# **OBSERVATIONS ON GERMAN AND FRENCH IDIOMATIC EXPRESSIONS FROM THE ANIMAL KINGDOM AND THEIR DIDACTIC TREATMENT**

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# Abstract

Our paper aims to analyze several German and French idiomatic expressions and their equivalent in Romanian by highlighting the similarities and differences between these languages. The examples with which we want to illustrate this analysis are part of the animal kingdom, a generous reservoir of images that illustrates certain symmetry between the phraseologisms of Romanian, French, and German, although this fact is not a mandatory aspect. The semantic equivalents in Romanian of German and French idiomatic expressions containing words from the animal kingdom highlight the material and spiritual richness of the two civilizations because the animal world has always held a special attraction in the collective imagination of humans.

Key words: idiomatic expressions, German and French language, animal kingdom, phraseology

Idiomatic expressions are phraseological units made up of two or more words. The words grouped together can indicate various meanings relating to individuals and their characteristics, historical or social events, whose overall meaning cannot be deduced from the singular meaning of the words (Nkollo, 2001; Pulido, 2010). They are used to express images of reality and correspond to situations known as stereotypes and clichés. According to Alain Rey: «The elements of language that we need to acquire in order to express ourselves include not only words, but also groups of words that are more or less unpredictable, sometimes in their form and always their value. Thousands of expressive in peculiarities, untranslatable as such into other languages, make up the vast majority of the lexicon known as idiomatic expressions. » (Rey A., 1979).

To understand an idiomatic expression, it is a good idea to immerse yourself in the cultural charge it conveys: «It means acknowledging the fact that every language is the bearer of a philosophy of the world, an imaginary world and even utopias that are inscribed in the fabric of its grammar, in the structure of its words and the organization of its sentences. » (Hagège C., 2021).

Many idiomatic expressions have a metaphorical aspect, so they call for a figurative or pictorial interpretation. On the other hand, idiomatic expressions with cultural connotations are difficult for non-native speakers of a language to understand, because their comprehension requires a certain extralinguistic knowledge of the individuals who speak that language. In any intercultural communication situation, it is clear that cultural connotations based on collective experiences can prevent understanding. Everything can be translated, but this cannot be done without rigor and method. The translator must therefore master "the ways of thinking and functioning of the community for which he is translating" (Hagège C., 2021), otherwise communication will not take place. A crucial example of this is the use of idioms such as avoir du chien, poser un lapin, gueuler comme un putois, rire comme une baleine, which are so typical of a community that it is questionable whether it is legitimate to translate them at all.

From a semantic point of view, frozen expressions, like simple words, maintain different relationships of meaning with other frozen forms: relationships of synonymy, antonymy, homonymy and so on. A whole series of idiomatic expressions are based on the metaphorical use of the verb, or one of its complements, or both. We have identified four categories of idiomatic expressions translated into both languages: those with semantic equivalence, those with formal equivalence, those with morphological and semantic equivalence, and those without equivalence. Closely related to the plant world, the animal world (wild and domestic animals and birds, fish, reptiles, insects, etc.) also

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exerted a particular attraction on man, whether it was wild animals or those around the house.

On stories - often ironic - and expressions have been created on account of the donkey: to quarrel over the donkey's shadow - *um des Esels Schatten zanken* is said of those who quarrel over trifles. Both the Romanian and the German versions are based on a story that Demosthenes would have told to the Athenians: an Athenian rented a donkey. During the day it got so hot that the man sat down in the donkey's shade and a big fight broke out between him and the owner who claimed he had not rented the donkey's shade.

In popular belief, the cuckoo is, in general, a bird that brings good luck even possesses prophetic powers. Goethe calls it a prophetic bird in his poem Frühlingsorakel. The bird acquired this fame mainly because of its ability to predict the years of a man's life by the number of calls. In Romanian phraseology, Anton Pann and J.C. Hintescu record "to sing one's cuckoo", that is to say to go well with someone. About a lucky man, Iordache Golescu has picked up the phrase "bine-i cântă cucul" (well he sings cuckoo). With the same meaning, it is also said "he sang the cuckoo in front/right". Vasile Alecsandri, in his turn, took up in Poesii poporale the bird's mission to bring health and good luck to the man to whom it sings: "Cuckoo, deaf bird, /.../ Sing to my right with fire/ So that I may have good luck. / Sing in front of me with love/ For I will give you a beech leaf/ So that you will not be a vagabond." In the same context, but with a negative connotation, as a harbinger of disappearance, of death, are the expressions der hört den Kuckuck nicht mehr rufen - the cuckoo will (no longer) sing to him, with the meaning 'not to miss next year'.

Human qualities or defects are often likened to those of animals. One of the most industrious creatures is the bee, hence the comparison to be as industrious as a bee – *bienenfleißig sein*, when one works tirelessly from morning till night. But bees have not always been admired; Democritus detested bees because they work like miserly bees, as if they lived forever; and Charles Dickens thought bees exaggerated. But these and other 'attacks' on bees could not obscure the image that ancient mythology had imposed on them. Being very close to man, like a partner with whom he can consult, the bee is seen in literature - and not only from the most diverse angles. Paradoxically, a more innocent role is played by the bee's needle: er ist von der Biene gestochen, it is said of someone who gets angry quickly. (Zaharia C., 2004).

There are many expressions used as an example of the fixed word compounds with the

comparative particle "like": *stumm wie ein Fisch sein* means say nothing, not be talkative.

## MATERIAL AND METHOD

Working with phraseological units has many advantages:

- it facilitates motivation in class by working with proverbs in a variety of exercises
- it brings to interpret the meaning of the message of a given text provided phrases are present in it.
- it provides a series of exercises and lists of proverbs and idioms that may be used in class.

The following examples of how to work with phrases given below have been developed and worked with the students of Veterinary Medicine or Animal husbandry. They had to compare expressions in French and in their mother tongue, work on the role of idiomatic expressions, and practice paraphrasing. Here, we offer two versions of the exercise: the advanced version, where the only clues are the list of animals to be replaced; the intermediate version, where the number of letters is indicated; and, of course, the complete version.

Connaitre les expressions idiomatiques avec les noms d'animaux



Que vous soyez fier comme un \_\_\_\_\_, fort comme un \_\_\_\_\_, têtu comme une \_\_\_\_\_, malin comme un \_\_\_\_\_\_, chaud \_\_\_\_\_, ou fine \_\_\_\_\_\_, vous êtes tous, un jour ou l'autre, devenu \_\_\_\_\_\_pour ane \_\_\_\_\_\_, nux yeux de \_\_\_\_\_.

Vous arrivez frais comme un \_\_\_\_\_\_å votre premier rendez-vous et la, pas un \_\_\_\_\_/ Vous faites le pied de \_\_\_\_\_\_vous demandant si cette \_\_\_\_\_\_vous a réellement posé un \_\_\_\_\_\_Le type qui vous a obtenu ce rancard, avec lequel vous êtes copain comme \_\_\_\_\_\_, vous l'a certifié .

« Cette \_\_\_\_\_\_ a du \_\_\_\_\_\_ une vraie \_\_\_\_\_\_ ! « C'est sür, vous serez un \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ mort d'amour. Mais tout de même, elle vous traite comme un \_\_\_\_\_\_ Vous étes prêt à gueuler comme un \_\_\_\_\_\_ mais non, elle arrive.

Bon, dix mmutes de retard, il n'y a pas de quoi casser trois pattes à un \_\_\_\_\_\_. Sauf que la fameuse \_\_\_\_\_\_, avec sa crimière de \_\_\_\_\_\_est en fait plate comme une \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ myope comme une \_\_\_\_\_\_ elle souffle comme un \_\_\_\_\_\_et rit comme une \_\_\_\_\_\_

Vous restez muet comme une \_\_\_\_\_\_ Elle essaie bien de vous tirer les \_\_\_\_\_du nez, mais vous sautez du \_\_\_\_\_ à l'\_\_\_\_ et fluissez par nover le \_\_\_\_\_\_. Vous avez le \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ envie de verser des farmes de \_\_\_\_\_\_ Vous finissez par vous inventer une fièrre de \_\_\_\_\_\_ qui vous permet de filer comme un \_\_\_\_\_\_ Vous avez beau être doux comme un \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ faut tout de même pas vous prendre pour un \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ II

#### Version avancée

#### (Voyez plus bas la liste d'animaux)

Que vous soyez fier comme un \_\_\_\_\_, fort comme un \_\_\_\_\_, têtu comme une \_\_\_\_\_, malm comme un \_\_\_\_\_, chaud \_\_\_\_\_ou fine \_\_\_\_\_, vous êtes tous, un jour ou l'autre, devenu \_\_\_\_\_pour une \_\_\_\_\_aux yeux de \_\_\_\_\_

Vous arrivez frais comme un \_\_\_\_\_\_ à votre premier rendez-vous et là, pas un \_\_\_\_\_\_ l Vous faites le pied de \_\_\_\_\_\_, vous demandant si cette \_\_\_\_\_\_vous a réellement posé un \_\_\_\_\_\_. Le type qui vous à obtenu ce rancard, avec lequel vous êtes copain comme \_\_\_\_\_\_, vous l'a certifié

 Cette \_\_\_\_\_\_n du \_\_\_\_\_\_, une vraie \_\_\_\_\_\_! = C'est sûr, vous serez un \_\_\_\_\_\_mort d'amour. Mais tout de même, elle vous traite comme un \_\_\_\_\_\_ Vous êtes prêt à gueuler comme un \_\_\_\_\_\_, mais non, elle arrive.

Bon, dix minutes de retard, il n'y a pas de quoi casser trois pattes à un \_\_\_\_\_\_. Sauf que la fameuse \_\_\_\_\_\_, avec sa crinière de \_\_\_\_\_, est en fait plate comme une \_\_\_\_\_\_, nyope comme une \_\_\_\_\_, elle souffle comme un \_\_\_\_\_et rit comme une \_\_\_\_\_.

Vous restez muet comme une \_\_\_\_\_\_EBe essaie bien de vous tiver les \_\_\_\_\_du nez, mais vous sautez du \_\_\_\_\_A l'\_\_\_\_et finissez par noyer le \_\_\_\_\_\_. Vous avez le \_\_\_\_\_\_enwie de verser des larmes de \_\_\_\_\_\_Vous finissez par vous noventer une fièure de \_\_\_\_\_\_qui vous permet de filer comme un \_\_\_\_\_\_Vous avez beau être doux comme un \_\_\_\_\_faut tout de même pas vous prendre pour un \_\_\_\_\_I

#### Voici la liste des animaux à utiliser pour remplir les trous

- 1. agneau
- 2. âne
- 3. baleine
- 4. bécasse
- 5. biche
- 6. bœuf
- o. Decor
- 7. bourdon
- 8. caille
- 9. canard
- 10. carpe
- 11. chat
- 12. cheval
- 13. chèvre
- 14. chien (2 fois)
- 15. cochon
- 16. cog (2 fois)
- 17. crapaud
- 18. crocodile
- 19. gardon
- 20. grue
- 21. lapin (2 fois)
- 22. lièvre
- 23. limande
- 24. lion
- 25. mouche
- 26. mule
- 27. panthère
- 28. phoque
- 29. pigeon
- 30. poisson
- 31. poule
- 32. putois
- 33. singe
- 34. souris
- 35. taupe
- 36. vers

### Et voici le texte original

Que vous soyez fier comme un coq, fort comme un bœuf, têtu comme une mule, malin comme un singe, chaud lapin ou fine mouche, vous êtes tous, un jour ou l'autre, devenu chèvre pour une calle aux yeux de biche.

Vous arrivez frais comme un gardon à votre premier rendez-vous et là, pas un chat i Vous faites le pied de grue, vous demandant si cette bécasse vous a réellement posè un lapin. Le type qui vous a obtenu ce rancard, avec lequel vous êtes copiain comme cochon, vous l'a certifié :

Bon, dix minutes de retard, il n'y a pas de quoi casser trois pattes à un canard. Sauf que la fameuse sounts, avec sa crimère de lion, est en fait plate comme une limande, myope comme une taupe, elle souffle comme un phoque et nit comme une baleine.

Vous restez muet comme une carpe. Elle essale bien de vous tirer les vers du nez, mais vous saurez du cog à l'âne et finissez par noyer le poisson. Vous avez le bourdon, envie de verser des larmes de crocodile. Vous finissez par vous inventer une fièvre de cheval qui vous permet de filar comme un lièvre. Vous avez hoau être doux comme un agneau, faut tout de même pas vous prendre pour un pigeon !

#### Source: http://www.labonneblague.fr/humour/boeuf

#### Les expressions idiomatiques liées aux animaux

1 - Parmi les trois propositions, choisisses celle qui correspond à l'expression proposée

#### A - Etre à cheval sur les principes.

- Agir comme on en a envie.
- Ne pas tolérer qu'on transgresse les règles de savoir-vivre.
- Faire deux choses à la fois.

#### B - Etre muet comme une corpe.

- Ne pas oter parler.
  Parler trop.
- Etre capable de garder un secret. Ne pas répêter ce qui a été dit.
- C Etre bavard comme une pie

#### Ne pas parler.

- Parler beaucoup et souvent ne rien dire d'important,
  Parler en chantant,

#### D - Etre fier comme un paon

- Se sous-estimer.
  Etre sympathique.
- Etre très fier et hautain
- E Bre laid comme un pou.
- Ne pas avair un physique agréable.
  Elre très beau.
- e Etre petit.
- F Etre le dindon de la farce.
- Etre victime d'une plasanterie ou de moqueries.
- Ethe gros,
  Falte des platsanferies aux autres.

# **RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

One way of dealing with the opacity of expressions is to accompany them with an illustration that highlights the contrast between the literal and figurative meanings. For example, the illustrations on "TV5 Monde", Archibald's imaginary expressions, and the idiomatic expressions on the "Bonjour de France" website are also good sources of illustrations for both teacher and learner, as a playful treatment of the expressions encourages motivation to retain them. Illustrations create a mental image, which is easier to memorize and use in the future. And why not draw the literal and figurative meanings of expressions yourself, to help you memorize both? A section called "The phrase of the day", or "Today's phrase" can be established. This has been done with good results by other teachers in other places, and we have also tried it in our classes. The teacher can ask the students to bring any proverb or saying to be analyzed or worked on in class.

This can be a challenge for everybody, including the teacher, who might not know the proverb. Therefore, it is necessary that the students be asked to bring to class not only the bare proverb but also the whole information, including its origin, the way in which it is used, i.e., the possible situations to which the proverb applies, etc. Finally, if possible, depending on the level and real progress of the group and the individual student, he can propose a set of exercises to be developed in class. This is a good opportunity for the student to develop research and independent work. So the students become active participants in the teaching-learning process, increase their selfconfidence and through esteem personal satisfaction.

# CONCLUSIONS

Idiomatic expressions are inevitably present in the everyday communication of a native speaker, as they constitute one of the inexhaustible sources of each nation's cultural heritage. As our examples have shown, freezing a sequence causes the loss of meaning of the individual words, and the idiomatic expression then functions as a single semantic unit that undergoes little morphosyntactic or lexical modification. This gives the teacher the possibility to cover many classroom situations, impulse creativity, and independent work on the part of the students. The exercises suggested in the present work can be used as a warm-up; independent study, as part of the main body of the class, for motivation, or to deliver a whole class by taking one of the words.

Another example could be using the cognitive islands, such as those about animals, nature, or human behavior. On the other hand, the phrases allow increasing motivation in class, focusing on real-like situations, and multiple-sided analysis. The fact that phrases are ambiguous in

many cases makes them excellent material for discussion in class.

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