

THE LINGUISTIC CONSTRUCTION OF IDIOMS IN TV DRAMA: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF TEACHING IDIOMS TO IRAQI LEARNERS OF ENGLISH

**Assi. Lect. Sahira Ahmed Mahmood
National Diabetes Center
Al-Mustansirith University**

Abstract :

As English is heavily idiomatic, this paper attempts to answer the question how Iraqi learners can better understand and speak English when interacting with native speakers of English from hearing and being exposed to constructed dialogue in TV drama. Hence, the paper has two focal points: the linguistic (semantic and syntactic) construction of idioms in dialogue scripted for the screen and the problems that Iraqi learners encounter in learning English idioms and fixed expressions. An idiom is the assigning of a new meaning to a group of words which already have their own meaning. Idioms can be easily identified with the familiar parts of speech. Thus, some idioms are clearly verbal in nature: "figure out/shy away from," an equally large number are nominal in nature: "feet of clay", many are adjectives: "butterflies in my stomach," and many are adverbial: "high and dry." These idioms which correlate with the familiar parts of speech can be called "lexemic idioms." The other most important group of idioms are of larger size. Often they are an entire clause in length: "have the guts," "have the stomach for," "to be caught between the rock and a hard place. As the English of advanced students, while grammatically, phonologically, and lexically correct, may sound rather bookish and pedantic to a native speaker. Iraqi learners have difficulties in understanding idioms for a number of reasons: idioms have figurative unpredictable meaning, distinctive cultural features, they exist in large numbers and thus difficult to memorize, lack of frequent use, and inadequate method of learning idioms. The study shows that learning idioms in the appropriate context of situation will result in learners' understanding and speaking better and more fluent English. The study hence not only contributes to the fields of linguistic stylistics and media studies, but also to applied linguistics and pragmatics, in particular through revising the concept and meaning of idioms.

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1. INTRODUCTION

A Chief of Party of an NGO, Internews/Iraq, Ms. Marika Olsen wrote once "good grief" towards the end of an e-mail she sent to one of her staff members. He was confused and at loss inquiring: "What's she mean?!" Well, I happen to be there and told him she was merely expressing her surprise and probably anger as well (because there were too many holidays in Iraq). This paper is inspired by this particular incident.

For Iraqi learners of English, particularly for advanced learners, knowing and understanding idiomatic expressions is a significant step to mastering this language. It can be noticed that such short expressions contain numerous linguistic features.

The aim of this paper is to investigate these idioms. In order to obtain this aim, data and sources are collected and gathered through reading and selecting numerous English idiomatic expressions. After that, data are categorized and analyzed with an aim to provide a clearer understanding of the aspect.

English is now playing an indispensable role in all fields of life. It is not difficult to realize the dominance of English in interactional communication, science, business, aviation, entertainment, and broadcast. Therefore, if the need for an international language is prompted, English will probably be chosen.

The demand for learning English worldwide, particularly in Iraq, is so great that people of all circles are now making a point of learning it. It is assumed that Iraqi learners do not often find it hard to learn English initially. They do grammar exercises feeling like a rose. Nonetheless, it is challenging to become proficient in English. Furthermore, Channell (1994: 21) maintains that the English of advanced students while grammatically, phonologically, and lexically correct, may sound rather bookish and pedantic to a native speaker, and "this results in part from an inability to include appropriate vague expressions" (Channell 1994: 21)

Peacock's (1997) study shows that learners may be more motivated by authentic materials rather than authentic ones, though it is not directly because they are more interesting. Idioms are an important factor in native-like discourse by an English speaker, as a foreign language (EFL) speaker. According to Fernando (1996) "the sheer number of idioms and their high frequency in discourse make them an important aspect of vocabulary acquisition and language learning in general". Many linguists claim that idioms require special attention in language programs and should not be relegated to a position of secondary importance in the curriculum.

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However, classroom learning of EFL is - at least in Iraq - not very concerned with the teaching of idioms and fixed expressions, as analyses from current and historical textbooks have shown. This results in the necessity for the teacher to make up own exercises or series of lessons to put the teaching of fixed expressions into the curriculum. The cognitive approach to language learning provides useful aspects and implications on how to organize idiom learning in a classroom context. Idioms are widely used by native speakers, whether they are presidents, governors, or laypeople, and idioms should not be confused with slang or colloquial. Script writers make sure that they include idioms in TV drama in order to project what everyday conversation look like and give a sense of realism, consider these examples:

Example (1)

- Justin (criticizing his uncle): Poor guy. He doesn't have anything to do. He doesn't have a job. He smokes around all day.
- Nora (Justin's mother): Hello Pot. Have you met Kettle? (His mother declines Justin's criticism for his uncle (though in a teasing playful frame) as Justin is criticizing his uncle for a behavior he himself has.)
- Justin: That's hilarious. I think you're forgetting that I have a girlfriend, and I go to narcotic anonymous, I have recruiting duties. Okay I'm pathetic too. (Justin's reply confirms such interpretation as Justin admits that he has the same behavior as his uncle's.)

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Example (2)

- Sarah: (addressing her brother-in-law) So, what's Kitty doing?
- Robert: She's not sleeping, won't talk about it, and stays up all night, obsessively donating to television charities.
- Sarah: That's not a good sign.
- Kevin: (Sarah and Kitty's brother) that's bad.
- Robert: I'm gonna fly back for the vote and won't be here till next, week, so my thought (he gets interrupted).
- Sarah: (she interrupts Robert) hold that thought.

Example (3)

- Kitty: (she talks about their surrogate mother with Robert) I scared away our birth mother.
I was beating myself up about Trish.
I screwed up, plain and simple.

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Example (4)

- Tom: (addressing his brother Kevin with whom he had an argument earlier) I heard about the new job. It's awesome congrats.
- Kevin: Thanks.
- Tom: Look, can we just burry the hatch now please.

Example (5)

- Sarah: (meeting with two potential employers in a job interview) have you guys thought about franchising this, coz there is no reason this shouldn't go global.
- Employer: From your mouth to God's ears.

Example (6)

- Nora: (addressing her daughter Kitty and warning her about Kitty's husband, Robert, unusual behavior) for some men it's sex, for others it's power. Two sides the same coin.

Example (7)

- Kitty: (to her sister Sarah) I actually wanted to go there, but mom talked me out of it.

Example (8)

- Tom: My dad worked his butt off building this company.

Example (9)

- Kitty: And you know, I, I, say that I don't *have the stomach* for politics, but what I'm really trying to say is that I, I, don't *have the guts.*"

"- Nora: (Kitty's mother encouraging her) Oh, Kitty, you're nothing but *guts*, you are nothing but *guts.*"

Example (10)

- Nikki Haley, Governor of South Carolina: "We responded by talking to each other. By putting ourselves in other people's shoes and by finding common ground in the name of moving our state forward"

Nikki Haley (speech 8/removing the confederate flag, June 22, 2015).

Example (11)

- Governor Romney: (addressing President Obama at Washington



Square Park in New York City) make my day!
to the video)

Make my day!.mp4

(Link

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Idioms are an evolved form of English vocabulary and that no English native speakers' interaction goes out without the use of at least an idiom. English, especially American English, is replete with idioms. Therefore, exploring, learning, and being exposed to these idioms, which are in fact quite large in number, being spoken by native speakers, as occurring in their appropriate context of situation, in TV drama, where I suggested a close resemblance between scripted dialogue and naturally occurring conversation. In other words, if Iraqi learners of English are exposed, from an early age as well as the advanced learners, to the proper amount of idioms, that are incorporated in the syllabus, in their right context of situation, and clearly explained by the teacher, this will eventually result in better understanding, learning, and speaking English. Similarly, the lack of exposure to idioms will result in the limited communication capacity during interaction due to the fact that the learner/non-native speaker (here the Iraqi learner/speaker) is not familiar with the idiom being used, does not understand or know its meaning, and therefore is unable to interact efficiently and effectively.

The study attempts to reveal the linguistic and semantic constructions that the idioms have as well as the pragmatic functions they serve in a given exchange. Moreover, it shall demonstrate how English interchanges are extremely and highly idiomatic in nature and how a proper exposure to these idioms via employing TV drama will result in better understanding and ultimately speaking English. I also focus on the idioms that are actually spoken by native speakers in TV drama as the latter is characterized by realistic dialogue, or the imitation of reality.

The interrelation between being familiar with idioms, through learning them in the right context, and mastering English and being a fluent at it is a major concern of this study. Targeting TV genres with the focus on the idioms used in them is an interesting field of research. Not only such paper will avail the learners, also it will help language teachers evolve the conversational and communicative proficiency of their learners via taking advantage of effective and fundamentally innovative and fun teaching materials and approaches. Correspondingly, the teachers can personally have the opportunity to learn new idioms simultaneously raising their own academic and teaching performance bar. Thus, while this project directly targets the learners, it indirectly concerns the language teachers as well.

The paper is comprised of four chapters. Chapter one is a general introduction to the paper. Chapter two, however, is a theoretical background – provides the background of the study. This chapter sheds

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light on the literature of the study, particularly the theoretical background of the research topic. To begin with, a sketchy picture of the research background will be provided with an overview of the key concept: "idiom" and the idiomatic expressions in English. Chapter three will discuss the problems faced by learners in studying idioms. Chapter four, the conclusion; summarizes the main issues discussed in the paper as well as some suggestions for future studies. Following this chapter are references utilized in this study..

In this study, the idioms that correlate with the familiar parts of speech and thus they are used as verbs, nouns, adjectives, and adverbs. Of special interest are a largest class of idioms that are well-established sayings and proverbs (also referred to as clichés). They are entire sentences that can sometimes be altered to fit a context of situation, however, keeping their original meaning intact (See the example, "Pot call the kettle black," where this overrides grammar rules). The linguistic and semantic construction of idioms will be discussed and highlighted. Further, the focus will be on the idioms' actual use by native speakers in a multitude of contexts of situations, i.e. their pragmatic component. The concept of naturally-occurring conversation, or talk-in-interaction, however, will be touched upon, but not fully discussed through this paper.

THE LINGUISTIC CONSTRUCTION OF IDIOMS LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Definitions of Idioms

An idiom is the assigning of a new meaning to a group of words which already have their own meaning.

According to Jenifer Seidl and W. Mc Mordie in "English Idiom and How to Use" "an idiom is a number of words which, taken together, mean something different from the individual words of the idiom when they stand alone." (1979: 20)

The Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics regards an idiom as "an expression which functions as a single unit and whose meaning can not be worked out from its separate parts" (1992: 198)

Three years later, Jonathan Crowther in the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English (Oxford University Press – 1995) defines idiom as "a phrase or sentence whose meaning is not clear from the meaning of its individual words and which must be learnt as a whole unit." (1995: 67)

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In the same year, Dean Curry in the "Illustrated American Idioms" (1995) offered another definition of idiom as follows: "an idiom is the assigning of a new meaning to a group of words which already have their own meaning." (1995: 49)

On reflection, it could be seen that there is no conflict between the aforementioned definitions of idiom. Regardless of obvious differences in expressing, they intersect at one point: an idiom is a fixed expression whose meaning can not be worked out by combining the literal meaning of its individual words. Contrarily, and as I have noted, native speakers can alternate an idiom turning it into an interrogative: "Hello Pot. Have you met Kettle?" This utterance achieves multiple goals: firstly, Norah reprimands her son Justin for criticizing his uncle Saul, secondly, she signals that he has been in the same situation as his uncle that he criticizes, and thirdly, she creates humor through the unexpected hypothetical playful conversation with the "Pot" introducing it to the "Kettle." Thus, the idiom is slightly adapted, but at the same time its original meaning is kept intact.

2.2 Features of Idiom

A review of the literature yields the following semantic and syntactic features of idioms and that these idioms have not only a meaning to convey, but also have a function to do in a particular context of situation. For instance, Hello pot. Have you met Kettle?

Justin: Poor guy. He doesn't have anything to do. He doesn't have a job. He smokes around all day.

Norah's response of an idiom that has an interrogative form serving a taunting/reprimanding function, implying that Justin criticizes his uncle Saul when he is as poor and pathetic as his uncle.

2.2.1 Semantic Features

Since idioms are predominantly meaning phenomena, figurative meaning is the essential characteristic of idioms: the meaning assigned to an idiom helps decide whether a fixed expression is an idiom or not. As V. V. Vinogradov imaginatively expressed, the meaning of an idiom is "the special chemical mixture" of the meaning of all components which is completely new in quality. Here is an idiom to exemplify: "to talk someone into something/browbeat someone into something,"(convince), "raise the bar," "make someone's day," (back to square one: which has a cultural implication originating in baseball," "start/do something from scratch," and "cut to the chase" the individual components of the above idioms are hardly indicative of their meanings. Henceforth, it is important to understand metaphorically rather than literally.

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However, according to A. V. Kunin (2006), the meaning of an idiom is either "partly" or "completely" different from the meaning of all components. In case of any partial difference, their figurative meaning is not different from the literal meaning. The partly different ones are such as "back to back," "plain and simple," "find out," "get a lot on one's plate." The meaning of these idioms can be guessed from the meaning of their individual words.

Another semantic feature of idioms is that idioms can convey positive, neutral, or negative meanings. Some idioms have a positive meaning such as "be on the same page" (to agree),. Examples of idioms with neutral meaning include "give credit for," "in somebody's shoes" (be in somebody's position), "cold feet," (hesitant/reluctant), "feet of clay," (a hidden flaw(s) in someone's character," "tie the knot," (marry). Other idioms could be interpreted to have a variety of potentially negative implications/meanings such as: "monkey business" (dishonest or silly behavior), "hold/nurse a grudge", "a pain in the butt," (an obnoxious person), "in someone's birthday suit," (naked).

To sum up, idioms can be motivated, partially-motivated, and non-motivated. Also, idiomatic expressions can convey positive, neutral, or negative meanings.

2.2.2 Syntactic features:

It is common knowledge that an idiom is a set-expression. Hence, as its name suggests, the components in idioms can neither be added nor substituted. They can not be changed or varied in the way literal expressions are normally varied, whether in speech or in writing. Moreover, when an idiom is used in a complete sentence, it is hardly possible to change it into passive. Let us consider such an idiom: "to eat humble pie," which means to say and show that one is sorry for a mistake that he/she made in the sentence: "She had to eat humble pie when Harry, who she said would never have any success, won first prize." It would be unnatural to say: "Humble pie was eaten by her." It is also noticeable that one can not make other changes without losing the idiomatic meaning. Almost all idiomatic phrases fail in one way or another to permit the usual grammatical operations which literal phrases usually do. This relates to the grammatical fixity of idioms.

Further, idioms may take many different forms or structures. Some idioms are noun phrases such as "pep talk," "child's play," "a new man," "forty winks," (a short sleep during the day) and "the storm in the tea cup." In terms of structure, an idiom can have a regular structure, an irregular or

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even a grammatically incorrect structure. For the first type, they have common forms but there is no connection between the meaning of each component and that of the whole unit. Typical examples of idioms with regular structure are not difficult to find: "the green-eyed monster" (a feeling of anger or unhappiness because somebody you like or love is showing interest in somebody else), "a/the bottom line" and "in a nutshell", "chances are," (probably). The meaning of idioms in this group can not be perceived without having been learnt already. The second group takes into account ones which have unconventional forms but their meaning can be worked out through meaning of individual words. That is to say the meaning of the whole unit sometimes can be perceived through the meaning of its components. Take "I am good friends with him" as a typical illustration; since the idiom is irregular and illogical in terms of grammatical structure. According to the rule of language, "I" is singular and therefore "friend" must be singular, too. However, in this case, the idiom does not need to obey grammatical rule to make sense. "I am good friends with him" can still be interpreted that "I am a friend of his." In the last group, grammatically incorrect: "long story short," "pot call the kettle black," neither the structure conforms with the rules of grammar, nor their meanings are predictable or inferred. both its form and meaning are irregular.

The structure is grammatically inaccurate and the meaning is not precisely expressed by gathering the meaning of each member-word. Such idioms as "Be up to no good" (doing or planning something wrong or dishonest), "to go through thick and thin" (in spite of all the difficulties and problems; in good and bad times) illustrate grammatical irregularity. The structure of the idioms can be written as "Verb+ proposition+ adjective." In English, normally a structure like this is acknowledged once in a blue moon since adjectives never come after prepositions individually. As an idiom, however, the case is accepted.

To conclude, in terms of syntactic features, firstly, an idiom is a set-expression. That is, one can not make any changes without losing the idiomatic meaning. Secondly, idioms may take many different forms or structure. Idioms can be in form of noun phrases, verb phrases, preposition phrases and so forth. In connection with this structure, an idiom can have a regular structure, an irregular or even a grammatically incorrect structure.

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PROBLEMS FACED BY LEARNERS IN STUDYING IDIOMS

3.1 Introduction

It might be noteworthy to mention again that knowing and understanding idiomatic expressions is a significant step to mastering English. The more fluently and accurately Iraqi learners can use English set phrases and collocations, the more successfully they can deal with the language of everyday conversation. According to Copper (1999), however, idiom study presents a special language problem for all language learners for the figurative meaning is unpredictable. In this part, attempts are made to shed light on common difficulties confronted by learners. Furthermore, suggestions to solve the problem as well as implications for teaching idioms are also given in the chapter.

3.2 Difficulties in understanding

3.2.1 English idioms with various grammatical structures

As mentioned in the chapter of theoretical background, English idioms take various forms, structures which are fraught with difficulties for learners.

Firstly, they are various in length. Idioms can be mere letters (ABC), letters and prepositions (from A to B, from A to z), a word (rosy), a phrase (any Tom, Dick, or Harry), or a sentence (Big Brother is watching you). Also, learners have to bear in mind that idioms may take many different structures. That is, an idiom can have a regular structure, an irregular or even a grammatically incorrect structure. For the first type, regular structure idioms have common form but there is no connection between the meaning of its components and that of the whole unit. The meaning of an idiom in the group can not be perceived without having been learnt already. Learners, therefore, find it the most challenging to deal with this kind of idiom. For instance, it is hard to figure out "red tape" as "bureaucratic method" based on the idioms components. The meaning of idioms with irregular structures, contrarily, can be perceived through the meaning of their components. In the last group, grammatically incorrect, both form and meaning are irregular. The structure is grammatically inaccurate and the meaning is not precisely expressed by gathering the meaning of each member-word. For instance, one can not rely on the grammar structure to explain the idiom "be in on the ground floor" exactly as "became involved in a plan, project, etc. at the beginning."

3.2.2 English Idioms with distinctive culture features.

Apart from the difficulties caused by various grammatical structures of idioms, the differences between English and Iraqi cultures are frequently

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the most hindrance for learners to grasp the meaning of idioms. Cultural gap, in other words, results in numerous ways of expressing one's idea. It is the valid reason causing considerable difficulties to learners. Also, the two dissimilar-systems in two countries make learners from time to time feel at loss to find an exact equivalent to the idioms they encounter. For instance, "as alike as two peas" is the English idiom to express the indistinguishable features between two people or things. Iraqi idioms, however, employ to express the identity. Another example is "as cool as cucumber." In process of finding an Iraqi equivalent idiom, it is notable to grasp beforehand the meaning of the English one as to describe "calm people, especially, when the opposite might be expected, i.e. on a hot day or in a tough situation." It will be a big mistake to do this by translating literally the English one. Beware of those things; the Iraqi idiom is the right answer.

3.2.2.1 Suggested solutions

Based on two notable reasons for difficulties in understanding idioms as above, in this part I will give some suggested solutions.

Firstly, to deal with various grammar structures of idioms, a careful study should be conducted on them.

Furthermore, idioms should be better learnt in specific communicative contexts rather than learnt by heart. While trying to commit to memory that idioms are troublesome, learners should practice using idioms by putting them into specific and real situations so that their meanings become familiar at the beginning.

Also, frequent application of idioms is of great help.

Next, it is advisable that learners should guess the meaning of idioms before looking them up in the dictionary. According to Copper (1999) guessing the meaning from the context is the most successful strategies, leading to correct interpretation 57 percent of the cases.

Eventually, thorough understanding of idioms should be on a line with a deep knowledge of cultural features which include physiological characteristics, customs, beliefs, concepts, attitudes, etc. Accordingly, the background knowledge on a culture would be advantageous to firmly grasp idioms. It does take time since knowledge is accumulated gradually; nevertheless, learners can benefit much from using idioms during communication.

3.2.2 Problem in memorizing

Besides difficulties in understanding idioms, learners also encounter a variety of problems in memorizing them. In this part, three main

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obstacles in memorizing idioms will be discussed. Furthermore, attempts are also made to give suggested solutions.

3.2.2.1 English idioms exist in large numbers

There are thousands of idioms in any language; there is no exclusive to English ones. Some English idiom dictionaries contain as many as 7000 entries. It is said that idioms change together with the change of life, society, and language. Giving an exact total number of English idioms, henceforth, is out of the question. According to my knowledge, English idioms in colors are now reaching about 192, animal-based idioms counting at about 320, conversational idioms 350. Idioms of comparisons contribute about 800 items. That is not all. As a result, facing with such boundless ocean of idioms, one can easily get confused and discouraged in memorizing them.

It is unlikely and unrealistic to expect a learner to master 5000 idioms in the Cambridge Dictionary of American Idioms (Heacock, 2003), for instance. A conclusion can be drawn that such large number of English idioms is actually one of the reasons that hinders Iraqi learners from studying them.

3.2.2.2 Lack of frequent use of English idioms

Unfortunately, English idioms are rarely used by Iraqi learners. This makes idiomatic expressions, which themselves are difficult to learn, become even more challenging to remember. On one hand, learners do not flexibly apply the idioms they have learnt in language production on the ground that some of them sound uncommon for their interlocutors to take in. On the other hand, they do not firmly grasp the idioms, thus, they do not know how to use them appropriately. This makes them diffident of using idioms. Idioms, even though have been learnt and practiced in classroom-environment, they are little, or even not at all, used in daily life. Learners tend to use ordinary expressions instead of idiomatic expressions even when they know those idioms. The lack of favorable language environment in which English idioms are utilized results in the fact that learners do not remember and use them efficiently.

3.2.2.3 Inadequate method of learning English idioms

In learning English idioms, foreign learners including Iraqi ones face a variety of obstacles in terms of learning method, which affects their memorization of idioms.

Normally, after getting the meaning of new idioms, learners tend to put them in their own memory without using them in daily communication. Learners study idioms out of specific communicative situations, that is,

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idioms are detached from the context. Unfortunately, that is not the way of learning idioms for knowing the idiom without learning them in the appropriate context is pointless.

3.2.2.3.1 Suggested solution

So as to deal with idioms as a convincing linguistic instrument, it is indispensable for learners to put them into long-term memory. Here are four practical suggestions for a retentive memorization of idiomatic expressions. To begin with, there is no point worrying about the large number of idioms. Naturally, it is beyond the learners' reach to know all the English idioms. Attention, thus, should be devoted to the most useful and frequent ones. Potential resource is "The Longman Grammar of Spoken and Written English" (1999), which includes a small section on most frequently used idioms.

"Oxford Idioms" (2001) is also a good option. Furthermore, learners are advised to build their own way of classifying idioms based on a certain criterion.

For instance, one may divide idioms into some following groups: idioms in connection with memory and remembering "bear something in mind," "in one ear and out the other," "jog someone's memory," "lose one's train of thought," "trip down memory lane," "ring a bell," "slipped one's mind," etc, idioms in connection with relationship "see eye to eye with someone," "fair-weather friend," "know someone/something inside out," "be an item," "keep someone at arm's length," "to be at odds with somebody," "give someone the cold shoulder," "a stormy relationship," "on the same wavelength," and so forth.

Moreover, idioms must be practiced in authentic situations frequently. It is common knowledge that the more learners drill the language items, the more they can memorize them.

Next, as mentioned in the chapter of theoretical background, a complete new aspect of idioms can be discovered: though structured like phrases, they function like words. That is, based on grammatical function; idioms can be classified into five main types: idioms functioning like nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs and prepositions. Consider idioms as words will surely help learners memorize them more easily.

It is advisable for learners to find equivalent Iraqi idioms of the English ones. In this way, they can install the relation between the two languages; thus, can put them into their long-term memory. It is obvious that there are a few absolute coincidences between idiom systems of

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different languages; nevertheless, there are still many items that can convey the same ideas.

CONCLUSION

Preceding chapters have thoroughly elaborated on the Introduction, The theoretical background of English Idioms, problems faced by learners in studying idioms. The conclusion will summarize and evaluate the outcomes of the entire paper by summing up the findings, giving pedagogical suggestions for teaching English idioms as well as putting forward several suggestions for further studies.

4.1 Major findings of the research

Initially, the primary purpose of this study was first to obtain a comprehensible picture of English idioms.

An idiom is a fixed expression whose meaning can not be frequently worked out by combining the literal meaning of its individual words. The features of idioms are convincingly demonstrated. The semantic feature of idioms is that idioms can be motivated, partially-motivated, and non-motivated. Also, idiomatic expressions can convey positive, neutral, or negative meanings. In terms of syntactic feature, firstly, an idiom is a set – expression. That is, one can not make any changes without losing the idiomatic meaning. Secondly, idioms may take many different forms or structures. Idioms can be in form of noun phrases, verb phrases, adjective phrases, adverb phrases, preposition phrases, and sentences. In connection with structure, an idiom can have a regular structure, an irregular or even a grammatically incorrect structure.

4.2 Pedagogical suggestions for teaching English idioms

In such a small study on linguistic theory, I will not go further into the field of ELT methodology. The following suggestions are collected from experienced teachers and I subjectively created them. Focus, then, will be on implications for teaching English idioms.

4.2.1 Which idioms to teach

This is a primary consideration since teachers always wish the learners to learn those idioms that will allow them to participate more fully in interactions with native speakers. As there are thousands of idioms in any language, people may want to devote attention to the most useful ones. Generally, "most useful" overlaps with "most frequent." Fortunately, recent research has contributed to knowledge in this area.

English teachers may consult the work by Liu (2003) on the most frequent used spoken idioms in American English. In short, frequency is a significant criterion when choosing idioms for teaching purposes.

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4.3 Separated lessons or integrated ones

If teachers decide to devote attention to idioms in their class, they may consider creating separated lessons so as to teach useful idioms. However, this is not necessarily the most effective way. The reason is that a lesson on idioms is likely to be limited in two ways, the time spent on them and the naturalness of language used to contextualize the idioms. For these reasons, many people have argued in favor of an integrated lesson which involves incorporating idioms into regular one that focus on any of the four skills.

Specifically, the first step would be to raise learners' awareness of idioms so that they should develop a habit of noticing them in everyday situations, including reading and listening. Learners can be asked to keep an idiom notebook; they can later share their examples in class and ask questions about the usage. Teachers can draw attention to new idioms by taking them into vocabulary-improving or reading activities. Teachers should also take advantage of authentic materials like TV, newspapers, magazines, and modify them for classroom purposes based on the learners' levels.

Another way is to instruct and familiarize learners with the way of learning idioms by connecting the new information with something they already know and by making a picture in their mind. Imagination could do much to help remember new idioms.

4.4 Specific classroom activities

Most researchers suggest using a wide range of techniques. Firstly, it is assumed that most vocabulary teaching strategies will be applicable to idioms as well. An important first step is exposing learners to idioms in context for contextual clues are useful to learners in comprehending unknown idioms. Learners should be encouraged to infer the meaning of the idiom by using contextual clues, background knowledge, or first language equivalents. Teachers may help learners during this process, especially if the idiom is not easily worked out. There are several techniques to make learners aware of the link between the idiom's literal and figurative meanings. For instance, learners can draw pictures to present the literal meaning; this can be particularly effective for lower – proficiency learners for idioms which are image –evoking such as: "let the hair down," "keep an eye on someone," "twist one's arm." Alternatively, the teacher can provide an image associated with the idiom.

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It might be noteworthy to mention that images or pictures are more than mere entertainment for learners. Researchers suggest that forming a mental image of an idiom is a powerful tool for learning.

After resending idioms in context and helping learners to infer their meaning, teachers should revise the idioms that have been studied. This can be done in numerous ways, including typical vocabulary exercises like matching idioms to their meanings, filling in blanks with the appropriate idiom, replacing underlined expressions with an idiom, etc.

Eventually, to promote output and creative language use, learners can write dialogues using the idioms or tell stories based on pictures.

"Rome was not built in a day."

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الخلاصة

العبارات المجازية

نظرا لكون اللغة الأنكليزية لغة اصطلاحية بشكل كبير، فتسعى ورقة البحث هذه الى الأجابة عن السؤال المتعلق بالطريقة التي سيكون باستطاعة المتعلمين العراقيين من تحسين فهمهم و تحدثهم للغة الأنكليزية، فيما يتفاعلون مع الناطقين باللغة الأنكليزية من خلال الأنصات و التعرّض الى الحوار الذي يتم أنشائه في الدراما التلفزيونية. وبالتالي، هناك نقطتان محوريتان للبحث وهما: البناء اللغوي (الدلالي و النحوي) للعبارات المجازية في الحوار المعد للشاشة و المشاكل التي يواجهها المتعلمين العراقيين في تعلّم العبارات المجازية و المصطلحات الثابتة في اللغة الأنكليزية. أن العبارة المجازية هي تحديد و تعيين معنى جديد لمجموعة من الكلمات والتي تمتلك سلفا المعنى الخاص بها. يمكن تشخيص العبارات أو المصطلحات المجازية بسهولة مع أقسام الكلام المتعرف عليها. وعليه، فمن الواضح أن العبارات المجازية هي تشبه الفعل في طبيعتها: "figure out/ يتحاشى shy away /from raise the bar يرفع المستوى"، هناك عبارات مجازية أسمية بطبيعتها وهي كبيرة بنفس القدر: "feet of clay أقدام من طين وتشير الى الضعف الكامن و الأنهيار الوشيك" والكثير من هذه العبارات هي صفات: "butterflies in my stomach أشعر بالتوتر/ high and dry عاجز"، والكثير منها هي شبيهة بالظروف: "from scratch من الصفر". أن هذه العبارات المجازية والتي ترتبط مع أقسام الكلام المعروفة تسمى "العبارات المجازية المعجمية". المجموعة الأخرى الأهم من العبارات المجازية هي ذات حجم أكبر والتي غالبا ما تكون عبارة عن جملة برمتها من حيث الطول: "have the guts تكون لديه الجرأة"، "have the stomach for تكون لديه الرغبة و التحمل"، "to be caught between the rock and a hard place أن يكون بين المطرقة و السندان/ أي يكون في موقفين بنفس القدر من الصعوبة". وبما أن اللغة الأنكليزية التي يتحدثها الطلبة ذوي المستوى المتقدم والتي برغم كونها صحيحة من الناحية النحوية، واللفظية، و المعجمية أو كمفردات، إلا أنها قد تبدو نوعا ما كتيبة و متحذقة بالنسبة الى المواطن الأصلي الناطق باللغة الأنكليزية. لدى المتعلمون العراقيون صعوبات في فهم ما تعنيه العبارات المجازية لعدد من الأسباب ومنها: للعبارات المجازية معنى مجازي لا يمكن التكهّن به، سمات ثقافية مميزة، توجد العبارات المجازية بأعداد كبيرة ولهذا السبب يصعب حفظها، قلة الأستخدام المتكرر، وكذلك الطريقة الغير كافية في تعلّم العبارات المجازية. تظهر الدراسة أن تعلّم العبارات المجازية في السياق الملائم لها سيفضي الى فهم و تحدّث أفضل و طلاقة أكثر في اللغة الأنكليزية بالنسبة للمتعلمين. وبالتالي فإن الدراسة لا تسهم في حقليّ الأسلوبية اللغوية و الدراسات الإعلامية وحسب و إنما تساهم أيضا في علم اللغة التطبيقي و علم اللغة التداولي وعلى وجه الخصوص من خلال مراجعة مفهوم و معنى العبارات المجازية.