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THE IMPACT OF IDIOMS ON EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION: CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES SUMMARY

Idioms are an integral part of the English language, providing richness and expressiveness to communication. An idiom is a phrase or expression whose meaning is not immediately apparent from the individual words it contains. However, for non-native speakers, idioms present a unique set of challenges, often becoming stumbling blocks in both comprehension and usage. This article examined the impact of idioms on effective communication as well as ways of overcoming the difficulties pertaining the utilization of idiomatic expressions and phrases. Idioms enrich language but can create comprehension challenges due to their non-literal and culturally specific nature. Linguistic challenges include ambiguity and syntactic inflexibility, while cognitive challenges involve accessing stored knowledge and processing metaphorical meaning. Solutions include explicit instruction, contextual learning, use of dictionaries and corpora, cross-cultural awareness, and metalinguistic reflection. These strategies can help individuals navigate the complexities of idiomatic language and enhance communication effectiveness.

Keywords:Idioms,communication,language,culture,interpretation,ambiguity,comprehension,intercultural communication

Introduction

It is often assumed by language teachers and learners that idioms are too informal to appear in academic English. A scrutiny of six advanced level EAP books, for example, reveals that only one (de Chazal & Moore, 2013, p. 150) includes even half a page on idioms, and O'Dell and McCarthy's comprehensive *English idioms in use: Advanced* (2010) self-study book contains only one section on idioms that can be used in essay writing. Researchers and students with English as an L2 may therefore avoid using idioms in English academic discourse. Idioms, however, perform many functions in academic communication: describing and evaluating, emphasising, paraphrasing, creating a sense of group identity, and marking a change of topic (Simpson & Mendis, 2003). Deliberate exclusion of idioms from one's writing may therefore signal a lack of phraseological competency, which can mark a writer out as uninformed of the conventions of a discourse community (Li & Schmitt, 2009, p. 86). Even more importantly, those who misinterpret or fail to understand idioms may

not only miss essential information (Martinez & Murphy, 2011), but misunderstand central concepts entirely (Liu, 2003, p. 687), especially if their knowledge of the idiom's individual words gives them a false confidence in their understanding of the whole text (Park & Chon, 2018). Phraseological understanding is “particularly relevant” to advanced learners and users of English (Kremmel, Brunfaut, & Alderson, 2017, p. 865), such as L2 university lecturers and students. Due to their own misconceptions or their teachers' misgivings, however, L2 writers and students may be unaware of idioms that would help them understand English academic texts or lectures, or enrich their own academic speaking and writing, and are therefore not confident which idioms might be safe to use in their own academic work. Even those instructors who do teach idioms generally do not know which expressions are used most often in academic environments (Martinez, 2013, p. 197), and there is a need for more materials targeted at teaching phraseological content (Kremmel et al., 2017).

Materials for academic idiom teaching should, nevertheless, consider the register in which they appear (Liu, 2008). Biber (2006, pp. 222–223) cautions that “all spoken university registers, regardless of purpose, are sharply distinguished from written university registers in most of their typical linguistic characteristics”. In regard to idioms, it is therefore appropriate to follow Liu's advice (2008, p. 113) and examine “how formal an idiom is and what register and language variety it is used in [as these] constitute perhaps the most important information for language learners in order for them to use it appropriately”. For this reason, a comparison of spoken and written corpora can highlight the relative frequency of idioms in each register.

This paper therefore centers on the use of idioms recorded in the British Academic Spoken English corpus, compared with the same idioms used in written academic texts from the Oxford Corpus of Academic English. The aim of the research was to discover whether idioms are actually used in academic English and, if so, which are used more in speech or in writing. The findings have important implications for the speech and writing of English L2 university students and lecturers, since any frequently used idioms can be confidently used in their own writing and presentations, and less frequent items can be noted for decoding purposes.

The inherent ambiguity of idioms (Nunberg et al., 1994) presents a significant linguistic challenge. Decoding their meaning requires familiarity with the specific idiom and its conventionalized usage. This poses difficulties for language learners (Liontas, 2015) and can lead to misinterpretations in cross-cultural communication (Zhu, 2010). Further, the fixed structure of many idioms limits their syntactic flexibility, making them challenging to adapt to different grammatical contexts. Another difficulty in idiom acquisition is the transfer of idiomatic expressions from a learner's native language to the target language. For example, an Azerbaijani speaker

learning English may encounter idioms that are structurally similar in their native language but differ in meaning. This phenomenon, known as “false friends” complicates the translation of idioms in communication. For instance, the English idiom “when pigs fly” (never) translates to “qırmızı qar yağanda” (when it snows red) in Azerbaijani, but while both idioms refer to something that will never happen, their literal translations differ.

Comprehending idioms necessitates cognitive processing beyond the literal meaning of words (Barzegar & Askari, 2015). This involves accessing stored knowledge of idiomatic expressions and mapping them onto the current context. The metaphorical nature of many idioms (Brain Talk: More Effective Conversations through Clean Language, 2018) adds another layer of complexity, requiring individuals to understand the underlying conceptual metaphor. These cognitive demands can strain working memory and impede comprehension, especially for non-native speakers and individuals with cognitive processing difficulties. From a cognitive linguistic perspective, idioms are seen as metaphoric expressions that arise from embodied human experiences. Many idioms are motivated by common human experiences, such as spatial relations, physical sensations, or everyday activities. Research on idiom processing suggests that native speakers often recognize idioms holistically. In contrast, second-language learners face the additional challenge of parsing the literal meaning of the idiom before understanding its figurative interpretation. Idioms are often cited as one of the most difficult aspects of learning a second language. Non-native speakers must navigate the cultural and contextual specificity of idiomatic expressions to fully grasp their meanings. According to Liontas (2002), idiomatic competence is crucial for achieving fluency in a second language, yet idioms frequently cause confusion due to their unpredictability.

Idioms rarely mean what they literally say, making them particularly confusing for language learners. For example, “break the ice” does not mean physically breaking ice but initiating a conversation in a social setting. This disconnect between literal and figurative meanings is a key challenge. Idioms are deeply rooted in cultural contexts. Expressions like “once in a blue moon” or “piece of cake” may be confusing to those unfamiliar with Western metaphors or cultural references. Without exposure to the cultural backdrop, learners may struggle to understand why a phrase means what it does. Cultural idioms pose challenges for translation, as direct translations often lead to loss of meaning or confusion. To successfully convey idioms across languages, translators must navigate both linguistics and cultural nuances (Baker, 2018). This highlights the importance of idioms in intercultural communication and the need for language learners to understand not only the structure but also the cultural underpinnings of idiomatic expressions.

Idioms often lack equivalent expressions in other languages. For instance, the idiom “raining cats and dogs” (meaning heavy rain) might not translate directly into

another language, leaving learners puzzled. Many idioms rely heavily on context for their meaning. An idiom might change its nuance based on tone, situation, or accompanying phrases. For example, "pull someone's leg" is humorous when said jokingly but could be confusing in a serious conversation. Non-native speakers often misuse idioms by either translating them directly from their mother tongue or using them inappropriately. For instance, a learner might say, "He spilled the milk" instead of "He spilled the beans," confusing listeners.

Several strategies can mitigate the challenges posed by idioms:

1.Explicit Instruction: Language learners can benefit from explicit instruction on idioms, including their meaning, usage, and cultural context (Liontas, 2015).

2.Contextual Learning: Exposure to idioms in authentic contexts, such as literature, film, and everyday conversations, can facilitate comprehension and retention.

3.Idiom Dictionaries and Corpora: Resources like idiom dictionaries and corpora can provide valuable information about the meaning and usage of idioms.

4.Cross-Cultural Awareness: Developing awareness of cultural differences in idiomatic usage can prevent misunderstandings in cross-cultural communication. Idioms are a reflection of cultural values and social norms. They often emerge from historical or cultural contexts unique to a specific community.

5.Metalinguistic Awareness: Encouraging learners to reflect on the nature of idioms and their figurative meaning can enhance comprehension and usage (Barzegar & Askari, 2015).

6.Exposure to Native Use Watching movies, reading books, and listening to native speakers can provide context for idioms, helping learners understand their meaning and usage.

7.Idiomatic Dictionaries Specialized dictionaries like *Oxford Dictionary of English Idioms* or *Cambridge Idioms Dictionary* are invaluable resources for understanding idioms. They offer definitions, usage examples, and origins, aiding comprehension.

8.Practice in Context Practice makes perfect. Incorporating idioms into conversation, writing, or even creative exercises like storytelling can help solidify their usage.

9.Learning Origins Many idioms have fascinating origins that provide clues to their meaning. For instance, knowing that "bite the bullet" comes from historical medical practices helps clarify its use to mean enduring pain or hardship.

10.Focus on Common Idioms Instead of trying to learn every idiom, learners can focus on commonly used ones like "at the drop of a hat," "the ball is in your court," or "hit the nail on the head."

CONCLUSION

Lack of idioms knowledge has an academic impact on the learners' overall performance. It is necessary for teachers and students to deal with idioms in a suitable environment, where issues such as idiom definition or teaching methodology are solved; in this way, the teaching learning process of English as well as students and teachers will receive advantages related to the development of communicative skill. Teaching idioms in a classroom is a challenge due to their non-literal meanings and cultural specificity. Traditional methods, such as rote memorization do not always aid in idiom retention or usage .However, recent researches suggest that contextual learning, where idioms are taught within meaningful narratives or real-life scenarios, can improve comprehension. Incorporating cultural elements and exploring the origins of idioms can also make them more memorable to learners. Finally, English teachers must be aware of the importance and advantages of using idioms and integrate this issue in the development of the four language skills in English.

Reference Books and Resources

1. *Oxford Dictionary of English Idioms*.
2. *Cambridge Idioms Dictionary*
3. *McGraw-Hill's Dictionary of American Idioms and Phrasal Verbs*
4. *English Idioms in Use* by Michael McCarthy and Felicity O'Dell
5. Gillett, A. (2004). *Speak English like an American. Learn the idioms and expressions that will help you speak like a native.*
6. *Language Success Press. Johnson, A. Action Research. Pearson. (without source).*
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XÜLASƏ

Əsmər Kərimli

İdiomların Effektiv Kommunikasiyada Rolu: Çətinliklər və Strategiyalar

İdiomlar ingilis dilinin ayrılmaz bir hissəsi olmaqla kommunikasiya prosesində zənginlik və ifadəlilik təmin edirlər. İdiom ehtiva etdiyi müstəqil sözlərdən mənası dərhal aydın olmayan ifadə deməkdir. Lakin onlar qeyri-dil daşıyıcıları üçün həm anlama həm də istifadədə müəyyən əngəllər yaradaraq çətinliyə səbəb olurlar. Bu məqalə idiomların effektiv kommunikasiyada təsirlərini analiz edir. İdiomlar dili zənginləşdirməklə bərabər onların daşdığı məcazi mənaları və mədəni cəhətdən özünəməxsus təbiətləri bir sıra çətinliklər yarada bilər. Linqvistik çətinliklərə qeyri-müəyyənlik və sintaktik sabitlik daxildir. İdrak problemlərinə isə metaforik mənanın

ötürülməsi aiddir. Həll yolları olaraq eksplisit öyrətmə, konteksti öyrənmə, uyğun lüğətlərdən və ya lüğət toplularından istifadə və mədəniyyətlərarası maariflənmə göstərilə bilər. Bu strategiyalar insanlara idiomatik dilin çətinliklərini dəf etmək və ünsiyyətdə effektivliyi artırmağa kömək edə bilər.

РЕЗЮМЕ

Асмар Каримли

Влияние идиом на эффективную коммуникацию: проблемы и стратегии

Идиомы являются неотъемлемой частью английского языка, обеспечивая богатство и выразительность общения. Идиома — это фраза или выражение, значение которых не сразу очевидно из отдельных слов, которые она содержит. Однако для носителей языка идиомы представляют собой уникальный набор проблем, часто становясь камнями преткновения как в понимании, так и в использовании. В этой статье рассматривается влияние идиом на эффективную коммуникацию. Идиомы обогащают язык, но могут создавать проблемы понимания из-за их небуквальной и культурно-специфической природы. Лингвистические проблемы включают двусмысленность и синтаксическую негибкость, в то время как когнитивные проблемы включают доступ к хранимым знаниям и обработку метафорического значения. Решения включают явное обучение, контекстное обучение, использование словарей и корпусов, межкультурную осведомленность и металингвистическую рефлексивность. Эти стратегии могут помочь людям ориентироваться в сложностях идиоматического языка и повысить эффективность общения.

Ключевые слова: Идиомы, коммуникация, язык, культура, интерпретация, двусмысленность, понимание, межкультурная коммуникация.

Rəyçi: fil.ü.f.d., dos. Ulduz Mürşüdoğa