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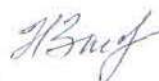
MASTER'S THESIS
on the topic of
Animal idioms in the English language

Thesis executor
235-om group

 10.06.24

Zhao Haiwei

Academic supervisor
assistant professor, candidate of philological sciences



N.M. Zalesova

The head of the master's degree program
professor, doctor of philological sciences

 10.06.24

T.Yu. Ma

Compliance check
the head of the department

 10.06.24

T.Yu. Ma

The reviewer
assistant professor, candidate of pedagogical sciences



L.P. Yatsevich

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The head of the department

Ma T.Yu. Ma

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Assignment

To the master's thesis of the student **Zhaohaiwei**

1. The topic of the thesis: **Animal idioms in the English language**

(Approved by the order from _____ № _____)

2. The date of the thesis final version submission: **10th June 2024**

3. The thesis baseline information: scientific works on idioms, linguistics, culture and their application in the English language _____

4. The contents of the thesis (the objectives necessary to achieve):

1) Idiomatic theories and their development through the time;

2) History of idioms, definitions of idioms, semantic and structural types of idioms, functions of idioms;

3) Representation of animal idioms in the English language and culture.

5. Appendix list (schemes, graphics, tables and other illustrative material): _

1 table, 1 diagram _____

6. Thesis advisors (by chapters): _____

7. The date of assignment issue: **the 1th of September 2023**

Academic supervisor: **N.M. Zalesova**, assistant professor, candidate of philological sciences, assistant professor

(last name, first name, patronymic name, post, advanced degree, academic title)

The assignment is subject to execution (date): **Zhaohaiwei** *Zhaohaiwei*
(student's signature)

ABSTRACT

The thesis is comprised of 60 pages, 1 table, 1 diagram, 52 references and includes introduction, chapter 1, chapter 2, and conclusion.

IDIOM, ANIMAL IDIOM, STRUCTURAL TYPES OF IDIOMS, SEMANTIC TYPES OF IDIOMS, LANGUAGE, CULTURE, CAT IDIOMS, BEAR IDIOMS, HORSE IDIOMS

The thesis deals with the animal idioms the way they are represented in the English language and culture.

The relevance of the work is proved by the fact that idioms are the basic concept of humanity: it is widely presented in the language units of the English language and culture. Their careful study helps to understand the mentality of the English-speaking people and find out more about their personality and their own specific perception of the world.

The objective of the thesis is to study animal idioms through the number of linguistics units and find out their peculiar use in the English language and culture.

The object of the study is animal idioms in the English language and culture.

The methods of the study are the following: continuous sampling method, quantitative estimation method, description method, context analysis method, comparative analysis method, interpretation method.

The thesis main results were presented at the scientific conference “The Day of Science-2024” (AmSU, Blagoveshchensk). There was published a scientific article: «Animal idioms as an imminent part of the language and culture».

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INTRODUCTION

The thesis deals with the animal idioms the way they are represented in the English language and culture.

Idioms are one of the most interesting parts of language and culture. They are like a window into the past and a reflection of our shared experiences. They have a long and colourful history, and they contain unique cultural connotations. They're like a mirror that reflects the unique culture of a nation. Idioms are a special form of language with their own characteristics.

Animal idioms are very common in daily lives, enriching oral communication in English and also forming a unique part of cross-cultural language: they have rich ethical and cultural meanings, reflect people's feelings, or explain complex phenomena with vivid and evocative animal images, and contain rich and unique cultural connotations.

For thousands of years, people have used animals as tools. People in different cultures have used different animals as their main helpers. Naturally, the more familiar people are with a particular animal, the more it appears in their everyday idioms.

The relevance of the work is proved by the fact that culture plays a significant role in determining which idioms are important or salient in a particular society. Animals are an indispensable part of people's daily lives, they are inseparable from people. Language, as a part of society and culture, is naturally not immune to influence, and animal idioms in English clearly highlight the characteristics of animals, concisely and profoundly and these characteristics are often used to describe the diverse life of people and their personality.

The object of the study is animal idioms in the English language and culture.

The subject of the study is animal idioms characteristics revealed in the English online dictionaries.

The objective of the thesis is to study animal idioms through the number

of linguistics units and find out their peculiar use in the English language and culture.

The objective is realized through a number of **aims**:

- 1) to study the history of idioms and their development through the time;
- 2) to explore different definitions of idioms, their semantic and structural types, as well as their functions;
- 3) to reveal the aspects of life that animal idioms describe;
- 4) to compare positive and negative situations animal idioms describe;
- 5) to study animal idioms representation through cat idioms, bear idioms and horse idioms.

The methods of the study are the following: continuous sampling method, quantitative estimation method, description method, context analysis method, comparative analysis method, interpretation method.

Theoretical background of the research is comprised of the works of such linguists as V. Kunin, M. G. Lebedko, N.D. Arutyunova, S. Anderson, B. Bruening, A.V. Baranov and others.

The material **of the study** is the following: 100 animal idioms taken from various English dictionaries and websites (Cambridge dictionary, Collins dictionary, Macmillan dictionary, Merriam-Webster dictionary, The Free dictionary, Idioms On Line) and 50 cat, bear and horse idioms taken from online dictionaries.

Academic novelty is that the idioms are studied from the point of their description of different aspects of the life to identify the role they play in the English language and culture. The distribution of idioms from the position of negative and positive connotations contributes to better understanding of English mentality, language and culture.

Theoretic significance of the work is that it contributes to the development of idiomatic theories in general, and animal idioms in particular. The study of animal idioms at the example of some animals allows to reveal the

special perception of animals by English-speaking community.

The practical value of the work is that the obtained research results make it possible to apply them in the process of teaching English, as well as during lectures and seminars on linguo-culturology and intercultural communication.

Approbation. The thesis main results were presented at the scientific conference “The Day of Science-2024” (AmSU, Blagoveshchensk). There was published a scientific article: «Animal idioms as an imminent part of the language and culture».

Provisions submitted to defence:

1) The type of idioms describing people or people’s behaviour are the most frequent ones. These animal idioms were made within the English language and culture to illustrate different characteristics of people and manners of behaviour.

2) There are other aspects of human life that animal idioms describe: life, weather, things, money, the philosophy of life. They summarize how people have lived, and reflect their experience over a long period of time.

3) Mostly, animal idioms are used negatively, they show different bad and dangerous situations that people can get into or condemn some negative characteristics and traits that some people have. There are not many animal idioms that have positive connotations.

4) Cats, horses and bears are some of the most frequent animals people live by. Therefore, they may be the most illustrative in terms of reflecting human’s life in the English language and culture through time.

1 IDIOMS AS A PART OF LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

1.1 History of idioms

Language, history and culture are like three peas in a pod. They're all connected and have a big impact on each other. Modern English is the result of lots of changes and evolution over time. As languages evolve, they take on the words and ideas from history and culture. These words and ideas become part of the language, and they help us understand the world around us.

Idioms are one of the most interesting parts of language and culture. They are like a window into the past and a reflection of our shared experiences. They have a long and colourful history, and they contain unique cultural connotations. They're like a mirror that reflects the unique culture of a nation. Idioms are a special form of language with their own characteristics.

Borrowings of English language during the 18th century. What is an idiom? How many different types of idioms there are in English? Where do they come from? Are people from different cultures and backgrounds able to understand idioms from only the context? This has shown to be a subject of debate. It may be best to start with the definition of an idiom. An idiom is a phrase whose meaning cannot be made understood literally, but refers instead to a figurative meaning that is known only through common use. Many linguists would say that idioms are figures of speech that deny the principle of compositionality. It might mean that idioms are words collocated together, which become fixed over time. These word expressions are first commonly used in groups, slowly changing the definitions of each of the constituents forming one word group that develops a specialized meaning, thus creating an idiom¹.

“Idiom” is not originally an English word – it is one of the many that have come into the language from Greek. “Idiom” means “one of a kind” and indicates that a phrase is being used with a special meaning that can be very different to the

¹ Archive for the ‘Idioms from the 21st Century’ Category URL: <https://www.idiomation.wordpress.com/category/idioms-from-the-21st-century>

literal meaning.

In making a study of any period from the point of view of linguistic change, it is necessary to examine many individual examples and thus to disentangle the more obvious threads of development. Before describing eighteenth-century idiomatic developments in detail, it may be observed that the vocabulary of that period is remarkable in having adopted a great number of new senses for words already existing, rather than having acquired completely new words. Some foreign borrowings occurred, such as *influenza*, originally an Italian word meaning any epidemic, and *palaver* from a Portuguese word used for talk with natives on the coast of Africa. Some formations were made from words already existing, such as *argufy*. A few special forms were adopted from proper names, e.g. *doily*, taken from the name of a great haberdasher, of the early 18th century, or from dialect – *codger*. A far greater number, however, were used with a different signification, generally more idiomatic and colloquial, and one perfectly familiar to speakers of the present day, although unknown to the earlier age. Such new senses are those given to *bore*, *fag*, *parade*, *tolerable*, *rigmarole*, *no chicken*, *all the rage* and *sweet on* words which were used during the 18th century in senses with which modern ears are thoroughly conversant, but which had previously borne a slightly different meaning.

Due to the previous impacts of French, Scandinavian and other languages on English language, lots of dialects in definite regions appeared and slang spread over population. All of this was the change that led to the wide use borrowed words. Inequality was on a high level, representatives of the poor and the rich used in their speech different slang and dialects².

Certain dialectal words appear in 18th century English, examples being *clunch*, used by members of the Burney family, and probably acquired at King's Lynn, Norfolk; *codger*, regarded as a dialectal version of *cadger*, and used by Richard Burney; and *jiim* (meaning "smart"). *Codger* is the only one of these which has some claim to existence in Standard English. There are many other

² Baranov A. N., *Idiomatics and idioms // Questions of linguistics*. No. 5. 1996. Pp. 52.

words adopted in the eighteenth century from slang, such as humbug and bamboozle, but these hardly rank as words borrowed from the speech of a lower social class, since slang is common to all classes, but it particularly prominent as a kind of alternative speech for those speakers of Standard English language who elect to use it. Moreover, these words are to be considered rather as modern slang than as modern Standard English.

Later on, in the late 19th century literate people were able to recognize idioms, which have become unfamiliar now. The reason why is very simple – generation changed, language underwent considerable changes.

Idioms referring to the period of time of 17th – 20th centuries.

As it has already been mentioned above, idioms can be considered as mirrors of the periods of time and event which took place in that time. Let me see a brief review of idioms reflecting events of the period of time from the 17th century till the 20th century. Let's review idioms of American English, basing on the data of American Studies Perspective which as an academic discipline numbers 60 years in the United States and about 50 years in Europe³.

Idioms reflecting events of the 17th century. A very important historic event is reflected in the idiom a witch-hunt, the idiomatic meaning of which is: "a search for, and persecution of, people whose views are regarded as evil: The McCarthy witch-hunt in the United States from 1950-54 sought out members of the Communist Party." ⁴ The prototype of the idiom refers to the organized hunts for witches. And though it took place both in America and in Britain the idiom originally appeared in the United States. Against the background of extreme stress (being a colony of England, the country was in a state of war with the French and their Indian allies and in 1690 northern frontiers of New England and New York were devastated by enemy attacks) there occurred an outbreak of witch-hunt that led to accusations in witchcraft. It was especially severe in Salem Village. In 1692

3 Baranov A. N., *Idiomatics and idioms // Questions of linguistics*. No. 5. 1996. Pp. 52. P. 54.

4 Kirkpatrick E.M., Schwarz C.M. *The Wordsworth Dictionary of Idioms*. Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions Ltd. 1995. P. 28.

nineteen people were hanged, another was pressed to death by heavy stones, and more than one hundred people were jailed. To explain this puzzling episode, the authors of the book *A People and A Nation* write, "to be understood it must be seen in its proper context –one of political and legal disorder, of Indian war, and of religious and economic change. It must have seemed to Puritan New Englanders as though their entire world was collapsing.

"By the skin of my teeth:" This incredibly common, yet bizarre, phrase obviously has no physiological origin, but most English-speaking peoples have access to its very first use. The Geneva Bible, first published in 1560, translated Job 19:20 as such, and the idiom's meaning was used in much the same as it is now. Subsequent English bibles related it as either something very similar or hewing closer to referencing gums rather than literally skinned teeth.

"Green-eyed monster:" Unsurprisingly, William Shakespeare coined a bounty of idioms and expressions still used by English speakers today. His tragic drama *Othello* first referenced a "green-eyed monster," alluding to the jealousy and betrayal at the narrative's center. But rather than the expected vision of toothy viridian terror most people conjure up, the Bard actually used a cat seemingly playing with its captured meal before consumption.

"Let the cat out of the bag:" The most reasonable of the two historical explanations for this phrase actually ties into another one involving mammals and bagging – "a pig in a poke." Dating back to around 1530, cats often served as sneaky substitutes for their porcine peers when shady businesspeople tricked their customers. Clever consumers who exposed their deception eventually spawned the familiar idiom, which retains a similar, albeit broader, meaning today.

Idioms referring to the 18th century. There are some idioms which reflect everyday life of people during the 18th century. It refers to the idiom have an axe to grind, the idiomatic meaning of which is "to have a personal, often selfish, reason for being involved in something: I have no axe to grind – just want to help you."⁵ The etymology of this idiom presents a great interest. It represents a story

⁵ Kirkpatrick E.M., Schwarz C.M. *The Wordsworth Dictionary of Idioms*. Hertfordshire: Wordsworth

as it is believed, told by Benjamin Franklin (1706-1790), American statesman, diplomat, author, scientist, and inventor, about a man who "had once asked him to demonstrate how his father's grindstone worked – and had then produced an axe which he wanted to sharpen."⁶

"Read the Riot Act: "While the idiom references "the riot act" in the abstract, such a legal proclamation did, in fact, exist. Under King George I, the real Riot Act was passed in 1714, enforced a year later and read out loud in order to quell gatherings of subjects the throne considered potentially threatening. Once concluded the "rioters" were given one hour to disperse before getting slapped with penal servitude and imprisonment sentences.

"Talking up a blue streak:" 18th Century America birthed this humorous little phrase used to describe incredibly quick speech patterns. Most etymologists and word geeks tend to think the "blue" refers to lightning tinged with the specific color. So the idiom's original metaphorical intent has stayed pretty much the exact same throughout the centuries.

Idioms referring to the 19th century. Most idioms describe the everyday life, they are connected with the tools. Fly off the handle idiomatically means "to lose one's tempo: He flew off the handle when he heard that the boys had raided his garden again." The metaphor is based on the possibility of an axehead to fly off the handle while one is using it. According to D. Boorstin, the idioms came into use in 1825. Tools and implements play an important role in the life of Americans, as in a life of any people. They are often used in idioms. The prototype of the idiom get the hang of (something) originally meant "to learn to use this or that tool." Idiomatic meaning is "to learn, or begin to understand, how to do (something): It may seem difficult at first, but you'll get the hang of it after a few weeks."⁷ A very important facet of life is disclosed in the idiom bark up the wrong tree, which presently means "to attempt to do the wrong thing or to do

Editions Ltd. 1995. P. P. 35.

⁶ Ibid. P. 43

⁷ Kirkpatrick E.M., Schwarz C.M. The Wordsworth Dictionary of Idioms. Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions Ltd. 1995. P. 31.

something in the wrong way or from the wrong direction: You're barking up the wrong tree if you think you will be able to influence the judge." The metaphor comes from racoon-hunting, where dogs were used to locate racoons up in trees. There are many idioms including elements denoting hunting in the common vocabulary stock, most of them were inherited by American English. It is noteworthy to underline that the idioms describes hunting a new animal, racoon, the habitat of which is the North America. D. Boorstin refers this idiom to 1833.

"Paint the town red:" Multiple theories exist regarding the history of the idiom that conjures up images of nocturnal bacchanalian fervor, with one in particular standing out. Around 1837, the infamous troublemaker Marquis de Waterford and his accomplices spent an evening vandalizing the English town Melton Mowbray. Some of the night's raucous festivities included literally painting various buildings – even a tollbooth – a lovely (and obvious) shade of red.

"Lowbrow," "Middlebrow" and "Highbrow:" Despite these idioms' vastly different meanings, all of them share the same pseudo-scientific roots. The once-accepted field of phrenology, which enjoyed popularity in the late 19th and early 20th Centuries, wrongly posited that the size of one's forehead indicated the size of one's brain. "Highbrow," of course, was thought to indicate the most intelligence, and 1875 marked its first appearance in English vernacular⁸.

"Selling like hotcakes:" Around 1839, this tasty term likened anything that sold out quickly to one of America's most popular foodstuffs. Hotcakes and pancakes have always enjoyed a beloved spot in the nation's culinary heart, and serve as some of the best metaphors for anything that flies off the shelves. They never blew up as one major "flash in the pan" fad, but rather endured as a classic, reliable comfort food.

Idioms referring to the 20th century. The period of Prohibition gave rise to several idioms pertaining to the organized crime. Many Americans first heard

⁸ Exploring English Idioms: Origins and Meanings Unveiled URL : <https://5minuteenglish.com/exploring-english-idioms-origins-and-meanings-unveiled/>

about this type of crime in the early 1920s when it was started by notorious Al Capone with bootlegging in Chicago. Later he came to control much of illegal activities: extortion, gambling, prostitution, narcotics, etc.⁹ The activity of gangsters is reflected in the idiom take (someone) for a ride, which had a variant take (someone) for a one-way ride, the etymological meaning was "to kill someone in a moving car", it was originally gangster's slang reflecting a common practice of exterminating a person without attracting attention. Metaphorical meaning is: "to trick, cheat or deceive (someone): He doesn't actually work for a charity at all, so the people who have sent him money have been taken for a ride."¹⁰ Three other idioms in the material under study also refer to the same period and all of them came from the gangster's slang. Thus, the idiom put (someone) on the spot means "to place (someone) in a dangerous, difficult or embarrassing position: The interviewer's questions really put the Prime Minister on the spot." Originally it meant "to decide to kill someone." Give (someone) the works metaphorically means "to give someone the full treatment: They've certainly given her the works at the hairdresser's – she's had her hair cut, tinted and permed." The prototype meant "to kill someone". Though the prototype of the idiom stool-pigeon meaning "a pigeon tied to a stool and used as a decoy" goes back to the 1830's, the spread and active use refers to the 1920's. Idiomatic meaning is "an informer or spy especially for the police: The police received information about the planned robbery from a stoolpigeon."

A later period can be seen in the idiom on the breadline meaning "with barely enough money to live on: The widow and her children were living on the breadline." The idiom reminds about The Great Depression (1929 - the late 1930's). But the worst period was between 1929 – 1933, when unemployment reached 13 million people in 1933 which comprised one fourth of the labor force. It is at that time that soup kitchens were opened by such organizations as Red

⁹ Lebedko M. American History Reflected in Idioms: American Studies Perspective. URL : <https://spintongues.vladivostok.com/idioms.htm>

¹⁰ Kirkpatrick E.M., Schwarz C.M. The Wordsworth Dictionary of Idioms. Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions Ltd. 1995. P. 28.

Cross and Salvation Army in the United States, the poorest people queued in breadlines. So, the prototype of the idiom meant literally "queues of destitute people waiting for free food from soup-kitchens, especially run by the government." "Screaming meemies:" At least two possible origins for this bizarre phrase exist, one as 1920s slang term for intoxication, the other an onomatopoeia describing German artillery shells used in World War I. With the latter, soldiers coming home with an unfortunate case of PTSD were often referred to as suffering the "screaming meemies." From there, the idiom eventually swelled to include anyone who felt afraid or traumatized by a scary situation.

"Back to square one:" Several different possible histories of this curious idiom exist, though only one from 1952 seems the most likely. Snakes and Ladders, known as Chutes and Ladders in the United States, may not have sent unlucky players straight to the first square. But this did not stop an Economic Journal article from wielding it as a metaphor for having to start over from the very beginning.

Idioms reflecting the way of life on the American frontier. So much has been written on the frontier that it is difficult to find any subject not covered in the literature. The role of the frontier is tremendous not only in the history but also in contemporary life of Americans. Thus, R.A. Billington sees the impact of frontier in some characteristics of the American people, "during three centuries of expansion their attitudes toward democracy and nationalism and individualism were altered, and they developed identifiable traits not shared in like degree by their European ancestors: wastefulness, inventiveness, mobility, and a dozen more." Other authors describe the image of the frontier. For example, L. Schlissel underscores how different the image of frontier may be, "it could mean deep forests or grasslands stretching for a thousand miles; it could mean red dirt flats or outcroppings of rock surging up against the sky."¹¹ The impact of the frontier can be seen in many spheres of American culture.

The idiom rope (someone) in reflects the experience of catching and

¹¹ History of idioms <https://learnlaughtspeak.com/why-idioms-are-used-the-origins-of-idioms>

collecting cattle with the help of lassoes by the frontiersmen in the West. That is the direct meaning and the idiomatic meaning is "to include (someone); to persuade (someone) to join in doing something: We roped him in to help."¹² The prototype of the idiom this neck of the woods originally denoted a remote community in the woods, later the idiomatic meaning "a particular place or part of the country" developed which can be seen from the example: What do you do in the evening in this neck of the woods? Though the frontier was different a lot is connected with a life in the woods that predetermined many typical American characteristics. Billington writes, "No matter how nationalistic the frontiersmen might be, they were backwoodsmen, living in comparable isolation from the main currents of life..."¹³ The life in the woods is also reflected in the idiom have a chip on one's shoulder, the etymological meaning of which was "a reference to a man who carries a piece of wood balanced on his shoulder in the hope that someone will give him an excuse for a fight by knocking it off". The idiomatic meaning is: "to have rather an aggressive manner, as if always expecting to be insulted, ill-treated etc: He is very difficult to deal with--he's always had a chip on his shoulder about the lack of education." The origin of the idiom run-of-the-mill has reference to the life in the woods too. It came to mean "not special or unusual" as can be seen from the example: The film on television last night was very run-of-the-mill. Originally it meant "ungraded sawn timber as produced by a sawmill." One more facet of frontier history, the gold rush of the 1850's and 1860's, can be found out in the idiom strike (it) lucky, the etymological meaning of which expressed anticipation of gold miners (forty-niners) to find gold or silver. Idiomatic meaning: "to have good luck in a particular matter: We certainly struck lucky in choosing that school"

In consideration of the above, it can be concluded that...language due to their ability to convey complex ideas in a concise and evocative manner. Whether

¹² Kirkpatrick E.M., Schwarz C.M. The Wordsworth Dictionary of Idioms. Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions Ltd. 1995. P. 31.

¹³ Lebedko M. American History Reflected in Idioms: American Studies Perspective URL: <https://spintongues.vladivostok.com/idioms.htm>

in written or spoken English, English idioms have become increasingly prevalent. This paper aims to assist readers in developing a deeper understanding of English idioms and in appreciating the nuances of foreign cultures by examining the sources and characteristics of English idioms, as well as the cultural differences reflected in English idioms.

A comparative analysis of the cultural context of idioms can assist language learners in comprehending the essence of idioms and the idioms themselves. A comparative study reveals that the diverse cultural meanings of animal idioms influence cross-cultural communication to a certain extent. Language is a means of communication. In the contemporary world, where the global village is gradually becoming a reality, various cultures are influencing, impacting, and intertwining with each other.

In consideration of the above, it can be concluded that the idioms are not only the essence of language but also the epitome of language and history. By learning the stories behind English idioms, the various cultural aspects of the historical development and social life of the British nation are displayed in a vivid manner.

1.2 Definitions of idioms

Idioms represent a significant component of the language vocabulary. They are fixed phrases or short sentences extracted from people's lives and often exhibit strong national cultural characteristics. An idiom is defined by the Cambridge Dictionary as a group of words with a meaning that differs from that of each constituent word when used together. This definition describes an idiom as a combination of words with a figurative meaning that arises from its common usage.¹⁴ This figurative meaning is distinct from the literal meaning of the individual words. There are thousands of idioms, and they occur frequently in all languages. There are estimated to be at least twenty-five thousand idiomatic expressions in the English language. Webster defines an idiom as "an expression in the usage of a language that is peculiar to itself either grammatically or in

¹⁴ Cambridge dictionary URL: <https://www.cambridge dictionary.com>

having a meaning that cannot be derived from the conjoined meanings of its elements." The definition from the website Dictionary: an expression whose meaning is not predictable from the usual meaning of its constituent elements or from the general grammatical rules of a language, and that is not a constituent of a larger expression of like characteristics. The definition from Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English: a group of words that has a special meaning that is different from the ordinary meaning of each separate word. The aforementioned definitions share a common trait: that the idiom is an unique expression that cannot be comprehended by its literal meaning. Furthermore, it can be said that, in order to understand the meaning of the idiom, it is not necessary to know the meanings of all the words that make up the phrase. Therefore, it can be concluded that mottoes, colloquialisms, sayings, proverbs, slang, jargon and allusions can all be considered idioms.

Idioms are a type of figurative language that employs vivid imagery, depth in language, and a more colorful and expressive style of communication. While the literal meaning of an idiom may suggest one thing, the actual meaning is often quite different.

An idiom is a phrase that may seem incomprehensible to someone unfamiliar with the language in which it is spoken. Idioms are also usually very difficult to translate, except in a very roundabout way. Idioms are extremely difficult to learn, and many language learners cite them as one of the most difficult parts of gaining a thorough understanding of the language and culture. Because idioms are used so frequently and extensively, several companies produce idiom dictionaries that list idioms and their proper usage for language learners.¹⁵

If someone were to look at the words of an idiom alone, they might have difficulty understanding the meaning of the phrase. For example, many English speakers say that someone "kicked the bucket" when they died. This particular use of language is not taken literally, but most English speakers understand it,

¹⁵ The Free Dictionary URL: <https://www.freedictionary.com>

along with thousands of other idioms. In other cases, an idiom may refer to a body of cultural knowledge, such as literature, which can be confusing to someone not steeped in that culture.

Popular sayings are often idioms, such as "let the cat out of the bag". In this sense, the cat is not literally let out of the bag, and the listener understands that the speaker is referring to revealing a secret. The user is often unaware of the roots of the idiom because it is so deeply embedded in the speaker's culture.

Many idioms are colourful and curious, and their origins are impossible to trace. William Shakespeare is thought to have added several hundred to the English language, but countless others are constantly added and dropped over time. These idioms colour a language, making it more lively and fun to use. They are also often an important part of a national culture, which can be very alienating to people who do not come from that culture.

An idiom is a commonly used expression or phrase that carries a figurative meaning separate from its literal interpretation. These phrases are unique to each language, carrying a cultural or traditional essence that often stems from historical events, customs, or shared experiences.¹⁶

They paint vivid pictures and add depth to language, making communication more colorful and expressive. While the words in an idiom may suggest one thing, the actual meaning is typically entirely different.

Idioms can be quite mysterious to non-native speakers or language learners because understanding them requires familiarity not just with the language but also with the culture and context in which that language is used. They are a linguistic garnish, adding flavor to our daily conversations and written expressions.

Some people also use the term "idiom" to refer to a type of language that is unique to a region or people. For example, someone might speak of "the American idiom", referring to the way in which American speakers use English. Although this form of English is not a completely separate dialect, it is radically

¹⁶ The Free Dictionary URL: <https://www.freedictionary.com>

different from British English and sounds and feels very different. This use of the word is a reference to its root, the Greek "idiousthai", "to make one's own".

From the definitions above, we can generally know that an idiom is an expression that needs to be learned as a whole and is difficult to understand by knowing the vocabulary and grammar literally. Through the definition of idiom, two features can be achieved: first, no matter how long or short an idiom is, it is a fixed group of words in terms of its structural feature. Secondly, in terms of the semantic feature, the meaning of an idiom cannot be inferred from the literal meaning of the vocabulary, which is called semantic unity.

1.3 Structural types of idioms

The introduction to The Oxford Dictionary of Contemporary English Idioms says: "Familiarity with a large number of idiomatic expressions, and the ability to use them appropriately in context, is a mark of fluency in English as well as in one's native language."¹⁷ The use of idioms is so common in English that it is difficult to speak or write without them. Learning idioms is therefore an essential part of learning vocabulary. English idioms are unique, fixed phrases and short sentences that have been refined through long-term social practice during the development of English and are the essence of the language.

Idioms are typically structured as fixed expressions, where the words cannot be altered or rearranged without changing the meaning of the idiom. They often consist of a combination of words that, when taken individually, would not convey the idiomatic meaning.

There are several common structures found in idioms, including:

Verb + Noun: Examples include "bite the bullet," meaning to face a difficult situation bravely, and "break the ice," meaning to initiate conversation or social interaction.

Adjective + Noun: Examples include "red herring," meaning a misleading or distracting piece of information, and "cold shoulder," meaning to ignore or reject

¹⁷ Idioms, collocations, and structure // Syntactic constraints on conventionalized expressions, London. 2019. P. 365.

someone.

Verb + Preposition: Examples include “look forward to,” meaning to anticipate something with excitement, and “run out of,” meaning to exhaust a supply of something.

Noun + of + Noun: Examples include “out of the blue,” meaning to occur unexpectedly, and “piece of cake,” meaning something that is easy to accomplish.

While idioms generally follow these structures, there are exceptions and variations. Some idioms are formed using similes, such as “like shooting fish in a barrel,” meaning something is very easy.

1.4 Semantic types of idioms

They are: pure idioms, binomial idioms, partial idioms, prepositional idioms, proverbs, euphemisms and clichés.¹⁸

Some idioms may fit into multiple different categories. For example, the idiom “a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush” is both a cliché and a proverb.

Idioms are figurative phrases whose meanings are not deducible from the phrase alone. They are expressions that we have developed in our language over time.

An idiom develops when its meaning no longer requires analysis by fluent language users: you instinctively understand it as a whole phrase because you are a competent member of a language community.

Having the idiom’s meaning passed down to you by other language users, having sufficient contextual and cultural knowledge to deduce the meaning yourself, or having sufficient historical knowledge to deduce the meaning yourself.

Idioms differ from other types of figurative language such as metaphors and similes because these other figurative forms involve comparative elements to help you to deconstruct the meaning even if you are not a native speaker of the language. Let's examine the classification of idiomatic functions:

¹⁸ The 7 Types of Idioms in the English Language URL : <https://symbolismandmetaphor.com/types-of-idiom/>

1) Pure Idioms

Pure idioms are idioms whose original meaning is lost to the extent that there is no possible way to analyze the phrase logically to come to an understanding of its meaning.

Unlike some of the other types of idioms listed below, these idioms tend not to have significant overlap with figures of speech like metaphors and similes, because there is no comparison or meaning that could possibly be derived from it.

Examples of pure idioms include:

It's raining cats and dogs (it is raining heavily – also see rain idioms).

A chip on my shoulder (to have a grievance about something).

Wrap my head around (to understand something).

Fit as a fiddle (to be healthy).

Make no bones about it (to be certain).

2) Binomial Idioms

Binomial idioms are idioms that involve two parts that work together or in contrast to construct an expression.

Examples of binomial idioms include:

black and white (there are clear differences).

night and day (there has been a distinct and remarkable change).

more or less (something is close enough to correct).

give or take (there is some room for error).

3) Partial Idioms

A partial idiom contains a literal part and a non-literal part. An example is “storm brewing in his eyes.” This idiom refers to a look of ferocity in someone’s face that can usually be identified in the intensity of their eyes.

There is a literal part in the idiom (we are referring to something in someone’s eyes). But, there is also a non-literal part (the storm). A language user would need to understand that by ‘storm’, the speaker means that the person’s eyes are intense and fierce.

Partial idioms are often also metaphors because the half of the idiom that is

literal part (the eyes) derive additional descriptive meaning via comparison to the non-literal part (the storm, in the above instance, implying the eyes are ‘fierce like a storm’).¹⁹

Examples of partial idioms are listed below with the literal element bolded:

Red hair

Eat humble

Change is as good as a holiday.

Turnover a new leaf

4) Prepositional Idioms

Prepositional idioms are idioms that contain prepositional verbs plus an adverb or a preposition to create non-literal meaning. These types of idioms need to be placed into a sentence and cannot be used in isolation (they are not ‘fixed collocational idioms’).

You may notice that prepositional idioms are barely recognizable as idioms because they are so commonplace in the English language. Nonetheless, their meanings aren’t derived from the sum of the words in the phrase, but rather through iterative exposure to the English language.

Thus, these sorts of phrases are often learned by rote by new English language learners in order to understand the language.

Examples of prepositional idioms include:

Put up with (tolerate something).

Go for (try something).

Look after (care for).

Get along (be amicable).

Look into (investigate).

5) Proverbs

Proverbs are idioms that provide universal truths or sage advice. They are often provided by wise people or contain morals that are passed on from

¹⁹ The 7 Types of Idioms in the English Language URL : <https://symbolismandmetaphor.com/types-of-idiom/>

generation to generation. Many of our proverbs come from old religious or philosophical texts.²⁰

Examples of proverbial idioms include:

A bad workman always blames his tools.

Actions speak louder than words.

An apple a day keeps the doctor away.

A rolling stone gathers no moss.

As you sow, so you shall reap.

Beggars can't be choosers.

5) Euphemisms

Euphemisms are expressions that are used to soften a message that might otherwise be too harsh, blunt or politically incorrect. We will use them when gently chastising someone, talking about something uncomfortable, or even talking about taboo topics such as sexuality.

Examples of euphemisms include:

Passed away (see also: death idioms).

Between jobs (unemployed).

Correctional facility (prison).

Big-boned (fat).

Powder my nose (use the toilet).

6) Clichés

A cliché is a term that has been so overused over time that it is considered intellectually lazy, not funny, unoriginal, or stereotyping when used.

They are often avoided by creative writers, novelists, and songwriters because they betray any sense of seriousness or skill.

Examples of clichés include:

Diamond in the rough.

Take a chill pill.

Don't judge a book by its cover.

²⁰ Ibid.

I'll give it my best shot.

In conclusion, there are probably many different ways of dividing idioms into different 'types'. This list above provides an introductory overview of some common types of idioms we might come across in the English language²¹.

Many of the idioms overlap and even spill over into other categories of idiom, such as metaphor and exaggeration. Because the language has developed over many millennia, it is a complex and changing thing. Definitions aren't set in stone, and it's difficult to and it's difficult to put language forms into distinct buckets.

Nevertheless, these categories can be very useful for writers, teachers and wordsmiths to think about how to use language to communicate effectively and create rich, unique and timeless stories.

1.5 The functions of idioms

Idioms are the essence of language. English idioms, with their rich cultural connotations, perform different roles or multi-functions.

Enhancing Language Expression

Idioms play a crucial role in enriching a language and making it more expressive. They add color and vibrancy to speech, enabling speakers to convey complex ideas or emotions using short, well-known phrases.²²

Additionally, idioms help to create a sense of belonging among native speakers by reflecting their shared cultural experiences and values.

Facilitating Cross-Cultural Communication

Understanding idioms can greatly improve cross-cultural communication. They provide insights into the beliefs, customs, and thought processes of a particular community. When non-native speakers learn idioms, they are better equipped to appreciate the nuances of conversations in that language, enabling smoother and more effective communication.

²¹ The 7 Types of Idioms in the English Language URL: <https://symbolismandmetaphor.com/types-of-idiom/>

²² Beisenova D.T., Kudritskaya M.I. Role and function of idioms // Pedagogical science and practice. 2020. №2 (28). URL: <https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/role-and-function-of-idioms>

Promoting Creativity and Language Development

Idioms also foster creativity and language development. Both children and adults who are exposed to new idioms and learn to use them correctly can expand their vocabulary and enhance their verbal skills.

Furthermore, idioms can serve as a creative writing tool, allowing authors to make their work more engaging and relatable for their readers.

How do idioms get their meanings? Idioms get their meanings through historical, cultural, and linguistic factors. Many idioms have roots in cultural practices, stories, or historical events. Over time, these phrases become figurative expressions that bear a meaning separate from their literal interpretation.

One way idioms acquire meaning is through the influence of mythology or religious beliefs. For example, the idiom “Achilles’ heel” originates from ancient Greek mythology, wherein Achilles, a seemingly invincible warrior, has only one weak point – his heel. This idiom now refers to a person’s vulnerable spot or weakness.²³

Another factor in idiom development is the use of metaphors. Many idioms are metaphoric expressions that draw comparisons between seemingly unrelated things. For instance, the idiom “walking on eggshells” refers to the feeling of extreme caution and delicacy, as if one were literally stepping on fragile eggshells.

Language evolution also plays a role in shaping idioms. Some idioms may have begun as literal expressions that gradually took on a figurative meaning over time. As language evolves and words change, idioms can become nonsensical or obscure in their current form. After years of change, the formation of the unique rules of use, according to the function, can be divided into the following aspects:

1) Humor and Tone

Idioms play a vital role in creating humor and setting the tone of language.

²³ Beisenova D.T., Kudritskaya M.I. Role and function of idioms // Pedagogical science and practice. 2020. №2 (28). URL: <https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/role-and-function-of-idioms>

They often contain amusing or vivid imagery, which can bring a lighthearted feel to a conversation.

For example, when someone is described as having “a bun in the oven,” it can soften the impact of announcing a pregnancy. Additionally, idioms can convey sarcasm, irony, or other nuanced emotions that may not be effectively expressed through literal language alone.²⁴

2) Metaphor and Symbolism

Idioms also function as a means of conveying metaphor and symbolism in language. By using familiar phrases with deeper meanings, idioms allow for more expressive and creative communication.

For example, saying someone has “a green thumb” to represent their gardening skills uses metaphor to communicate the concept effectively.

3) Enhancing Expressiveness and Color

Idioms add a unique expressiveness and color to language. By packing complex meanings into a few words, they allow speakers to convey ideas or emotions in a more vivid and impactful way than literal language. For instance, saying someone “has cold feet” is a more colorful and succinct way of saying they are nervous about proceeding with an action.

This quality makes idioms a favorite tool in storytelling, casual conversations, and even in more formal contexts where a touch of creativity is desired.

4) Cultural Identity and Continuity

Idioms often have deep roots in a culture’s history, traditions, and shared experiences. When people use idioms that are specific to their culture or region, they express a sense of identity and belonging. Furthermore, the use of idioms helps to preserve cultural heritage, as many idioms have stories or historical events associated with them.

For example, the English idiom “barking up the wrong tree” harkens back

²⁴Podoliuc T. The functions of idioms in a sentence URL: https://ibn.idsi.md/sites/default/files/imag_file/90-97_11.pdf

to hunting dogs barking at the base of the wrong tree after the prey has moved.

5) Social Bonding and In-group Communication

Idioms can serve as a social bonding tool. Since they are often specific to certain regions, cultures, or social groups, understanding and using idioms can signal membership in a particular group. They are a form of in-group communication that can strengthen social bonds and create a sense of camaraderie.

For example, professional communities often have idioms that are specific to their line of work, contributing to a shared professional identity.²⁵

6) Efficiency in Communication

Idioms can make communication more efficient. They allow complex ideas to be expressed concisely, which can make speech and writing more fluent and less cumbersome.

In conclusion, through the above introduction we can easily find the following: the use of animal images in idioms makes the language simple and vivid, witty and humorous, profound and easy to understand. Due to regional culture and ethnic history, Chinese and English idioms have both similarities and peculiarities. Many idioms have different vocabulary but express the same meaning. In addition, the number of idioms is huge, which requires learners to accumulate and study them in order to achieve the purpose of flexible use. Secondly, idioms are also a kind of commonly used expressions or phrases that have a metaphorical meaning different from the literal interpretation. These expressions are unique to each language and carry the essence of culture or tradition, which must be gradually learned and applied in our lives.

²⁵Podoliuc T. The functions of idioms in a sentence URL: https://ibn.idsi.md/sites/default/files/imag_file/90-97_11.pdf

2 ANIMAL IDIOMS IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

2.1 Animal idioms

Animal idioms are very common in daily lives, enriching oral communication in English and also forming a unique part of cross-cultural language: they have rich ethical and cultural meanings, reflect people's feelings, or explain complex phenomena with vivid and evocative animal images, and contain rich and unique cultural connotations.

For thousands of years, people have used animals as tools. People in different cultures have used different animals as their main helpers. Naturally, the more familiar people are with a particular animal, the more it appears in their everyday idioms.

Animals are an indispensable part of people's daily lives, whether cows and horses in the countryside or pets in the city, they are inseparable from people. Language, as a part of society and culture, is naturally not immune to influence, and animal idioms in English clearly highlight the characteristics of animals, concisely and profoundly.

For example: 1. The dog is a faithful friend of mankind. There is an old Chinese proverb: A son never thinks his mother is ugly, and a dog never shuns its owner's house, however shabby it may be. In the English idiom there is this phrase: A son never thinks his mother is ugly and a dog never shuns its owner's house however shabby it is, they mean the same thing. In the West, dogs are seen as friends and emotional support, so there is that: Love me, love my dog (love the house and its crow);²⁶

The above study makes it clear that the use of animal images in idioms makes the language simple, vivid, witty, humorous, profound and easy to understand. Chinese and English idioms have commonalities as well as their own characteristics because of regional culture, ethnicity and history. Many idioms have different vocabularies but convey the same meaning. Furthermore, the

²⁶ <https://www.theidioms.com/animal/>

number of idioms is vast, so learners must constantly accumulate and research them to achieve the goal of flexible use.

An animal idiom is a fixed phrase or sentence that describes an animal's habitual behaviour, shape, sound, image, or characteristics.

English animal idioms are a unique and valuable part of linguistic interculturality. They have rich ethical and cultural meanings, can reflect people's feelings, or explain complex phenomenal laws with vivid and evocative animal images. They also contain rich and unique cultural connotations.

People have always used animals as tools for labour. Different cultures have used different animals as their main helpers. It's no surprise that the more familiar people are with a particular animal, the more frequently it appears in everyday idiomatic expressions.

Animals are common protagonists in legends and fables. The richness of legends and fables from different cultures is clear, with numerous traditional animal images and fixed idiomatic expressions.

2.2 The aspects of life animal idioms describe

There were chosen in random order 100 different animal idioms. They were taken from different dictionaries, such as Oxford dictionary, Cambridge dictionary, Macmillan dictionary, Merriam-Webster dictionary, the Free dictionary (idioms).

There were the following animals in the idioms: a cat, a dog, a bear, a horse, a monkey, a cock, a bull, an elephant, a whale, a duck, a mouse, a worm, an ant, a badger, a wolf, a turkey, a wolf, an owl and others.

The idioms were analyzed from the point of their illustration of different aspects of human life, people's behaviour, philosophy of life, money, weather and things.

Describing people / people's behaviour (40%)

This type of idioms turned out to be the most frequent ones and made up **40%** of all the idioms under analysis. These animal idioms were made within the English language and culture to illustrate different characteristics of people and

manners of behaviour: 1) excitement or worry: to have ants in your pants, 2) persuasion: to badger someone, 3) a bad mood: to be like a bear with a sore head, 4) obsession: to have a bee in your bonnet, 5) meeting each other by interests: birds of a feather flock together, 6) clumsiness: be like a bull in a china shop, 7) nervousness: to be like a cat on a hot tin roof, 8) power and well-being: a fat cat, a top dog, 9) fright: a scaredy-cat, 10) arrogance: the cat's whiskers, 11) content / happiness: to look like the cat that got the cream, to be like a dog with two tails, to have a whale of a time, happy as a lark, 12) cowardness: to be a chicken, 13) being disliked: a cuckoo in the nest, 14) becoming less successful: gone to the dogs, 16) being not upset by bad things: water off a duck's back, 17) overhearing secretly: to be a fly on the wall, 18) sneakily clever: to be as sly as a fox, 19) being upset: to get someone's goat, 20) secretive: dark horse 21) hungry: you could eat a horse, 22) having a good appetite: to eat like a horse, 23) expressing lack of interest: to not give a monkey's, 24) making a surprise: to pull a rabbit out of the hat, 25) being dangerous: a wolf in sheep's clothing, 26) speaking frankly: to talk turkey, 27) giving a false alarm: to cry wolf, 28) changing behaviour in the opposite direction: the worm has turned, 29) being early: an early bird, 30) being lucky: a lucky dog, 31) tenacious, unwilling to give up: like a dog with a bone, 32) acting or living alone: to be a lone wolf, 33) very wise and knowledgeable: as wise as an old owl, 34) no longer young: no spring chicken, 35) deceitful: a snake in the grass, 36) being in a vulnerable position: sitting duck.

So, it is clear that animal idioms are used to show excitement or worry, a bad mood or obsession, arrogance or happiness, clumsiness and dander and so on. All these characteristics describe a diverse human nature through the manner the animals usually have in some situations.

Describing life (14%)

There are also a number of idioms that are used to describe life situations. They are not as frequent as the previous group but anyway they are also quite popular. Let's look at some examples: 1) when a certain possibility is better, they say: a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush, 2) if a timely manner leads to

success, then: the early bird catches the worm. 3) To solve two problems: to kill two birds with one stone, 4) to reveal the secret: to let the cat out of the bag, 5) to cause trouble: to put a cat among the pigeons, gone to the dogs, 6) to fix the problem after it occurs: to close (shut) the stable door after the horse has bolted, 7) to be grateful for what you have: not to look a gift horse in the mouth, 8) being correct by being lucky: even a blind squirrel can find a nut once in a while, 9) to deal with something dangerous: to have a tiger by the tail, 10) to expose a set of problems: to open a can of worms, 11) to have a miserable existence: to lead a dog's life, 12) to have a life of discord and quarrels: cat and dog life, 13) to pursue a futile line of thought or action: to flog a dead horse.

So, life described with the help of animal idioms seems to be not easy: it is troublesome and full of problems, miserable or quarrelsome. It is described in different ways and sometimes it is similar to the way animals live and behave.

Describing the weather (12%)

There are some idioms that use animals to show what the weather is like. 1) pouring rain: it rains cats and dogs, it rains elephants and whales, to be raining pitchforks, lovely weather for ducks, 2) extremely hot: as hot as a goat in a pepper patch, soaring like a bird of prey 3) blowing strongly and loudly: howl like a wolf, 4) extremely cold: it's colder than a polar bear's toenails, 5) heavy snowfall accumulating: piling up like a herd of sheep, 6) intense, loud storm: the storm is roaring like a lion, the hail is pounding like a pack of wild turkeys, 7) severe, biting frost: the frost is biting like a rabid dog.

As it can be seen from above, the weather the idioms describe is usually rainy, very hot or very cold, with intense wind, snow, storm and frost.

Describing money, the rich and the poor (12%)

Some of the animal idioms are used to describe the financial situations. There are some idioms that mean 1) wealthy and affluent: to be a fat cat, 2) a lucrative source of income: to be a cash cow, 3) to be extremely poor: to be dog poor, poor as a church mouse 4) a small or insignificant sum of money: to be a chicken feed, 5) unable to save money: to have ants in your pants, 6) someone

who is easily cheated out of money: to be a pigeon:, 7) prices rising over a sustained period of time in the stock market: bull market, 8) prices declining in the stock market: bear market, 9) stocks with low value: cats and dogs, 10) borrow money from somebody: to put the bee on somebody, 11) to spend extravagantly: to play ducks and drakes.

Thus, people can be poor or rich, have a lot of money or only insignificant sums, they can spend money extravagantly or borrow it from somebody.

Describing things (11%)

There are also some idioms that use animals to describe things. These things are 1) a mess or a chaotic situation: a dog's breakfast/dinner, 2) an ugly thing: the fly in the ointment; 3) a false story: a cock-and-bull story; 4) something seen from above: a bird's eye view, 5) a short sleep: a cat nap, 6) a silly story: a shaggy dog story, 7) a show to demonstrate: a dog and pony show, 8) a failure: a dead duck, 9) a useless thing: a white elephant, 10) something of high quality: the bee's knees, 11) moving slowly: at a snail's pace.

So, these idioms describe different things at the example of animals. These things can be messy or ugly, false or silly, useless or meant to fail. They illustrate the ordinary things we have in life using animals' patterns of behaviour.

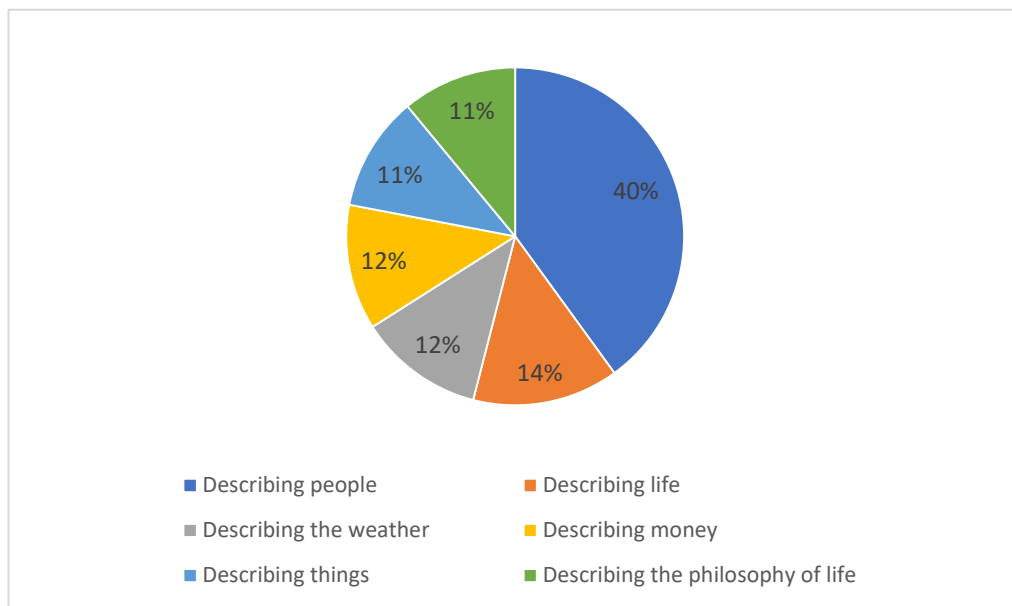
Describing the philosophy of life (11%)

Human beings get a lot of philosophical revelations about life from animals. Let's look at some examples: 1) old people have some experience in this life: an old dog barks not in vain, 2) the person who says bad things about others will also say bad things about you: the dog that fetches will carry, 3) meddling will get you into trouble: curiosity killed a cat, 4) those who are eager and early are the ones who most succeed: the early bird catches the worm, 5) living a life of fierce competition and drudgery: to be a rat in a rat race, 6) to avoid reawakening an issue that has been settled: to let sleeping dogs lie, 7) don't do things in the wrong order: don't put the cart before the horse, 8) to face a difficult situation directly and with courage: to take the bull by the horns, 9) everyone will have their chance at success or good fortune: every dog has its day, 10) it's better to

hold onto something you have than to risk losing it: a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush, 11) you shouldn't optimistically count on something before it definitely happens: don't count your chickens before they hatch.

Diagram 1 shows aspects of life that different animal idioms describe.

Diagram 1. The aspects of life animal idioms describe



These animal idioms summarize how people have lived and reflect a deep philosophy of life.

2.3 Positive and negative situations animal idioms describe

Language is a cloak for thought and emotion. When people use idioms, they are expressing certain emotions, positive or negative, to a greater or lesser extent. Among the many idioms, there are countless idioms that contain animals, and the emotions they contain vary from positive to negative.

Although there are numerous types of human emotions, they can be broadly categorized into two main types: positive and negative. Positive emotions are affirmative and positive; they promote development and endeavour to make progress. In contrast, negative emotions are negative; they are counterproductive; they hinder development and are not enterprising.

Whether positive or negative emotions are abstract emotional concepts, people often resort to other concrete means when expressing them. This is

exemplified in animal idioms, where emotions are concretely manifested in the materialization of emotions into a certain kind of animal. The following section will analyze the metaphors in animal idioms that express positive and negative emotions, respectively.

1) Positive Situations

In the English language, the phrase "as graceful as a swan, black-swan far are and precious treasure" is an example of a phrase that conveys praise. In China and the West alike, the metaphorical use of the term "swan" to describe an elegant, graceful, and pure kind of person is a common occurrence. In referring to ontological metaphors and common physical characteristics and emotional experiences of human beings, people will use animals with common cultural connotations to express similar emotional concepts. For example, positive emotional concepts are concretised in animals such as "bees" and "swans". Consequently, the presence of animals such as "bees" and "swans" in Chinese and English idioms indicates that the emotions they convey are positive and upward.

2) Negative Situations

In the natural world, there are numerous animals that are not well accepted by humans due to their behaviors, appearances, temperaments, or other characteristics. As a result, humans tend to ascribe negative emotions to these animals, which they then conceptualize as a kind of animal that they are familiar with and concrete²⁷. It can be observed that wolves, tigers, lions, snakes and other animals in the natural world are the animals that people are afraid of. Wolves are regarded as cunning, greedy and ferocious; tigers and lions are considered ferocious; snakes are generally perceived as poisonous and can be poisoned or even fatal if they are bitten. In the case of these animals, the colour of the animal is a topic of discussion. Consequently, the animal idioms will be reflected in the English language, including "throw somebody to the wolves," "a wolf in sheep's clothing," and "lion's mouth," among others. Let's look at some examples of animal idioms and try to find out how many of them have positive connotations

²⁷ <https://www.learnenglish.de/idioms/animaldioms.html>

and how many of them have negative connotations. See Table 1.

Table 1. The idioms and their connotations

Idiom	Explanation	Positive	Negative
To have ants in your pants. For example: There's a test tomorrow, and he can't concentrate or keep still. He looks like he's got ants in his pants.	To be unable to keep still because you are very excited or worried about something.	+	+
To be like a bear with a sore head. ²⁸ For example: My husband is like a bear with a sore head before he gets his cup of tea in the morning.	To be in a bad mood.		+
To have a bee in your bonnet. For example: She's got a real bee in her bonnet about that new advertising campaign, she's even phoned the ACA!	To be obsessed about something, to be crazy about smth.		+
A bird in the hand is	Having something for	+	

²⁸ <https://www.learnenglish.de/idioms/animaldioms.html>

<p>worth two in the bush.</p> <p>For example:</p> <p>I would stay with your current firm, rather than look for something better. After all, a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush.</p>	<p>certain is better than the possibility of getting something better.</p>		
<p>The early bird catches the worm.²⁹</p> <p>For example:</p> <p>I'll go to work early tomorrow. After all, the early bird catches the worm.</p>	<p>If you do something in a timely manner you will succeed.</p>	+	
<p>Birds of a feather flock together.</p> <p>For example:-</p> <p>At the party, all the teenagers gathered in the kitchen. Birds of a feather flock together.</p>	<p>People who have similar characters or similar interests will often choose to spend time together.</p>	+	
<p>To kill two birds with one stone.</p> <p>For example:</p> <p>I went to the dentist, and asked him to fill the molar, and remove the</p>	<p>To solve two problems with a single action.</p>	+	

²⁹ <https://www.learnenglish.de/idioms/animaldioms.html>

wisdom tooth at the same time. Might as well kill two birds with one stone.			
To be like a bull in a china shop. ³⁰ For example: Don't let him touch those glass baubles, he's like a bull in a china shop.	To be clumsy.		+
To be like a cat on a hot tin roof. For example: She's waiting for her boyfriend to call, and she's been like a cat on a hot tin roof all day.	To be nervous and unable to keep still.		+
A fat cat . For example: Too many fat cats have made money out of the recession.	Someone who is very rich and powerful.	+	+
A scaredy- cat . For example: It's only a little spider, don't be such a scaredy-cat.	Someone who is frightened for no reason.		+

³⁰ <https://www.learnenglish.de/idioms/animaldioms.html>

<p>The cat's whiskers.³¹</p> <p>For example: She thought she was the cat's whiskers when she got the part in the play.</p>	<p>When someone thinks they're better than everyone else.</p>		<p>+</p>
<p>To let the cat out of the bag.</p> <p>For example: Everybody knows about the redundancies, someone let the cat out of the bag.</p>	<p>To reveal a secret.</p>		<p>+</p>
<p>To look like the cat that got the cream.</p> <p>For example: I guess you passed your exam. You look like the cat that got the cream.</p>	<p>To look very pleased and a bit smug about something.</p>	<p>+</p>	
<p>To put a cat among the pigeons.</p> <p>For example: When the photos showed him kissing a young woman, it really put the cat among the pigeons.</p>	<p>To cause trouble.</p>		<p>+</p>
<p>Look what</p>	<p>An insulting way of</p>		<p>+</p>

³¹ <https://www.learnenglish.de/idioms/animaldioms.html>

<p>the cat's dragged in! For example: Look what the cat's dragged in! You look terrible!</p>	<p>saying that someone has just arrived and they don't look good.</p>		
<p>To be a chicken or To be chicken or to be chicken livered.³² For example:- She wouldn't get on the waltzers, because she said they're dangerous. She's such a chicken.</p>	<p>Someone who is cowardly.</p>		+
<p>A cuckoo in the nest. For example: The new manager is a real cuckoo in the nest. He's causing more problems than he's solving.</p>	<p>Someone who is part of a group but is different and often disliked, or a problem that grows quickly and crowds out everything else.</p>		+
<p>A dog and pony show. For example: His campaign was a real dog and pony show, but he still didn't win the election.</p>	<p>A show or other event that has been organized in order to get people's support or to persuade them to buy something.</p>		+
<p>A shaggy dog story.</p>	<p>A joke or story that's</p>		+

³² <https://www.learnenglish.de/idioms/animaldioms.html>

For example: The way he kept going on led me to suspect it was a shaggy dog story.	obviously not true or has a silly ending.		
To be like a dog with two tails. For example: When we found out we had won the contract, our manager was like a dog with two tails.	To be very happy.	+	
Gone to the dogs . For example. This country has gone to the dogs since they won the election.	Used when someone or somewhere becomes less successful than it was.		+
A dead duck . ³³ For example: The police admitted that they were giving up, the case was a dead duck.	A failure.		+
Water off a duck's back. For example: He kept shouting at me, but it was like water off a duck's back.	Said when someone doesn't let things upset them.		+
A white elephant .	Used to describe		+

³³ <https://www.learnenglish.de/idioms/animaldioms.html>

<p>For example: Spain lavished money on many white elephant building projects, such as the airport at Ciudad Real, south of Madrid.</p>	<p>something you own that is useless.</p>		
<p>To be a fly on the wall.³⁴ For example: I would love to have been a fly on the wall when the boss was telling him off.</p>	<p>To want to be somewhere secretly, so you can overhear what is said.</p>		+
<p>To be as sly as a fox. For example: He managed to get all his money out before the bank collapsed. He's a sly old fox.</p>	<p>To be sneakily clever.</p>		+
<p>To get someone's goat. For example: The whole time I was singing she didn't stop talking. She really got my goat.</p>	<p>To upset someone.</p>		+
<p>A dark horse. For example: I was surprised when he</p>	<p>A person who is secretive and often does something</p>		+

³⁴ <https://www.learnenglish.de/idioms/animaldioms.html>

<p>sat down to play the piano, I didn't know he could! He's a real dark horse.</p>	<p>surprising.</p>		
<p>To close (shut) the stable door after the horse has bolted. For example: Giving the banks billions of dollars, is like closing the stable door after the horse has bolted.</p>	<p>To try to fix something after the problem has occurred.</p>		<p>+</p>
<p>To eat like a horse. For example: He had two helpings of everything. He eats like a horse!</p>	<p>To eat a lot.</p>		<p>+</p>
<p>To look a gift horse in the mouth. For example: She complained that the software was slow, but hadn't paid for it, so I told her not to look a gift horse in the mouth.</p>	<p>To mistrust or complain about something you are offered or given for free.</p>		<p>+</p>
<p>To not give a monkey's. For example: I don't give a monkey's about being</p>	<p>Used to express lack of concern or interest.</p>		<p>+</p>

made redundant. I'm leaving. I've got another, better job.			
To pull a rabbit out of the hat. ³⁵ For example: He really pulled a rabbit out of the hat by getting those orders.	To surprise everyone by suddenly doing something clever.	+	
A wolf in sheep's clothing. For example: I wouldn't borrow any money off him if I were you. He's a real wolf in sheep's clothing.	Someone who is dangerous, but pretends to be harmless.		+
Even a blind squirrel can find a nut once in a while. For example: I was surprised when he came up with the solution, I didn't think he was that clever. I guess that even a blind squirrel can find a nut once in a while.	Sometimes people can be correct just by being lucky.	+	

³⁵ <https://www.learnenglish.de/idioms/animaldioms.html>

<p>To have a tiger by the tail.</p> <p>For example:</p> <p>Trying to deal with the problem of drugs on the streets is like grabbing a tiger by the tail.</p>	<p>To have become associated with something powerful and potentially dangerous.</p>		<p>+</p>
<p>To talk turkey.</p> <p>For example:</p> <p>We need to solve this problem, and the only way we'll do it is to talk turkey.</p>	<p>To speak frankly and openly.</p>	<p>+</p>	
<p>To cry wolf.</p> <p>For example:</p> <p>Don't take any notice of him, he's always crying wolf.</p>	<p>To raise a false alarm about something.</p>		<p>+</p>
<p>The worm has turned.</p> <p>For example:</p> <p>Investors have become skeptical of the ability of CEOs to pull higher stock prices out of their hats. The worm has turned.</p>	<p>When a usually meek person or group of people becomes angry.</p>	<p>+</p>	<p>+</p>
<p>To open a can of worms.</p> <p>For example:</p> <p>When the government</p>	<p>To do something that exposes a very difficult issue or set of</p>		<p>+</p>

invited online petitions through its website, it found it had opened a can of worms.	problems.		
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From table 1 it can be clearly seen that mostly animal idioms are used negatively (72%), they show different bad and dangerous situations that people can get into or condemn some negative characteristics and traits that some people have. There are only 28% of idioms that have positive connotations illustrating the situations when people are happy or pleased or rich. Interestingly, birds, rabbits, squirrels and turkeys are used in the idioms only positively, a few other animals are used both positively and negatively; they are ants, cats and dogs and worms. All the other animals are used only negatively: bears, bees, bulls, chickens, cuckoos, ponies, ducks, elephants, flies, foxes, goats, horses, monkeys, wolves.

2.4 Animal idioms representation

Idioms serve various functions in everyday communication. Their purposes range from adding color and vividness to language, expressing deeper meanings, to promoting cultural understanding. There are three animals under analysis to explore their full idiomatic potential.

2.4.1 Cat idioms

Among all animals, the cat has had a great influence on human life. As the status of the cat has risen and fallen in human society, the derivation of what it stands for has also changed, and this increasingly close relationship has been expressed in the language.

Cats are important in Western culture. English has more cat idioms and proverbs than any other culture. Their cultural connotations are different. Before the 10th century, cats were protected by the church. Their images often appeared in church carvings. However, after the 10th century, the church was superstitious about cats. It was believed that witches could turn into cats, and cats were seen as

the devil.³⁶

In the early 13th century, the Church started a crusade against the pagans because they worshipped cats as gods. During this period, cats suffered a terrible fate in Europe. The cat culture in English changed a lot. Cats began to be seen as "vicious, evil, mean". The idioms "old cat": a bad-tempered old woman; "a bag of cats": a bad-tempered person. It is taboo, especially for black cats. The taboo about black cats dates back to medieval superstitions. People often associate black cats with witches. In "Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone", the mysterious old woman who lives in Maiden Road is often accompanied by a black cat. The American writer Washington Irving's short story "The Black Cat" also talks about black cats bringing misfortune. Therefore, Westerners often say "Don't let a black cat across your path". Cats are often associated with witchcraft. Cats and dogs were said to be followers of Odin, the god of storms. Cats were used as a symbol of rain and dogs as a symbol of wind. In Norse mythology, Freyja, the goddess of love and beauty, was pulled by two cats in her chariot. She was often surrounded by cats of all sizes³⁷. Odin gave Freya nine lives, so cats have nine lives.

Let's examine the cultural and idiomatic meaning of the word "cat" in English:

1. a spiteful, gossipy woman: the crazy old cat;
Mary can be such a cat, you know.

2. a man:

A: "You ever hear of Tom Michelson?" B: "The cat who runs the Double D ice bar over on Santa Monica? Yeah, I've heard of him";

3. a fellow; a guy; a dude:

Now, this cat wants to borrow some money from me. What should I do?

4. to empty one's stomach; to vomit:

Looks like somebody catted in the bushes.

³⁶ <https://idioms.thefreedictionary.com/cat>

³⁷ <https://idioms.thefreedictionary.com/cat>

5. (as) black as a stack of black cats:
completely black; totally without light or color;

6. (as) conceited as a barber's cat: very narcissistic or vain:

7. (as) nervous as a long-tailed cat in a room full of rocking chairs

8. a bag of cats: someone who is very unpleasant or difficult to deal with

9. a cat may look at a king:

Everyone has rights, regardless of status, especially to do things that are of no consequence to others.

10. kick at the cat:

An opportunity to do, try, or achieve something. Primarily heard in Canada.

11. all cats are gray after dark:

In the dark of night, appearances do not matter (because it is too difficult to see anything clearly).

12. bell the cat

To undertake or agree to perform a risky, dangerous, or impossible job or task. It comes from a fable (often and likely incorrectly attributed to Aesop) called "Belling the Cat," in which a group of mice decide that one will harness a bell to a murderous cat so that its jingle will warn them of its presence, though none want to take on the dangerous role.

13. To be like a cat on a hot tin roof: To be nervous and unable to keep still

14. A fat cat: Someone who is very rich and powerful.

15. A scaredy-cat: Someone who is frightened for no reason.

16. The cat's whiskers: When someone thinks they're better than everyone else.

17. To let the cat out of the bag: To reveal a secret.

18. To look like the cat that got the cream: To look very pleased and a bit smug about something.

19. To put a cat among the pigeons: To cause trouble.

20. Look what the cat's dragged in! An insulting way of saying that someone has just arrived and they don't look good.

So, cats being popular pets among humans have been widely used by people for comparison and describing people's bad and negative traits, behaviour, life situations. Cat idioms show that people can be gossipy and vain, nervous and scary, troublesome and noisy. Although most idioms about cats are negative, there are also some positive ones, and some of them even hold some kind of expectation from people. Cats have played an important role in human life, whether as pets or mousetraps, and have had a growing influence on human life. As times change, cat culture also changes. When studying cat-related idioms, it is important to understand the cultural significance of cats.

2.4.2 Bear idioms

The image of the bear in Western culture is dominated by the words "powerful and clumsy". This is a neutral metaphorical meaning with no obvious pejorative connotations. The cult of the bear also existed in Western prehistory. Anthropologist Campbell is certain that it was a common feature of most tribes that fished and hunted for a living. The bear was also considered a sacred symbol in early Western culture, and bear worship was common in Western culture.

Let's examine the bear idioms in the English language and culture. It looks like the image of this animal can be used in different idiomatic expressions and can denote a great number of things:

- 1) a difficult task: "This problem is a real bear";
 - 2) an ugly woman (derogatory): "Tell the old bear to hold her tongue";
 - 3) a highway patrol officer: "There's a bear hiding under that bridge";
 - 4) inactive: (as) busy as a hibernating bear not busy at all;
 - 5) exceptionally angry, annoyed, or irritable: (as) mad as a bear with a sore head;
 - 6) baby bear: a highway patrol officer who has only recently started in that line of work;
 - 7) be a teddy bear: to be very kind and utterly harmless, especially in contrast to one's appearance or demeanor;
 - 8) care bear: One who seeks to avoid violence and discord;

9) mama bear: a strong, aggressive, protective mother or a female police officer

10) cross as a bear: exceptionally irritable, annoyed, or grumpy.

11) (as) lazy as a bear: to be particularly lazy or indolent.

12) gruff as a bear: surly or brusque.

13) bear in the air: a police officer in an airplane or a helicopter.

14) bear cage: a police station.

15) take the bear by the tooth: to subject oneself to danger or trouble.

16) some days you get the bear, (and) other days the bear gets you: You will have success at some points in time, while at other times you won't.

16) average bear: The average person or thing.

17) poke the bear: to internationally irritate or bother someone, especially when doing so carries an obvious risk.

From the above we know that people see bears as strong, powerful and clumsy. But different things influence how people see bears in different places. If you don't know what these idioms mean, you'll think they mean something else. So, it's important to understand the cultural meanings of these images.

So, the bear can be used to describe a difficult task or an ugly woman, a patrol officer or an average person, a rude and angry man or just the other way round someone kind and harmless. The bear is very controversial in character and is associated in the language and culture of the English world with different things, but mostly negative ones: gruff as a bear, lazy as bear, poke the bear, cross as a bear, mad as a bear, which reflect mostly the characteristics of this animal in the wild nature.

2.4.3 Horse idioms

The horse is closely related to humans and has a positive image in many cultures. Some horse idioms have the same or similar associations in different cultures. However, most horse idioms do not have the same cultural connotations

in the two cultures.³⁸

1. (as) healthy as a horse: having excellent, robust physical health;
2. from the horse's mouth: from the original or most reliable source;

3. a camel is a horse made by a committee: an expression critical of committees – which by analogy can extend to both group decision-making as well as abstract or unrelated managerialism – by emphasizing the weaknesses of incorporating too many conflicting and inexperienced opinions into a single project;

4. hobby-horse:

a subject, topic, or issue about which one frequently or incessantly talks;

5. horse of another color:

A person or thing completely different or unique, especially in comparison to someone or something else.

6. a nod is as good as a wink to a blind horse:

It is unnecessary to explain or elaborate upon something because one already understands or knows about it in full.

7. a ragged colt may make a good horse:

Someone's or something's current behavior, condition, or situation, especially that which is bad, does not dictate their future outcome.

8. a workhorse, not a show horse

Someone who puts in a lot of work or gets a lot of results without seeking or receiving a lot of attention or publicity for it. Used especially in reference to politics.

9. back the right horse

To support or select from numerous options a person or thing that becomes or proves to be successful³⁹

10. A dark horse: A person who is secretive and often does something surprising.

³⁸ <https://idioms.thefreedictionary.com/horse>

³⁹ <https://idioms.thefreedictionary.com/horse>

11. To close (shut) the stable door after the horse has bolted: To try to fix something after the problem has occurred.

12. To eat like a horse: To eat a lot.

13. To look a gift horse in the mouth: To mistrust or complain about something you are offered or given for free.

So, the image of the horse is often used to demonstrate robust physical health or a good appetite, some approval or hard work. Though there can also be dark horses in the society describing people who are secretive and suspicious.

From the above, it is clear the horse has played a pivotal role in the history of mankind. While it is less important nowadays, the horse's footprints in history are still reflected in various idioms today.

CONCLUSION

Idioms are not only the essence of language but also the epitome of language and history. By learning the stories behind English idioms, the various cultural aspects of the historical development and social life of the British nation are displayed in a vivid manner.

An idiom is a group of words with a meaning that differs from that of each constituent word when used together. It is a unique expression that cannot be comprehended by its literal meaning. In order to understand the meaning of the idiom, it is not necessary to know the meanings of all the words that make up the phrase.

Idioms are a type of figurative language that employs vivid imagery, depth in language, and a more colorful and expressive style of communication. While the literal meaning of an idiom may suggest one thing, the actual meaning is often quite different.

An idiom is a phrase that may seem incomprehensible to someone unfamiliar with the language in which it is spoken. Idioms are also usually very difficult to translate, except in a very roundabout way.

There are pure idioms, binomial idioms, partial idioms, prepositional idioms, proverbs, euphemisms and cliches.

Animal idioms are very common in daily lives, enriching oral communication in English and also forming a unique part of cross-cultural language: they have rich ethical and cultural meanings, reflect people's feelings, or explain complex phenomena with vivid and evocative animal images, and contain rich and unique cultural connotations.

For thousands of years, people have used animals as tools. People in different cultures have used different animals as their main helpers. Naturally, the more familiar people are with a particular animal, the more it appears in their everyday idioms.

Animals are an indispensable part of people's daily lives, whether cows and

horses in the countryside or pets in the city, they are inseparable from people. Language, as a part of society and culture, is naturally not immune to influence, and animal idioms in English clearly highlight the characteristics of animals, concisely and profoundly.

The animals that become a prototype of the idioms are a cat, a dog, a bear, a horse, a monkey, a cock, a bull, an elephant, a whale, a duck, a mouse, a worm, an ant, a badger, a wolf, a turkey, a wolf, an owl. These animals live nearby humans or people often come across them in the wild.

The type of animal idioms describing people or people's behaviour are the most frequent ones and make up 40% of all the idioms under analysis. These animal idioms were made within the English language and culture to illustrate different characteristics of people and manners of behaviour. They are used to show excitement or worry, a bad mood or obsession, arrogance or happiness, clumsiness and dander and so on. All these characteristics describe a diverse human nature through the manner the animals usually have in some situations.

There are other aspects of human life that animal idioms describe: life (14%), weather (12%), money (12%), things (11%), the philosophy of life (11%).

Life described with the help of animal idioms seems to be not easy: it is troublesome and full of problems, miserable or quarrelsome. It is described in different ways and sometimes it is similar to the way animals live and behave.

The weather the animal idioms describe is usually rainy, very hot or very cold, with intense wind, snow, storm and frost.

Through the animal idioms it can be seen that people can be poor or rich, have a lot of money or only insignificant sums, they can spend money extravagantly or borrow it from somebody.

The things animal idioms describe can be messy or ugly, false or silly, useless or meant to fail. They illustrate the ordinary things we have in life using animals' patterns of behaviour.

Describing philosophy of life, animal idioms summarize how people have lived and reflect a deep philosophy of life.

Mostly, animal idioms are used negatively (72%), they show different bad and dangerous situations that people can get into or condemn some negative characteristics and traits that some people have. There are only 28% of idioms that have positive connotations illustrating the situations when people are happy or pleased or rich. Interestingly, birds, rabbits, squirrels and turkeys are used in the idioms only positively, a few other animals are used both positively and negatively; they are ants, cats and dogs and worms. All the other animals are used only negatively: bears, bees, bulls, chickens, cuckoos, ponies, ducks, elephants, flies, foxes, goats, horses, monkeys, wolves.

Cats being popular pets among humans have been widely used by people for comparison and describing people's bad and negative traits, behaviour, life situations. Cat idioms show that people can be gossipy and vain, nervous and scary, troublesome and noisy. Although most idioms about cats are negative, there are also some positive ones, and some of them even hold some kind of expectation from people. Cats have played an important role in human life, whether as pets or mousetraps, and have had a growing influence on human life. As times change, cat culture also changes. When studying cat-related idioms, it is important to understand the cultural significance of cats.

The bear can be used to describe a difficult task or an ugly woman, a patrol officer or an average person, a rude and angry man or just someone kind and harmless. The bear is very controversial in character and is associated in the language and culture of the English world with different things, but mostly negative ones: gruff as a bear, lazy as bear, poke the bear, cross as a bear, mad as a bear, which reflect mostly the characteristics of this animal in the wild nature.

The image of the horse is often used to demonstrate robust physical health or a good appetite, some approval or hard work. Though there can also be dark horses in the society describing people who are secretive and suspicious. It is clear the horse has played a pivotal role in the history of mankind. While it is less important nowadays, the horse's footprints in history are still reflected in various idioms today.

Cats, horses and bears are some of the most frequent animals people live by. Therefore, they may be the most illustrative in terms of reflecting human's life in the English culture through time.

Animals are an indispensable part of people's daily lives, whether cows and horses in the countryside or pets in the city, they are inseparable from people. Language, as a part of society and culture, is naturally not immune to influence, and animal idioms in English clearly highlight the characteristics of animals, concisely and profoundly.

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