

IDIOMATIC EXPRESSIONS IN MEDIA WRITING: NEWS AND JOURNALISM ANALYSIS

Rugiyya KARIMOVA 

Nakhchivan State University, Nakhchivan, Azerbaijan

*Yazışılan müəllif: rugiyyakarimli@ndu.edu.az

NƏŞR TARİXİ:

Qəbul edilmə tarixi:
06.06.2026

Nəşr edilmə tarixi:
25.06.2026

KEYWORDS:

idioms, media
discourse,
journalistic
language, figurative
language, news
headlines, media
texts, journalism,
communication

SUMMARY

Idiomatic expressions represent one of the most distinctive elements of figurative language and are widely used in media communication to increase the effectiveness of journalistic discourse. In contemporary journalism, idioms are frequently incorporated into headlines, editorials, feature stories, and opinion articles in order to make information more engaging, expressive, and memorable for readers. This study explores the role and functions of idioms in written media texts, particularly within English-language news discourse. The research focuses on how idiomatic expressions contribute to journalistic style, influence audience perception, and facilitate the presentation of complex social, political, and economic issues. The study is based on a qualitative analysis of selected media texts obtained from online newspapers and digital news platforms. The analysis examines the contexts in which idioms are used most frequently and investigates their communicative and rhetorical purposes in journalistic writing. The results of the analysis show that idioms appear more frequently in headlines and commentary articles. Journalists often rely on familiar figurative expressions to simplify complicated topics, strengthen emotional resonance, and create persuasive effects within media discourse. At the same time, the research demonstrates that idioms may also present challenges in international communication. Since many idiomatic expressions are culturally embedded and context-sensitive, they can create ambiguity or misunderstanding for readers who are unfamiliar with their figurative meanings. This issue becomes increasingly important in the context of global digital media, where news content reaches audiences from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Overall, the research suggests that idioms remain an effective element of modern journalistic language. Their appropriate use enhances readability, rhetorical impact, and audience engagement; however, journalists must maintain a balance between creative language use and communicative clarity. The findings contribute to a broader understanding of figurative language in media discourse and emphasize the significance of idiomatic expressions in shaping journalistic communication.

INTRODUCTION

Language is one of the most essential tools used by the media to inform, influence, and engage the public. Journalists rely on carefully selected vocabulary and stylistic devices to present information in a way that is both clear and appealing to readers. Among the many linguistic features used in journalistic writing, idioms occupy an important place.

According to Crystal (2010) language plays a central role in shaping communication in modern society, including media discourse where linguistic choices strongly influence public understanding and interaction (Crystal, 2010).

Fernando (1996) argue that, idioms are expressions whose meanings cannot be fully understood from the literal meanings of their individual components but instead convey figurative meanings that have developed through cultural usage (Fernando, 1996).

In written media texts such as newspapers, magazines, and digital news platforms, idioms are frequently used to make articles more engaging and expressive. Journalists often employ idiomatic expressions in headlines, opinion pieces, and feature stories in order to summarize complex situations, capture readers' attention, and present ideas in a vivid and memorable way.

However, the use of idioms in journalistic texts can also create certain difficulties. Because idioms are often culturally specific, they may not always be easily understood by international audiences or non-native speakers of English. As global media increasingly reaches readers from

different linguistic and cultural backgrounds, journalists must balance creativity with clarity in their language use.

This article examines the role of idioms in written media texts, focusing particularly on news articles and journalistic commentary. The study analyzes how idioms function in media discourse, what communicative purposes they serve, and what advantages and limitations they bring to journalistic communication.

Literature review. The study of idioms has been an important topic in linguistics and discourse analysis. According to Fernando (1996), idioms are conventionalized expressions whose meanings are not predictable from the meanings of their individual words. They are deeply embedded in cultural and linguistic traditions and often reflect shared experiences within a speech community. (Fernando, 1996).

Moon (1998) emphasizes that idioms and other fixed expressions play a crucial role in shaping natural language use. Through corpus-based analysis, Moon demonstrated that idiomatic expressions appear frequently in both spoken and written communication, including journalistic discourse. (Moon, 1998).

Similarly, Glucksberg (2001) explains that idioms contribute significantly to figurative language and help speakers and writers express complex ideas in a concise manner. Because idioms carry metaphorical meanings, they allow communicators to convey abstract concepts through familiar imagery. (Glucksberg, 2001).

In the context of media studies, Richardson (2007) highlights the importance of linguistic choices in news discourse. Journalists do not simply report events; they also shape how readers interpret those events through their language. Figurative expressions, including idioms, can influence how information is framed and understood. (Richardson, 2007).

Bell (1991) also notes that news language is shaped by audience expectations and journalistic conventions. According to Bell, linguistic choices in media texts are influenced by the need to attract readers while maintaining informational value (Bell, 1991).

Fairclough (1995) argues that media discourse is closely connected with power, ideology, and social influence. From this perspective, the use of idiomatic and figurative language in journalism can affect how audiences interpret political and social events. (Fairclough, 1995).

Fowler (1991) argues that news is not a neutral reflection of reality but a socially constructed representation shaped through language and ideology. Therefore, lexical and stylistic choices, including figurative expressions, may influence readers' interpretation of events (Fowler, 1991).

These studies suggest that idioms are not merely decorative elements of language but serve important communicative and rhetorical functions, particularly in media texts where attracting readers and summarizing complex issues are essential

Idioms in journalistic writing Journalistic writing aims to communicate information efficiently while maintaining reader interest. Although traditional news reporting prioritizes objectivity and clarity, idiomatic expressions are frequently used to enhance the readability and impact of media texts.

Idioms often appear in headlines because headlines must summarize complex stories in a very limited number of words. For example, international media outlets frequently use idiomatic expressions in political and economic reporting. A headline published by CNN stating "Europe walks a tightrope over energy crisis" illustrates how journalists use figurative language to describe politically sensitive situations. Similarly, BBC News has used expressions such as "under fire" and "at the heart of the debate" in political coverage to create concise and emotionally engaging headlines. These examples demonstrate that idioms help journalists communicate complex issues in a more accessible and memorable way.

For example, a headline like "A political storm is brewing", "Government walks a tightrope over economic reforms" metaphorically describes a situation in which the government must act carefully to avoid negative consequences. The idiom "walk a tightrope" vividly illustrates the delicate nature of the political situation.

In addition to headlines, idioms frequently appear in opinion articles and editorials. In these contexts, journalists are not only reporting events but also interpreting them and expressing viewpoints. Idiomatic expressions help writers create persuasive arguments and emphasize the significance of particular issues.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

This study employs a qualitative analytical approach to examine the use of idioms in written media texts. A selection of English-language news articles, headlines, and opinion pieces from online news platforms was analyzed in order to identify idiomatic expressions used in journalistic contexts. The analysis focused on three main aspects:

1. The frequency of idiom usage in different types of media texts
2. The contexts in which idioms are most commonly used
3. The communicative functions that idioms perform in journalistic writing

Examples of idiomatic expressions were collected and categorized based on their role in the text, such as attracting reader attention, simplifying complex information, or adding emotional emphasis. This qualitative analysis allowed for the identification of patterns in the use of idioms within media discourse.

Analysis. The analysis of written media texts demonstrates that idioms function as an important stylistic and communicative tool in journalistic writing. In the examined news articles and headlines, idiomatic expressions were frequently used to present complex situations in a concise and engaging manner. This indicates that journalists rely on idioms not only for stylistic purposes but also for effective communication.

One of the most noticeable patterns identified in the analyzed texts is the frequent use of idioms in headlines. Headlines are designed to attract readers' attention and summarize the main idea of an article in a limited space. As a result, journalists often use idiomatic expressions that are short, vivid, and easily recognizable. Expressions such as "under pressure", "on the brink of crisis", and "a turning point" help convey the essence of a story while maintaining reader interest.

Another important aspect revealed through the analysis is the role of idioms in framing political and economic issues. Journalists frequently use idioms to describe complex situations in a more accessible way. For instance, expressions like "a double-edged sword" or "open the door to change" allow writers to communicate both positive and negative implications of a situation without lengthy explanations. This demonstrates that idioms serve as linguistic shortcuts that facilitate comprehension.

This observation supports the view of Lakoff and Johnson (1980), who argue that metaphorical thinking plays a fundamental role in human cognition and communication. Many idiomatic expressions used in journalism are based on conceptual metaphors that help readers understand abstract issues through familiar experiences (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980).

The examined examples also show that idioms strengthen emotional expression in opinion articles and editorials. In these types of texts, journalists often aim to persuade readers or emphasize particular viewpoints. Idiomatic expressions help create stronger emotional resonance and make arguments more persuasive. By using familiar figurative language, writers can strengthen the impact of their commentary.

However, the analysis also suggests that the use of idioms must be approached carefully in journalistic writing. While idioms enhance expressiveness and readability, they may cause confusion for readers who are not familiar with the cultural or linguistic background of the expression. This is especially relevant in global media contexts where audiences may come from diverse linguistic backgrounds.

Overall, the analysis confirms that idioms are widely used in media texts as a tool for attracting attention, simplifying complex information, and strengthening rhetorical impact. At the same time, journalists must ensure that the use of idiomatic language does not compromise clarity and accessibility for the audience.

RESULTS

The analysis revealed several important patterns regarding the use of idioms in written media texts:

First, idioms appear most frequently in headlines and opinion-based articles rather than in strictly factual news reports. Headlines often rely on idiomatic language because it helps summarize complex stories in a concise and engaging way. Expressions such as "at the heart of the debate," "under fire," and "a turning point" are commonly used in journalistic headlines. For example, the headline "Government under fire over new reforms" uses the idiom "under fire" metaphorically to indicate severe criticism rather than literal attack. This figurative usage increases emotional intensity and immediately attracts readers' attention.

Second, idioms are widely used to simplify complex political, economic, and social issues. Journalists often rely on familiar figurative expressions to help readers understand complicated topics more easily. For instance, the idiom "a double-edged sword" effectively describes situations that have both positive and negative consequences - "Markets on edge after inflation report".

Third, idioms are frequently used to create rhetorical and emotional impact, particularly in editorials and commentary articles. Writers may use expressive language to highlight conflict, emphasize urgency, or influence readers' perceptions of events.

Another important finding is that the choice of idioms often depends on the target audience. Media outlets that address international audiences tend to use simpler and widely recognized idioms, while local publications may use more culturally specific expressions.

Finally, the analysis shows that although idioms enrich journalistic language, excessive use may reduce clarity, especially for readers who are not native speakers of English.

DISCUSSION

The findings demonstrate that idioms perform both stylistic and communicative functions in media texts. From a stylistic perspective, idioms contribute to the expressiveness and diversity of journalistic language. They help writers avoid repetitive phrasing and create more engaging narratives. In digital journalism, idioms are also widely used in social media headlines and online news platforms where competition for audience attention is particularly strong. Media organizations increasingly rely on expressive and emotionally loaded language in order to increase reader engagement and click-through rates.

From a communicative perspective, idioms allow journalists to summarize complex issues quickly. Because many idiomatic expressions are widely recognized, they enable writers to convey complex meanings using relatively few words.

McCarthy and O'Dell (2002) emphasize that idioms are an important component of natural and authentic language use. Their frequent appearance in media discourse reflects their communicative value and their ability to make texts more engaging and memorable for readers (McCarthy & O'Dell, 2002).

However, the use of idioms must be balanced with the journalistic principles of clarity and accuracy. In global media environments where audiences come from diverse linguistic backgrounds, idiomatic expressions may cause confusion if readers interpret them literally.

Therefore, many journalists limit the use of idioms in hard news reporting while using them more freely in feature articles, opinion columns, and commentary pieces where stylistic creativity is more acceptable.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the present study confirms that idioms occupy an essential place in written media discourse and significantly contribute to the effectiveness of journalistic communication. The analysis demonstrates that idiomatic expressions are widely used in headlines, editorials, feature articles, and opinion pieces because they enable journalists to communicate ideas in a concise, vivid, and memorable manner. Through figurative language, idioms help transform complex political,

economic, and social issues into expressions that are easier for readers to understand and emotionally engage with.

The study also highlights that idioms perform several important communicative functions in media texts. First, they attract readers' attention and increase the stylistic appeal of journalistic writing. In highly competitive media environments where headlines must immediately capture audience interest, idioms serve as effective linguistic tools for creating impact and curiosity. Second, idioms contribute to rhetorical persuasion by strengthening emotional tone and emphasizing particular viewpoints. This is especially visible in opinion journalism and editorial discourse, where language is often used not only to inform but also to influence readers' interpretations of events.

At the same time, the findings indicate that the use of idiomatic expressions presents certain challenges. Since idioms are strongly connected to cultural and linguistic background knowledge, they may create difficulties for non-native English speakers and international audiences who interpret expressions literally or are unfamiliar with their figurative meanings. In global digital media, where news content is consumed by diverse audiences across cultures, excessive or highly culture-specific idiomatic usage may reduce clarity and accessibility. Therefore, journalists must carefully balance creativity, expressiveness, and comprehensibility when incorporating idioms into media texts.

Furthermore, the study suggests that the frequency and style of idiom usage vary depending on the genre and purpose of the journalistic text. Hard news reports generally contain fewer idiomatic expressions in order to maintain neutrality and precision, whereas opinion articles and feature stories allow greater stylistic flexibility and figurative language use. This distinction demonstrates the relationship between language choice and communicative purpose in media discourse.

Overall, idioms remain a powerful stylistic and communicative resource in modern journalism. They enrich media language, enhance reader engagement, and facilitate the communication of abstract or complicated ideas. However, their effectiveness depends on appropriate contextual use and audience awareness. Future research may further explore cross-cultural differences in idiom comprehension, the role of idioms in digital journalism and social media discourse, as well as comparative studies between English-language media and other linguistic traditions. Such studies would contribute to a deeper understanding of figurative language in contemporary global communication.

REFERENCES

- Bell, A. (1991). *The language of news media*. Blackwell.
- Crystal, D. (2010). *The Cambridge encyclopedia of language* (3rd ed.). Cambridge University Press.
- Fairclough, N. (1995). *Media discourse*. Edward Arnold.
- Fernando, C. (1996). *Idioms and idiomaticity*. Oxford University Press.
- Fowler, R. (1991). *Language in the news: Discourse and ideology in the press*. Routledge.
- Glucksberg, S. (2001). *Understanding figurative language: From metaphors to idioms*. Oxford University Press.
- Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M. (1980). *Metaphors we live by*. University of Chicago Press.
- McCarthy, M., & O'Dell, F. (2002). *English idioms in use*. Cambridge University Press.
- Moon, R. (1998). *Fixed expressions and idioms in English: A corpus-based approach*. Oxford University Press.
- Richardson, J. E. (2007). *Analysing newspapers: An approach from critical discourse analysis*. Palgrave Macmillan.

XÜLASƏ

MEDIA YAZILARINDA İDİOMATİK İFADƏLƏR: XƏBƏR VƏ JURNALİSTİKA ANALİZİ

Ruqiyyə Kərimova
Naxçıvan Dövlət Universiteti, Naxçıvan, Azərbaycan

İdiomlar məcazi dilin mühüm tərkib hissəsi olub müxtəlif ünsiyyət formalarında, o cümlədən media diskursunda əhəmiyyətli rol oynayır. Jurnalistik yazılarda idiomatik ifadələr mətnləri daha cəlbedici, ifadəli və yadda qalan etmək məqsədilə geniş şəkildə istifadə olunur. Bu tədqiqat yazılı media mətnlərində, xüsusilə xəbər məqalələrində, başlıqlarda və analitik yazılarda idiomların istifadəsini araşdırır. Araşdırmanın məqsədi idiomların kommunikativ funksiyalarını və jurnalistik dilin formalaşmasında oynadığı rolu müəyyən etməkdir. Tədqiqat çərçivəsində ingilisdilli media mətnlərinin keyfiyyət analizi aparılmış və idiomatik ifadələrin istifadəsində müşahidə olunan əsas meyillər müəyyən edilmişdir. Nəticələr göstərir ki, idiomlar ən çox diqqəti cəlb etmək və mürəkkəb məsələləri qısa və təsirli şəkildə ifadə etmək məqsədilə başlıqlarda və rəy xarakterli məqalələrdə istifadə olunur. Araşdırma həmçinin göstərir ki, idiomlar siyasi, iqtisadi və sosial mövzuların daha aydın şəkildə izah olunmasına kömək edir, eyni zamanda media diskursuna emosional və ritorik təsir gücü qatır. Bununla belə, idiomların həddindən artıq istifadəsi xüsusilə ana dili ingilis dili olmayan oxucular üçün mətnin başa düşülməsini çətinləşdirə bilər. Buna görə də jurnalistlər idiomatik ifadələrdən istifadə edərkən yaradıcılıq və aydınlıq arasında balans yaratmalıdırlar. Ümumilikdə, tədqiqat göstərir ki, idiomlar müasir jurnalistikada mühüm üslubi və kommunikativ vasitə kimi çıxış edir.

Açar sözlər: İdiomlar, media diskursu, jurnalistik dil, xəbər başlıqları, məcazi dil, media mətnləri, jurnalistika, kommunikasiya

АННОТАЦИЯ

ИДИОМАТИЧЕСКИЕ ВЫРАЖЕНИЯ В МЕДИАТЕКСТАХ: АНАЛИЗ НОВОСТЕЙ И ЖУРНАЛИСТИКИ

РУГИЙЯ КЕРИМОВА
Нахчыванский государственный университет, Нахчыван, Азербайджан

Идиомы являются важной частью образного языка и играют значительную роль в различных формах коммуникации, включая медийный дискурс. В журналистских текстах идиоматические выражения широко используются для того, чтобы сделать материалы более выразительными, интересными и запоминающимися для читателей. Данное исследование рассматривает использование идиом в письменных медийных текстах, в частности в новостных статьях, заголовках и аналитических публикациях. Целью исследования является определение коммуникативных функций идиом и их роли в формировании языка журналистики. В рамках исследования был проведён качественный анализ англоязычных медийных текстов с целью выявления основных закономерностей использования идиоматических выражений. Результаты показывают, что идиомы чаще всего используются в заголовках и аналитических статьях, где особенно важно привлечь внимание читателей и кратко представить сложные темы. Исследование также показывает, что идиомы помогают упрощать объяснение сложных политических, экономических и социальных вопросов, одновременно придавая медийному дискурсу эмоциональную и риторическую выразительность. Однако чрезмерное использование идиоматических выражений может затруднить понимание текста, особенно для читателей, для которых английский язык не является родным. Поэтому журналистам важно соблюдать баланс между выразительностью и ясностью при использовании идиом в медийных текстах. В целом исследование показывает,

что идиомы являются важным стилистическим и коммуникативным инструментом современной журналистики.

Ключевые слова: *Идиомы, медийный дискурс, язык журналистики, новостные заголовки, образный язык, медийные тексты, журналистика, коммуникация.*