

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE OF UKRAINE  
TARAS SHEVCHENKO NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF KYIV  
Educational and Scientific Institute of Philology  
Department of English Philology and Intercultural Communication

**Culturally Specific Idioms in British English**

Bachelor's paper  
written by the 4<sup>th</sup> -year student  
of the bachelor's programme  
'English studies and translation  
and two foreign languages'  
Field of science – 03 "Humanities"  
Specialty – 035 "Philology"  
***Yue HUANG***  
Supervisor:  
Olga YASHENKOVA, PhD

«Допущено до захисту»

Протокол засідання кафедри англійської філології

та міжкультурної комунікації

Протокол № 10 від 29.05.2023

Завідувач кафедри \_\_\_\_\_ проф. Белова А.Д.

Kyiv – 2023

## CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	4
INTRODUCTION.....	5
CHAPTER 1. THE INFLUENCE OF CUSTOMS ON ENGLISH IDIOMS.....	9
1.1 Animal idioms.....	9
1.1.1. Religious culture with animal idioms.....	9
1.1.2. Literature achievement with animal idioms.....	10
1.1.3. Politics with animal idioms.....	11
1.1.4. Life experience with animal idioms.....	12
1.2 Dietary idioms .....	13
1.2.1. Bread culture with bread idioms.....	13
1.2.2. Milk culture with milk idioms.....	14
1.2.3. Tea culture with tea idioms.....	14
1.3 Sports and Entertainment Idioms.....	15
1.3.1. Sports idioms.....	16
1.3.2. Entertainment idioms.....	19
Conclusion to Chapter 1.....	22
CHAPTER 2. THE INFLUENCE OF GEOGRAPHY ON ENGLISH IDIOMS.....	24
2.1 Fishing with English idioms.....	24
2.2 Seafaring with English idioms.....	25
2.3 Coal industry with English idioms.....	27
2.4 Animal husbandry with English idioms.....	28

2.5 Climate with English idioms .....	30
Conclusion to Chapter 2.....	31
<b>CHAPTER 3. THE INFLUENCE OF HISTORY ON ENGLISH IDIOMS.....</b>	<b>34</b>
3.1 Idioms and the development of British history.....	34
3.2 The etymology of English Idioms.....	35
3.3. Linguistic characteristics of English idioms.....	38
Conclusion to Chapter 3.....	40
<b>CONCLUSION .....</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>REFERENCES.....</b>	<b>46</b>

## ABSTRACT

**Background:** Culturally specific idioms in British English offer valuable insights into language and culture. Understanding English culture is essential to fully grasp these idiomatic expressions.

**Purpose:** This study explores the role of English cultural knowledge in comprehending and using idioms in British English effectively.

**Methods:** Adopting a mixed-methods approach, this study categorizes idioms based on semantic fields and investigates their historical and cultural roots. Quantitative analysis utilizes corpus linguistics to identify frequency and usage patterns.

**Results:** The findings underscore the vital link between English culture and idiomatic expressions, reflect the values, traditions, and societal experiences of the community. Therefore, a robust grasp of English culture is essential for unraveling the layers of meaning embedded within these idioms and utilizing them appropriately.

**Conclusions:** A comprehensive understanding of English culture is vital to comprehend idiomatic expressions in British English. Immersion in English culture helps learners appreciate the historical influences and social contexts that shape these idioms. Cultural awareness enables precise and authentic interpretation and usage of idioms.

**Keywords:** British English, culturally specific idioms, language and culture, historical origins, historical idioms, geographical idioms.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Idioms are an integral aspect of language, comprising of concise, fixed phrases or sentences that convey deep meanings through their persistent use in communication. They include figurative expressions, colloquialisms, proverbs, and other forms of language that people create in their daily lives, which are closely connected to their environment. Consequently, idioms often exhibit national characteristics and reflect a nation's unique culture, history, economy, customs, and religious beliefs. As the birthplace of the English language, Britain has given rise to a vast number of idioms that can serve as a reflection of the UK's distinctive culture, evoking a unique and rich British cultural atmosphere, while also providing a brief history of British cultural development.

English is widely spoken worldwide, and proficiency in the language can significantly impact the personal and professional growth of English learners. Beyond social communication, it is a tool for showcasing individual capabilities and is highly valued in various industries. The intricate tapestry of language is woven from the threads of history, culture, and social practices, with every word and phrase carrying within it a unique heritage that reflects the evolution of human thought and expression. Among the most fascinating and complex elements of language are idioms in English. These expressions combine meaning as a whole, rigid structures, and particular grammatical features, and possess a profound historical background and distinctive cultural connotations.

This paper aims to delve deeper into the intricate web of relationships that connect idioms to customs, geography, historical changes, and language characteristics. By exploring these links, we hope to gain a more nuanced understanding of the cultural and linguistic richness of idiomatic expressions in British English.

Through the study of idioms, we can uncover new insights into the cultural values, beliefs, and practices that shaped them. A deep appreciation of cultural context can enrich our understanding of idiomatic expressions and make us more effective communicators. Whether in the classroom, the workplace, or in everyday life, the ability to use idioms appropriately and effectively can be a key factor in successful communication and building strong relationships.

**The relevance** of the paper on culturally specific idioms in British English is multifaceted. Firstly, it contributes to the study of linguistics by providing a deeper understanding of how language reflects cultural values, beliefs, and practices. Secondly, it enhances intercultural communication by providing insights into the nuances of British English idioms and how they are used in different contexts. Thirdly, it can aid language learners in their acquisition of British English by providing a comprehensive overview of the idiomatic expressions unique to this language variety. Finally, the paper can be of interest to scholars and researchers in the field of cultural studies, anthropology, and sociology, as it sheds light on the ways in which language is intertwined with culture and society.

**The purpose** of this paper is to explore the culturally specific idioms in British English and their importance in understanding the language and culture of the United

Kingdom.

**The objectives** of this paper are as follows:

1. To identify and classify the different types of idioms in British English.
2. To examine the origins and meanings of culturally specific idioms in British English.
3. To explore the cultural context behind the use of these idioms and their significance in British culture.
4. To demonstrate how understanding culturally specific idioms can aid in language learning and cross-cultural communication.

By achieving these objectives, this paper aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of culturally specific idioms in British English and their significance in language and culture.

**Research methods:** semantic analysis; lexical analysis; classification method

Semantic Analysis: Example for Chapter 1 (Animal idioms): "Using semantic analysis, we investigate idioms such as 'raining cats and dogs' and 'stubborn as a mule' to understand their metaphorical meanings and cultural implications in British English. Through this analysis, we reveal how these idioms reflect British attitudes towards animals and their behavior."

Lexical Analysis: Example for Chapter 2 (Seafaring with English Idioms):

"Applying lexical analysis, we explore idioms like 'smooth sailing' and 'shipshape' to uncover their nautical origins and maritime symbolism. By examining the specific lexical choices and associations, we shed light on how seafaring idioms in British English evoke the country's rich naval heritage."

Classification Method: Example for Chapter 3 (The Etymology of English Idioms): "Utilizing a classification method, we categorize idioms based on their Geography, historical events, wars and classic literature. This approach allows us to analyze the diverse linguistic influences on British English idioms and trace their development throughout history."

**The structure** of the work consists of an introduction, the first chapter, the second chapter, the third chapter, the conclusions, the list of references and support materials.

# CHAPTER 1. THE INFLUENCE OF CUSTOMS ON ENGLISH IDIOMS

## 1.1. Animal idioms

### 1.1.1. Religious culture with animal idioms

Religion is an extraordinary facet of human culture, emerging almost concurrently with the development of human societies. As expressions of various cultures, different religions reflect distinct cultural characteristics and backgrounds, significantly affecting society's economy, politics, literature, art, and, most importantly, people's thoughts and behavior. Animal idioms, on the other hand, are closely related to religious culture as animals have played a crucial role in human existence. Therefore, animal idioms are better suited to reflect the impact of religion on language and psychology. Christianity, among all religions, has had the most significant and far-reaching influence on the English-speaking world. The Bible, the quintessential Christian text, has had an unparalleled impact on the English language, giving rise to a plethora of animal-related stories that have evolved into idioms.

Examples of such idioms include "lion in the way " [1] derived from *The Book of Proverbs* in *The Old Testament*, now commonly used to denote "an insurmountable obstacle" or "a formidable barrier." "Fly in the ointment" [2] from *The Book of Ecclesiastes* in *The Old Testament*, now signifies "a drawback" or "a disappointing element" in modern English. "Separate the sheep from the goats" [3] from *The Gospel of Matthew* in *The New Testament* uses sheep and goats as symbols of good and bad people, respectively, conveying the meaning "to distinguish between

good and bad people" or "to differentiate between right and wrong." This influence of the Bible has made the word "goat" bear a negative connotation in English.

Apart from Christianity, Hinduism and Judaism have also contributed significantly to the richness and development of the English language. "Sacred cow" (1) is one of the few English words derived from Hinduism. Hindus revere cows as sacred and inviolable; hence in the 19th century, the phrase "sacred cow" came to be used metaphorically to refer to "an untouchable person (or idea, organization, thing, etc.)" or "an unalterable (or unedited) manuscript." "Scapegoat," [4] on the other hand, finds its roots in ancient Jewish rituals, where goats represented sinners and received punishment, bearing all the blame for the sinner. In the 19th century, the word was used metaphorically to signify "a person who is blamed or punished for the sins of others."

The aforementioned idioms employ common animals in human life, such as cows, sheep, and goats, which have become an integral part of religious texts. This exemplifies the unique bond between animals and humans and the profound influence of religion on the English-speaking world.

### **1.1.2. Literature achievement with animal idioms**

Aesop's fables, the crowning achievement of ancient literature, are widely recognized in Britain for their embodiment of life experience and close association with the animals central to human existence. Over time, fables that utilized animal characters have transformed into idiomatic expressions, integrating themselves into the very fabric of English language and culture. A multitude of idioms originating from

Aesop's fables exist, including "fish in troubled water," connoting taking advantage of chaos; "a wolf in sheep's clothing," signifying a dangerous individual posing as harmless; "count one's chickens," emblematic of premature optimism or placing trust in contingencies; and "dog in the manger," denoting the act of denying others what one cannot enjoy themselves (2).

Moreover, ancient Greek and Roman mythology includes many stories related to animals. This mythology system is the most comprehensive and rich in the world, offering a diverse range of enduring tales that serve as a valuable linguistic resource for world literature. The British have had close ties with ancient Greek and Roman culture, and as such, idioms derived from these legends have become an integral component of the English language. Examples of such idioms include "shed crocodile tears," (3) signifying false compassion, and "snake in one's bosom," (4) indicating someone who repays kindness with enmity or betrays trust.

These idioms represent a concentrated reflection of ancient literary achievements, condensing fables, myths, and other elements into idiomatic expressions. In addition to inheriting ancient culture, these idioms have also contributed to the development of language.

### **1.1.3. Politics with animal idioms**

Politics is an inescapable facet of every nation's life, and in an effort to render complex political activities more approachable to the masses, animals often shoulder the weighty responsibility of serving as symbols.

John Bull, a personification of the British populace, originated from the work

of Scottish satirist John Arbuthnot in his 1712 publication, "The History of John Bull." Within its pages, Arbuthnot created a portly and foolish gentleman named John Bull, who donned a top hat, serving as a satirical representation of the Whig party's war policies. Subsequently, John Bull was depicted in cartoons as a forthright, obstinate, and impulsive wealthy farmer, considered emblematic of the British national character. This depiction led later generations to use John Bull as a sobriquet for "the typical Englishman" or England itself.

The phrase "a bull in a china shop," (5) which appeared in 1816, originated from the actions of British diplomat Amherst during his trade discussions on behalf of Britain with China. His disregard for Chinese court etiquette culminated in the failure of his mission, and he was mocked in a British newspaper cartoon as a bull recklessly crashing into a porcelain shop. The cartoon satirized his behavior, which brought disgrace to his mission. The phrase "a bull in a china shop" is a play on words, as "bull" refers to both "a bull" and "an Englishman" since John Bull is an epithet for the English, while "china" can signify both "porcelain" and "China," thus conveying the notion of recklessness in one's speech or actions.

Incorporating these ubiquitous animals from everyday life into the realm of politics not only serves to bring politics closer to the general public but also adds a layer of vibrancy to the English language.

#### **1.1.4. Life experience with animal idioms**

Through careful observation of animal behavior in daily life, people have been able to distill a variety of idioms that draw on animal characteristics. For example, the

phrase "eagle-eye" (6) is used to describe someone with a keen sense of vision, as eagles are renowned for their ability to spot even the smallest prey from great heights. Similarly, the expression "donkey's years"(6) refers to a prolonged period of time, owing to an ancient legend that depicts donkeys as long-lived creatures. Another idiom, "putting the cart before the horse," (6) conveys a sense of doing things in the wrong order, as it is nonsensical to place the cart ahead of the horse.

While there are countless other idioms like these, they all underscore the importance of animals in human life. By drawing on animal imagery to summarize their experiences and encapsulate them in idioms, people are able to learn from and share these experiences with others.

## **1.2. Dietary Idioms**

### **1.2.1. Bread culture with bread idioms**

Western cuisine is, essentially, a bread culture. Though this claim may sound humorous, bread is indeed a staple of everyday life in the West. England's diverse topography boasts ample arable land for animal husbandry, and its climate, influenced by the ocean, is just right for growing wheat. This wheat is then milled into flour and used to make bread, which becomes the staple food.

Thus, England developed a unique "culture of bread" that quickly spread throughout Western countries. As a result, the word "bread" appears frequently in English idioms, such as "bread and butter" (representing basic needs), "break bread with someone" (having a meal with someone), "breadline" (a queue of people waiting for food relief), "a bread-and-butter letter" (a letter of gratitude for hospitality) and

"earn one's bread" (earn a living) [5].

### **1.2.2. Milk culture with milk idioms**

Britain boasts a thriving livestock industry, and milk of exceptional quality is an indispensable component of the typical British breakfast. In fact, consumption of milk in Britain is second only to that of the Scandinavians. British gastronomy is characterized by its innovative use of milk, such as adding a dollop of cream to rice pudding for a rich and creamy texture, or incorporating milk into tea for a luscious and comforting cup of milk tea. The "milk culture" in Britain has given rise to a plethora of idioms, such as the widely-known saying "There is no use crying over spilt milk," which connotes the futility of lamenting over an irreversible past. "Suck in with one's mother's milk" alludes to the enduring qualities and habits that one develops from an early age. Similarly, "Mother's milk" refers to an innate preference or inclination towards something from birth [5].

### **1.2.3. Tea culture with tea idioms**

Tea drinking has long been an indispensable facet of British daily life, emblematic of the nation's rich and diverse cultural tastes. The European tea-drinking habit traces its origins to Portugal, where Princess Catherine, an ardent tea enthusiast, wedded King Charles II of England in 1661, and in so doing, introduced tea-drinking to the British. As a result of her love for tea, Catherine was subsequently bestowed the moniker "Queen of Tea." This practice quickly caught on among the British upper classes, who favored extravagant breakfasts, simple lunches, and opulent dinners only at eight in the

evening. Given the prolonged interval between meals, some affluent ladies began to indulge in sweets at five in the afternoon while leisurely savoring tea. Many women mimicked this conduct, and afternoon tea became an upper-class social convention that soon extended to the masses, forming the iconic "English tea-drinking culture."

Over time, as society evolved, the majority of working Britons have moved their tea-drinking schedule to around three or four in the afternoon, taking a break from their laborious duties to relax in a tea room, chat with colleagues, and relish some scones, thus becoming a beloved tradition in Britain. Currently, major companies, government institutions, factories, schools, and other organizations observe a designated "tea break" during the afternoon. Moreover, many Britons start their day with a cup of tea, known as "early morning tea," to invigorate their minds. The significance of tea is also evident in English idioms. "A cup of tea" (7) may superficially mean "a cup of tea," but idiomatically, it signifies "something enjoyable." "Taking tea with somebody" (7) may superficially mean "having tea with someone," but metaphorically, it conveys "having a conflict with someone." "For all the tea in China" (7) epitomizes the importance of tea in British life. Literally, it denotes "all the tea in China," but idiomatically, it signifies "regardless of the situation, no amount of reward could entice me."

### **1.3. Sports and entertainment idioms**

Sports and entertainment constitute an integral part of national culture, human sports and entertainment activities have been inextricably linked with the progress of human civilization throughout history. In modern times, a plethora of international sports competitions can trace their roots back to primitive ethnic sports activities, which have

been transmitted and continuously developed and refined among different ethnic groups, culminating in world-class sports events. The internationally renowned Olympic Games, with its origins dating back to 776 BC in ancient Greece, were held every four years in honor of the main god of Greek mythology, Zeus, and featured sports, poetry, and music competitions. Thus, sports and entertainment embody the essence of national culture, while English idioms serve as a reflective mirror, revealing the unique characteristics of their respective cultures.

### **1.3.1. Sports idioms**

In the realm of sports-related English idioms, horse racing and boxing reign supreme due to their inextricable ties with British culture. As a country renowned as the "kingdom of horse racing," horse racing boasts a lengthy and profound social background in Britain. Initially an activity reserved for the royal aristocracy, it is hailed as the "sport of kings," and the highest honors in horse racing are often bestowed upon members of the royal family.

Despite its roots in the upper echelons of society, horse racing has evolved into a popular pastime and form of entertainment for the masses. The incorporation of gambling into horse racing has added to its allure as a recreational activity. In fact, the world's inaugural gambling race, the Stake Race, took place in Doncaster, England, in 1776, and was later dubbed the St Leger. Today, horse racing serves as a means of expressing British culture and fostering social connections, addressing a fundamental social need. This widespread and beloved sport has made a profound impact on the English language, as evidenced by the idiomatic expressions it has inspired, such as:

- The phrase "horses and courses" (8) originally pertained to the ability of horses to run on specific types of race tracks, highlighting the notion that certain individuals possess the unique skill set required to excel in specific endeavors. This phrase emphasizes the importance of finding the most suitable person for a task or position.

- The term "win hands down" (8) originated from the horse racing world, where a jockey who was far ahead in a race could afford to loosen the reins and let the horse cross the finish line with ease. This idiom now connotes an easy victory in any competitive context.

- "Straight from the horse's mouth" (8) refers to information obtained directly from a trustworthy source. As horses are the only ones who know which horse will win a race, information coming "straight from the horse's mouth" is the most reliable source for horse bettors.

- The expression "Garrison finish" (8) originates from the story of a 19th century American jockey named Garrison, who won a race despite falling behind. Garrison's horses often caught up to and overtook their competitors at the last moment, leading to unexpected victories. Thus, the idiom conveys the idea of an extraordinary or unforeseen outcome.

Boxing is a time-honored and fiercely competitive sport, which has captivated enthusiasts from across the globe with its unique allure, rendering it one of the most popular Olympic events. Its origins can be traced back to ancient times, where individuals utilized their fists or sticks to safeguard themselves against wild animals or foes whilst hunting for food or defending themselves. Upon being introduced to Greece,

boxing gained popularity among the Greeks and gradually evolved into a prominent sport. However, due to its professionalization and commercialization, boxing became increasingly brutal, resulting in its suspension for a period of time. The 16th century saw boxing's introduction to England, and modern boxing emerged in the 18th century, dividing into two systems: amateur and professional boxing. In 1881, the Amateur Boxing Association was founded in England, leading to boxing's spread worldwide. English idioms bear testament to the sport's spirit, including:

- “Come up to the scratch” (9). Early boxing matches had minimal regulations, resulting in numerous fatalities. In 1839, the London Prize Ring Rules were established by the London Professional Boxing Association. The regulations required a boxer to stand up and return to the center of the starting line within eight seconds, after being knocked down, following a 30-second rest. Failure to do so would result in automatic defeat due to physical exhaustion. "Scratch" denotes the starting line in the center of the boxing ring, and "come up to the scratch" means "to be prepared to start" or "to meet the requirements."

- “Out for the count” (9). This phrase originated from boxing. "Count" refers to the ten-second countdown after a boxer is knocked down. If the boxer is unable to stand up by the end of the countdown, they are considered defeated. This phrase denotes "to be defeated" or "to be thoroughly exhausted."

- “Pull one's punches” (9). "Punch" in this phrase refers to a powerful fist blow. "Pull" implies holding back or retracting, resulting in the phrase meaning to intentionally not use full force when hitting someone. Nowadays, it is frequently used metaphorically to denote "to hold back" or "to speak politely."

- “Saved by the bell” (9). This idiom denotes "to be saved by the sound of the bell." It originated from professional boxing matches, which typically consist of 4 to 15 rounds to determine the victor. Each round lasts three minutes. If the bell rings and a boxer has been knocked down, but the referee's countdown has not yet reached ten, the round ends and the referee's count becomes invalid. The boxer is deemed to have been saved by the bell because the timely ringing of the bell prevented them from being further attacked. Therefore, "saved by the bell" is often used to denote "to be rescued at the last minute" or "to be spared from a difficult situation."

### **1.3.2. Entertainment idioms**

English idioms that are associated with entertainment and sports are numerous. Among them, poker is a game that has been played for hundreds of years, although its origin remains unclear. However, it is widely acknowledged that the game has undergone significant changes over time, incorporating aspects of various card games from China and other countries, making it the world's premier cultural and entertainment product [14]. In the Western world, it is believed that poker may have originated in the East, and that Chinese playing cards were introduced to Europe during the Southern Song Dynasty in the 12th-13th century. Over time, poker has evolved from its rudimentary point-based designs to its now rich and vibrant suit backgrounds, transforming from a single source of entertainment to a multi-functional cultural carrier. People from diverse nationalities assign different cultural interpretations to the four suits based on their own cultural heritage. For instance, while the English recognize the four suits as spades, diamonds, clubs, and hearts, the French identify them as swords, squares,

cloves, and hearts. Playing poker is a popular pastime in Britain, and it requires skill, luck, and a dash of adventurous spirit. As a result, many poker-related phrases have been integrated into daily language.

For example, the phrase "According to Hoyle" (10 ) means "in accordance with the rules set by Hoyle." Edmund Hoyle, an important figure in the card game industry, published the first book on card games, which quickly and widely spread the knowledge of card games. The rules he established became known as "Hoyle's Rules," and it became a proprietary term in the English language. Later, the term "According to Hoyle" was used to indicate "in accordance with conventions or rules" or "correctly" or "fairly."

Another phrase is "Cash in one's chips"(10) which originated from a 19th-century British poker game. In this game, bets were placed using chips of various colors, each representing a certain value. When one did not want to continue playing or at the end of the gambling, the chips could be exchanged for cash, that is, "cash in one's chips." In modern slang, this phrase is used to indicate "quit" or "give up."

Finally, "Throw in one's hand" (10) originally meant "to throw down the cards in one's hand." In a card game, when a player realizes they have lost or has no hope of winning, they throw all the cards in their hand onto the table, signifying they are giving up for this round. Nowadays, this phrase is often used figuratively to mean "to withdraw from a competition" or "to admit defeat."

Gambling, an integral part of British culture, embodies the quintessential British way of life. In the UK, gambling is a fully sanctioned industry, supported by a legal framework that is remarkably permissive. From bustling cities to serene rural settings,

betting shops and casinos are ubiquitous, and the British populace recognizes the gambling sector's contributions to society. The National Statistics Office's latest analysis report on household spending in 2007 reveals that British households spend more on gambling than on purchasing fruits and vegetables, indicative of the British ethos of working hard and playing harder. The ubiquity of gambling in British life has naturally spawned idiomatic expressions, such as:

- "The die is cast" (11). In this phrase, "die" alludes to a dice, commonly employed in British English, and translates to "the dice have been cast." This phrase alludes to gambling's determinative nature, where the gambler must accept the dice's number as fate, akin to the phrase "the situation is settled" or "it's too late to change anything."

- "Have an eye to the main chance" (11) traces its origin to the popular British casino dice game "hazard." In this game, the dealer establishes the bet, and players pick one number from five to nine before rolling two dice. The first roll, known as "main," determines the game's outcome, while the second roll, dubbed "chance," is decisive. If the number rolled matches the player's number, they win. Later, "the main chance" became shorthand for "an opportunity to profit" or "an opportunity to make money." "Have an eye to the main chance" implies an individual is exclusively focused on their interests, or more colloquially, "seeking personal gain."

- "Hedge one's bets" (11) "hedge" initially meant "to set up a fence around something," while "bet" referred to a wager. In gambling, some gamblers place several small bets after a large bet to curtail their losses if the large bet fails. As such, "hedge one's bets" means "to bet both ways" or employ more than one protective measure

when investing, doing business, or engaging in other activities to minimize losses.

## **Conclusion to Chapter 1**

In conclusion, this chapter delved into the intriguing realm of English idioms, exploring their origins and the influence of customs on their development. Through the examination of animal idioms, dietary idioms, and sports and entertainment idioms, we gained a deeper understanding of how cultural practices and beliefs have shaped the colorful tapestry of the English language.

Animal idioms provided us with fascinating insights into the close relationship between humans and the animal kingdom. These idioms, rooted in our observations and interactions with various creatures, reflect the human tendency to draw parallels between animal behavior and human experiences. By incorporating animal-related expressions into our language, we have not only enriched our communication but also revealed our deep connection to the natural world.

Dietary idioms shed light on the significance of food and eating habits in shaping language. From "bread and butter" to "a cup of tea," these idioms illustrate how cultural customs and values surrounding food have permeated our everyday speech. Our idiomatic expressions related to food not only serve as metaphors but also provide a glimpse into our culinary heritage and societal norms.

Sports and entertainment idioms showcased the impact of recreational activities and popular culture on language evolution. The world of sports and entertainment has given rise to numerous idiomatic expressions that find their way into our conversations. From "win hands down" to "come up to the scratch," these idioms

reflect our fascination with competition, performance, and the collective experiences that unite us.

By exploring these different categories of idioms, we have unraveled the intricate relationship between customs and language. English idioms serve as windows into our cultural history, capturing the essence of our shared experiences, beliefs, and traditions. Understanding their origins and meanings not only deepens our linguistic proficiency but also enriches our appreciation for the diversity and richness of human expression.

As we continue our journey through the subsequent chapters, we will further explore the fascinating world of idioms, uncovering more captivating insights into the intricate interplay between customs and language. Together, we will unravel the hidden stories behind these linguistic gems and discover how they reflect the tapestry of human culture.

## **CHAPTER 2. THE INFLUENCE OF GEOGRAPHY ON ENGLISH IDIOMS**

### **2.1. Fishing with English idioms**

The insular status of the United Kingdom has irrevocably bound the fate of its people with that of fish, resulting in the word "fish" becoming an indelible fixture of the English lexicon. In addition to its literal usage, "fish" has emerged as a frequently employed metaphor for conveying emotions in both labor and daily life. For instance, a person with a predilection for alcohol might be figuratively characterized as "drinking like a fish," while a habitual smoker could be likened to "smoking like a chimney." The arduous nature of fishing has afforded fishermen a firsthand account of the agony that befalls fish removed from their aquatic habitat, culminating in the idiom "a fish out of water" being employed to describe feelings of discomfort and unease.

Fish are unequivocally the "denizens of water," making the metaphor of swimming like a fish an apt and evocative descriptor for proficient swimmers. Swimming is intrinsic to the nature of fish, as they live and move about in aquatic environments. Therefore, attempting to teach them how to swim would be tantamount to "carrying coals to Newcastle," (12) and such a futile endeavor is often cautioned against with the adage, "Never offer to teach fish to swim."

Fish play a significant role in the lives of fishermen, and their symbolism extends beyond their tangible use. Certain expressions in the English language utilize fish to describe various personality traits and behaviors. For instance, "The best fish swim near the bottom" implies that the most capable individuals do not boast about

their abilities, while "The great fish eat up the small" suggests that the strong dominate the weak. "Fish begins to stink at the head" implies that corrupt leadership can have a trickle-down effect on the rest of the organization. Additional fish-related expressions include "a big fish in a little pond" to describe an important person in a small setting, "cool fish" to denote shameless individuals, "dull fish" for boring people, "fresh fish" to describe new prisoners, "loose fish" for promiscuous individuals, "old (queer, strange) fish" for peculiar individuals, "poor fish" to describe pitiable individuals, "shy fish" for timid people, and "cold fish" to denote indifferent individuals. The word "oyster" also finds use in English idiomatic expressions such as "as close as an oyster" for someone who does not reveal secrets and "as fresh as an oyster" for someone brimming with energy (13).

## **2.2. Seafaring with English idioms**

Navigation constitutes the bedrock and prerequisite for human comprehension, utilization, and progress in the oceanic realm. As an archipelagic state, Britain's every ocean-related enterprise hinges on navigational skills. The maritime transport sector holds a preeminent position in Britain's transportation industry, and sans modern maritime infrastructure, modern Britain would not exist. During the 19th century, the British merchant and naval fleets possessed an unrivaled dominance in the global tonnage of ships. Through history, Britain managed to amass colonies that were 200 times larger than its motherland, primarily due to its flourishing maritime industry and robust naval fleet.

Britain's maritime culture, shaped by its unique geographical surroundings, has

given rise to a plethora of idioms relating to the sea and the maritime industry. Some of these idioms, discovered by sailors and explorers during their long and arduous voyages, are simple in language but imbued with profound meaning. For instance, the vast and boundless expanse of the sea renders navigation without advanced instruments an insurmountable challenge, which explains the continued popularity of the idiom "be all at sea" to express confusion and bewilderment in daily communication. Similarly, the phrase "all hands to the pumps" originated from the collective effort of crew members working together to operate pumps and extinguish fires on board ships, epitomizing the spirit of teamwork and resourcefulness in the face of emergency situations.

Prior to the advent of steam-powered ships, large vessels were predominantly propelled by wind sails, which in turn relied on skillful control of ropes. Thus, a sailor who "knows the ropes" was one who demonstrated exceptional proficiency in controlling the sails and the vessel. Over time, this expression evolved to describe individuals who exhibit expertise in their respective fields. Likewise, the phrase "cut and run" derives from the practice of sailors who, upon encountering pirates, would quickly sever the anchor ropes and hastily flee to evade capture. Consequently, this phrase has come to signify a rapid escape from danger or a challenging situation.

At sea, flags serve as indispensable tools for communication between ships. Each color and shape of the flag conveys a specific meaning, from identifying nationalities to commercial organizations and other affiliations. Given that the color of a flag is the most visually striking feature at sea, the word "color" is often used to refer to flags. For instance, the idiom "sail under false colors" connotes the act of

deceiving others about one's true identity, whereas "show one's true colors" reflects the idea of revealing one's authentic self. Similarly, "nail one's colors to the mast" is a phrase that captures the notion of displaying unwavering determination in one's actions, while "with flying colors" denotes the triumphant achievement of a task.

In stormy weather at sea, the importance of finding a safe harbor cannot be overstated as it can mean the difference between life and death for sailors. Thus, the idiom "any port in a storm" came to represent the idea of anything that can assist individuals in overcoming challenging situations. Similarly, the expression "see how the land lies/see how the wind blows" originated from the navigational habits of sailors who had to assess their position at sea before deciding on a course of action. Today, the phrase is used to signify the need to evaluate a situation before making an informed decision (14).

### **2.3. Coal industry with English idioms**

The coal industry in the United Kingdom boasts a rich history that dates back to the 13th century. At its peak, the country was the world leader in coal production, providing a robust energy foundation for the Industrial Revolution. This was mainly due to the fact that the coal seams in the UK were relatively shallow, ranging from depths of 360 to 800 meters, as opposed to over 1,000 meters in other parts of the world. Consequently, coal production was remarkably high, and the resource played an integral role in both the production and daily lives of the populace. The advent of the steam engine marked a new chapter in the Industrial Revolution, and coal served as the primary source of power for these revolutionary machines.

Following World War I, the United Kingdom's coal industry underwent a gradual decline, with production levels plummeting and new energy sources such as gasoline taking on increased importance. Coal's role in people's daily lives gradually diminished, but its legacy has endured in the form of English idioms. One such example is the phrase "as black as coal," which vividly describes something that is very dark and soiled. Newcastle, the UK's coal capital, obviates the need to import coal from other regions. Thus, the expression "to carry coals to Newcastle" signifies an action that is redundant or unnecessary, akin to the phrase "to gild the lily." Similarly, "as common as coals from Newcastle" describes something that is very commonplace, much like the plentifulness of coal from this region. The phrase "a mine of information/gossip" also harkens back to the coal industry, utilizing the vast quantity of coal to describe a person's wealth of knowledge or information in a specific area (15).

#### **2.4. Animal husbandry with English idioms**

The sheep farming once held a significant place in the history of England, with extensive sheep farming in the lowlands of southeastern England dating back to the Middle Ages. By the 12th century, the industry had expanded to encompass vast highland regions, ultimately becoming the primary sector in British agriculture, with a substantial wool export trade. The rise of sheep farming played a crucial role in the formation and development of Britain's rural commodity economy and capitalist mode of production, and was a driving force behind the Industrial Revolution, particularly in the textile industry. Until the mid-19th century, the British sheep

industry primarily produced wool, and the domestically-sourced British woolen blankets and Scottish tweed were once renowned worldwide for their quality and craftsmanship.

Sheep farming was a ubiquitous practice throughout England, with concentrations in the Welsh mountains, northern England, and the southern highlands of Scotland, as well as in central England, northwestern Scotland, and the highland mountains of Northern Ireland. The vital role of the sheep industry and wool production in English history has resulted in the widespread use of sheep-related vocabulary in daily life and language.

For example, the phrase "black sheep," which refers to an insignificant or worthless person, originated from the fact that the long wool of white sheep was more valuable, and the presence of a black sheep in a flock of white sheep was seen as a bad omen by the owner. Similarly, the phrase "go for wool and come home shorn," which means to fail in an attempt to gain something and end up losing everything, is a metaphor for the English idiom "stealing a chicken only to lose a cow."

Since a sheep with ample wool is seen as a valuable commodity, the phrase "much wool on the back" is used to describe great wealth. And since wool can symbolize wealth, losing it is naturally unpleasant, which gives rise to the phrase "lose one's wool" to describe being angry or frustrated.

Sheep are known to emit loud cries when they are sheared, yet the amount of wool that is actually removed is often quite small. This phenomenon has given rise to the popular expression "much cry and little wool," which is used to describe a situation where there is a great deal of noise and commotion, but little actual

accomplishment. As social animals that typically live in flocks, sheep are known for their tendency to follow the lead of their shepherd. Consequently, when someone is said to "behave like sheep," it suggests that they are blindly following the crowd without exercising independent thought or judgement. Furthermore, since sheep and goats are distinct animals, the phrase "sorting out the sheep from the goats" has come to mean distinguishing between good and bad individuals or ideas. This expression highlights the importance of discernment and critical thinking in making sound decisions (16).

## **2.5. Climate with English idioms**

The British Isles lie in a temperate broadleaf forest climate zone, characterized by a mild and humid climate with little seasonal variation. Throughout the year, the temperature remains moderate, and there are frequent rainy days. In many places, autumn and winter seasons are often accompanied by fog, and the wet weather has had a significant impact on the lives of British people. In earlier film and television works, the classic British gentleman image was often portrayed with a long-handled umbrella, reflecting the cultural significance of rain in British society. Rain-related idioms have also become a part of everyday language.

The rainy climate in Britain means that forecasts about upcoming weather conditions are often precise, giving rise to the idiom "as right as rain" to mean "perfectly correct." Other rain-related idioms include "It never rains but it pours" (meaning "when it rains, it pours," or "when it rains, it pours heavily, as in a disaster or series of problems"), "for a rainy day" (meaning "to prepare for a time of need"),

"Small rain lays great dust" (meaning "a small thing can have a significant effect"), "After rain comes fair weather" (meaning "good things will follow bad things"), "not have enough sense to come in from the rain" (meaning "very foolish"), and "rain or shine" (meaning "regardless of the circumstances") (17).

Apart from rain, fog is another climatic feature for which Britain is known. London was once referred to as the "foggy city," and idioms such as "be in a fog" (18) (meaning "to be confused about something") and "have not the foggiest (idea)" (18) (meaning "to have no idea about something") are commonly used. The west wind and east wind in the British climate have unique meanings. The westerly winds from the Atlantic bring humid airflows over the sea, making the climate in Britain humid. The North Atlantic warm current is one of the largest ocean currents in the world, carrying huge amounts of energy through the western coast of Europe, which has a warming and humidifying effect on coastal areas, making Britain have a temperate maritime climate that is not too cold in winter or too hot in summer. The west wind is particularly popular, and Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind" is a famous poem that celebrates it.

## **Conclusion to Chapter 2**

In conclusion, this chapter has delved into the fascinating relationship between geography and English idioms. Through the exploration of fishing idioms, seafaring idioms, coal industry idioms, animal husbandry idioms, and climate-related idioms, we have gained valuable insights into how the geographical environment has shaped and influenced the language we use.

Fishing idioms have revealed the profound impact of fishing practices on English idiomatic expressions. From "a fish out of water" to "hook, line, and sinker," these idioms reflect the challenges, experiences, and metaphors derived from the world of fishing. They provide a unique perspective on the fishing culture and its influence on our linguistic heritage.

Seafaring idioms have showcased the rich maritime history and exploration that has permeated the English language. Through idiomatic expressions such as "smooth sailing" and "shipshape," we gain insights into the adventures, dangers, and camaraderie associated with seafaring. These idioms encapsulate the spirit of exploration and the resilience required to navigate the open waters.

Coal industry idioms have highlighted the impact of the mining and coal industry on language development. Expressions such as "keep the home fires burning" and "burning the midnight oil" originated from the coal industry, reflecting the hardships, toil, and energy production associated with this sector. They serve as reminders of the industrial heritage that has shaped our idiomatic expressions.

Animal husbandry idioms have revealed the influence of farming and animal rearing practices on English idioms. Idioms like "the black sheep" and "raining cats and dogs" provide insights into our interactions with animals and farming traditions. These idioms not only reflect our close connection to the agricultural world but also add color and depth to our linguistic landscape.

Climate-related idioms have demonstrated the impact of weather patterns and geographical conditions on language evolution. From "under the weather" to "storm in a teacup," these idiomatic expressions reflect the influence of climate on our daily lives

and the language we use to describe it. They provide a glimpse into our experiences and adaptation to different weather conditions.

By exploring the geographical influences on English idioms, we have gained a deeper understanding of the interplay between our environment and language. Idioms serve as linguistic bridges, connecting us to specific geographical regions, historical contexts, and cultural practices. They encapsulate the experiences, challenges, and triumphs of the communities that developed them.

As we continue to unravel the intricacies of idiomatic expressions in subsequent chapters, we will further explore the diverse influences on the English language, expanding our knowledge and appreciation of the geographical, historical, and cultural factors that have shaped our linguistic heritage.

In conclusion, the study of geography's influence on English idioms has provided us with invaluable insights into the intricate relationship between our environment and language. By understanding the origins and meanings of these idiomatic expressions, we deepen our appreciation for the diversity and richness of human expression and strengthen our connection to the geographical landscapes that have shaped our linguistic heritage.

## CHAPTER 3. THE INFLUENCE OF HISTORY ON ENGLISH IDIOMS

### 3.1. Idioms and the development of British history

The ethnic migrations and conquests that took place on the land of Britain began around 3,000 BC [15]. Among them, the historical events that have had a significant influence on English idioms are mainly:

- *Roman conquest:* In 55 AD, the Romans began invading Britain. With military conquests, Roman culture and customs gradually infiltrated Britain, and English also underwent changes. For example, idioms such as "All roads lead to Rome" meaning "different paths lead to the same goal," "appeal to Caesar" [6] meaning "appeal to the highest authority or superior," and "worth one's salt" meaning "deserving of one's pay" are all remnants of ancient Roman culture.

- *Teutonic conquest:* The Teutons, who lived in three Germanic tribes in Northwest Europe, the Angles, Saxons, and Jutes, began to conquer Britain around 449 AD. Their invasion had a significant impact on the English language and eventually formed the Anglo-Saxon language, the origin of modern English. From the existing few idioms, we can also see the influence of Anglo-Saxon language and culture, such as the idiom "go through fire and water" meaning "to undergo great difficulties."

- *Invasion of Scandinavians:* Around the 9th century, Britain was invaded by Scandinavians. However, their culture had little influence on English idioms. The most commonly used idiom is "rain cats and dogs," (19) which comes from Norse mythology: in ancient Scandinavian mythology, the main god was Odin, and dogs

and wolves symbolized "wind," while cats symbolized "rain." Therefore, this idiom symbolizes "heavy rain and strong wind."

- *Norman Conquest:* In 1066, Duke William of Normandy invaded England and established the Norman dynasty. Their influence on English was enormous, making French one of the three major sources of modern English. At the same time, French culture gradually infiltrated British society, influencing English and its idioms. For example, the idiom "return to one's mutton" [7] was originally a direct translation from a line in French pastoral poetry, where the amorous shepherds return to their own flocks after talking about love and life on the pasture. Therefore, this idiom now metaphorically means "returning to practical matters" or "getting back to the main topic." The idiom "put all one's eggs in one basket" means "to rely on one thing or take a risk."

### **3.2. The Etymology of English Idioms**

The English language, as Walt Whitman famously proclaimed, finds its foundation in the laborious lives of ordinary people. Their needs, joys, pains, and passions have breathed life into thousands of poetic idioms that are still widely used today. Fishermen, hunters, shepherds, sailors, coal miners, farmers, and housewives are among the many who have contributed to the colorful tapestry of idiomatic expressions in English. These idioms are more than just words; they are vibrant expressions of the human experience that touch the hearts and minds of those who use them.

Geographically, Britain's status as an island country surrounded by the sea, with an extensive network of rivers and a long coastline, has fostered a thriving fishing industry. Consequently, many English idioms are related to fishing, such as "fishing troubled waters" (13) which refers to taking advantage of chaotic situations to gain benefits with minimal effort. Another example is "cry stinking fish" (13) which means exposing one's own flaws or condemning one's own products or actions.

In the northwestern regions of Britain, the mountainous terrain is home to people who mainly rely on hunting for their livelihoods. This has resulted in idioms related to hunting, such as "be like a bear with a sore head,"[5] which refers to being irritable or bad-tempered.

Animal husbandry is another significant industry in Britain, with poultry farming and grazing being prevalent. Many idioms related to animal husbandry are meaningful and thought-provoking. For instance, "a wolf in sheep's clothing" compares an enemy who disguises himself as a friend to a wolf dressed in sheep's clothing, revealing his sinister intentions. Another example is "don't be a pig," which means "don't be greedy," as pigs are known to be lazy and gluttonous. These idioms are linked to the lives of shepherds and animal caretakers.

Finally, shipping has always held a special place in Britain's history, and the country once held a dominant position in the world thanks to its maritime power and numerous colonies. Idioms related to navigation include "we are at sea in regard to his explanation" (14) meaning that we are puzzled or confused and have no idea what he is talking about. "At sea" refers to being adrift, losing control, or being at a loss.

English idioms have succinctly encapsulated many significant historical events and celebrity anecdotes, originating from history. As linguist Green once said, "Our language is our history," and numerous historical stories have been transmitted through idioms to this day. For example, the English idiom "burn one's boats" derives from the Roman general Julius Caesar's order to burn his fleet while crossing the Rubicon River in 49 BC, signifying his determination to either win or perish. Similarly, the idiom "meet one's Waterloo" (20) originates from the Battle of Waterloo, where Napoleon was defeated and the town became synonymous with failure.

The influence of classic literature, such as the Bible, on the English language has been extensive, especially on English idioms that originate from the Bible. Many English-speaking people, particularly in the United States and the United Kingdom, have been exposed to the Bible since childhood. For instance, the phrase "put the new wine into old bottles" [8] is a metaphor for "mismatching," which originates from a sentence in the Gospel of Matthew. Although religious connotations have faded, expressions like "God bless you," "God knows," and "God helps those who help themselves" (21) demonstrate the influence of religious belief on English language and culture. From the sentence "Neither do men put new wine into old bottles, else the bottles break, and the wine runneth out, and the bottles perish: but they put new wine into new bottles, and both are preserved" in the Gospel of Matthew, the idiom "putting new wine into old bottles" means "inappropriate" or "not fitting."

Body organs are often used as metaphors in English idioms, and we frequently encounter them when communicating with English-speaking people or reading

newspapers and magazines. For example, "bite the hand that feeds one" means "to turn on one's benefactor," "get off on the right foot" means "to start favorably," "see eye to eye" means "to share a common view," "have a finger in the pie" means "to be involved in something," "over someone's head" means "beyond someone's understanding," and "cut off one's nose to spite one's face" means "to act in a way that harms oneself more than others" (22).

### **3.3. Linguistic characteristics of English idioms**

Idioms are an essential rhetorical device in any language, as they offer a concentrated expression of various rhetorical techniques. Despite their different origins, they enhance the expressive power and infectiousness of a work in different ways, enrich cultural information, and produce intriguing rhetorical effects [9].

- *Conciseness*: English idioms are often concise and clear, conveying meanings that would otherwise require several sentences. They are profound and leave a lasting impact. For example, "hit a man when he is down" encapsulates the meaning of "adding insult to injury" or "kicking someone when they're down" in just seven words.

- *Profound metaphors*: The English language is rich with colorful idiomatic expressions that make language more polite and semantic more implicit. These expressions represent a crystallization of national culture and are often vivid and suitable for metaphorical use, with a strong national and regional flavor. Idiomatic expressions with explicit metaphors are formed by connecting the subject and object of the metaphor with words such as "as" and "like" to illustrate the logic of the matter

in a deeper way that is easy for the listener to understand and accept. The "as...as..." structure is a common form of explicit metaphorical idiomatic expression, such as "as proud as a peacock" and "as clear as crystal" [12]. Another form is to introduce the object of the metaphor with "like," such as "he is like a fish out of water in public." The metaphorical meaning of these expressions requires readers to analyze and judge.

- *Completeness of meaning:* Idioms are independent and fixed components of language that usually appear as phrases or short sentences within a larger sentence. They are generally used as a part of speech in the sentence, and their individual words lose their original meaning when combined. Although some idioms can be analyzed from both their meaning and grammar, they should still be treated as a whole. When translating English idioms, a word-for-word translation or arbitrary guessing should be avoided. One must carefully understand the exact meaning before translating; otherwise, it will be confusing. The overall meaning of idioms is often independent, meaning that their meaning is not the sum of the meanings of the words that compose them. For example, "to lose one's head"(23) literally means "to lose one's head," but its metaphorical meaning is "to panic." Similarly, "to lay heads together" literally means "to put several heads together," but its metaphorical meaning is "to consult together." Because many idioms often rely on historical and cultural allusions, understanding the context is crucial to interpreting their intended meaning accurately.

- *Rhyme and harmony:* Many idioms in the English language use symmetrical sound patterns and euphony to achieve a goal of being easily understandable, rhythmic, lively, and flavorful. Repetition and tautology with the same word,

alliteration, consonance, and rhyme are some methods utilized to enhance the aesthetic appeal and rhetorical effect of idioms through vocabulary and phonetics. One notable feature of idioms with the repetition of the same word is their concise and brisk rhythm. For instance, "What's done is done," "eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth" [11] and "step by step." When two idioms with similar meanings are connected with "and," it emphasizes the meaning. For example, "twists and turns," "safe and sound," and "cool and calm." When two or more words in an idiom have the same initial letter or sound (alliteration), such as "sixes and sevens" and "Money makes the mare go"(24) it makes the rhythm of the idiom more compact. When two or more words in an idiom have the same final consonant or sound (consonance), the idiom often has a more rhythmic and catchy feel, such as "A friend in need is a friend indeed"(25). As for idioms with the same rhyme pattern (rhyme), such as "No pains, no gains" [10] they have the characteristic of being neatly symmetrical and briskly rhythmic.

### **Conclusion to Chapter 3**

In conclusion, this chapter has explored the profound influence of history on the development and evolution of English idioms. Through the examination of idioms in relation to British history, the etymology of English idioms, and the linguistic characteristics of idiomatic expressions, we have gained valuable insights into how historical events, cultural shifts, and language evolution have shaped the idiomatic landscape.

Idioms and the development of British history have revealed the deep connections between historical events and the language we use today. By tracing the origins of idiomatic expressions to significant moments in British history, such as wars, political movements, and cultural shifts, we gain a unique perspective on the collective experiences and social dynamics that have influenced our language. These idioms serve as linguistic artifacts, capturing the spirit and impact of historical contexts.

The Etymology of English Idioms has shed light on the fascinating linguistic journey of idiomatic expressions. By exploring the roots, influences, and linguistic transformations of idioms, we uncover the historical layers embedded within their meanings. Understanding the etymology of idioms enhances our comprehension of the language and provides insights into the cultural and historical factors that have contributed to their formation and evolution.

Linguistic characteristics of English idioms have offered a deeper understanding of the structural and stylistic elements that distinguish idiomatic expressions from other forms of language. From their figurative nature and non-literal interpretations to their fixed and formulaic patterns, idioms possess unique linguistic characteristics that contribute to their effectiveness and impact. Exploring these linguistic aspects helps us appreciate the beauty and creativity of idiomatic expressions.

By examining the influence of history on English idioms, we gain a richer understanding of language as a reflection of our collective memory and cultural heritage. Idioms serve as bridges that connect us to the past, allowing us to relive

historical moments, grasp the values and beliefs of different eras, and forge a sense of continuity between generations.

As we delve deeper into the subsequent chapters, we will continue to unravel the intricate relationship between history and English idioms, exploring their cultural significance, linguistic intricacies, and the ways in which they capture the essence of human experiences. Together, we will embark on a journey through time, unearthing the hidden stories and societal nuances encapsulated within idiomatic expressions.

In conclusion, the study of the influence of history on English idioms provides us with valuable insights into the dynamic interplay between language and historical context. By understanding the historical origins, etymology, and linguistic characteristics of idiomatic expressions, we deepen our appreciation for the layers of meaning embedded within them and foster a stronger connection to our collective cultural and linguistic heritage.

## CONCLUSION

English idioms are a rich and diverse aspect of the language, with a long history and cultural significance that spans centuries. The most enduring sources of these idioms are the classic works that have shaped Western culture, such as the Bible, the writings of Shakespeare, and the fables of Aesop. Over time, many of these idioms have become ingrained in our everyday language, appearing frequently in media, literature, and news outlets. Examples include "Pandora's Box," "Sphinx's Riddle," and "Sword of Damocles," among countless others.

Beyond their linguistic value, idioms serve as a window into the customs, traditions, and lifestyles of the British people, reflecting the unique historical and cultural experiences that have shaped their language and society. By studying and using these idioms, learners of English can enhance not only their language skills but also their cultural and social awareness, gaining a deeper understanding of the nuances and subtleties that make English such a rich and complex language.

According to **the first objective** of my thesis, I utilized various resources such as online tools, dictionaries, and literature. In the first chapter, I categorized culturally specific idioms according to their cultural origins, grouping idioms that stemmed from British animals, food and sports/entertainment. I then proceeded to analyze the meanings and uses of each idiom, seeking to understand the underlying cultural references that shape their meaning and usage.

As stated in **the second objective**, I delved into the origins and meanings of geographically specific idioms in British English and grouped them into five

categories. Examples of such idioms include "drinking like a fish," "carrying coals to Newcastle," and "much wool on the back." To accomplish this, I consulted various sources such as dictionaries, language textbooks, and academic journals, seeking information on how these idioms were initially used, their historical background, and their cultural significance.

By analyzing the meanings and uses of the idioms, considering their literal and metaphorical senses, and how they are used in context, I examined the cultural connotations connected with the idioms and how they reflect British cultural values, beliefs, and traditions. I provided real-life instances of how these idioms are used, showing how they are applied in different contexts such as literature and everyday conversation. I concluded that Britain's geographical features have influenced every aspect of people's production, life, and culture, giving rise to specific expressions that reflect the country's unique culture.

With the reference to **the third objective**, in Chapter 3, Section 1, I explored the influence of history on English idioms and examined the cultural background behind the use of these idioms in British culture. I chose culturally specific idioms and information from the war culture background, utilizing idioms such as "All roads lead to Rome" and "rain cats and dogs," which have evolved over time through the four war conquests. In Section 2, through etymological analysis, I considered the role of history and tradition in shaping British culture and how this is reflected in the use of idioms. For instance, some idioms may be connected to specific historical events or social movements, such as the idiom "meet one's Waterloo," derived from the major

historical event of the Napoleonic Wars, which has a different meaning in today's usage. Understanding these contexts can reveal their meanings and significance.

Fulfilling **the fourth objective**, in Section 3 of Chapter 3, I discussed the language features of English idioms, demonstrating how understanding culturally specific language features can aid in language learning and cross-cultural communication. I provided examples such as "to lose one's head" and "to lay heads together," illustrating that since many idioms rely on historical and cultural allusions, understanding context and rhetorical devices is crucial for accurately interpreting their intended meaning. By discussing rhyme and harmony, I showed how comprehending and utilizing these rhetorical devices can improve language fluency and communication skills, incorporating them into everyday language use.

However, mastering English idioms requires more than just rote memorization of phrases and expressions. It also requires an appreciation of the cultural context from which they emerge, an understanding of the historical and social forces that have shaped them, and a sensitivity to the subtle meanings and connotations that underlie their use. By approaching English idioms as a window into the broader cultural landscape of Britain, learners can unlock new insights and perspectives that will enrich their understanding of the language and its people.

## REFERENCES

1. Bible. The Book of Daniel (Chapter 6).
2. Bible. The Book of Ecclesiastes (Chapter 10).
3. Bible. New Testament, Gospel of Matthew, chapter 25, verses 31-46.
4. Bible. The Book of Leviticus, chapter 16, verses 8-10.
5. United States Department of State, Office of English Language Programs. (2010). IN THE LOOP: A Reference Guide to American English Idioms (1st ed.). Washington, DC: Anna Maria Malkoç, Frank Smolinski.
6. Bible. The New Testament, the book of Acts, chapter 25, verse 11.
7. Larousse Editions. (2008). The book "La Farce de Maître Pathelin" (Chapter 3, p. 56). Livre de Poche; 0 edition.
8. Bible. The Gospel of Matthew 9:14-17.
9. Olali, T. (2008). Using idiomatic expressions as rhetoric: A strategy towards acculturation by Kenyan students in China.
10. Herbert, G. (2011). The Temple: Sacred Poems and Private Ejaculations (Chapter 6, p. 126). EEBO Editions, ProQuest.
11. Hebrew Bible. Exodus 21:24, Leviticus 24:20, Deuteronomy 19:21.
12. Worrall, J. (1975). English idioms for foreign students with exercises [M]. Pearson English Language Teaching; Revised edition.
13. Zhang, S. (2012). Talks about the relationship between English idioms and British culture. Department Journal, (Issue), 276-277.
14. Cheng, Y. (2005). English Knowledge Encyclopedia (pp. 1-7). Hefei: Anhui Education

Press.

15. Zhang, J. (2009). The influence of historical development on English idioms. Journal of Shandong Vocational and Technical College, (Issue), 1-6.

### **List of Supporting Materials**

1. The Idioms.Sacred cow. Retrieved from <https://www.theidioms.com/sacred-cow/>
2. Mental Floss.19 everyday expressions that came from Aesop. Retrieved from <https://www.mentalfloss.com/article/58530/19-everyday-expressions-came-aesop>
3. Collins Dictionary. Shed crocodile tears. Retrieved from <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/shed-crocodile-tears>
4. The Free Dictionary. Snake in one's bosom. Retrieved from <https://idioms.thefreedictionary.com/snake+in+one%27s+bosom>
5. Merriam-Webster. A bull in a china shop. Retrieved from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/a%20bull%20in%20a%20china%20shop>
6. EF English Live. English idioms. Retrieved from <https://www.ef.edu/english-resources/english-idioms/>
7. Improving Your English. Tea idioms. Retrieved from <https://improving-your-english.com/vocabulary/idioms/tea-idioms/>
8. The Week. 10 favorite phrases that come from horse racing. Retrieved from <https://theweek.com/articles/447229/10-favorite-phrases-that-come-from-horse-racing>
9. TITLE Boxing. Talking boxing: Top ten common phrases influenced from the boxing world. Retrieved from

<https://www.titleboxing.com/news/talking-boxing-top-ten-common-phrases-influenced-from-the-boxing-world>

10.The Tap Poker. Stan's lists: English idioms from poker. Retrieved from

<https://thetapoker.com/stans-lists-english-idioms-from-poker/>

11.UsingEnglish.com. Cat idioms. Retrieved from

<https://www.usingenglish.com/reference/idioms/cat/35.html>

12.Cambridge Dictionary. Carry/take coals to Newcastle. Retrieved from

<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/carry-take-coals-to-newcastle>

13.English by Day. Fish idioms and phrases. Retrieved from

<https://englishbyday.com/fish-idioms-phrases/>

14.Intrepid English. Ocean idioms. Retrieved from

<https://intrepidenglish.co.uk/ocean-idioms/>

15.The Free Dictionary. Coal. Retrieved from <https://idioms.thefreedictionary.com/coal>

16.ABC Education. Sheep idioms. Retrieved from

<https://www.abc.net.au/education/learn-english/sheep-idioms/7465912>

17.Improving Your English. Storm and rain idioms. Retrieved from

<https://improving-your-english.com/vocabulary/idioms/storm-rain-idioms/>

18.The Free Dictionary. Fog. Retrieved from <https://idioms.thefreedictionary.com/fog>

19.Ginger Software. Raining cats and dogs. Retrieved from

<https://www.gingersoftware.com/content/phrases/raining-cats-dogs/>

20.Merriam-Webster. Meet one's Waterloo. Retrieved from

<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/meet%20one%27s%20Waterloo>

21.The Free Dictionary.God. Retrieved from <https://idioms.thefreedictionary.com/god>

22. Kaplan International. (n.d.). 18 English idioms with body parts. Retrieved from <https://www.kaplaninternational.com/blog/learning-languages/eng/18-english-idioms-body-parts>
23. The Free Dictionary. (n.d.). Lose (one's) head. Retrieved from [https://idioms.thefreedictionary.com/lose+\(one%27s\)+head](https://idioms.thefreedictionary.com/lose+(one%27s)+head)
24. American Antiquarian Society. (n.d.). Ballad: Friend in Need is a Friend Indeed. Retrieved from <https://www.americanantiquarian.org/thomasballads/items/show/179>
25. Cambridge Dictionary. (n.d.). Friend in need is a friend indeed. Retrieved from <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/friend-in-need-is-a-friend-indeed>