

THE USE OF IDIOMS IN BRITISH AND AMERICAN NEWSPAPERS

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Today the English language is widely spoken throughout the world. It is the language of 21st century the language of informative technologies, so while describing the English language; first of all it should be underlined that the English language is the mother tongue of the global media. To understand English clearly one should know not only its standard vocabulary but also its different styles, dialects, proverbs, sayings, phrasal verbs and idioms, as they are used in any sphere: books, films, newspapers, formal speeches. Nowadays this theme is rather contemporary as every learner must be prepared to meet the challenge simply because idioms occur so frequently in the spoken and written English.

The focus of the research project in this article is to represent idioms in British and American newspapers. Moreover, the research shows information on the history of English language newspapers, as well as on idioms.

An idiom is a phrase where the words together have meaning that is different from the dictionary definitions of the individual words.

Idioms are found in every language and learning them is an important aspect of mastery of language. The English language is no exception as it contains a large number of idioms, which are extensively used. However, because of their rigid structure and quite unpredictable meaning, idioms are often considered difficult to learn.

The essential features of idioms are stability of the lexical components and lack of motivation. Lexical stability means that the components of set expressions are either irreplaceable like «red tape» or partly replaceable within the bounds of phraseological or phraseomatic variance (a skeleton in the cupboard or a skeleton in the closet). It is consequently assumed that unlike components of free word – groups which may vary according to the needs of communication, member words of idioms are always reproduced as single unchangeable collocations..

The fact that the words of the idioms are fixed is what makes the idioms, first of all. So the fixed state of idioms is quality which not only characterizes them, but also proves idioms to be internally structured lexical items.

A word-group which defies word by word translation is consequently described as idiomatic. Unlike idioms (phraseological units), proverbs, sayings and quotations do not always function as word equivalents. They exist as ready-made expressions with a specialized meaning of their own, which cannot be inferred from the meaning of their components taken singly. Idioms are mostly based on metaphors which make the transferred meaning of the whole expression more or less transparent. An idiom has a non-compositional form, that is, its meaning cannot be compositionally computed from its parts. This suggests that the way many idioms had found their way into language is as dead metaphors. Secondly the bulk of idioms never function in speech as word equivalents which are a proof of their semantic and grammatical inseparability. It is also suggested that the idioms in general have very much in common with quotations from literary sources, some of which also exist as idiomatic readymade units with a specialized meaning of their own. Such quotations which have acquired specialized meaning and idiomatic value as “to be or not to be” differ little from proverbs and sayings which may also be regarded as quotation from English folklore and are part of this particular branch of literary studies. However quotations differ from proverbs in their origin. They come from literature but by and by become part and parcel of the language, so that many people using them don’t even know that they are quoting. Quotations from classical sources were once a recognized feature of public speech. Accordingly some quotations are so often used that they become clichés.

We should note that Idioms have no social boundaries or limitations as they exist in all cultures and classes of the society as well as in all languages. Idioms are a part of each language and cannot be described apart from the given language.

Biblical references are also the source of many idioms. Sports terms, technical terms, legal terms, military slang and even nautical expressions have found their way to everyday use of English language.

Newspaper is a publication that appears regularly and frequently, and carries news about a wide variety of current events. Organizations such as trade unions, religious groups, corporations or clubs may have their own newspapers, but the term is more commonly used to refer to daily or weekly publications that bring news of general interest to large portions of the public in a specific geographic area.

General circulations newspapers play a role in commerce through the advertisements they carry; they provide readers with information of practical value, such as television schedules weather maps and listings of stock prices; and these

newspapers provide a course of entertainment through their stories and through such features as comic strips and crossword puzzles. However one of the most important functions of the general- circulation newspaper (a crucial function in a democracy) is to provide citizens with information on government and politics.

The printing press was used to disseminate news in Europe shortly after Johann Gutenberg invented the letter press, employing movable type in the 1450s. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries thousands of printed news books short pamphlets reporting on a news event ballads accounts of news events written in verse and usually printed on one side of a single sheet of paper, circulated in Europe and in the new European colonies in America. The first news report printed in the America described an earthquake in Guatemala and was printed in Mexico in 1541.

The oldest surviving newspaper written in English appears to have been published in Amsterdam in 1620 by Pieter van de Keere, a Dutch and print engraver who had lived in London for a few years.

According to the historian Joseph Frank along with their political coverage newspapers in England in the 1640s, were among the first in the world to use headlines, to print advertisements, to illustrate stories with woodcuts, to employ a woman – «a she –intelligencer»– to collect news and to have newsboys, or more commonly newsgirls, sell papers in the streets. They are also among the first newspapers to compete with news books and news ballads in coverage of sensational events like bloody crimes.

Newspaper style was the last of all the styles of written literary English to be recognized as a specific form of writing standing apart from other forms. English newspaper style dates from the 17th century. Newspaper writing is addressed to a broad audience and devoted to important social or political events, public problems of cultural or moral character. The first of any regular series of English newspapers was the *Weekly News* which first appeared on May 20, 1622. The 17th century saw the rise of a number of other news sheets which, with varying success, struggled on in the teeth of discouragement and restrictions imposed by the Crown. With the introduction of a strict licensing system many such sheets were suppressed, and the Government, in its turn, set before the public a paper of its own – the *London Gazette*, first published on February 5, 1666. The paper was a semi – weekly and carried official information, royal decrees, news from abroad, and advertisements.

The general aim the newspaper is to exert influence on public opinion, to convince the reader or listener that the interpretation given by writer or the speaker is the only correct one and to cause him to accept the point of view expressed in the speech, essay or article merely by logical argumentation, but by emotional appeal as well. It falls in two varieties: the essay and the article.

The most characteristic features of essays are;

- 1) Brevity of expression
- 2) The use of the first person singular, which justifies a personal approach to the problems treated:
- 3) A rather expended use of connectives, which facilitates the process of grasping the correlation of ideas;
- 4) The abundant use of emotive words
- 5) The use of idioms and metaphors as one of the media for the cognitive process¹

Newspapers are most often published on a daily or weekly basis, and they usually focus on one particular geographic area where most of their readers live. Despite recent setbacks in circulation and profits, newspapers are still the most iconic outlet for news and other types of written journalism. To understand the language peculiarities of English newspaper style it will be sufficient to analyze the following basic newspaper features

- brief news items
- advertisements and announcements
- the headline
- the editorial

The headline is a dependent form of newspaper writing. The main function of the headline is to inform the reader briefly what the text that follows is about. In other words headlines are almost a summary of the information contained in the news item or article.

The function of editorial is to influence the reader by giving an interpretation of certain facts. Editorials comment on the political and other events of the day. Editorials make an extensive use of emotionally colored vocabulary.

The main function of advertisements and announcements is to give information about a product or service used to attract potential consumers;

¹ R. Galperin, Stylistics, "Higher School", Moscow, 1977 p. 253.

advertising takes place in newspapers and magazines, on hoardings, on radio and television and on the Internet .

The principal function of a brief news item is to inform the reader. News items are essentially matter - of - fact and stereotyped forms of expression prevail. It goes without saying that the bulk of the vocabulary which is used in newspaper writing is natural and common literary. But newspaper style has also its specific vocabulary features and is characterized by an extensive use of:

- a) special political and economic terms like constitution president, etc.
- b) non – term political vocabulary such as public people unity etc.
- c) newspaper clichés which are commonplace phrases familiar to the reader.

Clichés occur in newspaper headlines more often to give special coloring and emotiveness. e.g pressing problem, speaking realization etc.

d) abbreviations - names of organizations, public and state body, political associations, industrial and other companies etc – known by their initials are very common in newspapers. E.g UNO(united Nation Organization), FO (foreign Office), etc.

e) neologism_ a new word or sense of a word and the coining or use of new words and senses. Neologisms make their way into the language of newspaper easily. E. g coffee (the person upon whom one cough), abdicate (to give up all hope of ever having a flat stomach) etc.¹

Most modern newspapers are in one of three sizes:

- Broadsheets: 600 mm by 380 mm (23½ by 15 inches), generally associated with more intellectual newspapers, although a trend towards «compact» newspapers is changing this.
- Tabloids: half the size of broadsheets at 380 mm by 300 mm (15 by 11¾ inches), and often perceived as sensationalist in contrast to broadsheets. Examples: The Sun, The National Enquirer, The National Ledger, The Star Magazine, New York Post, the Chicago Sun-Times, The Globe.
- Berliner or Midi: 470 mm by 315 mm (18½ by 12¼ inches) used by European papers such as Le Monde in France, La Stampa in Italy, El Pais in Spain and, since 12 September 2005, The Guardian in the United Kingdom.

While most newspapers are aimed at a broad spectrum of readers, usually geographically defined, some focus on groups of readers defined more by their interests than their location: for example, there are daily and weekly business

¹ Richard Brandford, Stylistics, Routledge, London, 1997, p. 56.

newspapers and sports newspapers. More specialist still are some weekly newspapers, usually free and distributed within limited areas; these may serve communities as specific as certain immigrant populations, or the local gay community.

A **daily newspaper** is issued every day, sometimes with the exception of Sundays and some national holidays. Typically, the majority of these newspapers' staff work Monday to Friday, so the Sunday and Monday editions largely depend on content done in advance or content that is syndicated. Most daily newspapers are published in the morning. Afternoon or evening papers are aimed more at commuters and office workers.

Weekly newspapers are common and tend to be smaller than daily papers. In some cases, there also are newspapers that are published twice or three times a week. In the United States, such newspapers are generally still classified as weeklies.

Most nations have at least one newspaper that circulates throughout the whole country: a **national newspaper**, as contrasted with a **local newspaper** serving a city or region. In the United Kingdom, there are numerous national newspapers, including The Independent, The Times, The Daily Telegraph, The Guardian, The Observer, The Daily Mail, The Sun, The Daily Express and The Daily Mirror. In the United States and Canada, there are few, if any, national newspapers, and in almost every market one newspaper has an effective monopoly. Certain newspapers, notably The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal and USA Today in the US and The Globe and Mail and The National Post in Canada are available at limited locations throughout the country. Large metropolitan newspapers with also have expanded distribution networks and, with effort, can be found out with their normal area.

There is also a small group of newspapers which may be characterized as **international** newspapers. Some, such as Christian Science Monitor and The International Herald Tribune, have always had that focus, while others are repackaged national newspapers or «international editions» of national-scale or large metropolitan newspapers. Often these international editions are scaled down to remove articles that might not interest the wider range of readers.

But the principal vehicle of interpretation and appraisal is the newspaper article and the editorial in particular. Editorials (leading articles) are characterized by the subjective handling of facts, political or otherwise, and therefore have more

in common with political essays or articles and should rather be classed as belonging to the publicistic style than to the newspaper. However, newspaper publicistic writing bears a stamp of its own style. Though it seems natural to consider newspaper articles, editorials included, as coming within the system of English newspaper style, it is necessary to note that such articles are an intermediate phenomenon characterized by a combination of styles – the newspaper style and the publicistic style. In other words, they may be considered hybrids.¹

English newspaper style may be defined as a system of interrelated lexical, phraseological and grammatical means, which is perceived by the community as separate linguistic unity that serves the purpose of informing, instructing the reader. In fact, all kinds of newspaper writings are to a greater or lesser degree both informative and evaluative. The newspaper also seeks to influence public opinion or political and appraisal and other matters. Elements of appraisal may be observed in the very selection and the way of presentation of news, in the use of specific vocabulary. The vocabulary used in newspaper writing is natural and common literary. But apart from this, newspaper style has its one of the smartest ways to illustrate the topic and to direct it to the point is to use idioms in the article. Here are idioms found in popular newspapers.

«Venture capitalist David Cowan is a professed chess-playing nerd who studied math and computer science at Harvard. Last year, though, he decided he needed a **crash course** in getting hip» [The New York Times, p.3].

The idiom '**crash course**' means a quick lesson.

«Many older tech investors, eager not **to miss out**, are **going to great lengths** to shed **fuddy-duddy** images and ingratiate themselves with the younger generation [The New York Times, p 3].

The idiom '**(to) miss out**' means to miss an opportunity; to fail to make use of an opportunity .

The idiom '**(to) go to great lengths**' means to do a lot; to do a lot to achieve a certain goal.

The idiom '**fuddy-duddy**' means out of fashion; not modern; an old-fashioned person who doesn't want to change.

«As she pushed her shopping cart down an aisle of the Super Stop & Shop near her hometown of Warren, R.I., recently, Ms. Cabrera, a retired schoolteacher, offered her thoughts on why she **steers clear of** high-fructose corn syrup: "It's been

¹ Richard Brandford, *Stylistics*, Routledge, London, 1997, p.78.

linked to obesity, and it's just not something that's natural or good for you" [The New York Times, p. 5].

The idiom '**to steer clear (of something)**' means to avoid something; to stay away from something. (Note that "to steer" means to guide with a wheel or a similar device. When there's something in the road, you may need to steer your car around it).

«No one is predicting that the iPod economy will be slowing soon. Mr. Baker said: "We've barely **scratched the surface** with the video iPod" [The New York Times, p 7].

«In some communities, efforts are being made to increase the amount of affordable housing. Celebrity-heavy Aspen, for example, has created 2,600 low-cost units over the past 30 years. But such measures only **scratch the surface** of the problem» [The New York Times, p.6].

The idiom '**to (barely or only) scratch the surface**' means to only begin to explore or understand something; to deal with something only superficially.

«Rap-metal, once **all the rage** in the '90s thanks to bands like Limp Bizkit, now seems as relevant as Beavis and Butt-head» [The New York Times, p.8].

"Condos are **all the rage** right now," Hodgett said. "People like to be close to downtown and walk to restaurants and shopping. They can come home in the evening and not worry about mowing the lawn" [The Daily Mail, p.4].

The idiom '**all the rage**' means very popular, trendy.

Weber, the grill maker founded in Mount Prospect, Ill., in 1952, is refining its most expensive grill, the \$2,200 Summit Platinum D6, in response to buyers who want more **bells and whistles**, said Brooke Jones, a Weber product manager. "They are looking for stainless steel grills and more accessories like rotisseries, warmer drawers, side burners and hand lights," she said [The New York Times, p.5].

The idiom '**Bells and whistles**' means fancy features; product features that make a product more premium or expensive but that are not usually necessary.

It took Carolyn Fellwock and Charlie Watson only 11 months **to tie the knot** after meeting on Yahoo Personals – and three years more **to call it quits** [The Times, p 9].

The idiom '**to tie the knot**' means to get married.

The idiom '**to call it quits**' means to end something (such as a relationship, a job, a project, etc).

Some people who met a spouse online and later divorced aren't **losing heart**.

Some even say they would date online again [The Wall Street Journal, p. 5].

The idiom **'to lose heart'** means to give up hope; to get discouraged.

Diana Leal, a Woodland Hills paralegal, said that when she was working in Dallas, she immediately lost respect for her attorney boss when he asked her out for dinner. I couldn't believe it. I think he just fell for my beauty or something. And then when I said 'no,' he fired me," Leal said. "**Bottom line**, you can't be friends with your boss. It complicates things" [The New York, p.6].

The idiom **'Bottom line'** means the main point is...; the conclusion is...

Kids too into school have lost their love of learning (if they ever had any). They cram and forget. They're stressed. They're sleep-deprived. They compete with their "friends" and **kiss up** to their teachers [The Times, p.8].

Have a good relations hip with your boss. That does not mean **kiss up** to your boss. If it gets too far along a bad path, it means you don't get the good assignments, don't get the promotions and don't have a chance to advance your career. Plus, you may just be miserable. Make sure your relationship with your boss is open and honest, casual yet also professional [The Daily Mail, p.7].

The idiom **'to kiss up'** means to flatter; try to gain favor with; behave in a way to make people like you more.

But Vladimir Nuzhny, a toxicologist, said up to half of imported wine has not corresponded to the required quality since the fall of the Soviet Union. "It never killed anyone and Russian leadership used **to turn a blind eye**, but now relations are worsening with the Georgian and Moldovan leaders they don't see a need to ignore it any more," he said [The Guardian, p. 20].

The idiom **'to turn a blind eye'** means to ignore; to pretend that something is not happening; to let something illegal or wrong happen without saying anything.

George W. Bush can be sure of one thing when he next visits China on official business. Chinese president Hu Jintao won't try to emulate the Texas charm the US president dishes out at his Crawford ranch, dressing down **to shoot the breeze** over pork dumplings at a village restaurant [The Wall Street Journal, p.26].

The idiom **'shoot the breeze'** means to talk; to chat; to make conversation.

Steve Girdler, director of services at Kelly UK, agrees that Sugar's methods are impressive. "Sometimes I think we can be too soft in our assessment of graduates. But what's the point when we know that in reality, business can be a **dog-eat-dog** world?" [The Guardian, p.26].

The idiom '**dog-eat-dog world**' means a cruel world; a challenging environment in which people just look out for themselves.

As the cost of living for young people rises, the **helping hand** from parents is extending well past college years. – The New York Times There was a table for the folks from Alcoholics Anonymous, another where people could sign up for food stamps and another where homeless veterans could find a **helping hand** [The Guardian, p.7].

The idiom '**(the or a) helping hand**' means assistance; help.

In one of his first acts as president, Obama was **gagging for** the prison at Guantánamo closed within the first year of his presidency and ordered a review of the status of the roughly 245 men still detained there. The review is underway now [The Guardian. p.9].

The idiom 'be gagging for something' means to want something or want to do something very much

«Companies developing this technology are not necessarily **cashing in**» [The Wall Street Journal, p.33].

The idiom '**cash in (on something)**' means to make money doing something.

Being based on the accomplished practical and theoretical research we came to the conclusion that idioms are figurative expressions which do not mean what they literally state is and since they are so frequently encountered in both oral and written discourse, comprehending and producing idioms present language learners with a special vocabulary learning problem The essential feature of idioms is lack of motivation. This term (idiom) habitually used by English and American linguistics is very often treated as synonymous with the term phrasiological unit. Phrasiological units are habitually defined as non – motivated word – groups that cannot be freely made up in speech but are reproduced as ready – made units. The phraseological units may be classified into three big groups taking into account mainly the degree of idiomacity: Phreological fusions, phreological unities, phreological collocations the essential features of idioms are stability of the lexical components and lack of motivation. Idioms add spice to the communication discourse thus making it more palatable. Idioms are often used by both journalists and politicians as short hand ways of expressing opinion or conveying ready made evaluations.

Newspaper is a publication that appears regularly and frequently, and carries news about a wide variety of current events Newspapers are most often published

on a daily or weekly basis, and they usually focus on one particular geographic area where most of their readers live. English newspaper style may be defined as a system of interrelated lexical, phraseological and grammatical means, which is perceived by the community as separate linguistic unity that serves the purpose of informing, instructing the reader. The available literature on studies of idioms shows the considerable involvement of newspapers by the researchers. Studies in Argentina, Finland and the United States indicate strong links between having used newspapers in the class and academic achievement. We came to the conclusion that the use of idioms isn't only an interesting theme for research but also, creatively used, newspapers and magazines can effectively promote learning, critical thinking, creativity and resourcefulness in learners of all ages. Studies have shown that using newspapers in education helps students increase their vocabulary and comprehension.

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Հոդվածում ուսումնասիրվում է իղիոմների կիրառությունը բրիտանական և ամերիկյան թերթերում: Անգլերենը հարուստ է իղիոմատիկ արտահայտություններով: Իղիոմատիկ արտահայտությունների իմաստը հնարավոր չէ կռահել արտահայտության առանձին բաղադրիչների իմաստներից: Իղիոմի իմաստը հասկանալու համար անհրաժեշտ է ծանոթ լինել տվյալ լեզվի լեզվամշակութային առանձնահատկություններին: Բրիտանական և ամերիկյան թերթերը հարուստ են իղիոմատիկ արտահայտություններով, որոնց շնորհիվ էլ խոսքն ավելի արտահայտիչ և դիպուկ է դառնում:

УПОТРЕБЛЕНИЕ ИДИОМ В БРИТАНСКИХ И АМЕРИКАНСКИХ ГАЗЕТАХ

Ани ИГИТЯН

РЕЗЮМЕ

В статье исследуется употребление идиом в британских и американских газетах. Английский богат идиоматичными выражениями. Смысл идиоматичных выражений невозможно понять из смыслов отдельных составляющих. Для того чтобы понять смысл нужно быть знакомым с лингвокультурологическими особенностями данного языка. Британские и американские газеты полны идиоматичными выражениями, с помощью которых слово становится более выразительным и точным.