

РОЗДІЛ IV. ПРОБЛЕМИ ЛІНГВІСТИКИ ТЕКСТУ, ДИСКУРСОЛОГІЇ, КОГНІТИВНОЇ ЛІНГВІСТИКИ

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DOI: 10.31558/1815-3070.2024.47.7

ENGLISH IDIOMS IN WORKPLACE DISCOURSE: FUNCTIONAL, SEMANTIC AND STRUCTURAL FEATURES

У статті проаналізовано семантичні, функціональні, синтаксичні та структурні особливості ідіом, які вживаються в англійськомовному дискурсі робочого місця. Досліджено характерні особливості дискурсу робочого місця. Він охоплює офіційні, напівофіційні та неофіційні розмови на робочому місці різного ступеня асиметрії між колегами різного статусу та рівня кваліфікації. Встановлено роль і значення ідіом у комунікації на робочому місці. Виокремлено 9 тематичних груп фразеологізмів: робочий процес, звільнення, ділові переговори, лідерство, люди, планування, фінансові питання та продаж. За критерієм семантичної прозорості, більшість ідіом є семантично непрозорими. Виявлено, що досліджувані ідіоми здебільшого виконують номінативну та комунікативну функції. Аналіз синтаксичних характеристик ідіом дискурсу робочого місця засвідчив домінування вербальних (дієслівних) та субстантивних (іменникових) ідіоматичних виразів, тоді як речення складають найменшу частку. Найпоширенішою структурною моделлю вербальних ідіом є модель $V + Det + N$, а субстантивні ідіоми здебільшого представлені структурними моделями $N + N$ та $Adj + N$.

***Ключові слова:** дискурс робочого місця, англійськомовні ідіоми, семантичний, функціональний, синтаксичний, структурний, особливості.*

Introduction. Language plays a vital role in human communication, acting as a powerful tool for conveying ideas, emotions, and complex thoughts. Within the realm of language, idioms form a fascinating aspect that adds color, richness, and cultural depth to everyday conversations.

In the context of workplace discourse, idioms often find themselves intertwined with professional jargon, reflecting the unique dynamics and interpersonal interactions within organizational settings. Understanding and effectively utilizing idiomatic expressions in the workplace is essential for successful communication, as it enhances one's ability to express ideas concisely, convey messages with nuance, and establish rapport with colleagues.

The study of idiomatic expressions in workplace discourse offers valuable insights to researchers and scholars in linguistics, communication, and translation studies. Exploring the semantic and syntactic properties of idioms deepens the understanding of language usage and contributes to theoretical frameworks in these fields.

Review of publications. The concept of workplace discourse is not new and has become an increasingly popular area of research within sociolinguistics. It has been the subject of scientific works by A. Koester (Koester 2006, 2010) who offered an insightful overview of workplace discourse distinguishing it from other terms that are frequently used interchangeably with workplace discourse, namely institutional discourse and professional discourse; she uses both genre analysis and a corpus-driven approach to examine workplace discourse in a wide variety of workplace contexts; A. Birtalan (Birtalan 2019) who concentrated on the discourse genre of unidirectional communication and decision-making, offering illustrative examples of workplace talk, and showed that the existence of relational markers carries out important functions within workplace discourse. Moreover, owing to the complex nature of the term ‘workplace discourse’, it is often studied through comparison with institutional discourse, which was meticulously investigated by J. Heritage and S. Clayman (Heritage et al. 2010); professional discourse, which was examined by such linguists as S. Sarangi and C. Roberts (“Talk, Work, and Institutional Order” 1999), B.-L. Gunnarsson (Gunnarsson 2009), K. Kong (Kong 2014: 5), etc.; and business discourse, thoroughly investigated by F. Bargiela-Chiappini, C. Nickerson, B. Planken (Bargiela-Chiappini et al. 2007). At the same time, P. Drew and J. Heritage (Drew et al. 1992: 21–25) presented the results of a comprehensive conversation analysis of institutional discourse without drawing a dividing line between the terms ‘workplace discourse’ and ‘institutional discourse’. The definition of workplace discourse remaining ambiguous and sometimes confusing, it is necessary to identify its clear markers.

Numerous linguists have coined definitions of the term ‘idiom’ including S. Alavi, A. Rajabpoor (Alavi et al. 2015), C. Fellbaum, A. Geyken, A. Herold, F. Koerner, G. Neumann (Felbaum et al. 2006), D. Hanych, I. Oliinyk (Ганич та ін. 1985), T. Ifill (Ifill 2002), P. Kvetko (Kvetko 2009), J. Seidl, W. McMordie (Seidl et. al. 1988), J. Sinclair (Sinclair 1995) and others.

Both foreign and domestic scholars show a growing interest in analyzing the semantic and syntactic features of idioms in general and English idioms in particular. These characteristics of English phraseological units have been studied by S. Alavi, A. Rajabpoor (Alavi et al. 2015), C. Fernando (Fernando 1996), T. Ifill (Ifill 2002), P. Kvetko (Kvetko 2009), R. Moon (Moon 1998), etc. However, owing to the lack of exploration regarding the usage of English idioms in workplace discourse, this concern requires a more meticulous investigation through the lens of the functions they perform as well as their semantic and structural features.

The **aim** of the paper is to delve into the functional, semantic and syntactic features of English idioms used in workplace discourse. Thus, the following **objectives** were to be accomplished: to investigate the specificities of workplace discourse; to scrutinize definitions of the term ‘idiom’; to select common English idioms used in workplace discourse; to group the selected idioms into semantic categories; to classify the idiomatic expressions based on the degree of opacity and functions; to identify the semantic and analyze the structural features of the selected idioms.

The **object** of the paper is English idioms used in workplace discourse and its **subject** is the functional, semantic and syntactic features of English idioms used in workplace discourse.

The **material** of the research comprised about 250 English idioms, which are used in workplace communication. Lexical items were selected from authentic vocabulary workbooks that students use to acquire economic vocabulary skills, namely Check Your English Vocabulary for Banking and Finance, Check Your English Vocabulary for Business and Administration, Check Your English Vocabulary for Human Resources, Advanced Business English Idioms Visual Guide: Master Sales & Marketing Conversations; from podcasts about business and workplace communication, including Bloomberg Podcasts, Quick Business English's podcast, Business Daily Podcast, Workplace English Podcast, 6 Minute English, Business English Pod, Down to Business English Podcasts, TED Business Podcasts, Business English Podcasts from All Ears English; from movies The Big Short, The Second Act; from YouTube educational videos, namely Learn English for Business with Will Smith, Learn English with Jennifer Aniston, Boost Your Business & Your English; and from other sources, including Online Business English Vocabulary Exercises & Lessons from Blair English and animated series English at Work from BBC Learning English. The meanings of the idioms were checked in Cambridge and Merriam-Webster Dictionaries.

Methods used as a methodological basis of the study include analysis of theoretical aspects of workplace discourse; the comparative method to distinguish specific features of workplace discourse through its comparison with business discourse and professional discourse; continuous sampling of language material and linguistic analysis to conduct a comprehensive study of the selected idioms used in workplace communication and present research results; the descriptive method to systematically inventory the idioms and explain their structure and functions; the method of semantic and syntactic analysis to distribute idioms in workplace communication in thematic groups and identify the structure of the lexical units under study; the method of quantitative analysis to calculate the data obtained; the methods of induction and deduction to draw general conclusions.

Despite the numerous researches conducted by domestic and foreign scholars on the semantic and syntactic features of English idioms, there remains a lack of comprehensive exploration regarding their usage in workplace discourse. Hence, the **novelty** of the study lies in an attempt to generalize the findings of Western sociolinguists and single out transparent markers for workplace discourse, as well as in analyzing the functional, semantic and syntactic features of English idioms that have become integral to modern workplace communication but have not been thoroughly studied yet. The examination of the concept of 'workplace discourse' and its characteristics in comparison with professional, institutional and business discourses, the study of structural-semantic semantic and functional features of English idioms commonly used in workplace communication hold **theoretical significance**, whilst of **practical importance of the results of the study** determines the possibility of using its main provisions in teaching modern English phraseology, English for Specific

Purposes, Methods of Business Translation as well as in compiling tutorials for these courses.

Results of research. Workplace discourse is an integral part of discourse within any community. According to A. Koester's, it "provides an overview of the rapidly developing field of spoken and written workplace interaction, taking a fresh perspective on research methods and key issues in the field" (Koester 2010).

The term 'workplace' refers to "the site or location where a person works" (Oxford English Dictionary). A workplace associates an individual with their obligations related to a specific task that needs to be accomplished, along with all the accompanying responsibilities it entails.

Since discourse as a communicative process has no clearly defined boundaries, it interacts with other related discourses and often overlaps with them. According to A. Koester, workplace discourse may belong to institutional discourse, to professional discourse and to business discourse (Koester 2010: 3). Some linguists emphasize the need to separate one discourse from another by abstracting from certain parameters because discourse is a relative and subjective concept (Дроздова 2010). In light of this, it is expedient to look at the aspects that distinguish workplace discourse from other closely related and commonly confused ones – institutional, professional and business discourses. This involves recognizing the contextual scopes of each term.

A study conducted by P. Drew and J. Heritage uses workplace discourse as a synonym of institutional discourse based on conversation analysis (Drew et al. 1992: 21–25). Initially, early studies in conversation analysis centered predominantly on institutional discourse, with a particular focus on environments such as courtrooms, the media, etc. As scholarly interest in institutional settings grew, conversation analysis methodologies were increasingly applied to a broader array of contexts including doctor-patient interactions, business meetings, educational settings, various legal contexts, news interviews, political debates, radio and television talk shows, and numerous other settings. The authors elaborated a comprehensive approach to distinguish institutional discourse from other types of discourse. The approach systematically identifies several pivotal criteria that differentiate 'institutional talk' from informal everyday conversations. Notably, a paramount factor among these criteria is the concept of 'goal orientation'. Additionally, institutional conversations operate under constraints on allowable contributions, leading to a narrower range of acceptable discourse within this context compared to ordinary discussions. Furthermore, such interactions are frequently characterized as asymmetrical, marked by an uneven distribution of institutional power or specialized knowledge among participants. This emphasis is evident not only in the selection of lexicon, especially the use of technical or professional jargon but also in the use of terms such as 'we' to denote organizational membership or employ 'institutional euphemisms' (Drew et al. 1992: 21–25). Later, J. Heritage and S. Clayman described institutional discourse as "interaction that is professional, task-focused" (Heritage et al. 2010: 2).

The most commonly shared view on professional discourse is that it means communication in the domain of a particular profession. For example, S. Sarangi and C. Roberts ("Talk, Work, and Institutional Order" 1999), interpret professional

discourse as the one used by professional practitioners. In her book *Professional Discourse*, B.-L. Gunnarsson analyses the main differences between professional discourse and other types of discourse, identifying the following categorical features: (1) expert discourse related to different domains, (2) goal-oriented, situated discourse, (3) conventionalized form of discourse, (4) discourse in a socially ordered group, (5) discourse dependent on various societal framework systems, and (6) dynamically changing discourse (Gunnarsson 2009: 5). The term ‘professional discourse’ is also used by another well-known researcher in this field, K. Kong, attributing it to a narrow range of communicative interactions. In particular, according to him, “professional discourse is the language used by professionals including lawyers, doctors and engineers” (Kong 2014: 5). This definition sharply limits the circle of discourse participants; furthermore, this statement seems to contradict with the above-mentioned definition by B.-L. Gunnarsson that in professional discourse at least one of the participants must be an expert in a specific professional community. In the course of our investigation, it is important to emphasize the fact that the above-mentioned definitions of professional discourse presuppose communication with at least one specialist in a particular field, while the workplace discourse, which is the focus of our attention, does not have such restrictions, as well as many other categorical features. On this basis, we can agree with A. Koester (Koester 2010) that workplace discourse can be part of institutional, business and professional discourses, while remaining a separate discourse.

Workplace discourse is also commonly confused with business discourse. Examining the features of the latter, we refer to our previous studies (Ishchuk et al. 2023: 39), where we defined the term ‘business discourse’ as the oral or written expression of the mindset and values that characterize the world of business, conveyed through a variety of practices and thematically related texts that cover a broad range of business topics, and analyzed within their broader socio-economic contexts. A narrower definition of business discourse is offered by F. Bargiela-Chiappini et. al. According to them, business discourse should be understood as oral or written communication between people within business contexts who behave per their status and roles in the corporate hierarchy (Bargiela-Chiappini et al. 2007: 3). Meanwhile, describing workplace discourse A. Koester argue that it extends its reach to workplace environments, including factories, hospitals, and the non-profit sector, in addition to commercial organizations (Koester 2010: 5-6).

Analysis of linguistic literature shows that research on business discourse has predominantly focused on business communication within formal and structured events such as meetings and negotiations. These activities are seen as crucial components of business interactions, where individuals come together to discuss important matters, make decisions, and establish agreements. As such, there has been a significant emphasis on understanding the dynamics of these formal settings, including strategies for effective communication, managing conflicts, and reaching consensus. As A. Koester argues, such encounters are characterized by distinct starting and ending points, along with internal structures delineated by distinct phases. Instead, as the author claims, unlike business discourse, workplace discourse is also shaped by

workplace conversations involving spontaneous interactions such as making arrangements, briefing, giving instructions, decision-making or simply socializing (Koester 2006: 9).

Taking the aforementioned into account, we can state that although workplace discourse may overlap with related types of discourse such as institutional, business and professional, it has its distinctive features, which allows examining it separately. Within workplace discourse, which encompasses a range of communicative settings, including those where business communication takes place, a multitude of formal, semi-formal and informal conversations inevitably take place among its members. These talks may vary, ranging from work-related assignments to casual chats among colleagues, and are either symmetrical or asymmetrical. Workplace talks occur in a wide range of settings, encompassing casual oral and written communication between coworkers, interactions during service encounters or in professional contexts, and even extending to international business communication.

With the recent global economic development that has resulted in a diversification of institutional and non-institutional settings, the domain of studying workplace communication has drastically expanded. It addresses various aspects of interactions, such as the development of professional identities (including leadership roles), patterns of communication within meetings, the significance of humor, small talk, and narrative within professional environments. However, insufficient attention is given to such a crucial aspect of workplace discourse as the use of idioms in various work-related contexts.

The term ‘idiom’, meaning ‘a peculiarity in language’, has its origins in the late 16th century and is derived from Middle French ‘*idiome*’, and Late Latin and Greek ‘*idioma*’ (Online Etymology Dictionary). Despite the numerous linguistic works dedicated to idioms, a consensus regarding their precise definition is still lacking. Defining an idiom, some linguists focus on the difference in the meaning of a group of two or more words produce when taken together (Seidl et. al. 1988: 12–13; Sinclair 1995: 5). Others emphasize the inability to deduce the meaning of a fixed expression from a combination of the meanings of its constituent elements (Alavi et. al. 2015: 170; Ifill 2002: 2; Ганич та ін. 1985: 89). С. Fellbaum adds that these multi-word units “...pose a challenge to our understanding of grammar and lexis that has not yet been fully met” (Fellbaum et al. 2006: 349). P. Kvetko claims that an idiom “may have a literal meaning in some contexts but a completely different sense in another” (Kvetko 2009: 13).

The Oxford Dictionary gives, presumably, the most detailed definition of an idiom: “a form of expression, grammatical construction, phrase, etc., used in a distinctive way in a particular language, dialect, or language variety; spec. a group of words established by usage as having a meaning not deducible from the meanings of the individual words” (Oxford English Dictionary).

Considering the aforementioned explanations, we can understand an idiom as a fixed expression consisting of a group of words that functions as a single semantic unit, and its meaning cannot be deduced from the individual meanings of its constituent words. Idioms often possess metaphorical or non-literal meanings that extend beyond

their literal components. Furthermore, idioms showcase lexical and semantic stability, maintaining their form and meaning across various communicative contexts.

Using idioms in workplace discourse holds significant importance as it enhances communication by adding depth, clarity, and cultural context to conversations. Idioms not only foster rapport and understanding among colleagues from diverse linguistic backgrounds but also capture complex ideas concisely, which is especially useful in high-pressure or time-sensitive situations. However, it is important to use idioms carefully, considering the context and audience, as misinterpretation could lead to confusion or even unintended offense. When used wisely, idioms can serve as valuable tools that enrich communication and strengthen professional relationships.

The following excerpts from talks that occurred in the workplace convincingly illustrate the wide use of idioms in workplace discourse:

(1) An office conversation between two colleagues discussing a rival corporate giant

*Terry: That's all true, but to start these giants are able to undercut me by 50% and are willing to provide a custom made redesign of the prototype. They've really **got the upper hand** here. I'm working 24/7 trying to **figure out** how we can compete.*

*John: Geez, I guess you've **got your work cut out** for you. What happens if you don't **land the project**?*

(2) A talk between two co-workers discussing large spaces without internal walls dividing them up:

*Neil: Someone's taken my coffee mug too! Agh, ever since we started **hot-desking**, people in this office think they can do whatever they like!*

*Sam: Neil doesn't like the new rule about office hot-desking. Maybe he should look for another job and quit the **nine-to-five**.*

A. Birtalan explains that the frequent use of idioms and metaphors in different workplace conversations “is an indication that they have become pragmatically specialized as signaling markers” (Birtalan 2019: 168). Semantically, such idioms can be divided into eight thematic groups (henceforth TG).

TG Working Process includes idioms that reflect the dynamics of working, collaborating, and maintaining productivity. For instance, *to work your fingers to the bone* = to work very hard, *to pull your weight* = to do your fair share of the work, *to be snowed under* = to be very busy, *to sweat blood* = to work very hard, *to get your feet under the table* = to get settled in, etc.

TG Firing consists of the following idiomatic expressions: *to give the axe* = to dismiss someone from a job, *to be made redundant* = to lose the job because you are no longer needed, *to get the boot* = to be fired, *to give someone the sack* = to fire someone, *to give someone their marching orders* = to fire someone, etc.

TG Business Negotiations contains idioms that pertain to the process of negotiating agreements, contracts, or deals. For example, *an offer one can't refuse* = an extremely attractive offer, *to drive a hard bargain* = to negotiate effectively, *to stand one's ground* = to insist on one's position, *to cut a deal* = to make a mutually beneficial arrangement, *to have an ace up one's sleeve* = to have an important and secret advantage in a negotiation, etc.

TG Leadership includes idioms that highlight the importance of taking initiative, making decisions, and guiding a team. For instance, *to call the shots* = to make the

important decisions in an organization, *a changing of the guard* = a change in leadership at an organization, *movers and shakers* = influential people, especially in a particular field, *too many chiefs and not enough Indians* = a situation, when everyone wants to be a leader, and no one wants to do the actual work, *a yes man* = a weak person who supports the ideas and opinions of his/her superior, etc.

TG People consists of idioms that describe various attributes, behaviors, and characteristics of individuals. For instance, *a bean-counter* = an accountant, *a chief cook and bottle washer* = a person who is responsible for everything, *a big cheese* = an important person, *a yes-man* = a weak person who supports the ideas and opinions of his/her superior, *Jack (Jill) of all trades* = a person that is competent with many skills but is not outstanding in any particular one, etc.

TG Decision Making consists of various idiomatic expressions, such as *to give someone carte blanche* = to entrust a decision to someone, *up in the air* = not yet decided, *take it or leave it* = the person must decide now whether to accept the proposal or not, *to fish or cut bait* = to make a decision or give someone else a chance, *to be on the same page* = to understand a situation in the same way, etc.

TG Planning includes the following idioms: *against the clock* = forced to hurry to meet a deadline, *to burn the midnight oil* = to work late into the night, *a Busman's holiday* = a working vacation, *a crunch time* = a period of high pressure when one has to work hard to finish something, *an eleventh hour* = the last minute, etc.

TG Finance contains idioms that convey concepts related to money management, budgeting, and financial strategies. For example, *a cash cow* = a product which is a regular source of income for a company, *in the red* = losing money, *to break the bank* = to use all of one's money, *money talks* = rich people can get whatever they want, *a ballpark figure* = an approximate number or a rough estimate of the cost of something, etc.

TG Sales consists of idiomatic expressions that focus on the activities involved in selling products and the closing stages of a sales process. For example, *to close a deal* = to sign or to complete a business negotiation or contract, *out the door* = with everything included in a price, *to price something out of the market* = to sell goods or services at such a high price that nobody wants to buy them, *to sell someone a bill of goods* = to trick someone, *a selling point* = an attractive feature of something for sale, etc.

The bar chart below (Fig. 1) represents the frequency of the aforementioned TGs:

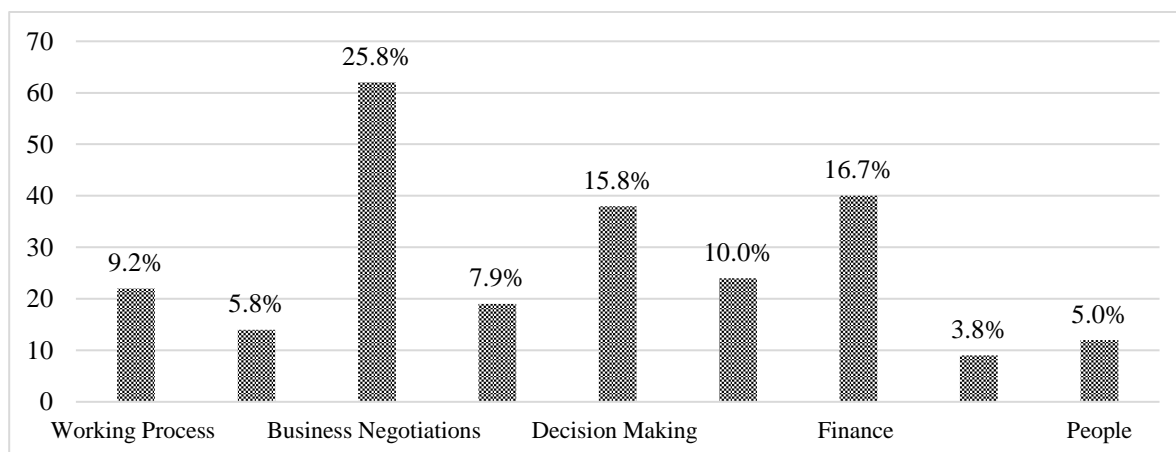


Fig. 1 Frequency of idioms used in workplace discourse by thematic groups

According to the chart, the majority of idioms used in workplace discourse (62 idiomatic expressions, constituting 25.8%) originated from TG Business Negotiations. This group is followed by TG Finance (40 idioms, equivalent to 16.7%), TG Decision Making (38 idioms, representing 15.8%), TG Planning (24 idioms, accounting for 10.0%), TG Working Process (22 idioms, making up 9.2%), and TG Leadership (19 idioms, comprising 7.9%). The least common groups are TG Firing (14 idioms, or 5.8%), TG People (12 idioms, or 5.0%), and TG Sales (9 idioms, or 3.8%).

There is a variety of criteria according to which idioms can be classified. One of them is the degree of semantic opacity or transparency of the idioms. In our study, we employed the classification by C. Fernando (Fernando 1996), according to which all idioms can be divided into three categories:

- pure (or non-literal) idioms – established, non-literal multiword expressions with a conventionalized meaning, e.g. *on the bubble* = not certain to keep the job, *out the door* = with everything included in a price, *a golden handshake* = a large payment received when leaving a company, etc. This group consists of 119 idiomatic expressions, or 49.6% of the total.

- semi-idioms – idiomatic expressions, that include both literal and nonliteral components. While one or more constituents have a clear literal meaning, others contribute to a nonliteral sub-sense, e.g. *to pull your weight* = to do your fair share of the work, *to sign on the dotted line* = to give the consent to something by signing an official document, *an eleventh hour* = the last minute, etc. This group comprises 42 idioms (17.5%).

- literal (or transparent) idioms – idioms, that can be interpreted based on the meanings of their individual parts, e.g. *an offer one can't refuse* = an extremely attractive offer, *to give someone the sack* = to fire someone, *take it or leave it* = the person must decide now whether to accept the proposal or not, etc. This group constitutes 79 idiomatic expressions (32.9%).

Some linguists offer a nuanced breakdown of idiomatic expressions, classifying them according to their functions. R. Moon (Moon 1998), for instance, distinguishes the following categories of idioms: informational (conveying various types of information), evaluative (reflecting the speaker's attitude to the situation), situational (conveying conventions, clauses, and exclamation), modalizing (expressing modality, truth values, advice, and requests), and organizational (structuring the text and signalling discourse structure).

In our research, we applied the classification outlined by the renowned Slovak scholar P. Kvetko (Kvetko 2009: 38) to categorize the selected workplace discourse idioms into four groups according to their functions:

- idioms with a **nominative** function encapsulate concepts and designate objects, states, processes, actions, qualities, etc. This group comprises 56 idiomatic expressions, or 23.3% of the total. For example, *a Busman's holiday* = a working vacation, *a cash cow* = a product which is a regular source of income for a company, *a ballpark figure* = an approximate number or a rough estimate of the cost of something, etc.;

- idioms with a **communicative** function depict situations and convey standalone statements; this group includes 10 idioms (4.2%). They often have the structure of a sentence, e.g. *money doesn't grow on trees* = money is limited, *money talks* = rich people can get whatever they want, *time is money* = time is valuable, etc.;

- idioms with **both nominative and communicative** functions (159 idioms, or 66.3% of the total) possess a mixed and somewhat restricted structure, e.g. *to give someone the sack* = to fire someone (someone is given the sack), *to price something out of the market* = to sell goods or services at such a high price that nobody wants to buy them (something is priced out of the market), *to sell someone a bill of goods* = to trick someone (someone is sold a bill of goods), etc.;

- idioms **without any distinctive nominative and communicative** functions include modal and interjectional idioms or those serving a cohesive purpose, e.g. *all told* = with everything taken into consideration, *all things being equal* = all aspects of a situation remain the same, *all things considered* = taking all factors into consideration, etc. This group consists of 15 idiomatic expressions (6.3%).

According to the classification of idioms proposed by P. Kvetko (Kvetko 2009: 27–28), which is based on their syntactic functions, the idioms under consideration were divided into **non-sentence** (236 units, or 96%), and **sentence** idioms (10 units, or 4%). Following the same classification, we analyzed the selected non-sentence idioms from the point of view of their syntagmatic structure, which implies dividing them into **verbal** and **non-verbal** (nominal, adjectival or adverbial) idioms.

The pie chart below (Fig. 2) presents the comprehensive distribution of idioms used in workplace discourse based on their syntactic function including the syntagmatic structure of non-sentence idioms. The data reveals that verbal idioms constitute the largest portion, accounting for 57.5% of the total. Nominal idioms make up 23.3% of the distribution, while adverbial idioms represent 12.1%. Sentence idioms are observed at a frequency of 4.2%, and adjectival idioms are the least common, making up only 2.9% of the classification.

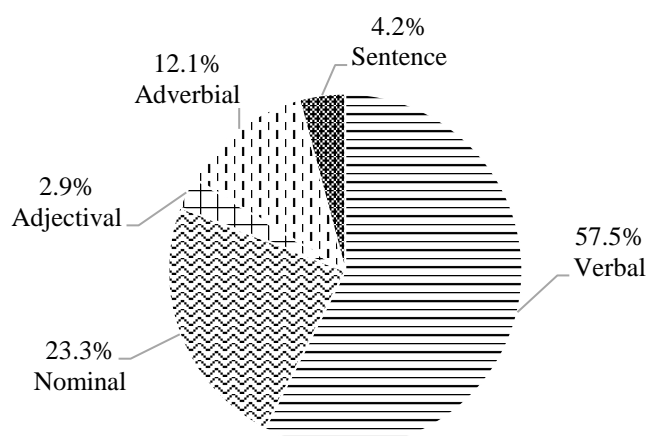


Fig. 2 Distribution of idioms used in workplace discourse based on their syntactic and syntagmatic features

After analyzing the structural composition of idioms used in workplace discourse, we obtained the following results.

Structural models of verbal idioms are represented by 138 units. The prevalent structural models of verbal idioms with examples are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Structural models of verbal idioms used in workplace discourse		
Structure	Examples of idioms	Number of occurrences
V + Det + N	<i>balance the books, call the shots, sweeten the deal</i>	17
V + N	<i>give ground, play hardball, take sides</i>	9
V + Adv	<i>break even, back down, fall behind</i>	6
V + Prep + Det + N	<i>sit on the fence, be in a quandary, toy with an idea</i>	6
V + Pron + N	<i>weigh your options, tighten your belt</i>	6
V + Det + Adj + N	<i>give a blank cheque, make a snap decision</i>	5
V + Pron + N + Prep + Det + N	<i>work your fingers to the bone</i>	4
V + N + Prep + N	<i>see eye to eye, put pen to paper, sell ice to Eskimos</i>	3
V + Pron + Det + N	<i>give someone the sack, call it a day</i>	3
V + Adj + N	<i>raise red flags, have second thoughts</i>	2
V + Adv + Prep + N	<i>get down to business, get down to nitty-gritty</i>	2
V + Conj + V	<i>nickel and dime, give and take</i>	2
V + N + Prep + Det + N	<i>take stock of the situation</i>	2
V + Prep + Det + Adj + N	<i>sign on the dotted line, be on the same page</i>	2
V + Prep + Pron	<i>sleep on it, sit on something</i>	2
V + Pron + Adj	<i>cut it fine, strike it rich</i>	2
V + Pron + Adj + N	<i>meet someone half-way, bet your bottom dollar</i>	2
V + Pron + N + Prep	<i>put your feet up, pull your socks up</i>	2
V + Pron + Prep	<i>iron something out, pencil something in</i>	2
V + Pron + Prep + Det + N	<i>bring nothing to the table, put someone on the spot</i>	2
V + Pron's + N	<i>change someone's mind, stand one's ground</i>	2
V + Pron's + N + Adv	<i>play one's cards right, put one's foot down</i>	2

The frequency of their occurrence is depicted in the pie chart below (Fig. 3).

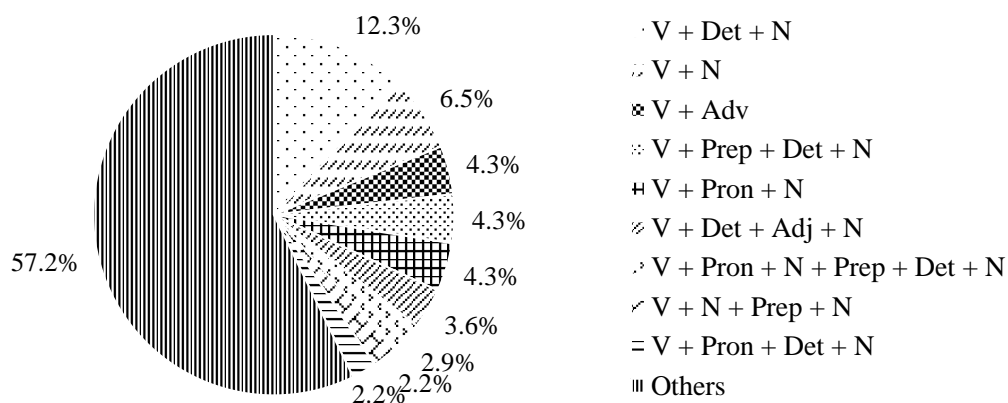


Fig. 3 Frequency of structures of verbal idioms used in workplace discourse

Among these patterns, the most prevalent one is *V + Det + N* found in 17 instances (12.3%) of the total. The second most frequent model is *V + N*, observed in 9 idioms (6.5%). Third place is jointly held by three structures: *V + Adv*, *V + Prep + Det + N*, and *V + Pron + N*, each accounting for 4.3% and comprising 6 instances. Other noteworthy structures include *V + Det + Adj + N* (3.6% or 5 idioms), *V + Pron + N + Prep + Det + N* (2.9% or 4 idioms), *V + N + Prep + N* and *V + Pron + Det + N* (each accounting for 2.2% or 3 idioms). The ‘Others’ category includes 79 idiomatic expressions (57.2%), which are represented by 62 structural patterns: 13 of them include 2 idioms (1.4%) each and the other 53 are represented by 1 idiom (0.7%) each.

The analysis of structures of nominal idioms employed in workplace discourse also reveals various patterns. The common structural models of nominal idioms with examples are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Structural patterns of nominal idioms used in workplace discourse

Structure	Examples of idioms	Number of occurrences
N + N	<i>ballpark figure, cash cow, bottom line</i>	16
Adj + N	<i>golden handshake, big cheese, common ground</i>	13
N + Prep + Det + N	<i>blood on the carpet, bang for the buck</i>	4
N + Conj + N	<i>movers and shakers, bread and butter, rank and file</i>	3
N + Prep + N	<i>agreement in principle, bone of contention</i>	2
N’s + N	<i>Hobson’s choice, Busman’s holiday</i>	2

The pie chart below illustrates the frequency of their occurrence (Fig. 4).

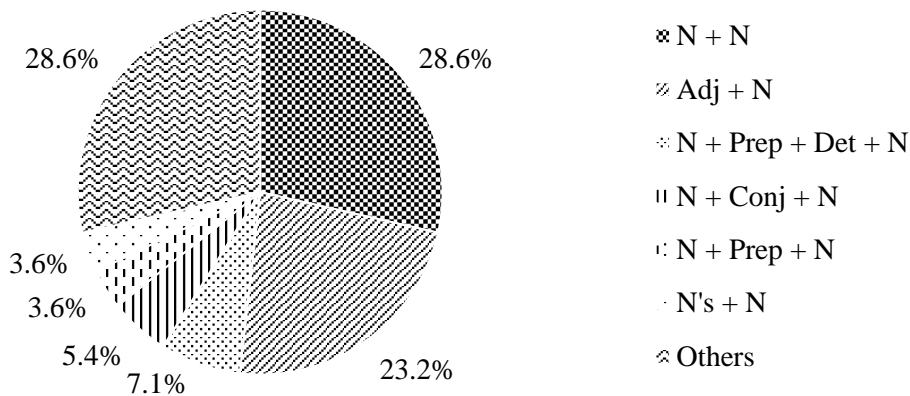


Fig. 4 Frequency of structures of nominal idioms used in workplace discourse

Among the 56 instances, the structure *N + N* emerges as the most frequent, comprising 16 cases (28.6%). *Adj + N* follows closely with 13 occurrences, indicating its significant presence (23.2%). The structural models *N + Prep + Det + N* and *N + Conj + N* are less frequent, with 4 (7.1%) and 3 (5.4%) instances respectively. Additionally, the patterns *N + Prep + N* and *N's + N* each appear twice (3.6% each), showcasing their moderate usage. A total of 16 instances (28.6%) fall under the ‘Others’ category, each represented by a distinct structural model: *Adj + Adj + N*, *Adj + N + Conj + N + N*, *Adv + N*, *Det + N + Pron + V*, *Det + Prep + Det + N's +*

N, N + Det + N, N + Prep + Adj, N + Pron + Mod. V + V, Ord. Num + N, Prep + Det + N + Prep + N, Prep + Prep + N, Prep + Det + N + Prep + Pron's + N, Prep + Prep + Det + N, Prep + Pron + Adj + N and Pron + N + Conj + Det + N.

Analysis of the structural patterns of adverbial idioms applied in workplace discourse uncovers the following insights (Table 3).

Table 3

Structural patterns of adverbial idioms used in workplace discourse		
Structure	Examples of idioms	Number of occurrences
Prep + Det + N	<i>on the bubble, for a song, at all costs</i>	14
Adv + Prep + Det + N	<i>ahead of the curve, up in the air, ahead of the game</i>	3
Adv + Prep + Det + Adj + N	<i>back to the drawing board, back to the salt mines</i>	2
Prep + N	<i>on point, at stake</i>	2
Adv + Conj + Adv	<i>back and forth</i>	1
Adv + N	<i>above board</i>	1
Adv + Prep + N	<i>up for grabs</i>	1
Det + N + Past Part	<i>all things considered</i>	1
Det + N + V + Adj	<i>all things being equal</i>	1
Det + Past Part	<i>all told</i>	1
Prep + Det + Adj	<i>in the red</i>	1
Adv + Pron+ N + Conj + Adv + Adv + N	<i>too many chiefs and not enough Indians</i>	1

The pie chart below illustrates the frequency of their occurrence (Fig. 5).

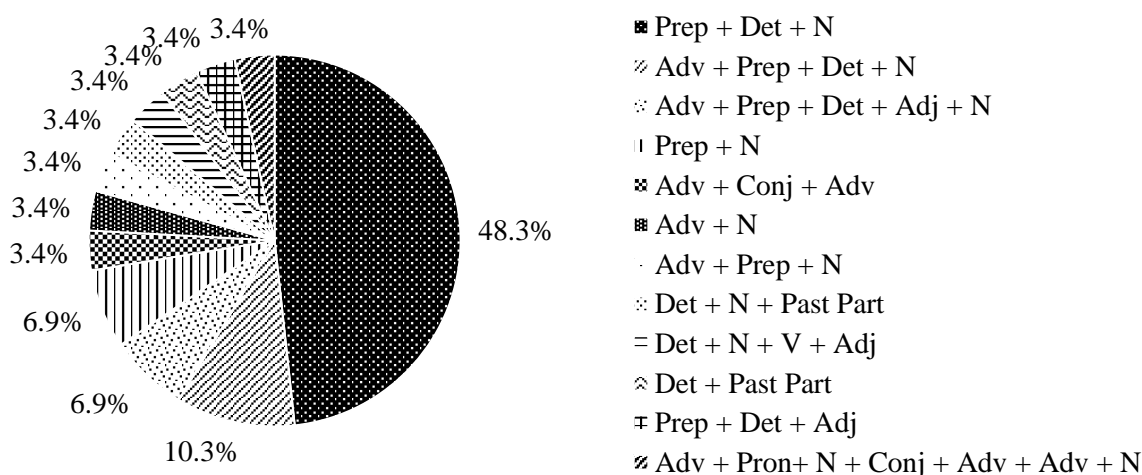


Fig. 5 Frequency of structures of adverbial idioms used in workplace discourse

Within the dataset of all studied idiomatic expressions, 29 adverbial idioms were identified. The most prevalent structure, observed in 14 instances, is *Prep + Det + N*, forming a notable presence (48.4%), followed by *Adv + Prep + Det + N* structural model (3 instances accounting for 10.3%). Such structural models as *Adv + Prep + Det*

+ *Adj + N*, and *Prep + N* are less frequent, each appearing 2 times (6.9% each). Other models, including *Adv + Conj + Adv*, *Adv + N*, *Adv + Prep + N*, *Det + N + Past Part*, *Det + N + V + Adj*, *Det + Past Part*, *Prep + Det + Adj*, and *Adv + Pron + N + Conj + Adv + Adv + N* emerge only once, adding to the diversity of structures.

Within the examined set of adjectival idiomatic expressions, 6 distinctive structures came to light (Table 4).

Table 4

Structural patterns of adjectival idioms used in workplace discourse

Structure	Examples of idioms	Number of occurrences
Adj + N	<i>cut-throat, cut-rate</i>	2
Adj + Prep + Adv + Det + N	<i>cheap at twice the price</i>	1
Adj + Pron + N + Prep + N	<i>worth its weight in gold</i>	1
Past Part + Past Part + Conj + Past Part	<i>signed, sealed, and delivered</i>	1
Past Part + Prep	<i>sold on</i>	1
Past Part + Prep + Det + Adj + N + Prep + Pron + N	<i>born with a silver spoon in one's mouth</i>	1

The pie chart below illustrates the frequency of occurrence of adjectival idioms (Fig. 6).

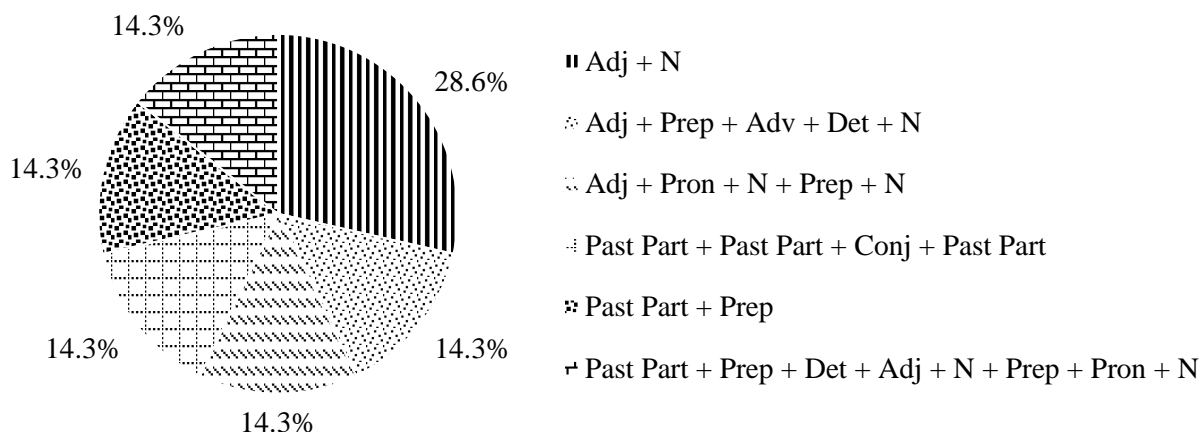


Fig. 6 Frequency of structures of adjectival idioms used in workplace discourse

According to the pie chart, the pattern *Adj + N* stands out, occurring twice and signifying its notable prevalence (28.6%). Other variations, including *Adj + Prep + Adv + Det + N*, *Adj + Pron + N + Prep + N*, *Past Part + Past Part + Conj + Past Part*, *Past Part + Prep*, and *Past Part + Prep + Det + Adj + N + Prep + Pron + N*, each appear once (14.3%), showcasing a nuanced use.

Sentence idioms commonly employed within the context of workplace discourse inherently have a structure of a full sentence, encompassing variations that can be either simple, compound, or complex. Upon careful examination, it becomes evident that each sentence idiom analyzed in this study possesses its own distinct and unique structural model, thus these idiomatic expressions are not subjected to structural analysis. Such diversity highlights the complex nature of these linguistic constructs,

each tailored to capture nuanced meanings and convey messages effectively in the workplace environment.

Conclusion. Generalizing the analysis above, it may be concluded that idiomatic expressions are deeply embedded in language and culture, and the issue of studying those used in workplace discourse is still topical. Workplace discourse is incorporated in the structure of institutional, professional and business discourses and is related to the physical place where people work. It includes formal, semi-formal and informal talks with different level of asymmetry between colleagues of different status and levels of expertise.

Based on the semantic criteria, identified were 9 thematic groups of idioms used in the workplace discourse: Business Negotiations (25.8%), Finance (16.7%), Decision Making (15.8%), Planning (10.0%), Working Process (9.2%), Leadership (7.9%), Firing (5.8%), People (5.0%), and Sales (3.8%).

By the degree of idiomaticity, the selected idioms were divided into three groups: pure idioms (119 idiomatic expressions, or 49.6%), literal idioms (79 idioms, accounting for 32.9%), and semi-idioms (42 idiomatic expressions, comprising 17.5%).

The analysis of the idioms according to their functions shows that idioms with both nominative and communicative functions dominate (159 idioms, constituting 66.3%), followed by idioms with a nominative function (56 idiomatic expressions, or 23.3%), idioms without any distinctive nominative and communicative functions (15 idioms, accounting for 6.3%), and idioms with a communicative function (10 idioms, comprising 4.2%).

The study shows that verbal idioms occupy the largest share of the vocabulary under analysis, constituting a substantial 57.5% of the overall distribution. In contrast, nominal idioms contribute 23.3% to the distribution. Adverbial idioms account for 12.1%, sentence idioms emerge at a frequency of 4.2% and adjectival idioms constitute the least common category, comprising a mere 2.9% of the overall classification, suggesting their limited application within the workplace communicative domain.

However, this study, while shedding light on significant aspects, does not encompass the entirety of idiomatic usage in professional settings. The continual evolution of language gives rise to new idiomatic constructs, thereby beckoning for further research into their semantic and syntactic features. Such aspects hold substantial implications not only for advancing our understanding of how idioms function within workplace communication but also for enriching communication in professional domains.

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List of abbreviations

TG – Thematic group
 N – Noun
 V – Verb
 Mod. V - Modal Verb
 Adj – Adjective
 Adv – Adverb
 Pron – Pronoun
 Past Part - Past Participle
 Det - Determinant
 Prep – Preposition
 Conj – Conjunction

ENGLISH IDIOMS IN WORKPLACE DISCOURSE: FUNCTIONAL, SEMANTIC AND STRUCTURAL FEATURES

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Abstract

Background: In today's fast-paced work environment, effective communication is essential for success. By mastering idiomatic expressions, individuals can improve their ability to express

themselves clearly and concisely, build stronger relationships with colleagues and clients, and advance their careers.

Both foreign and domestic scholars show growing interest in analyzing the functional, semantic and syntactic features of English idioms. However, due to the lack of comprehensive exploration regarding their usage in workplace discourse, this concern requires a more thorough and extensive investigation.

Purpose: The aim of the paper is to delve into the functional, semantic and syntactic features of English idioms used in workplace discourse.

Results: Based on the semantic criteria, identified were 9 thematic groups of idioms used in the workplace discourse: Business Negotiations, Finance, Decision Making, Planning, Working Process, Leadership, Firing, People, and Sales.

By the degree of opacity, the selected idioms were divided into three groups: pure idioms (119 idiomatic expressions, or 49.6%), literal idioms (79 idioms, accounting for 32.9%), and semi-idioms (42 idiomatic expressions, comprising 17.5%).

The analysis of the idioms according to their functions shows that idioms with both nominative and communicative functions dominate (159 idioms, constituting 66.3%), followed by idioms with a nominative function (56 idiomatic expressions, or 23.3%), idioms without any distinctive nominative and communicative functions (15 idioms, accounting for 6.3%), and idioms with a communicative function (10 idioms, comprising 4.2%).

The study shows that verbal idioms occupy the most significant share of the vocabulary under analysis, constituting a substantial 57.5% of the overall distribution; nominal idioms contribute 23.3% to the distribution; adverbial idioms account for 12.1%; sentence idioms emerge at a frequency of 4.2% and adjectival idioms comprise 2.9% of the overall classification.

Discussion: The investigation into the functional, semantic and syntactic features of English idioms used in workplace discourse carries significant implications for both academia and real-world application. A deeper understanding of how idiomatic expressions function within professional settings can lead to enhanced cross-cultural communication, fostering collaboration and mutual understanding. However, the continual evolution of language gives rise to new idiomatic constructs, thereby beckoning for further research into their semantic and syntactic features. Such aspects hold substantial implications not only for advancing our understanding of how idioms function within workplace communication, but also for enriching communication in professional domains.

Keywords: workplace discourse, English idioms, semantic, functional, syntactic, structural, features.

Vitae:

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Надійшла до редакції 05 лютого 2024 року
Рекомендована до друку 20 березня 2024 року