

# PHILOLOGICAL SCIENCES

## SEMANTIC PATTERNINGS OF UNIVERSAL IDIOMS IN THE CONTEXT OF ENGLISH AND ARMENIAN LANGUAGES

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### Abstract

The paper reports research findings from the detailed analysis on idioms with proper names. The study is primarily devoted to outlining semantic and structural patternings of idioms with proper names in English and Armenian.

Based on a contrastive analysis the main focus of the discussion will be to unveil common and distinctive features in source and target languages. The research data showed that these idiomatic expressions display similarities both in their unique structure and semantics.

**Keywords:** idioms with proper name, semantic traits, structural traits equivalence, universal idioms.

Naming a single entity is one of the basic speech acts in the class of declaratives, alongside declaring war, dismissing and bequeathing. People and places, pets and hurricanes, rock groups and festivities, institutions and commercial products, works of art and shops are given a name. Naming serves to highlight entities that play a role in people's daily life, to establish and maintain individuality in society. Proper names have been investigated by philosophers, logicians, anthropologists and psychologists, but only sporadically by linguists.

From an overview of the literature on this area of language, it emerges that special attention has been paid to theoretical issues, while investigations on specific aspects in individual languages are infrequent. If we examine idioms, the dominant subtype of phraseological units, we observe that they involve elements regarded as relevant for various reasons: body parts, because human beings as natural (and cultural) entities are at the centre of language; natural elements, animals, colours, proper names, clothing and food, because they are salient aspects of everyday life. Idiomatic expressions containing proper names came into English from people's everyday life, folklore, prose and poetry, myths, fairy tales, fables, songs, slang, and other sources. Quite a few idioms with proper names are familiar to people of different nationalities but knowing them can be very important because they make the language colorful.

Their contrastive analysis can offer an insight into the interplay between language and culture in phraseology.

### 1. Achilles Heel - Աքիլեսյան գարշապար

The English idiomatic expression implies the following meanings:

- A vulnerable point; a fatal weakness; a small fault in a person or system that can result in its failure (Merriam-Webster).

Before embarking upon a detailed analysis it is helpful and important to have a look at the origin of the idiomatic expression:

The Greek hero Achilles is one of the most famous figures in Greek myth and a key character in the Trojan War. Achilles was the son of Peleus, a Greek king, and

Thetis, a sea nymph or goddess. Thetis gives birth to Achilles who, unlike her, is mortal. She attempts to make the baby Achilles immortal, by dipping him in the River Styx (the river that runs through the underworld), while holding him by his heel. The one part of his body left untouched by the waters becomes his only point of weakness, hence the idiom 'Achilles heel' (The British Museum).

In English, the use of the idiom 'Achilles heel' dates from the seventeenth century. Although the earliest citation in the Oxford English Dictionary is dated 1705, this is the date of publication, not composition. The earliest citation in the OED is from the seventeenth-century Anglo-Irish poet John Denham (1614/15-69), who's best known for the long poem Cooper's Hill (1642). Denham also, however, gave us this couplet:

- Leave then, said he, th' invulnerable Keel,

We'll find they're feeble, like *Achilles Heel*. (Interestingliterature.com)

Here is a poem written by Joseph Washborn and sung by Toploader

Goodbye to the sky

You know I can't fly but I feel love

Do you know how I feel

You are my *Achilles heel*

Hello to below

I feel love flow like a river flow

I'm standing still

You are my *Achilles heel*

Feeling free yeah what about me

Well you gotta give it up 'cause I feel love

Do you know how I feel

You are my *Achilles heel*

- "Everyone has his *Achilles' heel*," continued Prince Andrew. (Leo Tolstoy, War and Peace, 1.1.24)

- Յուրաքանչյուր ուրիշ իր *Աքիլեսյան գարշապարը*, շարունակեց արքայազն Անդրեյը (Լ.Ն. Տոլստոյ, Պատերազմ և Խաղաղություն 1,1,24)

The idiom "Achilles Heel" with its equivalence in Armenian is a vivid example of a full correspondence suggested by Mona Baker, implying the usage of the

particular idiom in the target language with maintenance of similar meaning and form. This method is considered to be an ideal solution to translation problems, as the goodness of fit between the form and meaning is achieved here, but with a narrow functional coverage.

## 2. Damocles' Sword – Դամոկլյան սուր

The semantic field of the phrase encompasses two senses:

- A closely impending disaster; any situation threatening imminent harm or disaster

“If you say that someone has the Sword of Damocles hanging over their head, you mean that they are in a situation in which something very bad could happen to them at any time” (Collinsdictionary.com).

We can find the seeds of the meaning decoded in the etymology of the phrase:

The famed “sword of Damocles” dates back to an ancient moral parable popularized by the Roman philosopher Cicero in his 45 B.C. book “Tusculan Disputations.” Cicero’s version of the tale centers on Dionysius II, a tyrannical king who once ruled over the Sicilian city of Syracuse during the fourth and fifth centuries B.C. Though rich and powerful, Dionysius was supremely unhappy. His iron-fisted rule had made him many enemies, and he was tormented by fears of assassination so much so that he slept in a bedchamber surrounded by a moat and only trusted his daughters to shave his beard with a razor. As Cicero tells it, the king’s dissatisfaction came to a head one day after a court flatterer named Damocles showered him with compliments and remarked how blissful his life must be. “Since this life delights you,” an annoyed Dionysius replied, “do you wish to taste it yourself and make a trial of my good fortune?” When Damocles agreed, Dionysius seated him on a golden couch and ordered a host of servants wait on him. He was treated to succulent cuts of meat and lavished with scented perfumes and ointments. Damocles couldn’t believe his luck, but just as he was starting to enjoy the life of a king, he noticed that Dionysius had also hung a razor-sharp sword from the ceiling. It was positioned over Damocles’ head, suspended only by a single strand of horsehair. From then on, the courtier’s fear for his life made it impossible for him to savor the opulence of the feast or enjoy the servants. After casting several nervous glances at the blade dangling above him, he asked to be excused, saying he no longer wished to be so fortunate (History.com).

- For the Government persecutes us, and the absurd legislation that rules us is a veritable *Damocles' sword* over our heads.” (Cliffsnotes.com)

• Որովհետև կառավարությունը հետապնդում է մեզ... և արսուրդ օրենսդրությունը, որը ղեկավարում է մեզ իսկական *դամոկլյան սուր* է մեր գլխավերևում: (Gustav Flaubert “*Madam Bovary*” Chapter II) (Gutenberg.org).

The adequacy indices of the Armenian *Դամոկլյան սուր* and the English “*The Sword of Damocles*” may coincide in meaning and usage. We may not use them either while speaking about *something*, for it was a *man* who, as the myth goes, had been

made to seat at a feast under a sword hung by a single hair. We may use them only in a situation showing that someone is *prosperous*. However, it sounds strange to state, that both the English and Armenian phrases have rooted out their ties with the myth and are nowadays used more freely in a wider sense and mean “under a constant threat”.

## 3. Trojan horse - Տրոյական ձի

Something that initially seems innocuous but is ultimately bad or malicious.

Common if you describe someone or something as a Trojan horse, you mean that they seem good or useful, but are really there to help something be harmed or destroyed in the future. (Collinsdictionary.com).

After besieging the walls of Troy for ten years, the Greeks built a huge, hollow wooden horse, secretly filled it with armed warriors, and presented it to the Trojans as a gift for the goddess Athena, and the Trojans took the horse inside the city's walls. That night, the armed Greeks swarmed out and captured and burned the city. A Trojan horse is thus anything that looks innocent but, once accepted, has power to harm or destroy—for example, a computer program that seems helpful but ends up corrupting or demolishing the computer's software. (Merriam-webster.com)

- Politics: a *Trojan horse* race (Trojan Horse, Stanislaw Jerzy Lec) (Goodreads.com)

• Քաղաքականությունը *տրոյական ձիերով* մրցավազք է (Ալբերտ Միքայելյան և Միքայել Սարգսյան.)

The selected designation of these two phrases is close to each other often. It’s also worthy to mention specifically the punctuation in translation. The word “politics” is rendered in target language in a more inductive fashion; it conveys irony showing contempt and humorous attitude to the entity it depicts.

## 4. Judas' kiss – Հուդայի համբույր

We find the following meanings:

False love; an act of betrayal; traitorous action disguised as a show of affection. (Idioms.thefreedictionary.com)

It is well-acknowledged that the kiss of Judas, also known as the Betrayal of Christ, is the act with which Judas identified Jesus to the multitude with swords and clubs who had come from the chief priests and elders of the people to arrest him, according to the Synoptic Gospels. The kiss is given by Judas in the Garden of Gethsemane after the Last Supper and leads directly to the arrest of Jesus by the police force of the Sanhedrin (Finedictionary.com).

- Do not trust her because her love is a Judas kiss.

• Don’t try to be my friend now, it is just a *Judas kiss!* (Macmillandictionary.com)

• Աշխարհս լիքն է վատ, մութ մարդկանցով, որոնք անկաշառ գործչին մոտենում են *Հուդայի համբույրով*: Նար Դոս “Մահը”

We generally made use of the English segments (sentences) containing idiomatic expression, with proper names with parallel sentences in Armenian.

However, more often we encountered difficulties stemming from the lack of rich translation data. In this case we conducted a contrastive study for compensating this absence. Contrastive study enabled us to get new insights into this linguistic phenomenon as in the examples adduced below.

The contrastive study of the idiomatic expressions shows that the designations of both English and Armenian phrases coincide. The fully coinciding designation of the two phrases having the same meaning and framing can be considered *universals*, as far as the source language and the receptor language are concerned.

In both of the languages they are identical in meaning and form and are primarily used as a more expressive option to portrait betrayal and treason.

### 5. Pandora's Box – Պանդորայի արկղ

- a process that once begun generates many complicated problems; a prolific source of troubles (Merriam-webster.com).

The story of Pandora's box is a legend used by ancient Greeks to explain not only human weakness, but also how pain and suffering were first inflicted on the human race.

According to legend, Pandora was the first human woman on Earth. She was given many gifts, including beauty, curiosity, wit, intelligence, and strength – in fact, the name 'Pandora' in Greek means 'one who bears all gifts'.

Pandora was also given another very special gift: a box. She was told that the box contained even more offerings but that she must never, ever open it.

Her curiosity eventually got the better of her, however, and Pandora opened the box. When she did, she quickly realized it contained illness, hardship, trouble and pain – not the beautiful gifts she had expected! Pandora tried to close the box and stop the suffering from going out into the world, but it was too late. She shut the lid on the box, trapping Hope inside.

The story of Pandora's box has fascinated people for centuries and has inspired countless paintings, sculptures, and other works of art.

Examples:

- You're playing with *Pandora's box*. Sometimes it's better not to open it. Sometimes, it's better not to know." (Tatiana de Rosnay «Sarah's Key») ([Goodreads.com](http://Goodreads.com)).

- Ուրեմն եկեք մեր կաշվից դուրս չգանք և դադարեցնենք մամուլը որպես *Պանդորայի արկղ* ծառայեցնել

(Հայերեն դարձվածքների ընդարձակ բառարան, Պ. Բաղիրյան, էջ 1072)

In both languages the idiom is used to show unpredictable chain of events which will most likely result in catastrophic consequences.

### 6. Don Juan – Դոն Ժուան

The idiom amplifies the following:

- a legendary Spaniard proverbial for his seduction of women; a captivating man known as a great lover or seducer of women (Merriam-webster.com).

For unleashing the message encoded in the phrase we go back to its history:

The legends run that Don Juan, fictitious character is a symbol of libertinism. Originating in popular legend, he was first given literary personality in the tragic drama *El burlador de Sevilla* (1630; "The Seducer of Seville," translated in *The Trickster of Seville and the Stone Guest*), attributed to the Spanish dramatist Tirso de Molina. The legend of Don Juan tells how, at the height of his licentious career, he seduced a girl of noble family and killed her father, who had tried to avenge her. Later, seeing a commemorative effigy on the father's tomb, he flippantly invited it to dine with him, and the stone ghost duly arrived for dinner as a harbinger of Don Juan's death. In the original Spanish tragedy, Don Juan's attractive qualities—his vitality, his arrogant courage, and his sense of humour—heighten the dramatic value of the catastrophe. The power of the drama derives from its rapid pace, the impression it gives of cumulative tension as Don Juan's enemies gradually hound him to destruction, and the awareness that the Don is goaded to defy even the ghostly forces of the unknown. In the end he refuses to repent and is eternally damned (Britannica.com).

- The conqueror or the actor, the creator or *Don Juan* may forget that their exercise in living could not do without awareness of its mad character. One becomes accustomed so quickly. Albert Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus* ([People.brandeis.edu](http://People.brandeis.edu)).

- Բռնակալն ու դերասանը, ստեղծագործողն ու *Դոն Ժուանը* կարող են մոռանալ, որ առանց կյանքի անհեթեթությունը գիտակցելու, անհնար է ապրել: Ամեն ինչի շատ շուտ են վարժվում: Ալբեր Կամյու, *Սիզիփոսի առասպելը* (Grapaharan.org).

Don Juan has always been a famous character in western culture symbolizing masculinity and the action of womanizing. Although cultural representation of masculinity and appropriate ways of womanizing are a matter of change, the idiom Don Juan stays flexible and doesn't lose its popularity. It becomes evident from the translation that the translator has successfully preserved the variational qualities of the original utterance in the target language.

### 7. Platonic Love – Պլատոնական սեր

- love conceived by Plato as ascending from passion for the individual to contemplation of the universal and ideal; a close relationship between two persons in which sexual desire is nonexistent or has been suppressed or sublimated (Merriam-webster.com).

Platonic love, a phrase used in two senses, with allusion in both cases to Plato's account of love in his *Symposium*.

The immediate object of the *Symposium*—which professes to record the discourses made in eulogy of Eros by a group of eminent speakers at a banquet in honour of the tragic poet Agathon—is to find the highest manifestation of the love which controls the world in the mystic aspiration after union with the eternal and supercosmic beauty. The *Symposium* depicts Socrates as the type of the aspirant who has reached the goal of union and sets in sharp opposition to him the figure of Alcibiades, who has sold his spiritual birthright for the pleasures and ambitions of the world. The centre of

philosophical interest lies in the discourse of Socrates, which he professes to have learned from the priestess Diotima of Mantinea.

The main argument may be summarized thus: Eros, desirous love in all its forms, is a reaching out of the soul to a good to which it aspires but does not yet possess. The desirous soul is not yet in fruition of the good. It is on the way to fruition, just as the philosopher is not yet in possession of wisdom but is reaching out after it. The object which awakens this desirous love in all its forms is beauty, and beauty is eternal. In its crudest form, love for a beautiful person is really a passion to beget offspring by that person and so to attain, by the perpetuation of one's stock, the substitute for immortality which is all the body can achieve. A more spiritual form of the same craving for eternity is the aspiration to win immortal fame by combining with a kindred soul to give birth to sound institutions and rules of life. Still more spiritual is the endeavour, in association with chosen minds, to enrich philosophy and science with noble discourses and thoughts.

Thus, in common speech, platonic love means a supremely affectionate relationship between human beings in which sexual intercourse is neither desired nor practiced. In this sense, it most often refers to a heterosexual relationship. By extension, it may be used to cover that stage of chivalrous or courtly love in which sexual intercourse is indefinitely postponed (Britannica.com).

- And those who only know the *non-platonic love* have no need to talk of tragedy. In such love there can be no sort of tragedy. 'I'm much obliged for the gratification, my humble respects'—that's all the tragedy. And in *platonic love* there can be no tragedy, because in that love all is clear and pure. Leo Tolstoy "Anna Karenina" (Gutenberg.org).

- Եվ նրանք, ովքեր հասկանում են միայն *չպլատոնական սերը*, զուր են խոսում դրամայի մասին: Այդպիսի սիրո դեպքում չի կարող լինել ո՛չ մի դրամա: «Խորին շնորհակալությունն ինձ պատճառած հաճույքի համար, հարգանքներս ձեզ», - ասա և ամբողջ դրաման: Իսկ *պլատոնական սիրո* համար չի կարող դրամա լինել, որովհետև այդպիսի սիրո մեջ ամեն ինչ պարզ է և մաքուր: (Աննա Կարենինա)

The idiom platonic love is used in both languages to show non-sexual affection between two individuals. This idiom as well is translated by the first method suggested by Mona Baker. In both languages it pertains its original form and meaning.

#### 8. Gordian knot – Գորդյան հանգույց

- An intricate problem: a problem insoluble in its own terms —often used in the phrase cut the Gordian knot; a knot tied by Gordius, king of Phrygia, held to be capable of being untied only by the future ruler of Asia, and cut by Alexander the Great with his sword (Merriam-webster.com).

The part of this research unveils the meaning (message) of the phrase "Gordian knot":

The phrase "Gordian knot," commonly used to describe a complex or unsolvable problem, can be traced

back to a legendary chapter in the life of Alexander the Great.

As the story goes, in 333 B.C. the Macedonian conqueror marched his army into the Phrygian capital of Gordium in modern day Turkey. Upon arriving in the city, he encountered an ancient wagon, its yoke tied with what one Roman historian later described as "several knots all so tightly entangled that it was impossible to see how they were fastened."

Phrygian tradition held that the wagon had once belonged to Gordius, the father of the celebrated King Midas. An oracle had declared that any man who could unravel its elaborate knots was destined to become ruler of all of Asia.

According to the ancient chronicler Arrian, the impetuous Alexander was instantly "seized with an ardent desire" to untie the Gordian knot. After wrestling with it for a time and finding no success, he stepped back from the mass of gnarled ropes and proclaimed, "It makes no difference how they are loosed." He then drew his sword and sliced the knot in half with a single stroke.

Thanks to the enduring popularity of the Alexander fable, the phrase "Gordian knot" has entered the lexicon as shorthand for an intricate or intractable obstacle. One of its earliest appearances came in the Shakespeare play Henry V, where the titular character is praised for his ability to "unloose" the Gordian knots of politics. Likewise, the saying "cutting the Gordian knot" is now commonly used to describe a creative or decisive solution to a seemingly insurmountable problem (History.com).

- Her yellow, silken house-gown, faintly scented, touched his shoulders. "Poor Lester," she said. "You certainly have tied yourself up in a knot. But it's a *Gordian knot*, my dear, and it will have to be cut. Why don't you discuss this whole thing with her, just as you have with me, and see how she feels about it?"

"Jennie Gerhardt" by Theodore Dreiser (Gutenberg.org).

- Անուշահոտ ջրով օծված նրա հագուստի մետաքսը դիպավ Լեսթերի մեջքին:

-Ի՜նեղճ Լե՜սթեր, - ասաց նա: - Ա՛յ թե հանգույցի էք դեմ առել: Բայց դա *գորդյան հանգույց* է, սիրելիս, և հարկավոր է կտրել այն: Ինչու՞ դուք այս ամենը չեք քննարկում հենց նրա հետ, ասա, ինչպես հիմա ինձ հետ եք խոսում, և չեք պարզում, թե ինչ է մտածում նա ինքր: (Grqamol.am)

The idiom Gordian knot is commonly used in classical literature in both languages where it is mostly translated as an "unsolvable problem" which can only be solved by "cutting" i.e. by using force, isolating the source of the problem, etc. As you have undoubtedly realized it, this selected excerpts from the novel contain a case of full equivalence.

Thus, translating idioms with proper names is not an easy task for a translator. It can be tricky and take a lot of time and energy, but at the same time the usage of right strategies and techniques can make the results consummate.

### Conclusion

Proper names constitute a system, which varies across cultures and provides are flection of the society of which they are the expression.

Idioms are linguistic expressions or lexical items representing objects, concepts or phenomena of material life particular to a given culture. Every concept in one particular language has its own correspondent in another language. They are necessary to any language in order to keep the local and cultural color of that language. Translating idioms are arguably the most complex and problematic task for translators. An idiom is difficult to decode correctly for someone who only knows the normal meanings of its constituent elements.

The translator also needs to develop sensitivity to the use of idioms in the receptor language and uses them naturally to make the translation lively and keep the style of the source language.

This research depicts that there are various strategies used in idiom translation, yet when it comes to idioms with proper nouns, in vast majority of cases translation can be done via using an idiom with similar form and similar meaning.

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## ОБОГАЩЕНИЕ КИТАЙСКОЙ ДИПЛОМАТИЧЕСКОЙ ТЕРМИНОЛОГИИ ПУТЕМ ВЗАИМОДЕЙСТВИЯ ИНОЯЗЫЧНОГО ЯЗЫКА

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## ENRICHING CHINESE DIPLOMATIC TERMINOLOGY THROUGH FOREIGN LANGUAGE INTERACTION

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### Аннотация

В данной статье рассматривается обогащение китайской дипломатической терминологии путем взаимодействия иноязычного языка. Также рассматриваются методы и способы заимствования иноязычных терминов. Мы наблюдаем иноязычные заимствования в любом языке. Во время нынешней глобализации, когда прогрессирует век современных новейших технологий, и жизнь людей наполнена новой информацией, новых научных разработок и исследований, с каждым днем все больше и больше появляются новые термины. Заимствование способствует обогащению словарного запаса заимствующего языка; слова иноязычного происхождения, подчиняются законам фонетики, грамматики и словообразования данного языка, лишь в немногих случаях сохраняя свой "первоначальный облик" (см. варваризмы). Однако неоправданное использование их без надобности приводит к засорению литературного языка. Термины иностранного происхождения играют большую роль в обогащении дипломатической терминологии современного китайского языка. Заимствование иностранных терминов в дипломатии было связано со значительным опережением развития этой науки в странах Европы и Америки по сравнению с Китаем. Так, в 30 - х гг. XX в. дипломатические термины попадали в китайский язык в готовом виде вместе с новыми понятиями из различных языков, а больше всего из английского. Такие термины иностранного происхождения были связаны с предметами, процессами, явлениями, имеющими определенное значение для дипломатии. Они знаменовали определенный этап в становлении дипломатической терминосистемы и сыграли, несомненно, положительную роль в развитии дипломатической науки в Китае.

### Abstract

The article deals with the enrichment of Chinese diplomatic terminology through the interaction of a foreign language. Methods and ways of borrowing foreign language terms are also considered. Foreign borrowings are an inevitable process of replenishment and enrichment of the terminology of any language. During the current globalization, when the age of modern information technologies, active and rich social and political life, new scientific developments and research is progressing, new terms appear more and more every day. Borrowing contributes to the enrichment of the vocabulary of the borrowing language; words of foreign origin, as a rule, obey the laws of phonetics, grammar and word formation of this language, only in a few cases remain "foreign bodies" (see barbarisms). However, the abuse of foreign words, their unjustified use unnecessarily leads to clogging of the literary language. Terms of foreign origin play a large role in enriching the diplomatic terminology of modern Chinese. The borrowing of foreign terms in diplomacy was associated with a significant advance in the development of this science in Europe and America compared to China. So, in the 30s. 20th century diplomatic terms came into Chinese ready-made along with new concepts from various languages, and most of all from English. Such terms of