ГИПЕРБОЛА В ИДИОМАХ БЕЙСБОЛА И ИХ ИСПОЛЬЗОВАНИЕ В РАЗГОВОРНОМ ДИСКУРСЕ

HYPERBOLA IN BASEBALL IDIOMS USED IN EVERYDAY SPEECH

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Аннотация: Данная статья посвящена анализу идиом спортивного дискурса и исследованию их стилистике в разговорном дискурсе. Каждый язык богат фигурами речи, именно они делают его уникальным и благозвучным. Идиомы часто встречаются в современной речи. Данные фразеологизмы зачастую мигрируют из одного дискурса в другой. Гипербола – одна из наименее изученных стилистических фигур, которая обладает качествами преувеличения и часто встречается в языке. В данной статье гипербола будет рассматриваться в составе идиом из дискурса бейсбола, который изначально наполнен эмоциями и переживаниями. Задача данной статьи – проанализировать, как обыденные фразеологизмы для одного дискурса могут менять семантику и придавать эмоциональную окраску.

Annotation: Each language is rich of idiomatic expressions. Those make it possible to show the unique identity of the language. Nowadays, we face high chances of meeting idioms in every day English speech. Idioms originate from different discourses, usually not connected with their further idiomatic meaning and aimed at emotionally brightening the speaker's message. Present paper is aimed at focusing on idioms taken from the sport discourse, particularly baseball, and conducting the stylistic analysis of

those as hyperbolas in the everyday English speech. The research is conducted by analyzing ten idioms, comparing their sport and non-sport meanings and providing examples from standard language in order to identify the role of hyperbola in a sentence. The conclusion sums up all the examples and analysis.

Ключевые слова: гипербола, идиомы, бейсбол, разговорный дискурс, ударение, преувеличение

Keywords: hyperbola, idioms, baseball, spoken discourse, emphasis, exaggeration

INTRODUCTION

Idioms facilitate to present the culture through the language avoiding literacy. Any sport is filled with emotions which reflects on the discourse and lexis used. The idioms borrowed from the discourse are aimed at providing the listener or the reader with the same attitude as it is in sport. Each sport has a distinctive manner as well as lexis. The words and the terminology might be shared among sports, but the collocations and semantics usually differ.

There are sports to admire the beauty, or speed and force. Some may include brutality and even aggressiveness, as American football. In such case, borrowing lexis from sport and applying it to the everyday English speech should be filled with many figures of speech and being the culture of the sport.

The research is focused on American English and the fair decision was to pick the truly American sport. In such case the frequency of idioms is high, since the audience of the sport is wide. The baseball is considered one of the national American sports among the ordinary people. The popularity is justified by the absence of special physical requirements for playing the sport and it is in other top American athletic disciplines. In basketball, the height is the obstacle, in American football, the bulkiness makes the difference. On the other hand, the staginess also plays role. The most frequency is achieved on the crossing of the two: the accessibility to potential players and the further interest in cheering for the game. The baseball meets the two and, thus, is the perfect sport to conduct the linguistic research.

The aim of the research is to focus and to analyze ten baseball idioms frequently used in non-sport ~~related~~ discourses in order to trace their hyperbolic behavior transmitting

to everyday language. Because the research is looking at the baseball discourse and the idioms arising from that sport, as it was highlighted before, American language is considered. Nonetheless, due to globalization, the idioms, as well as the interest for different sports, have spread and can be met in other English dialects, or even got translated to other languages.

Hyperbole is still one of the least studied means of linguistics. They are recognized as stylistic figures of speech, but there is a lack of studies revealing how hyperboles appear depending on the context or the ways those transfer from discourse to discourse. That is especially significant in contrast to metaphor or irony with the abundance of material for conducting the research. Hyperbole is used in order to upgrade the level of intensity on the idea or, as Bolinger states, hyperboles are rhetorical figures or "expressions exaggerations and depreciations" (1972).

Usually, hyperboles are understood as extremes. As an example, "the game was fascinating", one could have said simply "the game was good" but instead, the scale of emotional intensification was risen to the extreme "fascinating". Such extreme hyperbolas are the easiest to spot in speech. On the other hand, we might argue what is an extreme or who makes the scale? There is an obvious scale from comparatives to superlatives, but there is none between "good", "fascinating", "perfect" or "amazing". In fact, we semantically understand that "fascinating game" means the game was more than just "good", it was" very good". Thus, the hyperbole is felt based on the degree of emotions it causes, which leads to another characteristic that hyperbole is not only the figure of speech that provides the reader with a description of some experience but also lets the reader to understand and evaluate the speaker's experience. Understanding is based on the choice of a speaker, whether he or she says "very good", "amazing" or "fantastic". The present research focuses not as much on the descriptive purpose of using hyperbolas as much on the semantic and emotional relevance the sport lexis is capable of transmitting to the everyday language.

The relevance of the research topic lies in the fact that the idiomatic phraseology has not been deeply studied with a focus on the peculiarities of sport idioms. There is a lack of scientific information covering the stylistic features of sport idioms in other discourses. The novelty of the article is presented by the stylistic approach which will

help to analyze the exaggeration shade achieved by the sport idiom. Baseball is known for its leadership among team sports and teambuilding. Thus, the article might either prove or challenge the transmission of the ambiance from one discourse to another.

ANALYSIS

The idioms often used in everyday language and will be analyzed in the present paper are: a big hit, out of the ballpark, bases are loaded, in a league of their own and playing hardball, to strike out, to throw a curve ball, to step up to the plate, to be cut off base and grand slam.

The first example to look at is “a big hit”. In the baseball discourse it means to get a good hit that leads in a forward progress of the team. On the other hand, the translation that provides the Cambridge dictionary sees “a big hit” as an extreme sympathy toward the person you see for the first time. For example, “I got a big hit with our new classmate”, meaning: the new classmate was liked very much by another classmate. In such case a big hit, when used as an idiom, is a clear hyperbola. It even exaggerates the simple “liked very much”, the hit itself carries the acuity of the moment and even intensified by the adjective “big”.

According to COCA, it is a frequently used idiom (one thousand five hundred twenty-six times mentioned) mostly used in a spoken discourse (over three hundred times). The idiom is shown in a variety of contexts: politics, art or simply in a chatting conversation. On the other hand, the idiom has turned into a term in certain contexts. For example, in art discourse which was present on the talk show Fresh Air 12.00AM in 2017 “And this was his only real, like, radio hit. And it was a big hit”. It is debatable, whether we can call the “big hit” is such context an idiom arrived from baseball or it is a term of any successful and popular innovation. Nonetheless, the term has roots of action in “hit”, meaning it could still be treated as a metonymical idiom and it has not the lifted intensity thus it is a hyperbole.

The second example to look at is “out of the ballpark” or adding some action “to hit out of the ballpark”. According to Dickens Baseball dictionary, the phrase means that the ball is batted out of the park, which is a beneficial situation for the team because the team has “a run”, meaning they score. In everyday language the idiom means a fantastic or a spectacular result. For example, “Her test results were out of the ballpark”

or “she hit out of the ballpark getting that promotion”, meaning she got amazing scores or those are magnificent news that she got the job. There is an obvious hyperbola when using the idiom in non-sport discourse.

Again, there is the mentioned earlier “hit” used in one of the interpretations of the idiom. Additionally, there is the preposition “out” which unconsciously makes the reader to intensify the meaning since usually it is treated as being beyond some expectations or lines.

The idiom is not being as popular and was mentioned only fourteen time in the period: once in spoken discourse and seven times in blogging discourse. The only time the idiom was mentioned is “That didn't go well for them today. He's got to really hit it out of the ballpark with tax reform. That was something very specific that candidate Trump said that he would achieve if he was elected president. So now that's what they have to do.” (The Five, 2017) The speaker presents the idea of an action that had to significantly help the situation of Trump at that moment to win the election.

The third example is “bases are loaded”. According to Wikipedia, the term means that there are players on the first three positions. Usually, such circumstances mean the fourth player has a good chance to score even though the odds are high. In general, everyday language the phrase usually means even though it won’t be easy, there is a good chance to benefit. For example, one may say at some conference “The bases are loaded but I think we can manage the negotiation”. The hyperbola lies in the verb “loaded” which means to be filled but has a shade of exaggeration.

To consider the slang in order to fully understand the shade it gives to the meaning, “to be loaded” nowadays mean to be extremely rich, even with a touch of shame for it. Thus, in terms of the baseball idiom, the recipient interprets the idiom with an emphasis on the obstacles that lie on the way to success.

The fourth example is “in a league of their own”. In the world of sport it is a name of a show about the baseball team that was a clear leader during its epoch. Nowadays, the idiom is used to describe clear leaders in any discourse. For example, one can say, “that class is in a league of their own among others”. Interpreting the idiom into the neutral language “the best” which is hyperbola itself, thus, the idiom carries the hyperbola in its semantics of its sociolinguistics sharing with a recipient the culture of baseball.

To bring up the real life example, “Australasia and South East Asia are in a League of their own along with Europe, they may fluctuate but never fail, like the American press likes to make out.” (topdocumentaryfilm.com, 2012). The statement has a perception of a leadership within it and even magnifies it.

The idiom “playing hardball” recalls the attitude of power or even aggressiveness. According to Collins British Dictionary, when a team plays hardball, that means it is being tough in the game. The applied phrase creates even fear in reader’s minds. As the research shows, usually such form of description of the game stands near other “fearful” statements. For example, the Society of American Baseball Research posted an article in 2012, the headline of which was “American Women Play Hardball in Venezuela: Team USA battles invisibility at home, is celebrated at home, and faces gunfire at the women’s World Cup”. The idiom “play hardball” is followed by the term “gunfire” which creates the atmosphere of the battle field, but in sport.

Similar meaning provides Cambridge Dictionary as well, when a person plays “hard”, meaning he or she is being very serious and firm about something. One may say “He is nice and funny but can play hardball when needed”. The hyperbola is clear and lies in the meaning itself – to be “very serious”. When the recipient hears the phrase, he or she will never treat the situation or a person as a joke.

With a help of search in Corpora COCA it was found “playing hardball” has mostly been used in the spoken language (thirty out of one hundred fifty-one total appearances, all others are divided among other discourses). Majorly it was used on popular American tv channels such as ABS and CNN and only two times the phrase was used in terms of baseball. That is a prove that idiomatic hyperboles are in demand.

The sixth idiom is “to strike out”. In order to understand the idiom, it is necessary to get the idea of how baseball is played. The pitcher is the one throwing the ball and the batter is the one who tries to hit the ball. The phrasal verb has a negative connotation in the world of baseball. According to Collins dictionary, if either the pitcher strikes out the batter or a batter strikes out or misses three times, the batter is out, which means the player has failed.

The idiom has travelled to everyday English to describe the situation when the person fails to accomplish the aim applying all efforts possible. For example, “He stroke out

entering the university", meaning the person seemed to be prepared for the entrance exams but still did not pass. The idiom exaggerates the emotions of both the speaker and the recipient, thus that is a hyperbole. Especially, the person who roots for the sport would feel very sorry for the failure of the other.

Surprisingly, the phrase has overtaken the previous idiom (nine hundred sixty-seven appearances in the period of same twenty years), even though one may say "hardball" sounds more familiar. As COCA states, the idiom mostly seen in news reports and magazines. One of the good examples was shown by NBC Today "So to help women strike out on their own and build their dream business, some women have harnessed those strengths in an organization that's called Ladies Who Launch." (2007)

The next idiom to research is "to throw the curveball". With a help of a website led by the famous pitcher Steven Ellis, in the world of baseball throwing a curveball means to have a specific grip and to make a ball fly according to a different trajectory. Such ball usually takes the batter by a surprise and is hard to hit in the right direction.

The idiom might be used as "to surprise" but negatively, when a person is not waiting and will struggle to reflect. One may say "He threw me a curveball by taking away that chance for a promotion". The recipient will interpret the given information as terrible news, where the hyperbole already lies in the word "terrible" leading to the conclusion that the hyperbole in the case is rather semantic than literal.

The hyperbolic phraseological unit is not a popular in the period of twenty years (1999 – 2019) it was noticed by COCA just twenty-one times and only once in spoken language in 2018 by PNR Morning "They say race is considered as just one factor weighed against a number of other factors like your parents' job, your geography, whether or not you can, you know, throw a curveball or turn a double play." In the dialogue the topic of obstacles while entering the university is covered and the speaker claims some university tries to cap the amount of Asian-American students, since they may cause troubles because of their financial situations or as they say "throw a curveball". The idiom emerges in contest of racism which makes it very harsh and intense.

Another popular baseball idiom that is frequently used on the daily basis is "to step up to the plate". In terms of sport that phrase means to take a position of a batter. As it

was mentioned previously, a batter is a person who is responsible for the key moment of scoring in baseball. Thus, batter takes responsibility for scoring for the team one he or she steps up to the plate.

Same meaning applies to the unit when one says “Somebody has to step up to the plate in order to solve the crisis”. In other words, someone has to take the responsibility and start acting to solve the crisis. The hyperbole is hardly noticed here, and, probably, just people ~~who are~~ being in the situation are capable of recognizing it basing on the attitude applied to the situation. In addition, the toughness of the situation might upgrade the level of intensification of the hyperbola in the case.

According to Corpora, the idiom was mainly mentioned in spoken language. To be more clear, in spoken language it was mentioned one hundred forty-four times out of total five hundred forty-seven usages. even though there are plenty political topics where the idiom is used. There are some simple dialogues taken from talk shows. Such as O’Railly Factor, in one of the episodes in 2015, the statement “Why don't you just step up to the plate and say I'm sorry?” was followed by the phrase “I am cooled than that, you know”. The hyperbolic idiom is being shown in an everyday conversation and one person attempts to evoke the courage and fair thinking in others mind. The plea itself is a hyperbola in its sense. It is more than a request, one may say that they are two different actions, but the action might also have a scale of intensity: to ask, to request, to plea, to order, to beg.

The ninth idiom analyzed in the present article is “batting a thousand”. When someone batts a thousand during the game, the person hits all the balls thrown by the pitcher and scores the most possible points. Obviously thousand is an impossible score in any sport, so it is even an idiomatic hyperbola in the phrase used in a game. The same happens on the everyday basis, “she batted a thousand answering her presentation yesterday” meaning she performed fantastically well.

As COCA provides, the idiom is not often met, and among thirty-six total usages, only four of those are in spoken language. “Back where his showbiz dreams began, he wasn't batting a thousand then.” (ABC 2011) The idea is clear, the speaker uses the idiom with a negation, that he was not very successful in the beginning of the showbiz journey. Because there are not as many examples, it is worth to look at the TV and

movie discourse, since, for the most part, the dialogues in the movies are similar to those in real life. Consequently, the speech is the same.

Based on the quotes containing the idiom collected by COCA, it would be noticed the idiom is used in order to address somebody and not his or her achievements. “So, you're batting A thousand today, huh?” (NYPD Blue, 1996)

The tenth idiom is the “grand slam”. According to The Dickson Baseball Dictionary, the term first emerges in the card game called contract bridge. To have a grand slam meant to win thirteen tricks during the game, which meant a great success. Then, the term transferred to sports. For tennis, for example, the Grand Slam is a major world competition. As for the baseball, to get a grand slam means to have hit the home (the fourth) run, even though all bases are loaded. in such case, the team scores the most in one play.

When someone has a “grand slam”, meaning the person was miraculously successful. The hyperbole is clear and is contained in both words “grand” and a “slam”. Both words provide the idea of power and success. The COCA has an abundance of appearances of the phrase (one thousand seven hundred seventy-four), but mostly as a name of the tennis tournament or it is somehow connected to either sport. Nonetheless, there are notion of the idiom used in other topics. For example, “You got Rory McIlroy going for the career grand slam.” (CBC The President`s chief strategist Steve Bannon, 2012) The idiom is taking place during the interview and refers to the moment if an eventual great success of the conversation participant.

CONCLUSION

The aim of the present paper was to show the stylistic peculiarities of baseball idioms, particularly paying attention to hyperbolas and whether those transfer to the spoken language. The analysis was conducted by using ten popular idioms borrowed from baseball. The idioms were chosen with a help of frequency method based on the information presented by COCA. For each example there were two meanings: the direct meaning of the term applicable to sport and another meaning of the idiom. In all cases the hyperbola was lying in the meanings, and the idiomatic phraseology exaggerated it even more, which is seen in the examples. Thus, it can be concluded

that hyperbolas in the idioms taken from the baseball are used in spoken language to add the emotional attitude to the statement.

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