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BAKALÁŘSKÁ PRÁCE

Selected Czech/English Idioms and the Perception of their Transparency
by Native and Non-native Speakers

Vybrané české a anglické idiomy a vnímání jejich transparentnosti
rodilými a nerodilými mluvčími

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I hereby declare that the bachelor thesis Selected Czech/English Idioms and the Perception of their Transparency by Native and Non-native Speakers is entirely my own work and the only sources used in the preparation are listed on the Bibliography page.

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ABSTRAKT

V této práci se zabýváme výzkumem percepce transparentnosti českých a anglických idiomů pro rodilé i nerodilé mluvčí. V teoretické části práce srovnáváme český a anglický jazyk, zaměřujeme se na význam idiomatické složky pro osvojení obou jazyků a definujeme pojem idiomu. Idiom dále blíže popisujeme ze sémantické i strukturní perspektivy a definujeme jeho pozici v osobní slovní zásobě většinové společnosti. V části praktické nejprve rozebíráme systém výběru idiomů užitých v této práci a metodu využitou k tvorbě dotazníku. Následně pozorujeme transparentnost vybraných idiomatických spojení, na základě dotazníku, který účastníci výzkumu vyplnili.

KLÍČOVÁ SLOVA

idiom, lexém, frazém, transparentnost

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this theses is to study how do native and non-native speakers perceive Czech and English idioms. In the theoretical part of this study Czech and English language are compared and the importance of idiomatic part of the language in each of them is described. The term 'idiom' is specified, both semantically and structurally, and its position in the personal lexicon is defined. The practical part is concerned with the survey taken by the participants. Firstly, the methods used when creating the survey and the criteria governing the selection of the idioms are described. Secondly, we observe the transparency of the chosen idioms based on the answers.

KEYWORDS

idiom, lexeme, phraseme, transparency

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2 Introduction

This thesis deals with the transparency of selected Czech/English idioms to the native and non-native speakers of the language. Idiomatic expressions are a crucial part of every language since they connect it to the reality and mirror the cultural and the social backgrounds of its speakers. They are also closely connected to the language learning as the full proficiency cannot be reached without understanding the figurative speech that is regularly used by the native speakers.

The theoretical part is concerned with the definition of the term ‘idiom’. We shall compare the terminology in both languages and state the boundaries of our study. The following paragraphs will define the phenomena closely related to the topic of this work, namely types of the idioms based on their constituting parts, realities that form the meaning, the transparency of the phrasal units and the language proficiency necessary to understand such complicated area of communication.

The practical part gives an overview of the research conducted for the purposes of this thesis, the main objective being to confirm the following hypotheses.

The main objective of this thesis is to verify the hypothesis that some idioms can be understood by non-native speakers even without the prior knowledge as their meaning is based on the transparent meaning of its components. On the other hand, we do not expect that the meaning of all the idioms can be understood from the components as there are often other aspects of the expression like cultural background and knowledge of the social environment.

Simultaneously, we will observe if the ability of the native speakers to explain the L1 idiom is in any way affected by their level of education. The hypothesis being that reaching a higher level of education correlates not only with more developed perceptual skills of the speaker but also with enhanced expressive abilities that strengthen the speaker’s competence to explain the meaning of the L1 idioms. That would have confirmed the importance of the other aspects than semantics.

Finally, it is expected that the respondents will be more successful in the parts of the research where there is no need for employing their productive skills. The reasoning behind

this hypothesis being that passive understanding is generally easier for the L2 speakers than producing a new utterance, hence choosing the meaning of an idiom may seem straightforward compared to reconstructing the whole meaning from the given context.

3 Language Characteristics of Czech and English

3.1 Language Typology

Language typology is concerned with similarities and differences among various languages. The similarities are often inherited from the common ancestral language and are therefore most notable in the language families. Language families are groups of languages that can be traced to the common ancestor and share a geographical setting (Moravcsik 18). The original ancestral language that gave roots to the modern languages is unknown due to the lack of resources. However, the Proto-Indo-European language was reconstructed from the modern languages and the dead languages (that are not spoken as a first language) that are preserved in the documents. Proto-Indo-European is the ancestral language of both English and Czech.

The differences among languages in the same family developed throughout the years as the nations migrated and new historical events occurred. English, for example, evolved when the rule of the Germanic tribes was overpowered by the French. One of the results being that the modern English lexicon includes numerous words of French origin and English syntax lost its inflectional character, opposing to the modern German, which was originally very similar to Old English. Both languages, however, belong to the same West Germanic language family.

Czech is one of the West Slavic languages. Originally the language shared many similarities with other Slavic branches, such as South Slavic, but due to the migration of the nations in the 6th and 7th centuries the languages went different paths.

Morphological typology is concerned with the way morphemes are joined to form words. The most important terms for our work are analytic languages, which have one-to-one morpheme-to-word correspondence, and synthetic languages, which have many-to-one morpheme-to-word correspondence. This does not strictly divide the languages into categories, the two types can co-exist within a single language. Czech is, morphologically speaking, a synthetic language and English tends to be more analytic (Moravcsik 110-112).

4 Defining Phraseology and Idiomatics

Phraseology and idiomatics is concerned with the study and description of phrases and idioms at all levels, with special focus on multiword lexemes. ...

The existence of phraseology and idiomatics is a natural phenomenon in every language, just as the use of phrasemes and idioms is a multi-layered means of conveying language culture, due to their specific features and expressive possibilities (Čermák, “Frazeologie a idiomatika” 76).

4.1 Phrases

Phrases are clusters of two or more words. Lyons states that phrasal expressions are mostly lexically composite, in other words, they are constructed from individual lexemes by means of the grammatical rules of the language. Lexemes are described as lexically simple, and they function as a vocabulary-units of a language. Phrasal lexemes, phrasemes and idioms, are lexically simple because their meaning is not systematically determinable (by rule) from the meaning of its constituent lexemes (Lyons 51-52).

4.2 Phraseme and Idiom

The terms phraseme and idiom are often treated as absolute synonyms but for the purpose of this thesis we shall define them more clearly. Even though linguists differ in the final definitions they suggest countless defining features of phraseological expressions among which some occur more frequently, namely the stability, figurativeness, multiword character and indegradability are often highlighted as primary attributes by most of the scientists (Čechová “Dynamika frazeologie” 178).

The traditional definition of the idiom as mentioned by Cruse “an idiom is an expression whose meaning cannot be inferred from the meaning of its parts” suggests that the full meaning of an idiom cannot be understood from the meanings the parts carry in that expression, in other words it is non-compositional (37). Cruse does not use the term “phraseme”. Lyons’ (as mentioned above) is predominantly concerned with phrases and does not include specific definitions of phraseme or idiom.

According to Čermák:

The idiom and phraseme is a unique combination of minimally two elements, one (or more) of which does not function in the same way in another combination (combinations), or it occurs in just one expression (or severely limited number of expressions). The feature of mere restricted collocability does not turn a combination of lexemes into a phraseme (“Frazeologie a idiomatika” 83-84).

Čermák uses one definition to describe both idiom and phraseme but explains the difference between the two in his other work. He suggests that “phraseme” should be used when discussing the form of the lexeme and “idiom” is used when describing its semantic features (FRAZÉM A IDIOM).

Harras and Proost introduce another approach in which phraseme is a fixed multiword expression and idiom is approached as one of the two types of phrasemes. Idioms are described as fixed expressions with a higher degree of idiomaticity while the second group, collocations, is only marginally or not at all idiomatic (277-280). This proposal highlights the importance of semantics.

All the authors mentioned above agree that idiomatic meaning and multiword structure are vital for the description of an idiom. The phraseme is mentioned only by some and is either described as the higher unit to the idiom or as its synonym. For the purpose of this thesis, the term “idiom” will be preferred to the “phraseme” as we are predominantly interested in the semantic aspect of the phrasal unit. The idiom shall be defined as follows: Idiom is a multiword expression with idiomatic meaning that cannot be deduced from the restricted meanings of its constituents.

4.3 Semantical Characteristics of Idiom

4.3.1 Non-compositionality and Conventionality

It has been determined above that idioms are non-compositional, in other words, their meaning cannot be derived from the meanings of their respective parts. That being the case, the speakers must learn the idiom as a complex unit in order to gain the ability to use

it properly. It is important to remember that non-compositionality alone, while often emphasized, is not a sufficient feature of the idiom as phrases cannot be strictly divided into those that are compositional and those that are not. It would be advisable to view the compositionality as a feature that is present in the phrases in various degrees, from fully compositional to fully non-compositional. Idioms would then be described as phrases that are often partly or fully non-compositional (Kavka 30).

Another important defining feature of idiomatic phrases is conventionality as described by Nunberg:

Conventionality is the discrepancy between the idiomatic phrasal meaning and the meaning we would predict for the collocation if we were to consult only the rules that determine the meanings of the constituents in isolation, and the relevant operations of semantic compositions. (qtd. in Wulff 37)

He then argues that “most phrasal idioms can actually be regarded as relatively compositional, because after speakers have been able to retrieve its meaning (from contextual clues), they will be able to recognize its compositionality” (qtd. in Wulff 37). According to this view, non-compositionality should not be regarded as an important feature of idiomatic meaning for most idioms are in fact compositional.

4.3.2 Metaphor and Metonym

Metaphor and metonym are often the base of the idiomatic meaning. Miller claims that “in its simplest form the essence of metaphor is that X resembles Y” (101). Similarly, the dictionary entry of metaphor is “1 a figure of speech in which word or phrase is used of something to which it does not literally apply (e.g. the long arm of the law) 2 a thing seen as symbolic of something else” (Soanes and Hawker 638). Sometimes the core of the resemblance is not easy to describe as it varies from visual similarity (e.g. “crown” to describe the top of the head) to behavioral schemes (e.g. “owl” to describe the person who works at night). If metaphor is used sufficiently often, the hearers may encode the metaphorical meaning as one of the standard senses of the expression and create so-called dead metaphor that is no longer considered to be figurative (Cruse 42).

Aitchison describes metonymy as “the use of a part to refer to a whole” (190). The matter is, however, more complicated. This definition is often preferred in primary and secondary education as it is somewhat clear and easily comprehensible for students. Unfortunately, it defines only one type of metonym, synecdoche. Metonym is in fact “a word or phrase used as a substitute for something with which it is closely associated (e.g. Washington for the US government)” (Soanes and Hawker 640). Almost identical to the dictionary entry is Kavka’s definition of metonymy: “the name for one thing is used instead that of another, associated with it” (17).

4.4 Basic Idiomatic Patterns

Semantic characteristics of idiom differ greatly among various linguists. When defining idiom structurally, the discordance among the scientists is just as distinctive. We have established that for the purposes of this thesis idiom is a multiword expression. In this chapter we shall discuss some of the approaches to the semantical and structural division.

Defining idioms structurally as well as semantically is utterly important for the lexicographic community. The complex idiomatic phrase with established meaning must be included in the dictionaries as a cluster of words and the problem arises where to include the idioms. Regular dictionaries are often organized alphabetically and including idioms in their base form, for example, would result in the cumulation of headwords (dictionary entries) starting with “to”. The final structure of the publication surely would be confusing. There are two major approaches to the headword issue:

- 1) Idioms are entered and explained (or translated) under each of their components.
- 2) Idioms are entered and explained under only one of their components.
Cross-references to the headword under which the idiom is explained appear at other idiom components.

Some dictionaries alternate between the two procedures. (Harras and Kristel 282)

In specialized dictionaries lexicographers often choose other structures. Čermák defined four types of phrasal and idiomatic expressions (simile, non-verbal phrase, verbal phrase, clausal phrase) and dedicated an independent dictionary to each of them. Bočánková and Kalina completed *Anglicko-český výkladový slovník* (English-Czech Explanatory Dictionary)

and chose to structure it by highlighting hyper-headwords (e.g. CAT) that create a field. In that field other headwords are included, each of them representing one idiom with a component that corresponds to hyper-headword (e.g. it is raining CATs and dogs) followed by its translation. While this organization is similar to the Čermák's inner structure, the authors chose not to differentiate idioms according to their structure and introduced the dictionary that prioritized the semantical approach.

Some semantical approaches to idiomatic patterns as quoted by Wulff are included in the following chart.

Gibbs and colleagues

- 1) normally decomposable idioms, which are expressions in which part of the idiom is used literally (e.g. *the question* in *pop the question*)
- 2) abnormally decomposable idioms, in which parts are linked to their referents via metaphor (e.g. *buck* in *pass the buck*)
- 3) non-decomposable idioms, the meaning of which cannot be derived compositionally from the component words at all (e.g. *chew the fat*)

Cacciari and Glucksberg

- 1) analysable-transparent, in which there is a clear semantic relation between the idiom parts and the overall idiomatic meaning (e.g. *break the ice*)
- 2) analysable-opaque, where the relation between an idiom's elements and the overall idiomatic meaning may be opaque, but they may still constrain the appropriate use of the idiom as well as its semantic and discourse productivity (e.g. *kick* in *kick the bucket*)
- 3) quasi-metaphorical, the literal referent of which is itself an instance of the idiomatic meaning (e.g. *surrender* could be expressed idiomatically as *to give up the ship* which is an example of the act of surrendering)

- 4) non-analysable, in which semantic and syntactic analysis of the idiom into its constituent parts does not reveal anything about the meaning of the composed phrase (e.g. *by and large*)

Nunberg et al.

- 1) idiomatically combining expressions, the meanings of which are distributed among their parts (e.g. *take advantage*)
- 2) idiomatic phrases, in which the meaning is not distributed over the component words (e.g. *kick the bucket*)

Table 1 – *Idiomatic Patterns* (qtd. in Wulff 39-40)

According to Wulff the definitions above, while sometimes useful, “present simplifying generalizations and need to be interpreted as such”. She notes that idioms cannot be strictly divided into categories. That does not mean that the taxonomy is wrong, or the phrase is not idiomatic. The understanding of meaning may be highly individual and consequently describing it on a scale is preferable (40).

4.5 Diachronic Evolution

“The origin of specific idioms is a subject of much speculation and folk etymology” (Fellbaum 451). Many idioms are based on biblical references, work processes or leisure activities. In 1993 Čechová suggests that borrowing idioms from other languages is getting more popular, especially speaking of anglicisms (“Kulturní frazeologie” 182). This phenomenon is even more present in 2021 with the massive spread of the internet and international communication, where English functions as a lingua franca.

Idioms undergo the same diachronic processes as the lexemes with a literal interpretation. They are subject to extension, merging, and semantic splitting, and may develop new, homonymic readings. The usage of idioms may be changed over time as some realities vanish and other arise. Idioms can also change their phrase structure either by the addition of a new element or more often elimination of the original element, creating an elliptical structure. Fellbaum is mostly concerned with German idioms, but the processes mentioned above may be extended to all the languages (451).

4.6 Position in the Mental Lexicon

Mental lexicon is the personalized system of language storage and retrieval that an individual uses to be able to recognize and find words. Acting like the brain's dictionary, a mental lexicon includes everything a person knows about a word such as how it sounds, what it means, which words are its synonyms, and which words are its antonyms. A mental lexicon is individualized because it is based on a person's own experiences with words, the language or languages the person understands, the culture in which he or she lives (Ungvarsky).

Ungvarsky introduces the mental lexicon (ML) as a personal dictionary with countless headwords and very detailed descriptions. If such a dictionary were to be written and published it probably wouldn't be synoptic due to the enormous amount of information that would have to be included. This chapter shall focus on the description of ML's inner structure and data comprehension with a focus on idiomatic expressions.

Fellbaum suggests that the multiword idiomatic phrases are often more or less fixed and remembered in the same way as long words, their position in the ML therefore should not be any different from the position of simple lexemes. There is, however, a wide range of variation that would not be possible within a single lexeme (452).

Some idioms are unalterable, e.g. "*Bill kicked the bucket.*" cannot be changed to "*The bucket was kicked by Bill.*" without the change in meaning. Even though the second clause is grammatically correct and could occur in a conversation, its meaning would move from idiomatic "dying" to literal "kicking of the bucket". Other idioms allow some changes in the word order (e.g. *They pulled Tom's leg. / Tom's leg was pulled.*), the addition of new elements (e.g. *to leave no stone unturned / to leave no legal stone unturned*) or interchanging constituents for its synonyms (e.g. *hold a gun / pistol to his head*) (Aitchison 114). The variability within idiomatic phrases constitutes a supplementary feature that must be included in the ML. The speaker distinguishes idioms that could be altered from those whose structure is fixed and only with that knowledge in mind produces grammatically and semantically legitimate utterances. Even more distinct is the importance of that knowledge when the (altered) idiom is encountered in a conversation or a text. The intention of a speaker cannot be fulfilled unless the listener recognizes the phrase with idiomatic

meaning and processes it as such. In conclusion, it seems implausible that the idioms should be incorporated in the ML in the same way the simple lexemes are.

According to the comprehension time studies, familiar idioms (e.g. *kick the bucket*) are often processed faster in their idiomatic meaning than in a literal one (Fellbaum 452). Once the speaker learns the complex meaning of the phrase it seems to overshadow the literal compositional one and the mind is programmed to prefer the new peculiar meaning.

4.7 Translating Idioms

Idiomatic expressions are found in every language. Some languages share the same (or very similar) idioms in terms of both structure and semantics, but many set expressions are specific for the language. One of the reasons may be the close relation of the idiom perception and the life experience. In general, speakers of Czech have different life experiences than the speakers of English, therefore the compositionality of the idioms (if present) may fade when the English phrase is encountered by Czechs.

Idioms are important additions to the language and are often used intentionally to emphasize some extralinguistic realities. When it comes to translating them into another language a few strategies can be employed. Firstly, the translator may choose to use a semantically identical or similar idiom that exists in the target language (TLI). That way the meaning is conveyed and the stylistic choice of the author is preserved. Secondly, even if there is a TLI that could be used, the translator might embrace the meaning of the original idiom and choose the non-idiomatic rendition in the target language. Sometimes the style can be the priority over the message and the translator decides to include a TLI of a different meaning than was the initial one. A literal translation could be also employed but this strategy is known to produce unintended side-effects that often originate in the different life experiences. Lastly, the idioms may be omitted and the meaning disclosed in the original message is dissolved among other words of the sentence (Harmon 126).

Fellbaum mentions that inputting an idiom into a machine translation engine (such as Google translate or Babelfish) often does not return an adequate translation in the target language. Even if the idiom or set expression is included in the computational lexicon it is often in fixed form, therefore once included in a sentence and altered, it breaks into its components and the computer is unable to process it (453).

5 Importance of Idiomaticity for the Second Language Acquisition

When communicating in their native language (L1) speakers may not think much about the idiomatic expressions and they often intentionally reach for them only in peculiar situations. The figurative language is, however, used daily and it is therefore vital for the learners if they yearn to reach a certain level of the language (L2) (Alrishan 167).

Brown (in accordance with Čermák in previous chapters) discusses the importance of culture in learning L2 and emphasizes that whenever the language is thought, the teacher always includes “a complex system of cultural customs, values, and ways of thinking, feeling, and acting” (qtd. in Alrishan 176). It is almost impossible to teach the language without learning something about the culture and Alrishan’s study shows that a moderate amount of students and teachers support the need for a cultural course in L1 and L2 (176).

Wang introduces another problem in teaching idioms: “In contrast to children learning their L1, who tend to assign meaning to the units of spoken language (often unanalysed word strings), L2 learners already know a language system and are familiar with the concept of breaking down a large unit into small segments” (5). Acquiring idioms in learners L2 introduces new obstacles that were not previously encountered. Crystal highlights the fact that truly learning a new item means it must be included in the mental lexicon, therefore countless links are created such as synonyms or connotations (198). For L2 learners there is an additional feature and that is translation to L1. Karlsson remarks that “As the L2 lexicon generally has fewer links, as well as more links that may be incorrect, the transference between the two types of knowledge here thus automatically becomes more difficult.” (214)

Learning and remembering the meaning of a new vocabulary item may be challenging but studies have shown that producing the item in an utterance is even more demanding. Milton concludes that “irrespective of language, L2 learner’s productive vocabulary knowledge usually constitutes between 50% and 80% of his/her receptive vocabulary knowledge” (qtd. in Karlsson 213).

In the research of L2 idiom processing and idiom learning, the problem arises of whether L1 or L2 subjects should be preferred. While the L2 learners are trying to achieve the L1 speakers’ proficiency, they do not share the same background and knowledge.

Including only L1 speakers into such studies might culminate in a partially biased result. It is of utmost importance to take learner's L1 and their level of L2 into consideration in order to avoid distortion, but new learners of the language are valuable sources of information that should not be excluded (Hubers, Cucchiarini, and Strik).

6 Methods and Materials

This chapter presents a description of the methods and materials that were used for the purposes of the research.

6.1 Aims

The main aim of the research was to prove the hypothesis that some idioms are not purely non-compositional and therefore their meaning may be fully or partially obtained from the meaning of its direct constituents. Moreover, we wanted to investigate whether the level of completed education correlates with the ability to formulate one's thoughts and to process contextual information. The final assumption was that the participants would be more successful in the multiple-choice questions.

6.2 Participants

There were two groups of respondents who volunteered to join the research. The first group consisted of thirty-five speakers of Czech as L1, aged 20-46. Those participants often speak at least basic English, some of them even claim to be proficient. Only six respondents claim to speak no English at all. The majority of them speak other languages, most often German and Spanish. Seventeen people claim to speak three and more languages.

The second group consisted of speakers of English, aged 18-57, whose native language is not Czech. Out of thirty-six participants, twenty are English L1 speakers. Out of those twenty, only five speak no L2 language. There are also participants with fourteen other mother tongues (Bengali, Turkish, Greek, Hindi, Spanish, Russian, Ukrainian, Latvian, Arabic, Chinese, Croatian, Tamil, Filipino, Romanian). Seven participants grew up in bilingual families and most of the others claim to know at least one L2 language. Only four of the participants claim to speak some Czech (at level A1-A2).

Ideally, respondents who belong to various age groups, speak different levels of Czech or English, and have a wide range of educational backgrounds would be included in the research to thoroughly investigate the pre-formulated aims. Unfortunately, gaining such participants was proved to be almost impossible. When contacting the potential respondents from various cultural backgrounds and social groups, most volunteers appeared

to be among the students (for the Czech participants) and the language enthusiasts (among the English speakers). For the detailed information about the participants see Appendix A.

6.3 Materials and Procedure

Two sets of questions in the form of the small-scale quantitative online questionnaire were distributed among participants to collect the data (Punch 40-41). A quantitative questionnaire is a common form of research in semantics, allowing the respondents to spend as much time as they prefer with each question. The online form was preferable as the non-Czech participants mostly live abroad and wouldn't be able to participate in person. The open questions used in the questionnaires must be analyzed one by one by a researcher hence the small-scale research was chosen to allow the proper data analysis.

Three types of questions appeared in each set – multiple-choice, explanatory based on context, and explanatory based on knowledge. Firstly, the respondents were introduced to five idioms, each one in the context of one sentence, and asked to choose their meanings from three possible answers. Then they encountered five idioms in the context of a conversation. Their goal was to explain the idiom in their own words. These questions presented 10 Czech idioms to the English speakers and 10 English idioms to the Czech speakers. Both sets were translated literally and the original idiom was not included in the questions. The last type of question introduced all the English idioms used in our research to the English-speaking respondents and the Czech idioms to the Czech L1 speakers. The objective of this question was to cross-check the choice of the idioms and to observe if they are well-known or rather unpopular. For the structure of the questionnaires see Appendix C.

For the sheer amount on them in all the languages, the idiomatic expressions with an animal component were selected as the base of the questionnaire. All the idioms used in this research were evaluated and determined to be at least partly constitutional and therefore suitable for our purpose.

The English idioms were chosen from Bočánková and Kalina's dictionary and even their definitions were adopted.

	English idiom	Czech translation	Meaning
E1	become a guinea pig	stát se morčetem	stát se pokusným králíkem
E2	till the cows come home	dokud se krávy nevrátí domů	až do soudného dne, na neurčito, na velmi dlouhou dobu
E3	hold the wolf by the ears	drží vlka za uši	být v prekérní situaci, dostat se do úzkých
E4	snake in the grass	had v trávě	had na prsou, falešný přítel, zrádce
E5	let sleeping dogs lie	nech spící psy spát	nechte to plavat, co tě nepálí nehas
E6	it's raining cats and dogs	prší kočky a psi	leje jako z konve
E7	it was like putting the cat among the pigeons	hodil kočku mezi holuby	způsobil rozruch
E8	be as cold as fish	je chladný jako ryba	být studený jako psí čumák
E9	hold your horses!	drž svoje koně	držet se zpátky, na uzdě
E10	be a chicken	je kuře	být zbabělec/baba

Table 2 - English Idioms

The Czech idioms and their definitions were found in Čermák's dictionaries of idiomatics, with one exception that comes from Mrhačová.

	Czech idiom	English translation	Meaning
C1	kovářova kobyla chodí bosa	a smith's mare walks unshod (barefoot)	neglect your own needs / your family needs for sake of others
C2	být sto let za opicemi	it is hundred years behind apes	be primitive / old / out of style / old-fashioned
C3	házet perly sviním	throwing pearls to swine	trying to help someone who refuses the help without reason, typically smart person to stupid one
C4	kdo chce psa bít, hůl si vždy najde	who wants to hurt the dog always finds the baton (stick)	if you want to hurt / punish somebody, you always find a way to do it
C5	labutí píseň	a swan song	last act / accomplishment / work in one's life or career
C6	dělat z komára velblouda	turning the mosquito into a camel	blowing it out of proportion
C7	jedna vlaštovka jaro nedělá	one swallow doesn't make spring	one victory/achievement doesn't mean the war is won
C8	udělat kozla zahradníkem	making a gardener of a goat	give a job to someone with no predispositions to be good at it
C9	darovanému koni na zuby nehleď	don't check the teeth of a horse given to you	do not complain about gifts
C10	mít švába na mozku	have a cockroach on your brain	be stupid/take a long time to figure something out

Table 3 - Czech Idioms

After the questionnaire was finished it was distributed among few respondents to pilot test it, as suggested by Punch (34). Most of the testers spent 15-25 minutes answering the questions and no ambiguous questions were observed. The survey was distributed in various language exchange groups but most respondents were found upon recommendations from friends.

7 Results

The previous chapter introduced the main aims of this research and the participants that chose to volunteer. It also introduced the set of idioms and the tasks that were to be taken by the participants. This chapter discusses the results of the questionnaire.

7.1 Czech Participants

As mentioned above, thirty-five people volunteered to enter the research. Out of all the idioms (Czech and English) introduced to them, 69,14% were interpreted correctly, which is approximately fourteen out of twenty correct answers per person. The lowest score of eight was achieved by R35 and the highest score of seventeen was reached by three respondents.

Surprisingly, the participants interpreted only 65,14% of the Czech idioms correctly. On the other hand, 73,14% of the English idioms were decoded, with 59,43% correct answers on multi-choice questions and 86,86% correct explanations. The number of the correct answers per idiom is presented in the following Tables 4 and 5 in descending order.

Out of all English idioms, the four that were most often interpreted incorrectly are E2-E5 that were introduced to the participants in the multiple-choice questions. For the success rate of each participant see Appendices A (Table 1) and B (Table 1).

E6	it's raining cats and dogs	35	100%
E9	hold your horses!	33	94,29%
E8	be as cold as fish	31	88,57%
E1	become a guinea-pig	30	83,33%
E10	be a chicken	29	82,86%
E7	it was like putting the cat among the pigeons	24	68,57%
E5	let sleeping dogs lie	23	63,89%
E3	hold the wolf by the ears	22	61,11%
E4	snake in the grass	15	41,67%
E2	till the cows come home	14	38,89%

Table 4 Rate of successful interpretation of English idioms by Czech participants

C9	darovanému koni na zuby nehled'	35	100%
C6	dělat z komára velblouda	35	100%
C2	být sto let za opicemi	35	100%
C7	jedna vlaštovka jaro nedělá	30	85,71%
C1	kovářova kobyla chodí bosa	30	85,71%
C4	kdo chce psa bít, hůl si vždy najde	27	77,14%
C8	udělat kozla zahradníkem	25	71,43%
C3	házet perly sviním	17	48,57%
C5	labutí píseň	15	42,86%
C10	mít švába na mozku	9	25,71%

Table 5 Rate of successful interpretation of Czech idioms by Czech participants

7.2 English-speaking Participants

A total of thirty-six participants entered the research and managed to interpret correctly 68,06% of all the idioms, gaining on average fourteen correct answers per person. They managed to interpret correctly 61,39% of English and 74,72% of the Czech idioms. The scores varied from the lowest score four, gained by three respondents, to the highest nineteen, reached by P33.

The English-speaking respondents, in contrast with the Czech participants, were more successful in multiple-choice questions, choosing 83,33% of the correct answers. The explanatory questions on Czech idioms were answered correctly in 66,11% of cases. For the success rate on the individual idioms see the following Tables 6 and 7.

C2	být sto let za opicemi	36	100%
C5	labutí píseň	33	91,67%
C3	házet perly sviním	30	83,33%
C7	jedna vlaštovka jaro nedělá	29	80,56%
C4	kdo chce psa bít, hůl si vždy najde	27	75%
C6	dělat z komára velblouda	27	75%
C1	kovářova kobyla chodí bosa	24	66,67%
C8	udělat kozla zahradníkem	24	66,67%
C9	darovanému koni na zuby nehled'	23	63,89%
C10	mít švába na mozku	16	44,44%

Table 6 Rate of successful interpretation of Czech idioms by English speaking participants

E6	it's raining cats and dogs	31	86,11%
E9	hold your horses!	31	86,11%
E10	be a chicken	29	80,56%
E2	till the cows come home	24	66,67%
E8	be as cold as fish	24	66,67%
E1	become a guinea-pig	22	61,11%
E4	snake in the grass	18	50%
E5	let sleeping dogs lie	15	41,67%
E7	it was like putting the cat among the pigeons	14	38,89%
E3	hold the wolf by the ears	13	36,11%

Table 7 Rate of successful interpretation of English idioms by English speaking participants

It is vital to consider that not only native speakers of English were included in this category. The three lowest scores were reached by the non-native speakers of English who did not try to explain the meaning of any of the English idioms. If those participants (and one other who did not answer the last ten questions) were not included in this research, the success rate on the tasks concerning the English idioms would rise to 69,06%. To observe the individual results of the participants, see Appendixes A (Table 2) and B (Table 2).

8 Discussion

In the following paragraphs we shall try to investigate the respondents' answers closely and discuss possible motivations behind their reasoning.

8.1 Czech Idioms

The Czech idioms were more successfully decoded by the English speakers, who had the advantage of the context added to the idioms.

Czech speakers	English speakers	Total
228 / 350	269 / 360	497 / 710
65,14%	74,72%	70%

Table 8 Czech idioms success rate

The Czech respondents defined 4-8 idioms correctly, nine of them gaining the score of eight, ten answering with seven correct explanations, eight reaching six points, six people with five correct answers and only two participants getting to the score of two. There seems to be no connection between the high score and the language proficiency or educational background. In fact, one of the respondents with a score of four claims to have a bachelor's degree in Czech studies. For most cases, respondents gave definitions that were very close to the actual meaning, there was, however, at least one important part missing. We shall discuss this phenomenon in the following paragraphs.

The English participants were introduced to the idioms in the context of a sentence or a conversation. It was probably because of that additional information on the idiom that they managed to describe the meanings more precisely. They managed to correctly answer 4-10 times. As mentioned above, multiple-choice questions were more accessible to the participants, thirteen of them reaching five (maximum) points, sixteen people four points, six getting three points, and one person gaining one point. In the explanatory questions, the success rate was lower but still admirable with six people getting a maximum amount of five, eleven of them reaching four points, twelve people achieving three points, four respondents answering right two times, and only one participant giving one correct

definition. There were three participants who did not participate in the explanatory part of the research.

There was only one idiom decoded correctly by all Czech and English-speaking participants and it was *být sto let zaopicemi*. This phrase is often used by the Czechs and its meaning is fairly straightforward as the individual meanings of its constituents are not significantly changed. It was probably the common knowledge of the evolution that made the meaning more transparent. Two more idioms, *dělat z komára velblouda* and *darovanému koni na zuby nehled'*, were defined correctly by all Czech respondents.

Exaggerating as the correct meaning of *dělat z komára velblouda* was suggested by twenty-seven (75%) English-speaking respondents. Other responses included *not having enough room; having too big expectations; jumping to conclusions; overestimating yourself; hidden complications* and *pretending something*. Three respondents left the task empty. It seems that most people focused on the lexemes *komár* (mosquito) and *velbloud* (camel) and used their knowledge of their appearance, as the definitions are mostly size-based.

Twenty-three English-speaking participants (63,89%) correctly explained *darovanému koni na zuby nehled'* as *don't be ungrateful/don't complain about a gift*. Once again, three participants did not fill in the box. An almost identical idiom *don't look a gift horse in the mouth* can be found in English, therefore one could expect that most of the English-speaking respondents should recognize it. There were, however, five native and four non-native speakers of English who did not manage to decode the meaning (+ the three non-native speakers who did not share their answers). They answered by the following definitions: *don't reject a gift (2x); don't make unnecessary inquiries; never say you like something until you really taste it; don't question the intention of a donor; don't look for flaws in something good (2x); don't overthink; always look for a brighter side* and *don't complain*. Most of the definitions were close to the real meaning but were missing the notion of ungratefulness. Judging by that, we may assume that the lexemes identified as the most important by most of the participants were *darovanému* (given to) and *nehled'* (don't check). In most cases, as proven by this and the following paragraphs, we can deduce that the respondents know and use the idiom but are unable to explain it clearly due to their lack of theoretical knowledge and/or inadequate level of English/Czech.

One of the reasons for the lower success rate may be the translation of the individual lexemes, more concretely lexeme *darovanému*. Three possible words were considered: *donated*, *gifted* and *given to*. *Donated* was ruled out because of its connotation with charity. That could lead the participants to believe that the gift was requested or needed, therefore would change the way the idiom was viewed. *Gifted* as well as *donated* has a connotation that may be misleading as it is usually understood as *talented/having a gift*. For those reasons, the last option was chosen, even if the translation seemed a bit stiff. In spite of the initial difficulties, most of the respondents seem to have picked up the intention.

Thirty (85,71%) Czech respondents managed to explain the idioms *jedna vlaštovka jaro nedělá* and *kovářova kobyla chodí bosa*. The first was interpreted correctly by twenty-nine (80,56%) English-speaking respondents. As for the Czechs, three people skipped the question and the incorrect definitions were *je potřeba více úsilí než jen něco začít¹* and *nedělat rychlá rozhodnutí bez zamyšlení²*. In the second group these incorrect definitions occurred: *do not anticipate the unknown outcome; the beginning of troubles* and *don't try to cover the sun with one finger³*. When evaluating the answers the decision whether to accept *don't jump to conclusions* as a correct definition had to be made. After consideration and a check-up with Čermák's dictionaries, it was marked as correct since it seems to cover the base of the idiomatic meaning. Most respondents seem to understand the connection between the *vlaštovka* (swallow) and *jaro* (spring) as well as the notion of the spring as something positive because most of the definitions were directed towards the positive result.

Another challenge in translation was faced with the phrase *kovářova kobyla chodí bosa*. The word that seemed to have the closest meaning to the Czech *neokovaný⁴* (which is the meaning of *bosý* in the idiom) was *unshod*, but that lexeme is almost archaic and therefore not ideal for our target group. For that reason, the questionnaire included another possible translation *barefoot*. The English-speaking participants were introduced to the idiom in the multiple-choice question and chose the correct meaning in twenty-four

¹ it takes more effort than just starting something

² not making quick decisions without thinking

³ Spanish idiom meaning *having more problems than one could handle*

⁴ used for a horse without horseshoes

cases (66,67%). The existence of a similar idiom in English, *the shoemaker's children go barefoot*, may have helped the respondents. As for the transparency, most of the participants seemed to understand the relationship between the *smith* and his *mare* and preferred options 1 and 3 that included it (see Figure 1). Nine people opted for the more detailed answer instead of the correct, but abstract, definition. Their choice might be affected by the lexeme *smith* included in both the question and the answer. Out of the nine people who opted for the third possibility, five are non-native speakers of English and in their case the lack of vocabulary knowledge may have led them to choose the most similar option.

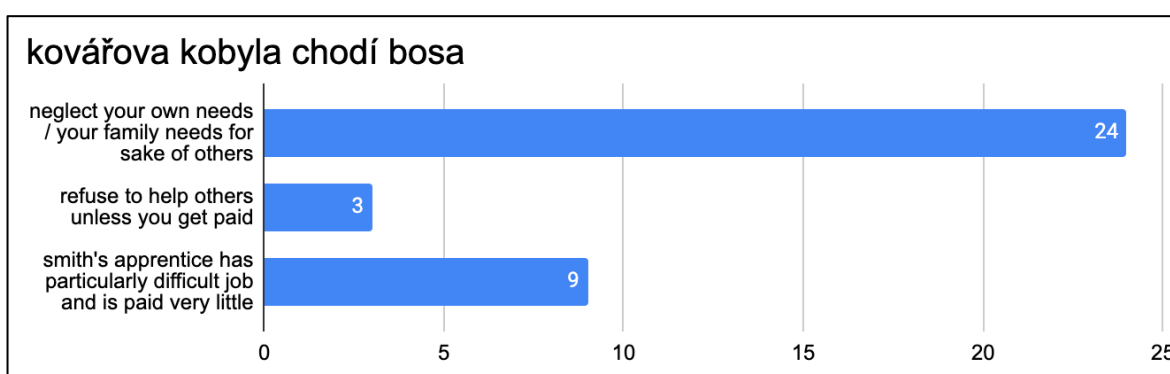


Figure 1 Occurrence of each option: *kovářova kobyla chodí bosa*

The Czechs shared the following incorrect definitions: *člověk, který neposlouchá vlastní rady*⁵; *ten, kdo se něčím zabývá, ale sám to nemá*⁶ and *paradox péče o sebe samého*⁷. Two people did not answer. Once again, the incorrect definitions are very close to the actual meaning and it seems likely that the respondents are able to use the idiom correctly in a sentence and struggle only with the theoretical meaning.

The idiom *kdo chce psa bít, hůl si vždy najde* was explained correctly by twenty-seven (77,14%) Czech respondents. The incorrect answers included: *kdo chce, vždy si najde záminku/důvod* (5x) and *kdo chce, najde jakýkoliv způsob k dosažení cíle* (3x). Both explanations are partly correct but it is important to include that this idiom is used in a negative connotation, mostly about the people who are trying to punish or hurt somebody. As for the English-speaking participants, twenty-seven (75%) of them chose

⁵ a person who does not follow his own advice

⁶ a person who is interested in something/does something but does not have it

⁷ a self-care paradox

the right meaning while seven, similarly to Czechs, opted for the more positive answer *if you want to change/improve something, you always find a way to do it* (see the Figure 2). Almost all of the participants, Czech and English-speaking, recognized the relationship between the desired action of *beating* and the tool necessary to achieve it, *the baton*. Some of them, however, generalized the meaning of the phrase to an extent where it included all types of acting instead of only negatively perceived deeds. This idiom can be perceived as relatively transparent with the additional meaning emerging from the common knowledge of the lexemes and the action included in the phrase.

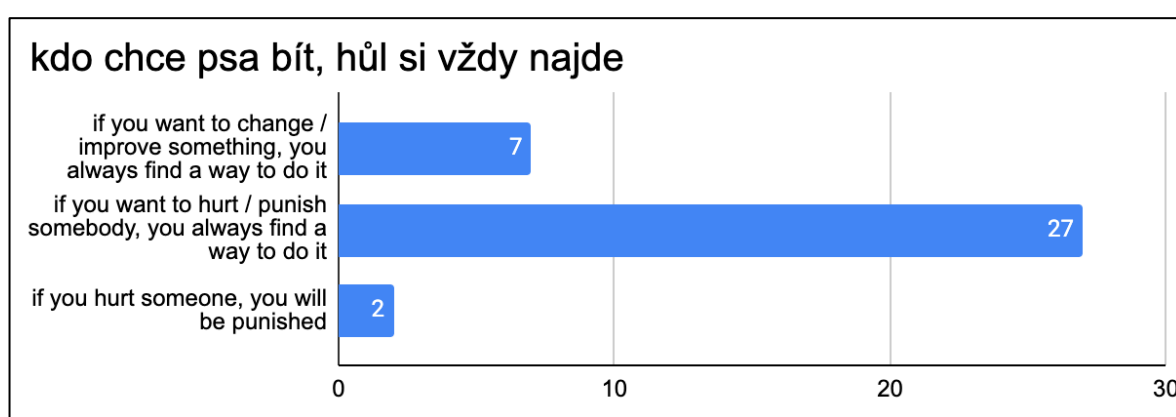


Figure 2 Occurrence of each option: *kdo chce psa bít, hůl si vždy najde*

Twenty-five (71,43%) Czechs managed to explain the meaning of *udělat kozla zahradníkem*. Three respondents skipped the task and the seven incorrect answers were as follows: *dát moc někomu, kdo ji zneužije*⁸ (2x); *udělat nesmyslnou věc, která předem vypovídala o negativním výsledku*⁹; *dát za něco zodpovědnost tomu, kdo v dané oblasti škodí*¹⁰ (2x); *z neználka odborníkem*¹¹ and *udělat špatnou volbu*¹². The English-speaking participants decoded the meaning in 24 (66,67%) cases. The English idiom *the fox guarding the henhouse* was included among the correct definitions and the rest was mostly on point and included *the missing predispositions of someone to be good at something*. The incorrect options were as follows: *assuming more of one's abilities than is reasonable* (2x); *it is meaningless/not acceptable*; *setting someone up to fail* (2x); *making a bad judgement decision*;

⁸ give someone power while knowing that the person will abuse it

⁹ do something even though there is a certainty of it failing

¹⁰ give the responsibility for something to the one who is prone to sabotaging it

¹¹ know-nothing to know-it-all

¹² make a bad choice

putting in charge someone who will destroy the hard work of others (2x); diminishing someone's abilities and finding the right person for the job. The common knowledge of goat behaviour seems to be sufficient for most of the participants to identify the meaning of the idiom as something that one should not do. Some people, however, went on to suggest that the damage made by the goat would be intentional proving that the idiom is not fully opaque even if the meanings of its constituents are.

The last three idioms were correctly explained by less than 50% of the Czech participants, the second group was, on the other hand, much more successful. Seventeen (48,57%) people defined *házet perly sviním* as *trying to help someone who refuses the help without reason*. The incorrect answers were *předkládat někomu něco, co nemůže využít/ocenit/pochopit*¹³ and *dělat něco zbytečně*¹⁴ (9x) and five people left the box empty. The English participants were choosing the definition from three options and thirty (83,33%) of them opted for the right one (see Figure 3). As for the English speakers, only five were led astray when they identified *pearls* as the only base word of the lexeme and chose the third option, which was formed to remind the participants of throwing/spending money on something. The opaque part of the meaning, that was missed by many Czechs, is in the notion that the swine are not capable of appreciation towards something valuable. Some of them knew that the idiom described something pointless but failed to explain the reason for the pointlessness, i.e. the other person's indifference/obliviousness to the offered help.

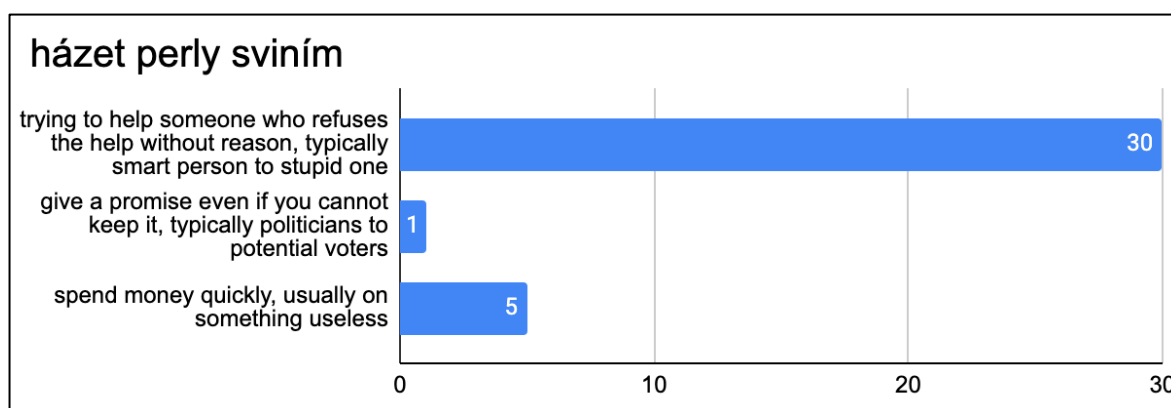


Figure 3 Occurrence of each option: *házet perly sviním*

¹³ to present something that cannot be used/valued/understood

¹⁴ doing something in vain

Only fifteen (42,86%) Czechs correctly explained the meaning of the penultimate idiom *labutí píseň* while thirty-three (91,67%) speakers of English managed to choose its right definition. The majority of the second group opted for the *last accomplishment in one's life or career* with three people choosing another option (see Figure 4). Among the Czech incorrect answers were the following: *poslední opakování*¹⁵; *lichocení*¹⁶; *zlepšení zdravotního stavu vážně nemocného krátce před jeho úmrtím*¹⁷; *nářek/smuteční hudba*¹⁸ (2x); *něco krásného/příjemného*¹⁹ (3x); *stěžování si na něco*²⁰; *poslední zvolání před zánikem*²¹ and *něco, co končí, i když se to snaží přežít*²². Nine participants skipped the task. It is this phrase that is probably the most suitable for the demonstration of the non-compositionality of the idioms. While the meanings of the individual lexemes *labutí* (swan) *píseň* (song) are straightforward and well-known, their combination is insufficient to understand the meaning of the combination. One must be aware of the saying that *swan's most beautiful song is her last* to comprehend the meaning of the idiom. The success rate of the English speakers may be credited to the additional context they were provided as well as the offered options rather than to their decoding skills.

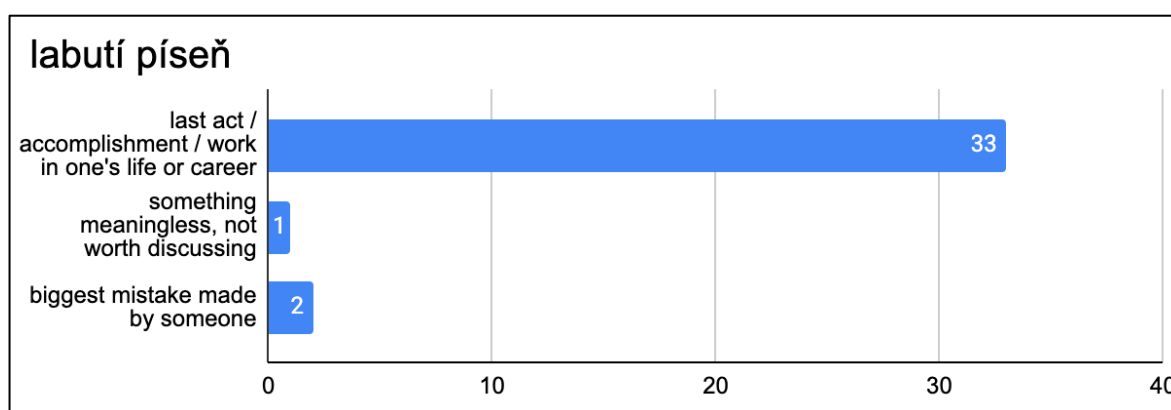


Figure 4 Occurrence of each option: *labutí píseň*

¹⁵ last repetition

¹⁶ blandishment

¹⁷ health improvement of a critically ill person just before his death

¹⁸ lament

¹⁹ something beautiful/pleasant

²⁰ complaining about something

²¹ last cry before death

²² something that is trying to survive but will inevitably end

The last Czech idiom in the questionnaire, *mít švába na mozku*, was misinterpreted by both groups. Sixteen (44,44%) English speakers gave a correct definition, which is the least amount of the correct answers they achieved on a Czech idiom. Only nine (25,71%) Czechs managed to explain it as *being/acting stupid*. Seven people did not fill in the box and as for the incorrect answers, they included *být něčím posedlý/mít brouka v hlavě* (11x)²³, *být blázen*²⁴ (8x), *být neklidný*²⁵. The main problem seems to be that the respondents identified the *cockroach* as a *beetle* and remembered the Czech idiom *mít brouka v hlavě*²⁶ which means *not being able to stop thinking about something*. The English-speaking respondents gave very similar incorrect answers to the Czechs: *acting crazy/not thinking straight/being distracted* (17x); *criticism of someone*. None of them thought of *having an earworm*, the English partial equivalent to *mít brouka v hlavě*, the reason may be that the similar idiom did not fit the context that was provided to them.

There is no obvious connection between the number of spoken languages or the education level and the achieved score in neither group. But again, most of the respondents are students, university graduates, or people who are interested in the languages and therefore were willing to participate. The low score of the Czech participants may be, for the most part, accredited to the lack of explanatory skills or the connections inside their mental lexicons that led them astray.

8.2 English Idioms

English speakers	Czech speakers	Total
221 / 360	256 / 350	477 / 710
61,39%	72,14%	67,18%

Table 9 English idioms success rate

The English idioms, as well as the Czech ones, were more successfully decoded by the participants who had the advantage of a context, in this case, those were the Czech speakers (see Table 9). They correctly interpreted 3-10 idioms per person and did especially

²³ be obsessed

²⁴ be crazy

²⁵ be restless

²⁶ have a beetle in your head

well in the explanatory questions, where eighteen of them gained the maximum score of five, thirteen people reached four points, two participants correctly answered three times and the lowest score of two was achieved by two respondents. Multiple-choice questions, while worse than the explanatory ones, still resulted in four people earning five points, nine participants reaching the score of four, eleven participants achieving three points, and two people obtaining the score of two. Five participants managed to make the right choice once and only one person submitted zero correct answers. There is no noticeable connection between the level of English spoken by the participants and the score. In fact, the highest score of nine was obtained by the participants who identified their level of English as B2-C1, although most of the respondents with the level C1-C2 achieved 7-8 points (see Appendix A Table 1).

The English-speaking participants managed to define between 3-10 English idioms. As mentioned above there were three people who skipped the explanatory parts, and one more who skipped the part of the questionnaire targeted at the English idioms. Those respondents were included in the statistics as if they entered incorrect answers and shall not be mentioned in this chapter anymore. As for the others, five of them scored the maximum amount of ten, three reached nine points, seven participants obtained eight correct answers, three managed to interpret seven idioms, five people gained six points, four respondents correctly answered five times and two explained four idioms. Only three participants (one L2 and two L1 English speakers) earned the lowest amount of three points. Consequently, out of the five participants who reached the perfect score, three are non-native speakers of English. This indicates that the language skill is not inherent and it needs to be practiced even by the native speakers. For the detailed results see Appendix B Table 2.

The idiom with the highest success rate among all the participants, Czech and English-speaking, was *it's raining cats and dogs*. All thirty-five Czech respondents decoded it without trouble. Some of the correct definitions included Czech idiomatic expressions *prší/padají trakaře*²⁷; *leje jako z konve*²⁸ and *venku se čerti žení*²⁹. As for the English respondents, thirty-one (86,11%) of them managed to define the phrase

²⁷ it's raining barrows/barrows are falling

²⁸ it's pouring like from a watering can

²⁹ the devils are getting married

correctly and the only incorrect answer (*this is an important and serious thing*) was submitted by the Chinese L1 speaker. This idiom is well-known among the learners of English as it is usually included among the first idiomatic expressions they encounter, for that it is not surprising that almost everybody managed to interpret it correctly. The Czech participants who speak no English prove, that once the idiom is introduced in the context of a conversation about the weather, it is fairly transparent.

Two more idioms were interpreted correctly by more than 80% of the participants *hold your horses!* and *be a chicken*. The first one was explained correctly by thirty-one (86,11%) English-speaking respondents. There was only one incorrect answer: *stop*. It could be classified as correct in a context but is insufficient as the definition on its own. The Czechs decoded the meaning in thirty-three (94,29%) cases and there was one missing and one incorrect answer (*nechovej se strojeně/nepřeháněj*³⁰). Some correct answers included idiomatic phrases *drž emoce na uzdě*³¹, *zachovej chladnou hlavu*³² and *zklidni hormon*³³. It seems that most of the people recognized the process behind the meaning and managed to transform the action of *holding/slowing down the horses* into the more abstract *slowing down/waiting/being patient*. This idiom may be therefore described as fairly transparent.

The next idiom *be a chicken* was decoded by thirty-one (88,57%) Czech and twenty-nine (80,56%) English-speaking participants. There is an idiom³⁴ in Czech that is structurally identical, but semantically very different and for that, it could have been expected that the success rate on this particular idiom would be significantly lower than average. This hypothesis was essentially proven wrong, even if four participants did mismatch the meanings of the idioms and answered *je nezkušená*³⁵. One more participant answered incorrectly because of the wrong connotation with Czech idiom *ranní ptáče dál doskáče*³⁶. The English-speaking participants did not seem to struggle with this very common idiom as the only incorrect answer was *hesitating to do something* and one more person did not

³⁰ don't act melodramatic

³¹ keep your emotions bound

³² keep a cold (clear) mind

³³ calm down your hormones

³⁴ být kuře = být nezkušený (be inexperienced)

³⁵ be inexperienced

³⁶ the early bird catches the worm

answer. This incorrect option is once again very close to the actual meaning, but the notion of fear was left out and in consequence the answer was marked as wrong. To conclude, most of the participants clearly identified the semantic head of this phrase and managed to use their knowledge of *the chickens* as *young, inexperienced and scared animals*, but some were led astray by the connotations to their L1 mental lexicon which increased the opacity of the idiom.

The disparity between the results of the groups is notable in the following idiom *till the cows come home*. While twenty-four (66,67%) of English-speaking respondents managed to interpret it without additional context, Czechs struggled with the multiple-choice question and only fourteen (38,89%) of them chose the correct variant (see Figure 5). Two English-speaking participants skipped the task and among the incorrect definitions were *for longer than expected*; *late at night* (2x); *waiting for something that will never happen* and *until something ends* (2x). All the respondents who answered identified the head of the phrase *till* and therefore based their definitions on time. The other constituents suggested that *the return of the cows* is the final action. The Czech group seemed to have used their common knowledge of the farm and the associated fact that the farm animals return in the evening to be closed inside. Unfortunately, this fact is in the contrast with the behavioral nature of the cows that stands behind the meaning of this particular idiom. The cows will return, even on their own, but it will take a long time because they are very slow. This case seems to be an excellent example of the compositionality as mentioned at the end of Chapter 4.3.1. The idiom itself was proved to be opaque, as most of the Czech participants could not decode it, but once one learns the phrasal meaning, its origin can be quickly deduced from the separate meanings of its direct constituents.

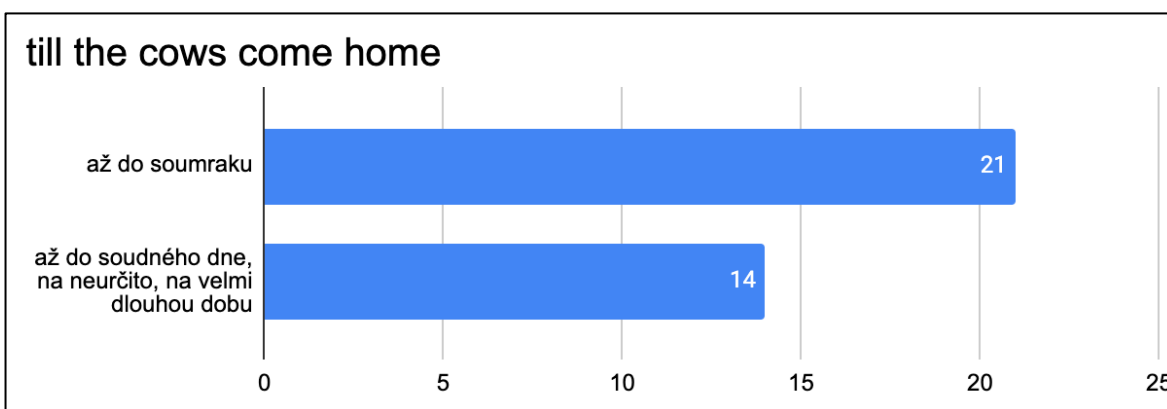


Figure 5 Occurrence of each option: till the cows come home

While the English-speaking participants were more successful when decoding the previous idiom, Czechs managed to overshadow them once they encountered *be as cold as a fish*. Thirty-one (88,57%) of them interpreted it correctly, eight people even by using semantically identical Czech idiom *studený jako psí čumák*³⁷. One person skipped the task and the incorrect options were *je nijaký*³⁸; *není moje krevní skupina*³⁹ and *nemá osobní přístup*⁴⁰. Twenty-four (61,11%) English-speaking participants correctly defined the idiom as *being unemotional/uncaring/unsympathetic*, two left the box empty and the rest opted for the following: *something very cold/dead* (2x); *be cold-blooded* (2x); *avoid getting nervous and angry* and *be impavid*. In this task, it was particularly difficult to differentiate between the correct and incorrect answers, as most of the participants managed to identify the base of the meaning, i.e. the lack of emotions. The foundation of the final ruling was the lack of all the emotions, not only carelessness or calmness. As mentioned, Czechs achieved higher scores and the reason is probably the additional context provided to them. The conversation (see Appendix C) hinted at the well-known Czech idiom, it was, therefore, easier to decode the meaning.

Becoming a guinea pig is another idiom that was understood by most Czechs. Thirty (83,33%) of the participants correctly identified the Czech idiom *stát se pokusným králíkem*⁴¹ as semantically identical to its English counterpart. The rest identified the guinea pig as a pet and preferred the options pointing to the energetic character of the animal or its need to be

³⁷ cold as a dog's muzzle

³⁸ be bland, uninspired

³⁹ he is not my blood type (Czech idiom meaning *we have nothing in common/ I don't like the person.*)

⁴⁰ he lacks an individual approach

⁴¹ become an experimental rabbit

taken care of (see Figure 6). The English-speaking participants lacked the context and still managed to describe the meaning correctly in twenty-two (61,11%) cases. One person skipped the task and the incorrect answers were as follows: *testing something for the first time* (3x); *be the first to do something* (3x); *an animal used for the science experiment*; *making noises during sleeping* and *coward*. The first three options are again on point, they are, however, not clear enough to be evaluated as sufficient. One may *be testing something for the first time* and not be a guinea pig, e.g. when trying a new restaurant. *The person that is first to do something* is more likely to be called a pioneer and *an animal used for experiments* is closer to the non-idiomatic meaning of the phrase.

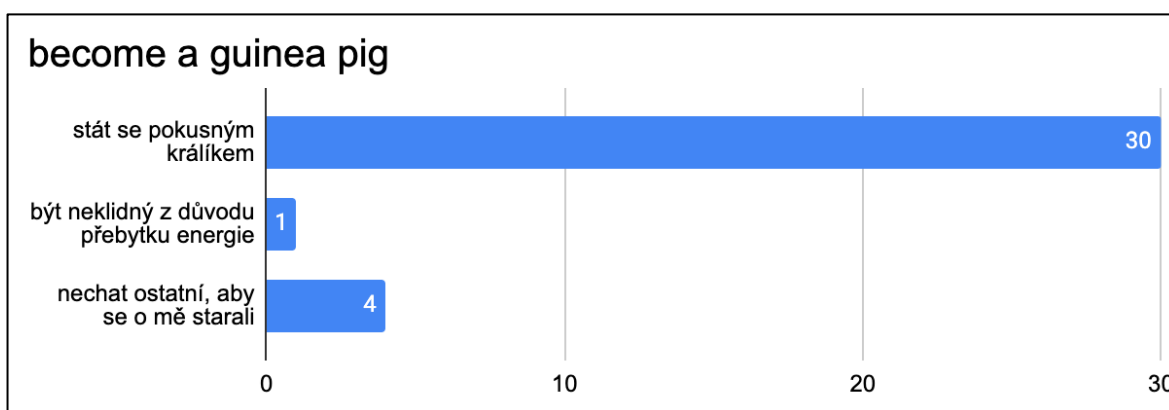


Figure 6 Occurrence of each option: become a guinea pig

The last four idioms were correctly identified by 50% or less of the English-speaking participants. Eighteen of them (50%) knew the idiom *snake in the grass*, two people did not provide any answer, and the wrong definitions were *hidden danger/trouble* (6x); *having predispositions to be good at something* (2x); *a surprise*; *pretend to do something* and *hiding*. Most of the incorrect definitions managed to identify the important part of the meaning in the lexeme that is *something unseen/hidden*. They, however, did not include the metaphorical meaning of *the snake*, i.e. the treacherous/deceitful person. The Czechs probably shared a similar train of thoughts when opting for the *něco nečekaného*⁴² or *problém, který se dal čekat*⁴³. Fifteen (41,67%) of them managed to connect the English idiom with the Czech *had na prsou*⁴⁴.

⁴²something unexpected

⁴³a problem that could have been expected

⁴⁴a snake on the chest (a treacherous person who is close to you)

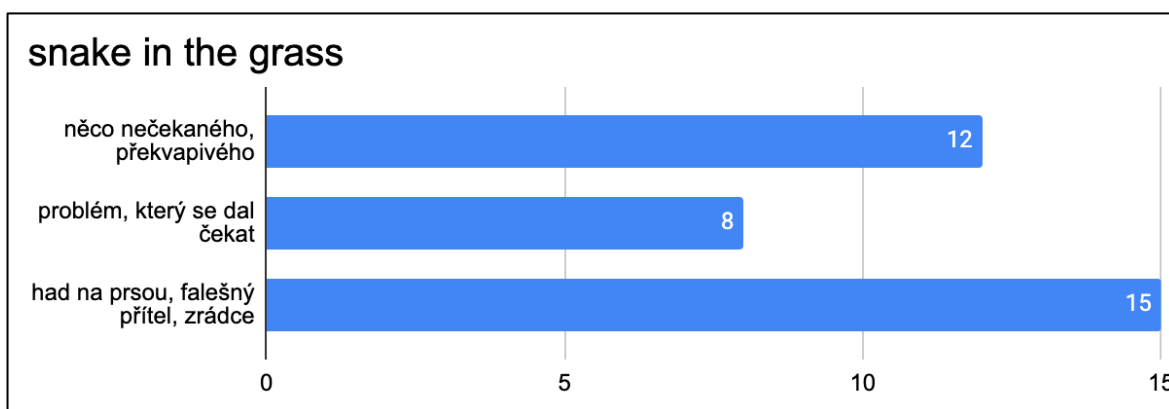


Figure 7 Occurrence of each option: snake in the grass

Twenty-three (63,89%) Czech participants chose the idiom *co tě nepálí, nehas*⁴⁵ as the correct definition of *let sleeping dogs lie*. The twelve others preferred the second option in the form of the idiom *nedráždi hada bosou nohou*⁴⁶ (see Figure 8). Even though those Czech idioms are sometimes introduced as synonymous, they bear few different senses. The first phrase suggests that there is an existing but stable problem that may be discussed in the future but there is no need to deal with it immediately. The second one, on the other hand, refers to a situation in which there is no preexisting complication but if someone were to start complaining, some problem might easily arise. Considering those descriptions, *nehas, co tě nepálí* seems to be a better match for the English counterpart. The English-speaking group managed to identify the idiom correctly fifteen times (41,67%), four people left the box blank, and the rest stated the following: *don't bring up a nearly forgotten argument* (3x); *let things go* (3x); *don't go looking for trouble* (4x) and *don't bother uninterested people* (3x). The first option is in the grey zone, as this definition may be found online but not in the well-known dictionaries. The last two incorrect answers are on the other hand similar to the Czech *nedráždi hada bosou nohou*. Overall most of the participants, knowing that the sleeping dog is safer than the one awake, identified *the disturbance leading to trouble* as an important part of the meaning, hence the idiom may be identified as at least partly transparent.

⁴⁵don't try to put out the fire that does not burn you (avoid interfering in a stable situation)

⁴⁶do not tease the snake with the bare foot (cruising for a bruising)

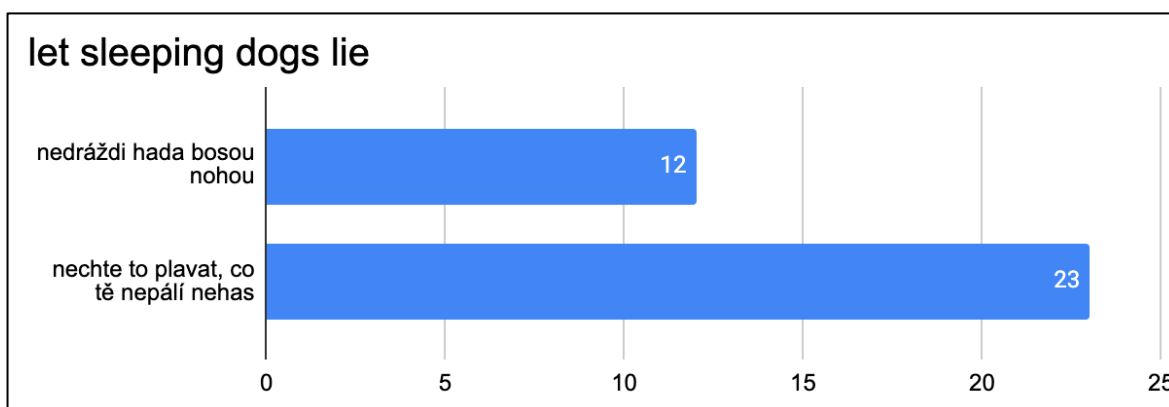


Figure 8 Occurrence of each option: let sleeping dogs lie

The penultimate English idiom *it was like putting the cat among pigeons* was defined correctly by twenty-four (68,57%) Czech and fourteen (38,89%) English-speaking participants. The Czechs again shared some idiomatic expressions with the similar meaning: *přilít olej/benzín do ohně*⁴⁷; *rozvířil vody*⁴⁸ and *kopnul/píchnul do vosího hnízda*⁴⁹. Two respondents skipped the task and the incorrect answers included *měl dobré argumenty*⁵⁰; *nadnesl něco nečekaného*⁵¹; *pustil se do ožehavého tématu*⁵²; *naštval nadřízené*⁵³ as well as idioms *uhodil hřebíček na hlavičku*⁵⁴ (3x), *trefil se do černého*⁵⁵ and *hodil slovo do pranice*⁵⁶. As for the second group, three people opted not to answer and the incorrect definitions were *throwing some undesirable/dangerous person into a group* (3x); *making an inappropriate choice; something out of ordinary* (2x); *easy; a very strong adversary among weak competitors* (3x); *making someone feel uncomfortable; someone who doesn't belong where they are; giving thief your money for safe holding; something meaningless* as well as the idiom *fox in the hen house*. The additional context of the conversation (see Appendix C) seems to have helped the Czechs understand the base of the meaning, as most of them looked for the definitions that described conversational behaviour. The English-speaking respondents were provided no context and their answers

⁴⁷ pour oil/petrol into the fire (comment on an argument in a way to make it worse)

⁴⁸ stir up the waters (disturb the situation and start an argument/a change)

⁴⁹ kick/jab into the wasp nest (say the right thing to start an argument/a change)

⁵⁰ he had good arguments

⁵¹ said something unexpected

⁵² started a delicate/vexed topic

⁵³ made supervisors/bosses angry

⁵⁴ hit the nail at the head (find the real problem/say the perfect thing)

⁵⁵ strike the black (find the real problem/say the right thing)

⁵⁶ threw a word into the fight (added an argument into a debate)

varied from the actual meaning to the *lopsided margins*, *social struggles*, and *making the wrong choices*. This expression may be therefore pronounced opaque, for the individual meanings of the constituents are not sufficient to the understanding of the idiom.

The last idiom, *hold the wolf by the ears*, was successfully explained by thirteen (36,11%) English speakers. Nine respondents mentioned that they are not familiar with the idiom, but four of them took a guess. The incorrect definitions were *take charge of something* (3x); *do something difficult* (2x); *make someone listen to you*; *be ineffective*; *useless method to solve a problem*; *tell someone off*; *hold someone by their weakness*; *take a big problem seriously*; *handle a situation well and get the point*. The Czech participants chose the right definition in twenty-two (61,11%) cases, once more proving that the additional context significantly increases the transparency of the idiom, that is unfamiliar even to the majority of the native speakers. Regardless of the context, thirteen people opted for the other answers, probably because of the common knowledge of the wild animals' behaviour (holding its ears would make it angry) or the connotation between *the danger* and *the wolf*.

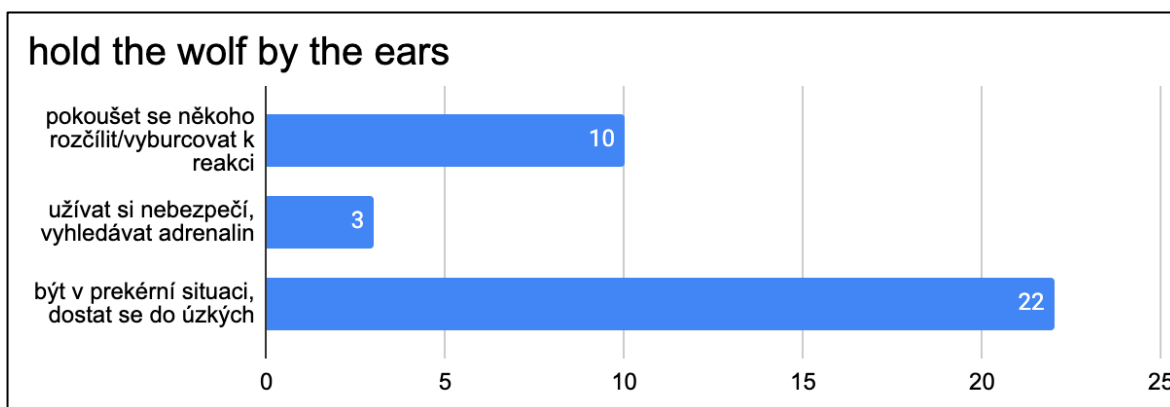


Figure 9 Occurrence of each option: *hold the wolf by its ears*

The explanatory questions on both Czech and English idioms showed that the Czech participants were more creative in sense of trying to find another idiomatic phrase that could be used in the same place. The English-speaking participants usually gave shorter, clearer answers and often provided only a small part of the meaning. The Czechs, on the other hand, regularly added example situations and made sure to include as many details as possible. That is presumably the reason why the Czechs were more successful in those parts of the questionnaire.

The explanatory questions of L1 idioms were, as mentioned above, added to the questionnaire primarily in order to cross-check the knowledge of the idioms among the native speakers. Surprisingly, it provided valuable information to the research as it was proven that one may struggle to explain the meaning of a well-known idiom that is already included in the mental lexicon.

10 Conclusion

The main objective of this thesis, as stated at its very beginning, was to study the way native and non-native speakers perceive the transparency of Czech and English idioms. It was assumed that the meaning of some idioms may be decoded thanks to the knowledge of the meanings of its direct constituents. Other hypotheses suggested that the native speakers with higher education would face fewer complications when decoding the meanings and that the participants would achieve better results in multiple-choice questions. To verify these hypotheses, the research was conducted, focusing on the compositionality/transparency of the selected Czech and English idioms.

The theoretical part of this thesis aimed to introduce the various approaches to the problematics of phraseology and idiomaticity. After the thorough study of the bibliography, the idiom was described as follows: Idiom is a multiword expression with idiomatic meaning that cannot be deduced from the restricted meanings of its constituents. The following chapters further discussed the structural and the semantical features of idiomatic expressions. The position of the phrasal units within the mental lexicon was specified and the issues of teaching and translating idiomatic expression were considered before the research could take place.

The second part of this thesis introduced the participants, the methods and the materials used in the research. The hypothesis that the native speakers with superior educational background would attain better results could not be proven due to the lack of data, although the obtained data suggest that the non-native speakers are fully capable of competition. On the other hand, the assumption that multiple-choice questions would be more accessible was decisively disproved. The Czech participants reached excellent scores in the explanatory questions and poor results were observed in the multiple-choice part of the test.

Lastly, it was assumed that the meaning of some idioms may be comprehended without any prior knowledge. Considering the amount of the successful interpretations of the selected idioms among both native and non-native speakers, the last hypothesis may be evaluated as proven. This thesis, therefore, achieved its objectives. Hopefully, it will facilitate further research of the Czech and English idioms as there is still much to be explored in the field of idiomaticity.

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Table 1 Czech participants

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For the English-speaking participants

Appendix A: Information about the participants **Table 1** Czech participants

	Age	Education	Occupation	Languages		Correct answers			
				L1	L2	Total (max 20)	EN M (max 5)	EN E (max 5)	CZ E (max 10)
R1	23	Bakalářské - Biologie	Student	Czech	English B2 Spanish B1	17	4	5	8
R2	24	Středoškolské s maturitou	Student	Czech	English B2 German B2 Russian B1	17	4	5	8
R3	31	High school	Manager	Czech	English C1	17	5	4	8
R4	22	Střední s maturitou - všeobecné gymnázium	Student	Czech	English C1 German A1	16	3	5	8
R5	23	Bakalářské (Specializace ve vzdělávání - AJ-ČJ)	Lektorka angličtiny	Czech	English C1+ German A2	16	3	5	8
R6	23	Střední škola s maturitou (všeobecné gymnázium)	Student	Czech	English B2/C1	16	4	5	7
R7	23	Střední obecné s maturitou	Studentka	Czech	English C1 Spanish A2	16	4	5	7
R8	30	Vysokoškolské, architektura	Architektka	Czech	English C1	16	4	5	7
R9	30	Bc., Český jazyk a literatura	Nezaměstnaný	Czech	English B2 Spanish A2	16	3	5	8
R10	44	Mgr. filosofie	Programátor	Czech	English B2	16	3	5	8
R11	27	Vysokoškolské bakalářské, AJ-PG	Učitel SŠ	Czech	English C2 French B1 German B1	16	4	4	8

	Age	Education	Occupation	Languages		Correct answers			
				L1	L2	Total (max 20)	EN M (max 5)	EN E (max 5)	CZ E (max 10)
R12	33	Bakalářské, IT	OSVČ	Czech	Spanish A1	15	4	5	6
R13	29	Vysokoškolské - právo a právní věda	Právník	Czech	English C1 German B1	15	5	4	6
R14	24	VŠ bakalářské, obor Arts management (Fakulta podnikohodpodářská VŠE)	Student	Czech	English C1 French A1	16	5	4	7
R15	23	Maturita, všeobecné gymnázium	Učitelka	Czech	English B2 German A2	14	3	5	6
R16	24	Bc., translatologie	Student	Czech	English C2 German C1 Spanish A2	14	3	4	7
R17	24	Středoškolské s maturitou	Student	Czech	English C1 French B2 German B1 Italian A2	14	3	5	6
R18	25	Vysokoškolské (bakalářské, Bohemistika)	Student	Czech	English B2 Spanish A2	14	5	5	4
R19	46	Vyučena	Technik skladu	Czech		14	2	5	7
R20	21	SŠ s maturitou, obor právní studie	Student VŠ	Czech	English A2	14	1	5	8
R21	24	Středoškolské, studuji Čj-D na PedF UK	Studentka	Czech	English B1 French A1 German A1	13	2	5	6
R22	24	SŠ	Student	Czech	English C1 French A1	13	3	4	6

	Age	Education	Occupation	Languages		Correct answers			
				L1	L2	Total (max 20)	EN M (max 5)	EN E (max 5)	CZ E (max 10)
R23	31	Střední odborné s maturitou, obor Propagační výtvarnictví	Asistent pedagoga	Czech	English B1	13	1	5	7
R24	24	Gymnázium	Pracovník v eshopu	Czech		13	2	4	7
R25	26	Učitelství pro 1. stupeň ZŠ, specializace Aj, titul Mgr.	Učitelka na I. stupni ZŠ	Czech	Spanish B1	13	3	3	7
R26	29	Středoškolské	Online marketing	Czech		13	4	4	5
R27	33	Bc. Logika	IT analytik	Czech	English B2	13	3	4	6
R28	20	Gymnázium	Student	Czech	English B2/C1 German B2	13	4	3	6
R29	38	Bc.	Středoškolský pedagog	Czech	English C1	13	1	5	7
R30	20	Všeobecné gymnázium s maturitou	Student	Czech	English B2/C1	11	3	4	4
R31	27	Magisterské - jednooborová výtvarná výchova	Učitel, barista, lektor programů primární prevence	Czech	English B2 Russian A1	11	2	4	5
R32	20	Gymnázium	Student	Czech	English C1 German A2 Spanish A1	10	1	4	5
R33	25	VŠ Strojírenství	Výzkumný pracovník, výpočtář	Czech	English B2 German B1 Spanish A1	9	2	2	5
R34	21	Maturita - gymnázium	Student	Czech		9	0	4	5

	Age	Education	Occupation	Languages		Correct answers			
				L1	L2	Total (max 20)	EN M (max 5)	EN E (max 5)	CZ E (max 10)
R35	21	Maturita - obor autotronik	Automechanik	Czech	English A2	8	1	2	5
				Total correct answers:		484	104	152	228
				Average:		13,83	2,97	4,34	6,51
				Percentage:		69,14	59,43	86,86	65,14

Appendix A: Information about the participants **Table 2** English-speaking participants

	Age	Education	Occupation	Languages		Correct answers			
				L1	L2	Total (max 20)	CZ M (max 5)	CZ E (max 5)	EN E (max 10)
P1	49	Master's degree in quantitative analysis	Not working currently (previously, data and business analysis, and I.T. project management)	English Chinese	French B1	19	5	5	9
P2	41	Degree - Computer Science (Software Engineering)	Civil Servant	English	Greek A2 German A1	18	5	5	8
P3	26	Bachelor in Computer Science	Software developer	Spanish	English C1	18	5	5	8
P4	37	University degree	Front Office Associate (admin and clerical)	English Spanish		18	5	3	10
P5	57	Master's degree	United Nations technical officer	English	German B1	17	5	4	8
P6	54	High School	Language Editor for Translators	English	Czech A2	17	5	4	8
P7	19	Bachelor of medicine	Student	Turkish	English	17	3	4	10
P8	22	Bachelor's degree - English translation and interpreting	Translator	Turkish	English C2 French B2 Russian A2 Czech A1	17	5	2	10
P9	40	Master's degree	Educator	English	French B1 Czech A2 Irish C1	17	4	4	9
P10	26	High School	Copywriter	English	Spanish A2	16	4	4	8

	Age	Education	Occupation	Languages		Correct answers			
				L1	L2	Total (max 20)	CZ M (max 5)	CZ E (max 5)	EN E (max 10)
P11	26	College	Warehouse Manager	English	Hungarian A1	16	4	3	9
P12	33	Bachelor's degree	Electronist	Romanian	English C1	16	4	2	10
P13	18	High School (Science)	Student	English, Bengali	Spanish A1 Arabic A1 Hindi C1	16	4	5	7
P14	48	5 GCSE	Team leader	English		15	5	2	8
P15	27	Bachelor's degree (Philosophy)	Nursing assistant	English		14	5	3	6
P16	37	High School	I own my own company and I study at the university at the same time	Croatian	English C2 Italian A1 French A1 Spanish A1 German A1	14	4	4	6
P17	27	Bachelor of science: communication sciences and disorders	Claims adjuster (insurance field)	English		14	3	3	8
P18	39	Master's degree	Mechanical Engineer	Tamil	English C1 Hindi C1 Czech A2 German A2	14	4	3	7
P19	39	College graduate	Customer service representative	English Filipino		15	2	3	10
P20	44	MFA Creative Writing MA Interdisciplinary	Writer	English	Cajun French B1	14	5	3	6

	Age	Education	Occupation	Languages		Correct answers			
				L1	L2	Total (max 20)	CZ M (max 5)	CZ E (max 5)	EN E (max 10)
		studies in architecture, history, and memoir.							
P21	55	Grammar School	Currently not working	English	Czech A2	14	4	3	7
P22	23	Digital forensic engineering 4. Grade	Cyber security expertise	Turkish	English	14	3	5	6
P23	30	Advanced Master's degree	Aeronautical Expert	Arabic	English C2 French C2	13	4	5	4
P24	36	Bachelor of Science	IT specialist	Spanish	English C2	13	4	4	5
P25	27	Bachelor's degree	English Teacher	English		13	4	4	5
P26	30	Bachelor's degree	IT	Spanish	English B2 French A2 Italian A2 German A1 Latin A1	13	5	3	5
P27	22	University	Psychology	English Greek	Spanish A2	12	4	3	5
P28	22	High School	Studying physiotherapy	Greek	French B2	12	5	4	3
P29	22	Bachelor's degree	Software engineer	English Hindi	Japanese A2	12	3	3	6
P30	35	Master's degree on Particle Physics and Nuclear Physics	Radiation Safety Officer	Chinese	English C1 German A1	11	4	3	4

	Age	Education	Occupation	Languages		Correct answers			
				L1	L2	Total (max 20)	CZ M (max 5)	CZ E (max 5)	EN E (max 10)
P31	24	Masters of Science in Education	Teacher	English		11	4	4	3
P32	28	Bachelor's degree in Nuclear Engineering	Intern at the International Atomic Energy Agency	Spanish	English C1	9	5	4	0
P33	20	High School	Missionary	English	Slovak A2	9	4	2	3
P34	23	Bachelor of science (Hons) in Microbiology	Student	Bengali	English B1 Hindi	4	4	0	0
P35	26	Master's degree	Researcher	Russian Ukrainian	English B2	4	4	0	0
P36	30	Bachelor's degree	Unemployed	Latvian	English C2	4	3	1	0
				Total correct answers:		490	150	119	221
				Average:		13,61	4,17	3,31	6,14
				Percentage:		68,06	83,33	66,11	61,39

Appendix B: Success rate on the selected idioms Table 1 Czech participants

	EN multiple-choice					EN explanatory					CZ explanatory										
	E1	E2	E3	E4	E5	E6	E7	E8	E9	E10	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6	C7	C8	C9	C10	
R1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0
R2	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0
R3	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
R4	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
R5	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
R6	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	0
R7	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0
R8	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	0
R9	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0
R10	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0
R11	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0
R12	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	0
R13	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	0
R14	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0
R15	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	0
R16	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1
R17	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	0
R18	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	0
R19	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	0
R20	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1

	EN multiple-choice					EN explanatory					CZ explanatory									
	E1	E2	E3	E4	E5	E6	E7	E8	E9	E10	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6	C7	C8	C9	C10
R21	1	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	0
R22	1	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1
R23	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	0
R24	1	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	1
R25	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1
R26	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	1	0
R27	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	0
R28	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	0
R29	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	1
R30	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	0
R31	1	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	0
R32	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	0
R33	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	1	0
R34	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	1	0
R35	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	1	0
Correct answers:	30	14	22	15	23	35	24	31	33	29	30	35	17	27	15	35	30	25	35	9
Percentage:	85,71	40,00	62,86	42,86	65,71	100,00	68,57	88,57	94,29	82,86	85,71	100,00	48,57	77,14	42,86	100,00	85,71	71,43	100,00	25,71

Appendix B: Success rate on the selected idioms Table 2 English-speaking participants

	CZ multiple-choice					CZ explanatory					EN explanatory									
	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6	C7	C8	C9	C10	E1	E2	E3	E4	E5	E6	E7	E8	E9	E10
P1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1
P2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	1
P3	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	1
P4	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
P5	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	1
P6	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	1
P7	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
P8	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
P9	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
P10	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	1
P11	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
P12	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
P13	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	1
P14	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1
P15	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	1	1
P16	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	1
P17	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	1
P18	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	1	1
P19	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
P20	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	1

	CZ multiple-choice					CZ explanatory					EN explanatory									
	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6	C7	C8	C9	C10	E1	E2	E3	E4	E5	E6	E7	E8	E9	E10
P21	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	1
P22	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	1	0
P23	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	1
P24	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	1
P26	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	1
P25	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	1
P27	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	1	0
P28	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	1
P29	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	0
P30	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1
P31	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	1
P32	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
P33	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	1
P34	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
P35	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
P36	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Correct answers:	24	36	30	27	33	27	29	24	23	16	22	24	13	18	15	31	14	24	31	29
Percentage:	66,67	100,00	83,33	75,00	91,67	75,00	80,56	66,67	63,89	44,44	61,11	66,67	36,11	50,00	41,67	86,11	38,89	66,67	86,11	80,56

Appendix C: Questionnaire - For the Czech participants

Dotazník pro rodilé mluvčí češtiny

Vážení respondenti,

děkuji, že věnujete čas tomuto dotazníku. Je určen rodilým mluvčím českého jazyka a bude sloužit jako podklad studie o českých a anglických idiomech, kterou se zabývám ve své bakalářské práci.

Nejprve Vás požádám o vyplnění informací o Vaší jazykové úrovni.

Následně Vám bude představeno 10 českých a 10 anglických idiomů (v překladu do češtiny), u kterých určíte význam.

Dotazník je kompletně anonymní a data z něj získaná budou využita výhradně pro akademické účely.

***Povinné pole**

Věk: *

Vaše odpověď

Nejvyšší dosažené (ukončené) vzdělání a obor studia: *

Vaše odpověď

Povolání: *

Vaše odpověď

Potvrďte, že je čeština vaším mateřským jazykem. Pokud jste vyrůstali v bilingvní rodině, doplňte váš druhý rodný jazyk. *

Čeština je můj mateřský jazyk.

Jiné: _____

Jakými dalšími jazyky hovoříte a na jaké úrovni?

A1	ZAČÁTEČNÍK
A2	POKROČILÝ ZAČÁTEČNÍK
B1	MÍRNĚ POKROČILÝ
B2	POKROČILÝ
C1	VELMI POKROČILÝ
C2	EXPERT

Vaše odpověď _____

Vyberte z nabídky správný význam anglického rčení.

Rčení je v textu zvýrazněno tučně.

1)

**Nechci se stát morčetem,
spoléhám se na známé značky.**

- nechat ostatní, aby se o mě starali
- stát se pokusným králíkem
- být neklidný z důvodu přebytku energie

2)

**Dokázali by spolu mluvit
až dokud se krávy nevrátí domů.**

- až do soumraku
- dokud nesplníš, co jsi slíbil
- až do soudného dne, na neurčito, na velmi dlouhou dobu

3)

Drží vlka za uši, ale nevím, jak to vyřeší.

- být v překerní situaci, dostat se do úzkých
- užívat si nebezpečí, vyhledávat adrenalin
- pokoušet se někoho rozčílit/vyburcovat k reakci

4)

Byla jsem si jistá, že je to had v trávě.

- něco nečekaného, překvapivého
- problém, který se dal čekat
- had na prsou, falešný přítel, zrádce

5)

Prosím tě, nech spící psy spát, nemá to cenu.

- neruš nikoho ze spánku
- nechte to plavat, co tě nepálí nehas
- nedráždí hada bosou nohou

Vysvětlete stručně význam anglických rčení.

Rčení je v textu zvýrazněno tučně.

6)

Martin: Hele, dneska ven nejdu, **prší kočky a psi.**

Eva: Nejsi snad z cukru, ne? Vždyť jsme se domluvili.

Vaše odpověď

7)

Petr: Ty jo, ta včerejší hádka byla hustá, co?

Ivan: Jojo, Pavel tou svojí stížností fakt

hodil kočku mezi holuby!

Vaše odpověď

8)

Jiří: Jak se ti líbí v nové práci?

Iva: Můj šéf **je chladný jako ryba,**

ale jinak je to super.

Vaše odpověď

9)

Katka: Můžeš mi laskavě říct, co to má znamenat?!

Jana: Hele, **drž svoje koně** a pojd' si to v klidu vysvětlit.

Vaše odpověď

10)

Jakub: Tak vyrazíme zítra v pět vlakem, večer jsme u řeky a ráno můžeme začít sjíždět.

Petr: No jo, ale Eva s námi nepůjde, **je hrozný kuře**.

Vaše odpověď

Vysvětlete stručně význam českých rčení.

být sto let za opicemi

Vaše odpověď

dělat z komára velblouda

Vaše odpověď

kovářova kobyla chodí bosa

Vaše odpověď

darovanému koni na zuby nehled'

Vaše odpověď

házet perly sviním

Vaše odpověď

jedna vlaštovka jaro nedělá

Vaše odpověď

kdo chce psa bít, hůl si vždy najde

Vaše odpověď

labutí píseň

Vaše odpověď

mít švába na mozku

Vaše odpověď

udělat kozla zahradníkem

Vaše odpověď

Appendix C: Questionnaire - For the English-speaking participants

Questionnaire for speakers of English

Dear respondents,

I would like to ask you to dedicate some of your time to fill in this questionnaire.

This form is targeted at all English speakers whose native language is not Czech and it will serve as a basis for a study of English and Czech idioms which is the subject matter of my bachelor thesis.

After a brief inquiry about your language skills you will be introduced to 10 Czech idioms translated to English and 10 English idioms and asked to explain their meaning.

The questionnaire is completely anonymous and the collected data will be used exclusively for academic purposes.

***Povinné pole**

Age: *

Vaše odpověď

Highest level of education successfully completed (including field of study): *

Vaše odpověď

Current occupation: *

Vaše odpověď

Mother tongue (in case you grew up in a bilingual family, include both languages):

*

English

Russian

German

Polish

Spanish

Italian

French

Portugese

Jiné: _____

Do you speak any other languages? List them out together with your current level.

A1	BEGINNER
A2	ELEMENTARY
B1	INTERMEDIATE
B2	UPPER INTERMEDIATE
C1	ADVANCED
C2	MASTERY

Vaše odpověď _____

Choose the right definition to the Czech idioms.

Idioms are in bold.

1)

Her husband is a car mechanic,
but a **smith's mare walks unshod (barefoot)**.

- neglect your own needs / your family needs for sake of others
- smith's apprentice has particularly difficult job and is paid very little
- refuse to help others unless you get paid

2)

Why are you using this phone,
it is hundred years behind apes!

- be on the ball
- be primitive / old / out of style / old-fashioned
- come really late, miss an appointment

3)

I give up, it is just throwing pearls to swine!

- give a promise even if you cannot keep it, typically politicians to potential voters
- spend money quickly, usually on something useless
- trying to help someone who refuses the help without reason, typically smart person to stupid one

4)

Don't take his complaints seriously. Who wants to hurt the dog always finds the baton (stick).

- if you want to hurt / punish somebody, you always find a way to do it
- if you want to change / improve something, you always find a way to do it
- if you hurt someone, you will be punished

5)

That movie role was the swan song of her career.

- biggest mistake made by someone
- last act / accomplishment / work in one's life or career
- something meaningless, not worth discussing

Briefly explain the meaning of the Czech idioms.

Idioms are in bold.

6)

Jacob: I think that if we allow people in,
there will be huge crowds everyday!

Peter: **Don't turn the mosquito into a camel,**
it is just a small garden in the city centre.

Vaše odpověď

7)

John: I got a message that they are considering
me for the job, that's great!

James: Do not celebrate yet, **one swallow
doesn't make spring.**

Vaše odpověď

8)

Jacob: Making him a manager is like
making a gardener of a goat.

Jane: I know! When she was on my project
she had no idea what to do!

Vaše odpověď

9)

Evelyn: My mom gave me theatre tickets for my
birthday, but I am not into theatre at all!

Jacob: Come on Evelyn, **don't check the teeth
of a horse given to you!** I am sure she
meant well!

Vaše odpověď

10)

Martin: What are you doing?

Peter: I thought it was a good idea...

Martin: Do you **have a cockroach on your brain?!**

Vaše odpověď

Briefly explain the meaning of the English idioms.

become a guinea-pig

Vaše odpověď

till the cows come home

Vaše odpověď

hold the wolf by the ears

Vaše odpověď

snake in the grass

Vaše odpověď

let sleeping dogs lie

Vaše odpověď

it's raining cats and dogs

Vaše odpověď

it was like putting the cat among the pigeons

Vaše odpověď

be as cold as fish

Vaše odpověď

hold your horses!

Vaše odpověď

be a chicken

Vaše odpověď
