

The Symbolic Role of Proper Names in English Idioms

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Abstract—This study examines the symbolic function of proper nouns in English idioms, emphasizing their contribution to the figurative meanings and cultural depth of idiomatic expressions. Proper nouns in idioms frequently possess profound cultural, historical, or literary significance, rendering them distinctive linguistic components that connect language and culture. This study examines the origins, symbolic interpretations, and cultural settings of chosen English idioms that incorporate proper names. The results indicate that proper nouns in idioms frequently function as cultural indicators, embodying historical occurrences, mythical allusions, and societal principles. Furthermore, the study underscores the difficulties of interpreting and translating these idioms into different languages, highlighting the necessity for cultural competence in cross-linguistic communication. This research enhances the domains of linguistics and translation studies by elucidating the interaction among proper names, cultural context, and figurative language.

Keywords— English idioms, proper names, symbolic meaning, cultural context, linguistics, translation.

I. INTRODUCTION

Idioms are a fundamental element of any language, embodying cultural insights, historical occurrences, and society conventions in figurative language. Among the several components that form idioms, proper names are notable for their symbolic depth and cultural particularity. Proper nouns in idioms may allude to historical persons, mythological beings, literary compositions, or geographical sites, endowing these statements with distinct significances that surpass their literal definitions. For instance, idioms like “Achilles’ heel” or “Uncle Sam” invoke not only particular individuals or entities but also the wider cultural or historical contexts linked to them. The symbolic function of proper nouns in idioms offers both advantages and difficulties for language learners, educators, and translators. Although these names can augment the expressiveness and memorability of idioms, their cultural embeddedness frequently complicates interpretation or translation into other languages. Comprehending the origins and significances of proper names in idioms necessitates a profound understanding of the cultural and historical settings from which these expressions emerge. This study seeks to examine the symbolic function of proper names in English idioms, focusing on their cultural, historical, and linguistic importance. This research aims to elucidate the significance that proper names impart to selected idiomatic utterances. The study also examines the ramifications of these findings for translation studies, namely the difficulties in expressing the symbolic and cultural subtleties of proper names in idioms across languages.

II. METHODOLOGY

2.1. Research design

This research used a qualitative methodology to examine the symbolic significance of proper names in English idioms. Qualitative research is adept at examining the intricate and contextually dependent characteristics of idiomatic phrases. The study aims to reveal the profound symbolic dimensions inherent in idiomatic expressions by examining the cultural, historical, and linguistic importance of proper names. This method prioritizes interpretation and contextual analysis over numerical data, facilitating an in-depth examination of the subject.

2.2. Data collection

The data for this study consists of English idioms containing proper names. These idioms were selected from a variety of sources to ensure a diverse and representative dataset. Key sources include:

- *Idiom Dictionaries*: Comprehensive resources such as the *Oxford Dictionary of Idioms (2 edition)* and the *Cambridge International Dictionary of Idioms* provided a foundational list of idioms with proper names.
- *Literary Works*: Classical and modern literature served as a source for idioms rooted in literary traditions.
- *Online Databases*: Repositories like Phrasefinder and Idiom Connection offered additional examples and insights into the usage of idioms with proper names.
- *Spoken Language Examples*: Idioms were also gathered from authentic spoken discourse, capturing contemporary and colloquial usage.

The selection criteria focused on idioms that prominently feature proper names and are widely recognized in English-speaking cultures.

2.3. Data Analysis

The collected idioms were analyzed through a two-step process:

1. *Categorization of Idioms*: Idioms were categorized based on their symbolic meanings and origins. Categories included mythological, historical, literary, and cultural references.
2. *Examination of Cultural and Historical Significance*:
 - Each idiom was examined to identify the cultural and historical contexts that contribute to its meaning.
 - The analysis explored how these contexts shape the symbolic role of the proper names within the idioms.

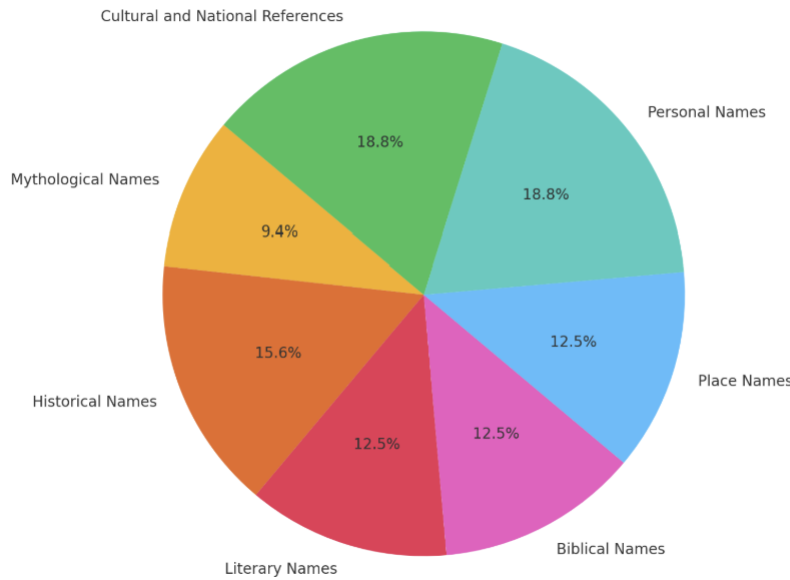
III. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Categories of proper names in English idioms

The idioms can be categorized into seven groups based on their origin. The origins of idioms significantly influence their

symbolic roles, creating a dynamic interplay between historical, cultural, and literary narratives. By categorizing idioms, we see how these origins shape their meanings, enabling them to serve as linguistic tools for conveying complex ideas and emotions.

Percentage Distribution of Idioms by Categories



Pie chart 3.1: Percentage Distribution of Idioms by Categories

The pie chart shows that the largest categories are Personal Names and Cultural and National References, each contributing 18.8% of the idioms. Mythological idioms account for 9.4%, but their symbolic roles focus on universal human experiences, making them widely resonant despite their smaller share. Historical, Literary, and Biblical categories are evenly distributed (12.5% each), reflecting their balanced influence on language.

"Pandora's box" illustrates the perils of unrestrained inquiry. "Pyrrhic victory" cautions against overreaching ambition detrimental to well-being. The proper name in these idioms serves as a cultural anchor. The name "Achilles" evokes notions of courage and fragility, but "Pandora" represents the repercussions of inquisitiveness. They frequently embody universal aspects of the human experience, such as fragility (Achilles' heel) or the price of ambition (Pyrrhic victory). Their symbolic functions frequently surpass temporal and cultural limitations, rendering them relatable across linguistic divides.

3.2. The symbolic roles and cultural and historical insights of English idioms containing proper names

3.2.1. Mythological Names

Mythological idioms are idioms derived from myths and legends which can be illustrated in the table below.

3.2.2. Historical Names

Historical idioms are based on historical figures or events shown in the table below.

TABLE 3.1: Idioms derived from myths

N0	English idioms	Origin/ Explanation
1	Achille's heel	Named after the Greek hero Achilles, symbolizing a hidden weakness.
2	Pandora's box	From Greek mythology, where Pandora unleashed evils upon the world, symbolizing unforeseen troubles.
3	Pyrrhic victory	Named after Pyrrhus, King of Epirus, symbolizing a costly success.

These three idioms constitute 9.4% of the total idioms examined, suggesting that mythical origins play a considerable, albeit not predominant, role in the whole corpus of idiomatic phrases. They possess a didactic quality, imparting moral or cautionary teachings. The phrase

TABLE 3.2: Idioms based on historical figures or events

N0	English idioms	Origin/ Explanation
1	Hobson's choice	Named after Tobias Hobson, symbolizing a "take it or leave it" choice.
2	Napoleon complex	Refers to Napoleon Bonaparte, symbolizing overcompensation for perceived weakness.
3	Peeping Tom	From the Lady Godiva legend, symbolizing a voyeur.
4	Joe Bloggs/ Joe Blow	Refers to an ordinary, typical person, symbolizing commonality.
5	Uncle Sam	A personification of the U.S. government, symbolizing national identity.

The idiom "Hobson's choice" highlights situations where individuals appear to have options but face no real choice.

This originates from Tobias Hobson's approach of compelling buyers to accept the horse closest to the stable door or depart without a horse. The term "Napoleon complex" denotes a propensity for individuals with perceived shortcomings, such as stature, to overcompensate via assertive or aggressive conduct, while "Peeping Tom" underscores the infringement of privacy, originating from the tale of Lady Godiva, wherein Tom's voyeurism resulted in his punishment. Moreover, "Joe Blogs/Joe Blow" symbolizes commonality and anonymity, acting as a surrogate for any typical person. The term "Uncle Sam" represents the U.S. government and national identity, frequently employed in political discussions or propaganda. Idioms derived from historical persons or events frequently function as linguistic instruments for expressing cultural ideals, lessons, or universal truths. These idioms depend on the lasting influence of historical personalities and their related narratives to offer context and depth to their symbolic interpretations.

Every phrase embodies its historical provenance, providing insights into the period or individual it signifies. For example: "Hobson's choice" preserves the economic practices of 17th-century England. "Napoleon complex" encapsulates the enduring psychological interpretations of Napoleon's legacy. Historical idioms utilize the credibility and familiarity of actual individuals and events to express symbolic ideas. Through the examination of their origins and functions, we reveal how history influences language to embody society ideals, individual conduct, and collective identity.

3.2.3. Literary Names

Literary names in the following table are the ones inspired by literary works or characters.

TABLE 3.3: Idioms inspired by literary works or characters

N0	English idioms	Origin/ Explanation
1	Big Brother	From George Orwell's <i>Nineteen Eighty-Four</i> , symbolizing surveillance and authoritarian control.
2	Jekyll and Hyde	From Robert Louis Stevenson's novella, symbolizing dual personalities.
3	Romeo and Juliet	From Shakespeare's play, symbolizing romantic love (not listed in examples but widely known).
4	Pleased as Punch	From the puppet play <i>Punch and Judy</i> , symbolizing delight.

Idioms derived from literary works or individuals typically obtain their significance from the narratives, themes, and personas they allude to. These idioms encapsulate abstract ideas such as emotions, moral dilemmas, or societal concerns, making them both vivid and relatable. By drawing from well-known literary sources, these idioms connect the speaker and listener through shared cultural or literary knowledge. The phrase originates from George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, representing dictatorship, surveillance, and the absence of privacy. "Big Brother" embodies a government or entity that exercises oppressive control over individuals, making this idiom highly relevant in discussions about modern technology, data privacy, and state power. For instance: "In the contemporary landscape of social media surveillance, it frequently appears as though Big Brother is observing you."

Referring to Robert Louis Stevenson's novella, *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, this idiom represents the duality of human nature. It highlights the coexistence of good and evil or conflicting personalities within the same individual. This idiom is widely used to describe erratic or unpredictable behavior. For instance, "He embodies a true Jekyll and Hyde—affable at one moment and enraged the next." Derived from Shakespeare's tragic love story, this idiom symbolizes romantic love, often associated with passion and tragedy. It is used to describe intense, sometimes doomed, romantic relationships. For example, "Their love story is like *Romeo and Juliet*—beautiful but filled with challenges." Originating from the puppet play *Punch and Judy*, where Mr. Punch expresses extreme delight, this idiom symbolizes happiness and satisfaction. The exaggerated persona of Mr. Punch imparts a whimsical quality to this vocabulary. For example, "She was pleased as Punch when she got the job offer."

Literary idioms encapsulate the spirit of the original works from which they originate, providing cultural and historical insights. For example, "Big Brother" embodies the political and dystopian elements of Orwell's novel. "Jekyll and Hyde" embodies the Victorian intrigue in psychology and ethics. Conversely, the idioms underscore universal human experiences: "Romeo and Juliet" epitomizes love and sacrifice, transcending temporal and cultural boundaries. "Pleased as Punch" expresses uncomplicated, universal delight. Although "Romeo and Juliet" maintains its romantic symbolism, "Big Brother" has acquired renewed significance in relation to surveillance technologies and data privacy. Idioms derived from literary titles utilize the art of storytelling to convey intricate concepts in an approachable and vivid manner. They not only enrich the English language but also preserve the cultural and historical significance of the literary works from which they originate. Examining their symbolic functions enhances our comprehension of literature's ongoing impact on daily communication.

3.2.4. Biblical stories or character

Idioms derived from Biblical narratives or figures occupy a significant position in the English language because of their ethical and spiritual implications. These idioms frequently embody values, beliefs, and teachings derived from religious narratives. Their extensive utilization underscores their lasting impact on culture, ethics, and communication.

TABLE 3.4: Idioms rooted in Biblical stories or characters

N0	English idioms	Origin/ Explanation
1	A good Samaritan	From the Gospel of Luke, symbolizing kindness and selflessness.
2	Job's comforter	From the story of Job, symbolizing unhelpful comfort.
3	Manna from heaven	From the Bible, symbolizing unexpected help or provision.
4	Not know sb from Adam	Refers to Adam from the Bible, symbolizing complete unfamiliarity.

Idioms inspired by literary works or characters often derive their meaning from the stories and themes. Their contribution to symbolic roles can be realized in the following examples, such as: the idiom "A good Samaritan" draws from

the parable of the Good Samaritan in the Gospel of Luke, where a Samaritan helps an injured stranger despite societal prejudices. It symbolizes kindness, compassion, and altruism. Another idiom like "Job's comforter" is based on the story of Job, whose friends offered words of "comfort" that were judgmental and unhelpful. This idiom critiques misguided sympathy or support. The idiom "Manna from heaven" refers to the miraculous food provided by God to the Israelites during their journey in the desert. It represents unexpected aid or provision in times of difficulty. Meanwhile, "Not know sb from Adam" references Adam, the first man in the Bible, symbolizing an anonymous or unknown individual. It represents unfamiliarity or a lack of recognition.

Furthermore, biblical idioms often carry moral lessons that reflect the values and teachings of the Bible. For example: "A good Samaritan" promotes compassion and helping others, regardless of societal divisions. "Job's comforter" warns against superficial or judgmental support. "Manna from heaven" underscores the theme of divine intervention or miraculous assistance, tying human struggles to spiritual solutions. "Not know sb from Adam" highlights the anonymity and shared humanity of individuals, a recurring theme in Biblical teachings.

To sum up, biblical idioms are timeless expressions that blend moral guidance with figurative language. Their ability to convey deep moral and spiritual meanings ensures their relevance across cultures and generations. By analyzing their origins and roles, we gain valuable insights into their enduring cultural and linguistic significance.

3.2.5. Place names

Idioms referencing geographical locations are rich in cultural and historical significance. They often evoke specific places to represent broader concepts, such as opportunity, adaptability, or patience. These idioms encapsulate the characteristics or stereotypes associated with the locations, making them memorable and impactful.

TABLE 3.5: Idioms referencing geographical locations

N0	English idioms	Origin/ Explanation
1	It's all Greek to me.	Refers to the difficulty of understanding the Greek language, symbolizing incomprehensibility.
2	Big Apple	A nickname for New York City, symbolizing opportunity and vibrancy.
3	When in Rome (do as the Romans do).	Refers to Roman customs symbolizing cultural adaptation.
4	Rome wasn't built in a day.	Refers to Rome's construction, symbolizing patience and perseverance.

The data indicates that in terms of the contribution to symbolic roles, the idiom "It's all Greek to me." originates from the perception that the Greek language is difficult to understand for non-speakers. It symbolizes confusion or incomprehensibility. "Big Apple" refers to New York City, known as the "Big Apple," representing opportunity, ambition, and vibrancy. The nickname likely originated in the 1920s from horse-racing slang and gained popularity as a symbol of New York's energy and culture. "When in Rome (do as the Romans do)" highlights the importance of adapting to local

customs and norms, derived from Roman culture. "Rome wasn't built in a day" is based on the historical construction of Rome, this idiom emphasizes patience, effort, and perseverance in achieving significant goals.

Taking cultural and historical insights into consideration, place-based idioms are used as symbols of larger concepts and global recognition. For instance, "Greek" represents complexity and confusion, reinforcing its symbolic role as something incomprehensible. "Rome" is a recurring symbol of grandeur, history, and cultural richness, providing a framework for idioms about time and adaptability. "Big Apple" conveys New York's reputation as a hub for ambition and success, making it an aspirational metaphor. These idioms often rely on globally recognized locations, which ensure their relevance and comprehension across cultures. For instance, the association of "Rome" with effort and patience transcends geographical boundaries.

In conclusion, place-based idioms use geographical references to encapsulate universal values and concepts. By analyzing their origins and symbolic roles, we gain a deeper understanding of how language reflects cultural, historical and societal narratives. These idioms serve as a testament to the power of place in shaping human communication and expression.

3.2.6. Personal names

Idioms rooted in Biblical stories or characters hold a special place in the English language due to their moral and spiritual undertones. These idioms often encapsulate values, beliefs, and lessons drawn from religious narratives. Their widespread use highlights their enduring influence on culture, ethics, and communication.

TABLE 3.6: Idioms derived from common or specific personal names

N0	English idioms	Origin/ Explanation
1	Every/any Tom, Dick, and Harry	Refers to generic names, symbolizing ordinary people.
2	Jack the Lad	From British slang, symbolizing a boisterous or carefree young man.
3	Mr. Big	Informal terms for an influential or powerful person, often with a negative connotation.
4	Mr. Nice Guy	Refers to a man who is overly kind or considerate, symbolizing selflessness.
5	Mr. Right	Refers to an ideal romantic partner, symbolizing perfection in relationships.
6	Prince Charming	From fairy tales, symbolizing the ideal romantic partner.

Idioms derived from personal names often carry symbolic meanings that reflect societal values, behaviors, or cultural stereotypes. These idioms may reference generic names or specific individuals, making them relatable and impactful in their usage. Their origins often lie in literature, folklore, or cultural observations.

Regarding their contribution to symbolic roles, we can see that the idiom "Every/any Tom, Dick, and Harry" uses generic names to symbolize the average or unremarkable person. It emphasizes commonality and ordinariness whereas the idiom "Jack the Lad" Originating from British slang represents a bold, carefree and often reckless young man. "Mr. Big" represents an influential or powerful person, often associated

with criminal or unethical behavior. “*Mr. Nice Guy*” refers to a man who is overly kind, often to the point of being taken advantage of or overlooked. “*Mr. Right*” symbolizes the ideal romantic partner, often portrayed as a perfect match. “*Prince Charming*” derived from fairy tales represents the perfect romantic partner, often with an element of fantasy or unattainability.

Concerning cultural and historical insights, “*Mr. Right*” and “*Prince Charming*” reflect societal ideals about romantic perfection, showing the influence of cultural narratives on relationship expectations.

“*Mr. Big*” and “*Jack the Lad*” highlight power dynamics and behavioral stereotypes, rooted in social hierarchies. Idioms like “*Every/any Tom, Dick, and Harry*” and “*Jack the Lad*” rely on generic names to emphasize universal traits. In contrast, “*Mr. Nice Guy*” and “*Mr. Big*” are more specific, reflecting individual traits or societal archetypes. On the other hand, these idioms also carry implicit judgments or lessons about behavior, such as the consequences of being overly accommodating (“*Mr. Nice Guy*”) or reckless (“*Jack the Lad*”).

To summarize, idioms derived from personal names encapsulate societal observations and expectations, making them deeply relatable and widely used. By analyzing their origins and roles, we see how language uses personal names to reflect shared cultural values, behavioral archetypes, and relationship ideals. These idioms demonstrate how names can transcend their literal meanings to become symbols of universal experiences.

3.2.7. Cultural and National references

Idioms related to cultural or national identities often reflect the values, traditions, and stereotypes associated with specific nations or regions. These idioms provide insights into how cultures perceive themselves and others, showcasing humor, stereotypes, and social norms embedded in language.

TABLE 3.7: Idioms related to cultural or national identities

NO	English idioms	Origin/ Explanation
1	As American as apple pie	Refers to American traditions, symbolizing quintessential American values.
2	Dutch courage	Refers to confidence gained from alcohol, symbolizing artificial bravery.
3	Go Dutch	Refers to sharing costs equally, symbolizing fairness in relationships.
4	Take French leave	Refers to leaving without permission, symbolizing abrupt departure.
5	Excuse/pardon my French	A humorous apology for rude language, symbolizing politeness in British humor.
6	The King's/Queen's English	Refers to proper British English, symbolizing linguistic purity.

Taking their contribution to symbolic roles into account, the idiom “*As American as apple pie*” draws from the cultural stereotype of apple pie as a representation of wholesome American traditions. It symbolizes simplicity, patriotism and quintessential American values. The idiom “*Dutch courage*” humorously critiques confidence gained through alcohol, emphasizing its artificial or temporary nature. “*Go Dutch*” reflects Dutch cultural norms of practicality and equality,

which symbolizes fairness and mutual respect in financial matters. The idiom “*Take French leave*” originating as a critique of 18th-century French customs symbolizes informal or impolite exits, often without explanation or permission while “*Excuse/pardon my French*” humorously apologizes for using rude or offensive language, reflecting British humor and politeness. The idiom “*The King's/Queen's English*” refers to the standard of British English symbolizing linguistic purity, correctness and cultural pride.

In terms of cultural and historical insights, the idiom “*As American as apple pie*” reflects the American emphasis on tradition and patriotism. “*Dutch courage*” and “*Go Dutch*” highlight perceived characteristics of Dutch culture, such as practicality and thriftiness. “*Take French leave*” and “*Excuse/pardon my French*” play on historical British French rivalry, using humor to critique French customs or manners. “*The King's/Queen's English*” reflects British pride in linguistic standards, emphasizing cultural refinement and identity. Despite their specific cultural origins, these idioms address universal themes, such as courage (“*Dutch courage*”), fairness (“*Go Dutch*”), and politeness (“*Excuse/pardon my French*”).

Overall, cultural and national idioms provide a fascinating window into how language reflects societal values, cultural pride and humor. By analyzing their origins and symbolic roles, we see how these expressions convey shared cultural experiences and stereotypes, enabling effective communication across diverse audiences.

3.3. The Role of Proper Names in Figurative Language

Proper names in idiomatic expressions serve as more than linguistic identifiers; they are powerful tools that enhance the figurative language by adding depth, humor, and emphasis. By invoking associations tied to historical, cultural, or literary figures and contexts, proper names imbue idioms with vivid imagery and nuanced meaning, making them memorable and impactful.

3.3.1. Adding Depth to Idiomatic Expressions

The use of proper names in idioms allows the expression to resonate on a deeper level, as these names often evoke rich narratives or specific cultural connotations. The invocation of proper names transforms simple phrases into complex, layered metaphors. For instance, “*Achilles' heel*” refers not only to a weakness but to a weakness in the context of an otherwise strong individual or system. The name “*Achilles*” carries with it the entire mythological backstory of invincibility and vulnerability, creating a vivid mental image that adds depth to the idiom. “*Hobson's choice*” illustrates a situation where no real choice exists. By including the proper name “*Hobson*,” the idiom becomes tied to a specific historical anecdote, enriching its meaning with context and lending it an air of authenticity. Proper names also help idioms transcend their literal meanings by drawing on shared cultural or historical understanding. Without the depth provided by these names, many idioms would lose their ability to convey complex ideas succinctly.

3.3.2. Introducing Humor

Proper names often introduce humor into idiomatic expressions, particularly when the names evoke unexpected or exaggerated associations. Humor arises from the juxtaposition of the literal meaning of the name with its figurative use in the idiom. Examples include: *"Dutch courage"* humorously refers to confidence gained through alcohol consumption, invoking a stereotype about Dutch drinking habits. The humor lies in the incongruity of associating courage with intoxication. *"Peeping Tom"* uses the name "Tom" to reference the legend of Lady Godiva, where Tom's voyeurism leads to his blindness. The idiom creates humor by exaggerating Tom's behavior into a cautionary tale. *"Every/any Tom, Dick, and Harry"* is humorous because it uses common, generic names to highlight the idea of ordinary or insignificant people. The repetition of names adds a playful tone to the idiom. Humor often makes idioms more memorable and engaging, enhancing their effectiveness as communicative tools.

3.3.3. Enhancing Emphasis

The inclusion of proper names in idioms also enhances emphasis, as the specificity of the names lends authority or gravitas to the expression. Proper names often anchor idioms in concrete, relatable examples, making them more impactful. For example: *"Big Brother is watching you"* emphasizes the pervasive nature of surveillance by invoking the authoritarian figure "Big Brother" from George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. The name adds a sense of foreboding and seriousness to the idiom. *"Manna from heaven"* emphasizes the miraculous or unexpected nature of a gift by referencing the Biblical story of divine sustenance. The proper name "Manna" adds a spiritual dimension to the idiom's meaning. *"Rome wasn't built in a day"* uses the grandeur of "Rome" to emphasize the importance of patience and sustained effort in achieving significant accomplishments. The specificity of these proper names ensures that the idioms are not only understood but also remembered, as they evoke vivid images and strong associations.

3.4. Cross-Cultural Implications

Idioms containing proper names often pose significant challenges when interpreted or translated into other languages. The cultural and historical specificity of the names can hinder comprehension for individuals unfamiliar with the idioms' origins. Moreover, the figurative and symbolic meanings embedded in the names are often difficult to convey across linguistic and cultural boundaries.

3.4.1. Challenges in Interpretation and Translation

The primary challenge lies in the cultural specificity of proper names, which are often tied to histories, myths, or societal norms. When translated into another language, the original connotations of the proper name may be lost, leading to misinterpretation or a diminished impact.

For example, *"Achilles' heel"* may not be understood in cultures unfamiliar with Greek mythology. Without knowledge of Achilles and his story, the idiom's symbolic meaning of vulnerability in strength may be lost.

"Pandora's box" is similarly tied to Greek mythology. In cultures without exposure to this narrative, the idiom may fail to convey its intended meaning of unforeseen consequences.

"Big Brother is watching you" loses much of its meaning in societies unfamiliar with George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. The proper name "Big Brother" may not evoke the same sense of authoritarian surveillance.

Another challenge is the use of culturally specific humor or stereotypes, as seen in idioms like *"Dutch courage"* or *"Take French leave"*. These expressions rely on cultural references that may not translate well into other languages, potentially causing confusion or offense.

3.4.2. Strategies for Retaining Symbolic Meanings

To address these challenges, translators and interpreters employ various strategies to retain the symbolic meanings of idioms with proper names:

Providing Contextual Explanations When translating idioms, it is often necessary to provide additional context to explain the cultural or historical significance of the proper name. For instance, in translating *"Achilles' heel"*, a brief explanation of Achilles' story could accompany the idiom to clarify its meaning. For *"Pandora's box,"* a note about its mythological origin could help convey its symbolic implications.

Substituting Equivalent Idioms In cases where a direct translation is not feasible, translators may substitute an idiom from the target language that conveys a similar meaning. For example, the idiom *"Rome wasn't built in a day"* could be replaced with a culturally equivalent expression about patience and effort in the target language.

Localizing Proper Names Translators may choose to localize the proper names in idioms, substituting them with culturally relevant names from the target language. For example, in translating *"Joe Bloggs,"* a generic name from the target culture could be used to convey the same idea of an ordinary person.

Maintaining Literal Translations In some cases, retaining the original proper name and idiom in a literal translation may be the best approach, particularly if the target audience is familiar with the source culture. This strategy preserves the idiom's original form and encourages cross-cultural understanding.

In conclusion, proper names in idioms play a pivotal role in enhancing figurative language by adding depth, humor, and emphasis. However, their cultural and historical specificity poses challenges in interpretation and translation. By employing strategies such as providing context, substituting equivalents, and localizing names, it is possible to retain the symbolic meanings of these idioms across cultural boundaries. Understanding the symbolic role of proper names in idiomatic language is vital for appreciating the intricate relationship between language, culture, and history. Idioms with proper names are more than just expressions—they are cultural artifacts that carry the weight of shared knowledge and collective memory. By studying these idioms, we gain valuable insights into the ways in which language encapsulates and transmits culture.

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