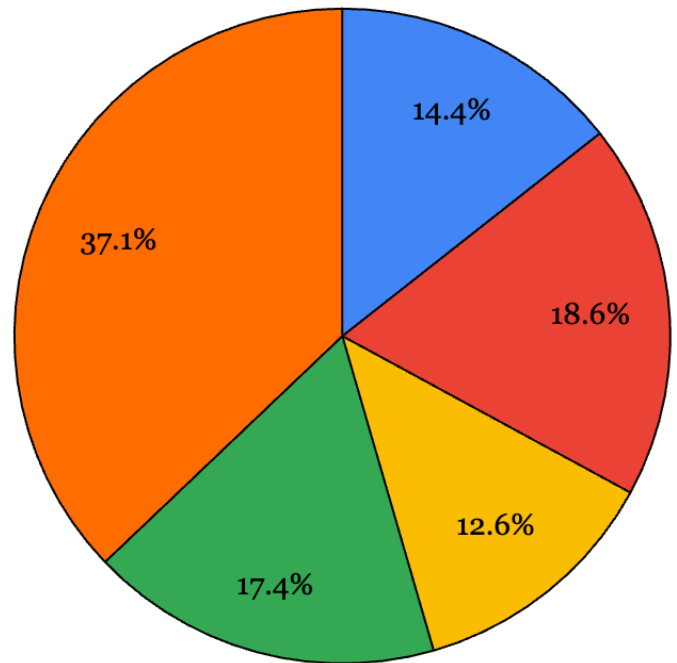
APPENDIX 2



APPENDIX 3

The percentage ratio of American culturally specific idioms

- Idioms that originated from different historical contexts
- Idioms that originated from everyday life of Americans
- Idioms that originated from artistic life
- Idioms that originated from American leisure
- American idioms that originated from the professional spheres



APPENDIX 4

Connotations of idioms that originated from historical context

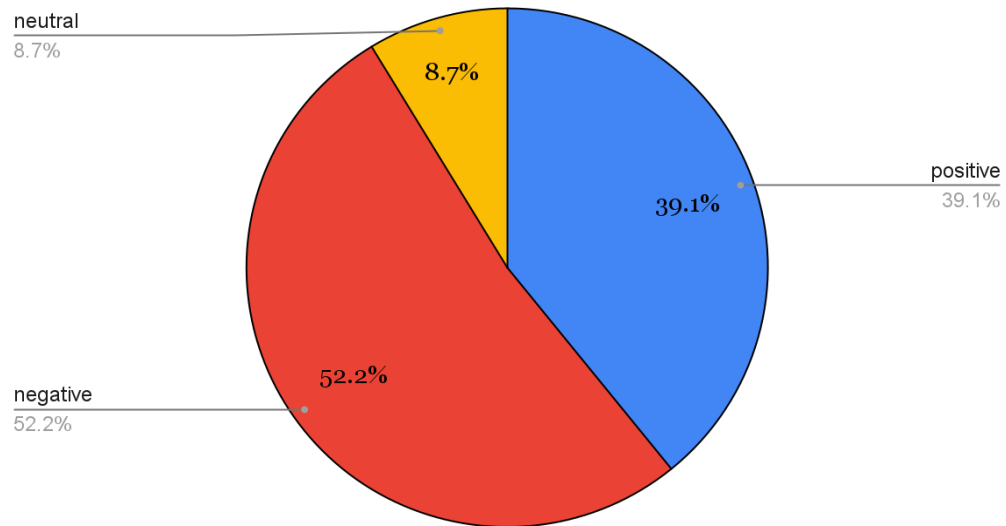


Chart 1. Connotations of idioms that originated from historical context.

Idioms that originated from everyday life of Americans

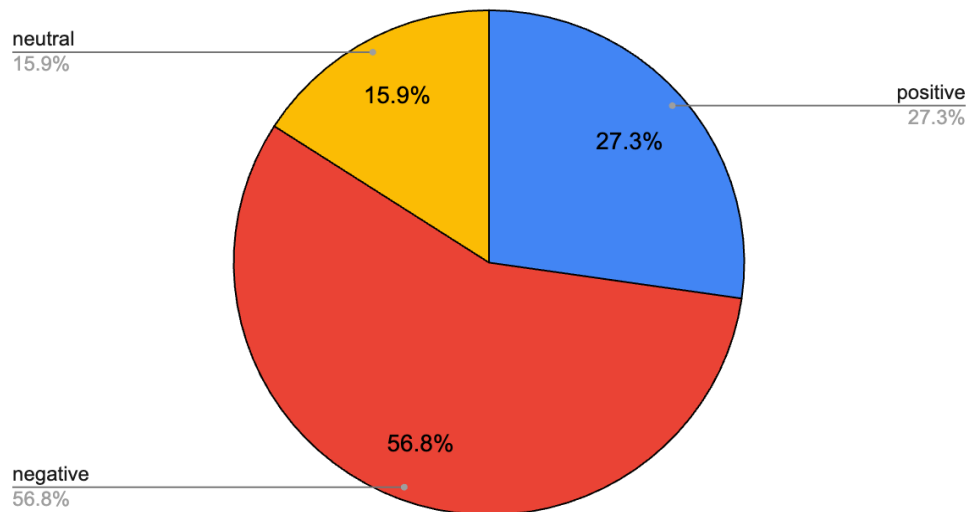


Chart 2. Connotations of idioms that originated from everyday life of Americans.

Idioms that originated from artistic life

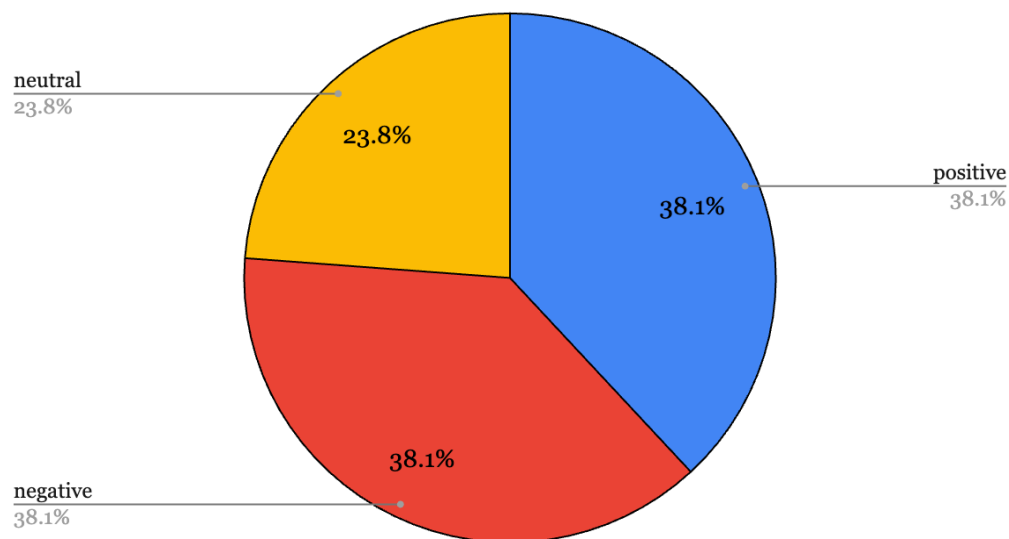


Chart 3. Connotations of idioms that originated from the artistic life of Americans.

Idioms that originated from American leisure

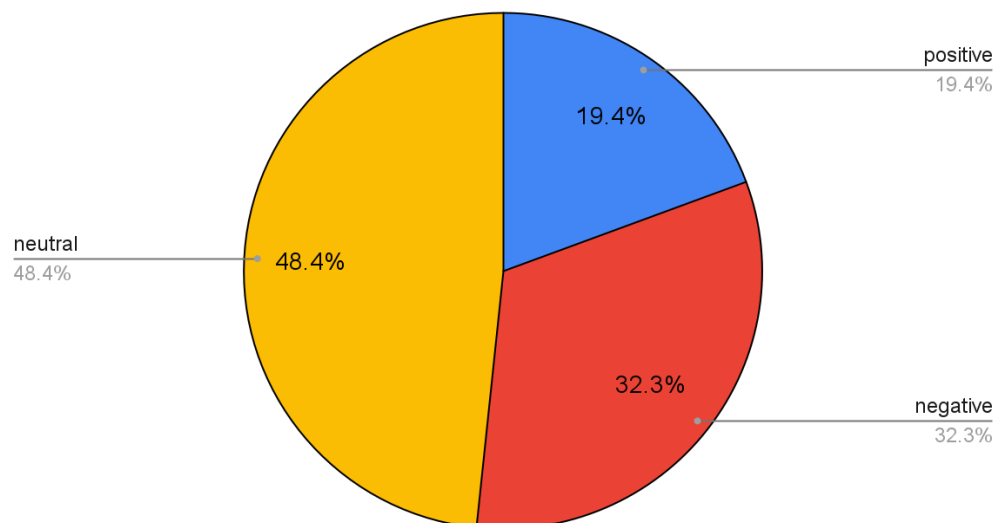


Chart 4. Connotations of idioms that originated from American leisure.

Idioms that originated from the American professional spheres

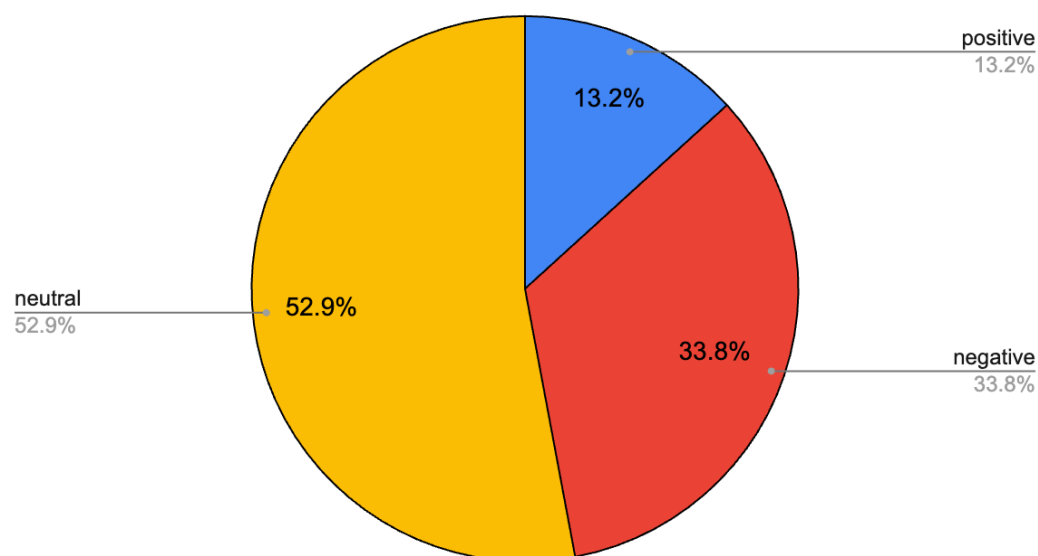


Chart 5. Connotations of idioms that originated from the American professional spheres.

APPENDIX 5

Division of idioms based on frequency of use

The amount of tokens in the COCA

Idioms that originated from historical contexts:

Highly frequent:

underground railroad	602.00
up the river	458.00

Rather frequent:

Indian summer	288.00
brownie points	159.00
hit pay dirt	150.00
double Dutch	130.00

Infrequent:

Luck of the Irish!	65.00
Mexican standoff	60.00
feather in one's cap	56.00
sell down the river	40.00
Indian giver	26.00
happy hunting ground	24.00
get off the plantation	19.00
Dutch treat	18.00
not for all the tea in China	17.00

a brass ring	15.00
To beat Dutch	15.00
Chinaman's chance	12.00
whistle Dixie	5.00
Indian file	4.00
all wool and a yard	1.00
bread-and-butter letter	1.00

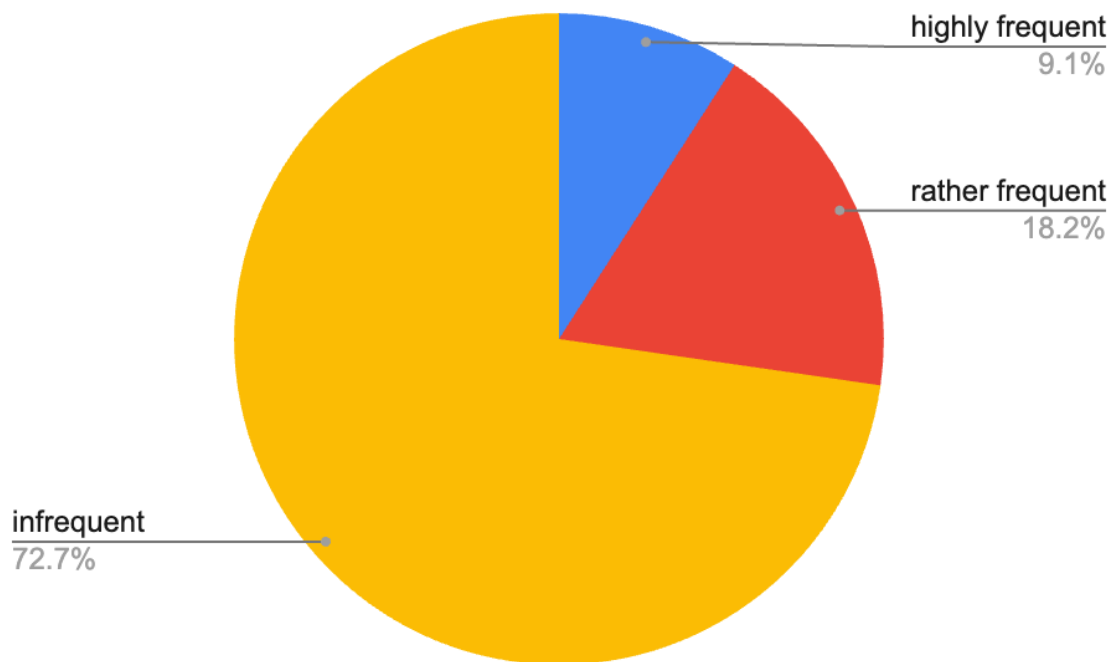


Chart 6. Frequency of idioms that originated from historical contexts.

Idioms that originated from everyday life of Americans:

Highly frequent:

act of God	460.00
Sun belt	447.00
Bible belt	356.00

hard hat	341.00
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Rather frequent:

hard liquor	253.00
snail mail	243.00
fine and dandy	239.00
garden variety	224.00
Sunday best	220.00
Southern belle	207.00
Southern hospitality	200.00
a company man	179.00
New York minute	149.00
la-la land	134.00
play hooky	133.00
horse trading	102.00
Southern charm	102.00
get out of Dodge	101.00

Infrequent:

publish or perish	78.00
come with the territory	75.00
cut the mustard	71.00
hem and haw	70.00

idiot box	63.00
a fat city	61.00
horse sense	57.00
one-horse town	57.00
cross my heart and hope	55.00
old college try	46.00
Philadelphia lawyer	32.00
Joe Six-pack	28.00
play in Peoria	26.00
Bronx cheer	22.00
hit the booze/sauce	20.00
to be from Missouri	17.00
crack a book	13.00
good-time Charlie	12.00
crash the gates	8.00
wait for the other shoe	7.00
hit the book	5.00
cow university	3.00
all talk and no cider	3.00
toss one's cookies	3.00
in a pig's eye	2.00
polish the apple	2.00

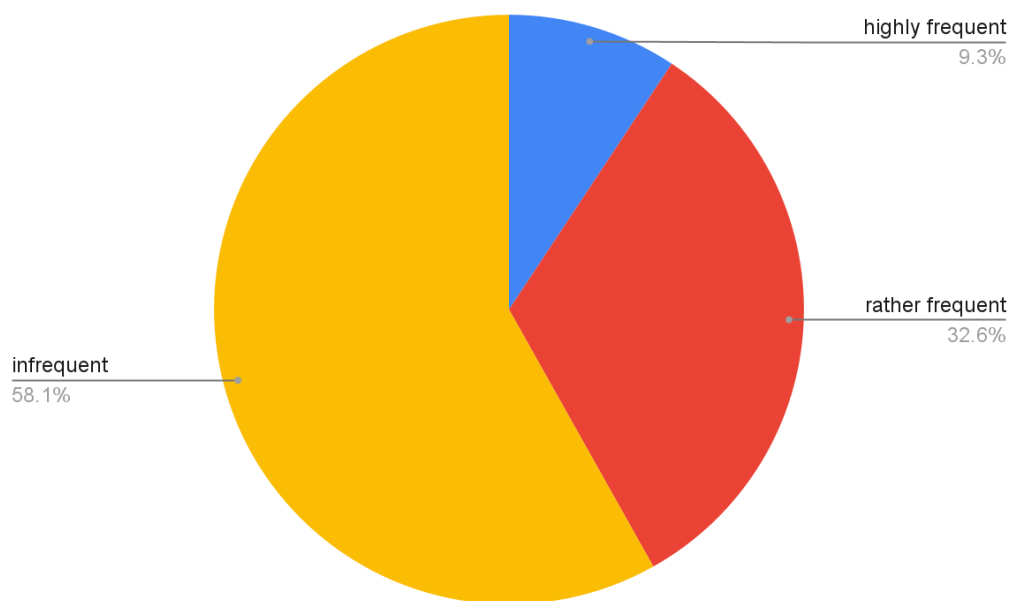


Chart 7. Frequency of idioms that originated from everyday life of Americans.

Idioms that originated from the artistic life of Americans:

Highly frequent:

conventional wisdom	3,084.00
Catch-22	785.00

Rather frequent:

real McCoy	134.00
double in brass	128.00
an ax to grind	124.00
three-ring circus	106.00
a dragon lady	104.00

Infrequent:

Walter Mitty	82.00
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dog-and-pony show	58.00
greatest thing since sliced bread	42.00
life of Riley	37.00
top banana	27.00
sure cure	24.00
a blessed event	17.00
shaggy-dog story	15.00
never give a sucker an even break	9.00
life is just a bowl of cherries	8.00
ships that pass in the night	6.00
another county heard from	5.00
as all getout	4.00
schoolgirl complexion	3.00

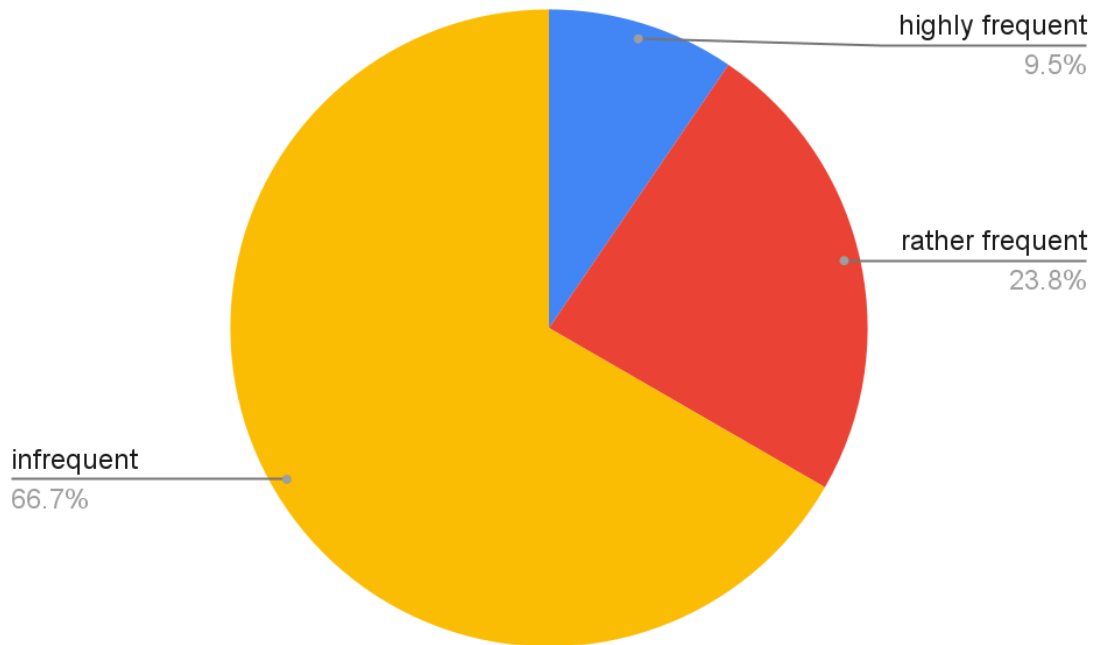


Chart 8. Frequency of idioms that originated from the artistic life of Americans.

Idioms that originated from American leisure:

Highly frequent:

be all in	3,520.00
after hours	1,341.00
across the board	366.00
only game in town	353.00
at the drop of a hat	349.00

Rather frequent:

ante up	266.00
jazz up	241.00
ace in the hole	235.00

play hardball	222.00
also-ran	217.00
ace it	160.00
the jig is up	155.00
even money	152.00
touch base with	150.00
it takes two to tango	106.00
great white hope	96.00

Infrequent:

behind the eight ball	84.00
a box score	38.00
body English	32.00
ace out	29.00
all over but the shouting	28.00
according to Hoyle	20.00
Monday-morning quarterback	15.00
the bigger they come, the harder they fall	11.00
daily dozen	8.00
in there pitching	8.00
hold all the aces	4.00

Bat one thousand	3.00
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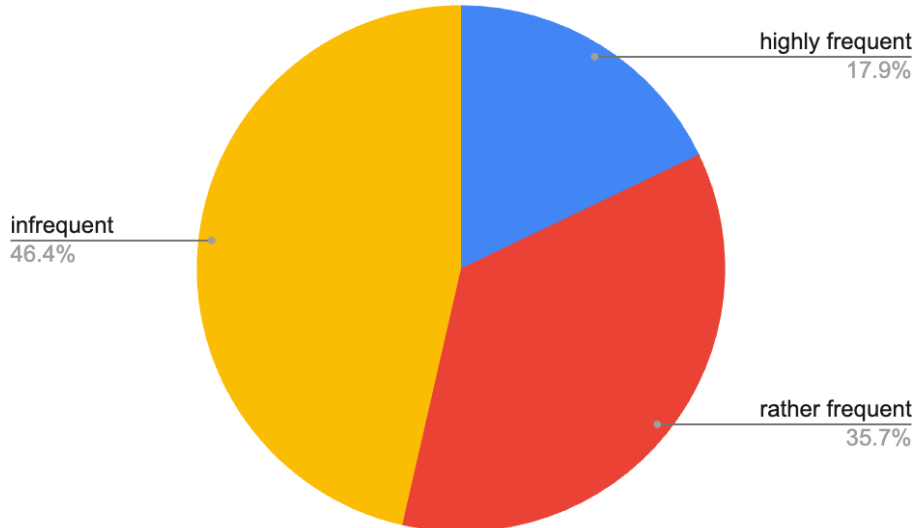


Chart 9. Frequency of idioms that originated from American leisure.

Idioms that originated from the professional spheres:

Highly frequent:

bottom line	16277
active duty	2210
free enterprise	1508
for two cents	1115
lame duck	879
sound bite	864
a fat cat	782
be busted	686
glass ceiling	659
cease and desist	468

on a dime	458
John Hancock	432
a basket case	414
brain trust	358
bite the bullet	330
take the Fifth	300

Rather frequent:

dime a dozen	295
take at face value	243
at close quarters	243
golden parachute	235
corner the market	209
confidence game/confidence trick/con game	190
kangaroo court	168
conspiracy of silence	167
dead to rights	141
the buck stops here	138
all systems go	119
Highway robbery	116
laugh all the way to the	105

bank	
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Infrequent:

credibility gap	93
asleep at the switch	90
get one's comeuppance	85
cutthroat competition	69
sell a bill of goods	68
bite the dust	63
hit the bricks	59
ambulance chaser	55
mend one's fences	52
can't fight City Hall	49
golden handcuffs	38
crime does not pay	37
earn one's stripes	36
absent without leave	35
pocket veto	32
dollars to doughnuts	31
all present and accounted for	28
a backseat driver	27
hang out one's shingle	26

straw boss	21
get off the dime	19
land-office business	16
sure as death and taxes	13
Golden handshake	12
bleed someone white	9
get mileage out of	7
cop a plead	3
drop dime	2

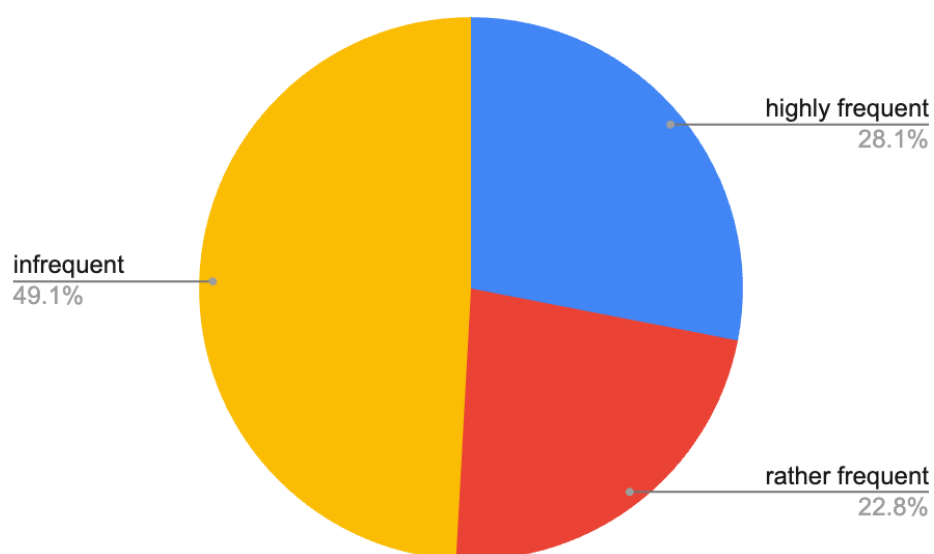


Chart 10. Frequency of idioms that originated from the professional spheres.

SUMMARY

Кваліфікаційна робота бакалавра присвячена аналізу культурно-специфічних ідіом в американському варіанті англійської мови. У цій роботі ми поставили собі за мету дослідити походження, особливості вживання та конотації цих ідіом за допомогою Корпусу сучасної американської англійської мови (COCA). Культурно-специфічні ідіоми - це ідіоми, що відображають культурну спадщину народу або нації, історичний контекст, в якому зародилися ці ідіоми, та соціальну динаміку певної спільноти. Часто ці ідіоми відображають культурні реалії, які зрозумілі лише носіям цієї культури.

У цій роботі ми дослідили походження, конотації та частоту вживання ідіом та їх значення в американському варіанті англійської мови. Для того, щоб це зробили ми запропонували власну систему класифікації культурно-специфічних ідіом на основі їх етимології, що найбільш підходить саме для американського варіанту англійської мови та нашого дослідження. Ця класифікація дала нам змогу відслідкувати закономірності в розвитку мови та ідіоматики та побачити, як різні фактори впливають на мову та її мовців.

Перший розділ містить огляд наукових публікацій, що присячені ідіомам та їх характеристикам, визначенню поняття ідіома, а також частоті вживання ідіом в англійській мови. Принагідно зазначимо, що в цій частині нашої роботи ми згадали фундаментальні роботи на тему ідіоматики та численних дослідників, що зробили величезний вклад в розвиток цієї частини лінгвістики. Особливу увагу було приділено культурно-специфічним ідіомам як частині ідіоматики, а також визначенню цього поняття. На сам кінець, ми згадали основні типи непрямої номінації, які були використані при утворенні ідіом.

У другому розділі бакалаврської роботи ми запропонували нашу класифікацію на основі етимології. Загалом ми отримали 5 груп(ідіоми, що походять з історичних реалій, повсякденного життя, мистецького життя, дозвілля та професійної сфери життя американців), які ми детально

проаналізували. Зокрема нам вдалося визначити конотативне значення ідіом кожної з груп та обчислити відсоток ідіом з позитивним, негативним та нейтральним конотативними значеннями. Також ми дослідили частоту використання ідіом кожної з груп за допомогою даних з Корпусу сучасної американської англійської мови (СОСА). Завдяки цьому нам вдалося визначити ідіоми, що мають високу, середню та низьку частоту вживання, а також знайти пояснення, чому деякі ідіоми використовуються все частіше, в той час як інші виходять з ужитку.

У роботі використано такі методи наукового дослідження, як: корпусний аналіз для вивчення частотності та вживання культурно-специфічних ідіом у Корпусі сучасної американської англійської мови (СОСА), порівняльний аналіз, контекстуальний аналіз, етимологічний аналіз, конотативний аналіз; описовий метод та метод статистичного аналізу, методи типологічного та лексикологічного аналізу, дедуктивний та індуктивний методи дослідження та узагальнення отриманих фактів і даних, метод суцільної вибірки (застосовано під час збору матеріалу дослідження).

Робота містить вступ, два розділи з висновками, загальні висновки, список літератури, ілюстративні матеріали, список онлайн джерел, додатки, анотацію.

Перспективу подальших наукових розвідок складає більш детальне вивчення Корпусу сучасної англійської мови (СОСА), оскільки він має великий потенціал, який ми використали лише частково. Зокрема можна дослідити контексти, в яких використовуються ідіоми. В додаткових дослідженнях можна також провести порівняльний аналіз ідіом різних варіантів англійської мови, виявити відмінності та спільні риси у їхньому вживанні.