

**Faramarzov Azer Suratulla oglu,**  
*Lankaran State University*  
*Department of Foreign Languages*

## **IDIOMS IN MODERN ENGLISH AND THEIR EXPLANATION WAYS**

**Abstract.** *The article deals with idioms used in Modern English and their explanation ways. The types of idioms and their translations are shown, the difference between them and free phrases are explained and the equivalents of some English units are given in Azerbaijani.*

**Key words:** *idioms, idiomatic expressions, collocations.*

**Фарамарзов Азер Суратулла огли**

## **ІДІОМИ В СУЧАСНІЙ АНГЛІЙСЬКІЙ МОВІ ТА СПОСОБИ ЇХ ПОЯСНЕННЯ**

**Анотація.** *У статті розглядаються ідіоми, які використовуються в сучасній англійській мові та способи їх пояснення. Показано типи ідіом та їх переклади, пояснюються різниця між ними і вільними фразами. Еквіваленти деяких англійських одиниць виміру наведено азербайджанською мовою.*

**Ключові слова:** *ідіоми, ідіоматичні вирази, словосполучення.*

**Фарамарзов Азер Суратулла огли**

## **ИДИОМЫ В АНГЛИЙСКОМ ЯЗЫКЕ И СПОСОБЫ ИХ ОБЪЯСНЕНИЯ**

**Аннотация.** *В статье рассматриваются идиомы, которые используются в современном английском языке и способы их объяснения. Показано типы идиом и их переводы, объясняются разница между ними и свободными фразами. Эквиваленты некоторых английских единиц измерения приведены на азербайджанском языке.*

**Ключевые слова:** *идиомы, идиоматические выражения, словосочетания.*

### **Problem definition**

**Introduction.** Each word or phrase is carefully selected by the message to give or to shape the desired perception. Each statement carries other meanings as well. In this regard they have characteristics which are designed and updated constantly for members of society can give us new information. Culture, which is the ongoing memory of societies, penetrates every area of life with its inclusive meaning. Social life is also in this context. Thus culture spreads in people's perception in daily life, The individuals general ideas on major issues remain from their ancestors living centuries ago. In this respect idioms have an important function. Idioms are however fixed expressions consisting of at least two words which figurative meanings. Each word language passing through the filter of time and language has survived today.

**Objectives** (цель статьи). Idioms are the phrases which are the cultural heritage of the community. Each idiom distilled for hundreds of years and has reached today's world.

Many of these idioms have been expressed and approved as a result of individual or social experience becoming the most straight forward and easiest way of elucidating a situation. Idioms can carry a few identify of the social structure and values. They are considered as a phrase based on traditions customs, religion morality or generally accepted culture elements.

Questions such as «what is the background to the idiom Where does the phrase have its origin?» «What is the validity of this idiom?» are matters that should be analyzed. In this paper analyses will be carried out for idioms giving examples reasons, validity and social basis for these idioms.

### **Main text**

Idioms have an important role in speaking and understanding native speakers, songs, and movies. They improve communication skills, and help us speak fluently. There are two types of learning way of language; textbooks and natural language. Textbook helps us learning exact grammar and writing skills, but native language helps us speak clearly as a native speaker and understand them. When we realize the impact of idioms? When we speak in any language, we use the words, but words are not enough to express feeling. Also, sometimes words cannot make the speech interesting and natural. Therefore we need to use idioms. Some idioms are simple, transparent, and related to their literal meaning, so learners can understand and memorize them. However, there are a lot of idioms that come from the past, and they do not have any relationship with their literal meaning. For example, «to hold one's horses» – means to stop and waiting patiently. Before, when people stopped their horses and began to wait, they used this idiom, but now the horses are not used as before.

As a result, if we translate them word by word, we will not understand the meaning which is used in any situation. But some idioms can be easy to understand, because they are almost similar to their literal meaning. For instance, «cat nap» — means short sleep, cat's nap is too short, so we can guess the meaning of this idiom. Native speakers use idioms in their speech all the time. Knowledge of idioms helps speak very well. Also, idioms are main parts of vocabulary. If someone learns the idioms, he will be motivated to speak and use these idioms. Learners should be realized that idioms have an impact on language and communication skills. Also, they help us understanding the native speaker. In addition, they affect to learn features of foreign language and cultures of different countries. Also whoever uses the idioms, should be familiar with their using style. They can memorize idioms, but that may not be enough for using them in which situation they use that idiom.

Sometimes we do not understand several phrases or sentences used in the English language, even if we are knowledgeable about the meanings of the words that phrases consist of. While translating proverbs, common sayings and informal phrases we can easily face such problems. This is just because of their idiomatic meanings. The reason of why we call these phrases as idiomatic expressions, because the word «idiom» itself means in Ancient Greek «*peculiarity*» – «*məxsusiyyət*» – «a combination of words that has a figurative meaning owing to its common usage». For instance, «I am over the moon». In this sentence, we separately know the translations of all the words, but as it is

being an idiomatic expression it means «I'm pleased – məmnun oldum». Or another example, «I'm just pulling your leg» means «I'm joking – mən zarafat edirəm». Idioms are very rich in meanings, thus, they are almost used in every literary language. In order to intensify the meaning of something several kind of idioms are used, including epithet, metonymic and metaphorical. But we also have to mention one fact that, a number of idiomatic expressions were not figurative but had a literal meaning in their original use.

For instance: spill the beans means 'to let out a secret – qeyri-ixtiyari sirri açmaq' probably originates in a physical spilling of beans. The point is that the spiller certainly does not want to lose any beans and like an idiom it draws a picture of this characteristic. The second example is 'let the cat out of the bag' has the similar meaning to 'spill the beans'. But the secret revealed in this case will likely cause some problems. As we know that, a cat was sometimes put in bags to keep it under control in order not to damage anything around. That is why, 'to let the cat out of the bag' suggests either that the secret is revealed or that the situation is out of control. There are at least twenty five thousand idioms that are very common in spoken English and informal written English, so it is important to learn them. In spoken English, they are used in most situations, from friendly conversations to business meetings. In written English they are especially common in newspapers because the writers want to make the headlines and articles interesting and lively. In the English language, there are also some words that they have lost their literary meaning and they are used only in figurative meaning. One of such words is «to plough — əkmək, biçmək». This verb almost is not used in modern English and we can only meet it in the idiomatic phrases:

1. He had to plough through hundreds of pages of American history to get ready for his test.

2. – O, Amerika tarixindən testi vermək üçün kağızların arasında itib-batmışdı. Profits can be ploughed back. – Qoyulan sərmaye qazanc gətirə bilər.

3. You can plough money into a business. – Sən bu işə pul buraxa bilərsən. Another example is the verb «to rack». This verb is an old polysemantic word and mainly had been used in the meanings of «əzab vermək, işgəncə vermək».

In modern English it has already lost its meaning and we can only meet it within word combinations. For example, «to rack your brain». The equivalent of this idiomatic expression is «bir şeyi xatırlamağa güclü səy göstərmək, yaddaşını eşələ –mək». We can extend the list of such words. Therefore, while translating we must know the figurative meanings of these words in such collocations. Otherwise, our translations will not make a sense. All the words that an idiom consists of are not used in literally but figuratively. In modern English, most words are used in their figurative meaning rather than literal one. For instance, the verb 'catch' is almost used in its figurative meaning: Literal meaning Figurative meaning I have been fishing, but caught absolutely nothing!

1. Yesterday I caught the bus.
2. Try to catch his eye.
3. You'll catch your death of cold.
4. Wait while I catch my breath.

The translations of the catch idioms used above are:

- catch the bus – avtobusa çatmaq, avtobusla getmək;
- catch one's eye – fikri yayındırmaq, fikri özünə cəlb etmək;
- catch one's death of cold – bərk soyuqlamaq;
- catch one's breath – rahat nəfəs almağa başlamaq;
- english is a language rich in idioms.

Therefore, English learners must be knowledgeable of their nature, types, and use. K. Larson (1984, pp. 48–49) states that «a literal word-for-word translation of the idioms into another language will not make sense<sup>6</sup>. The form cannot be kept, but the receptor language word or phrase which has the equivalent meaning will be the correct one to use in translation». Larson (1984, p. 49) points out: translators who want to make a good idiomatic translation often find figures of speech especially challenging<sup>6</sup>. A literal translation of as a blind bat might sound really strange in a language where the comparison between a blind person and a bat has never been used as a figure of speech.

In the Collins Co build dictionary, an idiom is defined as ‘a group of words which have different meaning when used together from the one they would have if you took the meaning of each word separately.’ The above mentioned definition is practical in the sense and it is important, to analyze idiom in its context and occurrence and a text. However, the meaning of idiom can only be inferred through its meaning and function in context:

- Bread and butter. For instance, «This is a real bread and butter issue»;
- bless you – is used, in most cases, in the cordial expressions context;
- go to hell – implies a conflicting situation among people who are having conversation;
- we know what bread and butter are, but in the abovementioned example, it is just beyond their edible meanings as not many people can understand.

But if we get acquainted with the whole context that this phrase is used, we can understand that the interlocutors are talking about an issue or a topic of discussion pertinent to daily life. So, it is important to start first of all, to discuss the nature of idiom and a concept related to it, such as ‘collocation’. When we produce a text, we usually combine old and new meanings of the word and word-combination that we are using.

The following sentences are example for this idea: «It was a simple bread and butter issue. I examined my bread very closely to see where it is buttered». In this example, the words bread and butter are used as an idiom and we can easily translate this idiom as ‘gündəlik məsələlər’, due to the fact that ‘bread and butter’ are consumed every day. However, in the following sentence we face with a new meaning in my bread and (is) buttered and a free translation of this sentence would be «I examined it closely to see where it mattered for me. – Mən məsələni mənimçün nə əhəmiyyət kəsb etdiyini dərinlən araşdırdım» In other words, a person, who produces a text tends to produce meaning from an established idiom. Idioms are collocations but some experts do distinguish them. Because the word components in collocations can freely go with other words but it is not

---

<sup>6</sup> Phraseology. Barbara ANN. Kipfer. PhD, 2008. Naperville Illinois, US. — Souce books. Inc.

the case with idioms and idioms can be as free in their combination, as well. In many cases the syntactic characterization of idioms has been a subject of dispute.

An idiom is fixed in nature and we cannot change any word form in it. For example, the idiom ‘as hungry as a bear’ cannot be changed into ‘as hungry as a lion’, and in the same way, ‘cost an arm and a leg’ cannot be changed into ‘cost arms and legs’. A translator may easily recognize an idiom if it violates ‘truth conditions’, as in ‘it is raining cats and dogs’, ‘He is a black sheep of the family’ so on. However, when the idiom is not of this nature, it is harder to recognize, and translators may just think of it as an ordinary expression, with the consequence of losing its meaning. The following example shows such problem: ‘This can only be done, I believe, by a full and frank airing of the issues. I urge you all to speak your minds, and not to pull any punches.’ Here, it is harder to see the italicized words as idioms. There are two sources which may cause misinterpretation: The first possible source is that there are idioms which mislead readers or users because they do not sound idiomatic at all, but at a closer look, careful readers would find the ‘hidden’ idioms.

As an example we can mention ‘drain the radiator’ in the following text given by Mona Baker: ‘I’ve just done my stint as rubber duck, see, and pulled off the grandma lane into the pit stop to drain the radiator.’ On first reading, readers may be inclined to interpret it in terms of a truck driver making a stop and do something with the radiator of the truck. Only careful readers would interpret the words ‘drain the radiator’ as an idiom in the meaning of ‘to use the toilet – ayaq yolundan istifadə etmək’.

The second source of misinterpretation is when the words in an idiom have equivalents in the target language but with totally different meaning. A good example is the idiom ‘to take someone for a ride’. In a general context, an Azerbaijani reader may take it to mean ‘taking someone, maybe a guest visiting the town, to go around in one’s car or motorbike’, while a careful reading of the idiom in context may give quite a different meaning: ‘cheating someone in some way – kimisə aldatmaq’. Once an idiom or fixed expression has been recognized and interpreted correctly, the next step is to decide how to translate it into the target language. The difficulties involved in translating an idiom are totally different from those involved in interpreting it. Here, the question is not whether a given idiom is transparent, opaque, or misleading. An opaque expression may be easier to translate than a transparent one.

The main difficulties involved in translating idioms and fixed expressions may be summarized as follows:

- An idiom has no equivalent in the target language. The way a language chooses to express, or not express, various meanings cannot be predicted and only occasionally matches the way another language chooses to express the same meanings. In one language it can be a single word, in another it may express by means of an idiom, and so on. It is thus, unrealistic to expect to find equivalent idioms.
- An idiom may have a similar counterpart in the target language. For example, ‘to turn one’s blind eye to something’ and its Azerbaijani translation is ‘nəyəsə göz yummaq’.
- An idiom may be used in the source text in both its literal and idiomatic senses at the same time.

For instance, ‘give credit to’ can be used as a word combination in the meaning of ‘kiməsə kredit vermək’ and as an idiomatic expression – ‘kiməsə kompliment söyləmək’. The way in which an idiom or a fixed expression can be translated into another language depends on many factors. It is not only a question of whether an idiom with a similar meaning is available in the target language. According to Baker, there are four possible strategies for translating an idiom:

- by using an idiom that is similar in form and meaning, for example ‘big head’ in ‘Dan’s such a big-head, always reminding us what fantastic results he got in his exams.’ where we can have ‘Dən elə yekəbaşdır ki, həmişə imtahanlarından əla qiymət aldığını bizə xatırladır’;

- by using an idiom of similar meaning but dissimilar in form, as in ‘kitab qurdu’ for book worm;

- By paraphrasing, as in the following example: ‘And this wasn’t even my fault. There must be someone behind this. – Baxmayarq ki, bu mənim günahım deyildi. Çox ehtimal ki, bu işin arxasında kimsə var.’

- By omission – as with single words, an idiom may sometimes be omitted altogether in the target text.

This may be because it has no close match in the target language, its meaning cannot be easily paraphrased, or for stylistic reasons. These strategies are not only good for training translators in order to interpret idioms better as well as translating them, they can also be good for training English learners in recognition of idioms by using bilingual texts.

### **Conclusions**

Idioms are phrases that have survived through history making a journey in time. Each word has a different adventure, a different experience idioms have a certain background. They are indicators of social life refer to the place of people in society as well as noticed in examples above, each phrase is a discourse developed and adopted by societies, although the effects of these idioms have diminished and their validity is still accepted by many people.

### **Literature**

1. American Idioms Dictionary Second Edition. Richard. A. Spears, PhD. — New York, US, 2007.

2. American Slangs. Fourth Edition. Barbara ANN. Kepfer PhD. Robert L. Chapman PhD Collins. Publishers. — New York, US, 2008.

3. Klimentieva T., Shannon J. Happy English 2. — Obninsk : Kaluzhskaya Oblast, 1999.

4. Litvinov P. P. 100 English nouns a key to super memory 1000 idioms. — Moscow, 2006.

5. Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary. — Oxford University press, 2005.

6. Phraseology. Barbara ANN. Kipfer. PhD, 2008. Naperville Illinois, US. — Souce books. Inc.

7. Vinareva L. A. English Idioms / L. A. Vinareva, B. B. Yanson. — Moscow, 2015.