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What are idioms?

They are a group of words in a fixed order that have a particular meaning that is different from the meanings of each word on its own:

For example:

1: *To "have bitten off more than you can chew" is an idiom that means you have tried to do something which is too difficult for you.*

2. Back against the wall

Be in a difficult situation from where escape is difficult

3. Head over heels

If you're head over heels, you're completely in love.

4. Better late than never

This expression means that it is better to arrive late than not at all.

5. Give someone the benefit of the doubt

You might use this phrase if somebody in the class says something that you don't fully believe; giving someone the benefit of the doubt means to trust what they are telling you – even if you don't think that it is true.

6. Get your act together

If your teacher tells you to 'get your act together' he/she thinks you need to work harder.

7. Back to the drawing board

This idiom means to start over. For instance, if you don't pass your English test, you might say that you are going back to the drawing board – meaning you are going to try some more lessons and try to pass the test again.

8. Hang in there

Your friend may be struggling with their English lessons, by which you could respond with 'hang in there', which means keep trying and don't give up with it.

Introduction:

Idioms come from spoken language and they are new vocabulary that we create using old vocabulary because by using words that already exist, we can give a clue to the meaning. They are building blocks of language and civilization.

Some idioms are easy to guess because of the words that make them. For example, get up (get out of bed), look around (browse), eat out (eat at a restaurant). But; they may have some hidden meaning that you cannot guess. Eat out means to go out (to

a restaurant) and eat but it does not mean to eat outside (you don't have to be under the stars). If you eat at a table just outside your house, we say eat outside not eat out.

What makes idioms difficult:

They are difficult to understand because the words used in them separately often have a basic and common meaning but are used to refer to something else when used in an idiom. They can have one or more meaning so a non-native speaker might get the wrong message and it can lead to confusion. They have a metaphorical meaning. The linguistic knowledge is essential to finding the right meaning of each word in the language, but it's the cultural knowledge that allows you to make meaning of the whole sentence. However, learning idioms presents a host of difficulties to English learners, primarily because they don't know the culture and history behind English idioms. That is why they often use idioms incongruous with the situation. Indeed, English learners utilize idiomatic expressions very carefully, being afraid of using them incorrectly and being misunderstood.

Some common idiom examples:

<i>Idiom</i>	<i>Meaning</i>
• A dime a dozen	Something common
• Beat around the bush	Avoid saying what you mean, usually because it is uncomfortable
• Better late than never	Better to arrive late than not to come at all
• Bite the bullet	To get something over with because it is inevitable
• A bed of roses	an easy option
• Raining cats and dogs	raining very heavily

The role of idioms in English language learning:

English is considered to be not only the most popular and demandable language in the world but also one of the most beautiful languages. Moreover, the English language is particularly rich in lexis. Idioms represent unique cultural and historical information as well as broaden people's understanding and manipulation of English.

That is why it is definitely important for non-native speakers to learn not only grammar and new lexical units as well as acquire reading, listening and writing skills but also pay attention to idioms in the process of English language learning. Idioms are not only a part of language, but also, they are the part of universal communication. We use idioms for theoretical purposes, and if we categorize idioms, they can be used in different ways for different purposes.

Since vocabulary and culture are intertwined, speakers can gain more vocabulary through idioms and conversely, can learn more about idioms from being exposed to the target culture. The more comprehensible input there is, the more learners' listening, speaking, writing and reading skills will improve.

There are certain things that happen in every culture and there are idioms to deal with them.

- In Norwegian and Czech, “walking around hot porridge” refers to beating around the bush, which is also an idiom meaning not getting to the point.
- If you are in Italy or Turkey and you say you are “as hungry as a wolf” then you are starving.
- In Finnish, “with long teeth” means you are doing something that you really don't want to do.
- In French, “to have long teeth” means you are ambitious. If it is raining in large amounts, most cultures have an interesting way of saying that:
- In English, it would be “raining cats and dogs”.
- In Africa, they might say “it's raining old women with clubs.” Many languages refer to heavy rain as coming in buckets or as rain coming out of a bucket.
- In Norway they say “it's raining female trolls”.
- The Irish say “it's throwing cobblers knives.”

Why is it Important to know and understand them?

Idioms help us say many things with just a few words. They help us enrich our language, they are nicer to listen to and make the conversation less monotonous and funnier. It will make the speech more alive and colourful. They are used in written languages as well as spoken language. They help language learners understand English culture, penetrate into customs and lifestyle of the English people, and gain a deeper insight into the English history.

Different topics have different idioms related to them. If one can know which topic the idiom belongs to by learning it, it will make it easier for them to use it when communicating. For example, not confusing an idiom which is used for animals in an office. E.g A black sheep of the family. Here it means someone who is known as a disgraceful member of the family and is not related in any way to the actual sheep.

What are some easy ways to learn idioms and use them in our day to day communication?

There are quite a few idiomatic phrases that are virtually the same across different languages. But given the cultural differences between the groups of people that speak the 7000 different human languages, one might think how could this come to be?

Despite having distinct cultural differences humans share common experiences, making it natural to use the same metaphor or idioms in different languages around the world. So for non-naïve speakers there are some idioms they can translate into the new language but they have to be careful to not to do that with all of them as it will not make any sense in English language even if it does in the language they are translating it from.

Nowadays young people have lots of opportunities to go on scholarships to study in all parts of the world. Especially in English speaking countries a lot of students can go on exchange programmes. Before starting their degrees or programs if student learn the new language fluently it will make their experience more beneficial and cheerful and they will not have to stress. Native speakers use idioms in all types of situations so if you understand their meaning straight away it will be easier to make new friends and will not feel frustrated having to ask them for the meaning and being embarrassed.

An easy way to learn and understand idioms is to watch cartoons, programmes and movies in the target language and practice them. You can turn them into games by writing idioms on one paper and their meanings on a different paper and then try and match them together with your friends. Once you find it, you will have to use them in a sentence and can also give critical evaluation. This can be a fun way to learn them. One can also use dialogues and role play which will help them practice it orally in an efficient way because they will be able to work on their pronunciation too. Non-native speakers should practice how to use idiomatic expressions. The more a non-native speaker of English is capable of using idiomatic expressions, the closer he or she is to English Language competence. Using idiomatic expressions in an adequate amount, parallel to native speakers brings the non-native speaker closer to English Language proficiency. Lack of idiomatic use and knowledge by non-native speakers equates their lack of English language competence.

Conclusion:

To conclude we may state that the sheer number of idioms and their high frequency in discourse make them an important aspect of vocabulary acquisition and language learning in general. One of the approaches to defining this linguistic phenomenon stresses that an idiom is a manner of speaking that is natural to native speakers of the language. It proves that only people who are very good at speaking English can adequately and to the point use idiomatic expressions in their speech. English is a language with a vast idiomatic basis, which makes its learning very exciting and intriguing. So, grasping the use of idioms is an essential part of learning English. Anyone can learn a language but skips the use of idioms as it is difficult to

understand and use them. It makes the language more fluent and gives the conversation a bright feeling. A non-native speaker will also feel more confident when speaking because they know that they will be able to understand everything spoken to them in the conversation without having to worry about anything.