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**FUNCTIONS OF IDIOMS IN BUSINESS MEETING
DISCOURSE**

**IDIOMU FUNKCIJAS LIETIŠKAJĀ SANĀKSMJU
DISKURSĀ**

BACHELOR THESIS

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ANOTĀCIJA

Bakalaura darbs pēta idiomu lietišķajā sanāksmju diskursā. Teorētiskais ietvars ir par diskursa teoriju ietvara analīzi un funkcionālo valodniecību (Brown and Yule, 1983; Haliday and Hasan, 1985) un idiomu funkcijas (Fernando 1996; Glucksberg, 2001). Pētījuma mērķis ir izpētīt funkcijas, nozīmi un idiomu kompozicionālo uzbūvi. Pētījuma metode ir diskursa analīze. Tā ir balstīta uz trīs internacionālu kompāniju lietišķās sanāksmju stenogrammas apkopošanu (106,784 vārdi). Rezultāti liecina, ka galvenā idiomu funkcija ir balstīta uz starppersonisku darbību, metaforisku terminalizāciju, semantiskiem izteicieniem un tekstiem. Autors secina, ka pētījuma rezultāts ir saskaņots ar idiomu raksturojumu pieejamajos teorētiskās literatūras avotos.

Atslēgas vārdi : lietišķās sanāksmes, idioma, diskursa funkcijas, diskursa analīze

ABSTRACT

The Bachelor thesis studies idioms in the discourse of business meetings. The theoretical framework is on the theories of discourse analysis and functional linguistics (Brown and Yule, 1983; Halliday and Hasan, 1985), and idioms functions (Fernando 1996; Glucksberg, 2001). The goal of the study is to investigate the functions, meaning and compositional structure of idioms. The research method is discourse analysis. It is based on the collection of transcripts of business meetings (106,784 words) of three international companies. The results indicate that the main function of idioms in business meeting discourse is interactional function, and noncompositional and quasi-metaphorical and semantically opaque idioms outnumber other types of idioms in the corpus. The author concludes that the results of the study are in line with the characteristics of idioms found in the available theoretical literature.

Key words: business meetings, idiom, discourse functions, discourse analysis

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INTRODUCTION

The focus of the present BA thesis is on the functions of idioms in the discourse of business meetings in three international companies operating at the global markets.

This study is necessary to facilitate international business communication in English. In the modern globalized world, English has become a language for international communication in business. Most globally operating companies are multinational, and for many professionals working in such companies English is a non-native language. Communication at business meetings in such international companies usually takes place in spoken English, in which informal expressions and idioms are more frequently used than in written language. However, the level of communicative competence in English varies considerably among the participants of business meetings – some people are confused by a vast inventory of idioms in a native speaker's repertoire. Idioms that native-speakers of English use in communication at business meetings may be culturally-specific, and their meaning and functions in discourse may not always be clear for representatives of other cultures. Moreover, because of the vagueness and ambiguity of idioms, which often do not have equivalents in other languages, their intensive use may jeopardize mutual understanding between communicators during negotiations at business meetings and even result in costly communication breakdowns. That is why, in order to improve international communication at business meetings, it is important to distinguish from the business meeting discourse the idioms that may cause difficulties for non-native speakers of English, investigate them and raise the awareness of meeting participants about the functions and meaning of idioms. Although such authors as Simpson and Mendis (2003), Schmitt (2010), Naciscione (2011), Glucksberg (2001), Langlotz (2006) have investigated various aspects of idioms, the functions of idioms in business meeting discourse have not yet been sufficiently researched.

The goal of this study is the investigation of discourse functions, semantic meaning and syntactic structure of idioms in the discourse of international business meetings.

The objectives of the research are the following:

1. To analyze the theoretical literature on discourse analysis (Brown and Yule, 1983) and functions of language (Haliday, 1985; Haliday and Hasan, 1985); the discourse of business meetings (Halbe, 2013; Handford and Koester, 2010; Handford, 2010), and idiom functions (Fernando 1996; Moon, 1998; Glucksberg, 2001).
2. To apply the theoretical framework of discourse analysis and investigate idioms in

business meetings of three global international companies.

3. To compile a collection of transcripts of business meetings containing idioms for the analysis and to analyze the functions of idioms in the samples.
4. To summarize and evaluate the results and to draw the relevant conclusions.

The research questions the author aims to investigate in this research are the following:

1. Which idioms are used in the discourse of business meetings represented in the collected research samples of business meeting transcripts?
2. What are the meaning and functions of idioms in the discourse of business meetings?
3. What are the syntactic compositional structure and semantic transparency level of the found idioms?

The methods of research:

1. The **theoretical research method** is applied to create the theoretical background for the study. The theoretical framework is based on the theories of discourse analysis and functional linguistics developed in the following studies: Brown and Yule (1983), Levinson (1983), Halliday and Hasan (1985), Sinclair (1991), Biber (1999). For the analysis, definition and classification of idioms are used the works of Rozina (2013), Naciscione(2010, 2015), Glucksberg (2001). The studies of business meetings by Halbe (2013), Handford and Koester (2010), Koester (2010) and Handford (2010) are applied to design the theoretical framework for the empirical analysis of the business meeting discourse.

2. The main **empirical research method** is discourse analysis of idiom functions in business meetings. The research data for the analysis are extracted from the samples of spoken language used in communication at business meetings in three international companies represented in the corpus of business meeting transcripts. In addition, some elements of quantitative research method are used to analyze the frequency of idioms in the corpus.

Short summary of chapters:

In chapter one, the author presents an overview of the sources and existing research on the discourse of business meetings.

In the second chapter, the definitions of idioms in the relevant literature and modern approaches to the study of idioms are discussed.

Chapter three is focused on the description of the research methodology applied in the study: the research corpus, procedure and analysis of the data.

Chapter four presents the summary of research results obtained in the qualitative discourse analysis of the idioms used in the research samples and discussion of the findings.

CHAPTER 1

1. DISCOURSE OF BUSINESS MEETINGS

In chapter one, the author presents a review of the sources and existing research on the discourse of business meetings. First, the concept of business discourse is defined and the types of it are discussed. The author proceeds with an overview of research approaches to the study of business discourse. Finally, business meetings are discussed as a special type of business discourse.

1.1. Types of Business Discourse

The language of business meetings is a specialized subtype of discourse known as Business Discourse. Halliday and Hasan (1989) first analyzed the language of buying and selling as discourse. They studied language samples that were much longer than a sentence, in many cases, the whole texts of business documents, and discovered that the discourse of business texts has a specific structure, in which each part has a communicative purpose, for example, greeting, sales request, sale, purchase, purchase closure and other elements (Halliday and Hasan, 1989). They also insisted that the choice of language in the discourse of buying and selling depends on the social situation, the purpose of use and the structural part of discourse in which it is used (ibid.).

Camiciottoli Crawford (2007) has developed the idea of Halliday and Hasan that the use and functions of language in different business situations vary. According to the author, there is a principal difference between the two types of business discourse. One type is a specialist discourse of economics that is used by professionals in institutional settings usually associated with universities. This discourse is often represented by written texts: scientific articles, academic monographs and research reports in the academic disciplines of Economics and Business Management. Camiciottoli Crawford states that this type of discourse is similar to academic discourse. Writers in the Economics discipline usually use formal academic vocabulary and grammatical structures while the number of idioms and other informal features in their writing is reduced. The other type of business discourse is 'situated in the workplace' (ibid.: 25). It is used in everyday communication between people working together in a company to make profit. This language of practical business is used between equals in spoken face-to-face communication (Bargiela-Chiappini, Nickerson and Planken, 2007). Therefore, people tend to use less formal language and their speech contains less informal elements, such as idioms. Examples of this kind

of language use may be found also in the discourse of business meetings, which are in the focus of this research.

A classification of business discourse types has been proposed by Yli-Jokipii (1994). According to the researcher, business language is divided into two types – interactive and non-interactive. Non-interactive type of business discourse is illustrated by various forms of written business language circulating in or issued by a company: quarterly and annual reports, advertisements, coupons, and proposals. This type of communication is unidirectional – the texts are distributed from writers to the intended audience. In contrast, spoken face-to-face verbal exchanges are classified as interactive type of business discourse, as each interaction involves at least two participants producing and perceiving language in turns as speakers and listeners.

Slightly modifying the model proposed by Yli-Jokipii, it is possible to define the discourse of business meetings as interactive spoken discourse and locate its position in the classification of the types of business discourse presented below (Fig. 1.1).

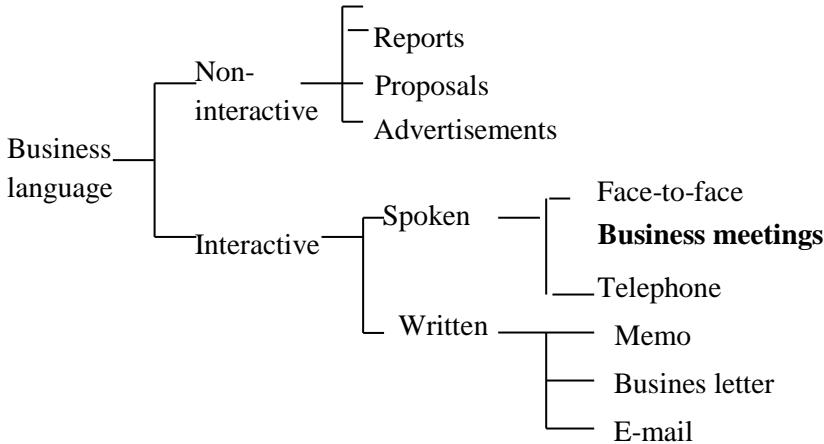


Figure 1.1. Classification of business language, adapted from Yli-Jokipii (1994:38)

Because the use of culturally-specific informal language elements, such as idioms, may cause communication problems more often than standard Academic English used in formal business discourse, the discourse of the second type, as defined by Camiciottoli Crawford (2007), is in the focus of many studies. For example, Bargiela-Chiappini, Nisckerson and Planken (2006) in their book titled *Business Discourse* define this type of business discourse as the discourse that is ‘all about how people communicate using talk or writing in commercial organizations in order to get their work done’ (ibid.: 3). According to the authors, business discourse applies to the use of language in real life situations to conduct business, to negotiate the terms of collaboration and

to solve problems (ibid.). The discourse of business meetings investigated in this BA thesis is classified as Business Discourse of the second type in the classification of Camiciottoli Crawford (2007).

1.2. Research on Business Discourse

Business discourse has practical, grounded into the real life purposes of communication. Therefore, the research approaches to the study of business language as discourse include the analysis of the context of language use in real situations.

One of the approaches that study business language is known as English for Specific Purposes (ESP), which is concerned with ‘teaching of adults working in businesses of one kind or another, or preparing to work in the field of business’ (Donna, 2000:5). Within the boundaries of this approach, Business English is studied as a means of communication in business settings. Its main purpose is to enable the speakers to reach their goals in business by learning and using appropriate to business situations language. This includes various aspects of language use, professional and social. Dudley-Evans and St John (1998: 30), for example, emphasize the cross-cultural aspect of business communication that requires ‘awareness and sensitivity to the diversity of values and customs around the world.’ To improve international business communication, special attention is given to the study of specific contexts of language use, such as business meetings. The ESP approach to the study of Business English discourse involves concentration on specific collections of texts or recordings of spoken language that contain the language variety of interest and the information on the specific context of its use. According to Ellis and Johnson (1994: 3),

As with other varieties of ESP, Business English implies the definition of a specific language corpus and emphasis on particular kinds of communication in a specific context. (Ellis and Johnson, 1993: 3)

In terms of its interest in the contextual aspects of language use, ESP approach is similar to another approach – discourse analysis (Brown and Yule, 1983). In contrast to ESP approach, the researchers who study Business English applying the discourse analysis approach are less concerned with pedagogical issues, but more with the goals to improve work place communication.

According to Brown and Yule, discourse is ‘a dynamic process in which language was used as an instrument of communication in a context by a speaker/ writer to express meanings and achieve intentions’ (ibid: 26). The researchers propose a *discourse analysis* approach that puts

speakers and writers at the centre of communication process. They consider that discourse analysis studies how language is used and how linguistic elements function in discourse.

According to Brown and Yule,

The analysis of discourse is, necessarily, the analysis of language in use. As such, it cannot be restricted to the description of linguistic forms independent of the purposes or functions which those forms are designed to serve in human affairs. (Brown and Yule, 1983: 1)

Brown and Yule use the idea proposed by Halliday (1985: x) that discourse function determines a linguistic form in a particular context, which means that a speakers' choice of language elements depends on what they want to do or achieve in each particular communicative situation. People make similar choices to achieve similar purposes, and linguistic elements that are used to achieve similar purposes perform similar functions. There are certain regularities or 'configurations of functions' (Halliday, 1985: x) that determine emergence of language patterns in texts. According to Brown and Yule, discourse analysis aims to 'describe regularities in the linguistic realisations used by people to communicate those meanings and intentions' (Brown and Yule, 1983: 1). The main purpose of discourse analysis for Brown and Yule is the study of language functions. Therefore, discourse analysis approach is applied to the study of idioms in business meeting discourse in this research. The author aims to discover the regularities and patterns in the use of idioms at business meetings that appear because the speakers use them to perform certain functions.

1.3. Business Meetings as Special Type of Business Discourse

According to Yli-Jokipii (1994), business discourse covers the following areas of language use: corporate language, organizational language, managerial language, technical language and administrative or governmental language. These are narrow specialized languages with specific lexis, phraseology and syntactic structures. The discourse of business meetings is also a narrow and specific subtype of business discourse related to business interactions and negotiations. It makes use of specific lexis and business terms in specific meaning, as well as collocations and phraseological units that are typical to certain business genres (Handford, 2010). Business meeting discourse comprises 'lexical units from everyday language or fields related to economics, which derive metaphorically to a new specific sense that is understood in context' (Henderson, 2000:172).

However, during such communicative events as business meetings several different specific

languages may be used by the participants, depending on their role at the meeting and the communicative situation (Rogerson-Revell, 2007). That is because the communicative purposes of business discourse at a meeting may be diverse: reporting, education, organisation of advertising campaign, information or promotion. Therefore, the discourse of business meetings cannot be restricted to one narrow area of business language use (Bargiela-Chiappini and Harris, 1997). For example, the language used by the meeting leader or the participant giving a formal presentation may considerably differ from the language used in discussions or debates following the presentation. The content area of the conversation at the meeting also influences the choice of lexis and the level of formality. However, there are distinguishable language features that are specific to only meeting discourse, for example, the phrases that are used for starting, leading and finishing the meeting, inviting motions for voting or offering the floor to the next presenter.

Business meetings are not only very specific, but also very important type of business discourse. Rogerson-Revell (2007) has studied business meetings in several European organisations and found out that the participants at these international events come from different language and cultural backgrounds. The differences in the level of communicative competence, cultural peculiarities or other linguistic, ethnic, status, age or gender differences between the participants of a business meeting may lead to certain problems in communication and cause misunderstandings. The researcher illustrates this by writing that ‘different ways of speaking or interacting can lead one party to believe that the other is either intellectually incompetent or deliberately unco-operative or combative’ (Rogerson-Revell, 2007:110). The language that is used at such a meeting, especially by more competent language users and native speakers has a decisive influence on the success of the meeting. According to Rogerson-Revell,

Meetings are obviously an extremely important part of workplace interaction, both in terms of individual advancement and organisational achievement. There can be considerable scope in meetings not only for overtly legitimate interactions, such as exchanging information or promoting action, but also for the strategic negotiation of rapport and influence. (Rogerson-Revell, 2007: 118)

There are, certainly, differences in the number and diversity of participants, the location and the purpose of the meeting and other aspects that have an effect on the nature of interaction and its outcomes (Poncini, 2003; Poncini, 2004). Rogerson-Revell divides the genre of business meetings into several subgenres, applying different criteria that define whether a meeting is

- inter- or extra-organizational;
- with a primarily commercial business focus;
- a professional, consultative brief
- essentially collaborative and information-sharing in nature

- fundamentally competitive and results-driven. (Rogerson-Revell, 2007: 110)

A recent profound study of the language of business meetings has been undertaken by Dorothea Halbe (2013). She has studied a corpus of spoken language recorded at business meetings and compiled as a part of British National Corpus. According to Halbe, business-specific terms and general words with business-specific meaning preserve their semantic meaning across different business meetings. They appear in discourse with various collocates, which ‘all fulfil the same function of further specifying a general term and thus creating a specific meaning (as for *business cards* and *admission procedure*)’ (Halbe, 2013: 75). The analysis of business meeting discourse is done by Halbe at the level of individual words and frequent collocations, for example, verbs and prepositions occurring together in discourse. Although she has investigated many different aspects of word-level vocabulary used at business meetings, multi-word phraseological units and collocations with idiomatic meaning, which are naturally less frequent than grammatical collocations, are not included in her research. Idioms, however, may have many different important functions in business meeting discourse and it is necessary to investigate them in this study.

Chapter summary: In chapter one, the author has discussed the discourse of business meetings, their types and language characteristics. The discourse of business meetings is defined as a narrow and specific subtype of business discourse related to business interactions and negotiations. It makes use of specific lexis and business terms in specific meaning, as well as collocations and phraseological units that are typical to certain business genres. The following chapter is devoted to the analysis of the theoretical sources on idioms and the functions they have in discourse.

CHAPTER 2

2. STUDIES OF IDIOMS IN BUSINESS DISCOURSE

In the second chapter, the author presents the review of the relevant literature on the concept of idiom and research approaches to the study of idioms. First, the definitions of idiom are discussed and compared. Then, the author presents an overview of the studies on idioms, their functions, semantics and compositional structure. Finally, a summary of the sources on the use of idioms in business discourse of meetings is presented.

2.1. Defining Characteristics of Idioms

Idioms, which are also called formulaic expressions, have been studied and defined by many researchers (Schmitt, 2010; Naciscione, 2011; Glucksberg; Langlotz, 2006; Leaney, 2005). The authors, however, admit that the definition of idiom is a difficult problem, which can be solved by defining the main characteristics of an idiom.

Schmitt (2010:118) defines idioms as ‘...a small part of the phrasal lexicon of both a language and individual speakers of language.’ According to Schmitt, a considerable part of any human language is made by formulaic language that is shared by the language speakers, which makes mutual understanding possible. The formulaic language includes a rich phrasal lexicon containing many different kinds of formulaic expressions, including idioms. Schmitt writes that a big variety of subtypes of formulaic language in use is responsible for the abundance of terms that are used in idiom research, as different authors may apply different terms to the same concept. According to Schmitt,

In fact, there seem to be many types of formulaic language, varying in degree of fixedness, institutionalism/ conventionality, and opacity/non-compositionality. This lack of homogeneity is one reason for the wide range terminology in the area.

(Schmitt, 2010: 119)

The idea of Schmitt that the term *idiom* is often used to mean different types of formulaic expressions is also supported by Naciscione (2011), who states that the word *idiom* as a term is ambiguous, as it may have more than one meaning:

‘The numerous uses of the term idiom only create terminological confusion. It is polysemous: it has several meanings in its semantic structure. Moreover, it has many theoretical interpretations.’ (Naciscione, 2011: 18).

Although, according to Wray and Perkins (2000) and Naciscione (2011), *idiom* is the most

frequently used term in the studies of formulaic language, there are many other terms in use that complicate the problem of defining *idiom*. For example, as Naciscione (2011: 18) writes, ‘Idiom is the most common term among the terminology used.’ She, however, also mentions some other terms are also used by researchers, for example, *phraseological unit*, *fixed expression* and *fixed phrase*.

In addition, many authors (Wray and Perkins, 2000; Wray, 2002; Langlotz, 2006) also admit that the precise definition of terms in this area of research is a rather difficult task because there are many different types of formulaic language in use. For example, Alison Wray (2002) writes that different researchers use many different terms. In her research, she has found more than fifty terms that were used by different authors to refer to formulaic language. She mentions, among other terms, such words as ‘*formulaic sequences, chunks, collocations, conventionalized forms, formulaic speech, formulas, holophrases, multi-word units, prefabricated routines, ready-made utterances*’ (Wray, 2002: 9). Therefore, distinguishing the concept of idiom from other types of figurative language is important, so that the term *idiom* could be used appropriately in this study to refer only to idioms and not to other types of formulaic language. For this reason, it is necessary to distinguish the defining characteristics of idioms.

One of the most important characteristics of idiom is its syntactic structure. Naciscione (2011: 18) writes that some researchers use the term *idiom* in a very broad meaning to refer to all kinds of collocations – the words that frequently occur together in texts or speech. For example, they do not distinguish between such phrasal verbs with idiomatic meaning as *to look after* (to care about) or *to look for* (to search) and the same verbs used with prepositions in the direct meaning: *to look at (something)*. A much narrower use of the term *idiom* includes only multi-word expressions that have idiomatic meaning not evident from the words constituting the idiom (as, for instance, Strässler, 1982: 79, quoted in Naciscione, 2011: 18).

All in all, the abundance of competing terms that are used by researchers to refer to the concept of idiom complicates the task of defining it. According to Langoltz,

The colorful linguistic spectrum called *idioms* directly reflects the considerable difficulties linguists face in finding an appropriate definition and classification of these linguistic phenomenon and to explain their grammatical behavior. (Langlotz, 2006:2).

In an attempt to solve the problem of defining idiom, some researchers emphasize the social and cultural characteristics of idioms. For example, Glucksberg writes, ‘idioms are a subset of the fixed expressions in a language community’ (2001:68). This means that idioms are specific to

some groups of people and may not be easily understood by people outside their language community. This is because the meanings of idioms and extant conventionalized forms have developed in the process of their intensive use in the corresponding language community. This idea is also shared by Langlotz, who writes, ‘idioms are linguistic constructions that have gone through a sociolinguistic process of conventionalization’ (Langlotz, 2006:3).

In result of the process of conventionalization, the figurative meaning of an idiom becomes inseparable from a specific group of words usually functioning as a single unit. Moreover, the meaning of the idiom cannot be easily derived from the literal meaning of its parts. According to David Crystal,

...a sequence of words which is semantically and often syntactically restricted, so that they function as a single unit. [...] The meanings of the individual words cannot be summed to produce the meaning of the idiomatic expression as a whole. (Crystal, 2008: 236).

To illustrate this idea, Seidl and McMordie (1983) provide examples of such expressions as *sharp practice* and *a vested interest*. The idiom *sharp practice* refers to ‘business deals that are not honest’ (ibid.: 204), and the idiom *vested interest* means ‘a connection with some enterprise that involves personal gain’ (ibid.:51). The meanings of both idioms cannot be easily derived from the meanings of their parts.

Consequently, having analyzed the definitions of idiom provided by different researchers, the author of this thesis proposes a working integrated definition of *idiom* for this study. *Idiom* is defined as one type of linguistic features that are specific conventionalized multi-word formulaic expressions, which meanings cannot be easily derived from the meaning of their constituent parts. This definition generally reflects a summarized conceptualization of idiom by most of contemporary researchers of idiom.

2.2. Approaches to Idiom Research

Although idioms are common in language, they have not yet been given due attention of researchers. According to Fernando, ‘Idioms, or conventionalized multiword expressions, often but not always non-literal, are hardly marginal in English, though they have been relatively neglected in lexical studies of the language’ (Fernando, 1996:1). The existing research was done from a number of different approaches. An overview of relevant studies of idioms undertaken at different levels of analysis is presented below.

The research of idioms at the lexical level has been conducted by Ze Amvela, 2000;

Jackson and Ze Amvela, 2000; Saeed, 2003; Grandy, 2012. The researchers aim at distinguishing the meanings of idioms and the most important cases of their usage in order to compile dictionaries of idioms. Their interest as lexicologists lies in the meaning of business idioms. The researchers aim to define non-idiomatic equivalents of idioms, which are other lexical elements of language that may substitute idioms in a sentence in order to convey the same or a similar meaning. They also investigate the relevance of definitions in existing dictionaries. For example, Vicente (2008) has studied the treatment of five business idioms in specialized business dictionaries and found out that animate and inanimate idioms are used for different purposes. While animate idioms describe economy and economic organizations under human control, for example, *growth, depression, parent/ sister company*, inanimate idioms are used to describe market movements that are beyond the control of humans, for example, *rebounds, slides* (Vicente, 2008). The author also has discovered that the most frequent idioms in dictionaries are *bear market* and *blue chip*.

The conceptual structure of idioms has been studied by Young (1986). The writer states that the English language makes use of a big number of various idioms that are easily noticeable by a reader or a listener – cognitively salient – in the language. This is because they form very specific word combinations that have an idiomatic meaning. According to Young (1986), although individual idioms do not denote individual concepts, they, as a part of the lexicon of a specific field, may belong to some specialized conceptual domains, such as Business, for example, making a part of its technical language (*ibid.*). The conceptual structure of specialized domains is constituted by general terminology, which is shared by many conceptual domains, and specific idioms belonging to some narrow field. There are also idioms that belong to several specific domains and make an intermediate category between general and narrowly specific technical vocabulary. For example, idioms originating in such conceptual domains as *war, sport, or living organism* may be used in Business English, for instance, the idiom *price war*. Young (1986) further explains that there is a frequent borrowing of idioms from general to specific domains and vice versa, which triggers the creation of new idioms. Moreover, long existing idioms may acquire new meanings or imply new shades of meaning often misunderstood or missed by non-native speakers of English. In addition, these new meanings may be culturally specific, referring to other conceptual domains than in English or even not having cultural equivalents in other languages. Gulland and Hinds-Howell (1994: 115) provide examples of such expressions that can easily be misunderstood by non-native speakers: ‘*in two minds*’ (to be

undecided), *'it stands to reason'* (there is only one conclusion to be drawn).

At the level of discourse, idioms have been studied in samples longer than a sentence and in the communicative context of their use. The most often applied contemporary approach at this level is Discourse Analysis (Brown and Yule, 1983). It is a qualitative research method which main goal is to study how 'the language in texts works' (Barton. 2004), that is, how speakers or writers achieve their communicative goals by using idioms. A very important issue in this approach is the analysis of functions of linguistic features, for example, idioms. A more detailed review of the discourse analysis approach, as the main research approach applied in this study, is presented further in the present BA thesis in subchapters 2.4 and 2.5. In the following part, the author discusses the criteria that are used for the classification of idioms.

2.3. Classification of Idioms

The specific features of idioms, such as idiomaticity, conventionality and the level of compositionality (Glucksberg, 2001) are used by researchers to distinguish between different types of idioms and classify them.

One of the main criteria that are used for the classification of idioms is idiomaticity – the quality of lexical units that they require from the language user navelike knowledge above the morpho-syntactic rules and vocabulary to identify a non-literal, idiomatic meaning of the expression (Moon, 1998). The definitions of idiom discussed in Subchapter 2.1 show that idioms are phraseological units that speakers or writers use to convey a specific, non-literal meaning which cannot be easily derived from the words that constitute the expressions. Strässler characterizes idioms by writing the following:

...every idiom has a non-idiomatic synonym on the semantic level and that idioms are seen as a special category of lexical items which are not only determined through their structure, but which also show a specific type of behavior in language use. (Strässler, 1982:72)

Exactly this 'specific types of behaviour' of idioms that Strässler mentions is an important feature of idioms that Moon (1998) defines as idiomaticity. It is a broader term that apart from idioms refers to a variety of expressions and collocations existing in a language. According to Moon,

Idiomaticity is a universal linguistic phenomenon in natural languages, although the distinction between morphemes, words, and groups may be qualitatively different in non-Indo-European languages. (Moon, 1998:12)

Fernando (1996:30) defines idiomaticity as a tendency of words to appear together in frequent specific collocations, such as *black coffee* and *rosy cheeks*. These groups of words sound familiar for a native speaker, who can easily identify idioms and derive their meaning.

Idiomaticity is the main characteristic feature of all idioms. However, not all lexical units that show idiomaticity can be defined as idioms. This is because, in addition to idiomaticity, idioms, according to Glucksberg (2001), also have other specific characteristics, such as conventionality, transparency/opacity and noncompositionality. The study of the levels of transparency/opacity, for example, allows to develop a classification of idioms by distinguishing between idioms and other expressions showing idiomaticity, on the one hand, and between the types of idioms, on the other hand (ibid.).

The second feature of idioms that is important for their classification is compositionality (Glucksberg. 2001; Vega-Moreno, 2007). Many idioms have a complex compositional structure, as in the example provided by Seidl (1983: 204): *to run up an account*, which means ‘to buy a number of things on credit’. Another example of idiom compositionality is given by Seidl and McMordie (1978: 32): ‘*to change one’s mind*’ (i.e. ‘to make a new and different decision or choice’), which may be modified into ‘*to change one’s stupid mind*’.

Most expressions in English comply with Gottlob Frege’s principle of compositionality, which says that the sum of meanings of constituent parts of an expression composes the meaning of the whole expression if the rules to combine them are applied properly (Seidl,1983). Idioms, however, make an exception. As it has been mentioned earlier in this thesis, idioms usually cannot be easily decomposed to their constituent parts. Vega-Moreno, for example, considers that Frege’s principle of compositionality is inapplicable to idioms in many cases, because it only applies to the cases when literal meaning of expressions is composed from constituent parts.

According to Vega-Moreno,

The reason idioms challenge compositionality is that combining the meanings of the parts of an idiom according to the morpho-syntactic rules of the language yields in a literal meaning rather than an idiomatic meaning of the string. (Vega-Moreno, 2007:144)

Moreover, Vega-Moreno proposes to use the fact that idioms are characterized by non-compliance with the compositionality principle as an indicator that could help to identify idioms:

Lack of compositionality has indeed generally been considered an essential property of idioms and a good indicator of idiomaticity. (Vega-Moreno, 2007:144)

However, the degree of non-compliance with the compositionality principle may considerable

vary among idioms. It is still possible to make certain changes or substitutions of parts in some idioms without a loss of meaning. Seidl and McMordie (1978: 32), for example, demonstrate that an idiom ‘*to change one’s mind*’, which means ‘to make a new and different decision or choice’, is rather flexible and may be modified into ‘*to change one’s stupid mind*’. Such flexibility of idioms may cause non-native users of English considerable problems in business communication.

The classification of idioms applied in this thesis has been proposed by Glucksberg (2001), who, in his turn, is based on the classification of Titone and Connine (1999). Titone and Connine (1999) proposed to divide idioms into two types – compositional and noncompositional – on the basis of one criterion: the degree of compositionality. Glucksberg’s classification is more complex, as he further developed the classification of Titone and Connine. It is based on two criteria: the degree of compositionality and the level of semantic transparency. Applying these two criteria, Glucksberg distinguished the following types of idioms (Table 1.1):

Table 1.1. Glucksberg’s (2001:75) classification of idioms

Degree of compositionality		Level of semantic transparency			
compositional		noncompositional	transparent	opaque	quasi-metaphorical
partly compositional	fully compositional				

As the classification of Glucksberg presented above is applied in the empirical study in this thesis, each type of idioms is further explained in detail in the text below.

The first division in the classification is the division into compositional and noncompositional idioms. Compositional idioms are further subdivided into two groups on the basis of the degree of compositionality: fully compositional and partly compositional. According to Glucksberg (2001: 73), it is still possible to recognize the meaning of partly compositional idioms, such as *kick the bucket*, although they may appear in texts in different tenses and with different modal verbs (*kicked the bucket, might kick the bucket, etc.*). Thus, partly compositional idioms can be changed to some extent and still keep their non-literal, idiomatic meaning, in contrast to fully compositional idioms, which consist of such recognizable elements that their order is not that important for native speakers of English, as it does not prevent them from understanding the idiomatic meaning. The fact of co-appearance of the elements of fully compositional idioms together is the most important factor. The order of words and the appearance of additional elements are less important for understanding fully compositional idioms. Native speakers of English can already recognize the idiom when the two or more recognizable words come together. The words trigger association of words with a certain

meaning. To explain this, Glucksberg gives an example of a fully compositional idiom *pop the question*, ‘In this idiom, the verb *pop* and the noun phrase *the question* map directly onto the idiomatic meanings of *suddenly utter* and *marriage proposal*’ (Glucksberg, 2001: 73-74).

In contrast to compositional idioms, according to Glucksberg, noncompositional idioms are not flexible and cannot survive any disintegration into constituent parts. The meaning of noncompositional idioms is highly conventionalized and is lost if the parts are separated. Their meaning cannot be constructed from the meanings of their elements. According to Glucksberg, ‘...in noncompositional idioms such as *spick and span*, none of the constituents map on to the idiomatic meaning of *neat, clean, and orderly*’ (Glucksberg, 2001: 74). Therefore the idiom in the example is noncompositional.

The second division of idioms in Glucksberg’s classification is based on the criterion of the level of semantic transparency of the idiom. Idioms are divided into three groups according to the degree of transparency/opacity of their meaning for a native speaker: transparent, opaque and quasi-metaphorical.

According to Glucksberg (2001:74), idiom transparency means ‘one-to-one semantic relations between the idiom’s elements and components of the idiom’s meaning.’ If the intended idiomatic meaning of an idiom can be easily understood from its constituent parts, the idiom is classified as transparent. If the meaning of idioms cannot be easily recognized, the idiom is labeled as opaque. Applying the criterion of compositionality together with the criterion of semantic transparency, may give such combinations as compositional-transparent and compositional-opaque idioms. To illustrate this, Glucksberg provides an example of a compositional-transparent idiom to *break the ice*. He explains that the word *ice* strongly associates with tension in communication and the word *break* is associated with a sudden change (Glucksberg, 2001: 74). Appearance of these two words in combination with other additional elements does not prevent from recognizing the intended meaning of the idiom.

Quasi-metaphorical idioms are the third type of idioms divided in Glucksberg’s classification on the basis of semantic transparency. These idioms refer or imply similarity to some concepts, and in this they are similar to such stylistic devices as metaphors or similes. Glucksberg (2001: 75) writes that they ‘call to mind a prototypical or stereotypical instance of an entire category of people, events, situations, or actions.’ Therefore, quasi-metaphorical idioms are culturally specific, as they refer to concepts that may be conventionalized differently in different cultures. To understand quasi-metaphorical idioms, people need culturally-specific knowledge of

certain conceptual domains, which differ from culture to culture. The comparability of some conceptual domains makes it possible to use quasi-metaphorical idioms to transfer the meaning from one conceptual domain to another. As it is clear from the name of this category, quasi-metaphorical idioms are not metaphors in a full sense. Metaphors are separate semantic units in a language, but quasi-metaphorical idioms have only some elements with metaphorical meaning in their structure.

The classification of idioms by Glucksberg (2001) described above is applied in this study to identify the degree of compositionality and semantic transparency of the idioms found in the discourse of business meetings. The functions of idioms to a considerable extent depend on the criteria used in the classification. Therefore, the division of the idioms into groups according to Glucksberg' classification helps to identify the functions that idioms fulfil in the business meeting discourse.

2.4. Idioms in Discourse of Business Meetings

As a specialized language, the language of meetings has also specific idioms, which have their specific meaning in this language variety. The number of idioms used in the English language is very big. In fact, native speakers of English do not even realize that they use such a big number of idiomatic expressions in their speech, which may cause problems in communication with non-native speakers. Because of cultural and linguistic differences between the participants of meeting discourse and vagueness and ambiguity of idiomatic expressions that may not have equivalents in other languages, non-native speakers may experience difficulties with deriving the intended meaning of idioms. Moreover, confusing, for example, the idiomatic meaning of an idiom (to buy) '*for peanuts*', i.e. 'for very little money', with its literal meaning 'for groundnuts *Arachis hypogaea*' may lead to a very costly misunderstanding at an important business meeting. In addition to this, some idioms used in English may have their origin in other conceptual domains, such as sport or military language, or have a complex compositional structure, which makes trouble identifying their original form and meaning. Therefore, the study of idiom use in business meeting is necessary to ensure effective communication at business meetings.

Although there have been some studies of idioms in Business English (Seidl and McMordie, 1983), only a few professional studies of the use of idioms in business meetings have been found (Halbe, 2013; Koester, 2010; Handford, 2010). Seidl and McMordie, in their book

English Idioms and How to Use Them, collected business idioms and explained their meaning and usage. Although they distinguish a subcategory of idioms of buying and selling, most of idioms in their study fall into the category of general business. Seidl and McMordie provide such examples of business idioms as (*business*) *runs at a profit/ at a loss* (to make profit or to lose money), *at steak* (at risk), *to go broke* (to go bankrupt), *to get down to business* (to start doing serious business), *to get a pink slip* (to be dismissed) (Seidl and McMordie, 1978:204). There are also specialized dictionaries of idioms used in Business and General English, for example, Adam (1993), Gulland and Hinds-Howell (1994). However, no specialized dictionaries of idioms used at business meeting are known.

Koester (2010) has specifically studied metaphors and idioms in the discourse of business meetings, but only the meetings and briefings taking place in an informal style in small companies. On the results of a corpus-based study of business meetings, Koester (2010) states that metaphors and idioms are more frequent in business meeting corpus in comparison with earlier compiled by the researcher (Koester, 2006) a more general corpus of workplace communication consisting of samples of many different business genres. Koester concludes that metaphors and idioms are more often used in business meetings than in other institutional genres. The researcher emphasizes their importance as a sign of linguistic creativity in the interactional construction of business meetings (Koester (2010: 203). In another study done in collaboration with Handford, Koester confirmed this conclusion, demonstrating that in the situation of conflict and argument at a business meeting, in spontaneous, unprepared speech, the use of idioms increases even further (Handford and Koester, 2010). In both studies, the researchers explain the frequent use of idioms in intensive interactive discourse of business meetings by the functions of idioms to compress big amounts of information into a short phrase or word combination or quickly raise relevant emotional associations in the listener.

2.5. Functions of Idioms in Business Discourse

The analysis of the theoretical sources on the functions of idioms in discourse shows that modern approaches to the study of idioms are mainly concerned with discourse-pragmatic and interactional features of idioms (Fernando, 1996; Moon, 1998). Simpson and Mendis (2003) have analyzed earlier, functional approaches to idioms and discovered that they were focused on only formal properties of idioms, such as semantic meaning and syntactic structure. While these are very important issues for understanding the linguistic nature of idioms, Simpson and Mendis

consider that ‘idioms are highly interactive items and cannot always be identified by their formal properties’ (ibid.: 421). Starting with Strässler (1982), the studies of idiom have changed the direction taking a more discourse-analytic and pragmatic approach (Fernando, 1996; Moon, 1998).

Within the boundaries of Systemic Functional Linguistics, for example, researchers focus on the functions that idioms have in different social contexts, that is, in a particular discourse. According to Martin and Ringham (2000: 51), in systemic-functional approaches discourse is viewed as ‘a unit of language larger than a sentence and which is firmly rooted in a specific context.’ The ‘units of language’ may be written texts or recorded and transcribed spoken communication, for example, at a business meeting. According to M.A.K. Halliday, language used in a specific context performs three metafunctions (Halliday, 1985): *ideational* (which includes the *experiential* function and the *logical* function), *interpersonal* and *textual* (Halliday, 1985; Halliday, and Hasan, 1985). As the language used at business meeting also performs these metafunctions, each metafunction will be further explained below.

According to Halliday, the ideational metafunction of language refers to the content of written or spoken communication: phenomena in the material world. Language is used to make meaning and transfer information about things, people, actions or situations (Halliday, 1985). According to Halliday, each language element, including idioms, is purposely chosen by speakers to perform this metafunction. Idioms, for example, may be used with the purpose of exchanging ideas, sharing one’s personal experience or for logical reasoning.

Interpersonal metafunction, according to Halliday, is performed by language used for interaction, that is, to maintain relationships, to socialise. Idioms, as other language elements, could also be used to perform the interpersonal metafunction at business meetings. They are used, for example, in an informal small talk at a business meeting before it begins.

The function of idioms from the systemic functional perspective may also be seen as a contribution to the textual metafunction of language, for example, as cohesive means creating a *texture* (Halliday, and Hasan, 1985), that is, for connecting separate elements of language (i.e. clauses, sentences) into a text by making references to its other elements. To illustrate, idioms that have a metaphoric meaning may help to create an extended metaphoric meaning for the passage, extract or text as a whole.

Fernando (1996) has further developed the classification of idiom functions based on Halliday’s theoretical framework of language metafunctions. He has distinguished three basic

functions that idioms perform in discourse: *ideational*, *interpersonal* and *relational*. They roughly correspond to the metafunctions of language proposed by Halliday. According to Fernando (1996: 74), the ideational function of idioms refers to the content of a text or spoken discourse. It may refer to an action (*pull an invisible string*), situation (*to be under the thumb of one's family*), a person or a thing (*made rather a fool of myself*). Fernando (ibid.) derives the second idiom function from Halliday's interpersonal metafunction of language. Idioms fulfil interactional function through apologies (*I beg your pardon*), greetings (*good evening*), directives (*to put it straight*). The third idiom function, corresponding to Halliday's textual metafunction of language, Fernando defines as relational function. Idioms fulfilling the relational function serve as cohesive ties in a text or spoken discourse; for example, they integrate information (*on the one hand...on the other hand, in addition*), or organise ideas in logical order or chronological sequence (ibid).

Another classification of idiom functions is proposed by Newmark (1988). Applying a more pragmatic approach, Newmark, distinguishes only two main discourse functions of idioms – pragmatic and referential. The first, pragmatic function, or expressiveness, denotes the appeal to the senses, to interest, to surprise or to delight. The other function, referential or aesthetic function, is used, according to Newmark, 'to describe a mental process or state, a concept, a person, an object, a quality or an action more comprehensively and concisely than is possible in literal or physical language' (Newmark, 1988: 104).

Although the division of idiom functions proposed by Newmark seems more straightforward, the classification developed by Fernando (1996) on the theoretical basis of Halliday's theory of language metafunctions is applied in this research, as it is more specified and better corresponds to the research goals set in this study.

All in all, idioms are considered to be frequently occurring features in business meetings (Handford and Koester, 2010). Their frequency even increases in debates, especially in conflict situations. Nevertheless, due to a big number of already existing idioms and natural linguistic creativity of humans, they tend to vary idioms in their speech and even spontaneously create new idioms in the process of communication. According to Simpson and Mendis, 'the frequency of occurrence of any individual idiom is relatively rare and unpredictable in any given stretch of discourse' (Simpson and Mendis, 2003: 419). Therefore, it is insufficient and hardly possible just to provide the learners of Business English with the list of most frequent idioms to be used at business meetings. Instead, it is necessary to study the idioms that occur in business meeting

communication, identify their functions and systematise them into groups according to their discourse functions. So that business meeting participants would understand what the speaker intends to do by choosing to use an idiom with a certain discourse function.

Chapter summary: In this chapter, the author provided the overview of the definitions, functions and classification of idiom in the theoretical sources and empirical studies of idioms in business meeting discourse. As a working definition of idiom in this research is accepted an integrated from different sources view of idiom as one type of linguistic features that are specific conventionalized formulaic expressions, which meanings cannot be easily derived from the meaning of their constituent parts. The classification developed by Fernando (1996) on the theoretical basis of Halliday's theory of language metafunctions is applied in this research to investigate discourse functions of idioms in business meeting discourse. For the analysis of the meanings of idioms in business meeting discourse and their types was used Glucksberg's (2001) classification of idioms based on two criteria – compositionality and semantic transparency. In the next chapter, the author will describe the research method and procedures that were used in this research thesis to investigate the functions of idioms in the language of business meetings.

CHAPTER 3

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Chapter three is devoted to the description of the research methodology applied in the study: the research corpus, and data analysis procedure.

As the main goal of the study is the investigation of the discourse functions of business idioms, qualitative research methodology was applied with some elements of quantitative research method. The author does not aim at counting the precise frequencies of idioms in the discourse of business meetings though the number of identified idioms was counted to present an objective picture of their use in business meetings and for the purpose of grouping them into types according to their functions.

3.1. Research Materials and Analytical Tools

The empirical research of idioms in this study was based on the use of the collection of extracts containing idioms from the transcripts of business meetings compiled by the author for the purpose of this study. The list of sources of business meeting transcripts used in this research is available from Appendix 1.

In this study, the collection of extracts from transcripts of business meetings has been compiled from the original transcripts of the following business meetings:

The transcript of the business meeting of *The U.S. Nuclear Waste Technical Review Board* from June 24, 2015. The transcript contains 61.234 running words on its 247 pages (Appendix 1.1.). During the meeting, 18 speakers of American English and international participants gave presentations and discussed the issues of their concern at the panel and question-answer sessions. The recording then was transcribed by the organizers of the meeting and publicized on the webpage of the organization. The transcript has an official certificate of correctness and correspondence to the recorded event on page 247.

The transcript of the business meeting of *California Energy Commission* from August 8, 2013, containing 9.719 running words on its 25 pages (Appendix 1.2.). At the meeting participated 22 speakers of American English and international participants. The recording of their oral presentations, panel discussions and question-answer sessions was transcribed by the organizers of the meeting and posted on the webpage of the organization.

The transcript of the joint public business meeting held by the board of governors of the

Federal Reserve System from February 26, 2015. The transcript contains 35.831 running words on its 117 pages (Appendix 1.3.). 53 speakers of American English and international participants present at the meeting gave presentations and discussed the issues of their concern at 8 panels and question-answer sessions. The transcribed recording was publicized on the webpage of the organization.

The total number of words in the texts of meetings recording transcripts was 106,784.

The author of this thesis used manual analysis of transcripts, in the course of which the idioms were identified in the texts of transcripts and their meaning and functions were analyzed in context. Then other cases of use of the same idiom were looked for in the transcripts. At this stage, the main analytical tool used in this research was the FIND facility built-in PDF documents containing the transcripts of business meetings available on-line for public access. It was used to compile the lists of extracts containing idioms, count the number of idioms in the corpus, analyze the idioms in context and compare different usages of idioms and idiomatic expressions and their meanings.

3.2. Research Method and Procedure

The author uses discourse analysis as the main research method in the empirical research in this BA thesis. Discourse analysis approach is applied to this study of idioms in business meeting discourse, because the main purpose of discourse analysis, according to Brown and Yule (1983), is the study of language functions and corresponding them regularities and patterns in the use of language elements that appear because the speakers use them to perform certain functions.

The research procedure comprised several steps.

First, with the idiom function categorization criteria developed by Halliday (1985) and Fernando (1996) in mind, a manual analysis based on careful reading of the texts of transcripts of business meetings was done with the purpose to find the idioms in the texts. The list of identified idioms was compiled and the extracts from the transcripts containing them were collected to provide the context of their use (Appendix 2). Each idiom was manually found and analyzed to identify its meaning. The core meaning of each idiom found in the transcripts was defined using the following specialized dictionaries of business idioms:

1. Adam J.H. (1993) *Longman Dictionary of Business English*. Harlow: Longman.
2. *Longman Business English Dictionary*. (2007) Harlow: Pearson Education Limited.
3. *McGraw-Hill Dictionary of American Idioms and Phrasal Verbs*. (2002) The McGraw-

Hill Companies, Inc.

4. Tuck A. (ed.) (2000) *Oxford Dictionary of Business English for Learners of English*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
5. Seidl, J. and McMordie W. (1983) *English Idioms and How to Use Them*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
6. Gulland, D.M. and Hinds-Howell, D.G. (1994) *The Penguin Dictionary of English Idioms*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd.
7. Merriam-Webster Dictionary Online <http://www.merriam-webster.com/>
8. Cambridge International Dictionary of Idioms <http://itools.com/tool/cambridge-international-dictionary-of-idioms>

The dictionary meaning and the contextual meaning of each idiom were compared. Then the identified idioms were analyzed in their context of use to identify the purpose of their use by the speaker in the extracts from transcripts of meetings and the function each idiom has in the construction of the discourse of business meetings.

After that each idiom was typed into the window of the FIND facility built-in PDF documents with other business meetings to find all the cases of its use. The number of identified cases was counted and the form of each idiom was analyzed to identify its compositional structure, applying the classification and analytical framework proposed by Glucksberg (2001). Further, the degree of semantic transparency of idioms is analyzed.

This procedure was applied to answer the following research questions:

1. Which idioms are used in the discourse of business meetings represented in the collected research samples of business meeting transcripts?
2. What are the meaning and functions of idioms in the discourse of business meetings?
3. What are the syntactic compositional structure and semantic transparency level of the found idioms?

The results obtained in the described research procedure are presented in the next section.

CHAPTER 4

4. RESULTS OF EMPIRICAL STUDY OF IDIOM FUNCTIONS IN BUSINESS MEETINGS

The last section presents the results of the research and discussion. All the provided examples are taken from the analyzed texts. The citing reference given after each example refers to the page in the transcript, which can be accessed from the link provided in Appendix 1. The full alphabetical list of the found and analyzed idioms is provided in Appendix 2. In the text below, the idioms identified in the extracts from the business meeting transcripts are analyzed. In the final subchapter of the present thesis, the author provides his interpretation of the obtained results.

4.1. Research Results

The author has found and extracted from the collection of business meeting transcripts 55 cases of idiom use. It was discovered that out of the total number of idioms, there are 41 types of different, not repeating idioms. In the rest of the cases (14), there are the same idioms repeated in the same or slightly modified form. The analysis of the meaning, function and compositional structure of each type of idioms is presented below.

All the found types of idioms are divided into three groups on the basis of the functions they fulfil in the transcripts of business meetings. The division into idioms with ideational, interpersonal and relational functions is made according to the classification described in subchapter 2.4 of this thesis, which was developed by Fernando (1996) on the basis of the theoretical framework of Halliday (1985).

The first group of idioms comprise the idioms performing **ideational function**. These idioms have been used at the analysed business meetings by presenters in the process of conveying the content of their speech to the audience. These idioms fulfil the ideational function because they are used to talk about the phenomena in the material world. In other words, they are used to make meaning and transfer information.

All the idioms performing ideational function have been further subdivided into four subgroups according to the type of ideational function they perform: action, person, thing or situation. Into the first subgroup – action – verbal idioms were selected: the idioms in which the headword is a verb. Into the other three subgroups, nominal idioms were put: the idioms in which the headword is a noun, adjective or adverb denoting or modifying a person, thing or situation.

It was discovered that five idioms fall into the first subgroup, in which the ideational function of idioms denotes an action: *to move forward*, *to ferret out*, *to fix one's wrongs*, *to refuse point blank*, and *to get one's hands around*. The most frequently used idiom of this type in the corpus is *move forward*. According to *McGraw-Hill Dictionary of American Idioms and Phrasal Verbs* (2002), it means 'to advance or make progress with something.' In all four cases found in the corpus, it has approximately the same meaning that corresponds to its dictionary definition (Examples 1-4).

1. *The approach that the Administration is taking as it **moves forward** is outlined in a January 2013 Strategy for the Management and Disposition of Used Nuclear Fuel and High- Level Waste. (Appendix 1. 1, p. 14)*
2. *If we're trying to help markets **move forward**, then we've got to understand and unpack and really dig into how those markets operate, and I think building those skills in a program administration contexts something that the Commissioner is doing better and better. (Appendix 1. 2, p. 26)*
3. *These actions are, one, planning for a defense-only repository; two, **moving forward** with planning an interim storage facility for commercial spent fuel; and, three, moving forward with consent-based siting for both types of facilities. (Appendix 1. 1, p. 14)*
4. *The guideline process makes life a lot easier to go with the punches as we **move forward** and learn by doing and get it right in an iterative way, so thanks for that detail. (Appendix 1. 2, p. 66)*

In all the cases in the corpus, the idiom *move forward* is used to transfer information in the presentations given at the corresponding business meeting to render the content of the speech. This, according to the classification of Fernando (1996), defines the idiom function as ideational.

As the idiom is expressed by the verb *move* as a headword, the function is classified as denoting an action. This idiom is also classified as compositional, because it can be seen from the provided examples that the verb *move* is modified by the speakers according to the grammar rules of the English language: *move*, *moves*, *moving*. The semantic meaning of the idiom is defined as transparent, because it can be easily derived from its parts. The use of this idiom at the business meetings indicates a semi-formal communication style, as in a more formal speech, a formal non-idiomatic equivalent *proceed* would be used.

The rest idioms performing ideational function denoting action appear in the transcripts only once each. The idiom *ferret out* has a rather complex meaning 'to discover information after searching, looking in many places or asking many questions.' As it can be seen from Example 5, this long and complex denotation is compressed into a short but capacious idiom:

5. *And we did look at the other international programs when, first of all, trying to **ferret out** what the appropriate size of these things was.* (Appendix 1. 1, p.117)

The contextual meaning of this idiom corresponds to the dictionary definition. In the corpus, the idiom *ferret out* is used to report about the actions undertaken by the group of professionals represented by the speaker giving the presentation. Its function is to convey the content of the speech to the audience. Therefore, its function was defined as ideational function denoting action. The data available in the corpus do not provide any evidence of the compositionality of the idiom, so it is defined as noncompositional. The level of semantic transparency is defined as low, as the verb *ferret* is a rather infrequently used verb in the English language, so its meaning would not be easily derived by non-native speakers of English.

The idioms *to fix one's wrongs*, *to refuse point blank*, and *to get hands around* are also classified as fulfilling ideational function denoting action, applying the same criteria as presented in the analysis above. Although the meaning of the idiom *to fix one's wrongs* is quite transparent, none of the used dictionaries (listed in the subchapter 3.2) provide a definition of this idiom. Evidently, it was created by the speaker on the spot, mixing the meaning of the idiom *to do wrong to* ('treat unfairly or unjustly') and the noun *wrongs*, which is a plural form of the word *wrong* denoting an immoral, unjustified or unacceptable act of behaviour. In the logic of the speaker, if it is possible *to do wrongs*, it is also possible *to fix their wrongs*. So the intended meaning of the idiom might be 'to repair the consequences of the injustice they caused to happen' (Example 6):

6. *Continually the bank refuses **to fix their wrongs**.* (Appendix 1. 3, p. 108)

The analysis of the grammatical form of the idiom *to fix their wrongs* suggests that it is possible to change the number of the noun (*wrong/wrongs*) and the pronoun denoting the doer (*to fix my/your/his/her/our/their wrongs*) or insert a common or proper noun instead of the pronoun (*to fix the bank's wrongs*). For this reason, the compositional structure of the idiom is defined as compositional.

The other idioms in this subgroup, such as *to refuse point blank* ('saying something very clearly in very few words, without trying to be polite or pleasant') and *get hands around* ('to be active in doing something') are semantically opaque and have a compositional structure, as it is seen from the examples below (Examples 7-8):

7. *To this date , they **point blank refuse** to give me a complete, detailed and verifiable accounting of the alleged debt they state I owe , an amount which has gone up and down like a yo — yo over the last two years varying by as much as \$153, 760.*
(Appendix 1. 3, p.106)
8. *So, again, we're trying **to get our hands around** that in this assessment this year.*
(Appendix 1. 1, p.122)

The contextual meaning of both idioms corresponds to their dictionary definitions. All the idioms in the examples above demonstrate a rather flexible, compositional nature, as the speakers seem to feel comfortable with modifying them according to their needs. In the idiom *to refuse point blank* the adverb has a noncompositional structure, but the position of the verb in the idiom is changeable. It also may be changed into a noun (*a point-blank refusal*). The idiom *get hands around* also has a compositional structure similar to the idiom *to fix their wrongs* described above.

The second subgroup of idioms performing **ideational** function are **nominal idioms**, in which the headword is expressed by a noun, adjective or adverb.

Only one idiom in the corpus has the ideational function that indirectly refers to a person. The idiom *to know something cold* means ‘to know something very well’ (in contrast to something that has just been memorized and is still ‘hot’). This idiom has a compositional structure and an opaque semantic meaning. The contextual and the dictionary meanings coincide. The idiom is used to characterize a person as a knowledgeable specialist (Example 9):

9. *Sorry, he is my subject matter expert. He **knows this stuff cold**.* (Appendix 1. 1, p. 60)

Seven other idioms in this subgroup of nominal idioms with ideational function refer to the content of the presentations at the meeting.

According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, the idiom *broad-brush (cost analysis)* means ‘relating to or involving the main or general parts of something rather than the details.’ In other words, it refers to something lacking in detail and finesse. As it is clear from the example below, it has the meaning similar to the dictionary definition. The level of transparency of the semantic meaning of this idiom is quasi-metaphorical, as the cost analysis is compared to sweeping with a broom making broad movements from side to side, that is, not paying attention to small pieces of litter that are left in result of this kind of sweeping. This idiom is noncompositional (Example 10):

10. *I'm not discussing--but if this cost is going to be more than 18 offset by costs saved downstream, that should be something that would be readily apparent on a fairly*

broad-brush cost analysis, wouldn't it? (Appendix 1. 1, p.122)

The semantic transparency of the idiom *bulk of the time* is quite straightforward and corresponding to its dictionary definition ('the largest part of the time'). It appears in the examples from the corpus in the same unchanged form, so it is defined as noncompositional (Examples 11-12):

11. *I can tell you that the **bulk of the time**, from what I remember on a per-assembly basis, is actually from the movement and setup of the canisters, all of the steps to take to move the cask, the canisters, getting everything set up.* (Appendix 1. 1, p.119)

12. *That's where the **bulk of the time** is.* (Appendix 1. 1, p.119)

A dictionary definition of the idiom *critical path* denotes 'the series of tasks that must be done in sequence from start to finish, determining the time needed for completion.' The contextual meaning of the idiom generally corresponds to this definition. However, in the two out of three cases, the idiom *critical path* is used in a collocation with the word *items*, which means that it is used as a modifier to this word (Examples 13 - 15). Hence, this makes its meaning to denote the 'items requiring the longest time in the sequence of stages in a project'.

13. *But in quick overview, by going through this process and working with the laboratories and independent contractors, we have been able to identify the **critical path** items that take us from where we are today at shutdown sites and take it all the way through and take it to the interim storage facility.* (Appendix 1. 1, p. 26)

14. *There is a process of integration that actually uses risk-based analysis that helps compress the time scale at which we can get things done by doing many things in parallel that don't require a **critical path**.* (Appendix 1. 1, p. 26)

15. *And I can see that it can save percent of the time just by understanding all of the details of **critical path** items.* (Appendix 1. 1, p. 26)

The collocation *critical path* makes a compound word, so it is noncompositional in its structure. The semantic meaning of it is opaque, as it is almost impossible to guess the meaning of this idiom for a non-native speaker.

The level of semantic transparency of both idioms *downstream cost* and *low-hanging fruit* is quasi-metaphorical. The idiom *downstream cost* is used to describe 'the costs that appear at later stages in a process of production.' The process of production is compared to a stream of a river. The meaning of the second idiom is 'something that can be achieved very easily', similar to a fruit hanging within an easy reach for someone. The structure of both idioms is defined as noncompositional. Although the words *cost* and *fruit* may appear in the plural form, the

compounds downstream and low-hanging cannot be changed without a loss of the intended meaning (Examples 16-17).

16. *If you don't have to repackage, there's an avoided **downstream cost**.* (Appendix 1. 1, p.121)
17. *So within that spectrum, are you prioritizing which sites you will try to address first, maybe the **low-hanging fruit** where all that infrastructure is in place, or ones where a lot is going to have to be done probably to go to retrieve that fuel?* (Appendix 1. 1, p. 28)

The ideational functions of three idioms *to be on the hook* (a slang word meaning to be obliged, committed or involved in something) and *out of the blue* (suddenly and unexpectedly) and *down the road* ('in the future') denote **situations**. All three idioms are noncompositional in structure. The idioms *on the hook* and *down the road* are quasi-metaphorical in semantic meaning, but the semantic meaning of the idiom *out of the blue* is opaque (Examples 18-20):

18. *So I am **on the hook** to get that done.* (Appendix 1. 1, p. 29)
19. *The only reason I got a HAMP is because I scared them outside of the legal system, and all of a sudden I got a call from the secret department of the United States Department of Treasury, HAMP Level 2 from Kenneth, and said - he said to me **out of the blue**, I have been instructed to get you a HAMP modification no matter what it takes.* (Appendix 1. 3, p. 111)
20. *Well, we are just—we are in the stage of planning for consent-based—I'm sorry—for holding meetings on consent-based siting. And we really haven't gotten very far **down the road** on this.* (Appendix 1. 1, p. 32)

There have also been found idioms that fulfil **interpersonal function** at business meetings. They all are used in the discourse of business meetings in the interaction between the participants to make them perform some action. For example, the idioms *for a poster session* ('a part of a meeting or conference where posters are presented instead of speeches') and *on a tight schedule* ('a procedure that is firmly fixed in time') refer to the meeting procedure. The first idiom directs the attendees to a certain place and the second is meant to make them work faster. Both idioms are defined as compositional and rather transparent in the semantic meaning (Examples 21-22):

21. *After the formal meeting ends, we'll stay on for an hour or so in the Keystone and Telluride rooms for a **poster session**.* (Appendix 1. 1, p. 11)
22. *I should say that we're **on a tight schedule**.* (Appendix 1. 1, p. 9)

A number of idioms performing interpersonal function in the business meeting discourse

are used to refer to the manipulations with the microphone. The leaders of the meetings used them to offer the floor to the next presenter. The idioms *turn the microphone over to* (to pass the microphone to someone) and *pass (it) over*, with a similar meaning, have a very transparent semantic meaning for a native speaker, but may cause difficulty for a non-native speaker of English because of their similarity to the phrasal verb *turn off* ('to stop the flow' / 'to switch off'). In each case, the use of the idioms makes people start speaking. As it is clear from the provided examples, the idioms have a compositional structure (Examples 23-26).

23. *So, with all of that said, I'll **turn the microphone over** to John Herczeg, and we'll begin the day's 21 presentations.* (Appendix 1. 1, p. 12)

24. *I'm going to **turn it over** to Shannon Chu of the Electric Power Research Institute that's going to tell us what they're doing.* (Appendix 1. 1, p. 130)

25. *With that, let me **turn this over** to Grovetta for her opening remarks.* (Appendix 1. 3, p. 4)

26. *So for this question I'm going to **pass it over** to Rob Howard.* (Appendix 1. 1, p.63)

A similar interpersonal function is performed by such idioms as *(to be) open for questions* and *to take some questions*, both encouraging the audience to start inquiring the presenter. The semantic meaning of both idioms is transparent, and they are compositional in the structure, as there might be slight changes made without changing the meaning, for example, 'I am open for your/some questions' (Examples 27-28):

27. *That's the extent of my presentation, and I am **open for questions**.* (Appendix 1. 1, p. 25)

28. *And so that is the end of my presentation. With that, I can **take some questions**.* (Appendix 1. 1, p. 52)

The dictionary meaning of the idiom *along the same lines* is 'to be similar.' In the corpus of the analysed business meeting transcripts, it appears with the same meaning only once in a slightly modified form, as it is demonstrated in Example 29.

29. *So is there on the horizon any ideas **along those lines**?* (Appendix 1. 1, p.170)

The difference between the dictionary form and the form of the idiom in the text of the transcript suggests that the idiom type is compositional: the element between the words *along* and *lines* may be modified without much change in the meaning. The meaning of the idiom in the transcript is still the same: 'similar ideas'. The function of this idiom is interpersonal, as it is used

to elicit some answers, to encourage the participants to express their thoughts on the discussed issue. The idiom is identified as quasi-metaphorical, as it contains an implication of the comparison between the ideas, as if they were written in identical lines of a text.

The idiom *to venture a guess* ('to take the risk of guessing the answer that the person does not know') is used by the speaker as a refuse to answer a difficult question at the meeting. To perform the same function, the idiom *have numbers offhand* is also used, giving a justified reason for not answering the question. Both idioms have interpersonal function and are noncompositional in the structure and opaque in the semantic meaning (Examples 30-31):

30. *I would only have **to venture a guess**, and I don't think I want to give a guess right now.* (Appendix 1. 1, p. 29)

31. *You know, I don't **have the numbers offhand**.* (Appendix 1. 1, p.118)

A rather big group of idioms are used in the business meeting discourse by the speakers to refer to their own presentations. In the interaction between the speakers and the audience, the following idioms are used: *to bring to light* ('to discover or make something known publicly'), *call to attention* ('to get someone's attention') and *put on the spot* ('to make clearly visible as if in the spotlight'). Their contextual meaning corresponds completely to the dictionary meaning. The idioms perform an interpersonal function, because the speakers use them to attract the attention of the listeners (Examples 32-33) or to apologize for unintentionally attracting attention to someone (Example 34).

32. *'One of the things that we like to **bring to light** at these sorts of proceedings is that our ultimate goal is obviously to remove the radioactive material from these sites so they can be decommissioned.'* (Appendix 1. 1, p.124)

33. *So just **call that to your attention**.* (Appendix 1. 1, p. 10)

34. *Sorry, didn't mean to **put you on the spot**.* (Appendix 1. 1, p.172)

All the idioms in the examples above are defines as having compositional structure, as they allow some structural changes, for example, *bring this to light*, *call your attention to this*. The level of semantic transparency of the idioms *bring to light* and *put on the spot* is quasi-metaphorical, but of the idiom *call to attention* it is transparent.

Other idioms are also used to perform interpersonal function. For example, the idiom *to shift gears* ('to change one's course of action in an abrupt, dramatic, or unexpected manner') is used to switch the topic of the presentation to a different theme (Example 35):

35. *So my comments—I'm going to **shift gears** slightly, and I'm going to move away from the technical side of things on cask size and design a little bit.* (Appendix 1. 1, p.238)

The meaning in the context corresponds to the dictionary definition. This idiom is noncompositional and, evidently quasi-metaphorical in its semantic meaning, as by its use giving a presentation is compared with driving a car.

To perform a similar interpersonal function the idiom *to keep in context* ('to maintain the relevance') is used. However, this compositional and transparent idiom is used by the speaker as a refuse to continue discussing the issue that is off topic from the point of view of the speaker (example 36):

36. *So I just want to **keep that in the context** where yes, all this conversation is very interesting, but it's peripheral to our goal.* (Appendix 1. 1, p.241)

Two more examples illustrate the use of idioms to perform the interpersonal function: *set the scene* ('to describe the situation') and *update someone on something* ('to bring up to date as by adding new information'). These idioms are also used by presenters to tell the audience about the structure of their talk. They inform the listeners about what they are doing or going to do (Examples 37-38):

37. *But let me just go over the questions very quickly to **set the scene**, and I will address each one of those questions as part of the presentation.* (Appendix 1. 1, p. 13)

38. *So Steve Marschman of Idaho National Laboratory is going **to update us on** what's being done in that area.* (Appendix 1. 1, p.142)

The idiom *pull together* ('to collect and regain the control of') is used to perform the interpersonal function to instruct the listeners what to do. It is compositional in structure and transparent in the semantic transparency level (Example 39).

39. *So as you do your assessment, **pull this information together**, is it readily available to be incorporated into, let's say, the generic performance assessments that will go on for different rock types?* (Appendix 1. 1, p. 62-63)

Other idioms that are used in the analyzed business meeting transcripts are the idioms *to take one's word for*, *catch off guard*, *get this fixed*, *hog the time*, *steal the thunder*, and *sell someone short*. They have also been analysed and their compositional structure and the level of semantic transparency were defined and presented in Table 2.1. The examples illustrating their

use are available from Appendix 2. Due to the limited scope of the present thesis, a more detailed analysis of other idioms fulfilling interpersonal function is not included, as it is similar to that presented above. Instead, the author presents the final group of idioms in the text below.

There have been identified several idioms fulfilling **relational function**, according to the classification of Fernando (1996). The idioms *the issue is raised* ('a problem is brought up/presented'), *(to follow) the line of thought/thinking* ('a particular way of thinking that is characteristic of some individual or group'), *to call an end to something*, ('to stop'), and *to draw the line* ('to impose a restriction; limit'). The contextual meanings of these idioms generally corresponds to their dictionary definitions. The idioms are used by the participants of business meetings, in most cases by the leader of the meeting, to structure the procedure of the meeting in an organized sequence. All these idioms have a rather easy guessable meaning, so they are semantically transparent. As it can be seen from the examples below, the idioms *the issue is raised* and *(to follow) the line of thought/thinking* are compositional because they allow some changes in the form without the change of meaning, but the idioms *call an end* and *draw the line* are noncompositional, as their meaning may change if the form is changed (Examples 40-44):

40. *If you would like a staff member to ask the question, write your question down on the card and give it to a staff member or a Board member, and we'll see that the **issue is raised**.* (Appendix 1. 1, p. 11)
41. *The minimum flow rates that we are proposing that you adopt today are consistent with water sense and we think are necessary to ensure that **issues** of thermal shock which **have been raised** but not supported by evidence aren't ever supported by evidence.* (Appendix 1. 2, p. 43)
42. *FRANKEL: Frankel, Board. So I think, just to **follow the line of thinking**, rather than just monitoring for cracking, there is obviously the idea of changing the local environment.* (Appendix 1. 1, p.171)
43. *So I'll **call an end to** the public comments for now, but I'll remind everyone that we would welcome the comments at the end of the day.* (Appendix 1. 1, p.124)
44. *I just don't know when there's a time you **draw the line** and you realize you can't do, really, standardization.* (Appendix 1. 1, p.124)

The results of the conducted analysis of idioms' functions in the discourse of business meeting are summarized in Table 2.1 presented on the next page.

Table 2.1. The results of the analysis of idioms in the corpus

Idioms	Number of cases	Types of idioms		Discourse function
		Compositionality	Semantic transparency	
<i>along the lines</i>	1	compositional	quasi-metaphorical	interpersonal
<i>bring to light</i>	1	noncompositional	quasi-metaphorical	interpersonal
<i>broad-brush (cost) analysis</i>	1	noncompositional	quasi-metaphorical	ideational (thing)
<i>bulk of the time</i>	2	noncompositional	transparent	ideational (situation)
<i>call an end to</i>	1	noncompositional	transparent	relational
<i>call to attention</i>	1	compositional	transparent	interpersonal
<i>catch off guard</i>	1	noncompositional	opaque	interpersonal
<i>critical path</i>	3	noncompositional	opaque	ideational (thing)
<i>downstream cost</i>	1	noncompositional	quasi-metaphorical	ideational (thing)
<i>draw the line</i>	1	noncompositional	transparent	relational
<i>ferret out</i>	1	compositional	opaque	ideational (action)
<i>fix one's wrongs</i>	1	noncompositional	transparent	ideational (action)
<i>follow the line of thinking</i>	1	compositional	transparent	relational
<i>get this fixed</i>	1	compositional	transparent	interpersonal
<i>down the road</i>	1	noncompositional	quasi-metaphorical	ideational (situation)
<i>get hands around</i>	1	compositional	opaque	ideational (action)
<i>hog the time</i>	1	noncompositional	quasi-metaphorical	interpersonal
<i>have numbers offhand</i>	1	noncompositional	opaque	interpersonal
<i>the issue is raised</i>	2	compositional	transparent	relational
<i>(keep) in the context</i>	1	noncompositional	transparent	interpersonal
<i>know smth. cold</i>	1	compositional	opaque	ideational (person)
<i>low-hanging fruit</i>	1	noncompositional	quasi-metaphorical	ideational (thing)
<i>move forward</i>	4	compositional	transparent	ideational (action)
<i>on the hook</i>	1	noncompositional	quasi-metaphorical	ideational (situation)
<i>open for questions</i>	1	compositional	transparent	interpersonal
<i>out of the blue</i>	1	noncompositional	opaque	ideational (situation)
<i>(refuse) point blank</i>	1	noncompositional	opaque	ideational (action)
<i>(to put) on the spot</i>	1	noncompositional	quasi-metaphorical	interpersonal
<i>pass (it) over</i>	1	noncompositional	transparent	interpersonal
<i>a poster session</i>	1	compositional	transparent	interpersonal
<i>pull together</i>	1	noncompositional	transparent	interpersonal
<i>sell someone short</i>	1	noncompositional	opaque	interpersonal
<i>set the scene</i>	1	noncompositional	quasi-metaphorical	interpersonal

<i>shift gears</i>	1	noncompositional	quasi-metaphorical	interpersonal
<i>steal the thunder</i>	1	noncompositional	opaque	interpersonal
<i>take some questions</i>	1	compositional	transparent	interpersonal
<i>take one's word for</i>	1	noncompositional	opaque	interpersonal
<i>tight schedule</i>	1	noncompositional	quasi-metaphorical	interpersonal
<i>turn the smth. over to</i>	3	compositional	opaque	interpersonal
<i>update someone on smth.</i>	1	compositional	transparent	interpersonal
<i>venture a guess</i>	1	compositional	opaque	interpersonal

The analysis and interpretation of the results are discussed in the next section.

4.2. Analysis and Interpretation of Results

The total number of the found and analyzed cases of idioms in the collection of transcripts was 50. As the total number of words in the corpus was 106,784 (389 pages), it is easy to calculate that one idiom appears per 2135.68 running words or per 7.8 pages, in average. Having in mind that Moon (1998) roughly estimated the frequency of the majority of idioms in English as one idiom per one million words, the figures obtained in the present study suggest that the use of idioms in business meeting discourse in the investigated companies is rather frequent though considerably less frequent than in the study of Simpson and Mendis (2003) and Handford and Koester (2010).

The number of idiom types in the corpus was 41. Only a few idioms occurred in the corpus more than once: *move forward* (4 times), *critical path* (3 times), *turn the microphone over to* (3 times), *issue is raised* (2 times), *bulk of the time* (2 times), which in general confirms the results of earlier studies by Moon (1998), who had found out that individual idioms are rather infrequent features in the English language though idioms as a category are rather frequently encountered in business discourse.

The functions of idioms of the analysed business meeting discourse are distributed in the following way: 21 idioms fulfil ideational function in the discourse, 24 have interpersonal function and only in 5 cases the function of idioms was identified as relational (Figure 2.1).

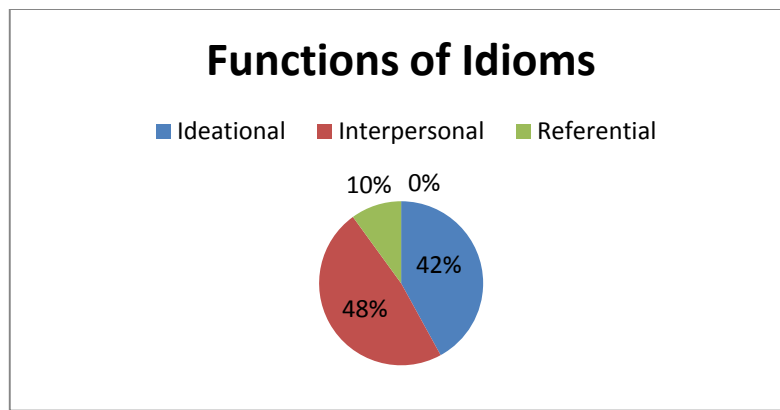


Figure 2.1. Functions of idioms in business meeting discourse

The results indicate that interpersonal function of idioms in business meeting discourse is the main and most frequently fulfilled function. This may be explained by the fact that business meetings are communicative events, in which people communicate personally, face-to-face. Interpersonal interaction was identified in the discussion and question-answer sessions that followed the presentations, and in the introductory and concluding parts of the meetings. The idioms that fulfilled the interpersonal function were also used by the leaders to give commands to presenters or other speakers to keep the procedure in order.

The number of idioms that perform ideational function follows the number of idioms with interpersonal function. The explanation may lie in the fact that rather big parts of the analyzed meetings were devoted to content-oriented presentations.

A small number of relational idioms is explained by the type of the analyzed discourse – spoken discourse, in which traditional for written discourse cohesive ties are not used. The idioms that fulfilled the relational function in the business meeting discourse were used by the leaders of the meetings and moderators of the panel sessions to organize the parts of the meetings in sequence.

Most of the idioms found in the corpus (34) were identified as noncompositional (Figure 2.1). There have been found 21 (out of 55) cases of compositional idioms, such as (to be) *open for questions* or *to draw the line*. The results of the research support the results of previous studies discussed in the first part of the present thesis, in that the number of noncompositional idioms in business discourse is bigger than the number of compositional idioms. These results confirm the characteristics of idioms that have been found in the analyzed literature (Chapter 2).

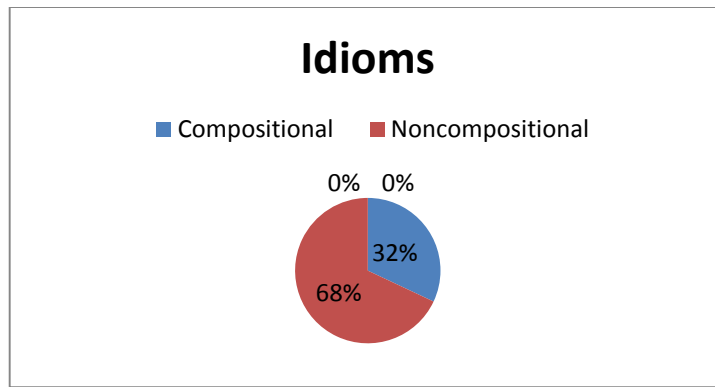


Figure 2.1. Compositional structure of the found idioms

Out of the total number of found idioms, in 18 cases they were assessed as semantically transparent, in 14 cases as semantically opaque, and in 23 cases as quasi-metaphorical (Figure 2.2).

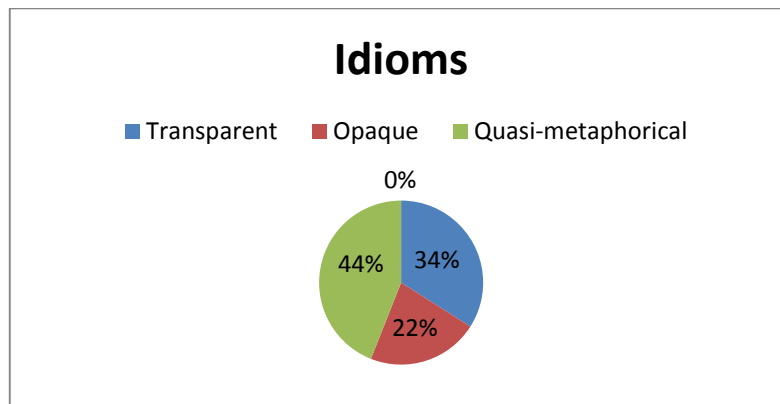


Figure 2.2. Semantic transparency of analyzed idioms

The total number of semantically opaque and quasi-metaphorical idioms (37) is two times bigger than the number of semantically transparent idioms, which is in line with the characteristics of idioms in the studied theoretical literature. Thus the present research supports the results of previous studies in that most idioms in business meeting discourse are opaque and quasi-metaphorical idioms, which may cause communication problems because of their frequency.

CONCLUSIONS

The author of the present Bachelor thesis has studied the use of idioms in the discourse of business meetings and has drawn the following conclusions.

On the basis of the theoretical research, the author concludes that idiom is one type of linguistic features that are specific multi-word conventionalized formulaic expressions, which meanings cannot be easily derived from the meaning of their constituent parts. The discourse of business meetings is defined as a narrow and specific subtype of business discourse related to business interactions and negotiations, which makes use of specific lexis and business terms in specific meaning, as well as collocations and phraseological units that are typical to certain business genres.

The goal of the study to investigate the functions, meaning of idioms and compositional structure of idioms in the business meeting discourse has been achieved and all the research questions have been answered.

To answer the first research question about the idioms that are used in business meeting discourse, the author provides the list of found idioms in Appendix 2.

The answer to the second research question about the meaning and functions of idioms is that the contextual and the meaning of idioms coincided in most cases and the interpersonal function of idioms was found to be the main and most frequently fulfilled function in business meeting discourse. The conclusion is that in business meetings, as face-to-face communicative events, the main function of idioms is interpersonal. Most idioms are used in the discussion and question-answer sessions that follow presentations, and in the introductory and concluding parts of meetings. The idioms that fulfilled the interpersonal function are used by the meeting leaders to give commands to presenters or other speakers to keep the procedure in order.

The number of idioms that perform ideational function follows the number of idioms with interpersonal function. A small number of relational idioms is explained by the type of the analyzed discourse – spoken discourse, in which traditional for written discourse cohesive ties are not used. The idioms that fulfilled the relational function in the business meeting discourse were used by the leaders of the meetings and moderators of the panel sessions to organize the parts of the meetings in sequence. A small number of relational idioms is explained by the type of the analyzed discourse – spoken discourse, in which traditional for written discourse cohesive ties are not used.

The third research question about the syntactic compositional structure and semantic transparency level of the found idioms is answered in the following way: most idioms in business meeting discourse are noncompositional in their syntactic structure. The number of opaque and quasi-metaphorical idioms is bigger than the number of semantically transparent idioms. On the basis of these results it can be concluded that the idioms used in business meeting discourse may cause communication problems because of their frequency, noncompositionality and low level of semantic transparency.

THESES

1. The discourse of business meetings is defined as a narrow and specific subtype of business discourse related to business interactions and negotiations. It makes use of specific lexis and business terms in specific meaning, as well as collocations and idioms that are typical to certain business genres.
2. As a working definition of idiom in this research is accepted an integrated from different sources view of idiom as one type of linguistic features that are specific multi-word conventionalized formulaic expressions, which meanings cannot be easily derived from the meaning of their constituent parts.
3. Discourse analysis approach is applied to this study of idioms in business meeting discourse, because the main purpose of discourse analysis, according to Brown and Yule (1983), is the study of language functions and corresponding them regularities and patterns in use of language that appear because the speakers use them to perform certain functions.
4. The results indicate that the interpersonal function of idioms in business meeting discourse is the main and most frequently fulfilled function. The number of idioms that perform ideational function follows the number of idioms with interpersonal function.
5. The functions of idioms of the analyzed business meeting discourse are distributed in the following way: 24 idioms fulfil interpersonal function in the discourse, 21 have ideational function and the function of only 5 idioms was identified as relational.
6. Only a few idioms occurred in the corpus more than once: *move forward* (4 times), *critical path* (3 times), *turn the microphone over to* (3 times), *issue is raised* (2 times), *bulk of the time* (2 times).
7. The contextual meaning of the found idioms in most cases corresponded to their dictionary meaning.
8. The total number of semantically opaque and quasi-metaphorical idioms (37) has been found to be two times bigger than the number of semantically transparent idioms, which is in line with the characteristics of idioms in the studied theoretical literature.
9. The results of the research support the results of previous studies and are in line with the theoretical sources discussed in the first part of this paper.
10. The idioms used in business meeting discourse may cause communication problems because of their frequency, noncompositionality and low level of semantic transparency.

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Appendix 1. Sources of Business Meeting Transcripts

1. The U.S. Nuclear Waste Technical Review Board. Business Meeting Transcripts

<http://www.nwtrb.gov/meetings/meetings.html>

2. California Energy Commission. Business Meetings Transcripts

http://www.energy.ca.gov/business_meetings/

3. The U.S. the Federal Reserve Board. Public Business Meeting Transcripts

<http://www.federalreserve.gov/bankinfo/reg/publicmeetings/pmt.htm>

Appendix 2: List of Extracted Idioms in Context

from the collection of business meeting transcripts in this study

1. along the lines

So is there on the horizon any ideas **along those lines**? (Appendix 1. 1, p.170)

2. bring to light

One of the things that we like to **bring to light** at these sorts of proceedings is that our ultimate goal is obviously to remove the radioactive material from these sites so they can be decommissioned. (Appendix 1. 1, p.124)

3. broad-brush (cost) analysis

I'm not discussing--but if this cost is going to be more than 18 offset by costs saved downstream, that should be something that would be readily apparent on a fairly **broad-brush cost analysis**, wouldn't it? (Appendix 1. 1, p.122)

4. bulk of the time

I can tell you that the **bulk of the time**, from what I remember on a per-assembly basis, is actually from the movement and setup of the canisters, all of the steps to take to move the cask, the canisters, getting everything set up. (Appendix 1. 1, p.119)

That's where the **bulk of the time** is. (Appendix 1. 1, p.119)

5. call an end to (the public comments)

So I'll **call an end to** the public comments for now, but I'll remind everyone that we would welcome the comments at the end of the day. (Appendix 1. 1, p.124)

6. call to attention

So just **call that to your attention**. (Appendix 1. 1, p. 10)

7. catch off guard

EINZIGER: I have no questions.

EWING: Okay, **caught him off guard**. All right. So I have one very, I guess, naïve question. (Appendix 1. 1, p.167)

8. critical path

But in quick overview, by going through this process and working with the laboratories and independent contractors, we have been able to identify the **critical path** items that take us from where we are today at shutdown sites and take it all the way through and take it to the interim storage facility. (Appendix 1. 1, p. 26)

There is a process of integration that actually uses risk-based analysis that helps compress the

time scale at which we can get things done by doing many things in parallel that don't require a
9. **critical path**. (Appendix 1. 1, p. 26)

And I can see that it can save percent of the time just by understanding all of the details of
critical path items. (Appendix 1. 1, p. 26)

10. downstream cost

If you don't have to repackage, there's an avoided **downstream cost**. (Appendix 1. 1, p.121)

broad-brush cost analysis

11. draw the line

I just don't know when there's a time you **draw the line** and you realize you can't do, really,
standardization. (Appendix 1. 1, p.124)

12. ferret out

And we did look at the other international programs when, first of all, trying to **ferret out** what
the appropriate size of these things was. (Appendix 1. 1, p.117)

13. fix one's wrongs

Continually the bank refuses **to fix their wrongs**. (Appendix 1. 3, p. 108)

14. follow the line of thinking

FRANKEL: Frankel, Board. So I think, just to **follow the line of thinking**, rather than just
monitoring for cracking, there is obviously the idea of changing the local environment.
(Appendix 1. 1, p.171)

15. get this fixed

But do you think I can **get this fixed**? (Appendix 1. 3, p. 112)

16. get down the road on

Well, we are just--we are in the stage of planning for consent-based--I'm sorry--for holding
meetings on consent-based siting. And we really **haven't gotten very far down the road on this**.
(Appendix 1. 1, p. 32)

17. get our hands around

So, again, we're trying **to get our hands around that** in this assessment this year. (Appendix 1.
1, p.122)

18. have numbers offhand

You know, I don't **have the numbers offhand**. (Appendix 1. 1, p.118)

19. hog the time

Didn't want to **hog the microphone time**, but I'm interested in the aspects of barging spent fuel away from the site. (Appendix 1. 1, p.124)

20. the issue is raised

If you would like a staff member to ask the question, write your question down on the card and give it to a staff member or a Board member, and we'll see that the **issue is raised**. (Appendix 1. 1, p. 11)

The minimum flow rates that we are proposing that you adopt today are consistent with water sense and we think are necessary to ensure that **issues** of thermal shock which **have been raised** but not supported by evidence aren't ever supported by evidence. (Appendix 1. 2, p. 43)

21. keep in the context

So I just want to **keep that in the context** where yes, all this conversation is very interesting, but it's peripheral to our goal. (Appendix 1. 1, p.241)

22. know something cold

Sorry, he is my subject matter expert. He **knows this stuff cold**. (Appendix 1. 1, p. 60)

23. low-hanging fruit

So within that spectrum, are you prioritizing which sites you will try to address first, maybe the **low-hanging fruit** where all that infrastructure is in place, or ones where a lot is going to have to be done probably to go to retrieve that fuel? (Appendix 1. 1, p. 28)

24. move forward

The approach that the Administration is taking as it **moves forward** is outlined in a January 2013 Strategy for the Management and Disposition of Used Nuclear Fuel and High- Level Waste. (Appendix 1. 1, p. 14)

If we're trying to help markets **move forward**, then we've got to understand and unpack and really dig into how those markets operate, and I think building those skills in a program administration contexts something that the Commissioner is doing better and better. (Appendix 1. 2, p. 26)

These actions are, one, planning for a defense-only repository; two, **moving forward** with planning an interim storage facility for commercial spent fuel; and, three, moving forward with consent-based siting for both types of facilities. (Appendix 1. 1, p. 14)

The guideline process makes life a lot easier to go with the punches as we **move forward** and learn by doing and get it right in an iterative way, so thanks for that detail. (Appendix 1. 2, p. 66)

25. on the hook

So I am **on the hook** to get that done. (Appendix 1. 1, p. 29)

25. (be) open for questions

That's the extent of my presentation, and I am **open for questions**. (Appendix 1. 1, p. 25)

27. out of the blue

The only reason I got a HAMP is because I scared them outside of the legal system, and all of a sudden I got a call from the secret department of the United States Department of Treasury, HAMP Level 2 from Kenneth, and said - he said to me **out of the blue**, I have been instructed to get you a HAMP modification no matter what it takes .

28. refuse point blank

To this date , they **point blank refuse** to give me a complete, detailed and verifiable accounting of the alleged debt they state I owe , an amount which has gone up and down like a yo - yo over the last two years varying by as much as \$153, 760. (Appendix 1. 3, p.106)

29. to put on the spot

Sorry, didn't mean to **put you on the spot**. (Appendix 1. 1, p.172)

30. pass (it) over

So for this question I'm going to **pass it over** to Rob Howard. (Appendix 1. 1, p.63)

31. a poster session

After the formal meeting ends, we'll stay on for an hour or so in the Keystone and Telluride rooms for a **poster session**. (Appendix 1. 1, p. 11)

32. pull together

So as you do your assessment, **pull this information together**, is it readily available to be incorporated into, let's say, the generic performance assessments that will go on for different rock types? (Appendix 1. 1, p. 62-63)

33. sell someone short

Shame on all of you for **selling us so short**. (Appendix 1. 3, p. 111)

34. set the scene

But let me just go over them [the questions] very quickly to **set the scene**, and I will address each one of those questions as part of the presentation. (Appendix 1. 1, p. 13)

35. shift gears

So my comments--I'm going to **shift gears** slightly, and I'm going to move away from the technical side of things on cask size and design a little bit. (Appendix 1. 1, p.238)

36. steal the thunder

Well, I have to be careful in answering the second one, because I have a very strong personal opinion of the second one, and I don't want to **steal the thunder** of Melissa Bates, who is going to give you great detail on 1 interim storage. (Appendix 1. 1, p. 25-26)

37. take some questions

And so that is the end of my presentation. With that, I can **take some questions**. (Appendix 1. 1, p. 52)

38. take one's word for

you don't have to **take my word for it**, but I'm putting the notion out in front for consideration.

39. tight schedule

I should say that we're on a **tight schedule**. (Appendix 1. 1, p. 9)

(Appendix 1. 1, p.88)

40. turn the microphone over to

So, with all of that said, I'll **turn the microphone over** to John Herczeg, and we'll begin the day's 21 presentations. (Appendix 1. 1, p. 12)

I'm going to **turn it over** to Shannon Chu of the Electric Power Research Institute that's going to tell us what they're doing. (Appendix 1. 1, p. 130)

With that, let me **turn this over** to Grovetta for her opening remarks. (Appendix 1. 3, p. 4)

41. update someone on smth

So Steve Marschman of Idaho National Laboratory is going **to update us on** what's being done in that area. (Appendix 1. 1, p.142)

42. venture a guess

I would only have **to venture a guess**, and I don't think I want to give a guess right now. (Appendix 1. 1, p. 29)

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