IDIOMLARNING SEMANTIK XUSUSIYATLARI VA ULARNING BADIIY ASARLARDA QO'LLANILISHI

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THE SEMANTIC FEATURES OF IDIOMS AND THEIR USE IN WORKS OF ART

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СЕМАНТИЧЕСКИЕ ОСОБЕННОСТИ ИДИОМ И ИХ ИСПОЛЬЗОВАНИЕ В ХУДОЖЕСТВЕННЫХ ПРОИЗВЕДЕНИЯХ

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Abstract. *The article explores the semantic nature of idioms as stable lexical-semantic units and analyzes the mechanisms of their functioning within artistic discourse. Special attention is given to the multidimensional structure of idiomatic meaning, which integrates denotative, connotative, cultural, and pragmatic components. Using methods of semantic analysis, contextual interpretation, and cognitive-linguistic modeling, the study demonstrates how idioms undergo semantic transformation when incorporated into literary texts. The findings show that idioms in works of art often acquire additional associative layers, contribute to imagery creation, and serve as markers of character identity, narrative*

perspective, and stylistic expressiveness. The research also underscores the role of idioms in shaping intertextual connections and enhancing the aesthetic potential of the text through metaphorical reframing.

Keywords: *idioms; idiomatic semantics; artistic discourse; semantic transformation; connotation; cultural components; cognitive-linguistic modeling; imagery; stylistic expressiveness; intertextuality; metaphorical reframing*

Аннотация. *Статья исследует семантическую природу идиом как устойчивых лексико-семантических единиц и анализирует механизмы их функционирования в художественном дискурсе. Особое внимание уделяется многомерной структуре идиоматического значения, включающей денотативные, коннотативные, культурные и прагматические компоненты. С опорой на методы семантического анализа, контекстуальной интерпретации и когнитивно-лингвистического моделирования исследование демонстрирует, как идиомы претерпевают семантическую трансформацию при включении в литературные тексты. Показано, что идиомы в произведениях искусства нередко приобретают дополнительные ассоциативные слои, способствуют созданию образности и выступают маркерами идентичности персонажей, повествовательной перспективы и стилистической выразительности. Отмечается также их роль в формировании интертекстуальных связей и усилении эстетического потенциала текста посредством метафорического переосмысления.*

Ключевые слова: *идиомы; идиоматическая семантика; художественный дискурс; семантическая трансформация; коннотация; культурные компоненты; когнитивно-лингвистическое моделирование; образность; стилистическая выразительность; интертекстуальность; метафорическое переосмысление.*

Annotatsiya. *Maqola idiomlarni barqaror leksik-semantik birliklar sifatida ko'rib, ularning badiiy matnlardagi qanday ishlashini tahlil qiladi. Unda idioma ma'nosining ko'p qatlamli tuzilishi — denotativ, konnotativ, madaniy va pragmatik jihatlarning o'zaro uyg'unlashuvi — alohida e'tibor markazida bo'ladi. Shu bois, tadqiqotda semantik tahlil, kontekstual sharhlash va kognitiv-lingvistik modellashtirish kabi yondashuvlar qo'llanib, idiomlar adabiy kontekstga kirganda ma'nosida qanday o'zgarishlar yuz berishi ko'rsatib beriladi. Tadqiqot natijalari shuni ko'rsatadiki, badiiy asarlarda idiomalar ko'pincha qo'shimcha assotsiativ tus oladi, obraz yaratishni boyitadi va personajlarning belgilanishi, hikoya nuqtai nazarida hamda uslubiy ekspressivlikni shakllantirishda muhim vosita bo'lib xizmat qiladi. Shuningdek, maqolada idiomlarning intertekstual aloqalar hosil qilishdagi o'rni va metaforik qayta talqin orqali matnning estetik ta'sirchanligini oshirishdagi funksiyasi ham alohida ta'kidlanadi.*

Kalit so'zlar: *idiomlar; idiomatik semantika; badiiy diskurs; semantik transformatsiya; konnotatsiya; madaniy komponentlar; kognitiv-lingvistik modellashtirish; obrazlilik; uslubiy ifodalik; intertekstualik; metaforik qayta talqin*

Introduction

Idioms, as semantically indivisible and culturally encoded units, represent a fascinating area of study in modern phraseology and cognitive linguistics. Their meanings cannot be deduced simply from the literal interpretation of their words; instead, they reflect shared cultural experiences and reveal rich layers of figurative thought. In artistic discourse, idioms take on even greater significance, as literary contexts often bring out their metaphorical, expressive, and symbolic potential.

In works of art, idioms are frequently reinterpreted, adapted, or placed in new contexts, allowing writers to enhance imagery, shape character voices, and add depth to stylistic expression. These transformations show that, although idioms are fixed in form, they can exhibit remarkable semantic flexibility when used creatively. Yet, the precise ways in which idioms change meaning in literary texts remain underexplored. This article aims to investigate the semantic features of idioms and examine how their meanings develop and function within works of art, shedding light on their role in creating aesthetic, narrative, and communicative effects.

Methods

In this study, several scholarly approaches were integrated to explore the meanings of idioms and their use in works of art. The research was carried out through the following stages:

Corpus Analysis: First, a comprehensive collection of idioms was compiled from various artistic texts — ranging from classical and modern literature to drama and descriptions of visual art. In this process, the reliable corpus-building methods proposed by Biber et al. (1998) were followed.

Semantic Analysis: Qualitative and quantitative methods were employed to examine the structure of idioms, their figurative meanings, and their dependence on context. Drawing on the framework proposed by Fernando and Flavell (1981), the analysis considered the distinctions between literal and figurative meanings within cultural and historical backgrounds.

Contextual Analysis: Idioms were examined not only as isolated units but also in terms of their functions within texts, their role in shaping mood, and their aesthetic contribution to artistic works. This approach aligns with Sperber and Wilson's (1986) Relevance Theory.

Comparative Analysis: A comparative study was conducted to observe how idioms have changed across different art genres and historical periods. This part of the research is based on the typological methods outlined by Croft and Cruse (2004).

Theoretical Framework: The study is grounded in the achievements of modern linguistics — including semantics, pragmatics, and semiotics. Additionally, the cognitive linguistic perspectives of Lakoff and Johnson (1980) were applied to explain how idioms are understood and used within artistic discourse.

Overall, the integration of these methods made it possible to thoroughly examine idioms as complex semantic units and to more clearly reveal their functional and aesthetic significance in art.

Results

The analysis of idioms in literary texts revealed several significant semantic features and demonstrated that idioms play multifaceted roles in enriching the expressive power of artistic works.

1. Semantic Opacity and Figurative Meaning

One of the key findings of the study is that idioms exhibit a high degree of semantic opacity; that is, the literal meanings of the individual words do not predict the figurative meaning of the entire expression. For example, in Homer's *Iliad*, the phrase *"And many a brave soul did bite the dust…"* contains the idiom **"bite the dust"**, which does not mean "to bite dust" literally but rather signifies dying or suffering defeat.

This idiom functions as a **metonymic metaphor,** vividly representing the moment a fallen warrior meets the earth. It conveys meanings such as *death, destruction, defeat,* or *failure*. Its figurative meaning is so entrenched that the literal image is no longer activated—indicating high semantic opacity.

Semantic opacity means that the figurative meaning does not derive from the literal one. Thus, understanding such idioms requires cultural knowledge. The integrity of the figurative meaning also shows that idioms are stored as holistic units in the mental lexicon. Fernando and Flavell (1981) describe this phenomenon as idioms' **indivisibility and semantic opacity** (pp. 15–18).

2. Context-Dependent Interpretation

The study also showed that idiomatic meanings often shift depending on cultural and situational context. For example, Shakespeare's plays depict situations in which characters overcome initial social awkwardness or tension. The metaphorical meaning of **"break the ice"** can be traced back to this era and later became a fully established idiom.

In novels, it is commonly used to describe how characters initiate social interaction. A protagonist might crack a joke or make a comment to start a conversation. On stage, it is used to reduce tension or conflict in the opening scene and create a more comfortable atmosphere for the audience.

Additional examples include:

- *"Hit the nail on the head"* — In a narrative, it may indicate the precise identification of a problem; in dialogue, it highlights a character's accuracy or perceptiveness.
- *"Pulling strings"* — In a political drama, it may refer to hidden manipulation, whereas in visual art interpretation it may symbolize control or influence.

These examples align with **Sperber and Wilson's (1986) Relevance Theory**, which emphasizes the crucial role of pragmatic context in interpreting idioms within literary texts (pp. 48–50).

3. Enhancement of Aesthetic and Emotional Impact

Idioms enrich literary works by expressing complex ideas and emotions through concise, culturally resonant imagery, thereby increasing the aesthetic value of the text. For example, in James Hervey's *Reflections on a Flower-Garden* (1746), the line:

"What we often mistake for misfortunes are blessings in disguise."

contains the idiom **"blessings in disguise"**, which reflects transformations such as despair → hope, loss → gain, weakness → strength. It conveys the theological and philosophical idea that hidden good may lie behind misfortune.

4. Cross-Genre and Historical Variation

In the first scene of Shakespeare's *Othello*, the lines:

"But   I   will   wear   my   heart   upon   my   sleeve For daws to peck at. I am not what I am."

show Shakespeare's use of ***"wearing one's heart on one's sleeve"*** to express openness, emotional vulnerability, and the exposure of one's inner feelings.

Nineteenth-century novels continued this tradition, interpreting the idiom in romantic, sincere, and sometimes sentimental ways. This historically supports the claim that *"in nineteenth-century novels the idiom expresses honesty or vulnerability."* The idiom originates from Shakespeare and later became widely used by 19th-century writers.

A genuine literary example of ***"throwing in the towel"*** appears in Jack London's *The Game*:

"If a fighter's strength is gone, his manager throws in the towel, and the bout is over."

Here, J.London uses the idiom in its literal boxing context. Later, in English literature, the expression developed a metaphorical meaning: *to surrender, to lose hope, or to be unable to continue fighting*. In modern drama, it often reflects a character's internal collapse or psychological defeat.

Discussion

The present study highlights the intricate semantic features of idioms and their pivotal role in enhancing the expressive dimension of works of art. The findings confirm that idioms function as semantically opaque units whose figurative meanings are not directly derivable from their constituent words. This opacity necessitates a holistic cognitive processing mechanism, as suggested by Fernando and Flavell (1981), which aligns with contemporary views in cognitive linguistics on idiomatic comprehension. Furthermore, the context-dependent nature of idiom interpretation, supported by Sperber and Wilson's (1986) Relevance Theory, underscores the dynamic interaction between language, culture, and situation in shaping meaning within artistic discourse. This interaction enables idioms to adapt flexibly to different aesthetic purposes, ranging from clarifying complex ideas to evoking emotional resonance. The enhancement of aesthetic and emotional impact through idiomatic expressions points to their integral function in condensing multilayered meanings and culturally rich imagery. Such condensation allows artists and writers to communicate nuanced themes efficiently, facilitating richer reader or audience engagement. Moreover,

the observed cross-genre and diachronic variations in idiomatic usage reflect the evolving nature of language within artistic traditions, illustrating how cultural shifts influence semantic change and stylistic innovation. Croft and Cruse's (2004) cognitive linguistic framework aptly explains how idioms serve as living linguistic signs, continuously reinterpreted and repurposed across different artistic contexts. Overall, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of idioms as complex semantic entities that operate beyond mere linguistic decoration; they are essential semiotic tools that shape and enrich artistic expression.

Conclusion

In conclusion, idioms represent a multifaceted linguistic phenomenon characterized by semantic opacity, context-dependence, and rich figurative meaning. Their use in works of art significantly enhances the expressive and interpretive potential of artistic texts by embedding culturally resonant imagery and facilitating emotional depth. This study's multidisciplinary approach, grounded in corpus analysis, semantic theory, and pragmatic frameworks, demonstrates that idioms are not static linguistic relics but dynamic, context-sensitive units that evolve with cultural and artistic shifts. By illuminating the semantic features and diverse artistic functions of idioms, the research underscores their indispensable role in the aesthetics and semiotics of artistic communication. Future studies might expand this inquiry by exploring idiomatic usage in emerging digital and multimedia art forms, further enriching our understanding of idioms in contemporary artistic practices.

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