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# OF MICE AND MEN: PETA'S ANIMAL-FRIENDLY IDIOMS AS A STRATEGY AGAINST SPECIESISM?

## Apie peles ir žmones: PETA gyvūnams draugiškos idiomos kaip strategija prieš rūšiškumą?

### ANNOTATION

Language shapes our understanding of animals and can influence social attitudes and behaviors toward them. Despite the progress in animal welfare, the English language continues to perpetuate prejudice against animals that can justify violence against them. To combat linguistic speciesism and promote non-discriminatory language, People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) proposed animal-friendly alternatives to replace speciesist idioms. Examples of these alternatives include *feed two birds with one scone* and *bring home the bagels*, suggested instead of *kill two birds with one stone* and *bring home the bacon*. This study uses linguistic and critical discourse analyses to examine the corpus of 166 words and phrases comprising original and animal-friendly idioms. The study objective is to assess the potential of PETA's alternative expressions to replace discriminatory language. The paper argues that while some animal-friendly alternatives might gain public acceptance, others may be too unfamiliar or contrived to be widely adopted. Additionally, these expressions could backfire and undermine the animal rights movement by making it appear radical or out-of-touch. Despite the limitations, PETA's campaign has the potential to raise awareness about speciesism in the English language and promote non-discriminatory language use in applied linguistics, especially among young learners and non-native English speakers.

KEYWORDS: speciesism, PETA, animal-friendly idioms, linguistic discrimination, critical discourse analysis, applied linguistics.

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ANOTACIJA

Kalba formuoja mūsų supratimą apie gyvūnus ir gali paveikti socialines nuostatas ir elgesį su jais. Nepaisant pažangos gyvūnų gerovės srityje, anglų kalba vis dar skatina rūšių diskriminaciją, kuri gali pateisinti smurtą prieš gyvūnus. Norėdama kovoti su lingvistiniu rūšiškumu ir skatinti nediskriminacinę kalbą, organizacija „People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals" (liet. „Žmonės už etišką elgesį su gyvūnais") vietoje rūšies požiūriu diskriminuojančių idiomų pasiūlė gyvūnams draugiškus alternatyvius posakius. Tarp šių alternatyvų yra „feed two birds with one scone" ir „bring home the bagels" vietoj „kill two birds with one stone" (liet. *vienu šūviu nušauti du zuikius* 'atlikti du reikalus vienu kartu') ir „bring home the bacon" (liet. *parnešti namo lašinių* 'uždirbti, parnešti atlygį'). Remiantis lingvistine ir kritine diskurso analize, šiame tyrime siekiama ištirti 166 žodžius ir frazes, sudarančias originalias ir gyvūnams draugiškas idiomas. Siekiama įvertinti PETA pasiūlytų alternatyvių idiomų potencialą pakeisti diskriminacinę kalbą. Straipsnyje teigiama, kad nors kai kurios gyvūnams draugiškos idiomos gali sėkmingai įsitvirtinti visuomenės gyvenime, kitos gali būti pernelyg neatpažįstamos ar nenatūralios, kad būtų plačiai priimtos. Be to, šie posakiai galėtų neigiamai paveikti ir pakenkti gyvūnų teisių judėjimui, paverčiant jį radikaliu ar atitrūkusiu nuo realybės. Nepaisant galimų trūkumų, PETA kampanija turi potencialą ugdyti visuomenės sąmoningumą apie rūšiškumą anglų kalboje ir skatinti nediskriminacinę kalbą taikomosios kalbotyros srityje, ypač tarp besimokančio jaunimo ir žmonių, kuriems anglų kalba nėra gimtoji.

ESMINIAI ŽODŽIAI: rūšiškumas, PETA, gyvūnams draugiškos idiomos, lingvistinė diskriminacija, kritinė diskurso analizė, taikomoji kalbotyra.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In December 2018, an American animal rights organization People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) sparked criticism after urging English-language speakers to replace speciesist idioms with animal-friendly alternatives. PETA argued that expressions *kill two birds with one stone*, *bring home the bacon* and *beat a dead horse* were no different from racist or homophobic phrases and, therefore, had to be replaced with alternatives, such as *feed two birds with one scone, bring home the bagels*, and *feed a fed horse* (PETA 2018). While the initiative received mixed responses, it raised important questions about the role of language in reinforcing or challenging speciesism and the potential of language change to promote the non-discriminatory treatment of animals.

The present study uses the case of PETA's animal-friendly idioms to address the issue of linguistic speciesism. The objective of this study is twofold: firstly, to critically examine the animal-friendly idioms proposed by PETA, and secondly, to assess the potential of the alternative expressions to replace speciesist language. The study uses a critical discourse approach to assess the strengths and

limitations of PETA's suggested expressions to understand their effectiveness in challenging and replacing speciesist language. In doing so, this research contributes to a better understanding of the role of language in perpetuating or challenging speciesism. Ultimately, the study seeks to contribute to creating a more inclusive and equitable language by challenging and transforming how we speak about and relate to non-human animals.

The research data comprise the speciesist expressions that promote violence against animals selected by PETA and the alternative phrases suggested by the organization to replace them. More specifically, the study analyzes a corpus of animal-friendly idioms comprising 166 expressions (88 original English words and phrases and 88 alternative ones) presented on PETA's official website. The organization has updated the list since the original tweet published in December 2018 (PETA n.d.).

The paper begins with a brief account of the origin and definitions of the term "speciesism", followed by an overview of approaches to speciesism in linguistics. It then proceeds to analyze the alternative animal-friendly idioms suggested by PETA and their potential to replace speciesist language. Finally, the paper discusses the implications of PETA's initiative for applied linguistics, particularly in raising awareness about speciesism among English-language speakers and promoting non-discriminatory language use.

## 2. THE ORIGIN AND DEFINITIONS OF SPECIESISM

The term "speciesism" was coined in 1970 by British psychologist Richard D. Ryder as a way to describe discrimination against non-human animals in a pamphlet criticizing animal experimentation (Ryder 2000: 5; 2010). The word was inspired by similar terms such as "racism" and "sexism". At the time, Ryder was a clinical psychologist at the Warneford Hospital in Oxford and a member of the Oxford group, which included university faculty and students who believed that discrimination against other species was irrational and unjust, much like discrimination based on an individual's race or sex.

Since then the concept of speciesism has gained widespread acceptance and is frequently used in various domains beyond animal experimentation. In his seminal work *Animal Liberation* philosopher Peter Singer defined speciesism as "a prejudice or attitude of bias in favor of the interests of members of one's own species and against those of members of other species" (Singer 2015, Chapter 1, para. 13). Singer's definition draws from Jeremy Bentham's principle of equal consideration of interests, which applies to animals based on their capacity to

experience feelings and sensations. Singer argues that animals should be treated as independent sentient beings whose interests ought to be considered the same as those of people.

Singer's book profoundly impacted the animal rights movement and inspired Ingrid Newkirk, who founded and became the president of PETA. Newkirk described Singer's work as a "philosophical bombshell" that forever changed the conversation about our treatment of animals (Newkirk n.d.). Further acknowledging the powerful effect of Singer's work, animal rights advocate and author Joan Dunayer promoted the concept of "speciesism" in her linguistic works. Dunayer's seminal book *Animal Equality: Language and Liberation* (2001) presents a valuable resource for anyone interested in animal rights and language.

Scholars and practitioners from various fields have joined philosophers in promoting animal rights within their respective domains. Biologists, ecologists, and veterinarians advocate for better animal welfare practices, while lawyers and policymakers work to establish more robust legal frameworks to protect animals. As a result, animal rights are becoming a mainstream concern in many domains, with businesses, governments, and individuals all taking steps to address issues related to animal welfare and ethics (Linzey, Clarke 2004; STN 2012; Kalof 2017; PH 2018; Linzey, Linzey 2019).

Despite the growing interest in speciesism, there was little effort to clarify its meaning. According to Oscar Horta, an animal ethics scholar, there is only one kind of speciesism, despite differing views and positions (Horta 2010: 243). Horta and Frauke Albersmeier (2020) further argue that the lack of a clear definition of speciesism has caused a poor understanding of the concept. As a result, the term has been employed in ways that may display a speciesist bias. Upon conducting an exhaustive analysis of existing definitions of speciesism, Horta and Albersmeier have proposed a "wide and evaluative" definition of the term as "unjustified consideration or treatment of those who are not classified as belonging to a certain species" (Horta, Albersmeier 2020: 1). This approach views and treats speciesism as a form of discrimination, similar to other discriminatory practices, such as racism and sexism. Furthermore, this definition has implications for understanding speciesism as a serious ethical issue, which requires greater attention from the public and scholars.

## 3. DEFINING "SPECIESISM" IN DICTIONARIES AND ENCYCLOPEDIAS

The term "speciesism" gained recognition in the English language and was officially included in the Oxford English Dictionary (OED) in 1985

(Ryder 2017: 77). The ODE defines speciesism as "discrimination against or exploitation of animal species by human beings, based on an assumption of mankind's superiority", highlighting the role of exploitation.

Other major English language dictionaries also have entries on speciesism, but they provide varying definitions for the term in British and American English. For instance, the British definition of the term in the Collins Dictionary describes speciesism as "a belief of humans that all other species of animals are inferior and may therefore be used for human benefit without regard to the suffering inflicted." In contrast, the American definition in the same dictionary describes speciesism as "discrimination against or exploitation of animals based on the assumption that humans are superior to and more important than all other species" (CD). These differing definitions highlight cultural variations in the interpretation of the concept, with the British English definition emphasizing beliefs and the American English definition emphasizing practices and behavior.

Multiple specialized dictionaries, encyclopedias, and handbooks with entries on speciesism offer varying definitions of the term. The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy defines speciesism as "the improper stance of refusing respect to the lives, dignity, rights or needs of animals of other species" (Blackburn 2016: 453). In *A Dictionary of Psychology*, speciesism is described as "the intrinsic superiority of the human species over all others, often accompanied by an assumption that human beings are therefore justified in exploiting non–human animals for their own advantage" (Colman 2015: 717). Similarly, *A Dictionary of Critical Theory* defines speciesism as "[a] prejudice or exceptionalism exhibited by one species (typically humans) with regard to another species (typically animals in general)" (Buchanan 2018). The *Encyclopedia Britannica* provides a separate entry on speciesism in the philosophy and religion section (Duignan 2010) and briefly mentions the phenomenon in several other articles.

Despite its significance in various fields such as philosophy, psychology, sociology, and critical animal theory, speciesism has not received adequate attention in linguistic dictionaries and encyclopedias. Major English language dictionaries and encyclopedias, such as *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Language*, *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the Language Sciences*, and *The Encyclopedia of Applied Linguistics*, lack separate entries or mentions of "speciesism". While it is briefly touched upon in the *Environment and Language* article under the *Themes in Language and Environment* subsection of the *Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics* (Mühlhäusler 2006: 204), no comprehensive information on linguistic speciesism or any definition of the term is provided. The omission of such entries limits the accessibility and understanding of speciesism within linguistic studies.

## 4. SPECIESISM AS A LINGUISTIC PHENOMENON

Linguistic speciesism is a form of discrimination or bias in language use that favors or privileges certain species, typically humans, over others. It involves language reinforcing the belief that humans are superior to other species and that their interests and experiences are more important or relevant than the experiences of non-human animals. Linguistic speciesism can manifest in various ways, for instance, through anthropocentric assumptions, derogatory language, speciesist slurs, or exclusionary language that disregards or marginalizes non-human animals. It can also manifest in the representation and portrayal of animals in language, literature, media, and other forms of communication. Linguistic speciesism is a topic of ongoing debate and study within linguistics, animal studies and ethics as it raises questions about language, power dynamics, and ethical considerations in human-animal relationships.

Michael Halliday, the founder of Systemic Functional Linguistics, is considered the first to introduce the concept of speciesism in Applied Linguistics. In his article "New Ways of Meaning: The Challenge to Applied Linguistics" (2006) presented at the Ninth World Congress of Applied Linguistics in 1990, Halliday argues that social and political issues are linguistically constructed and that humans' special position is structurally integrated into the language system.

Investigations into speciesism in Ecolinguistics were significantly influenced by Halliday's criticism of the language system. Within this field, researchers primarily focus on discursive representations of animals, taking a critical approach towards the topic (Cook, Sealey 2018). Notable studies in this area include works by Arran Stibbe (2003; 2006; 2012), Joan Dunayer (2003), Alwin Fill, Peter Mühlhäusler (2006), and Reinhard Heuberger (2003; 2007).

Guy Cook and Alison Sealey (2018) classified all studies on linguistic speciesism into three main categories: (1) research primarily about language and incidentally about animals, (2) research primarily about animals and incidentally about language, and (3) works that focus on both language and animals. Furthermore, they found that most research on linguistic speciesism falls into the first category, with the language being the primary focus and animals only incidentally addressed. However, they argue that it is vital to include animals as a central focus in language studies because linguistic representations of animals can have real-world implications for their treatment and welfare.

*Animal Equality: Language and Liberation* by J. Dunayer (2001) remains one of the most significant works on linguistic speciesism. Through her analysis of common phrases and terms used to refer to animals, such as *beasts*, *critters*, and

*livestock*, Dunayer critiques how language reinforces speciesism and discriminatory attitudes toward animals. She also examines the use of language in various contexts, including scientific research, advertising, and popular culture, to demonstrate how the language we use shapes our attitudes and behaviors toward animals. Furthermore, Dunayer emphasizes the importance of linguistic awareness and encourages readers to challenge harmful practices and promote language that reflects a more compassionate and respectful view of non-human animals.

Another comprehensive study into linguistic speciesism is *Animals Erased* by A. Stibbe (2012). The book highlights the disappearance and erasure of animals from our consciousness, not only in the sense of extinction but also in terms of their representation through discourse. Stibbe (2012: 3) argues that discourses representing animals in discriminatory and inhumane ways are "destructive" and suggests creating alternative discourses that promote reconnection to animals and nature.

Other studies have found that animal names used metaphorically in general discourse can reinforce speciesism. In addition, words whose "core" meaning is to name an animal are often used in this way to refer to human attributes and values, as animal metaphors for humans are prevalent in general discourse (Cook, Sealey 2018: 317). Andrew Goatly (2006) found that such metaphors are often pejorative, suggesting a desire to distance ourselves from animals conceptually and emotionally. Animals with individual names can be classified as "pets" or "members of the family", while farm animals are less likely to be named, but when they are, they are often known for their "character" (Cook, Sealey 2018: 317). Furthermore, proverbs often depict nonhuman animals being killed or used by humans, making such acts seem acceptable due to the speciesist belief that humans have the right to exploit animals for their purposes and enjoyment (Guevara Labaca 2017: 4).

However, research on animal idioms has primarily focused on lexicographic, psycholinguistic, neurolinguistic, and computational perspectives, similar to the analysis of other idiomatic expressions (Espinal, Mateu 2019). Cook and Sealey (2018) emphasize the necessity of critically examining how animals are represented in language and discourse. They also highlight the importance of interdisciplinary approaches in ecolinguistics that unite scholars from various fields to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the intricate relationships between language, culture, and the natural world. Therefore, it is essential to critically analyze how animals are portrayed in language and explore alternative ways of speaking about them that challenge harmful stereotypes and promote greater empathy and respect. Such critical analysis can help to identify and address instances of speciesism in language and encourage the development and adoption of non–discriminatory language use.

## 5. THE ANALYSIS OF PETA'S ANIMAL–FRIENDLY IDIOMS

People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) is a well-known American nonprofit organization that has been a vocal advocate for animal rights in various industries such as agriculture, clothing, and entertainment. The organization is known for its thought-provoking campaigns that utilize slogans, images, and idiomatic expressions to promote language change and challenge societal norms around animal cruelty.

PETA's initiative, also known as the "Bringing home the bagels" campaign, to replace discriminatory idioms with animal-friendly alternatives is one example of the organization's ongoing efforts to promote a more compassionate world for all animals. PETA launched the campaign on its social media platforms in December 2018. The initiative has become one of PETA's most publicized and controversial campaigns.

As part of the campaign, the organization suggested alternative expressions for common idioms such as *kill two birds with one stone*, *beat a dead horse*, and *bring home the bacon*. In particular, PETA recommended using *feed two birds with one scone*, *feef a fed horse*, and *bring home the bagels*. It explained the reasoning behind the campaign by stating that words matter, and our language must evolve as our understanding of social justice evolves. The organization's message was clear: remove speciesism from your daily conversations. The campaign received a strong media reaction, with The Washington Post reporting in December 2018 that the tweet had over 3,000 retweets, 9,000 likes, and 1,500 comments, and as the article stated, "It's safe to say people weren't too thrilled" (Wang 2018).

The initiative also features a series of posters and educational materials with speciesist expressions and their animal-friendly alternatives. The campaign is aimed at young learners because PETA believes that children are more receptive to new ideas and, therefore, more likely to adopt animal-friendly language. The organization advocates the adoption of alternative idioms among young individuals to foster a more compassionate and respectful society towards animals (PETA 2018).

Since 2018, PETA has expanded the list of alternative idioms. The "Complete list of animal-friendly idioms" currently contains 166 expressions, including 88 original words and phrases and 88 alternatives proposed by PETA (PETA n.d.). The organization continues its campaign on its official website and Twitter, inviting the public to create new animal-friendly idioms.

Before analyzing PETA's animal-friendly expressions, it is important to address a terminological issue regarding their use of the term "idiom". In linguistics,

idioms are defined as "fixed multi-word expressions that conceptually encode non-compositional meaning" (Espinal, Mateu 2019). In other words, idioms are phrases that function as a single unit (Ayto 2020) to convey a figurative meaning that cannot be inferred from the literal meanings of the individual words. Therefore, it is worth noting that not all entries labeled as "idioms" by PETA conform to the strict definition of the term. For example, single-word metaphors such as *badger*, *parrot*, and *dogfight* on PETA's list are not idioms in the traditional sense of the term.

However, Raymond Gibbs (2007) challenges the traditional view of idioms as "bits and pieces of fossilized language" (p. 702) and argues that the traditional approach fails to account for the metaphorical thought process of contemporary language speakers. According to Gibbs, studying idioms provides a unique opportunity to understand the rich and flexible nature of natural language and human thought (Gibbs 2007: 721).

Another issue that needs to be considered is the nature of idioms. According to John Ayto (2020), idioms are characterized by semantic opaqueness and fixedness, meaning that their components are typically fixed, at least to some degree (Espinal, Mateu, 2019), and difficult to substitute. Replacing keywords in original idioms raises doubts about whether PETA's proposed alternative expressions are true idioms or should be classified as quasi-idioms. However, this study does not aim to define their status, as it may be explored in future research. For convenience, this paper uses the term "animal-friendly idioms", widely recognized by the public familiar with the campaign and frequently used in the media.

While the reasons behind PETA's selection of 88 speciesist idioms are not clear, it is still important to critically examine the alternative expressions and their potential impact on shaping attitudes and behaviors towards animals. Some of these expressions explicitly promote violent behavior towards animals or are discriminatory, such as *more than one way to skin a cat*, *like a chicken with its head cut off*, or *shoot fish in a barrel*. Others cast animals in negative connotations or use the names of animals to describe negative human traits, for instance, *chicken out*, *bull in a china factory*, or *stubborn as a mule*. On the other hand, idioms *snail mail* or *back the wrong horse* are not inherently discriminatory. However, it can be argued that some idioms, such as those mentioned above, may contribute to the normalization and perpetuation of certain discriminatory attitudes and behaviors.

The alternative expressions provided by PETA use various linguistic strategies to create animal-friendly idioms. The most popular strategy is a substitution, where the original word referring to an animal is replaced with an animal-friendly alternative. For instance, *kill two birds with one stone* was replaced with *feed two birds with one scone*, whereas *mad as a March hare* was replaced with

*mad as a hatter*. Other suggestions include idioms *take the flower by the thorns* (replacing *take the bull by the horns*), *an ace in the hand is worth two in the deck* (replacing *a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush*), *act like an ogre* (replacing *act like an animal*), and *a flower in your cap* (replacing *a feather in your cap*).

On multiple occasions, the substitution strategy is combined with various stylistic and rhetorical devices, such as alliteration, rhyme, humor, and pun. The use of alliteration and rhyme allows creating memorable and catchy expressions. For instance, *bring home the bacon* was replaced with *bring home the bagels*, which uses alliteration and rhyme to make the animal-friendly idiom more appealing and easier to remember. The alternative expressions rhyming with the original idioms include *stubborn as a fool* (replacing *stubborn as a mule*), *cry over spilt Silk* (replacing *cry over spilt milk*), and *build a better mouse pad* (replacing *build a better mousetrap*). Alliteration is used in expressions *filthy fiend* (instead of *dirty dog*), *packed in like pickles* (instead of *packed in like sardines*), *put all your berries in one basket* (instead of *put all your eggs in one basket*), *molasses mail* (instead of *snail mail*) and others.

While the majority of proposed alternative expressions are reminiscent of the original idioms and readily evoke the intended meaning, some appear more contrived and may require greater cognitive effort to understand. Moreover, a few of them, such as *thorn in your side* (replacing *bee in your bonnet*), *cool your jets* (replacing *hold your horses*), and *that boat won't float* (replacing *that dog won't hunt*) and several others, do not have an obvious connection to the original expressions.

PETA employs humor in their animal-friendly idioms to engage the audience and convey the message effectively. For example, *beat a dead horse* was replaced with *feed a fed horse*, which is a humorous twist on the original idiom. Among other examples are *talk Tofurky* (a vegetarian or vegan meat substitute, which is a blend of tofu or seitan, and other ingredients to give it the texture and flavor of turkey) (replacing *talk turkey*). The humorous effect in the above phrases is created by using a pun – a play on words that relies on the double meanings or similar sounds of words to create humor or new meaning. This stylistic device is also used to create expressions *not my first roadshow* (replacing *not my first rodeo*), *smell a rotten apple* (replacing *smell a rat*), *wild gooseberry chase* (replacing *wild goose chase*), *the strawberry that broke the gardener's basket* (replacing *the straw that broke the camel's back*) and *that really gets my goatee* (replacing *that really gets my goat*).

While PETA has introduced numerous new animal-friendly expressions, in several instances, the organization suggests replacing speciesist language with pre-existing English phrases. For example, it urges replacing *open a can of worms* with *open Pandora's box*, *chicken out* with *lose your nerve*, and *let the cat out of*

*the bag* with *spill the beans*. However, such instances are relatively few and are mostly confined to the above examples.

In several instances, PETA recommends replacing idioms with words and phrases that have literal or straightforward meanings, such as *not my problem* (instead of *not my circus, not my monkeys*), *moneymaker* (instead of *cash cow*), *mind your own business* (instead of *curiosity killed the cat*), and *monopolize* (instead of *hog*). While these suggestions lack the expressionism found in the original idioms, they are devoid of speciesism.

Additionally, the semantics of some animal-friendly expressions differ from those of the original idioms. For instance, the recommended alternative *eat your words* means "to admit that something you said before was wrong", while the original American idiom *eat crow* means "to be forced to admit to having made a mistake, as by retracting an emphatic statement; suffer humiliation" (CD). Another suggestion, the verb *gluttonize*, means "to eat excessively", while *eat like a pig* means "to eat a lot of food, usually in a greedy or disgusting manner" (CD). Thus, the alternative expression only partly delivers the meaning of the original one. Furthermore, the meanings of several suggestions, such as *halftime show* or *free-to-all*, recommended as replacements for *dog and pony show* and *dogfight*, differ from the meanings of the original expressions.

Thus, PETA's animal-friendly idioms employ a range of linguistic strategies to create memorable and catchy phrases. This approach captivates the audience's attention and effectively delivers the message, encouraging English-language speakers to contemplate the ethical treatment of animals in their daily vocabulary.

## 6. THE LIMITATIONS AND POTENTIAL IMPLICATIONS OF PETA'S CAMPAIGN

PETA's campaign to create animal-friendly idioms has both strengths and limitations. While it challenges the use of speciesist language and encourages critical thinking about the messages sent by our words, the alternative expressions do not resonate culturally or linguistically and are unlikely to be widely accepted by the general public. For example, while the new idiom *itches in your britches* maintains the poetic quality of the original *ants in your pants*, it is too contrived and obscure for people to understand. Similarly, the brand name *Silk* (a plant-based milk produced by Danone North America) in *cry over spilt Silk* is not familiar to all English-language speakers.

While some may find animal-friendly idioms clever or humorous, others view them as contrived and even ridiculous (Wang 2018). Therefore, there is a risk that the initiative may backfire and undermine the efforts of animal rights

activists. Furthermore, concerns may arise about the potential consequences of PETA's campaign. Critics might argue that using animal–friendly idioms is trivial and does not address the root causes of animal exploitation and abuse. They may suggest that instead of focusing on language, we should advocate for systemic changes that address the underlying issues perpetuating animal suffering. Thus, the campaign may be counterproductive as it could be perceived as overly zealous or even ridiculous, which could alienate potential allies and reinforce negative stereotypes about animal rights activists.

Additionally, some of the new idioms proposed by PETA may have unintended negative consequences. For example, the replacement of *act like an animal* with act *like an ogre* may be seen as promoting negative stereotypes about humans, as the word *ogre* can refer to a cruel or monstrous person (CD). Similarly, PETA's suggestions to replace idioms like *dog-eat-dog world*, *like a chicken with its head cut off*, *shoot fish in a barrel* with *a cut-throat world*, *like your hair is on fire*, and *steal candy from a baby*, respectively, could potentially encourage negative behavior towards humans.

Furthermore, the alternatives proposed by PETA lack the natural process of linguistic evolution and therefore face challenges in gaining widespread acceptance or usage. In comparison, traditional idioms have a rich cultural significance that might be perceived as missing from PETA's campaign, which may appear contrived. Although the origins of some conventional idioms may be obscure, their meanings and usage are deeply ingrained in language and culture. In contrast, the artificial expressions created by PETA lack this natural evolution process and may struggle to gain acceptance or usage.

Despite these limitations, PETA's campaign raises awareness about linguistic speciesism, challenges the norm of speciesist phrases, and encourages people to think critically about the language they use and the messages it sends. The initiative could prove particularly effective in teaching English to young learners and non–native speakers. Although it may not be necessary to encourage their use of alternative expressions, it is crucial to urge them not to use the speciesist language.

## 7. CONCLUSION

After a critical evaluation and assessment of PETA's animal–friendly idioms, the findings of this study suggest that the likelihood of their replacing traditional ones in everyday use is minimal. The potential for such expressions to gain widespread usage is limited by several factors, including the resistance of language users to change established patterns of language use, the lack of cultural resonance of the new expressions, and their contrived nature. Moreover, simply

substituting animal-related terms in idiomatic expressions does not necessarily address the underlying issues of animal exploitation and oppression. These issues require more comprehensive and sustained efforts toward creating a culture of respect and empathy toward non-human animals. Therefore, while PETA's efforts to promote animal-friendly language are commendable, the practical impact of such initiatives in promoting animal welfare remains uncertain.

Despite these limitations, PETA's campaign is a positive step toward raising awareness about linguistic speciesism. Although the campaign may not lead to immediate changes in the language usage of English speakers, it can potentially influence new language learners and non-native speakers to avoid speciesist expressions. Therefore, the issue of speciesism deserves more attention in applied linguistics and education, and efforts should be made to educate educators and raise awareness of speciesist language practices among young learners and foreign English speakers. Moreover, raising awareness about linguistic speciesism through campaigns such as PETA's can encourage individuals to be more mindful of their language use and refrain from using discriminatory expressions, which could have broader social implications.

This study has provided new insights into the issue of linguistic speciesism, yet certain limitations must be acknowledged. Although the paper exclusively examined PETA's campaign to eliminate speciesist idioms from English, the findings may not apply to other languages and cultural contexts. Additionally, the study did not investigate the reactions of individuals and groups to this initiative, indicating the need for further research to assess the effectiveness and impact of the campaign.

Further research could also explore the complexities of speciesism in language and its impact on attitudes and behaviors toward animals. For instance, examining how different linguistic constructions influence our perceptions of non-human animals and our attitudes and beliefs toward them can be an important area of inquiry. Studying the potential impact of animal-friendly alternatives on attitudes and behaviors toward animals will help assess their potential adoption in different cultural and linguistic contexts. These avenues of research can provide valuable insights into the multifaceted relationship between language and speciesism, thereby contributing to developing more effective strategies for promoting social justice and equality.

Finally, including the term "speciesism" in linguistics dictionaries, handbooks, and encyclopedias along with other "-isms" would provide linguists, educators, and the general public with a more comprehensive understanding of the concept and its implications for language use and animal welfare. By addressing speciesism in language, we can take a small yet significant step toward creating a more equitable and just society for all beings.

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## Apie peles ir žmones: PETA gyvūnams draugiškos idiomos kaip strategija prieš rūšiškumą?

SANTRAUKA

Šiame tyrime nagrinėjamas organizacijos „People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals" (PETA, liet. „Žmonės už etišką elgesį su gyvūnais") pasiūlymas pakeisti nusistovėjusias anglų kalbos idiomas, kurios skatina smurtą prieš gyvūnus, gyvūnams draugiškomis alternatyvomis. Išanalizavus 88 gyvūnams draugiškus žodžius ir frazes lingvistinės ir kritinės diskurso analizės metodu, tyrime siekta įvertinti kampanijos stipriąsias ir silpnąsias puses. Straipsnyje konstatuojama, kad nors PETA siūlomos alternatyvos, tikėtina, nepakeis gyvūnus diskriminuojančios kalbos dėl savo dirbtinumo ir kultūrinio atotrūkio, iniciatyva turi teigiamą poveikį taikomajai lingvistikai ir švietimui. Kampanija plečia supratimą apie gyvūnus diskriminuojančią kalbą ir ragina žmones vengti su gyvūnais susijusių diskriminacinių posakių. Be to, PETA iniciatyva kelia klausimą apie prieš gyvūnus nukreiptos kalbos vartojimą kaip nusistovėjusią normą ir skatina kritiškai mąstyti apie žodžiais perduodamas žinutes. Nors ši kampanija gali neatnešti skubių pokyčių, tačiau ji turi potencialą paskatinti nediskriminacinį kalbos vartojimą taikomosios kalbotyros srityje, ypač tarp besimokančio jaunimo ir žmonių, kuriems anglų kalba nėra gimtoji.

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