

The Importance of Idioms for English Language Learners

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Abstract:

The focus of this paper is to share the importance of idioms for non-native speakers as part of their mastery of the English language.

More than just knowing the denotative meaning of words is required to comprehend the English lexicon. Its speakers must be able to comprehend connotative words as well as understand figurative language.

Keywords: English language, idiom, cliches and slang, prepositional usage, culture, Cooper, Tim Brown, newspaper headlines.

The English language being very flexible constantly enriches its vocabulary with words invented by language speakers, making it more colorful with new idiomatic expressions, and, at times, refills its stocks with the borrowings and neologisms. English just amazes by its extraordinary linguistic diversity.

The focus of this paper is to share the importance of idioms for non-native speakers as part of their mastery of the English language.

More than just knowing the denotative meaning of words is required to comprehend the English lexicon. Its speakers must be able to comprehend connotative words as well as understand figurative language. Idioms fall into the latter category. Learning idioms is certainly not *a piece of cake* (very easy), but once you know them, they can be a lot of fun, and anyway, because English people use idioms non-stop you will *be all at sea* (totally confused) in most conversations until you learn the ropes (understand how things work). So what is an idiom itself? Idioms share cultural and historical information and broadens people's understanding and manipulation of a language.

Idioms are defined as: (1) a language unique to a people, country, class, community, or, more rarely, an individual; (2) a construction or expression with a meaning other than the literal one or not following the language's regular patterns [5]. The second definition is the most appropriate for the topic of this paper.

Cliches and slang are examples of idioms, which encompass all the terms we use that are unique to English. Although prepositional usage is prevalent in idiomatic expressions [6], this paper focuses on idioms in figurative language. Two idioms are used in the following sentence:

Carol's father was going to see red is she failed tomorrow's exam. She was burning the midnight oil because she hadn't been taking her school work seriously.

Speakers who aren't sure what these words mean can utilize context clues to figure it out, but these idiomatic expressions are common among native speakers. The more comprehensible the input, the better the listener's, speaker's, writer's, and reader's skills will be. There are many instances where phrases are founded on ancient English prejudices, and a comparable prejudice held in other nations may cause the reader to be confused. "*A black cat crossed her path*", for example, could mean different things to different people. A black cat is thought to bring good luck to the English,

to the point where some students are supposed to look for a black cat crossing their path on their approach to college exams.

All of the above examples demonstrate the divisibility and unpredictability of phraseological units in a given discourse environment, demonstrating their instability. Although not every idiom will be learnt, as people become more familiar with English and are exposed to a greater number of native English speakers, they will encounter a higher number of idioms, depending on their interests. To grasp a language, we must first understand what the idioms in that language mean. We will be perplexed if we try to decipher the meaning of an idiom word for word. We must decipher its hidden significance. They aid language learners in comprehending English culture, as well as the customs and way of life of the English people and gaining a better understanding of English history.

However, learning idioms presents a host of difficulties for English learners, primarily because they don't know the culture and history behind English idioms. That is why they often use idioms incongruous with the situation. Indeed, English learners utilize idiomatic expressions very carefully, being afraid of using them incorrectly and being misunderstood. According to Cooper, idiom study presents a special language problem for all language learners because the figurative meaning is unpredictable. [3]

Idioms themselves give a deeper insight into British culture and actually make language a lot more interesting, so here are some English idiomatic meanings.

Idioms	Meanings
Barking up the wrong tree	<i>looking in the wrong place/accusing the wrong person</i>
The ball is in your court	<i>it's up to you to take the next step/make the right move</i>
Add insult to injury	<i>to further a loss with indignity or mockery/ to make an unfavourable situation a lot worse than it already is</i>
Best thing since sliced bread	<i>a good invention, innovation, idea or plan</i>

To learn more about idioms, consider the last example, "*the greatest thing since sliced bread*", which refers to "*a good invention, innovation, concept, or strategy*". It may seem self-evident, yet this idiom was born when sliced bread first appeared on store shelves in 1928. People were so taken aback by the concept that they began using the idiom to convey their enthusiasm for it on a daily basis. Idioms can also be found in newspapers and periodicals, radio shows, television shows, and films. Roleplaying, writing, and interactive games like idiom matching are some activities that can help second-language learners develop their knowledge and usage of idioms.

Knowing which idiom should be used when comes with practice and time. "If

you keep an open mind and play your cards right, your proficiency in English will soon be something to crow about" [4].

Tim Brown, former Foreign Teacher at Web International English said: If I had to *put it in a nutshell*, i.e. summarise it clearly, I would say that my reluctance stemmed from a fear that learners would find the idioms obscure and struggle to use them correctly.

However, experience has taught me differently. Here`s why:

1) Students very often describe situations for which an idiom is the best way of expressing what they want to say. Giving them the idiom therefore expands their ability to communicate their meaning.

2) Learners don't necessarily have to use a lot of idioms but they will need to have the most common ones in their passive knowledge if they wish to maximize their understanding of the language. This is a true of written language as spoken. Newspaper headlines are a good example here.

This article is about the importance of idioms in learning English. Learners can learn the followings from this article: If learners use more idioms in their speech, they can get better results, which can increase their skills in listening, speaking, and etc. Also, some idioms' definitions are used in both British English and American English. And some investigators' ideas about why learning idioms is important for second-language learners are used.

In conclusion, knowing an idiom is quite necessary and beneficial. Because learning idioms allows us to communicate effortlessly with native speakers while also learning more about their language, history, and culture than we previously knew. Finally, I'd like to point out that understanding idioms is an important part of our future lives. Because everyone who is learning English wants to communicate with native speakers more and, of course, study in places where the language is spoken. As a result, I believe this post benefits you in some way, encouraging you to study English more thoroughly and only go forward with your goals. Our listening, speaking, writing, and reading abilities will increase as more intelligible material is provided.

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