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**ВАЖНОСТЬ ИДИОМ В ПРЕПОДАВАНИИ АНГЛИЙСКОГО ЯЗЫКА**

**THE IMPORTANCE OF IDIOMS IN TEACHING ENGLISH**

In fact, language plays an active role, reproducing the logical mental picture of the world, making it a kind of adjustments, imposing on the understanding of its mark. Therefore, the mechanism of language expression cannot really be the same for all languages.

In modern linguistics, the mutual relationship between language and culture is not in doubt. Every language is inseparable from the culture that makes up its content. Language not only reflects modern culture in a momentary way, but also records its previous states and transmits its values from generation to generation.

Idioms have been and remain in the language throughout its history. The idioms depict the rich historical experience of the people, it reflects the views related to work, life and culture of people.

Changing in time, the national language as a socio-historical category never loses its specific essence, which allows it to preserve the important property of transmission from generation to generation of cultural and historical traditions. National character is manifested in the reflection of nature, life, customs, history and culture, mainly in the combat units of the language, to which we refer and idioms.

During the last number of decades an important amount of studies have turned their attention to phraseology producing works that range from structural and generative-transformational to functional descriptions of English idiomatic expressions with the result that these lexico-grammatical elements of the English language – seen as “unique cases from which no rules can be derived” – have in the years come to acquire some form of categorization within dictionaries and grammars. [1, p. 285]

These layers of research has permeated not a great deal in order to reach the more practical area of English Language Teaching. Proof lies in the examination of the majority of courses for foreign learners of English where, on the whole, idiomatic expressions are still presented at the end of didactic units and by means of exercises that fail to unveil their complex nature and strong connections with every day language.

Idiomatic expressions are, after all, the patrimony of a culture and tradition; they represent centuries of life in a determined sociolinguistic context and geographical setting and are therefore the heart and soul of a linguistic community. It is precisely this culture-bound nature that makes them unmanageable for learners who do not belong to the same linguistic community and who cannot instinctively ñ as native speakers do ñ recognize a clear semantic, pragmatic and syntactic pattern. What can therefore not be naturally and instinctively recognized, must therefore be made recognizable through due analysis and reflection: learners must be made aware that the meaning, use and structure of idioms can, like other elements of the English language, also be controlled. What learners need is to discern that idioms are not just obtuse lexical units that have to be learnt off by heart for exam purposes, but that they are an important part of any linguistic heritage and that their existence in spoken and written texts has a reason. So if learners are to appreciate idioms and acquire them with some success, their existence needs motivating and this may be done by exploiting all the linguistic information now available. [2, p. 54]

To exploit all the semantic analyses carried out on formulaic language by presenting learners with idioms that belong to similar or even contrasting categories of meaning could also be a pedagogical advantage. For instance, idioms such as steer clear, at armís length, keep something at bay, keep a low profile, give someone a cold shoulder, turn a blind eye to something, to have an axe to grind, to jump on the bandwagon and to get your teeth into something all denote some form of involvement and interest; drawing attention to relations such as these accompanied by information that distinguishes one type of involvement from another should certainly help learners to fix form-meaning patterns even where idioms are concerned. [3, p. 87]

Besides being more or less semantically transparent, idioms - it has been said - are idiosyncratic syntactic structures which, depending on their level of idiomaticity, can be more or less fixed. This is common knowledge to native speakers of English as well as English language researchers, but to learners this is often unclear information. For sake of simplicity, learners are in fact normally told that idioms are inflexible and cannot be transformed in any way. This is a myth that should be exploded by showing learners that while some idioms cannot normally admit any type of variation (e. g. a *red herring*), others can accept variations both of the lexical kind - for example, the *idiom steer clear of someone or something* can also admit the lexemes *keep* and *stay* - and of the grammatical kind so that there are idioms that can admit passivization e. g. *Jane pulled strings for Sue* which can become *Sue had her strings pulled by Jane*, idioms that can admit conjunct movement e. g. *Sue came to terms with Jane* can become *Sue and Jane came to terms*, idioms that can have their subject raised e. g. *it strikes my mind that Jim* can become *Jim strikes my mind* as..., or idioms that may undergo the rule of There insertion e. g. *a problem cropped up* and *there cropped up a problem.* [4, p. 328-336]

The functional force of idioms is an important aspect that should be investigated and exposed to learners of English. Learners should be encouraged to look for the textual function in each idiom encountered, and thus be made to distinguish between formal and informal, between polite and derogatory, general English or special English idiomatic expressions in order to fully understand the text in which they appear. Through an understanding of the function of idioms it also becomes easier to understand the nuances between idioms that appear synonymous. Lattey [5, p. 227], for example, considers how the idioms *to go to bat for someone* and to *stand/stick up for someone*, seemingly equivalent, are in reality quite different: while *to go to bat for someone* tends to be an initiatory move, *stand/stick up for someone* is used to describe behaviour in an argument or a fight that is already in progress where that person being stood up for has been attacked. To be able to carry out such an analysis, learners need to be made aware of the importance of the context in which the idioms appear and the need to analyse it closely. The people, the settings and the themes involved in any text are elements that evidently determine the use of one idiom or another and are indispensable cues for the decoding of its functional force. By analysing idioms in their contexts, learners can be encouraged to draw up a fine web of interrelations between pairs of idioms that are the reverses of each other (e. g. *to lure someone into a trap* and *to walk into someone’s trap*, where the first describes a negative effect on the person being lured and the second on the actor), opposites of each other (e. g. *it is no bed of roses* and *it ís a piece of cake* [5, p. 225-226]) and that have positive rather than negative impacts on the entities mentioned (e. g. to *pull someone’s leg* which has positive connotations, while *to take the mickey* has negative ones).

For learners of English to perceive patterns and relations regarding the meaning, the structure and the function of English idioms encountered is what is ultimately most auspicable here. The final aim of this article is indeed to underline once again the importance of making learners active participants in the learning process. It has been suggested here that learners, provided with the full array of instruments of analysis retrieved through years of theoretical research in the field of idiomatic expressions, can adopt the right attitude to handle such complex signs. The exposure to a full grammar of idioms should in fact consent learners to acquire a more curious and analytical approach: the only real key to a better passive and active knowledge of idioms.

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