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## **Idioms denoting derogatory attitudes toward a person in the English mass media**

### **Ідіоми на позначення зневажливого ставлення до людини в англійській мові**

**Анотація.** Ідіоми не лише втілюють народну мудрість та вічні істини, але й відіграють важливу роль у сфері засобів масової інформації. Ці вирази, часто засвоєні ще в дитинстві, дають мовцям можливість без особливих зусиль передавати свої думки в стислій і доступній формі. Використання ідіоматичних виразів у мас-медіа не лише сприяє мовній економії, але й підсилює образність та виразність мовної комунікації.

В англійських засобах масової інформації ідіоми часто використовуються для вираження ставлення до людей. Переважна більшість ідіоматичних виразів відбивають зневажливе ставлення до групи людей. Ідіоми, що позначають певні групи людей, часто зображують їх у негативному світлі та передають почуття презирства, зверхності або зневаги до людей, на яких вони спрямовані.

Інший спосіб позначення зневажливого ставлення в ідіомах полягає у використанні негативних конотацій, пов'язаних з певними професіями, переконаннями чи соціальними групами. Такі одиниці можуть містити вказівку на приховані плани, поведінку або маніпуляції з боку осіб, які належать до цих груп. Ці висловлювання використовуються для вираження скептицизм-

му, критики або недовіри до референтів, позначених ідіомою.

Ідіоматичні вирази можуть містити негативну оцінку, засновану на таких ознаках, як стать, вік, раса чи соціальний статус. Одиниці, що належать до цієї групи, містять зневажливі та принизливі висловлювання чи порівняння. Вживаючи такі ідіоми, мовці або автори висловлюють негативні думки або упередження щодо осіб, на яких вони спрямовані. Варто зазначити, що ідіоми, які позначають негативне ставлення до чоловіків, відносно нечисленні порівняно з тими, що стосуються жінок. Однак, негативні ідіоми, спрямовані на чоловіків, часто посилюють традиційні гендерні стереотипи та асоціюють жіночність зі слабкістю або неповноцінністю. Ці одиниці увічнюють дискримінацію за ознакою статі і вважаються образливими.

Отже, ідіоми в медійному просторі слугують потужним інструментом для вираження зневажливого ставлення до окремих осіб чи груп. Вони забезпечують лаконічну та ефективну комунікацію, виражаючи презирство, скептицизм, критику чи упередження. Однак важливо пам'ятати про наслідки та потенційну шкоду від використання таких ідіом, особливо тих, що увічнюють стереотипи або дискримінують певні статі чи соціальні групи.

**Ключові слова:** ідіома, ставлення до людини, зневажливе ставлення, мова ЗМІ.

**Abstract.** *Idiomatic expressions do not only embody popular wisdom and timeless truths but also play a significant role in the realm of mass media. These expressions, often learned during childhood, equip speakers with the ability to effortlessly convey their thoughts in a concise and accessible manner. The use of idiomatic expressions in mass media not only contributes to linguistic economy by replacing lengthy explanations with a single phrase but also enhances the vividness and imagery of language communication.*

*In the English mass media, idioms are frequently employed to express attitudes toward individuals in various ways. Some idioms express a derogatory attitude towards a group of people. For example, certain idioms target specific groups, portraying them in a negative light. These idioms can convey a sense of disdain, superiority, or dismissiveness towards the targeted individuals.*

*Another way idioms denote derogatory attitudes is through the use of negative connotations associated with certain professions, beliefs, or social groups. Such idioms may suggest hidden agendas, secretive behavior, or manipulation by individuals belonging to these groups. These idioms are used to convey scepticism, criticism, or mistrust towards the targeted individuals.*

*Idioms can also carry negative evaluations based on factors such as gender, age, race, or social status. Some idioms use derogatory language or comparisons to belittle or mock individuals based on these attributes. Invoking such idioms, speakers or writers express negative opinions or prejudices towards the targeted individuals. It is worth noting that idioms denoting negative attitudes towards males are relatively scarce compared to those targeting females. However, when negative idioms targeting males are used, they often reinforce traditional gender stereotypes and associate femininity with weakness or inferiority. These idioms perpetuate gender-based discrimination and may be considered offensive.*

*Thus, idioms in the mass media serve as an instrument for expressing negative attitudes towards individuals or groups. They allow for concise and impactful*

*communication, conveying disdain, scepticism, criticism, or prejudice. However, it is important to be mindful of the implications and potential harm caused by the use of such idioms, particularly those perpetuating stereotypes or discriminating against certain genders or social groups.*

**Key words:** *idiom, attitude to a person, derogatory attitude, media language.*

**Introduction.** Language is a powerful tool for expressing attitudes, and idiomatic expressions serve as a rich resource for conveying nuanced meanings. In the context of mass media, idiomatic expressions serve as effective means for journalists, editors, and writers to effectively engage their audience. Idioms can captivate readers, evoke emotional responses, and communicate complex ideas with efficiency. Idioms enable media professionals to infuse their work with color and figurative language, making it more engaging and memorable for the audience. The English mass media frequently employs idioms to express attitudes toward individuals, effectively shaping public opinion. This article investigates the distinctive features of idiom usage in the English mass media concerning the portrayal of people and their associated attitudes.

Idioms have long been recognized as an integral part of everyday English communication, serving as a means to add depth, richness, and vividness to language. They are commonly used in spoken conversations, written texts, and various forms of media, including fiction, social media, publications, songs, movies, and TV shows. The prevalence of idiomatic expressions in the English language highlights their significance and impact on communication across different domains.

In the realm of mass media, idiomatic expressions take on a special role in shaping public opinion and influencing the audience's perception of individuals and events. Journalists, editors, and writers carefully select and employ idioms to convey their evaluations, opinions, and judgments concisely and impactfully. Leveraging idioms, media professionals can capture attention, evoke emotions, and enhance the overall persuasiveness of their messages. The idiomatic language used in media discourse contributes to linguistic economy by replacing lengthy explanations with a single phrase, making it more accessible and memorable for the audience. Furthermore, idioms infuse media content with vivid imagery, creating a more engaging and immersive experience for the readers or viewers.

According to R. Thyab, idioms are commonly utilized in everyday English conversation as they enhance the substance of communication and facilitate the speakers' ability to articulate their thoughts with clarity [7, p. 106]. Employing idiomatic expressions, individuals can add depth and richness to their speech, making it more engaging and effective in conveying nuanced meanings. Additionally, idioms serve as a means to succinctly convey complex ideas or emotions, enabling speakers to express themselves in a concise and impactful manner.

Idioms, characterized by their metaphorical or non-literal meanings, have been found to be prevalent in various forms of English communication, as highlighted by A. Müller et al. [4, p. 848]. These idiomatic expressions can be encountered in English fiction, social media, publications, songs, movies, and TV shows. Given the widespread use of English as a lingua franca (ELF) and the growing number of individuals learning English as a second or foreign language (ESL/EFL), English learners frequently come across idioms in their language journey.

In the realm of media, phraseology serves as a potent mechanism for communicating a particular attitude, enabling the recipient to perceive the surrounding reality and interpret the presented information. This is predominantly evident in article titles (in the case of informative, analytical, and feature journalistic genres) and slogans (in advertising and PR texts). According to D. Syzonov, employing manipulative techniques, phraseological units have the capacity to shape society's prevailing values within the mass circulation of information. In advertising, this influence is wielded with utmost precision and persuasiveness [3, p. 46]. The author believes that the category of evaluation in media phraseology is intrinsic to mass media, which not only informs but also persuades. Journalists employ linguistic resources to express their opinions, utilizing manipulation as a means to achieve their goals. Within this context, evaluation plays a crucial role. Undoubtedly, phraseology in the media aids in providing a more nuanced and qualitative assessment of the situation [3, p. 47].

S. Pomyrcha's article offers a comprehensive examination of phraseological units that convey various aspects of a person's character. The author delves into the semantics and structural characteristics of these units, specifically focusing on their portrayal of character traits. Through an analysis of the phraseological corpus, it becomes evident that the language primarily comprises phraseological with negative evaluation [2, p. 64]. Similar findings have been obtained by U. Bylytsia studying comparative idioms denoting moral and ethical personality traits in the English language world view. The author notes that from an axiological perspective, there is a notable quantitative prevalence of idiom units with a negative evaluation within the examined set [1, p. 14].

The relevance of the research lies in exploring how idiomatic expressions are used in the English mass media to convey negative attitudes toward individuals. Idioms play a significant role in the realm of mass media as they contribute to linguistic economy by replacing lengthy explanations with a single phrase and enhance the vividness and imagery of language communication. Examining the distinctive features of idiom usage in the mass media, the research aims to shed light on how idioms

are harnessed to express evaluations, opinions, and judgments concisely and impactfully.

The aim of the research is to investigate the distinctive features of idiomatic expressions used in the English mass media to denote negative attitudes toward individuals. The study seeks to explore how idioms are employed as linguistic devices to convey evaluations, opinions, and judgments in a concise and impactful manner. It aims to analyze various examples of idioms and their underlying linguistic mechanisms in order to shed light on how idioms are harnessed to communicate subtle nuances of opinion and evaluation. The research also aims to understand the pragmatic functions of idioms in the mass media, such as shaping public opinion, enhancing reader engagement, and facilitating economy of expression.

**Material and methods.** The methodology employed in this research involves a qualitative analysis of idiomatic expressions used in the English mass media to denote attitudes toward individuals. The analysis includes several approaches including definitional analysis of idiom meaning and contextual analysis.

The definitional analysis of idiom meaning is performed to determine the semantics of idioms and to uncover the underlying connotations and nuances conveyed by these expressions. This analysis helps in identifying the evaluative, metaphorical, or vivid nature of the idioms and how they contribute to the portrayal of individuals and their associated attitudes.

The contextual analysis is conducted to understand the usage of idiomatic expressions in their specific media contexts. It involves collecting a diverse range of idiomatic expressions from online publications of the prominent English newspaper “The Guardian”. These idioms are then analyzed within the broader context of the articles or headlines, in which they appear. Considering the surrounding text and the target audience, the researchers gain insights into how the idioms contribute to the intended message and attitude.

**Results and discussion.** Idioms are fixed expressions consisting of words whose combined meaning may differ from the individual meanings of the constituent words. They often carry cultural and contextual connotations, making them valuable resources for precise and efficient communication. In the context of mass media, idioms allow journalists, editors, and writers to convey attitudes toward individuals in a succinct and impactful manner.

In the English mass media, idioms are frequently employed to express attitudes toward individuals in various ways. Some idioms express a derogatory attitude towards a group of people, for example, “the chattering classes” [6, p. 50] denotes a derogatory stance towards

a specific group of people, namely articulate and educated individuals who express liberal opinions about society and culture. The use of the component “chattering” suggests that their opinions are seen as trivial, implying that they engage in empty talk without substantial action or impact. The term carries a negative connotation and dismisses their viewpoints as inconsequential: *“In the continuing fallout from the child benefit disc disaster, the government’s IT chiefs can draw one small consolation: the “transformational government” programme to join up public services through IT is now on the **chattering classes**’ agenda”* [5].

Describing the government’s IT program as being “on the chattering classes’ agenda”, the author implies that these individuals, known for expressing liberal opinions about society and culture, have now taken an interest in the program. The tone suggests that their involvement is seen as unwelcome or even problematic. It suggests that their concerns may be seen as excessive or uninformed, downplaying the significance of their viewpoints.

This idiom “the (great) unwashed” [6, p. 302] also expresses a derogatory attitude towards a group of people, referring to the mass or multitude of ordinary individuals. The term “unwashed” implies a lack of refinement, education, or social standing, suggesting that these people are perceived as ignorant, uncultured, or socially inferior. It can be used to demean or belittle them based on their perceived lower social status. The addition of “great” in parentheses intensifies the derogatory tone, emphasizing the speaker’s disdain or contempt for this group, for example: *“A subsequent Instagram video, in which Williams does the same thing after wishing a woman Happy New Year; suggests he might have been joking, but how concerned should a public figure be about contact with the **great unwashed**?”* [5].

The use of the phrase “the great unwashed” in the given example emphasizes a divide between the public figures and the general population. It suggests that public figures may perceive the public as unclean or potentially infectious, reinforcing the condescending attitude embedded in the term.

Idioms can carry a positive or negative evaluation of a certain group of people based on certain aspects such as race, age, gender, profession, political or religious beliefs. For instance, the idiom “gnomes of Zurich” [6, p. 124] refers to Swiss financiers or bankers and is often used in a derogatory manner to suggest that they have a secretive and sinister influence over financial matters. It implies that these individuals, like gnomes hiding in underground vaults, operate behind the scenes and manipulate financial markets for their own benefit: *“Harold Wilson blamed **the gnomes of Zurich**, a disparaging term for Swiss bankers,*

when his economic policies went awry, while John Major pointed the finger at currency speculator George Soros for wrecking his government's finances" [5].

In the examples provided, the idiom is used to portray Swiss bankers as powerful and influential figures in the world of finance. The example mentions Harold Wilson, a former British Prime Minister, blaming the "gnomes of Zurich" for his economic policies going wrong. The idiom is employed to convey a negative perception of Swiss financiers, depicting them as shadowy figures with significant control and influence over financial matters, often to the detriment of others.

The idiom "the unco guid" [6, p. 302] is an idiom coined by the Scottish poet Robert Burns. It refers to individuals who are self-righteous and excessively pious in their religious beliefs and behaviors. The term is often used in a derogatory or mocking manner to criticize those who are overly zealous in their religious convictions and impose them on others: "*Each book packs a fair wallop against the godly, which is singularly welcome to those of us who have suffered many dreary years having God's message stuffed down our throats by the religious self-righteous (the 'unco guid', as Burns called them)*" [5].

In the given context, the author employs the idiom to express their discontent with religious individuals who forcefully impose their beliefs on others. They refer to themselves and others who share similar sentiments as "doubters" and suggest that the religious self-righteous, or the "unco guid", have been imposing their religious messages on them for many years. The use of the idiom highlights the author's exasperation with individuals who exhibit an intense urge to proselytize and forcefully promote their religious convictions. Using the term, the author conveys a sense of annoyance and suggests that the behavior of the "unco guid" is unwelcome and undesirable. Thus, the idiom serves to criticize the self-righteous and proselytizing tendencies associated with some religious individuals, reflecting the author's scepticism and frustration with such behavior.

The attitude to gender is also a basis for many negative idioms, for instance, "call-girls", "ice queen", "a dumb Dora", etc., for example: "*The second minister, Lord Jellicoe, who was a cabinet minister and whose father had commanded the fleet at the battle of Jutland, told a secret security inquiry that he had started using call girls because of the 'exceptionally heavy burden of work' he faced, including preparing for the arrival of the Ugandan Asians*" [5].

In the given context, the idiom "call girl" refers to a prostitute or sex worker who is contacted by clients through a phone call. It is used to describe individuals involved in sexual scandals and affairs, specifically in the case of Lord Lambton and Lord Jellicoe, who were ministers in Ted

Heath's government and resigned due to their involvement with call girls. The idiom carries a negative connotation and is often associated with illicit or immoral activities. It implies paid sexual services and suggests secrecy, as the clients typically arrange meetings with the sex workers through phone calls. In the context of the article, the idiom highlights the scandalous behavior of the ministers and the impact it had on their political careers.

It should be noted that males are determined by fewer negative idioms in the media than women. One of such rare idioms is "big girl's blouse" [6, p. 30] used in a derogatory manner to insult someone, implying that they are weak, timid, or lacking in courage. It is typically used to mock a person, particularly a man, by comparing them to a woman's garment that is traditionally associated with femininity and perceived as delicate or non-threatening, for example: "*Boris Johnson's first Prime Minister's Questions was immediately embroiled in controversy after footage appeared to show him gesticulating towards Jeremy Corbyn, saying: "Call an election, you great big girl's blouse" [5].*

In the context of the article, Boris Johnson, the Prime Minister at the time, is shown gesticulating towards Jeremy Corbyn, the leader of the Labour Party, and uttering the phrase "Call an election, you great big girl's blouse" during Prime Minister's Questions (PMQs) in the UK Parliament. The insult is directed at Corbyn, suggesting that he is not bold or assertive enough to call for an election. The usage of this idiom sparked controversy, with social media users criticizing Johnson for employing a sexist and inappropriate comment within the parliamentary setting. The idiom has been previously used by Johnson to insult others, indicating a pattern of his choice of language. In this specific instance, the phrase is seen as an attempt to belittle Corbyn and undermine his position. It is important to note that the idiom "big girl's blouse" is considered offensive and reinforces negative gender stereotypes associating femininity with weakness or inferiority. Its usage perpetuates gender-based discrimination.

**Conclusions.** Idioms play a crucial role in language, allowing speakers to convey complex meanings efficiently. In the context of mass media, idiomatic expressions are frequently employed to express attitudes toward individuals. This article explores the features of idiom usage in the English mass media to convey attitudes toward a person. Analyzing various examples and their underlying linguistic mechanisms, we aimed to shed light on how idioms are harnessed to communicate subtle nuances of opinion and evaluation. Understanding these features can enhance our comprehension of media discourse and the persuasive power it wields.

The use of idiomatic expressions to denote attitudes toward a person in the English mass media is a prominent feature of media discourse.



Idioms serve as linguistic devices that convey evaluations, opinions, and judgments in a concise and impactful manner. They play a crucial role in shaping public opinion, influencing reader engagement, and facilitating economy of expression.

Understanding the features and pragmatic functions of idioms in the mass media can enhance our comprehension of media discourse and the persuasive power it wields. By analyzing examples of evaluative idioms, metaphorical idioms, and colorful idioms, we can discern the nuances and attitudes associated with individuals.

Thus, idioms are a powerful tool in the English mass media for denoting attitudes toward individuals. Their usage enhances persuasive communication, engages readers, and efficiently conveys complex evaluations. Exploring the features and pragmatic functions of idioms in media discourse provides valuable insights into the ways in which language shapes public opinion and influences our perceptions of individuals.

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