
La enseñanza de frases idiomáticas en inglés *Teaching English Idioms in a Foreign Language Setting*

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Resumen

El dominio y uso correcto del lenguaje idiomático les permite a los aprendices de una lengua extranjera alcanzar mayores niveles de competencia lingüística en la lengua que se estudia. En este artículo abordamos los aspectos que deben tenerse en cuenta en el diseño de una metodología y un material didáctico para la enseñanza de las frases idiomáticas en la lengua extranjera. Por tanto, presentamos una serie de cuestiones preliminares de carácter teórico-práctico, con el fin de dar respuesta a la cuestión de cómo debería enseñarse el lenguaje idiomático en un contexto de no inmersión. El objetivo del presente trabajo consiste en diseñar una propuesta metodológica para el perfeccionamiento del proceso de enseñanza y aprendizaje de las frases idiomáticas en inglés. Para ello se analizará en detalles algunos de los retos que enfrentan los estudiantes cuando se encuentran con este tipo de unidades léxicas, así como se propondrán diferentes técnicas y procedimientos metodológicos para la enseñanza y sistematización de este tipo de vocabulario.

Palabras clave: expresiones idiomáticas, competencia idiomática, enseñanza, metodología

Abstract

Adequate knowledge and appropriate use of idiomatic expressions often lead foreign language learners (hereafter L2) to higher levels of fluency and proficiency in the target language. In this paper we address the aspects that will determine the design of a teaching methodology and learning material for teaching English idioms in a foreign language context. We argue that the current idiom teaching practices are inefficient, hence, a series of preliminary and theoretical/practical concerns are introduced in order to answer the question of how to teach idioms more effectively. We focus on the theoretical parameters that should be taken into consideration when English idioms are to be taught in a foreign language context. The long-term objective of this research

study is the design of a teaching methodology to be used in the English Language classroom for the teaching learning process of English idioms.

Keywords: idioms, idiomatic competence, teaching, teaching methodology

Introduction

At present, there is a general and growing tendency in the English language toward more idiomatic usage. Idiomatic expressions are used in a broad range of everyday contexts. This pervasiveness often relates them to foreign language (hereafter L2) proficiency or at least to higher levels of L2 fluency. Thus, idioms play a significant role in the teaching-learning process of the English language. Authors such as Prodromou (2003), Levorato & Cacciari (1992) agree that the way for L2 learners to become more fluent and proficient in the target language is not only to have a good command of grammar, pronunciation and vocabulary, but also, within the last one, effective use of idioms. Other scholars (Lennon, 1998; Cooper, 1998; Pawley & Synder, 1983) state that the correct use of English idioms is essential not only to indicate a high level of proficiency that approaches learners to native-like characteristics in the use of L2, but also when mastered, idioms provide learners with confidence in speaking the language fluently and accurately.

Furthermore, with the rapid development of language and technology and the increasing exposure of Cuba to international contexts, English language students often demand learning the language that they commonly encounter in today's TV series, songs, films and contacts with native speakers of the language, as they feel that the language they learn in class can rarely help them understand most of what they hear or read in authentic English. Indeed, classroom English and everyday English more often than not employ different discourses. Therefore, teachers must try to more accurately mirror the language that is used by native speakers in real world contexts and find a balance between what is taught in class and what students experience in natural, authentic situations. The fact that the vocabulary of a language includes not only words, but also idioms (which are functionally equivalent to words), must be given special attention in the English language classroom. Idioms are so frequently encountered both in spoken and in written discourse that imprecise idiomatic usage may cause difficulties in communication even for a student with an excellent knowledge of grammar and a high

level of vocabulary attainment. Nevertheless, idioms are rarely introduced into the EL classroom or, when they are, they are often presented on a random basis.

It is widely accepted that teaching and learning idioms is deemed to be not the easiest part of vocabulary instruction but rather a stumbling block (Laufer, 1997). While linguists and language teachers alike have referred to the importance of teaching idioms to L2 students, much research has been devoted to discussing and characterizing their complex nature, but little attention has been paid to the teaching and learning aspects of idioms. No one has yet reached a satisfactory methodology that could guide language teachers in dealing with this type of vocabulary in class. Hence, the need to determine the steps involved in teaching English idioms in L2 contexts. The aim of this study is to address the factors that a teacher of English as a foreign language should keep in mind before teaching idioms to L2 learners. We believe these theoretical parameters will assist him/her in planning the teaching learning process more effectively and it will consequently minimize failure of idiom instruction.

Fundamental considerations

Idiom definition

Idioms, as a type of Multiword Units (MWU), are not well-defined in the literature. That is to say, the term 'idiom' is applied to a wide range of expressions that do not admit a single definition. As a result, a diverse group of multiword units are called idioms, which makes them difficult for language teachers to explain and teach to learners. Most scholars use the term "phraseological unit" which was first introduced by Academician V.V. Vinogradov. Carter (1998) uses the term *fixed expressions*, Moon (1997) picks up the term *multi-word items*, Howarth (1998) prompts for the term *phraseology*, whereas McCarthy (1998) prefers the traditional term *idiom* and Gläser (1984) the term *phraseological unit*. Charteris-Black (2002) for example, uses the term *figurative phrases* and *figurative idioms*. Bahns (1993) speaks about *lexical collocations* and Mel'cuk (1998) calls them *set phrases* or *phrasemes*. Indeed, the term 'idiom' occurs in the literature with a variety of different meanings and terminology; however from the above mentioned terms, the most traditional one –*idiom*– is adopted in the present study.

Although several criteria have been suggested in the literature to define (or more accurately describe) idioms and various other MWUs, the criterion used most is the one related to their non-compositionality. The principle of non-compositionality (also called semantic opacity) refers to: “an expression consisting of more than one word, whose composite meaning is not deducible from the normal meanings of its constituent parts” (Cornell, 1999). This element of non-compositionality has remained as one of the most common elements in any definition of an idiom.

Thus, non-compositionality emerges as the key criterion taken for the definition of idiom in the present study. The definition adopted in this research is the one given by Robert J. Dixon (1978) in his book *Essential Idioms in English, New Edition*: “*Idioms are combination of words that have a meaning different from the meaning of each of their component parts. In other words, idiomatic expressions are expressions where there is a considerable difference between what is said (literal interpretation), and what is meant (idiomatic interpretation)*”. By defining idioms in such a way, Dixon seems to accept as idioms all expressions that have idiomaticity, since they all have meaning different from that of their individual component parts. Robert J. Dixon, therefore, gives a general definition of idioms which enable us to incorporate within the term a wide range of fixed expressions, such as phrasal verbs and collocations that are considered important for students’ vocabulary acquisition in terms of their useful frequency.

Importance of learning idioms

Before determining what the best way to teach idioms to L2 students is, the reason why idioms are important to know needs to be addressed. Why is practicing idioms a worthwhile activity in the classroom? Why is it important, or perhaps even absolutely necessary, for language learners to understand idioms in the target language? Idioms are very common in both written and spoken language. Lundblom and Woods (2012) write that idioms “appear in conversation, print (magazines and newspapers), and media (movies, radio, and television)” (p. 203). Cooper (1998) claims that when idioms occur on TV-shows, for example, in order to even understand the plot, the viewer often needs to be able to comprehend the idiom in question. Furthermore, “[o]f the four kinds of

nonliteral expressions, idioms are the most frequently encountered in discourse” (Ibid., p. 255). Consequently, since idioms are such a big part of most languages, students should learn them in order to be fluent in the target language. Burke (1998) goes as far as claiming that there is “absolutely no way a nonnative speaker of English could fully understand an American movie, TV show, news broadcast, or even a typical conversation without help because our language is loaded with nonstandard English, i.e., slang and idioms” (p. 1). He explains that if nonnative speakers do not understand idioms, they will never be able to completely integrate and, instead, they will always be outsiders. Cooper (1998) agrees, “sooner or later, imprecise idiomatic usage will cause difficulties even for a student with an excellent knowledge of grammar and a high level of vocabulary attainment” (p. 259).

Thus, the fact that students most definitely will encounter idiomatic expressions on a daily basis (whether in a country where the native language is English, or just through TV shows and movies) is definitely a main reason as to why their idiom awareness needs to be developed during their language learning. Additionally, it seems idioms are difficult to learn and comprehend. The complexity of this area within language learning is another reason why teachers need to explain and teach idioms to students. D’Angelo Bromley (1984), for example, writes that idioms “add confusion and difficulty to the learning of language” (p. 272). Lundblom and Woods (2012) further explain that idioms “occur frequently in classroom language. Students with literacy or language weaknesses are often challenged by idioms; therefore, the failure to comprehend idioms can impact academic performance” (p. 202). Moreover, Burke (1998) mentions that teaching students about and explaining nonliteral language thoroughly in school is preferable to students hearing this type of language outside of the classroom. Outside of an educational environment the risk of the student misunderstanding an idiom, for example, is higher. The student might end up in a situation where he or she uses the idiom in the wrong context and gets into trouble or an awkward situation because of it. To conclude, since idioms are so common in everyday language use, and since they seem difficult for foreign language students to learn, as educators, we cannot afford to ignore idioms if a natural use of the target language is an aim, we do have a

responsibility to familiarize students with this type of language and help them understand and use idioms effectively.

Although considerable work has been done on idioms, few researches have revealed the teaching implications of this type of vocabulary. No one has yet reached a satisfactory methodology that could guide language teachers in dealing with this type of vocabulary in class. For the purpose of this study, the different aspects to take into consideration as the basis for the teaching-learning process of English idioms in the L2 classroom were compiled, organized and further analyzed in order to provide teachers with a pathway whenever idiom instruction is to take place in the L2 classroom.

Teaching implications and teaching tips

When presenting idioms useful to EFL learners, teachers should be aware of the fact that knowing a word involves not only its most frequent meaning, but also all its features. So, idiom instruction requires an understanding of the level of the students, idiom frequency, influence of learner's first language (hereafter L1), context in which it may be found, register, connotation of the word, lexical variation, cultural value, the degree of interaction among students to make idiom acquisition more natural, as well as the different tasks through which the teaching of idioms is going to be more comprehensible and meaningful for L2 learners.

Level

First of all, with respect to the suitable students' level of proficiency, many scholars (Liontas, 2002; Cooper, 1998) suggest that idioms should be introduced to learners as early as possible along with other aspects of semantics, pragmatics, sociolinguistics, culture, and conventions of discourse and therefore should be integrated into the language curriculum right from the start. Indeed, idioms should not be separated from other aspects of learning a language. However, Boers (2004) suggests that the suitable students' level of proficiency to introduce idioms is that of an intermediate level instead of beginners, since students at an elementary level will face problems due to lack of the lexical knowledge required to understand figurative language. On the other hand, advanced learners may hesitate about the acceptability of certain idioms and therefore they may be less willing to jeopardize efforts and predictions (Boers *ibid.*) The

assumptions of the present study are based on Boers ideas, since intermediate students are the ones who have developed the necessary mental skills to think and reason figuratively.

Frequency

As regards to the matter of frequency, many authors such as Irujo (1986) and Nation (2004) claim that idioms of high occurrence should be taught first. That is, we most teach first the most frequent idioms encountered in the English language and as the learner progresses, s/he may continue to learn the least frequent ones by themselves. By seeing idioms often in their daily interaction with the language, students can store it in their memory more effectively and retrieve it for later use in communicative interactions. In the same vein, it is important to consider the fact that language is a flexible and dynamic system open to many changes, therefore teachers and learners alike should be prepared to meet the challenge of new phrases coming into use and others becoming archaic and out of use. Only updated, commonly used phrases should be presented to learners for active use, while other infrequent and old-fashioned expressions should only be explained in terms of their cultural value.

L1 influence

Together with frequency, learners' first language (hereafter L1) is believed to play a key-role in idiom acquisition. Irujo (1993) explored the influence of L1 Spanish in advanced ESL learners. From her experiment it can be concluded that identical and similar idioms (i.e. those which have exact or similar counterparts in the learner's mother tongue) should be taught first since they are the easiest to understand and produce. In contrast, different or dissimilar idioms (i.e. those which have no counterparts and whose meaning cannot be derived from the conjoined meaning of their constituents) should be left until last because they are the hardest to understand and produce.

Indeed, Lennon (1998) claims that comparisons with L1 should be encouraged so that learners can become aware of the differences between the metaphors in the target language and their native language. It can be encouraging for learners to see that English and Spanish idiomatic equivalents, for example, can even have syntactic

structures that are more or less congruent (e.g. *to take the bull by the horns*:: tomar el toro por los cuernos; *cry over the spilt milk*:: llorar sobre la leche derramada, etc.). Furthermore, he believes that students will become highly motivated to translate their language's metaphors into the target language so as to share with the class their own culture's method of metaphorical encoding. Additionally, to give an equivalent translation of an idiomatic expression where possible saves time, energy and is undoubtedly more effective in bringing home the full meaning to learners.

Context

We learn words better when they are acquired in a meaningful context. The comprehension of an idiomatic expression is facilitated by contextual support (Cacciari and Levorato, 1989; Nippold and Martin, 1989). Therefore, idioms must be immersed in a context for students to make meaningful connections to their previous knowledge and to be able to acquire those words and use them in future situations. Through an understanding of the function of idioms in context it also becomes easier to understand the nuances between idioms that appear synonymous. Lattey (1986, 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.

Together with it, one principle of effective idiom learning is to provide multiple exposures to an idiom's meaning. There is great improvement in vocabulary when students encounter vocabulary words often (National Reading Panel, 2000). According to Stahl (2005), students probably have to see a word more than once to place it firmly in their long-term memories. "This does not mean mere repetition or drill of the word," but seeing the word in different and multiple contexts. In other words, it is important

that idiom instruction provides students with opportunities to encounter idioms repeatedly and in more than one context.

Register

In this respect, it is important to draw student's attention towards the need to understand that idioms should, by no means, be used in all contexts and discourses. When correctly used, idioms provide one with a native-like ability to communicate at a more advanced level and in situations that are more complex; when used inadvertently and at random where more formal and literary diction is required, they pose a great danger to the inexperienced user, who, consequently, runs the risk of sounding uneducated and vulgar. Biber, Johansson, Leech, Conrad and Finegan (1999) and Liu (2003) notice that idioms are more common in informal communicative situations than in more formal registers. That is why when deciding which idioms to present to our learners, highly colloquial idioms, slangs and vulgarisms should be avoided, since they do not sound right when used by non-native speakers and may therefore interrupt the flow of communication. The functional force of idioms is one of the aspects that should be exposed to learners of English. It is important to explain to learners that idioms are meant to be used metaphorically and only in conversing with people with whom one shares experiences, socio-cultural background, and even religious beliefs. Additionally, idioms are most often used for third person reference rather than first or second person because of their face-threatening nature.

Connotation

The connotation of a word is its value, that is, the way native speakers view that particular word. Connotation of words can be neutral, negative, or positive. Connotation affects usage. For example, a given word may be appropriate for a formal talk but sound stilted in everyday conversation. And the other way around, one word may sound appropriate in everyday conversation but sound inappropriate in a more formal context. Two or more words may mean more or less the same thing, but they have different connotation and therefore different usages.

As idioms usually carry a certain kind of evaluation, when working with idioms learners should be encouraged to look for the positive and negative connotation of each idiom

encountered, and thus be made to distinguish between polite and derogatory disapproving (*offensive*) and appreciative in order to fully understand the meaning of the word or phrase. Through an understanding of the connotation or function of idioms it also becomes easier to understand the idiom itself. An awareness of the connotation of an idiom can also provide learners with greater confidence when using them without fearing to sound inappropriate. It is therefore important, wherever possible, to expose to learner the connotation of the idiom so that they can have a better idea on how and when to use it.

Polysemy

One of the biggest challenges for L2 learners when learning vocabulary in general is that most words –whether single words, set phrases, variable phrases or idioms- often have multiple meanings, i.e. they are polysemic words. A good example is the verb *take up* which has at least three distinct meanings: collect (e.g. “I’m going to take up the exam now”); occupy space (e.g. “The table takes up half the room”); begin a new hobby or pastime (e.g. “I took up tennis when I was fifteen”). Therefore, learners should be presented with the different meanings of an idiomatic expression to be able to use it accurately and appropriately. Exploring all the meanings an idiom can have will provide learners with more confidence in using them in the right context.

Lexical variation

As well as differences in spelling (hyphenation), morphology (singulars and plurals) and in inflection (particularly verb tenses), idioms often vary in their lexical form. When learners become familiar with an idiomatic expression they also need to be aware of the combinations the idiomatic phrase takes (Simpson & Mendis, 2003, p.436). For example, *get / pull your finger out; took / held / called / brought to task*. Some allow a difference in modification: *cut no / cut less / cut very little / not cut any... ice with somebody*. Some allow an addition to, or subtraction from, for example: *pull the other one – pull the other one; look as if butter wouldn’t melt in his mouth – butter wouldn’t melt*. Some allow the substitution of one word or one part of the idiom: *(be) a piece of cake – (be) a piece of piss*. Some allow passivization: *pull his leg / having his leg pulled*. Some idioms allow a variety of different variations, as in the following

examples: *make/ makes / made / making no bones about it / never made any bones about it /without making any bones about it / and no bones about it.*

Learners need to be exposed to the different variations of the idioms as they may encounter them. According to Gibbs (1987), learners acquire more easily the idioms that are syntactically frozen. Syntactically frozen idioms are those idioms that allow little - if non- variation, they cannot be syntactically transformed into the passive and still retain their figurative meaning. These idioms are learned more quickly because heard more frequently in only one syntactic form (Gibbs, 1987).

Cultural background

The creation of idioms is influenced by two main heritages: social heritage and cultural heritage. Even if the speaker perceives the world through his language, the latter is made up of things that exist in the speaker's social environment. Animals (*blind as a bat, as the crow flies, to kill two birds with one stone*), flowers and plants (*to gild the lily, to nip something in the bud*), vegetables and fruit (*to spill the beans, the apple of someone's eye*) are very present in idiomatic imagery. In the same way, if language mirrors life, men, and society, it also arises from culture. Several idioms originate in mythology (*in seventh heaven*—the antique firmament is composed of seven vaults, seven skies that one reaches successively, *to carry the weight of the world on one's shoulders*), in the Bible (*not to know someone from Adam, to turn the other cheek, like a lamb to the slaughter*), in literature (*Achilles' heel, to bite the dust, it's all Greek to me*), and in history (*to have an axe to grind, when the balloon goes up, it's like the Black Hole of Calcutta*).

Therefore, idiom learning and figurative language in general encodes customs, cultural beliefs, and specific features of a language, social attitudes and norms. Hence, learning idioms and their origins also provides learners with a good opportunity to acquire information about a language's culture; the teacher task at this point is to draw students' attention to the cultural aspects of idioms through an analysis of the social norms, customs and cultural values an idiom conveys. Furthermore, an approach to teaching idioms would benefit from a teacher's awareness of cross-cultural as well as cross-linguistic differences (Boers and Demecheleer, 2001).

Interaction and Involvement

Interaction through group work is another aspect that teachers have to take into consideration when teaching this type of vocabulary. Widdowson (1995) suggests group work because “it allows learners to adopt addresser and addressee roles in co-operative endeavor in the negotiation of meaning” (p.17) and he also recommends together with some exercises, teachers should systematize the use of idioms through meaningful activities for solving problems by means of language, so as to make the use of idioms a more practical and natural task. Lennon (1998) suggests that exercises of a problem-solving nature can help learners to discover the metaphors in idiomatic expressions. He argues that since idioms are so semantically opaque, they are well-suited to a problem-solving approach in teaching which can exploit learners’ innate cognitive drive to make sense out of their environment.

When reviewing the literature a wide variety of activities and exercises can be found. To name a few, Boers (1999), Deignan, Gabryśand Solska (1997) Lazar (1996) and Liu (2008) offer sample activities (e.g. gap-filling exercises, metaphoric themes recognition, making sentences using idioms, telling stories based on pictures, retelling and add-on stories, idiom notebooks and flashcards, association of idioms with mental images, hypothesizing and learning the origin of idioms, using idiom dictionaries, playing idiom games, replacing marked expressions with idioms, completing a story or a paragraph), all of which aim at raising metaphoric awareness and give students the opportunity to make cross-linguistic comparisons and express themselves in metaphorical terms. The more the teacher includes interactive idiom teaching, the more involved students will become and the better they will acquire the target vocabulary. Indeed, “...words which are processed with higher involvement load will be retained better than words which are processed with lower involvement load” (Laufer & Hulstijn, 2001, p.15).

Other teaching implications when presenting idioms to EFL students were also reviewed and further analyzed. For example, Irujo (1986) suggests that comparing the literal and figurative meanings of idioms will help students realize the absurdity of the literal meanings and provide a link from the literal words to the nonliteral meaning. Grant and Bauer (2004:46) claim that when dealing with figurative language (as native

speakers and language learners) our comprehension is focused on the ‘untruth’ element, together with our linguistic and pragmatic competence. It is actually our linguistic competence that indicates that what we hear or read is ‘untruth’, but our pragmatic competence helps in interpreting the meaning. They conclude that “understanding figurative language involves taking a compositional untruth and extracting probable truth from it by an act of pragmatic reinterpretation”. Hence, learners need to discover the relationships with the use of inferencing. Different activities can potentiate these interpretation skills, for example: matching pictures showing literal and idiomatic meanings of an idiom, drawing or acting out literal meanings, making up stories or dialogues in which the literal use of an idiom creates a misunderstanding or humorous situations. Activity of this type would be particularly useful with idioms which have no first language equivalent or a totally different one.

Moreover, it is generally agreed that transparent and semi-transparent idioms are more easily understood by language learners. Since their structure is very similar or identical in learner’s L1 and the meaning can be derived from the meanings of their constituents, these types of idioms can pose little difficulty to L2 students. Conversely, opaque idioms represent a challenge because the words making up such phrases are never used with the literal meaning, which makes their semantic decoding impossible for the non-native speaker.

On the other hand, (Irujo (1986), Liontas (2001) and Mahmoud (2002) suggest that presenting learners with idioms that belong to similar or even contrasting categories or themes could also be a pedagogical advantage. Grouping is deemed to be an important factor that assists people in retrieving and organizing vocabulary in a more effective way (Schmitt, 1997). Teaching idioms by theme or communicative functions (Sports, Gambling, Agreeing and Disagreeing, Persuading someone, etc.) is beneficial for students since it assists them when developing connections for better understanding, retention and eventual application. Therefore, teachers should provide students with lists and exercises of idioms related to the topics they are studying since this could become an invaluable communicative tool that will enable them to associate meanings.

To summarize, through a teacher's conscious effort, students can receive effective practice in comprehending and producing idioms. However, before idiom teaching can be carried out, several issues need to be taken into consideration:

- Idioms should be presented at intermediate levels.
- Most frequent idioms should be taught first.
- Only updated, commonly used phrases should be presented to learners for active use.
- EFL learners make use of their L1 when processing English idioms; therefore, identical and similar idioms should be taught first while different or dissimilar idioms with difficult vocabulary should be left until last.
- Idioms are easier to understand if given contextual support.
- Highly colloquial idioms, slangs and vulgarisms should be avoided.
- Syntactically frozen idioms are easier to learn than syntactically flexible idioms.
- Dividing idioms into thematic categories will make them easier to learn.
- Idioms containing cultural aspects should be taught comparatively.
- The grammatical form, collocations, frequency, register, polysemy, connotation and cultural value of idioms should be explored for better understanding and higher retention.
- Transparent and semi-transparent idioms are easier to learn than those with opaque meanings.
- Idioms should be exposed and practice through different types of activities, both at a receptive and productive level.

Idioms can be taught successfully in many different, creative ways. In general, it is probably beneficial to use a mixture of procedures to teach students because not all learners are the same type. Books, group work, drama, illustrations, music and sounds can all be used in order to create a variety of tasks and activities that appeal to different students. The teacher can also help raise students' awareness of idioms' origins and

improve their cultural knowledge through teacher instruction and many other procedures. A few weeks can be spent on these activities and learning a larger set of idioms or the teacher can, potentially, make a habit of integrating idioms into lessons and address them on occasion throughout the school year. There are also many new ways of incorporating idioms in students' everyday lives by showing them different idiom games and apps that can be downloaded to their smartphones. We believe that when students' attention is drawn to idioms an entire world will open up and they will start noticing idioms everywhere.

CONCLUSIONS

Vocabulary is indeed an essential element of any language and idioms constitute an important aspect of vocabulary acquisition. However, these forms of language are difficult to understand and learn because they do not mean what they literally state. As a consequence, learners face problems to communicate whenever they encounter an idiom.

Idioms are usually marginalized by language teachers and are not integrated into the L2 class, but often introduced as a time-filler at the end of the hour or end of a unit with random, simple, and unpractical exercises that fail to help learners understand these forms. Therefore, teachers should focus their practice on providing appropriate activities for students to develop their receptive and productive knowledge of idioms.

Teaching idioms more effectively requires careful planning and intensive and systematic practice. Through an extensive and systematic practice of English idioms in the EL classroom following the methodological implication previously analyzed, the deficiencies that exist while understanding and using idioms can be reduced significantly. It can make a difference in the way students and teachers alike view and treat this type of vocabulary.

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