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Insects that Inspired German and Finnish Insect Idioms that Affected Human Attitudes Towards Insects*

Durch Insekten inspirierte deutsche und finnsche Redensarten, die einen Einfluss auf die Wertschätzung dieser Tiere haben

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Summary: We analysed German and Finnish idioms that make reference to insects, especially Diptera and Hymenoptera. Idioms can become integrated into feelings like irritation, contemptuous attitudes, and even anger and disgust. However, idioms can also convey explanations, humour, encouragement and advice. We assigned the idioms to five major groups: 1. Those that refer to an insect's role in connection with the weather, seasons and agriculture. 2. Those that are humorous, ironic, or sarcastic in nature. 3. Those that criticize or praise a person's behaviour. 4. Those that advise people to deal with certain situations and 5., those that do not seem to have any obvious logical connection with the insect mentioned in them. Almost equally high numbers of the Finnish idioms can be found under groups 2, 3, and 4, but group 1 also contained a good number. German insect idioms, however, are dominant in group 3, while none come under group 1. We suggest that the differences could be related to the sparser and till recently more rural population in Finland and that country's harsher climate, having resulted in a greater need to express hardships and loneliness with less emphasis on criticizing a person's behaviour.

Keywords: Emotions, socio-linguistics, ethno-entomology, mirror neurons, insect appreciation

Zusammenfassung: Wir haben deutsche und finnische Redensarten, die sich auf Insekten, insbesondere Dipteren und Hymenopteren, beziehen, betrachtet. Gefühlsmäßig integriert können Redensarten Unmut, Abneigung und sogar Ärger und Abscheu ausdrücken. Sie können aber auch Erklärungen geben sowie Humor und Ratschläge enthalten. Die Redensarten ließen sich fünf Hauptgruppen zuordnen. 1. Jene, die sich auf die Rolle von Insekten in Bezug auf Wetter, Jahreszeiten und Landwirtschaft beziehen. 2. Jene mit lustigen, ironischen oder sarkastischen Inhalten. 3. Jene, die das Verhalten einer Person rügen oder loben. 4. Jene, die Ratschläge vermitteln und 5. jene, die keinerlei logische Verbindung mit dem in der Redensart erwähnten Insekt erkennen lassen. Eine fast gleich hohe Zahl finnischer Redewendungen fanden sich in den Gruppen 2, 3, und 4, aber auch Gruppe 1 enthielt etliche. Die deutschen Redewendungen dominierten in der Gruppe 3; kein Eintrag fand sich unter Gruppe 1. Wir halten es für möglich, dass die Unterschiede auf die geringere und bis vor kurzem meist ländliche Bevölkerung Finnlands und die härteren Witterungsverhältnisse zurückgehen und Finnen es deshalb für nötiger hielten, Not und Einsamkeit Ausdruck zu verleihen als anderer Menschen Verhalten zu kritisieren.

Schlüsselwoerter: Gefühle, Sozio-Linguistik, Ethnoentomologie, Spiegelneurone, Insektenwertschätzung

1. Introduction

Folk songs, idioms and proverbs with references to insects and spiders are known from virtually all regions of the world. We can assume without being able to prove it that many such references came about by observing insects and spiders and relating their

*We wish to dedicate this work to the late Studiendirektor Mr. Werner Hahn, Hamburg.

looks and behaviours to those of specific human individuals. It has been pointed out in several publications that in the majority of the cases, the association is overwhelmingly a negative one, at least when we consider only European and North American countries (REYE 1959; MEYER-ROCHOW et al. 2000).

The question that arises is whether such negative views then lead to an increasingly hostile attitude towards those species referred to in the idioms and proverbs. An investigation into this aspect to the best of our knowledge has never been satisfactorily carried out and this paper should therefore be seen as an attempt to encourage entomologists to probe whether the widespread fears and dislikes of creepy crawly insects and spiders are indeed nurtured by the negative references to them so common in idioms and proverbs.

What is the evidence? We have discussed this recently in connection with the question as to why insects as a food item generate a feeling of disgust in many people of western cultural backgrounds (MEYER-ROCHOW & KEJONEN 2020). Much of the background of the analysis in the present paper stems from that earlier publication. Being known from virtually all languages, idioms and proverbs according to CASAS & HERNÁNDEZ CAMPOY (1995) constitute categories that "permeate languages at a much deeper level than what is usually taken for granted" (p. 44) and exert an "overriding influence on society" (p. 47). According to COWIE et al. (1983) they tend to become integrated into popular consciousness to express, as BASTIAANSEN et al. (2009) have pointed out, feelings like irritation, contemptuous attitudes, and even anger and disgust. If we accept the validity of this view, idioms and proverbs might then be interpreted as "natural decoders of customs, cultural beliefs, social conventions, and norms" (YAĞIZ & IZADPANAH 2013, p. 953) with a profound influence on experience and human behaviour (FLADERER & FREY 2017).

Turning specifically to idioms that incorporate references to insects and other terrestrial arthropods like spiders, it has repeatedly been reported that amongst people with western cultural backgrounds these idioms convey predominantly negative attitudes, but that in East Asia more positive attitudes prevail (REYE 1986; OKUI 1992; MEYER-ROCHOW et al. 2000). Thus, whether the generally negative connotations of insect idioms present in the western world stem from a genuine, deep-rooted, perhaps even genetically manifest antipathy towards insects as well as terrestrial arthropods generally, or are based on negative experiences with these animals, is still an open question. Evidence, however, that exposure (GERDES et al. 2009), learning (ÖHMAN & MINEKA 2001), and social interactions in connection with anxiety and fear (RAYKOV 2004) may be involved has indeed been presented. On the other hand, it is less clear whether the negativity expressed in the majority of idioms and proverbs with references to insects and spiders nurtures and strengthens these antipathies towards these invertebrates or is either irrelevant or may even increase the interest in the species referred to.

What seems pertinent in connection with this question is the recent realization of so-called mirror neurons in the human brain, discovered by RIZZOLATTI & SINIGAGLIA (2010). Such neurons are implicated in the ability of an individual to understand another individual's emotion and to empathize by activating neuronal circuits, as when the receiving individual experienced the other person's emotion herself or himself directly (MARA 2017). Originally seen in connection with visual or odoriferous stimulation, mirror neurons are now also thought to play a role in adopting emotions that are expressed figuratively, i.e. in idioms, as mirror neurons are located near the Broca area of speech development in the human brain and thereby can facilitate the learning process as well as verbal communication (MARA 2017).

The emotional state of the 'receiver individual' according to Bastiaansen et al. (2009) comes to resemble that of the 'sending individual', especially if a facial expression of disgust (Le Goff & Delarue 2017) accompanies the utterance of a particular idiom. That could explain why young children, who have never had any bad experience with insects or spiders, respond to these animals in ways that they saw their mothers, fathers or older siblings respond when confronted with such animals.

The aim of this article is to show that idioms containing negative (and sometimes also positive) references to insects and other invertebrates exist in the German and the Finnish language, that meaning and use of the idioms often but not always differ in the two countries and that the attitudes expressed in the idioms depend to a large extent on species diversity, species abundance and degree of familiarity with a species' habits. The present article confirms this, but it must not be seen as a comprehensive and detailed study on insect (spiders, not being insects, were not included) containing idioms and their effects on people, but is meant to serve as a 'wake-up-call' to conduct further studies into this question.

2. Materials

For the Finnish idioms the target subgroups in this study were Diptera and Hymenoptera. Species of other insect orders, although we do know of a very large number of Finnish idioms referring to fleas, lice, and bedbugs as well as to some beetles, especially dung beetles, and cockroaches were not considered. Including idioms with references to these latter orders of insects would have gone beyond the scope of this article and must therefore remain a task for the future. For the German idioms, however, we did not restrict ourselves to any particular insect order, simply because in comparison to the Finnish situation so few idioms appear to exist that make reference to insects (cf. https://www.daserste.de/information/wissen-kultur/w-wie-wissen/sendung/2011/zwei-fliegen-mit-einer-klappe-sie-haben-mitgemacht-100.html).

The idioms that we have most thoroughly examined belonged predominantly to the Finnish language for two reasons: firstly, Finns have largely been a rural people living in close contact with nature and their language is therefore particularly rich in idioms that contain references to insects; furthermore, the second author's familiarity with the language provided us with considerable insight into use and meaning of such idioms and both authors live in Finland. Since Finnish idioms have been the subject of several books, the most relevant books (Horila 1977; Laukkanen et al. 1978; Kuusi 1979; Vuorela 1979; Lönnrot 1981; Piirainen 2011) were consulted by the authors in order to locate and select idioms, i.e. those involving only insects and not any other invertebrates. The Finnish idioms were discussed with a small but unspecified number of colleagues, some students and four elderly relatives, who contributed some additional idioms. Fifteen Finnish idioms, deemed either too outdated or having been used mainly by soldiers during WWII and found little use thereafter, were not included.

The list of the German idioms is to some extent based on what the first author remembered from his childhood in Hamburg and on recent information provided by the high school teacher of the German language Studiendirektor i.R. Mr. Werner Hahn of Hamburg. Other sources consulted were webpages like: „https://www.dw.com/de/von-flei%C3%9Figen-bienchen-motten-und-schmetterlingen/g-54263948" and "https://www.daserste.de/information/wissen-kultur/w-wie-wissen/sendung/2011/zwei-fliegen-mit-einer-klappe-sie-haben-mitgemacht-100.html" and reports by Ruediger (1931), Weidner (1941), Reye (1986) and Wennemann (2006).

This research represents a qualitative study but does not claim to be exhaustive. As with an earlier study on Korean insect idioms by MEYER-ROCHOW (2016) and Finnish insect items related to food and eating (MEYER-ROCHOW & KEJONEN 2020) we are presenting the idioms first in their original form, followed by their translation into English and, where deemed necessary, an explanation as to the idiom's meaning and application in parentheses.

3. Results

3.1. German idioms ("Redewendungen")

Zwei Fliegen mit einer Klappe schlagen = To swat two flies with one hit (similar to "Killing two birds with one stone")

Keiner Fliege/Mücke etwas zuleide tun = Not to hurt a fly/mosquito ("to be of gentle disposition")

In der Not frisst der Deubel/Teufel Fliegen = In need even the devil will consume flies ("in times of need, something that's usually rejected will become acceptable")

Sich über die Fliege an der Wand ärgern = To get annoyed by the fly on the wall

Sich über jeden Fliegendreck aufregen = To get worked up by fly droppings on the wall ("to get angry about unimportant things")

Eine Fliege machen = To make a fly ("to quickly bugger off")

Aus einer Mücke einen Elefanten machen = To turn a mosquito into an elephant (similar to "Making a mountain out of a molehill")

Mit Geduld und Spucke (oder Tücke) faengt man eine Muecke = Patience and spit (or cunningness) are needed to catch a mosquito

Angeben wie 'ne Tüte Mücken = Bragging like a swarm of mosquitoes ("to emphatically show off; to brag profusely")

Lieber einen Sack Flöhe hüten als… = Better than guarding a sac full of fleas than… (said "when faced with a difficult task of supervision")

Die Flöhe husten (niesen) hören = To hear the fleas cough (sneeze) ("to be very sensitive to noise or alert")

Angenehmes Flohbeißen! = Pleasant flea bites! (an ironic wish "to sleep well")

Jemandem einen Floh ins Ohr setzen. = To put a flea into someone's ear (similar "To put a bee in the bonnet")

Grillen fangen = To catch crickets ("spending time on useless things")

Grillen im Kopf haben = To have crickets in one's head ("to entertain fanciful ideas")

Du fehlst mir gerade noch in meiner Käfersammlung = It's you who is missing in my beetle collection ("you are now visiting me at an inconvenient time")

Jemandem ist eine Laus über die Leber gelaufen = A louse ran across someone's liver ("something is bugging someone")

Jemandem eine Laus in den Pelz setzen = To put a louse into someone's pelt/fur ("to give someone a silly idea")

Eine Laus im Kraut ist besser als gar nichts = A louse in the cabbage is better than nothing ("even small things can help")

Hummeln im Hintern haben = To have bumble bees in the bottom ("to bee fidgety")

In ein Wespennest stechen = To poke into a hornet nest ("to stir up trouble or a lively discussion")

Jemand ist bienenfleißig (ameisenfleißig) = Someone is as industrious (or busy) as a bee/ant

Wer Honig liebt, darf den Stachel nicht scheuen = He who loves honey must not fear a sting ("wanting to reach a goal, you need to accept the risk")

Flotte Biene/Dufter Käfer = Gorgeous bee/Good-looking beetle ("used in connection with attractive young ladies")

Schmetterlinge im Bauch haben = To have butterflies in the stomach ("to be nervous")

Einen Käfer im Hals haben = To have a beetle in the throat ("to have a hoarse and scratchy voice")

Wie eine Made im Speck leben = To live like a maggot in the bacon ("to lead a good life")

Alter Falter! = Old moth ("an expression of surprise or admiration")

3.2. Finnish idioms

3.2.1. Diptera: Nematocera

Note: spelling and choice of words are not always those of 'standard Finnish', but are a reflection of local dialects and traditional uses.

Kiitä sääskistä kesäii, mäkäräistä vuoden päätä = Thanks for mosquito-rich summer and blackfly-rich autumn (means "good weather for crops")

Ukkostaa, kun hyttyset syö = Thunder is coming, because mosquitos are eating ("realistic observation")

Itiköillä ilma pilalla, mäkäröillä maa = Mosquitos spoil air, blackflies spoil country ("farmers' wisdom").

Hyttynen hyvä minusta, minä hyvä hyttysestä = I like mosquito (because it means summer) and mosquito likes me (ironic: "because she will have my blood")

Kiitä. kiiskistä - kiitä. Sääskistä = Thanks for quarrel - thanks for mosquitos ("ironic expression")

Suussa on sääskellä henki = Mosquito spirit is in her mouth "(stinging or biting comment")

Sääski on kesän kunnia = The mosquito is the honour of the summer ("accepting the bad with the good")

Ei sääsken laulu taivaaseen kuulu = The singing of a mosquito cannot be heard in heaven ("complaints or wishes of the common person will not be listened to by the authorities")

Ei hyttysen ääni taivaaseen kuulu = Voice of a mosquito cannot be heard in heaven ("you may complain, but it won't reach those the complaint is meant to reach")

Ei sääsken sääresta paljon paisteta = One foot of a mosquito is not much as a roast ("not much nourishment in the food")

Henki on sääskel suus, mäkärällä persees = The life of a mosquito in her mouth, but blackfly in her bottom ("a controversial or irritating person")

Tottuu härkiikin sääskeen ja auraan = Even a bull must get used to the mosquitos and the plough ("one needs to accept some hardship")

Apu hyttysenkin apu on = Even the help of a mosquito is helping "(a little bit of help can go a long way and is better than nothing")

Pieni kun hyttysen pieru = Small like the fart of a mosquito ("refers to someone's comment or help")

Ei sääsket puiden puutu, paarmat tappaen vahene = The mosquitoes are not disappearing by whisking and horseflies by killing ("you cannot easily get away from annoying people")

Niin ei voi ötököitä tappaa, ettei yhtä jää = It is not possible to kill all insects (mosquitos), one is always alive ("you can't catch them all: culprits or bad-meaning, gossiping people will always be there")

Yhtä puuttuu, sano piru, kun hyttysiä laski = One is missing, the devil says, when he was counting mosquitos ("you can't win them all")

Siinä on lissää, sano hyttys, kun mereen pissi = Here is some more, mosquito said, when it pissed into the ocean ("someone's 'gracious' help may be nothing meaningful at all")

Pienoot kun hyttysen paska Itämeressii = Small like the shit of a mosquito in the Baltic sea (refers to "very small or meaningless help, gift or advice")

Nii o pien ko itika pieru = Small like when a mosquito breaks wind ("unnecessary and unimportant comment").

Hyttynen seura, mäkärd kiusa, polttiainen koko piru = Mosquito is company, blackfly is nuisance, biting midge is the real devil ("accepting small problems, but realizing there are bigger ones")

Hyttynen on niin kesy, että heti syö kädestä = Mosquito is so tame, that it eats from the hand at once. ("ironic comment, related to a friendly, but exploitative human being")

On ko hankisdaski = She is like a snow gnat (hankisdaski = longwing and long legged gnat species which is around in early spring on snow belt; means that "a person is stupid or behaving unnaturally")

Pien ko tiho pillu = Small like tiho's vagina (tiho = mosquito-looking but smaller non-biting insect that occurs on dunghills; "the idiom refers to small objects or gifts")

Nii kintut ko itikal = Legs like mosquito's legs ("comparison with human legs")

Mies kun pyy ja sääret kun sääskellä = A man like a hazelhen, legs like those of a mosquito

Tinäjää ko itikka pillus = Squeak like mosquito in the pussy ("someone really enjoying something and vocalizing it")

Nii o täynäd ku iment tihi = Full like a sucked mosquito (drunken man similar to "pissed like a newt")

Hienod ku seaksen pieru = Fine like the fart of a mosquito.

Survoot ko surviaiset = Go up and down like the chironomids ("unstable character with phases of elation and melancholy")

3.2.2. Diptera: Brachycera

Kärpänen mereen kusi, meri tohahti/kohahti = A fly was pissing into the sea, the sea gasped/collapsed ("ironic expression related to an insignificant amount of help").

Ei kärpäsen kusi meressä haittaa tee = The piss of a fly means nothing in the ocean ("little help is useless")

Joka enemmän oda, se kärpäsen näkee = The longer you wait the more flies you'll see ("one should not wait for too long to take action")

Äkäinen kun kärpäset satteen iellä = Angry like flies before or in the rain ("angry before impending trouble")

Ei kärpänen kyntömiehen mahassa tunnu = One fly does not satisfy a ploughman ("farmers' expression")

Paarma on viimeinen kesälintu = Horsefly is the sign of the end of summer bird ("melancholic expression")

Jos ei kesällä paarma pyrise, ei syksyllä kivet jyrise = If horseflies are not buzzing in summer, millstones are not rumbling in autumn (means: if the weather in summer is bad, crop failures will follow")

Itekullain elukalla on omat kärpäsensä = Every animal has its own flies ("everyone has its own worries")

Ovi kiinni, ettei kärpäset karkaa = Close the door, so that flies won't escape ("ironic expression to close the door")

Varo ettei kärpänen suuhun lenna = Be careful, that a fly is not flying into your mouth ("someone talking too much, especially when eating")

Tunkee kun kärpänen hevosen puohon = It is going in like a fly into the ass of a horse ("something that works without much of a problem")

Se on sellain likka, että sen silmille ei kärpäset lentele = She is such a kind of girl, that even flies are not visiting her eyes ("ironic expression; not very likeable person")

Niin häjy saakin olla, jotta kärpäset silmiltansa ajaa = Someone must be so evil that he/she drives away the flies from his/her eyes.

Niin hyvin, ettei tappa kärpästäkään = So kind, that he does not even kill a fly

Housus on niin terävät rässit, että kärpäin lentää pääns halki = Trousers that have such a sharp crease that it could split a fly's head ("a joking or ironic remark

aimed at a smartly dressed man")

Huolehtia kun sokia paarma = Going around like a blind horsefly ("someone with no clear goals")

Sintä välin lapsen nälkä tulee, kun kärpänen pirtin yli lentäd = A child is getting hungry as soon as it sees a fly fly over the house ("ironic expression related to poor people's children")

Kun tulisi kesä ja kärpäsiä, niin saisi köyhäkin ystäviä = If only the summer came with its flies, then even the poor man would have some friends ("ironic expression related to loneliness")

Kun on kärpäsiä, on köyhällä ystäviä= When there are flies, poor man has friends ("ironic or sarcastic expression")

Kesä ku tulee ja kärpäsiä, ni köyhäkis saa ystäviä = When the summer and the flies come, poor man has friends ("ironic expression referring to lonely people")

Tulis kesä ja kärpäsiä = If only summer and flies were here ("melancholic expression, longing for something nice even if one has to accept some difficulties")

Pitäisi lähteä, sanoi kärpänen, kun tervaan tarttui = I should fly away, said the fly when stuck in tar ("one should leave in time when noticing there is trouble")

Paska on hyvää, miljoona kärpästä ei voi olla väirässä = Shit is good, million flies cannot be wrong ("ironic expression said to critics")

Tehdä kärpäsestä härkänen = Make a fly to a bull ("similar to 'Make a mountain out of a molehill' or in German 'Aus der Muecke einen Elefanten machen'")

Enempi saa kärpäsiä siirapilla kuin tervalla = You can catch more flies with syrup as with tar ("using the correct persuasion method is important")

Missä kärpänen, jos ei hevosen persiissa = Where would you find a fly, if not in the ass of a horse ("to find someone in a bad place")

Kaksi kärpästä yhdella iskulla = Get two flies with one hit ("similar to 'To kill two birds with one stone' or in German 'Zwei Fliegen mit einer Klappe schlagen'")

Joka miehellä on oma kärpäsensä = Every man has his own fly ("in this case fly means hobby or madness")

Suu auk kun kärpäsen kirkko = Mouth is open like church for the fly ("means close your mouth or the fly is entering your mouth")

Pörrää niinkuin kärpänen = Buzzing like a fly ("when someone talks excitedly or unintelligibly")

Sana kuin kärpänen paisuu kuin härkiinen = A word may be as small as a fly, but it can become as big as a bull ("related to gossip: beginning small and growing increasingly bigger")

Ain se avuks on ika karvane kaalfaris = It is always of help like the meat in the cabbage casserole is a fly. ("a small something is better than nothing at all")

On niinku kärväne siirapis = Be like a fly in syrup ("stuck in something one cannot get away from easily")

Tarttuu kun kärpänen tervahan = Being stuck like a fly in tar ("feeling like being trapped")

Niinhän se kävi äkkiä kun kärpäsen naiminen = It went so quick like the coitus of the flies ("something happened so quick that you could hardly realize what had happened")

Sepä on ohun niinkun kärpäsen siipi = It is so thin like the wing of a fly ("can have positive or negative meaning")

Lompsa on kun kärpäspiiska = Wallet like a flyswat ("to have no money in the wallet")

Joka asioissa on kun paskakärpänen = Someone or something is in every place like a shit fly ("you cannot get away from someone or something")

Tuo o aina jalessa ko perskärpäne = Always being followed like being pursued by an ass fly ("not being able to get away from something")

On niinku perskarviine = Being like an ass fly ("when someone is pestering you and cannot leave you alone")

3.2.3. Hymenoptera: Vespidae and Apidae

Ei ihminen oo mikään ampiainen (kun vaaditaan liikaa akkinaisyytta) = The man is not a wasp ("when too big a hurry is demanded of someone")

Nii on sukkela kuin neulijäine = Someone or something is as fast as a wasp

Ampiainen antaa, mehiläinen metenii juo = Wasp is stinging, bee is drinking honey ("beware of bad and good")

Kussa vähän kimalaisia, siind vähän hunajata = With few bumble bees around, there is little honey ("note: honey bees were introduced to Finland only ca. 200 years ago and localfolk would see them as bumble bees")

Mettiset touon toivottaa = Bumble bees welcome the spring crop ("farmers' realistic observation")

Jos ei ole hyvä minul, ni ei o sinullakaan, sano muija, kun ampiaisen päälle astui = If your feeling is bad so is mine, old woman said, when she had trodden on a wasp. ("sarcastic expression accompanying revenge")

Niin on kun ampiaispessee sohases = It's like a man prodding at a wasps' nest ("stirring up trouble")

Porisoo ku neulijäispesa = Buzzing like a wasp's nest ("noise from an excited crowd or person")

Ruoka mekeä ku hunaja, työ karvas ku terve = Food is sweet as honey, work is acid like tar

Yksin tehty työ on kun tervaa, kaksin kun hunajaa = Working alone is tar, working together is honey "cooperation helps")

Uni to ruoka makie kun mesi, vain työ karkie kun terva = Sleeping and supper are sweet as honey, only work is as bad as tar

Sähäkkää kun kimalaisen lento = Hot like a bumble bee's flight

Nii o hoikka kuin ampiine = She is as slender as a wasp ("pretty woman")

Perse pylkkää ko ampijaisel = Someone's ass is moving like that of a wasp ("beware; there could be a danger")

Kiukkuinen kuin ampiainen = Irritable like a wasp ("bad-tempered person")

Hai, hyvä tohtor, poista kipu vaan jätä turvotus = Hello, good doctor, take off the pain, but leave the swelling ("joking remark after a wasp has pricked someone's penis")

Viisaat on laskeneet, ettei kimalainen voi lentää, mutta kun kimalainen ei sitä tiedä se 'entail vaan = wise men have calculated that a bumblebee cannot fly, but because it does not know it, it flies (" do what you think is right and not what others tells you")

Mekeä kuin mehiläisen perse = sweet like the bottom of a bee ("when attracted to somebody or something, do not lose your guard/caution")

Ku mettiäinem pirttiin tuppaa, tuap puita piisiin aikanansa = When the bumble bees are coming into the house, it's time to bring in the fire wood inside ("realistic observation of impending cold autumn or winter weather")

Amouu kun ampiaine = Shoot like a wasp ("a good to hit in shooting or a good argument in a discussion")

Vahavenoo ja vahavenoo ku Kuaros-Mikon kyrpä, ku siihen ampiaanen pisti = Something got bigger and bigger like the penis of Kuaros-Mikko after a wasp has pricked it ("referring to growing gossip")

Paska lentää ku Ekyptissa hunaja = Shit is flying like honey in Egypt ("when someone suffers from diarrhoea")

Uni mekeää kun mend, työ karvasta kun terva = Sleep is as sweet as honey, work is acidic like tar.

Nii hääriit ku kimalaiset = Working hard like bumble bees

Siel on miestä ja naesta kun kimalaesta = There are men and women like bumble bees "(both men and women can be equally industrious and buzzing with activity")

Niin meillä ollaan kun mesidiset tammes istu ja pila kiinni = We are like bumble bees in the oak - sitting and having to fast ourselves ("hoping to find something nice, but it's in vain")

Hiljaa kun mettiset tammes = Quiet like bumble bees in an oak ("you hear but don't see what's going on")

On päisään ku mettiäinen = Drunk like a bumble bee ("problems with balance")

Pihisoo kun mehildenen mattaassa = Buzzing like the bee in tussock.

Tytöt kun kukkaset ja pojat mehiläiset, akat o ku rukkaset ja ukot härkäpaiset = Girls are like flowers and boys like honeybees, old women are like mittens and old men are bull-heads ("ironic assessment of genders and age groups")

Pia surajaa ko mehiläispesä = My head is buzzing like a nest of bees ("something is occupying one's mind")

3.2.4. Hymenoptera: Formicidae

Kuhajaa kun muurahaispeä = Swarming like on anthill (or meaning: "buzzing like a beehive")

Mauriainen munans kantaa, vähä vaimo lastans = The ant (*Lasius niger*) carries her eggs, a poor woman her child ("describes the hard life of a poor or lonely mother")

Vastaan pistää kun muurahainen junaa = Opposed or stubborn like an ant trying to stop a train ("being stubborn, unwavering")

Nyt on kusiainen pisiaisessa, sano Tyyne Kovane = Now is the ant in another ant, say Tyyne Kovane (Tyyne K. is a woman) (kusiainen = ant species or penis, pisiainen = ant species or vagina)

Hyvä se on toesen persauksilla vaekka kusijaespessään istuva = It is good to sit down on the ant hill, when you use some other person's bottom ("ironic expression: blaming somebody else is good for you")

Aivot ne on muurahaisellakin = Even an ant has brains ("said to a person who makes foolish decisions")

Ei onnista ihmiselle mikä muurahaiselle = The man cannot do, what the ant can ("to belittle a person's effort or to warn someone not to overestimate his/her abilities")

On kiirus kun viholaasella (muurahainen) = Hurry like an ant

Ahkera kuin muurahainen = Hard-working like an ant

Kuhina kuin hämmennetyssä muurahaispesässä = swarming like in a stirring ant hill ("getting agitated after irritation")

Muurahainen kantaa munansa, mutta paha vaimo ei huolla lapsiaankaan = An ant carries her egg, but a bad woman is not taking care of her children

Muurahainen muuttomies; mauriainen maamies = (farmers' observation: muurahainen is *Formica rufa*, which builds anthills and is a mover; mauriainen is *Lasius niger*, which has its nest in the soil and is a farmer, "meaning that even your son will still be living in your house")

Puhdistusoperaatiot alkavat, sanoi sotamies Kontas, kun paitansa muurahaispesään pisti = Cleaning operations are beginning, soldier Kontas said, when he put his shirt on a ant hill ("ants clean lice and this idiom is what soldiers used to say jokingly")

Kuhinaa ku kusiaispesiisä suviaamuna = Swarming like on ant hill in summer morning ("when lots of people are seemingly aimlessly milling around")

Sohoo kun kusiaspesda = Poke at something like an ant hill ("to be insistent")

Hienot nivuset kun kusijaisella = Fine groins like the groins of an ant ("ironic: great effort meaning little")

On kuin kusijainen: mennee vaikka valkiaan = To be like an ant, go through it ("a big mess/problems to master")

Kiehuu ko kusuaispesä = Boiling lake an anthill ("someone is agitated like the activity in an anthill")

Kiahuu kun viholaispesä = Boiling like an ant hill (viholainen is a stinging ant genus *Myrmica*)

Kuhajaa ko kusijaispesä = Swarming like an ant hill ("to be all over the place")

Kihisee ja kahisee ko kusiaspesä keväällä= Swarm and rustle like on an ant hill in the spring ("being active")

Muurahainen kantaa 10 kertaa itsensä painon, mutta se ei kuulukaan ammattiyhdistykseen = An ant carries a 10 times heavier load, but the ant is not a member of any trade union

4. Discussion

Two conclusions can immediately be drawn when we compare with each other Finnish and German idioms containing references to insects. Firstly, currently (for it might have been different in the past) the Finnish language appears to contain far more idioms with references to insects than German. Secondly, contrary to common sense (ERREN et al. 2013) the smaller insect biodiversity in Finland because of its northern geography has obviously not led to a smaller number of idioms with insect references, but actually to a greater number that refer to certain specific and highly abundant species. In both countries Diptera such as flies and mosquitoes play major roles with parasites like fleas, lice and bugs also being involved in their share of idioms, especially so in Finnish (to be shown in a future report, but not addressed in this paper).

The idioms in both countries can be assigned to five major categories: 1. Those that are a reflection of an insect's role with regard to weather, seasons and agricultural activity; 2. those that are humorous, ironic or sarcastic in nature; 3. those that refer to human behaviour and either criticize or praise a person's effort; 4. those that advise people how to deal with certain situations and 5. those that do not seem to have any obvious logical connection (or have lost the original connection) to the insect mentioned in them. Each of these categories could, of course, be broken down into sub-categories to distinguish those, for example, that refer to general attitudes about the weather or relate mainly to farming activities and the seasons alone, are either good-humoured or 'biting', chastise human behaviour or are meant to calm down and mollify a situation. For this paper, however, the afore-mentioned five major categories should suffice and sorting the listed idioms according to them reveals an interesting trend.

Some idioms obviously qualify to be assigned not just to one category, but to two or even more. Take for instance the German "Sich über jeden Fliegendreck aufregen" or " Eine Laus im Kraut ist besser als gar nichts", which can be interpreted as advice, but may also be listed under commenting on someone's unacceptable behaviour or be filed under humorous and ironic idioms. The same situation applies to many Finnish idioms, which explains why in table 1 the total number of idioms in it does not tally up with the number of idioms given in this paper. Occasionally an idiom may not be categorizable at all and is then not entered into table 1.

Another easily to be explained feature of many idioms is that they occur in a number of local variants, e.g., if in the German

Tab. 1: Contexts and numbers of uses of insect idioms by German and Finnish native speakers.
Tab. 1: Kontexte und Anzahl der Verwendungen von Insekten-Idiomen durch deutsche und finnische Muttersprachler.

Idioms with insects and connections with	German idioms	Finnish idioms
Weather, seasons, agricultural activities	-0-	-14-
Humorous, ironic or sarcastic comments	-8-	-30-
Critique or praise of human behaviour	-15-	-34-
Advice to humans how to master a situation	-9-	-33-
No obvious source of origin	-2-	-3-

idioms, people refer to the "Deubel" in some regions, but it is the "Teufel" in others or if in some regions it is with "Tücke" that one catches a "Mücke", but it is with "Spucke" in others. Such regional variations of basically the same idiom also occur with regard to many Finnish idioms and suggests close relationships between some regions, but also a trend to adapt idioms to a local region's dialect or preference. Preferences in connection with positive or negative attitudes have sometimes led to contradictory idioms. For example, "Apu hyttysenkin apu on" = Even the help of a mosquito is helping (a little bit of help can go a long way and is better than nothing) and "Siinä on lissää, sano hyttys, kun mereen pissi" = Here is some more, the mosquito said, when it pissed into the ocean (someone's 'gracious' help may be nothing at all) are clearly opposites, expressing optimistic and pessimistic viewpoints.

What is certainly interesting and not necessarily based on a historical relationship between the idioms of the two countries (although, of course, inter-cultural links between them have been existing for a very long time), is the virtual identity of the meanings and uses of certain idioms in the German and Finnish languages. "Zwei Fliegen mit einer Klappe schlagen" or "Aus einer Mücke einen Elefanten machen" have their Finnish equivalents in " Kaksi kärpästä yhdella iskulla" and "Tehdä kärpäsestä härkänen", while "Ahkera kuin muurahainen" means the same as "ameisenfleißig" in the German idiom. Idioms like the latter are likely to have evolved from independent observations in both countries and the warning not to poke into a wasp's nest because that could result in trouble (Finnish: Niin on kun ampiaispessee sohases; German: In ein Wespennest stechen) would enter anyone's mind whether in Germany, Finland or elsewhere, who had experienced the consequence of such an action. And the somewhat ironic but perhaps comforting comments in the respective Finnish and German languages like "Ain se avuks on ika karvane kaalfaris" and "Eine Laus im Kraut ist besser als gar nichts" can also be assumed to have quite independent origins. But once again, there is also the negative alternative: "Ei sääsken sääresta paljon paisteta" = one foot of a mosquito is not much as a roast.

Analysing and comparing the idioms of the two countries shows one clear trend: there are virtually no insect idioms in the German list that refer to weather, seasons and conditions, i.e. idioms that predominantly farmers and rural folk would use. Finns, however, have quite a number of such idioms and they also use more idioms with an ironic or even sarcastic undertone than Germans do. In both countries people have idioms that criticize and advise others, but idioms to calm down and make people accept a challenging situation or an adverse condition are more common in the Finnish language and perhaps reflect the greater difficulties to survive in the harsher climate of northern Europe. The references to loneliness and poverty in many Finnish idioms but less so in the German ones suggest the same. Idioms that refer mainly to human behaviour and express critical attitudes dominate in the German list, e.g, "Grillen im Kopf haben"; "Sich über jeden Fliegendreck aufregen"; "Jemandem eine Laus in den Pelz setzen", etc . This may be due to a smaller willingness of Germans to tolerate what is seen as unacceptable behaviour in a more populous society, while amongst the sparse population of Finns the tendency expressed in their insect idioms is less direct and more of advice to overcome difficulties, even if uttered with an ironic undertone.

Did our study provide evidence for a role of insect idioms in the mindset of people? Looking only at Diptera and Hymenoptera, the negative attitude towards flies and mosquitoes clearly dominates in the Diptera. However, for Hymenoptera the situation is less clear-cut and a considerable number of idioms could be called neutral and some are

clearly referring to positive traits of hymenopteran species, e.g. being fast, industrious, and social. Can such idioms affect a person's attitude towards specific insects? Based on the study by OHMAN & MINEKA (2001) on fear learning and the analysis by RAYKOV (2004) on social interactions related to anxiety, one might answer that question in the affirmative. In fact, most people would agree that if a happy and smiling one-year-old infant sees and hears another, unrelated baby cry at the sight of a creepy crawly insect, the mood of the former, happy infant will change and it may also start to cry for no apparent reason other than seeing and hearing another baby cry. Likewise, as STADLER (2012) explains, when a customer happens to phone a shop owner and talks with an angry voice (irrespective of the call's content (our addition)), it will affect and change the mood of the recipient. Negative as well as positive emotions are copied by mirror neurons; learning is not involved. That repeated emotional stimulation can ultimately alter the emotional right hemisphere of the brain and lead to a deeper unconscious reaction in connection with the appropriate stimulation has originally been postulated by TSUNODA (1978) and the more frequent use of insect idioms by country people such as farmers is therefore likely to swing a person's attitude towards accepting insects more readily than it does in an urban dweller.

DUDA & BROWN (1984) thoroughly investigated lateral asymmetry of positive and negative emotions and SCHAPKIN (2000) confirmed hemispheric asymmetries in connection with emotional words. HOLTGRAVES & FELTON (2011) studied hemispheric asymmetries in relation to the processing of negative and positive words and BERAHA et al. (2012), a year later, examined the hemispheric asymmetry for affective stimulus processing. Finally, GAINOTTI (2019) very recently reviewed the evidence for the role of the right hemisphere in emotion processing. It therefore appears highly likely that frequent exposure to idioms expressing certain attitudes can indeed lead to long-lasting effects. Idioms and proverbs, after all, have been credited with an ability to affect the experience and the behaviour of humans (FLADERER & FREY 2017).

An aspect not to be ignored is 'familiarity' with insects and other arthropods. Urbanization leads to an increasing alienization regarding insects and one consequence of this is that nowadays fewer people residing in towns know and use idioms that make reference to insects as seen not only with regard to Finns and Germans, but especially so with English and German speakers when compared, for example, with the Japanese (MEYER-ROCHOW et al. 2000). Historically many more insect and spider idioms were in use than is now the case (PIIRAINEN 2011) and secondly, as with taboos (MEYER-ROCHOW 2009), once prejudices and antipathies become established, it takes a very long time before they are abandoned. To recover insect-related idioms or to see a revival of them is therefore not to be expected. Thus, it is indeed desirable to record and document now where and by whom idioms that contain references to insects are still being used. Such idioms mirror the familiarity and abundance of certain insect species of a region and information such as this should be of interest not only to entomologists, but also sociologists, linguists and others concerned about us humans and the environment we live in.

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Artikel/Article: Insects that Inspired German and Finnish Insect Idioms that Affected Human Attitudes Towards Insects* Durch Insekten inspirierte deutsche und finnsche Redensarten, die einen Einfluss auf die Wertschätzung dieser Tiere haben 61-74