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BAKALÁŘSKÁ PRÁCE

**English Negative Polarity Items  
and their Czech equivalents**

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### **Čestné prohlášení**

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## Annotation

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<b>Anotace práce:</b>	<p>Tato bakalářská práce si klade za cíl analyzovat vybrané fráze v anglickém a českém jazyce a hledat jejich vzájemné ekvivalenty. Teoretickým základem samotné analýzy je charakteristika fenoménu negativně polaritních výrazů a formulaického jazyka. V praktické části se zaměříme na hledání českých ekvivalentů konkrétních anglických formulačních frází a negativně polaritních výrazů. Budeme zkoumat, zda tyto výrazy sdílejí v obou jazycích podobné významy, nebo zda se liší.</p>
<b>Klíčová slova:</b>	formulaický jazyk, negativně polaritní výrazy, idiomy, angličtina, čeština, lingvistické srovnání, lingvistické konstrukce
<b>Anotace v angličtině:</b>	<p>This bachelor thesis aims to analyse selected phrases in English and Czech and identify their equivalents. The theoretical foundation of the analysis is based on the concepts of Negative Polarity Items and Formulaic Language. The practical section will focus on identifying Czech equivalents of specific English formulaic phrases and Negative Polarity Items. The study will investigate whether these expressions have similar meanings or if they differ.</p>



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## Table of contents

Abstract .....	7
Introduction .....	8
1. Negative Polarity Items .....	10
1.1. Negative Polarity Items in Linguistic Theory .....	10
1.2. Contexts of usage .....	11
1.3. Collection of Negative Polarity Items .....	13
2. Formulaic Language .....	19
2.1. Definition and Terminology .....	19
2.2. Usage in everyday life .....	21
2.3. Identification of Formulaicity .....	22
3. Comparison of Negative Polarity Items in Czech and English .....	26
3.1. Born yesterday .....	26
3.2. Touch someone/something with a ten-foot pole .....	27
3.3. Sleep a wink .....	29
3.4. Hope in hell .....	30
3.5. Give a damn .....	31
3.6. Any-series .....	32
3.7. For all the tea in China .....	34
Conclusion .....	36
Sources .....	38

## **Abstract**

This bachelor thesis aims to analyse selected phrases in English and Czech and identify their equivalents. The theoretical foundation of the analysis is based on the concepts of Negative Polarity Items and Formulaic Language. The practical section will focus on identifying Czech equivalents of specific English formulaic phrases and Negative Polarity Items. The study will investigate whether these expressions have similar meanings or if they differ.

## Introduction

The relationship between grammar and meaning has been a subject of extensive debate over the years among linguists. Becker (1975, p. 60) said that linguists often envy the clarity and predictability of other scientific fields, such as physics, where concepts like “ $F=ma$ ” encapsulate the truths about the world. They yearn for language to behave similarly, with neat rules and universal principles waiting to be discovered. However, the reality is that language is far more complex than the laws of physics. While physical laws are fundamental constituents of the universe, language is a strictly human invention born out of the need for communication and social interaction. As a result, it is deeply intertwined with human nature and culture, making it inherently unpredictable and resistant to neat categorisation.

One recurring topic in the study of grammar and meaning is polar sensitivity, which is the way certain words or phrases interact with positive or negative contexts. The focus of this thesis is Negative Polarity Items (NPIs), a phenomenon that contains linguistic elements that are closely tied to negative contexts. This sensitivity to various contextual factors poses a challenge in describing this phenomenon, highlighting just a fraction of the broader challenge linguists encounter as they tackle the complexity of language.

Having established the significance of Negative Polarity Items, it becomes imperative to dive deeper into the broader framework within which NPIs operate, Formulaic Language, a linguistic phenomenon characterised by a spectrum of multiword expressions, including idiomatic and fixed phrases. We are particularly interested in how NPIs and these set expressions both affect our daily communication. As we will later find out, they demonstrate how language does not always follow straightforward patterns.

This thesis serves as a comparative study of Negative Polarity Items in the context of Formulaic Language in Czech and English. The aim is to describe their characteristics and their significant role within the English and Czech language. In the practical part of the thesis, we will search for Czech equivalents of specific formulaic phrases and Negative Polarity Items. We will investigate whether these two languages share similar meanings in these expressions or if they differ entirely. This comparison will provide insights into how these two languages handle these

phenomena, enriching our understanding of both languages and uncovering the potential similarities and differences in how these linguistic phenomena are employed.

# 1. Negative Polarity Items

## 1.1. Negative Polarity Items in Linguistic Theory

In language, there are specific phrases that are commonly tied to their linguistic environment and can only occur in either positive or negative sentences. Those appearing in positive (affirmative) contexts are termed Positive Polarity Items (PPIs). Those dependent on negation are referred to as Negative Polarity Items (NPIs), which will be the focus of this thesis. In English linguistic theory, there is a wealth of literature with authors dealing with the concept of NPIs. Notable works include Ladusaw (1980), along with studies of Haspelmath (1997) and Linebarger (1987). However, in the context of the Czech language, the only substantial contribution to the theory of Czech NPIs comes from Dočekal (2014). Additionally, there is a contribution to the Slovak languages (Czech, Slovak and Polish) by Szcześniak (2016) with his study of the construction *have* as a Negative Polarity Item. This scarcity of literature in Czech presents both a challenge and an opportunity, providing a ground for further research.

NPIs are not only restricted to the expression of non-existence but can also be used in different environments, such as interrogative or conditional clauses. Because of this feature, Haspelmath (1997, p. 34) argues that the term *negative polarity item* is not particularly accurate, and a term like *scale reversal* would be much more suitable. In the Czech language, this phenomenon is referred to as *negativně polaritní výrazy* by Dočekal (2017).

Negative Polarity Items lack positive counterparts, and if they are used in a sentence without a negation, the sentence becomes grammatically incorrect (Linebarger, 1987, p. 326). NPIs encompass a wide range of word classes, such as determiners, adverbs, noun phrases, verbs, and verb phrases. Some common NPIs are the determiner *any*, adverbs like *ever*, *anymore*, *yet*, or *until*. Additionally, verb and verb phrase idioms such as *budge an inch*, *lift a finger*, and *bat an eyelash* are also considered NPIs. Since NPIs are characterised by their acceptability in negative sentences these expressions are perfectly fine in sentences with negative polarity. Still, they sound odd or even grammatically incorrect in positive sentences.

- (1) a. He hasn't made *any* progress yet on his novel.
- (1) b. \* He has made *any* progress yet on his novel.

- (2) a. He wouldn't *lift a finger* to help his neighbour.  
(2) b. \* He would *lift a finger* to help his neighbour.

The asterisks used to mark NPIs in positive sentences do not imply that these expressions can never be used literally, as in the case of *lift a finger*. Instead, they highlight the general syntactic rule that governs the use of NPIs within linguistic structures (Linebarger, 1987, p. 327).

Negative Polarity Items are very unique, especially when it comes to expressing their meaning. The exact definition of each NPI is somewhat unclear. They often convey the idea of restriction or absence, indicating that something is not there. Since the meaning of NPIs is so sensitive to having a context, Linebarger (1987, p. 325) says that they can provide us with a unique lens through which we can examine how language's formal structure interacts with the meanings it conveys. That is because when we use certain NPIs, they create a hidden meaning in our conversations. This way of using these words depends on some specific information, and this information helps us make sense of what's being said, even though it's not about the exact definition of these words.

## 1.2. Contexts of usage

The fact that NPIs are grammatically sensitive to negative environments adds a layer of complexity to their usage. Linebarger (1987, pp. 326-328) argues that the distribution of Negative Polarity Items is not solely determined by semantics but instead involves an interplay between syntax and pragmatics. There are specific rules and contextual requirements regarding how NPIs and the negation that licenses them (allows them to be used correctly) are positioned in a sentence. This distribution is by Homer (2019, pp. 2-3) referred to as the licensing problem, which involves understanding the conditions that determine when a sentence is grammatically correct. Addressing this problem has always been a central focus of theories of polarity. Licensing can be seen as fulfilling a specific need of NPIs, often satisfied by negation, which then serves as the 'licenser' for the NPI. It can be proposed that a crucial rule is that negation must c-command the NPI to make the sentence grammatically acceptable:

- (3) a. She didn't find *any* evidence.  
(3) b. \**She any didn't find evidence.*

As previously mentioned, explicit negation is not the only linguistic context that licenses the use of NPIs. Alongside explicit negation, certain words and expressions also permit the use of NPIs, precisely the quantifier *few* and the restrictive particle *only* (Haspelmath, 1997, p. 34). Homer (2019, p. 4) also mentions the quantificational determiner phrase *at most*.

- (4) *Few* people give a damn about this.
- (5) *Only* he gives a damn about this.
- (6) *At most* three people give a damn about this.

Certain adverbs also allow the use of NPIs; concretely, the adverbs *never* and *rarely* (Homer, 2019, p. 4).

- (7) He *never* says anything.
- (8) She *rarely* visits anyone.

Overall, we can identify five contexts in which NPIs appear (Haspelmath, 1997, pp. 2-3). This categorisation provides a comprehensive framework for understanding their distribution and usage in language. These contexts are:

1. Polar question

- (9) Does *anybody* want to join us for dinner tonight?

Polar questions that inquire about the existence or possibility of something create an environment where NPIs can occur naturally because NPIs often convey the idea of absence. In interrogative sentences, NPI *anybody* includes any possible individual rather than specifying a particular person. It does not claim that there is or is not someone who wants to join but instead asks if such a person exists.

2. Conditional protasis

- (10) If there weren't *any* storms, we could picnic in the park.

The nature of NPIs also seems to align well with the conditional protasis as they, similar to polar questions, create a non-assertive context and provide an appropriate environment for NPIs to occur. Furthermore, the sentence introduces a negative context, which licenses the use of *any* as an NPI.



### 3. Standard of comparison

(11) She is taller than *anyone* in our class.

NPIs are utilised in comparative constructions to again emphasise the absence of something. Here, the NPI *anyone* indicates that there is no one taller in the class.

### 4. Direct negation

(12) He did not eat *any* of the cake.

In straightforward negations, NPIs, as they emphasise the absence or lack of something, here serve to indicate no consumption of the cake.

### 5. Indirect negation

(13) She asked if there was *anything* left in the fridge.

Indirect questions indirectly create a negative environment that is suitable for NPIs. *Anything* addresses the contents of the fridge, implying the possibility of the absence of some items. This aligns with the role of NPIs, which often express concepts related to non-existence or minimal presence.

## 1.3. Collection of Negative Polarity Items

Despite the diversity of words and phrases of NPIs, there are surprisingly few compilations of them in the literature. One notable exception is the categorisation by Von Stechow and Von Stechow (1993), who characterise NPIs based on their semantic properties and their intended use within sentences. Building upon this categorisation, Sailer (2008) compiled a concrete list of NPIs corresponding to each category. This classification provides a structured framework for analysing and comprehending the diverse range of expressions that function as NPIs across languages. Similarly to Sailer, we intend to give examples of Czech NPIs that correspond to each category according to the system provided by Von Stechow and Von Stechow (1993), adding depth to this categorisation and demonstrating its applicability to the Czech language.

#### 1. Denotative Strengthening of Negation

This category represents a type of NPI that intensifies or reinforces the negation within a sentence. Expressions that fall under this category are *at all*, *what(so)ever*, and *possibly*. In this category, we might include the Czech NPI *vůbec*, an equivalent to English *at all*. For example, consider the sentence:

(14) a. I didn't see him ***at all***.

(14) b. ***Vůbec*** jsem ho neviděl.

In this case, the phrases *at all* and *vůbec* emphasise the extent of the speaker's non-seeing. This phrase intensifies the negation by explicitly stating that there was absolutely no instance of seeing the person in question.

## 2. Affective Strengthening of Negation

This category focuses on expressions that intensify negation through affective emphasis. These phrases not only reinforce the negation but also convey a heightened emotional tone, such as frustration, anger, or disbelief. Some expressions within this category are *the hell*, *the fuck*, *give a damn*, *worth a damn*, *a (god)damned thing*, *a doggoned thing*, and *on earth*. Czech phrases considered fitting examples are *k sakru*, *k čertu*, and *proboha*. Notably, many of these expressions are frequently employed in questions.

(15) a. What ***the hell*** is that awful noise?

(15) b. Co to ***k čertu*** je za příšerný zvuk?

Here, the speaker not only expresses negation towards the noise but also conveys a heightened emotional tone, likely frustration or annoyance. This phrase *the hell* intensifies the negation by adding an affective emphasis.

## 3. Strengthening of Negation by Minimal Items/Amounts

This category of NPIs comprises expressions that intensify negation by using the lexical *minimal-unit expressions*, which are the minimal nature of an action, amount, or quality. English and Czech examples of such phrases are *lift a finger (nehnout ani prstem)*, *see a living soul (nevidět ani živou duši)*, *budge an inch (nepohnout se ani o píď)*, *say a word (neřekl půl slova)*, *believe a word of it (nevěřit někomu ani slovo)*, *hurt a fly (neublížít ani mouše)*, *sleep a wink (ani oči nezahmouřit)*, *an iota of truth (ani špetka pravdy)*, *has a penny to his name (nemít ani vindru/floka)*,

*bat an eyelid (ani nemrknout)*, or *begin to (ani začít)*. Some more English examples are *a drop of jealousy*, *move a muscle*, *cost you a penny*, *a hair of his head*, *drink a drop*, *sing a note*, *so much as* and *worth a damn*.

(16) a. She told me he was just a friend, but I don't ***believe a word of it***.

(16) b. Řekla mi, že jsou pouze přátelé, ale ***nevěřím jí ani slovo***.

By using the phrase *don't believe a word of it*, the speaker negates the act of believing and emphasises the minimal nature of the amount they believe. This phrase intensifies the negation by emphasising that the speaker rejects even the smallest unit of information said to them.

#### 4. Strengthening of Negation by Maximal Items/Amounts

In contrast to the *minimal-unit expressions*, the Strengthening of Negation by Maximal Items/Amounts represents a category of NPIs that features expressions that intensify negation by invoking maximal or exaggerated scenarios. These phrases serve to emphasise the impossibility or extreme unlikelihood of a particular action occurring. Expressions within this category include *for the world* with its Czech equivalent *ani za nic na světě*, *hit the broad side of a barn*, *touch with a barge-pole/ten-foot pole*, *wild horses would drag (someone somewhere)*, *in a hundred years*, *for all the tea in China*, and *know him from Adam*. Some more fitting Czech expressions are *ani za mák*, *ani za milion*, *za žádnou cenu* or *neopřít si o někoho ani kolo*.

(17) a. I wouldn't miss your party ***for the world***.

(17) b. Tvoji párty bych si nenechal ujít ***ani za nic na světě***.

Here, the speaker employs a maximal expression to emphasise their absolute commitment to attending the party. By using *for the world* or *ani za nic na světě*, they emphasise the extreme unlikelihood of missing the event, suggesting that nothing, not even the world as a whole, could deter them from attending.

#### 5. Simple and Shorter Expressions

This category represents a set of NPIs characterised by their simplicity. These expressions also convey a sense of limitation or absence within a sentence. However, unlike other categories of NPIs that may consist of more complex expressions, this category features versatile words or phrases that directly and effectively contribute to the negative polarity of a statement. The

expressions include *much* and *many*, equivalent to Czech *moc* and *mnoho*, then *far* (*daleko*), *long* (*dlouho*), and *yet* (*ještě*).

(18) a. There isn't ***much*** hope for success.

(18) b. Není zde ***mnoho*** naděje na úspěch.

In this case, the phrase *isn't much* or *není mnoho* directly contributes to the negative polarity of the statement by conveying a sense of limitation or absence of hope for success. It is a straightforward expression that effectively emphasises the lack of optimism.

#### 6. Nonreferential Indefinites

The category is very similar to simple and short expressions. It encompasses a variety of phrases that serve to convey negation and non-specificity in a sentence. A very common nonreferential indefinites is the English *any*-series. These are the set of pronouns that include *anybody*, *anyone*, *anything*, *anywhere*, *any*, and their related forms, such as *anyhow* or *anyway*. Some more examples are *ever*, *either*, *much*, *many*, *far*, *long*, *yet*, and *that*.

(19) I haven't seen ***anybody*** here.

In this case, the word *anybody* is used to express non-specificity; it refers to no particular person or defined set of people. In this negated context, it effectively broadens the scope of the negation to include every possible individual, yet without referring to any specific individual—hence, it is nonreferential.

In the Czech language, the direct Czech equivalents to the English *any*-series, like *kdokoliv*, which is a translation of *anybody*, do not function as NPIs and are instead used in positive contexts. To express a similar sentiment in a negative context in Czech, one would use *nikdo*, which translates to *nobody* in English. *Nobody*, however, is not an NPI but a negative pronoun.

(20) a. I have seen ***nobody*** here.

(20) b. ***Nikoho*** jsem zde neviděl.

This discrepancy underscores the complexity of directly correlating terms and grammatical structures across languages. The case of Czech NPIs and negative pronouns illuminates not only the differences in how negation and non-specificity are constructed but also the challenges in

making cross-linguistic comparisons. This issue will be discussed more deeply in the practical part of this thesis, where the complexities of these findings will be examined in greater detail.

## 7. Understatement

Understatement encompasses expressions that understate the intensity of a situation, action, or quality. Expressions within this category, such as *too*, *overly*, *exactly*, *quite*, *much*, *all that*, *overmuch*, *born yesterday* (*být včerejší*), and *flies on him*, serve to downplay the impact of a statement and to soften the assertion. Czech expressions that correspond with this category are *až tak moc*, *příliš*, *zrovna*, *úplně* and *moc*.

(21) a. He didn't ***exactly*** excel in the exam.

(21) b. U zkoušky ***zrovna*** neexceloval.

In this sentence, the phrase *didn't exactly* or *zrovna* is a clear example of an understatement. This NPI is used to soften the assertion regarding his performance in the exam. The speaker conveys that while he may have passed or even done moderately well, he could have performed at a better level. The use of *didn't exactly* minimises the intensity of the negation. Instead of a harsh statement about his poor performance, it implies a more nuanced situation where his performance was not necessarily terrible. This understatement allows the speaker to communicate the idea more diplomatically without making a direct or overly negative statement.

## 8. Presuppositionally Marked Verbal Phrases

This category of NPIs is characterised by verbal expressions. These phrases again convey a sense of restriction and limitation. Expressions falling under this category include phrases such as *dare* (*odvážít/opovážít*), *mind* (*vadit*), *can help* (*mocit pomoci*), *have use for* (*mít využití*), *matter* (*záležet*), *brook* (*snést*) and *can bear* (*vydržet*). Some more English are *can place so*, *can stand*, *can support*, and *care about/for*, among others. These phrases indicate constraints or unwillingness on the part of the subject to engage in the action described or that support is provided only in specific circumstances with certain limitations. For example, consider the sentence:

(22) a. I ***dare*** not speak up against authority.

(22) b. ***Neodvážím*** se odmlouvat autoritě.

Here, the verb *dare not* or *neodvážím se* implies a significant constraint on the speaker's behaviour. It suggests that there is a perceived risk associated with the action of speaking up against authority, which prevents the speaker from taking that action.

## 2. Formulaic Language

Negative Polarity Items are part of the Formulaic Language, serving as prime examples of Formulaic Language in action. A significant portion of our everyday communication is essentially 'formulaic.' This means that much of what we say or write contains predictable patterns. These language phrases are stored in our memory as shortcuts that are accessible for everyday use. Interestingly, due to its everyday use, people often overlook the internal composition of these fixed phrases and accept them without thinking about their literal meaning. Wray (2002, pp. 3-4) uses the example of the idiomatic expression *pull someone's leg*, which has both a literal sense (a person is pulling somebody else's leg) and a figurative meaning 'to tease somebody'. People often choose to focus on the figurative meaning of such expressions rather than breaking them down and understanding their components. Formulaic language, therefore, refers to expressions that are used without the analysis of their smallest linguistic components.

Formulaic Language is not just a static collection of words and phrases that individuals must memorise to become competent in a language. Instead, it's viewed as flexible, meaning that it can take on different forms based on the specific needs of the conversation and the preferences of individual speakers (Wray, 2002, p. 5). By recognising the flexibility of formulaic language, this perspective might suggest that language is a living, evolving entity shaped by its users. It implies that individuals proficient in a language not only memorise fixed expressions but also possess the ability to employ them in diverse ways, adjusting to the nuances of different communicative situations. That means that individuals can express themselves in a variety of ways. It goes beyond pure memorisation and allows for creativity in language use, enabling users to convey every thought, emotion, and intention with greater ease. Formulaic language, therefore, serves as a valuable tool for both self-expression and effective communication.

### 2.1. Definition and Terminology

Formulaic Language encompasses a broad spectrum of linguistic terms, and consequently, defining these phenomena presents a significant challenge. Wray (2002) draws attention to this problem and presents a list of the multitude of terms within the literature to describe Formulaic Language, including *amalgams*, *chunks*, *collocations*, *idioms*, *phrasemes*, *fixed expressions*, *formulaic language*, *formulaic speech*, and others (Wray, 2002, p. 8). Although widely used, the

term *formulaic language* carries associations that may not accurately represent the full scope of research findings. Consequently, Wray opts for the term *formulaic sequence*. In this context, she defines it as

„a sequence, continuous or discontinuous, of words or other meaning elements, which is, or appears to be, prefabricated: that is, stored and retrieved whole from memory at the time of use, rather than being subject to generation or analysis by the language grammar“ (Wray and Perkins, 2000, p.1).

While both definitions acknowledge the concept of pre-established linguistic units, the second definition is more accurate. It describes a formulaic language as a set of words or meaning elements arranged in a particular order. These elements seem to be pre-made, like bricks of language stored in our memory, ready to be used, without the need to create or analyse the rules of language grammar at that moment.

We encounter a similar challenge in the Czech language when attempting to identify suitable terminology. There is no exact equivalent for the term *formulaic language*. While one might use ”formulaický jazyk,” this term lacks recognition among Czech authors and may not be considered entirely accurate. Similarly, the term *formulaic sequence* raises questions about whether ”formulaická service” could be deemed a suitable equivalent. Instead, Czech utilises different terminology to address similar concepts. One might consider the term *frazém* or *idiom* as accurate. The term *ustálená slovní spojení* is also frequently used, equivalent to English *fixed expressions*. Čermák, Řezáčová, and Ščerbaničová (2011) define fixed expressions as any established anomalous combination of two or more elements, such as morphemes, words, or collocations. At least one of the elements of this combination must be a member of an extremely restricted and closed paradigm or class. In other words, phrases and idioms often involve the use of specific linguistic elements that are part of a small and closed group, contributing to the unique and figurative meanings associated with these expressions. This aligns with the nature of formulaic language. The presence of specific elements belonging to an exclusive set and that are well-defined suggests that they are not randomly chosen but instead adhere to specific criteria or rules. This exclusivity contributes to the idea that Formulaic Language involves the repetition of certain phrases or expressions that are stored in memory and retrieved.



## 2.2. Usage in everyday life

Formulaic expressions play a crucial role in our everyday communication, shaping how we express ourselves and interact with others and prompting us to ponder the scope of their impact. Becker captures the significance of Formulaic Language in our communication. He says, „In order to survive in society, we've got to know what to say, and we usually know it in advance by memorizing it.“ (Becker, 1975, p. 62). By providing us with pre-existing frameworks, Formulaic Language allows us to express our ideas without the need to construct utterances from scratch each time we communicate. His observation suggests that language use relies heavily on memorisation and Formulaic Language and, therefore, functions as a useful tool for smoother and more fluent communication. This is advantageous as it reduces the cognitive load associated with generating speech, allowing for more effortless expression of ideas and smoother interactions. Furthermore, Becker also hypothesised that phrase adaptation and generative gap-filling play roughly equal roles in language production. By listening to everyday conversations, we can gain insights into how often speakers rely on pre-formed phrases versus generating new constructions to fill gaps in their speech. This method provides a practical way to understand the dynamics of language production.

However, Formulaic Language can, at the same time, potentially serve as a means of reducing effort in communication. When individuals rely heavily on formulaic language, they may become less attentive to the nuances of communication. This is particularly evident in routine interactions where communication is predictable, the flexibility offered by novel constructions may be unnecessary. In such situations, Formulaic Language can allow individuals to interact efficiently without expending unnecessary effort. Moreover, in scenarios where someone is multitasking or experiencing cognitive load, the tendency to rely on formulaic expressions becomes even more pronounced. This reliance can manifest in the frequent use of default pronouns, fillers, and other formulaic phrases to fill gaps in speech without engaging in the process of generating novel linguistic structures (Wray, 2002, p. 30). This downside of overusing Formulaic Language can lead to a form of "mindless" communication, where speakers mechanically resort to familiar phrases without fully considering their appropriateness or the specific context of the conversation. Excessive use of Formulaic Language could then limit the richness of expression, potentially leading to communication that is repetitive and superficial.

In the context of an analysis of Formulaic Language across English and Czech, it becomes apparent that speakers' familiarity with formulaic phrases plays a crucial role during communication. The selection of certain phrases in everyday life reflects the strategic nature of language use, which is strictly tied to the speaker's linguistic competence and proficiency. Speakers often draw from a repertoire of formulaic expressions that they have already encountered and internalised over time. Consequently, the distinction between native and non-native speakers in their utilisation of formulaic phrases is evident. Native speakers typically possess a deeper and more intuitive understanding of the formulaic expressions of their language, which stems from their extensive exposure to the language from an early age. As a result, native speakers tend to employ these phrases more frequently and with greater variety in their speech. On the other hand, non-native speakers may appear more hesitant in their speech, as they need to invest additional effort in communication.

### **2.3. Identification of Formulaicity**

There is a notable lack of agreement among researchers regarding what constitutes Formulaic Language. As Wray (2002, p. 28) points out, studies on Formulaic Language reveal significant discrepancies and differences. They disagree on the extent to which our daily spoken language is essentially formulaic, primarily because definitions vary widely among authors. This fundamental disagreement underscores the need for further attention to Formulaic Language and how best to identify and categorise these expressions.

Interestingly, Becker (1975, pp. 61-62) developed a classification of formulaic phrases, or as he puts it: „The structures I am discussing in this paper have often been swept under the rug by means of the disclaimer 'Oh, that's an idiom. ' “ (Becker, 1975, p. 61). This classification provides a structured framework that can help reconcile some of the differences in understanding and identifying Formulaic Language, potentially offering a way to address the fundamental lack of agreement in the field. He introduces six classes, they are as follows:

#### **1. Polywords**

Polywords represent multi-word phrases that function as single units of meaning. The components of these phrases cannot be changed or substituted without altering their meaning. For instance, *for good* means ‘forever,’ and this meaning would be lost if we altered the phrase to "for

well." Despite consisting of multiple words, polywords convey a single concept. This allows them to be used in a manner similar to single words within sentences. For example, *blow up* can replace 'explode.'

## 2. Phrasal Constraints

Phrasal Constraints are slightly more flexible than polywords. Unlike polywords, which are entirely invariable, phrasal constraints include elements that restrict the variability of other components within the phrase. These phrases are tailored to fit particular expressive needs and often involve intensifiers that modify the meaning. They help emphasise or specify specific aspects of the message. For example, if we wish to say that we don't care about something, we say that we *do not give a damn*; stronger and more vulgar would be *do not give a fuck*.

## 3. Deictic Locutions

Deictic Locutions, similar to polywords, have a fixed structure with limited flexibility in their formulation. They can range from brief phrases to slightly longer expressions, but they are typically concise enough to be used fluidly in spoken language. The primary purpose of these phrases is to manage the direction and flow of a conversation. They help speakers navigate through the dialogue by signalling shifts in topics, introducing new points, or refocusing the discussion. For example, *for that matter* can introduce a new perspective or additional information that the speaker just considered. They also help manage the emotional tone of the conversation. For instance, *that's all* can be used to reassure someone that there is no need to worry or get upset.

## 4. Sentence Builders

Sentence Builders extend to the length of full sentences. Their primary function is to serve as a skeleton that speakers can fill in with relevant details for articulating specific ideas or conveying meanings. They can, therefore, help organise thoughts and ideas into coherent expressions. The slots within Sentence Builders allow for variation in expression, enabling speakers to adapt their language to different contexts or tailor their message to suit the needs of the conversation.

(22) John gave Mary a long song and dance about the benefits of investing in cryptocurrency.

This Sentence Builder consists of several slots: (Person A) gave (Person B) a (long) song and dance about (a topic). ‘Person A’ is the individual who is conveying information or trying to persuade, ‘Person B’ is the recipient of the communication, ‘long’ is an optional modifier indicating the duration of the communication, ‘song and dance about’ is the action in which information is presented, and ‘a topic’ is the subject of the communication.

#### 5. Situational Utterances

Situational Utterances are typically full sentences, fully formed and ready to use in specific contexts without the need for further construction. They have a fixed structure with little to no flexibility. These phrases are well-known to be appropriate in particular situations, and they are used because they are recognised as the expected response in those contexts. Phrases like „Don’t mention it.“ or *piece of cake* can also be used out of context for effect, such as humour or irony. These phrases often carry emotional weight, making it easier for speakers to convey their feelings appropriately in given situations.

(23) Thank you for your help. – *Don’t mention it!*

#### 6. Verbatim Texts

The concept of Verbatim Texts focuses on another essential component of Formulaic Language: texts that are memorised and used verbatim or with slight variation. They are texts that speakers learn by heart. These texts, ranging from short phrases to longer passages, serve as rich sources for quotations, allusions, and other linguistic functions. They are recognised and understood by the wider community. Examples include expressions like *better late than never* and even famous lines from literature, such as Hamlet’s *to be, or not to be, that is the question*.

Knowing what kinds of phrases can be considered Formulaic Language, it still might be challenging to recognise what might and what might not be regarded as such. So, what are the criteria and key signs that guide us in identifying these patterns of language that seem to flow so intuitively from native speakers? Alison Wray (2002) sheds light on this very question. She asserts the process of identification of Formulaic Language relies less on formal definitions and more on the ability to recognise these sequences in actual language usage. This perspective emphasises the importance of understanding the concept of formulaic sequences rather than focusing on strict formal definitions.

To illustrate how formulaic sequences can be collected, Wray (2002, p. 19) introduces various methods, starting with the least scientific but most commonly used approach: intuition. This method, while seemingly informal, captures the intuitive nature of how we perceive and use Formulaic Language. The usage of Formulaic Language does indeed often feel instinctive, reflecting our familiarity with these expressions and patterns. However, Wray acknowledges the limitations of relying solely on intuition, particularly in scientific research, due to its subjective nature. Moreover, it tends to be a luxury afforded primarily to native speakers. In contrast, second language acquisition research faces the challenge of the absence or limited nature of non-native speaker intuition. Wray's acknowledgement of the challenges posed by non-native speaker intuition underscores the need for a more nuanced and inclusive approach to studying Formulaic Language acquisition and usage.

Wray (2002, pp. 21-22) then introduces a more effective method for detecting formulaicity in language: frequency analysis. In corpus linguistics, researchers analyse the patterns of word distribution within texts, often relying on frequency counts to determine which words frequently co-occur with a given target word. These patterns of collocation are found to be anything but random. Instead, they reveal consistent associations between specific words or phrases. For instance, structures like *a matter of V-ing* are frequently encountered in language and are characteristic of formulaic expressions. These recurring associations between words or phrases invite us to consider frequency as a prominent, if not determining, factor in identifying formulaic sequences. By examining the frequency with which certain words or phrases occur together, linguists can uncover the regularities and tendencies inherent in language usage. Wray's emphasis on frequency analysis underscores the importance of empirical methods in the study of Formulaic Language. By systematically examining language data for recurring patterns, researchers can gain a deeper understanding of how formulaic sequences function and are used in various contexts.

### 3. Comparison of Negative Polarity Items in Czech and English

Negative Polarity Items represent a intriguing area of study, especially when comparing languages from different historical and structural backgrounds. We will be analysing specific expressions that function as NPIs within the English and Czech languages. For this comparison, a focus will be placed on the more idiomatic expressions, as they promise more intriguing results, enabling an analysis of both the idiomatic and literal interpretations of these expressions.

The challenge arises when attempting to document Czech expressions from traditional dictionaries, which often fall short of capturing the complexity of formulaic and idiomatic expressions. Unlike individual words with clear definitions, these expressions resist easy categorisation and translation. Their meanings are often context-dependent, relying on shared cultural knowledge and historical references. Researching these expressions, therefore, requires a more hands-on approach.

We will immerse into the language environment through analysis of spoken and written texts, paying attention to recurring phrases and expressions that are commonly used by native speakers and studying the context in which idiomatic expressions are used to understand their meaning, connotations, and appropriate usage. We will then compare these findings with existing dictionaries or linguistic databases to identify any discrepancies and highlight expressions that are missing altogether.

#### 3.1. Born yesterday

The expression born yesterday is a formulaic phrase used „in order to tell someone that a person is not stupid and cannot be easily deceived“ (Cambridge International Dictionary of Idioms, 1998, p. 46). It implies they have a level of scepticism, and they can't be tricked or taken advantage of. The literal interpretation of born yesterday refers to the act of entering the world for the first time. When we consider the literal meaning, it becomes evident that the phrase carries a more profound connotation. It suggests that while a person who was literally born yesterday might be easily fooled due to their lack of understanding, someone who has been through various life experiences cannot be easily deceived.

(24) a. He didn't fall for the scam; he wasn't *born yesterday*.

This sentence illustrates that the individual avoided becoming a victim of a scam because they possess the awareness that comes with experience and can, therefore, protect themselves from being exploited.

The expression *born yesterday* would directly translate to Czech as “narodit se včera“. However, the corresponding expression in Czech is *být včerejší*, which directly translates to “to be yesterday's,“ which is an expression in English. However, it is employed in different contexts, usually to metaphorically denote something that is outdated and no longer relevant. The Czech expression *být včerejší*, in its literal interpretation, doesn't involve the act of being born but instead suggests a sense of being outdated or out of touch with the present. However, in its idiomatic usage, it aligns closely with the meaning of *born yesterday*, conveying that the person is not naive or gullible and is fully aware of the current situation and events around them (Ústav pro jazyk český AV ČR, 2011).

(24) b. Na podvod nenaletěl, *není včerejší*.

This sentence is a direct translation of the preceding one. There is also a slight difference from a linguistic perspective, in *born yesterday*, the word “yesterday“ functions as an adverbial phrase. The noun “yesterday“ provides additional information about the action described by the verb. Conversely, in *být včerejší*, the word “včerejší“ or “yesterday's“ functions as an adjective phrase, where the adjective is derived from the noun “yesterday. “

### **3.2. Touch someone/something with a ten-foot pole**

The expression *to not touch something (or someone) with a ten-foot pole* signifies „that you think someone or something is so bad that you do not want to be involved with them in any way“ (Cambridge International Dictionary of Idioms, 1998, p.305). It is a vivid idiomatic phrase in English, symbolising a strong aversion or deliberate avoidance. The literal meaning of *not touch something with a ten-foot pole* implies a very direct form of avoidance, which is physically keeping oneself at a safe distance from something potentially dangerous or undesirable using a hypothetical ten-foot pole. It is a way of saying that one would not want to come anywhere close to the subject in question, even with a long tool that would allow them to maintain a significant distance. Similarly, the metaphorical meaning suggests a deliberate avoidance of a subject because it is deemed undesirable. The idea here is not about physical distance but about the desire to remain

uninvolved with something seen as negative. The correspondence between the literal and metaphorical meanings is solid and intuitive, they both convey a sense of caution. The ten-foot pole, in this sense, becomes a symbol of one's willingness to distance oneself from what is considered undesirable.

(25) a. He can try all he wants, but I wouldn't *touch him with a ten-foot pole*.

In this sentence, the phrase is used to express the speaker's strong sense of aversion towards the person in question. It implies that the person is so undesirable or repellant that the speaker wouldn't even want to come close to them, let alone interact or form any kind of relationship. The addition of "He can try all he wants" suggests that despite the person's efforts, they will not be able to change the speaker's stance.

The expression *not touch someone/something with a ten-foot pole* would directly translate to Czech as "nedotýkat se někoho/něčeho ani desetimetrovou tyčí" although exact measurements may vary due to differences in the metric system. The closest corresponding expression in Czech is *neopřít si o někoho ani kolo*, which directly translates to "to not even lean your bike against someone." This Czech expression similarly conveys a deliberate avoidance and corresponds well with the English expression. In both cases, the literal meaning emphasises maintaining a physical distance.

(25) b. Může se snažit jak chce, ale *neopřela bych si o něj ani kolo*.

This sentence illustrates a strong aversion towards the person in question. It implies that the individual in question is so repellant that one would avoid any contact with them, to the extent of not wanting even their bicycle to touch them.

However, there's a notable difference between the two expressions. Unlike *not touch someone/something with a ten-foot pole*, which can be applied to both people and objects, *neopřít si o někoho ani kolo* is typically used only with people. It suggests a desire to avoid any involvement or association with that person entirely. This distinction underscores how expressions may vary in their applicability across different contexts and languages. If we were to search for a Czech expression that can be applied to both people and objects, we might consider *nezavadit o někoho/něco ani pohledem*. This expression translates directly to "to not even glance at



someone/something.“ This expression suggests that the person or object isn't even worth acknowledging with a brief glance.

(25) c. Může se snažit jak chce, ale *nezavadila bych o něj ani pohledem*.

However, unlike the previous examples involving physical acts like using a pole or leaning a bike, *nezavadit o někoho/něco ani pohledem* examines a more abstract concept of avoidance. It emphasises a complete disregard towards the person or object, signifying a strong aversion. This expression underscores the depth of the speaker's avoidance, extending beyond mere physical distance to include a refusal to even acknowledge the existence of the person or object in question.

### 3.3. Sleep a wink

The expression *sleep a wink* or to *get a wink of sleep*, when used in negative statements, indicates the inability to sleep even for a short duration (Cambridge International Dictionary of Idioms, 1998, p. 427). It is used to convey the idea of experiencing sleeplessness or insomnia. It implies an inability to sleep throughout a period of time, often despite efforts to do so. Literally, “sleep a wink“ refers to the act of sleeping, with a “wink“ indicating a very brief moment or duration of sleep. It suggests that even a short period of sleep, symbolised by the blink of an eye, has not occurred. So, in a strictly literal sense, it means not being able to fall asleep at all. However, metaphorically, *not sleep a wink* is often used to convey a sense of extreme exhaustion or frustration with the quality of sleep rather than a precise account of actual sleeplessness. While it can sometimes be used to indicate a literal absence of sleep throughout the night, it's more commonly employed as an exaggeration to emphasise how little rest one feels they got, even if they did manage to sleep for some periods.

(26) a. After worrying about the upcoming exam, I didn't *sleep a wink* last night.

In this sentence, *sleep a wink* means that the speaker didn't get any sleep at all due to being preoccupied or anxious about the exam. It emphasises the feeling of restlessness and the perceived lack of sleep, regardless of whether the person actually managed to sleep for a brief period or not.

The corresponding Czech expression is *ani oka nezahmouřit*. This expression would directly translate to “not even squint the eyes.“ It conveys the same idea of the inability to achieve any amount of sleep (Internetový slovník současné češtiny, 2024). *Ani oka nezahmouřit* suggests

an extreme level of wakefulness, as the person hasn't even closed their eyes momentarily. This literal interpretation may seem more intense compared to the English expression, which simply refers to not sleeping a wink. Despite the slight variation in literal interpretation, both expressions serve as perfect equivalents in capturing the essence of sleep deprivation. They convey a sense of frustration with the inability to achieve any restful sleep. Additionally, they both carry a degree of exaggeration, emphasising the severity of the sleeplessness.

(26) b. Po obavách z nadcházející zkoušky jsem v noci *ani oka nezahmouřil*.

### 3.4. Hope in hell

The phrase *hope in hell* is an expression that signifies „to have no chance at all of achieving something“ (Cambridge International Dictionary of Idioms, 1998, p. 189). It conveys a sense of extreme unlikelihood or impossibility. Metaphorically, it suggests that a certain outcome of a situation is so unlikely that it is comparable to having no chance whatsoever, even in the fiery depths of hell. This metaphorical interpretation emphasises the desperation associated with the situation. However, when taken literally, the phrase could imply a scenario where hope is absent within the confines of hell, a place traditionally associated with torment and despair. It suggests a lack of optimism even in the most dismal of circumstances.

(27) a. I don't have a *hope in hell* of ever passing this exam.

In this context, *hope in hell* is used to express the speaker's belief that passing the exam is an impossibility for him and that the likelihood of success is so low it's virtually non-existent. The use of this phrase amplifies the emotional weight of the speaker's situation, highlighting his feeling of being trapped in failure with no apparent way out. The metaphorical use here does not refer to an actual place of hell but instead serves to intensify the perception of his chances as being beyond reach.

In Czech, an exact counterpart to the phrase *hope in hell* does not exist. A literal translation might yield “nemít naději ani v pekle,” but this construction is not a recognised expression within the Czech language. To convey the concept of having absolutely no chance whatsoever, Czech speakers typically use the phrase *nemít šanci*, which is a direct equivalent to *no chance*. This highlights a notable difference in idiomatic expression between the two languages, with Czech opting for a more straightforward phrase this time.

(28) a. *Nemám šanci* tu zkoušku složit.

(28) b. I have *no chance* of ever passing this exam.

The phrase *no chance* is a direct way to express the absence of possibility or likelihood that something will happen. Unlike more colourful or idiomatic expressions that might soften the blow with metaphor or humour, *no chance* cuts straight to the point.

Another expression to consider is the phrase *ani náhodou*, which we could translate as “not even by coincidence.”

(29) Tu zkoušku nesložím *ani náhodou*.

The phrase *ani náhodou* suggests that the outcome in question is so unlikely that not even the most random or unexpected sequence of events could bring it about. This statement amplifies the notion of unlikelihood to a point where the speaker believes that chance or luck itself has no power to make it happen. It serves to firmly shut down any optimism regarding the likelihood of the event.

### 3.5. Give a damn

The phrase *give a damn*, when in a negative sentence, means „to not be interested in or worried about something or someone“ (Cambridge International Dictionary of Idioms, 1998, p. 447). It implies that the speaker holds no regard for the subject at hand. It suggests a dismissive attitude and lack of interest. Literally, the phrase refers to not caring about something to the extent that one wouldn't even offer a “damn“ in exchange for it. While “damn“ itself is a swear word, in this context, it symbolises any form of concern or attention.

(30) I don't *give a damn* about what they think of me.

In this sentence, *give a damn* expresses a strong sense of indifference towards the opinions of others regarding the speaker as a person. It conveys a dismissive attitude, suggesting that the speaker's self-confidence is not influenced by the judgments of others. The phrase is straightforward, leaving no room for doubt about the speaker's feelings towards the matter.

It's intriguing to note that in English, there exists a multitude of NPIs to express a lack of care or indifference, all essentially conveying the same meaning. However, some expressions carry more emotional weight than others. These expressions range from *not caring one bit* to *not giving*

*a fig, not giving a hoot, not giving a rat's ass*, and even more emphatic variations like *not giving a fuck* or *not giving a flying fuck*. Each of these phrases serves as a colourful means to articulate indifference and apathy, offering speakers to communicate their feelings across various contexts with differing degrees of emphasis and informality.

When we search for the proper equivalent in Czech, things become pretty intriguing. The corresponding expression in Czech is *je mi to jedno*. However, what makes it particularly interesting is a shift in the polarity. While English utilises negative polarity to signify indifference, Czech employs positive polarity for the same purpose. Consequently, the equivalent of the NPI *give a damn* in the Czech language is itself not an NPI.

(31) a. I don't **give a damn**.

(31) b. Je mi to jedno.

Conversely, expressing care in Czech involves a shift towards negative polarity.

(32) a. I do give a damn.

(32) b. **Není mi to jedno**.

This polarity shift underscores the diverse ways in which emotions are articulated and understood in different linguistic contexts. Similarly to English, the Czech language provides a range of expressions to convey the lack of care. These include *je mi to jedno*, *je mi to fuk*, *je mi to šumák*, *je mi to u prdele*, and *mám to na háku*.

Providing a direct translation for some of these expressions can be challenging because they often consist of words or colloquial phrases that don't have direct equivalents. These expressions may have originated from literal objects, but their metaphorical usage developed as people began to apply them figuratively. This further proves the point that in Formulaic Language, the focus is on the overall meaning and function of the expression as a whole rather than dissecting the literal meaning of each component word.

### 3.6. Any-series

Haspelmath (1997, p. 21) uses the term *any-series*, borrowed from Veyrenc (1964), to describe a collection of indefinite pronouns. According to Haspelmath, indefinite are typically organised into different series. He says, „For instance, English has the some-series (somebody,

something, somewhere ...), the any-series (anybody, anything ...), and the no-series (nobody, nothing ...);“ (Haspelmath, 1997, p. 2).

For our current focus on Negative Polarity Items, we are only interested in the *any-series*. Similarly, in the Czech language, there exists a comparable series, which we might refer to as the *koliv-series* or *koli-series*, as most words in this group end with the suffix “-koliv“ or “-koli.“ This series comprises indefinite pronouns like *kdokoliv*, *kohokoliv* (*anybody*), *kamkoliv* (*anywhere*), *cokoliv* (*anything*) or *jakkoliv* (*anyhow*). This similarity suggests a common linguistic phenomenon across languages, where indefinite pronouns share structural and semantic characteristics.

When we examine the usage of indefinite pronoun series in texts, an intriguing phenomenon emerges; despite their equivalence in meaning, these series behave differently in the English and Czech languages. Take, for instance, this English sentence:

(33) a. I didn't know *anyone* at the party.

If we were to translate this sentence to Czech using the equivalent *kohokoliv* for *anyone*, the resulting sentence would be grammatically incorrect.

(33)\* b. Na pártý jsem *kohokoliv* neznal.

The reason for this discrepancy lies in the distinct grammatical conventions between English and Czech. Unlike English, where the *any-series* can be used in negative sentences as Negative Polarity Items, Czech employs negative pronouns in negative contexts. Thus, the correct translation of the sentence (33) would be:

(33) c. Na pártý jsem *nikoho* neznal.

The word *nikoho* is equivalent to English *nobody*, which is a part of the English *no-series*. In Czech, a similar series of negative pronouns are not typically used in negation. What this essentially tells us is that English NPI any-series words do have their Czech equivalents. However, these equivalents do not act as NPIs. Such observations contribute to our understanding of language universals and typological similarities.

### 3.7. For all the tea in China

„If you say that you would not do something for all the tea in China, you mean that nothing could persuade you to do it.“ (Cambridge International Dictionary of Idioms, 1998, p. 384). The phrase uses the vast quantity and value of tea produced in China to emphasise the enormity of the offer, which is still not enough to change the person's mind. The phrase means that one is unwilling to do something under any circumstances. Literally, it refers to the quantity of tea produced in China, historically known as the world's largest tea producer. In a literal sense, it suggests that even if presented with something as valuable or abundant as all the tea in China, the person would still decline.

(34) a. I would never invite him again, *not for all the tea in China*.

This sentence effectively employs the phrase *not for all the tea in China* to convey a strong sense of determination and refusal. The speaker has no desire to invite the individual again under any circumstances.

In Czech, there is no expression involving tea in China, but a similar idiom is *ani za mák*, which translates to „not even for poppy seeds.“ This expression can be seen as equivalent because, much like China's association with tea, the Czech Republic has been the world's largest producer and exporter of blue poppy seeds since 2006 (Mikšík & Lohr, 2020, p. 1). However, the Czech phrase does not specify the quantity of poppy seeds, which contrasts with the hyperbolic abundance in *all the tea in China*. Despite this difference, both idioms effectively indicate that no amount of the mentioned commodity would persuade the speaker to change their decision.

(34) b. Už bych ho nikdy nepozval, *ani za mák*.

Another similar Czech phrase is *ani za nic na světě*, which translates to „not for anything in the world.“ This phrase is, however, already an equivalent to the phrase *not for all the world*. Both idioms convey an absolute refusal, indicating that no incentive, regardless of its value or significance, could persuade the speaker to change their decision, which corresponds to the meaning of *not for all the tea in China*.

(35) a. She wouldn't come to visit us *for all the world*.

(35) b. Ta by nás nepřišla navštívit *ani za nic na světě*.

Another Czech equivalent could be *ani za nic*, which directly translates to „not even for nothing.“ Literally, this phrase seems odd because it suggests that the speaker would not do it for nothing, a point already apparent from the phrase itself. The word *nothing* doesn't add any functional meaning, highlighting how deeply ingrained and formulaic such expressions are in our language. However, it is possible that this phrase is simply a shortened version of *ani za nic na světě*. Since Formulaic Language is primarily used to facilitate effective communication, it's not surprising that many expressions that seem illogical upon analysis might be modified or shortened versions of other expressions. This finding offers a significant opportunity for further research into these phrases. By investigating the history of each expression, we could uncover their original meanings, revealing that all of these phrases might have a meaningful foundation.

## Conclusion

In this thesis, a comprehensive analysis of Negative Polarity Items and Formulaic Language in Czech and English language has been conducted and tested based on a comparison of expressions of these phenomena. The comparison revealed expressions with precise equivalents in both languages, discerning subtle differences in meaning and pinpointing instances where one language lacks a counterpart for certain expressions found in the other. Through comparative analysis, it was revealed that while certain expressions have perfect equivalents in both languages, which means they correspond in both metaphorical and literal meaning, others do not. However, in most cases, alternative expressions can still be found that convey the same concepts in both languages with potential variations.

It has been demonstrated how, in formulaic phrases, the focus is on the overall meaning and function of the expression as a whole rather than dissecting the literal meaning of each word. Phrases like *je mi to fuk* and their variations operate on the basis of conveying figurative meaning rather than relying on a literal interpretation of each individual word. While the specific origins or meanings of the words *fuk* or *šumák* in these expressions may not be clear, what matters is the collective understanding of what these phrases signify in context. This further proves the fact that expressions become entrenched in the language through common usage and familiarity, serving as efficient and effective ways to convey specific ideas or emotions. So, whether we know the exact origins or meanings of the individual words within formulaic expressions, what's important is their figurative significance and the communicative purpose they serve in expressing certain emotions or conveying particular messages. Formulaic language thrives on shared understanding and cultural resonance, allowing speakers to communicate effectively without needing to analyse the precise meaning of every word.

The research shows that both the Czech and English languages offer a large number of ways to convey the same concepts or emotions, providing speakers with a range of options to choose from. This illustrates the numerous opportunities for self-expression offered by Formulaic Language. While it is indeed true that these expressions can be effortlessly employed without much cognitive effort, individuals still have the freedom to select the degree of emotion with which they wish to express themselves.



In conclusion, this study holds the potential to contribute to the linguistic theory of Czech and English Negative Polarity Items. Our exploration of formulaic and idiomatic expressions has also exposed the limitations of standard dictionaries in reflecting the richness and diversity of Formulaic Language. By conducting research in this area, we are not only filling a gap in the existing literature but also advancing our understanding of how NPIs function within the Czech and English languages. Additionally, this study might uncover any unique characteristics or patterns specific to Czech NPIs that differ from those found in English. Furthermore, this research could provide valuable insights into the universality of NPI phenomena across languages, which could deepen the understanding of linguistic diversity. Lastly, this study has the potential to enhance the knowledge of the nature of Negative Polarity Items and Formulaic Language, thereby contributing to the development of communication techniques. This way, it can refine our communication skills and help us effectively convey thoughts and emotions in both Czech and English. Formulaic language represents a flexible linguistic entity where phrases evolve over time, reflecting the dynamic nature of language itself. As old phrases are replaced by new ones, language perpetually remains a field of endless research and study.

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