

University of Pardubice

Faculty of Arts and Philosophy

Idiomatic Expressions in Film Reviews

Martina Hradilová

Bachelor thesis

2014

Zadání práce

Prohlašuji:

Tuto práci jsem vypracovala samostatně. Veškeré literární prameny a informace, které jsem v práci využila, jsou uvedeny v seznamu použité literatury.

Byla jsem seznámena s tím, že se na moji práci vztahují práva a povinnosti vyplývající ze zákona č. 121/2000 Sb., autorský zákon, zejména se skutečností, že Univerzita Pardubice má právo na uzavření licenční smlouvy o užití této práce jako školního díla podle § 60 odst. 1 autorského zákona, a s tím, že pokud dojde k užití této práce mnou nebo bude poskytnuta licence o užití jinému subjektu, je Univerzita Pardubice oprávněna ode mne požadovat přiměřený příspěvek na úhradu nákladů, které na vytvoření díla vynaložila, a to podle okolností až do jejich skutečné výše.

Souhlasím s prezenčním zpřístupněním své práce v Univerzitní knihovně.

V Pardubicích dne 30. 6. 2014

Martina Hradilová

Acknowledgement

I wish to express my gratitude and thank to my supervisor Mgr. Jaromír Haupt for his patient guidance and valuable suggestions on the content of my thesis. I appreciate time he devoted to my work.

My special thanks belong to my family and my fiancé for all their support and encouragement during my studies.

ANNOTATION

The thesis is dedicated to the study of idiomatic expressions in film reviews in The New York Times. Its primary objective is to investigate the lexical, morphological and syntactic variations of the English idioms on a sample of randomly collected language material. Attention is paid to the frequency of idioms and idiom variations, including, a brief comment of the function of idioms in the chosen genre.

KEYWORDS

idiom, idiom variation, idiom transformation, idiom function

NÁZEV

Idiomatické výrazy ve filmových recenzích

ANOTACE

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá studiem idiomatických výrazů ve filmových recenzích publikovaných v americkém tisku New York Times. Hlavním cílem práce je studie idiomatických variací, a to jak lexikálních, morfologických či syntaktických, na vzorku náhodně sesbíraného jazykového materiálu. Pozornost je rovněž věnována četnosti výskytu idiomů a idiomatických variací. V neposlední řadě se práce zabývá zhodnocením funkce idiomů ve zvoleném žánru.

KLÍČOVÁ SLOVA

idiom, idiomy, variace idiomu, transformace idiomu, funkce idiomu

TABLE OF CONTENT

0. Introduction	11
1. Idiomatic Expressions	12
1.1. Defining Idioms	12
1.2. Basic Properties of Idioms	14
1.3. Another Features of Idioms.....	15
1.4. Form and Structure of Idioms	16
1.4. Idiom Function	17
2. Idiom Variation	20
3.1. Function of Idiom Variations	21
3.2. Classification of Idiom Variations	22
3.2.1. Čermák’s Classification	22
3.2.2. Liu’s Classification	22
3.2.3. Langlotz’s Classification	23
3.2.4. Fernando’s Classification	24
2. Film Review as a Genre	27
3.1. Genre	27
3.2. Journalism	27
3.2.1. Classification of Journalistic Genre	28
3.3. Definition of Review and its Function	28
3.4. Film Review vs. Film Criticism	29
4. Methodology.....	31
4.1. Data	31
4.2. Methodology of Idiom Analysis	32
4.3. Classification of Idiom Variation.....	33
5. Findings and Results.....	35
5.1. Frequency Analysis	35
5.1.1. Frequency of Idioms	35
5.1.2. Frequency of Idiom Variation.....	36
5.2. Classification of Idiom Variation.....	38
5.2.1. Replacement.....	39

5.2.2. Permutation.....	42
5.2.3. Addition.....	43
5.2.4. Deletion.....	44
5.3. Non-canonical Idioms and Idiom Variations.....	44
5.4. Function of Idioms.....	48
6. Conclusion.....	51
Resumé.....	53
Bibliography.....	56
I. Primary sources:.....	56
II. The secondary sources:.....	56
A. Dictionaries:.....	56
B. Other Literature.....	56
Appendix.....	Chyba! Záložka není definována.

LIST OF TABLES AND CHARTS

Table 1: Parameters for the definition of idioms	14
Table 2: Langlotz' classification of idiom variation.....	24
Chart 1: Frequency of occurrence of idioms	35
Chart 2: Frequency of occurrence of idiom variation I	37
Chart 3: Frequency of occurrence of idiom variation II	38
Chart 4: Classification scheme of idiom variation.....	39
Chart 5: Replacement of content words according to word classes	40
Chart 6: Classification scheme of idiom variation: Permutation	43

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

e.g.	for example
i.e.	that is
so	someone
so's	someone's
sb	somebody
sb's	somebody's
sth	something
<i>*example</i>	ill formed phrase/expression

0. Introduction

This thesis deals with English idiomatic expressions in authentic written texts of the selected genre: the film reviews. Its primary objective is to investigate idiom variation, an intriguing phenomenon in idioms, from both quantitative and qualitative perspectives. The aim of the paper is also focus on idiom and idiom variation frequency, and comment on the role and function of idioms in the chosen genre.

Theoretical insights into concepts dealt in this paper are outlined in the first three chapters of the thesis. Firstly, attention is paid to clarifying what an idiom is, what idioms' properties and functions are. The second chapter casts light on idiom variation and its possible classifications according to several linguists. In chapter 3, firstly concepts 'genre' and 'journalism' are briefly clarified from a general point of view. Then, several definitions of a film review as a genre are provided together with a section dealing with differences between the terms 'review' and 'critique'.

After describing the methods employed when working with the data in chapter 4, a close look is given to the results and findings. The chapter 5 investigates the quantitative and qualitative studies of idiomatic expressions identified in the collected corpus. Initially, attention is paid to the frequency of occurrence of idioms and idiom variation. Then, the paper focuses on classification of canonical idiom variations. Based on the study of a sufficient number of randomly selected language material, the aim is to divide indentified idiom variations into relevant categories, comment on the most frequent and the least frequent variations providing examples. Next section delves into idiom variations using a qualitative method. Interesting and less canonical occurrences of transformations are discussed. The last section examines and evaluates functions performed by idioms in the chosen genre. The main results are summarized in the last chapter 6.

1. Idiomatic Expressions

Idioms and idiomatic expressions form an inseparable part of any language. They are usually grouped within a larger class of linguistic expressions called figurative or non-literal language together with figurative devices such as metaphor, pun, simile etc. Or they are often referred to as a subset of set phrases / fixed phrases. They are the main subject of the study of Phraseology and Idiomatics, a relatively young branch of linguistics.

The concept of idiom covers a broad area. One glance at any dictionary of idioms and we can observe the complexity and variedness in idiomatic devices without being any experts on linguistics. Langlotz (2006, 1) draws attention to this typical feature of idioms in his book on idiomatic creativity and states that “the set of linguistic expressions termed ‘idiomatic’ is very heterogeneous”. *After all, in any case, by and large, put up with, as dead as a doornail, smell a rat, a friend in need is a friend indeed, good morning, etc.* are units that differ considerably in terms of their “structural complexity, their lexical, morphosyntactic, syntactic and semantic organization as well as their discursive function” (Langlotz 2006, 1). In short, idioms are very complex linguistic configurations; they may be relatively simple compounds, like *callgirl*, fixed collocations like *red herring*, complex expressions like *kick the bucket* (Vokáčová 2008) or even proper sentences like *true love never grows old*.

Because of this complexity and heterogeneity, there is no single or unique definition of idioms on which everyone would agree. Various linguists provide definitions on idioms varying to some extent depending on how many of the fundamental features were selected and which were emphasised (Langlotz 2006, 5).

1.1. Defining Idioms

In McMordie’s (1954, 5) view, “under idioms we include peculiar uses of particular words, and also particular phrases or turns of expression which, from long usage, have become stereotyped in English”. By ‘peculiar uses’ the author probably means what Fernando (1996, 63) describes as some “idioms do not easily show connections between the literal meanings of the individual words which make them up and the idiomatic one applicable to the whole expression”. For instance, considering the prototypical idiom *kick the bucket*, we cannot use the grammar rules to combine the meanings of *kick*, *the*, and *bucket* to obtain the idiom’s figurative meaning ‘to die’.

The former definition by Fernando (1996) can be found in many other forms expressing the same idea, i.e. idioms are noncompositional expressions. In other words, the idiom's meaning cannot be guessed according to the literal meanings of the idiom's individual elements. Another definition of type is stated by Cruse (1986, 37) who defines idioms as expressions "whose meaning cannot be inferred from the meaning of its parts", or by Makkai (1987, vi): "Idiom is the assigning of a new meaning to a group of words which already have their own meaning".

Langlotz (2006, 2) states that prototypical idioms have been traditionally characterized as "conventional multi-word units that are semantically opaque and structurally fixed". The former property refers to opaque meaning, i.e. the meaning is figurative. The latter feature points out the fixed nature of idioms and inability to be unanalysed; idioms are resistant to undergo any syntactic or lexical changes, i.e. variations.

The lastly mentioned definitions can be regarded as traditional definitions expressing the notion of noncompositional approach. This orthodox view of idioms holds that idioms are represented and processed similarly to long words and the idiom components do not influence the idiom's comprehension (Titone and Connine 1999, 1656). Thus, meaning of idioms is unpredictable (Liu 2012, 108). Idioms are believed to have fixed forms; they cannot be separated, substituted by other elements or further analyzed (Liu 2012, 108). Thus, idioms do not permit any variations. Linguists favouring traditional approach are, for instance, Katz and Postal (1963), Swinney and Cutler (1979) and Fraser (1970).

The opposing view called compositional (decompositional) believes that "meaning of each constituent of an idiom contributes to the overall meaning of the idiom, so the meaning of an idiom is predictable" (Liu 2012, 108). Idioms are compositional, i.e. there is a visible relation between the idiom's parts and its idiomatic (figurative) meaning. Idiomatic word sequences are semantically and syntactically analyzable (Titone and Connine 1999, 1656). This view is for instance represented by Nunberg et al. (1994) who claims that the majority of phrasal idioms are compositional.

It was suggested by various authors (e.g. Titone and Connine 1999, Liu 2012) that both views are inadequate. "Idioms are neither totally arbitrary nor conventional" (Liu 2012, 111). Titone and Connine (1999) suggest combining both approaches together.

1.2. Basic Properties of Idioms

This section summarizes fundamental idioms features already mentioned in the definitions in the previous part. Different linguists regard different characteristics as basic idiom properties therefore we cannot say there exists a stable list of them. For instance, Nunberg et al. (1994, 492) propose a list of idiomatic properties which help to determine prototypical and less prototypical idioms. Some of them are

- **Conventionality:** Idioms are conventionalized so their meaning or use cannot be entirely predicted “on the basis of a knowledge of the independent conventions that determine the use of their constituents when they appear in isolation from one another” (Nunberg et al. 1994, 492). According to Fernando (1996, 6), “the conventionality of an idiom is related to its currency in the speech community...”.
- **Inflexibility:** Idioms typically do not allow many syntactic modifications in contrast to non-idiomatic expressions.
- **Figuration:** Idioms typically involve means of figurative language such as metaphor, simile, hyperboles etc.
- **Informality:** Idiomatic expressions are typically associated with rather informal and colloquial spoken language.

The following table summarises the most frequently mentioned features of idioms according to Langlotz (2006, 3).

Table 1: Parameters for the definition of idioms

Semiotic dimension	Feature	Term
Grammatical status	Degree of conventionalisation or familiarity	Institutionalisation
Form	Formal complexity of construction: multiword unit	Compositeness
	Lexicogrammatical behaviour: restricted syntactic, morphosyntactic and lexical variability	Frozenness
Meaning	Meaning cannot be derived from constituent words but is figurative	Non-compositionality

- Institutionalisation expresses an idiom's degree of familiarity and conventionality.
- Compositeness captures that idioms are multi-word units consisting of at least two words. There are a few scholars who accept even single words as idioms, however this approach is viewed as minor.
- Frozenness can influence variability in idioms. The more frozen an idiom is, the less lexical and grammatical changes it can undergo.
- Non-compositionality is a feature regarded as primary in traditional definitions already mentioned. The meaning of an idiomatic expression is not determined by the meanings of its constituents and by the standard rules of language used to combine them.

Fernando (1996, 3) shares similar view as Langlotz (2006); she regards as basic features 'compositeness' (idioms are multiword units), 'institutionalization' (the form of idioms must be known to all language users) and 'semantic opacity' (idioms are often non-literal).

It is important to realize that apart from the property of conventionality, none of the listed characteristics can be automatically connected to all idioms. For instance, there are idioms which lack the property figuration (e.g. *by virtue of*) or any other. Nevertheless, we can come up with the set of generally accepted basic features. Vokáčová (2008, 26) in her dissertation on idioms summarizes three characterizing aspects in idioms which seem to be agreed on by majority scholars. Firstly, "idioms are understood as a type of multiword expression; secondly, idioms are conventionalized expressions; thirdly, idioms are often non-literal, which means that the meaning of idioms is not the sum of its constituents."

1.3. Another Features of Idioms

The distinctive feature of idioms is that though they consist of more than one word, they are also lexicalized, i.e. "they display to some extent the sort of internal cohesion" that remind us of single word (Cruse 1986, 38). In other words, "idioms are characterized by integrity of meaning and form" (Liu 2012, 108). As a result of this feature, an idiom normally resists interruption and re-ordering its parts. On the other hand, many idioms are syntactically flexible; for instance, we can replace one of its parts with a pronoun, we can use some idiom either in active or passive voice etc. So although, idioms have the semantic unity of single words, they also possess the grammatical flexibility in varying degrees (Fernando 1996, 74). Therefore, majority of linguistic (e.g. Cruse 1986; Glucksberg 2001; Fernando 1996 etc.) agree that it would not be appropriate to group idioms within the category of words.

Another significant feature possessed by idioms is according to Čermák (2007) what he calls ‘anomaly’. Anomaly, differs in types, degrees and shades and is idioms’ omnipresent fundamental feature (Čermák 2007, 82). Anomaly is idioms’ “irregular nature” and “nongenerable deviation from rules of various types based on analogy” (Čermák 2007, 81?). In Čermák’s other words (2007, 81), anomaly in idioms can be perceived “in contrast to the background of the semantic and formal situation in regular language, i.e. a sphere of language governed by rules”.

“The omnipresent anomaly of different kinds” prevents the (semantic, morphological etc.) analysis of idioms while using criteria of the regular language (Čermák 2007, 77). For instance, a word is no longer a word here with its familiar meaning (consider words *kick* and *bucket* in idiom *kick the bucket* which means ‘to die’), what looks like a morphological case here is functionally not a case, what seems to be an object of a verb is not an object, etc. “The structure of idiom is not productive and generative” compared to other non-idiomatic constructions (Liu 2012, 108).

According to Čermák (2007, 120), the term idiomaticity is determined by the measure of idiom’s “anomalousness”. Idioms feature idiomaticity which can be described as a continuum, with one end where idioms are highly frozen and do not allow any modifications and with another where idioms are highly unrestricted and allow modifications. Liu (2012, 111) believes that most of idioms are located somewhere in the middle of the continuum, which enjoy certain degree of idiomaticity and all allow some flexible transformations.

1.4. Form and Structure of Idioms

Čermák (2007, 97-114) distinguishes three main types of idiom in terms of their form. The first, most prominent area in idiomatic expressions, are collocational idioms not forming a sentence on their own. Prepositional idioms, belonging to the second group, are also called sentential because they form sentences. They are known as proverbs, sayings, maxims, etc. The last type, are lexical idioms consisting of a single word; they are one-word lexemes.

According to Langlotz (2006, 3), typical structure of idioms is composite structure of phrases or semi-clauses. Other composite structures also include idiomatic compounds (*chatterbox*), phrasal verbs (*come across*) and proverbs (*Birds of a feather flock together*).

Fernando (1996, 39) distinguishes idioms in size from compounds (*pick-me-up*), and phrases (*red herring, out of the blue*), through to semi- and full clauses (*spill the beans, smell a rat*). Fernando (1996, 42) states that the most favoured type in English idioms appear to be

phrasal verbs (verb + particle/s), e.g. *put up with* and semi-clauses, e.g. *spill the beans*, *smell a rat*, etc.

Seidl and McMordie (1978, 5) state that idioms can have either regular structure (*to have a bee in one's bonnet*), irregular structure (*by and large*) or even grammatically incorrect one (*I am good friends with him*). The non-grammatical or non-syntactic structure is also called as asyntactic idioms (Cruse 1986, 38), it includes idioms as *all of a sudden* and *put pen to the paper*. According to Seidl (1988), majority of idioms fall into to the group of idioms with regular structure.

1.4. Idiom Function

Idioms play a number of different functions in discourse: they name objects, describe emotions, they evaluate and many other. Nonetheless, it is believed this field of study has been so far largely neglected and the little what was found is too imperfect. As Čermák (2007, 161) suggests, the studies on idiom function so far failed to come up with “a set of instruments, criteria, telling us how to describe this function.” As one of the aims of this paper is to investigate idioms' function, I will try to at least briefly focus on this area.

Idioms are naming units and therefore serve communicative needs (Čermák 2007). Idioms are used mostly in informal spoken language, but they can be also found in written texts, mainly in newspapers and magazines. The use of a particular idiom depends on various aspects, such as on the subject matter of the conversation, the particular situation, who we are talking to, the speaker's personality, present frame of mind etc.

According to Čermák (2007, 115), there are two main functions idioms primarily perform in discourse: structural (formal) and nominative (semantic). The former concerns the customary place of the idiom in a sentence. For example, the idiom *dead end* can occur in both its predicative and attributive function but usually not in the role of subject (Čermák 2007, 146). The latter follows especially from its semantic nature - the need to denominate, i.e. name something (Čermák 2007, 115).

Prevailing nominative function names whatever language users wish to denominate, for example, objects, states, actions and qualities. Čermák (2007, 127) also briefly mentions less defined functions performed by idioms such as the aesthetic function which enables express witty metaphors. The purpose of the metalinguistic function is to comment on or correct the communicated message, e.g. *it's on the tip of my tongue*, *in other words*.

Another important function performed by idiom is the economic function. Idioms are regarded as usually a highly economic means which enable to express in few words exactly what we wish to convey; the literal paraphrase, if there is any, is always longer. In Čermák's (2007, 127) view, it is hard to find an idiom that would be "too wordy, over-long and clumsy". He also points out, idioms possess "considerable compactness; their small-scale form may carry an enormously complex meaning and function..." (Čermák 2007, 127). Thus idioms serve as an important means of language economy.

The pragmatic function in idioms carries a prominent importance. The pragmatic function expresses "evaluative, i.e. subjective and often also emotional evaluation in the attitudes and opinions of their users" (Čermák 2007, 127). It is one of the most significant functions performed by idioms because the need to evaluate is regarded as absolutely essential in human communication. It is believed that majority of idioms are distinct means "for expression of positive and negative attitudes and personal evaluation of whatever is made subject of one's talk..." (Čermák 2007, 161).

This function is most probably very common in the genre of film reviews (similarly as the economic function). Authors are supposed to evaluate films therefore it is likely that idioms are used in order to evaluate either the acting performances, the ability of directors, the film's plot, costumes, setting and many other topics.

Fernando's (1996) primary intention is to explore what roles and functions idioms play; what purposes they fulfil. She believes the way idioms are used express what they are meant to convey therefore she pay particular attention to it.

Fernando (1996) (also Langlotz, 2006) believes that the three language functions identified by Halliday (1985) can be usefully applied to idioms as well. Thus, she proposes idiom functional categorization based on Halliday (1985)

She uses Halliday's terms 'ideational' and 'interpersonal' to describe two of the idiom functions. The third term 'textual', i.e. "cohesive relationship within a text" (Fernando 1996, 1), was replaced with 'relational'. Fernando (1996, 1) feels that her term shows more precisely "the connective function" with the aim to achieve both cohesion and coherence played by this type of idioms. Each category is presented together with typical examples.

- Ideational idioms

These type of idioms either communicate "message content, experiential phenomena including the sensory, the affective and the evaluative, or they characterize the nature of the message, e.g. as being specific or non-specific" (Fernando 1996, 72). According to Langlotz (2006, 4), idioms serving this function are mainly prototypical idioms.

Some of the types of message content:

1. Actions: *tear down, mess about with, spill the beans, wave/offer/hold out the olive branch, etc.*
2. Evaluations: *it is a pity; matter-of-fact; beauty is/lies in the eye of the beholder; waste not, want not; a Trojan horse*
3. Emotions: *green with envy, lose one's heart, tear one's hair*

Characterizing the message

1. Specific information: *to be exact/precise, for example, that is, what I am saying is*
2. Non-specific information: *kind of/sort of, such and such, and so on, etcetera, etc.*

- Interpersonal idioms

Interpersonal idioms are of twofold type. They either fulfil “an interactional function or they characterize the nature of the message” (Fernando 1996, 73). In the former function, idioms initiate, maintain and close social contact. They are also connected with polite phrases and represent the mores of social interactions.

Interactional strategies include:

1. Greetings and farewells: *good morning, how are you?, see you later, by for now*
2. Directives: *let's face it, tell you what, say no more, believe you me, never mind*
3. Agreement: *say no more, that's true*
4. 'Feelers', eliciting opinions: *what do you think?, how do you feel?*
5. Rejections: *you're kidding/joking, come off it, I wasn't born yesterday*

Characterizing the message

1. Newsworthiness: *guess what, what do you know*
2. Sincerity: *quite seriously, believe you me, as a matter of fact*
3. Calls for brevity: *cut the cackle, get to the point, in a nutshell*
4. Uncertainty: *I daresay, mind you*

- Rational idioms

Rational (textual) idioms take care of the cohesion of discourse; they have the textual function (Fernando 1996, 74). She further divides them according to integrative information to:

1. Adversative: *on the contrary, far from*
2. Comparison: *on the one hand ...on the other hand*
3. Causal: *the more X ... the more Y, no wonder*
4. Concessive: *at the same time*
5. Addition: *in addition to, what is more*

2. Idiom Variation

As mentioned above, one of the typical idioms' characteristics is that idioms tend to be frozen in form and meaning, i.e. they do not allow changes in their structure and meaning. However, as Liu (2012, 105) points out in her research, variation is actually one of the crucially important aspects of idioms. Although idioms are highly restricted in terms of lexicon, syntax and meaning, it was revealed that they show a greater degree of formal and semantic flexibility than traditionally thought.

Thus this chapter casts light on this feature in idioms – their flexibility and the transformations this flexibility causes. These include, for instance, substituting a word in an idiom by another, adding a new element or changing the syntactic structure of an idiom. The latter is particularly frequent, i.e. the change in tenses. In the paper, this phenomenon is referred to as 'idiom variation' or 'transformation'.

It should be stressed that the extent to which the form of an idiom can be altered in various ways is largely unpredictable and that not all idioms can undergo changes. As Fernando (1996) states, the replacement of idioms' elements is either not possible, as in *kick the bucket* (*kick the pail **), or the range of options is restricted (e.g. *find one's tongue/feet/wings*). Another limitation is, for instance, constraints regarding idioms' word order. For example, *raining cats and dogs* cannot be changed into *raining dogs and cats**. These restraints on replacing the words in idioms, constraints on idioms' word order and others are an important feature separating idioms from non-idioms which are normally open to a wide range of word replacements (Fernando 1996, 43).

So, if not all idioms can undergo changes to various degree, then we have to pose an intriguing question which has become the subject of many studies on this topic. Why some idioms undergo transformations while the other do not or only to some extent? According to Čermák (2007⁷), transformations appear in every type of idiom if their anomalies (formal, collocational and semantic) permit it. The degree of idiomaticity is also an important factor; "the impossibility to undergo a certain transformation is typical of more markedly idiomatized phrasemes" (Čermák 2007, 124). Typically, idioms showing higher degree of idiomaticity do not under any changes (Čermák 125). Čermák (2007, 93) estimates that "as many as every fourth idiom has a variant of one sort or another."

Yusifova and Izzaddin (2013) come up with a theory based on cognitive view why some idioms can be subjected to the transformations in the passive voice while others cannot. If the image, which the noun phrase (e.g. the bucket) arouses in the idiom, reflects the

conveyed meaning, the idiom accepts transformation (2013, 137). Therefore, *kick the bucket*, which does not “awoke ‘death’ domain”, will not change into passive. Besides, idioms which have intransitive paraphrases are not used in the passive either (Yusifova and Izzaddin 2013, 136).

3.1. Function of Idiom Variations

Why people create idiom variants when speaking or writing? Liu’s (2012, 105) answer to this question is “people’s subjectivity and their creative use of language”. Language users vary the original idioms according to their expressive needs. Idiom variations reflect speakers’ affect, the expression of self and the representation of a speaker’s perspective or point of view. By changing an idiom’s pattern, “language users involve themselves in the language they use and in this way their attitude, feelings and perspectives are revealed” (Liu 2012, 111).

Furthermore, Liu (2012, 108) claims that “lexical substitution and syntactic rearrangement are motivated by pragmatic needs as well as cognitive needs of the speaker”. So, variation in idioms performs pragmatic functions by conveying extra meaning (Liu 2012, 105). Liu (2012) favours researching variations from a cognitive perspective over the traditional one, i.e. from transformational generative paradigm and functional linguistic. She (2012, 112) believes that the latter approach cannot offer an adequate explanation for idiom variation as it does not recognize “the underlying cognitive and pragmatic factors in language use”. Instead, she proposes explanation based on the three metafunctions of language and cognitive study.

Langlotz (2006) adopts a similar approach, as he also pays attention to cognitive factors of language users. According to him, idiom variation reveals “intelligent creative behaviour that exploits basic knowledge recourses and the information processing capacities of the human mind” (Langlotz 2006, 10). He believes idioms possess ‘idiomatic creativity’.

Hanks (2013, 212) notices exploitations of norms in text, which he describes as “deliberate departure from an established pattern of normal word use...”. Dynamic and creative exploitations are distinguished from alternations described as “regular second-choice elements within an overall pattern” (2013, 212). Some of the devices used for exploiting are, for instance, ellipsis, anomalous collocates, metaphors and similes etc. (Hanks 2013).

3.2. Classification of Idiom Variations

In the following section, several variation classifications proposed by different linguists are elaborated on, including the scheme I use for the analysis of idiom variation in chapter 5.

3.2.1. Čermák's Classification

Čermák distinguishes between two basic types: transformations and variants. The former is described as a process of structural and grammatical change whose result differs from the original structure by its function yet it preserves a formal and semantic similarity of a varying degree to the original structure (Čermák 121). On the other hand, the latter is viewed as a variant that is fixed or unfixed and allows relatively small formal or semantic modifications which does not alter idiom's function and mainly not its meaning (Čermák 93).

Thus a variant is a rather minor "modification of the same unit which preserves its function, while transformation may produce another unit" (Čermák 121-122). To illustrate the point, variants include re-ordering of the idiom's elements such, as *on and off/off and on*; replacement of the idiom's element with another, as in *teeter on the brink/edge of sth*, *find your tongue/feet/wings* etc. Transformations create new units, for example, *your eyes pop out of your head* > *eye-popping*, *leave so holding the baby* > *he was left holding the baby*; change of syntactic aspects in idioms include use of passive voice.

In the paper, I do not differentiate between the labels 'variant' and 'transformation'. For the purpose of this paper, they are used interchangeably and refer to the same concept, i.e. idiom variation.

3.2.2. Liu's Classification

According to Liu (2012, 111), the basic division of idiom variations can be made into two broad groups: normal and nonce variations. Normal variations include lexical variation such as verb, noun and adjective variation, passivization, nominalization, embedding, truncation, topicalization and idiom schema". Nonce variations cover replacement, reversion, modification, negation, extraction, distribution and combination of different idioms.

Some idiom variants have been widely recognized and became conventionalized, i.e. they are accepted and commonly used by people. These are known as legitimate idiom variation (Liu 2012, 109). Another kind of idiom variation is temporary. It has not been widely accepted and used because 'one-time use' idioms suits only the particular occasion it was created for. Liu (2012) believes that "people create temporary idiom variants to meet the needs of rhetoric and to increase emotional effect". Whereas legitimate idioms tend to be

fixed as relatively simple, ‘one-time use’ variations are more flexible and complex. Consequently, they are not limited by form or meaning of the original idiom. So, language users frequently borrow some of the parts of the original idiom, or give it a new meaning for their expressive purpose (Liu 2012, 109).

Liu (2012) classifies idiom variations into five sections according to the type of change of the idioms’ elements. These include some already mentioned variations such as replacement of the idioms parts with another and change in aspect from active to passive.

- Idiom variation caused by phonetic change (e.g. *whine and dine* from *wine and dine*)
- Idiom variation caused by change of lexical elements (e.g. *walk in love with* from *fall in love with*)
- Idiom variation caused by change of syntactic structure (e.g. *like son, like father* from *like father, like son*)
- Idiom variation caused by change of aspect (e.g. *the boat has sailed* from *sail the boat*)
- Idiom variation caused by metaphor

3.2.3. Langlotz’s Classification

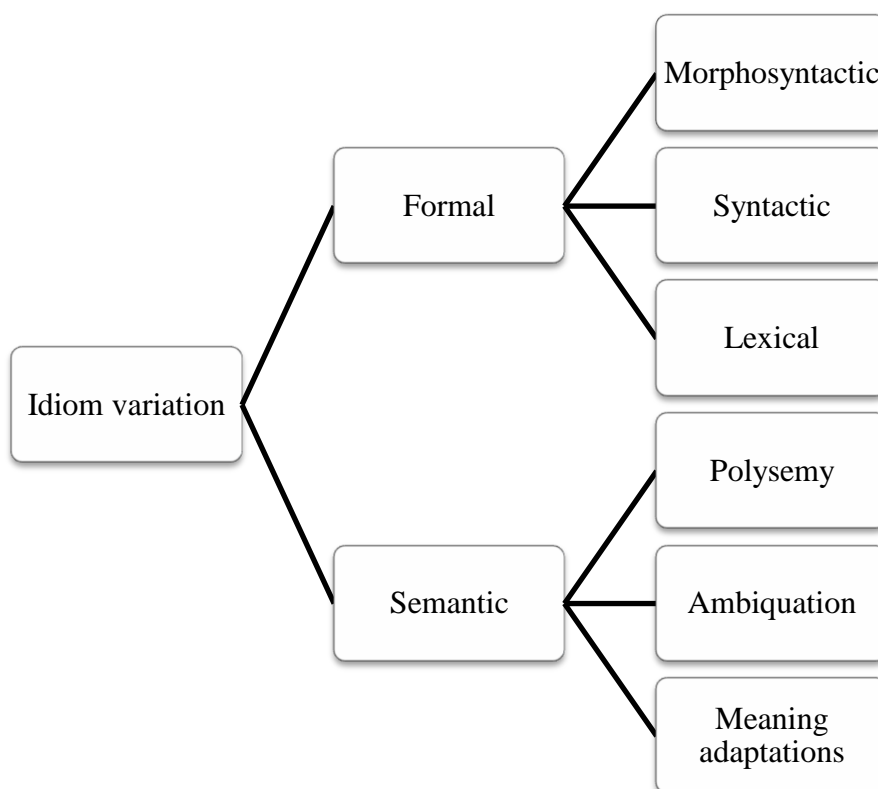
Another classification of idiom variants, depicted in the chart 2, is made by Langlotz (2007, 179). He distinguishes two basic types: formal and semantic changes comprising of further subcategories.

The first group consists of three subclasses. Morphosyntactic class contains inflectional variations, such as verb inflections, pluralisation, the flexible use of determiners and quantifiers. The syntactic class involves changes in the constructional organization of the base-form. There are clefting, passivization and idiom extension through postmodification by an of-complement. The lexical substitution refers to general alternations of an idiom’s lexical constituents. Substitution can be either based on synonyms, antonyms or non-synonymous alternations.

The second group deals with subtle meaning alternations which are often accompanied with changes in the formal structure of idioms. This group further consists of three classes. The first, polysemous idioms, includes expressions having more than one conventional meanings such as *come a cropper* (meaning either ‘fall’ or ‘fail’).

The second, ambiguation, reflects invention of non-conventionalised but occasional meanings of the idioms. The last type captures meaning adaptations such as intensifications, specifications, antonymy and perspectivisations.

Table 2: Langlotz' classification of idiom variation



3.2.4. Fernando's Classification

The last surveyed classification of idiom variation by Fernando (1996) was used as a base for the classification I use in the analysis of idiom variation in chapter 5 of this paper.

In a similar vein as Liu (2012), Fernando (1996) holds that idioms transformations and manipulations in miscellaneous ways are used “to meet people’s communicative needs”. Elements in idioms are substituted, added, permuted or deleted to achieve certain communicative effects. For instance, the addition of a new element makes the message more precise (Fernando, 1996). Fernando’s (1996, 43-52) division of idiom variation includes four main categories presented in the following lines.

- Replacements or substitutions

There are numbers of variations belonging to this group, such as a) inflectional changes - alternation of number or tense, b) replacement of one structure word (e.g. replacement of an article by another or by zero), c) lexical replacement, i.e. one content (compulsory) word replaced by another, d) replacement of optional elements such as one’s, somebody’s.

Changes in tenses are permitted in many verbs and are therefore common, similarly as change of number. Both variations are possible, for instance, in *red herrings*, *a red herring* or *in detail*, *in details*. Nevertheless, it is impossible to say e.g. **kick the buckets* (*kick the*

bucket) or **smell the rats* (*smell a rat*). If plurals are not possible in some idioms, neither are singulars in others e.g. **raining a cat and a dog* (*raining cats and dogs*), cf. **bring sth to the parties* (*bring sth to the party*).

Apart from inflections, individual words of an idiom might be altered. There are idioms that do not permit substitutions, others do in varying degrees. It is impossible to say *smell a rat*/**mouse* or *kick the bucket*/**pail*. These are idioms that admit no lexical substitutions. *Burn one's boats/bridges* and *get/give/have cold feet* are examples of idioms that permit a choice of restricted variants. Unrestricted choice reduces the “fixinity” of an expression and so brings it closer to “an ad hoc construction” (Fernando 1996, 45).

- Additions

Addition is based on insertion of new elements into idioms. They are not typically permitted within idioms, nevertheless, they can be possible. Adding a new element to an idiom enables speakers make their utterances more precise and specific (Fernando 1996).

(1) *Things are rocky even before they go bump in the night* (343)¹.

In the example (1) not only one but several elements were inserted in the idiom to form a complete sentence. The idiom *things that go bump in the night* often used in a humorous way allows addition with the intention to put emphasis on the ‘scary’ atmosphere of the commented horror movie. The variant of the idiom intensifies the standard meaning.

Fernando (1996) stresses that any addition to an idiom must be thought to reinforce its meaning and not simply elaborate on the expression of itself. She probably means what Langlotz (2007) names as ‘meaning adaptations’ functioning for example intensifications and specifications.

- Permutations

Permutations concern rearranging words within an idiom. Fernando (1996, 49) points out that some idioms have no permutational possibilities in terms of their grammar because if they are transformed, they lose their idiomaticity. For instance, *he smells a rat* > **he is a rat smeller*, *he kicked the bucket* > **the bucket was kicked by him*.

¹ The number of the example in the bracket refers to the table which can be found in appendix. The table contains all identified idioms and source sentence of the studied data.

Fernando (1996, 49-50) classifies four types of permutations:

- a) Particle shift concerns phrasal verbs. It can be either optional (*he beat his sister up* or *he beat up his sister*) or obligatory when the object is a pronoun (*the house blown up* x *he threatened to blew it up*).
- b) Gerundive compound
To split hairs over these cases is unworthy of ... versus ... the jury lost itself in the minutiae of legal argument and *hair-splitting* rather than using common sense (Example provided by Fernando 1996)
- c) Change of a verb and object predicate into a nominal (used both in idioms and non-idioms). For example, *sb drops a brick* > *a brick dropper*.
These ‘compressions’ are usually made unconsciously by native speakers and do not appear to be something unusual. They indicate the fluency of native speakers or advanced learners.
- d) Passivization is a type of permutation that can be carried out by only certain idioms such as (*shed/weep*) *crocodile tears* > *buckets of crocodile tears have been shed*; or *leave no stone unturned* > *no stone is left unturned*.

- Deletions

Deletion is a process used to delete an element from an established idiom. In Fernando’s account (1996, 51), there are some idioms which are well known in their shorter version so much so that they have become the norm (e.g. *red herring* from *draw/tail a red herring across the track/path*). Similarly as permuted ‘compressions’ (e.g. *ice-breaker*), deletions indicate the fluency of language-users. The reasons for deletions can be, for instance, space-saving, employed usually in newspapers. In Fernando’s notion (1996, 52), this process is not usually employed with idioms made up of verb and preposition/particle (e.g. *bring the house down*, *get in touch with sb*, *see through sb*, etc.).

- (2) It suggests that the Egyptian revolution, after a glorious birth and a blighted infancy, *is still at Square 1*. (212) - (*go/be*) *back to square one*

The elements ‘*back*’ and ‘*to*’ of this idiom in (2) were deleted and instead two new ones ‘*still*’ and ‘*at*’ were added. This idiom also features variation in terms of lexical substitution of the idiom’s verb.

2. Film Review as a Genre

The following chapter focuses on a journalistic genre: a film review. Initially, I will briefly discuss terms genre, journalistic genre and review in general terms. Then, a sufficient number of definitions and key features of a film review will be provided in order to clarify the chosen genre for the present study.

3.1. Genre

Genre is an abstract concept of French origin meaning ‘type’ or ‘kind’. We can encounter it in various situations on daily bases. As Tušer (2003, 78) notices, genre as a category constantly develops and changes with time. Some types of genres are employed more often while others less according to the social and political situations of every period of the human race (Tušer 2003, 83).

Žemličková (1974, 6) is convinced it is difficult to explicitly define this term on account of having more than one meaning. What she finds problematic is, for one, its meaning that changes frequently according to the historical period and, for another, various studies on genres usually tend to focus only on one art discipline, usually literature or linguistics while others go unnoticed (1947, 7).

Nevertheless, we can come across various definitions of this concept. For instance, Tušer (2003, 78) describes genre as an intangible abstract concept which cannot be seen or touched. However, its form as a reflection of the reality is perfectly visible and tangible. It can be a statue, a picture, a melody, an epos, a poem or any other work of art (Tušer 2003, 78-79). Genres exist in every artistic sphere of human activity and thus also in journalism.

Tušer (2003, 82) also defines genre as a model which has common set characteristics for each genre. In a similar vein, Žemličková (1974, 7) describes genres as set of methods when forming a content. These genre methods guide an author to follow certain rules, employ certain work methods or a particular language style and approach (Tušer 2003, 82). Tušer stresses this model should not be understood as a “taboo” otherwise it can become a “straightjacket” (2003, 82).

3.2. Journalism

Reviews are conventionally classified among journalistic genres. In a nut shell, journalism reports to the public and at the same time represent the public; its goal is to represent “the

reality out there” (Watson, Hill163). As journalism is not the key topic, no further comment is provided on this topic. Instead, I would like to take a look on classifications of journalistic genres in order to see to what subcategories reviews are traditionally classified.

3.2.1. Classification of Journalistic Genre

Bull (2010), Keeble (2005), Harcup (2004) divide journalism into two main sections: ‘news’ and ‘features’. Both groups share many fundamental characteristics yet they also differ in some points. These authors group review in the section ‘feature’ together with interviews, comments, advice columns, editorials etc.

Mencher (1996, 19) does not use any particular labels but similarly as the three authors above, he distinguishes between two major journalism categories. The first numerous group is formed by “fact gatherers and the information purveyors” (Mechcher 1996, 19). Their law is objectivity; they refrain from including their opinions. This characterizes ‘news’.

The second group consists of the critics and reviewers, the columnists and the editorial writer. The key difference is they engage their judgements and opinions; their law is subjectivity (Mencher 1996, 19). This characterizes ‘features’.

Tušer (2003) and Jacz (1982) classify reviews to an opinion journalistic genre (parallel to ‘features’), specifically to journalism of rational type.

3.3. Definition of Review and its Function

Review is a qualified opinion and specialized evaluation of any piece of art in general (Vel’as 1983, 167). Reviews “are a features writer’s assessment of a movie, a play or other kind of live or recorded performance, a book, a meal, a hotel or any number of other products of services” (Bull 2010, 320). For instance, movies, books, exhibits, concerts, clothing, restaurants etc. all and many other “are subjected to the scrutiny and the evaluation of a critic or a reviewer...” (Mecher 1996, 20). He adds that a review usually has two parts; the first one gives basic information about the work, it is called ”straight reporting”, the second one includes reviewer’s assessment (the criticism), it is called “opinion subjective art” (Mecher 1996, 20).

Basic function of reviews, according to Mecher (1996, 20) is that they tell us whether we should spend our time and money on a product; reviews are consumer reports. Key functions according to Vel’as (1983, 168) include informative, orientation functions and popularizing and aesthetical educational functions.

3.4. Film Review vs. Film Criticism

When speaking about evaluating a work of art, we can come across two terms: a review and a critique. It might appear there is no particular difference between these two terms and that they are used interchangeably. Nevertheless, some authors draw distinctions between them.

The core difference seems to lie in the type of audience the review is meant for. Thus, review is often associated with as broad as possible audience with no particular knowledge about films while the latter is concerned with far smaller group of readers usually already possessing a great deal of knowledge. This summary is based on the following examples.

Null (2005, 40) points out the difference between a “film critic” and a ‘movie reviewer’. The latter writes reviews of new films for the masses in a reader-friendly way; the reviews are readable, witty and usually short. The former composes critiques and studies films in a more profound artistic way while using academic language; the critiques are lengthy and intended for limited group of readers.

Tušer (2003, 105) distinguishes review – appraisal which can be found in regular newspapers and magazines. It contains aesthetic side as well as informative one; a lot of background and additional information about the work of art is provided in order to familiarise readers with it (Tušer 2003, 105).

The second one is called review – critique (*recenzia-kritika*) and appears in scientific magazines intended for professionally oriented readers. Less attention is devoted to the informative content while more attention is paid to evaluative side of the review. Technical terms and less known expressions are included (Tušer 2003, 105).

According to film critique David Bordwell, the term film criticism is categorically superior and further contains three subcategories: journalistic criticism (review), essayistic criticism and academic criticism (Bordwell 1989, 19). Newspapers and popular weeklies belong to the first subcategory. Essayistic criticism can be found in specialized or intellectual monthlies or quarterlies and academic criticism in scholarly journals (Bordwell 1989, 20).

Corrigan (2001) introduces very similar division with the difference he uses different labels. These are a review, a theoretical essay, and a critical essay. The review is the type of film analysis most of us are chiefly familiar with, since it appears in almost every newspaper. A review aims at the broadest possible audience, the general public with no special knowledge of film. Accordingly, its function is to introduce unknown films and to recommend or not recommend them (Corrigan 2001, 9). Much of the essay is devoted to

summarizing the plot or placing the film in another context (the director's other work, films of the same genre etc) that might help the reader to understand it (Corrigan 2001, 9).

Theoretical essay can be found at the other end of the spectrum. This essay often supposes that the reader possesses a great deal of knowledge about specific films, film history etc. Its aim is to explain some of the larger and more complex structures of the cinema and how we understand them (Corrigan 2001, 11).

Critical essay usually falls between the theoretical essay and the movie review. The writer presumes that readers have seen or are at least familiar with the film. There might be mentioned key themes and elements of the plot but a lengthy retelling of the story is not needed nor acceptable (Corrigan 2001, 12). The focus of the essay is far more specific than of a review – writer hopes to reveal subtleties or complexities that may have escaped viewers on first or even second viewing (Corrigan 2001, 13).

Using the terminology introduced by Corrigan (2001), we can assume that the film reviews selected from The New York Times for the present paper chiefly belong to the first group, i.e. a review. Occasionally, a few reviews might have some features of critical essays.

4. Methodology

The analytical part of the thesis will provide results of the authentic written English language analysis on the basis of the theory introduced in the first part of the paper. There are four main sections in which quantitative (the first and the second part) and qualitative approaches (the remaining two parts) are adopted. The first section focuses on the frequency of use of the idiomatic devices as well as of idiom variation found in the collected data. The second part deals with transformations within idioms, the major issue of this paper. It classifies idiom variation into categories and comments on the results. The following section studies less canonical transformations and peculiar uses of idiomatic expressions. Lastly, intention is also briefly comment on the function of idioms in the selected genre.

For the present study of idiomatic devices, not only prototypical non-transparent idioms are being considered, but also phrasal verbs and transparent set phrases are also included. The reason why is, for one, they are listed in many dictionaries as idioms including the Dictionary of American Idioms by Makkai, one of the three dictionaries used for the idiom identification. For another, they feature interesting aspects in terms of idiom variation therefore I have decided to include them in the analysis.

4.1. Data

The collected language material for the purpose of this paper consists of film reviews taken from The New York Times (further NYT). In order to provide sufficient amount of examples, I selected at random 63 film reviews between the years 2010 and 2013 by seven different authors.

Because one of the aims of this paper is to find out the frequency of occurrence of idioms in the selected genre, the criterion set for this analysis is approximately the same amount of words per a reviewer, i.e. roughly 4000 words. If the criterion was the same number of reviews per an author, the amount of the words between the authors would differ tremendously as the length of reviews by the critics varies considerably and so in this way the results would be skewed.

Among the chosen reviews from NYT are also included reviews so called “critics’ picks”. This label is assigned to a film if the reviewer decides solely on his/her personal opinion to recommend it to the public. Films labelled this way usually receive very positive evaluation and are full of praise.

The gathered language material for the purpose of this paper is summarized in the table located in the appendix. Individual examples of idioms used in the paper to illustrate various points are marketed with numbers so if needed they can be found in the table together with the source sentence.

Regarding the arrangement, the very first left column of the chart, labelled as ‘idiom used in reviews’, shows the exact form of idiomatic expressions employed in the film reviews by the selected authors. The following three columns from the left represent each a dictionary chosen as the criterion for idiom identification. If an idiom was discovered in these dictionaries, I write down the exact form stated by the corresponding dictionary. Or otherwise, I write 0.

Following columns deal with ‘idiom variation’. Here, I use my classification of idiom variation already mentioned earlier. The six columns are divided into three main sections named as ‘idiom variation 1’, ‘idiom variation 2’ and ‘idiom variation 3’. Each main section comprises of two columns called a ‘main class’ and a ‘subclass’. It is necessary to use three of them because some idioms featured not only one idiom variation but two or even three.

The last but one column indicates whether an idiom is verbal or not. If it functions as verb, it is labelled as ‘v’, if not then as ‘x’. Finally, the last column contains the source sentence or part of sentence from which an idiom stated in the first column was taken from.

4.2. Methodology of Idiom Analysis

The first step when gathering the language material, i.e. idiomatic expressions, for the present analysis was to establish the criterion of idiom identification. To serve this purpose, three dictionaries were selected. If an idiomatic expression is listed as idiom in at least one of them, it is included in the corpus. The selected dictionaries are Cambridge Advanced Learner’s Dictionary, A Dictionary of American Idioms and online source Free Dictionary².

After identification of expressions as idiomatic language tools in the corpus, I further focus on possible variations within them. The second step was to determine the canonical form of idioms in order to classify variations in idioms in to the categories elaborated on in the following subchapter 4.3.

To establish the canonical (generally accepted) form of the identified idioms in the corpus, firstly, I consulted the selected dictionaries. If the form of idioms from the corpus matched the entry in at least two of the dictionaries, it needed no more attention. However,

² Free Dictionary <http://idioms.thefreedictionary.com/>

the forms often varied. In this instance, I consulted the Corpus of Contemporary American English (further COCA) for two main reasons. It helped me to determine the canonical form in the case of disputable instances and served me as a source of examples which are occasionally included in the section 5.3.

The Corpus contains numbers of frequency of the searched entries. In this way, I can determine the canonical form which is the one most frequently opted for. For instance, the idiom *the life of the party* identified in the data belongs among the disputable examples. One dictionary lists *the life and soul of the party*, the other *life of the party*. Based on this limited information, it might be inferred that the idiom omits ‘and soul’, thus the variation is deletion. Nonetheless, the corpus shows different results. The form *the life of the party* shows 106 occurrences whereas the form *the life and soul of the party* does not show any occurrence. Hence, after finding out the canonical form of this idiom, we can conclude, the idiom in the review is used rather canonically and does not feature any variation.

Further, the COCA includes examples of less canonical forms of idioms and show many possible lexical variations, not only the main ones stated in dictionaries. For instance, I have found in a review an idiom *bring ... along for the ride*. The Cambridge Advanced Learner’s Dictionary lists this idiom as *along for the ride*, in combination with either *come*, *go* or *be*. Nevertheless, the Corpus reveals that at least another four different verbs, including the verb *bring*, can be also used with this particular idiom. The highest number of occurrence receives the verb *go* with 92 occurrences. The verb *bring*, on the other hand, belongs to the minor usage with only 2 occurrences. As a result, the idiom used in the text cannot be regarded as purely canonical, which is caused by the choice of the verb it combines with. By using this method, I came across several idioms of non-canonical nature which are subject of the third section of the practical part of this paper.

The Corpus of Contemporary American English contains more than 450 million words of text and is equally divided among spoken, fiction, popular magazines, newspapers, and academic texts. The corpus was created by Mark Davies of Brigham Young University.

4.3. Classification of Idiom Variation

The third step lies in recognition of possible variations idioms may feature. If an idiom does adopt any variation, it is sorted into a relevant category. For the quantitative study of idiom variation, dealt with in subchapter 5.2., a classification scheme put forward by Seidl (1996) is used which I elaborated on in the theoretical part of this paper. I have made several

amendments to the original scheme. The four main categories (replacement/substitution, permutation, addition, deletion) were left unchanged, as well as all subcategories of the category A (replacement/substitution). However, I did several changes in terms of the category B (permutation).

The first change consists in the omission of two subcategories from this category, which are ‘particle shift’ and ‘reverse of subject and object’. The former subclass is a matter suitable for another academic paper and is not relevant to the present study. The latter subcategory is a very special and rare kind of idiom variation and there were no examples found in the gathered corpus. The second change resides in uniting two Seidl’s subclasses ‘gerundive compound’ and ‘compressions’ in the subcategory ‘lexical change’ which is further divided into ‘nominalization, adjectivization and verbalization’. Lastly, I added another new label in to this group ‘change in syntax’ which further contains two subclasses: a new one ‘change of word order’ and an existing one ‘passivization’.

My classification based on Seidl’s (1996) scheme of idiom variation:

A) Replacement (Repl.)

- Inflectional change (inf. ch.)
- Replacement of structure word (r/struc.)
- Replacement of content word (r/cont.)
- Replacement of variable word (r/variab.)

B) Permutation (Perm.)

- Lexical change
 - Nominalization (nom.)
 - Adjectivization (adjec.)
 - Verbalization (verb.)
- Change in syntax
 - Change of word order (ch/WO)
 - Passivization (passiv.)

C) Addition (Add.)

D) Deletion (Del.)

5. Findings and Results

There are four main sections according to the main objectives of this study. The first two sections study idiomatic expressions from quantitative perspective; the first part focuses on the frequency of idioms and idiom variation in the collected data; the goal of the second part is to sort and classify idiom variation by means of category scheme inspired by Fernando (1996). The third section, which adopts qualitative approach, explores individual examples of non-canonical idiom variations found in the corpus. The last section briefly focuses on the function performed by idioms.

5.1. Frequency Analysis

The frequency analysis is further divided into two parts. In the first part, attention is paid to the frequency of idioms; the frequency of idiom variation is dealt with in the second part.

5.1.1. Frequency of Idioms

Chart 1: Frequency of occurrence of idioms

Critic	Reviews	Words	Idioms	Idioms per 1,000 words
M. Dargis	4	4,018	60	15
J. Catsoulis	13	4,108	67	16
S. Holden	6	3,999	76	19
A. Webster	13	3,986	50	12
R. Saltz	11	3,894	68	17
A. O. Scott	4	4,106	40	10
D. M. Gold	12	3,833	68	18
Total	63	27,944	429	107

Chart 1 above gives a brief overview of the selected corpus and its key number facts. The first table column shows the name of the seven authors; the second one shows the number of reviews per each author, in total 63; the third column illustrates the number of words of all reviews per each author. The gathered corpus consists of almost 28 thousand words. The last but one column carries the number of idioms found in reviews of the selected critics. The

overall number of all idioms is 429. And finally the last column shows the number of idioms occurrence per 1000 word. There are roughly 15 idioms per 1000 words on average.

Based on the information from the chart 1, we can find out the approximate frequency of occurrence of idioms in the corpus. It means that every sixty-fifth (65,1) word is part of an idiomatic expression. According to Čermák (2007, 116), a text can be considered rich in idioms if it contains one idiom per 80-120 words on average. Thus, we can presume the usage of idioms in the chosen genre is fairly frequent.

The most productive author in terms of incorporating idioms in his writing is S. Holden with total score of 76 idioms used in 6 reviews who is also an author with the highest relative frequency of 19 idioms per 1000 words. On the contrary, the lowest number of idiom occurrence is 10 idiomatic expressions per 1000 words by A. O. Scott. The rest of the results do not vary dramatically. We can see from the chart that the numbers are very similar in case of at least four authors; the relative frequency is 16, 19, 17 and 18 idioms per 1000 words.

5.1.2. Frequency of Idiom Variation

In the following quantitative analysis, I present two graphs named 'Frequency of occurrence of idiom variation I and II'. Similarly as the previous chart 1, they also describe the selected corpus with the difference they also provide quantitative information on idiom variation in the penultimate column from the right. The last vertical line shows the relative frequency of the targeted phenomenon again per 1000 words.

Regarding the difference between these two graphs, it lies in the different approach when counting the individual transformations in idioms. The method is described separately under each chart.

Chart 2: Frequency of occurrence of idiom variation I

Critic	Reviews	Words	Idioms	Idiom Variation (I. V.)	I.V per 1,000 words
M. Dargis	4	4,018	60	39	10
J. Catsoulis	13	4,108	67	52	13
S. Holden	6	3,999	76	65	16
A. Webster	13	3,986	50	35	9
R. Saltz	11	3,894	68	51	13
A. O. Scott	4	4,106	40	34	8
D. M. Gold	12	3,833	68	53	14
Total	63	27,944	429	329	83

Chart 2 focuses on all possible idiom variation that can be found in the collected data. This means that idioms featuring more than one idiom variation are counted individually. For example, there are five idiomatic expressions out of which three contain 2 idiom variations each; and the rest two contain 1 idiom variation each. The total score of idiom variation is therefore 8.

By counting each idiom variation, it was identified 329 idiom variations in the selected data. The frequency of idiom variation in the selected genre occurs approximately in every 1,3 idiom.

As it can be seen from this chart, the results differ in more respect than the results of idiom frequency. The author S. Holden with the most idioms in the previous analysis also has the most relative frequency of idiom variation, i.e. 16 per 1000 words. Similarly, the author A. O. Scott having the least number of idioms also has the least number of idiom variation, i.e. 8 idiom variation per 1000 words. This means half less than the former author.

Additionally, out of 429 idioms, there are 63 idioms having more than one idiom variation. So it means that almost every seventh (6,8) idiomatic device can undergo more than one transformations. The maximum variations encountered in the data were three variations per an idiom.

Chart 3: Frequency of occurrence of idiom variation II

Critic	Reviews	Words	Idioms	Idiom Variation (I. V.)	I. V. per 1,000 words
M. Dargis	4	4,018	60	32	8
J. Catsoulis	13	4,108	67	40	10
S. Holden	6	3,999	76	51	13
A. Webster	13	3,986	50	23	6
R. Saltz	11	3,894	68	40	10
A. O. Scott	4	4,106	40	27	7
D. M. Gold	12	3,833	68	40	11
Total	63	27,944	429	253	65

Chart 3 ‘Frequency of occurrence of idiom variation II’ shows results of idiom variation which were counted differently than the previous chart I. Even if an idiom features more than one idiom variation, the number counted is always one. For illustration, let us present the same example used in the previous chart. There are five idiomatic expressions out of which three idioms contain 2 idiom variations each; and the rest two idioms contain 1 idiom variation each. The total score of idiom variation is 5 because we have five idioms which all feature idiom variation. I am no longer interested in how many idiom variations can be found in a particular idiom.

In the corpus, the total idiom variation counted by this method is 253. Thus, idiom variation occurs in roughly every second (1,7) idiomatic expression. The highest number of relative frequency of idiom variation per 1000 words is 13, again by S. Holden. There is a little change compared to the previous chart. The lowest score 6 variations, the relative frequency per 1000 words, does not belong to A. O. Scott, but to A. Webster. The difference is caused by the different way of counting the variations. Webster tends to use more than one variation per an idiom, thus his score is higher in the previous chart.

5.2. Classification of Idiom Variation

This chapter deals with quantitative analysis of canonical idiom variation whose results are summarized in the chart 4 below. The classification scheme of idiom variation used in the

analysis is largely inspired by Fernando (1996) and is presented in chapter 4. The data collected for this analysis are arranged in a table included in the appendix of this paper.

As we can see in chart 4, variations are classified into four main groups – replacement, permutation, addition and deletion in the first column on the left – and if necessary into further subgroups which are shown in the second left column. The two columns on the right side represent the results: the last but one column contains numbers of idiom variation occurrences which are transformed into percentage in the last column and serve for better understanding and orientation.

The most numerous group is ‘replacement’ with 62,61 % of occurrences. The second category ‘permutation’ comprises 21,28 %. The last two categories collected minor number of occurrences; 9,12 % represents ‘addition’ and 7 % ‘deletion’. A closer look on each class will follow.

Chart 4: Classification scheme of idiom variation

Main category of idiom variation	Subcategory of idiom variation	Absolute frequency	Relative frequency %
Replacement		206	62,61
	Inflectional change	25	12,14
	Replacement of structural word	8	3,88
	Replacement of content word	64	31,07
	Replacement of variable word	109	52,91
Total		206	100,00
Permutation		70	21,28
	Lexical change	45	64,29
	Change in syntax	25	35,71
Total		70	100,00
Addition		30	9,12
Deletion		23	6,99
TOTAL		329	100,00

5.2.1. Replacement

The main category ‘replacement’ further contains four subcategories. The most frequent one is ‘Replacement of variable words’. Its relative frequency is 53% out of the class of

‘replacement’. Idioms *take sth in stride* and *meet so’s match in so* are examples of this minor variation which can undergo an extensive group of idioms.

Far more interesting is the subclass ‘replacement of content words’ with relative frequency 31% occurrences out of the class ‘replacement’. An interesting point is that two types of this subclass can be considered. The first one describes conventional replacement of elements that can be found in majority of dictionaries; for instance, *be left holding the bag/baby* and *stiff/straight as a ramrod*. Nevertheless, not only lexical items such as nouns and adjectives can be replaced with another, but also functional (structural) words such as prepositions were a common presence in the corpus. For example, *a rap on/over the knuckles* can be either used with preposition *on* or *over*; similarly in *be set on/upon sth*, etc.

It is necessary to mention that for the purpose of this paper, the umbrella term - replacement of “content” word - both encompasses lexical and structural replacements. The following chart 5 summarizes the occurrence of replacement of elements according to word classes.

Chart 5: Replacement of content words according to word classes

Replacement of content words					
Lexical elements	Absolute frequency	Relative frequency	Structural elements	Absolute frequency	Relative frequency
Noun	23	50,00	Preposition	16	88,89
Verb	12	26,09	Pronoun/deter.	2	11,11
Adjective	8	17,39			
Adverb	3	6,52			
Total	46	100,00	Total	18	100,00
%	71,88		%	28,13	
TOTAL	64				

Replacement of lexical content words (elements) was naturally more frequent (72%) than replacement of structural words (28%). The most commonly substituted lexical element according to the type of word class is a noun with 23 occurrences and a preposition with 16, with regard to the structural replacement.

The second type of replacement describes substitution of elements that are unpredictable and far more creative as they cannot be found in majority of dictionaries, if in

any. This alternation can be regarded as less canonical. To illustrate the point, let us consider (1):

- (1) ...Ms. Brady *rubs our faces in* the poisonous consequences of littering the planet...
(161) - *rub sb's nose in it*

The idiom used in (1) was found in two dictionaries out of the three dictionaries establish as a criterion for idiom recognition. They state the form of this idiom is *rub sb's nose in it* . The COCA identifies 17 occurrences of this form and only 4 cases of the former type used in the review out of which two are used literally. Therefore we can presume that the usage of this idiom with the noun 'face' instead of the conventional 'nose' is rather singular.

With regard to the idiom in (1), there are two more variations. Firstly, this idiom also allows pluralisation ('faces') whereas the canonical form 'nose' is in singular number. Secondly, the pronoun 'it' is being replaced by a complex noun phrase 'the poisonous consequences of littering the planet'.

In the example (2) there is a replacement of a general (dictionary) element 'market' with a specific one 'Manhattan' which is far more appropriate if we take into consideration the context. Further, this idiom is also used in passive voice.

- (2) Jasmine's appalled aside about being forced to move to Brooklyn after *being priced out of Manhattan ...* (324) - *price yourself out of the market*

The first and the second subclasses of the class 'replacement' were already introduced and now the rest two are described. 'Replacement of structural words', the third subclass, is a minor variation with less than 4% of relative occurrence out of the 'replacement'. It usually either involves replacement of a definite article with zero or vice versa (*against all odds / against all the odds, the gift of the gab / the gift of gab*) or replacement of an article with personal pronoun such as in *whet the appetite / whet sb's appetite* . The variation in example (1) stated above can be also regarded as a replacement of a structural element. The structural element pronoun 'it' was replaced by a complex noun phrase.

The last subclass, comprising 12% out of the 'replacement', concerns inflectional changes in tenses and numbers. The former are ordinary and common variations occurring in the overwhelming majority of idioms containing verbs. Therefore, they were left out from the analysis. Nevertheless, there are several details on this topic worth mentioning.

There are 429 idioms in total out of which 257 function as verbs and can undergo any tense changes which include past tenses (*loomed large*), progressive tenses (*patience is*

wearing thin), complex tenses (...formula that *has stood* Disney in good stead...), future (will make up for), modal constructions (*could have been cooked up*) and infinitive (*to make it big*).

However, two verbal idiomatic items were identified which cannot undergo any tense change. The first one is *beggars can't be choosers*, referred to as a proverb according to the two selected dictionaries. Generally speaking, proverbs, sayings, maxims etc. are the only exceptions which do not allow any changes in tenses.

The second, *where dragons be*, is a variation of the metaphorical expression *here be dragons*. The expression does not allow any changes in tense proved by the COCA. There are ten occurrences of the original form with the verb 'be'. The phrase is further commented on in the following subchapter 5.3.

The rest 172 idioms are expressions functioning, for instance, as noun phrases (*inside job, a chip off the old block*), adjectives (*down-and-dirty, low-key*), prepositional phrases (*against all odds, by and large*) and adverbs (*there and then, along the way*).

In terms of inflectional number changes, this variation is far less common than tense changes therefore I include it in the analysis. The relative occurrence in this category is 12%, i.e. 25 variations in 206 idioms. We can distinguish two types; either a change from singular to plural number or vice versa. The majority of changes of this type belong to the first group, i.e. singular (the dictionary form) changes into plural (the form in the corpus). For example, *take one's cue from* → *take its cues from, red herring* → *red herrings*. Only few examples (3 out of 25) represent the second change, i.e. the original form in plural number changes to singular, e.g. *spin one's wheels* → *wheel-spinning, be all smiles* → *all smile*).

5.2.2. Permutation

This class, which represents 21% with 70 occurrences out of 329, is slightly more detailed in its classification as it contains two types of subcategories. The summarized results are presented in the chart 6 below.

The subcategory 'lexical change' further comprises of three subcategories: nominalization, adjectivization and verbalization out of which adjectivization (3) with almost 41% is the most frequent one. The half less score is ascribed to nominalization (4) and finally 4% to verbalization (5).

(3) a *back-of-beyond* village (from *back of beyond*)

(4) a *wheeler-dealer* (from *wheel and deal*)

(5) *trading small secrets* (from *a trade secret*)

Chart 6: Classification scheme of idiom variation: Permutation

Permutation			
Subcategory I	Subcategory II	Absolute frequency	Relative frequency
Lexical change	Nominalization	13	18,57
	Adjectivization	29	41,43
	Verbalization	3	4,29
Change in syntax	Change of WO	8	11,43
	Passivization	17	24,29
TOTAL		70	100,00

The subcategory ‘change in syntax’ is formed by two smaller subclasses. The first one, passive voice with 24 %, is exemplified in (6). The majority of passivization underwent phrasal verbs (e.g. *are singled out for, is billed as, have been lavished on* etc).

(6) Lang, who’s *holed up* at Martha’s Vineyard... (*be holed up / hole up*)

The subcategory named ‘change of word order’ was encountered in 8 examples, that is 11%. This group includes variants such as *on and off / off and on*. In general, the former is more frequent than the latter; according to the COCA, *on and off* has more than 2 thousand occurrences in the corpus while *off and on* roughly three times less. The variation with the fewer occurrences was used in the review.

This group includes also examples (7) featuring exchange of objects before verbs. This variation was quite rare and only few examples were identified in the data.

(7) It is also a record of a man’s tormented youth, his broad artistic impulses and *the price he paid for* following them. (380) - *pay a/the price (for sth)*

5.2.3. Addition

Addition represents 9% of all idiom variations so this class can be considered to be markedly less frequent. Even though the occurrence is rather scarce, there are several interesting points to mention. Some idioms allow additions not only of a single element (9) but also of several elements forming a sentence (8)

- (8) *Things are rocky even before they go bump in the night*. (from *things that go bump in the night*)
- (9) *...may have bitten off more influences than he can comfortably chew* (from *bite off more than you can chew*)

Most of the additions detected in the corpus such as *come quirkily alive, flies into a blind rage, tongue lightly in cheek, with his feet firmly planted in the soil*, fall into the group of addition mentioned by Fernando (1996, 48) which she describes as extraneous elements introduced into idioms in order to make the language user's message more precise.

5.2.4. Deletion

The last category dealing with omitting an element or some elements from established idioms was found in 23 examples (7 %) out of 329 variants which make it the least frequently occurred idiom variation. One of the types of deletion was encountered when changing idioms' word category (permutation), illustrated in (10) where personal pronoun and the last three elements were deleted in order to create adjective modifying the noun 'stage set'.

- (10) *...an eye-popping stage set. (53) - from your eyes pop out of your head*

As pointed out above, idioms may undergo more than one idiom variation at a time. Up to three variations per an idiom were encountered in the corpus.

- (11) *people struggling on the lower rungs of the economic ladder (273)*

In (11) the idiom features three variations. Firstly, a new element 'economic' is added (addition). Secondly, the canonical form of the element 'rung' is in singular number, however, in this particular example is used in plural (replacement – inflectional change). Finally, the author replaced the canonical verb 'be' with 'struggle'; and the canonical 'lowest/bottom' with 'lower' (replacement of content element).

5.3. Non-canonical Idioms and Idiom Variations

In this section I would like to take a closer look on interesting examples of idioms and idiom variations encountered in the corpus which either cannot be classified according to the scheme elaborated on in the previous chapter or feature interesting characteristics worth mentioning.

- (1) But if “At Any Price” overstates its points, they are still worth making. And the hot-wired performances by Mr. Quaid and Mr. Efron *drive them home* in a movie that *sticks to your ribs* and stays in your head. (274, 275)

The second sentence in the example (1) incorporates two cases of figurative language which can be commented on. The first idiom *drive them home* is used canonically and does not feature any abnormal traits apart from two points. First of all, although the idiom is used with the most canonical verb *drive* (more than 85 occurrences showed in the COCA), it appears to allow plenty of other verbs such as *bring, ram, hammer, press, drum, get, pound, hit* and *bang*, i.e. mainly verbs expressing act of hitting or pushing something with force. These verbs are used less frequently according to the corpus and so can be regarded as less canonical. Some of the examples taken from the corpus are illustrated below.

- (a) Dr. Josefina B. Magno was an oncologist who helped **bring that message home**. She founded one of the first hospices in the United States and helped... (SPOK NPR_Saturday 2003)
- (b) ...as if it were recorded when Hank was still alive. No one **rams that message home** harder, though, than the man's own grandson, Hank III. (MAG Entertainment 2006)
- (c) And many kids are having huge success **pounding that message home**. Says Charlotte Cameron, mother of budding activist Jodi ... (USAToday 1990)
- (d) **Hammering his point home** he accused those who support reproductive freedom of being... (ACAD 2009)
- (e) Republicans **have been hitting the point home** for nearly a year. If the president did obstruct justice... (SPOK 1999)

Secondly, the idiom is not used in the typical dictionary form, i.e. *drive your message/point home*. Instead, the author omits the lexical options *message/point* and uses a pronoun *them* which refers to the “points” made by the two mentioned actors in the previous sentence. The author probably wants to say that by means of their excellent performances they communicated the points effectively.

More interesting especially from the semantic point of view is the second occurrence of the idiom *stick to sb's ribs* in the same sentence. Dictionary denotative meaning states that the idiom is used in connection with foodstuffs. A meal described as *sticking to somebody's ribs* is substantial and filling; it fills your stomach to the satisfaction. The idiom used in this particular example expresses the same idea although it does not describe any eatables. Instead, it refers to the outstanding actors' performances. The author's message is to probably suggest that the viewers will feel saturated and satisfied in the figurative sense after watching this film so we can say that the idiom is here used metaphorically.

Metaphorical use of idioms and phrasal verbs appears to be relatively common. Several other examples were encountered when gathering the corpus. For instance:

- (2) His past also **tugs at** him in the form of a ghost — his old love... (14)
- (3) His own delivery can be so **tamped down** that he sometimes registers as overly restrained, almost bland, yet his control serves the material... (379)
- (4) Llewyn, (...), is a bit more prosaically adrift, stumbling from one friend's couch to another, **wearing out his welcome faster than his shoes**. (214)

Example in (4) is a variation of a phrasal verb *wear sth out*, i.e. to use something so much that it is damaged and cannot be used any more. Here, it is used metaphorically not referring to anything physical but abstract. The author probably wants to stress the rudeness and unpopularity of the main character and therefore adds behind the phrasal verb the comparison of the physical object, i.e. his shoes.

- (5) ... clueless educator has similarly mishandled a meeting with Alex's parents — showing them pictures of her grandchildren; chirpily insisting that the bus where Alex has been terrorized is "**good as gold**" ... (238)

Another example of figurative device is use of the idiom based on metonymy. The author uses the expression *good as gold* which refers to the school bus. Obviously, it is not the bus that is meant to be 'well behaved' but purportedly the students going by the bus every morning to school.

- (6) But if we must **talk trash**, Mr. Irons — assisted by a scientist or two and Vangelis's doomy score — is an inspired choice of guide. (163)

The author of a review of a documentary on waste and its consequences on the earth called "Trashed" exploits the idiom *talk trash* in example (6). The exploitation is based on playing with double meaning: literal meaning of individual words and figurative of the whole. The author's objective is to make the text more appealing.

- (7) Triumphant in his first show at Ms. Danan's gallery, Mr. Laga becomes a small sensation on the Los Angeles art scene. The sales pay the rent for a studio where he lives and works for a year. "Mondays With William," though, moves beyond this pleasant fable to the troubled one afterward, **where dragons be**. Subsequent shows don't do well... (122)

'*Where dragons be*' is a variation of a metaphorical phrase *here be dragons* used in ancient and medieval times denoting perilous unknown territories on maps where dragons, sea serpents and other mythological creatures were believed to exist. Nowadays it is used metaphorically to warn people away from unexplored areas or untried actions. The similar idea of the meaning is expressed in the review. After success, the main character experiences troubled times described as "where dragons be". The artist's 'fable' has changed into unsuccessful dangerous times causing insecurity and the unknown.

Considering the form 'where dragons be', we can speak of a singular variation of this rare metaphorical phrase because no such form or any other was encountered in the corpus apart from the original one listing ten occurrences. Two examples are included:

- (f) Explorers once wrote " **Beyond here be dragons** " on the edges of old maps of the known world, and the image of life as we approach these edges of change are proving to be just as mysterious, dangerous, and controversial. (MAG 2003)
- (g) Until recently, the post-treatment life of a survivor was like the blank part of a medieval map labeled **Here be dragons**. That is about to change. (MAG 2005)

The metaphorical phrase *here be dragons* and its variation *where dragons be* is the only example included in the analysis which is not listed in any of the three selected dictionaries. It was included because, firstly, the phrase features figurative meaning based on metaphor which is one of the typical feature of idioms. Secondly, the phrase is used non-canonically, it does not follow a regular form but the author invents one-time variation which suits the occasion it was created for (Liu 2012). Thirdly, the phrase *here be dragons* is rarely used nowadays; only ten occurrence were encountered in the COCA. Thus, it is interesting that such a phrase, moreover used non-canonically, was employed in such genre of film reviews.

- (8) Such witnesses, however, are the heartbreaking core of a film that tenderly details their experiences but *leaves* topics like poverty, lack of parental oversight, childhood damage and low self-esteem *off the table* — more than enough for a sequel. (157)
- (9) He introduces his troops to old friends like Edwige Belmore and Lio, onetime trend-setting singers and models long out *of the spotlight*... (104)

Following examples (8) and (9) are variations based on antonymy. *Off the table*, nor *of the spotlight* are expressions not found in any of the dictionaries. However, most obviously they are variations of the canonical forms *on the table* meaning a subject made available to be discussed by a group and *in the spotlight* meaning to receive a lot of public attention.

With regard to (8), another point to be considered is the usage of the verb ‘leave’ together with the idiom. According to the COCA, the most typical verbs that combine with the expression *off the table* appear to be the verbs *be* with more than 150 occurrences and *take* with more than 130 occurrences, for example:

- (h) ... lot of Republicans have talked about that the United States **is taking** things **off the table** that would deter other countries. (SPOK, ABC_ThisWeek, 2010).
- (i) The possibility of a larger playoff of eight or 16 teams **was taken off the table** in April (NEWS, Atlanta 2012).

An extraordinary number of other verbs can be further attached to this idiom. These verbs are used less frequently; their occurrence varies between fifteen and one. Some of them are, for instance, *fall*, *jump*, *roll*, *get*, *slide*, *bounce*, *clear*, *fly*, including the verb *leave* having two occurrences. Therefore, we can speak of a rather non-canonical variation of the established idiom *on the table*.

5.4. Function of Idioms

Taking into consideration the chosen genre ‘film review’ for the present analysis, I have identified predominantly three major functions performed by idioms, i.e. function of language economy and particularly pragmatic and nominative functions.

Function of language economy is very important in the journalistic genres and so in reviews. The reviews must go to the point; no lengthy passages are permitted because authors are usually limited in space. Idioms are believed to be one of the devices to achieve this effect. As pointed out before, idioms serve as highly specific means of communicating; with few words they enable language users to express tremendously a lot. Thus, idioms contribute to the language of economy because they save a lot of space.

To achieve even better economy, idioms occasionally underwent idiom variation called ‘deletion’ or they were permuted. Permutations such as in (1) and (2) serve language users, among many other aims, to shorten the message they want to convey because they often involve omission of one or more elements from the original idiom.

- (1) a *scene-stealing* role (from *steal the show/scene*)
- (2) a *ramrod-straight* protector (from *as stiff/straight as a ramrod*)

The second and prevailing function is pragmatic with its evaluating potential. One of the typical features of reviews is to evaluate. Thus idioms are often used when judging various aspects in films, either in positive way or negative. Aspects subjected to the criticism are, for

instance, acting performances (8), direction (3), the film itself (4), (6), (7). The costumes in (5) are described rather negatively and ironically.

Examples of negative appraisal:

- (3) Mr. Khan's efforts to invest this boy-man with charm, and the movie with comic pop, mostly *fall flat*. (50)
- (4) ..., "Going Down" *falls well short* of compelling, either as a coming-of-age film, a satire or a romance. (109)
- (5) ...his tiny shorts and tall heels *cast spells* of their own. (179)

Positive appraisal includes:

- (6) When the film works — scenes of Boston street life frequently rise to the level of pavement poetry — it *can take your breath away*... (179)
- (7) Moments like this separate "Guy and Madeline" from the pack and *whet the appetite* for more. (181)
- (8) ..."The Mortal Instruments" raises our hopes with early scenes of relaxed naturalism that allow the actors — most of whom *deliver the goods* — to work without tripping over digital effects. (195)

Nevertheless, idioms do not only evaluate but they also describe and provide more information about the topic, hence nominative function. Idioms often describe the main characters (9-13) and their actions (14, 15).

- (9) Babli is a lovable lout, a cocky car thief in Delhi with loud shirts and the inevitable *heart of gold*. (34)
- (10) ... Robert is a *down-and-out* saxophonist from New York... (73)
- (11) ...the *down-to-earth* family man in the heartland *with his feet firmly planted in the soil*. (264)
- (12) The maddeningly goofy Rene is a compulsive talker with a streak of *the ham actor* in him. (285)
- (13) He runs his handsome home with almost military efficiency, having trained his family — Brian, in middle school, *a chip off the old block*... (397)
- (14) And Hubert, who resembles a pouty young Elvis, a pouf of dark hair artfully flopping over one eye, often expresses it with a wounded howl, *throwing tantrums and lashing out at* his mother... (40, 41)
- (15) In any case, they *take a back seat* to Saleem and his family's story. (67)

Film itself is described by means of idioms too.

- (16) ...“Mammuth” has the distressed, gritty look of a 1970s movie. But *it takes its cues from* some of the less-appealing aspects of that era’s freewheeling style, in particular a sort of curdled whimsy. (17)
- (17) Money and visual care *have been lavished on* this Bollywood action-comedy-romance and glossy stars engaged. (49)
- (18) ...this would-be *coming-of-age* road trip movie in 1974. (84)
- (19) Despite its lurid subject “Going Down” is quite *old-school*, at its core a conventional uninspired fantasy of love conquering all. (113)

Idioms also describe the setting.

- (20) Stuck in a *back-of-beyond* village where sheep outnumber humans, Alma dreams of escape... (174)

Finally, director’s style is also included.

- (21) As a director, Mr. Dolan has a freewheeling style, and he’s self-dramatizing enough to want to call attention to it without being too much of a visual *show-off*. (47)

Using Fernando’s terminology, some instances of ‘rational idioms’ were detected in the corpus. *On one level...on another level, by and large, in the face of, in addition to, at the same time...* are idioms fulfilling cohesive function in the text, i.e. they link and combine sentences together.

6. Conclusion

This thesis studied idioms and their variations collected from film reviews The New York Times. It aimed at investigating idiom and idiom variation frequency, classifying types of idiom variations according to classification inspired by Fernando (1996), studying individual examples of idioms and exploring idiom function in the chosen genre.

Before conducting the analyses, it was necessary to provide the reader with a theoretical background of the concept used in the analyses. Clarification of the terms idiom, idiom variation and film review are included. Further, four different classifications of idiom variations are discussed.

In the collected data comprising of 63 reviews by 7 authors, 429 idioms have been identified, which means that their distribution is 1 idiom in 65 words. This is a rather frequent occurrence and can be accounted for the inclusion of phrasal verbs and transparent fixed phrases together with more prototypical idioms with figurative meanings.

The frequency of idiom variations was common. There is a variation in every 1,3 idiom, with intention to express various effects, such as reinforce meaning, add new meaning, be more specific or increase emotional effect. Because of the high frequency of idiom variation permitted by idioms, it can be presumed idioms used in the reviews are usually less prototypical, featuring middle or lower degree of idiomaticity.

Regarding the analysis of idiom variation classification, the most prominent category is 'replacement' with the highest absolute frequency. Majority of substitutions are conventional in nature; occasionally, less canonical substitutions were detected only in the subclass 'replacement of content word' signalling creative nature of the authors.

The second most frequent class is 'permutation'; its most frequent subclass is 'adjectivization'. Possible reason is that adjectives serve to modify nouns and noun phrases; they provide more information about the element they modify. As reviews are also to provide readers with information (e.g. they describe the setting, the acting performances) this is one possible way how to achieve this aim. Also, permutations sometimes omit elements from the established idioms thus they contribute to language economy which is one of the functions played by idioms.

The penultimate class is 'addition'; there are 30 instances of addition out of 329 variations. In the majority of cases, the reasons for adding new elements into established idioms were to reinforce or specify the meaning of the idiom.

'Deletion' is a class which comprises the lowest relative frequency 7%. Although it is the least frequent type of idiom variation, the class represents relatively high score (23 in 329), taking into consideration that the process of deleting elements of idiom is rather rare. One possible reason of deleting elements in idioms is to achieve brevity, a common feature of journalistic genres.

The study of individual instances of idioms revealed several non-canonical variations in idioms, however, they are relatively rare. The majority of variants appear to be canonical in nature.

Concerning the role and purpose of idioms, there are three main idiom functions detected in the chosen genre: evaluative, nominative (describing function) and language economy functions. In a few instances, idioms function as rational idioms (cohesive function). Evaluative function was probably the most conspicuous. Use of the idioms expressing positive evaluation outnumbered negative assessment.

The above analysis does not claim to be exhaustive. There are plenty of other aspects worth investigating. For instance, detailed study of idiom morphological structure was not included (only partial) or study of idiom semantic features, for example opacity, are outside the scope of this thesis.

Resumé

Tato bakalářská práce se zaměřuje na idiomatické výrazy ve filmových recenzích publikovaných v americkém tisku New York Times. Idiomy studuje jak z kvantitativní tak kvalitativní perspektivy. Největší pozornost je věnována zajímavému jevu idiomů, tj. variacím idiomů, které mohou být třeba syntaktické či lexikální. Práce se také zabývá četností výskytu idiomů a variací. V neposlední řadě cílem je zhodnotit výskyt a funkci idiomů ve zvoleném žánru filmové recenze.

Práce je rozvržena na dvě hlavní části. V první kapitole teoretické části je zpočátku nastíněn pojem idiom pomocí několika definicí různých lingvistů a shrnutím jeho základních vlastností. Následující dvě podkapitoly obsahují další typické znaky idiomů a informace o dělení idiomů podle jejich formy pro celkové pochopení tohoto termínu. Funkce idiomů je vyložena v další sekci. Velká pozornost se věnuje příspěvku na toto téma od významného českého lingvisty Františka Čermáka. Dále je také zahrnuta funkční klasifikace idiomů podle autorky Chitra Fernando.

Druhá kapitola se zaměřuje na variace idiomů. Nejprve je vysvětleno, co se chápe pod tímto pojmem, nazývaný v této práci buď jako variace, transformace či varianty idiomů. Proč lidé mluvící jakýmkoliv jazykem vytvářejí varianty a proč pouze některé idiomy podléhají (často novodobým a kreativním) změnám jsou otázky, na které se další podkapitola snaží dát odpovědi. Poté následuje sekce obsahující čtyři různé klasifikace variací podle čtyř různých lingvistů. Poslední schéma dělení bylo použito jako základ pro vytvoření klasifikace využitě v analýze variací v 5 kapitole.

Poslední kapitola obsahující teoretický základ dalších konceptů, se kterými se pracuje v této práci, charakterizuje žánr, filmovou recenzi a její funkci. Stručně vymezuje, kde se tradičně recenze v žurnalistickém žánru zařazuje a ujasňuje rozdíl mezi dvěma termíny ‚recenze‘ a ‚kritika‘, často spojované s filmovou recenzí, jež mnozí autoři rozlišují.

Druhá hlavní část začíná kapitolou 4, která obsahuje metody využitě při práci s daty, podává informace o sesbíraném jazykovém materiálu (zpracovaném ve formě tabulky přiložené v apendixu) a předvádí hlavní cíle práce již jednou zmíněné v úvodu. Tato kapitola rovněž vykládá a přibližuje klasifikaci použitou v analýze variací idiomů. Vymezuje také kritérium při identifikaci idiomů v korpusu.

Kapitola 5 předvádí výsledky čtyř hlavních cílů této bakalářské práce. První cíl bylo zjistit četnost výskytu jak idiomů, tak variací. Bylo zjištěno, že v nasbíraném materiálu (63 filmových recenzí, tj. necelých 28 tisíc slov) se nachází celkově 429 idiomů. Znamená to tedy, že četnost výskyt jedno idiomu připadá na každé 65 slovo. Podle Čermáka (2007, 116), text může být považován za bohatý na idiomy s výskytem průměrně 1 idiomu na 80 až 120 slov. Vysoká četnost idiomů, může být přisuzována faktu, že do analýzy byly rovněž zahrnuty frázová slovesa či transparentní ustálená spojení a ne jen pouze typické idiomy s netransparentním významem.

Četnost výskytu variací je poměrně velmi vysoká. Ze 429 idiomů, 329 představují variace. Což znamená, že každý 1,3 idiom obsahuje variaci nějakého druhu. Důležité je podotknout, že idiom může vykazovat víc než jednu variantu zároveň.

Druhým cílem práce je kvantitativní studie variací idiomů a to především kanonických, neboli tradičně uznávaných. Variace jsou tříděny do kategorií klasifikace inspirované podle autorky Fernando (1996). Nejčastější variace spadá do kategorie ‚nahrazení‘ (replacement), která tvoří dvě třetiny z celkového počtu variací. Nejméně časté jsou naopak variace ‚přidání‘ (addition) a ‚smazání‘ (deletion) s méně jak 10% výskytu z celkového počtu variací.

Třetím cílem je studie konkrétních idiomů pomocí kvalitativní metody. Zajímavé netrardiční příklady idiomů a příklady nekanonických variací jsou okomentovány v sekci 5.3. Méně kanonické příklady transformací byly poměrně málo časté v porovnání s tradičními všeobecně uznávanými variacemi.

Poslední cíl se zaměřuje na vymezení funkce a role idiomů v žánru filmové recenze. Tři hlavní funkce byly odhaleny s ohledem na typ žánru. Idiomy velmi často plnily pragmatickou funkci neboli hodnotící roly. Hlavní záměr recenze je ohodnotit umělecké dílo a idiomy slouží k tomuto účelu. Idiomy hodnotily například herecké výkony, samotný film či styl režie. Pozitivní hodnocení převažovalo nad negativním.

Další častá funkce byla nominativní, s cílem pojmenovat, popsat. Recenze slouží k poskytnutí informací, k podáváním bližších informací o diskutovaném filmu. Idiomy plní právě tuto funkci. Byly použity například při popisování a přibližování charakteru hereckých postav, či jejich chování a činů.

Třetí funkce má za cíl přispívat k jazykové ekonomii. Idiomy slouží jako prostředek k dosažení tohoto efektu, protože jsou to poměrně krátké a výstižné fráze, které jsou velmi bohaté na význam a dovolují vyjádřit i ty nejjemnější sémantické nuance. Jazyková ekonomie

je typický rys žurnalistických žánrů a platí tedy i o recenzích. Byť recenze mají hodnotit a poskytovat dostatek doprovodných informací, vyznačují se krátkostí a výstižností.

Bibliography

I. Primary sources:

“The New York Times”, accessed 2013 – 2014,
<http://www.nytimes.com/pages/movies/index.html>.

II. The secondary sources:

A. Dictionaries:

Good, Melissa. 2008. *Cambridge advanced learner's dictionary*. 3rd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University.

Farlex, Inc. 2004-2014. “The Free Dictionary”, last modified June 28, 2014
<http://idioms.thefreedictionary.com/>.

Makkai, Adam. 1987. *A dictionary of American idioms*. 2nd ed. New York: Barron's.

B. Other Literature

Bordwell, David. 1989. *Making meaning: Inference and rhetoric in the interpretation of cinema*. Cambridge: Harvard university press.

Bull, Andy. 2010. *Multimedia journalism: a practical guide*. London: Routledge.

Čermák, František. 2007. *Frazeologie a idiomatika česká a obecná*. Praha: Karolinum.

Corrigan, Timothy. 2001. *A short guide to writing about film*. New York: Longman.

Cruse, Alan D. 1986. *Lexical Semantics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Fernando, Chitra. 1996. *Idioms and Idiomacity*. London: Penguin Books.

Glucksberg, Sam. 2001. *Understanding Figurative Language: From Metaphor to Idioms*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hanks, Patrick. 2013. *Lexical Analysis: Norms and Exploitations*. Cambridge: Mass.

Harcup, Tony. 2004. *Journalism: Principles and Practice*. London: Sage Publications.

Jacz, Ludovít. 1982. *Malá encyklopédia žurnalistiky*. Bratislava: Obzor.

Keeble, Richard (ed). 2005. *Print Journalism: a critical introduction*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Langlotz, Andreas. 2006. *Idiomatic Creativity: A Cognitive-Linguistic Model of Idiom-Representation and Idiom-Variation in English*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company.

- Liu, Zhengyuan. 2012. "Analysis of Idiom Variation in the Framework of Linguistic Subjectivity". *English Language Teaching* 5(6): 105 - 113.
- Mencher, Melvin. 1996. *Basic Media Writing*. Madison: Brown & Benchmark.
- Nunberg, Geoffrey; Ivan A. Sag; T. Wason. 1994. "Idioms". *Language* 70(3):491 – 538.
- Null, Christopher. 2005. *Five stars!* California: Sutro press.
- Seidl, Jennifer and W. McMordie. 1988. *English Idioms*. 5th ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Seidl, Jennifer and W. Mc Mordie. 1978. *English Idioms and how to use them*. 4th ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Tušer, Andrej. 2003. *Ako sa robia noviny*. Bratislava: Sofa.
- Veľas, Štefan. 1983. *Novinárska publicistika: Publicistika racionálneho typu*. Bratislava: Sloveské pedagogické nakladateľství.
- Vokáčová Jana, "A Comparative Study of English, Czech, French and German Idioms" (PhD diss., Masaryk University Brno, 2008).
- Watson, James and Anne Hill. 2000. *Dictionary of media and communication studies*. 5th ed. London: Arnold.
- Yusifova and Gunel Izzadin. 2013. "Syntactic Features of English Idioms". *International Journal of English Linguistics* 3(3): 133 – 138.
- Žemličková, Gabriela. 1974. *Novinárske žánry II. časť*. Praha: Novinář