

## Idioms in Phraseology

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### ABSTRACT

*This paper explores the significance of idioms and phraseological units within the study of the English language, emphasizing their role in language acquisition, cultural identity, and communication. Through a detailed examination of different classifications of phraseological units proposed by scholars, including V. V. Vinogradov, this study highlights the complex and opaque nature of idioms. This research further underscores the importance of mastering idioms for achieving native-like fluency and enhancing expressiveness. Findings suggest that idioms, while challenging to learn, provide a significant depth of meaning and cultural insight, making them essential for learners striving for proficiency.*

**Keywords:** Phraseology, idiom, phrase, literally, fixed expressions, language layer, classification, phraseological fusions, phraseological unities, phraseological combinations, informal language, cultural identity.

### INTRODUCTION

The study of phraseology is essential for mastering any language, particularly English, due to its complex and rich use of fixed expressions, such as idioms, collocations, and proverbs. Phraseological units enhance the idiomatic nature of speech, allowing speakers to express ideas succinctly and vividly. For language learners, idioms and other phraseological units represent a challenging yet invaluable aspect of fluency. Scholars have classified idioms and phraseological units according to

various principles, and these classifications aid in understanding the role of idioms in language. This paper aims to discuss the various classifications of phraseological units, examine their cultural significance, and analyze the challenges associated with learning them.

#### METHODS

To investigate the structure and function of idioms and phraseological units, a comparative literature analysis was conducted. The study involved reviewing existing classification systems by notable scholars in the field of phraseology, including those of Academician V. V. Vinogradov, J. Huizenga, A. Langlotz, D. Gulland, D. Hinds-Howell, and A.L. Yusupov. Specific attention was given to Vinogradov's semantic classification, which categorizes phraseological units into fusions, unities, and combinations based on the degree of semantic change and motivational transparency. Definitions and interpretations from standard linguistic resources, such as the *Collins Cobuild Dictionary of Idioms* and the *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*, were also analyzed.

#### RESULTS

The study reveals that phraseological units, especially idioms, serve as an integral component of the English language's expressive potential. Vinogradov's classification highlights three primary types:

##### 1. *Phraseological fusions*

These are word groups with completely altered meanings that cannot be inferred from their individual words. Examples include "once in a blue moon" (meaning "very seldom") and "to cry for the moon" (meaning "to demand the impossible"). Fusions are unique to each language and resist literal translation. Sometimes phraseological fusions are called idioms (the word "idiom" is of Greek origin *idios* and means own, peculiar, private) under which linguists understand a complete loss of the inner form. An idiom

is a phrase or expression that has a meaning that is different from the literal meanings of the individual words that make it up. English idioms are a part of figurative language, meaning that the phrase has a meaning beyond the literal definition of the words. Researches have shown that, idioms have the following characteristic features “(a) Multiword character – they consist of more than one word (b) Collocability – some idioms (but by no means all) consist of words which collocate more frequently than by chance, that is, their co-occurrence is statistically significant (c) Conventionality – they are prefabricated ready-made chunks of words intuitively familiar to native speakers (d) Relative opacity of meaning – the constituent items of an idiom are relatively opaque in their meanings.”

### 2. *Phraseological unities*

Although unities have shifted meanings, their meaning can still be discerned through context. For instance, “to lose one’s head” (meaning “to panic”) is motivated by the imagery of losing control. These units are more numerous and can occasionally be translated or interpreted across languages.

### 3. *Phraseological combinations*

These combinations contain one component in its literal sense and another in a figurative sense, such as “to meet the demand.” They represent the most transparent category and are often easier for learners to understand and use.

The results suggest that idioms and phraseological units provide a unique window into cultural values and thought patterns, while their figurative nature poses a challenge for learners.

## DISCUSSION

The findings indicate that idioms and other phraseological units are vital for achieving fluency and expressiveness in English. Idioms reflect cultural identity and encapsulate cultural nuances, enhancing communication by enabling speakers to convey meaning beyond literal interpretation.

However, due to their opaque meanings, idioms are difficult for language learners to master and often require extensive exposure to language and culture.

This study supports the view of scholars like Richard A. Spears and David Crystal, who argue that idioms are inherently complex due to their lack of literal meaning, opacity, and fixed structure. Idioms provide learners with additional vocabulary and allow for a more authentic, native-like use of the language. Cultural insight is necessary for effective translation of idioms, as demonstrated by the proverbs “There is no rose without a thorn” and “A stitch in time saves nine,” which require cultural equivalency for accurate cross-language interpretation. The field of phraseology, also known as idiomacity, refers to all those features of language that are connected with prefabricated ready-made expressions that are, at the moment of production, not generated by the rules of grammar, but stored and retrieved from memory as wholes is rich and intriguing, providing ample opportunities for a lifetime of analysis from different perspectives.

J. Huizenga considered an idiom as a group of words having a meaning different from the meaning of its individual parts, A. Langlotz stated that “The colourful linguistic spectrum of expressions called “idioms” directly reflects the considerable difficulties linguists face in finding an appropriate definition and classification of these linguistic phenomena and to explain their grammatical behaviour” The following definition of idiom is given in *Collins Cobuild Dictionary of Idioms* and *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*, “An idiom is a special kind of phrase. It is a group of words which have a different meaning when used together from the one it would have if the meaning of each word were taken individually, “idiom is a group of words that has a special meaning that is different from the ordinary meaning of each separate word”, another definition of idiom is given in the *Cambridge Encyclopedia of the English Language* by David Crystal “Two central features identify an idiom. The meaning of the idiomatic expression cannot be deduced by examining the meanings of the constituent lexemes. And the expression is fixed, both grammatically and lexically. Thus, “put a sock in it” means “stop talking” and it is not possible to replace any of the lexemes

and retain the idiomatic meaning. Put a stocking in it or put a stock on it must be interpreted literally or not at all.”

According to Sh. Usmonova, “Differences between languages are usually based on differences between cultures. These differences are visible in the phraseological layer of a language. Thus, idiomatic expressions as part of a given culture are necessarily to be translated bearing in mind their function in the system and not just their form. As we argued above, idioms cannot be defined by saying that the sense of the whole cannot be arrived at from a prior understanding of the meaning of the parts, as we saw that many authors took for granted, for otherwise the great majority of proverbs would not fit into this definition. Indeed, there is nothing especially opaque in expressions like “There is no rose without a thorn” or “A stitch in time saves nine” in spite of their figurative meaning. The problem arises the moment we have to render these expressions into another system. The fact that they are to be taken as semantic wholes means that we have to find a similar if not an identical idiomatic structure that culturally corresponds to the semantic import of the proverb. D. Gulland and D. Hinds - Howell in the *Penguin Dictionary of English Idioms* state that “The English language is rich in idioms, and though it is possible to converse correctly in non-idiomatic English, students with only a superficial knowledge of English idioms will find themselves at a serious disadvantage in their reading, and even more so when they take part in discussions and debates. We would define an idiom as a combination of words with a special meaning that cannot be inferred from its separate parts.”

Idioms can enhance the expressiveness of language. Writers and speakers use idiomatic phrases to convey emotions, emphasize points, or create vivid imagery. For example, saying someone “has a heart of gold” “have long hands” can arouse a more profound emotion than merely expressing kindness.

A. L. Yusupov states that, “Idioms are informal expressions used in everyday speech. Often referred to as catch phrases, colloquialisms or clichés, they are group of words in a fixed order that have a particular meaning that is different from the meanings of each word understood on its own. They serve as a

colorful way to sum up an idea. However, idioms can be one of the most difficult areas to learn in a foreign language.”

It is worth pointing out that, even though idioms are often claimed to be characteristic of informal language and popular speech, most characteristically they are very specific to particular communication systems or registers and idioms can be complicated both to understand and to use, due to the fact that they commonly have a different meaning from what they literally express. For example, someone being a “dark horse” has literally nothing to do with running on four legs with a rider on their back. What makes idioms so special is that they give you an immense new range to express your thoughts, and they allow you to develop vocabulary for your learning; this means that you will have additional tools when speaking or writing, and you’ll be able to approach a native level of English at a greater rate. It’s a “win-win,” so to speak.

The following idioms makes no claim to completeness:

“Bring home the bacon”

Meaning: To earn a living.

“That’ll be the day!”

Meaning: I don’t believe it!

He’s dragging his feet”

Meaning: To move slowly.

“8-ball”

Meaning: A problem that is impossible to solve.

Further research is warranted to explore methods for teaching idioms effectively to language learners, focusing on contextual learning and memory-based strategies to support comprehension and usage. This study concludes that understanding idioms is critical for full language mastery, reflecting the broader cultural dimensions of English and enhancing learners’ expressive abilities.

## CONCLUSION

This paper underscores the importance of idioms and phraseological units in language learning. Idioms are not only integral to English vocabulary but are also key to understanding

cultural identities. Although difficult to master, idioms offer learners valuable tools for achieving fluency. Future studies should aim to develop instructional techniques that address the challenges of learning idioms, ensuring that learners can navigate the figurative and expressive layers of English.

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