

COMPREHENDING IDIOMS IN THE CONTEXT

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Abstract: *this article shows what difficulties students have in comprehending the idioms. In order to avoid difficulties students should learn to find the meaning of the idioms in the context. In this way they will learn how to use idioms in their speech and writing. Besides, in this article some examples of idioms with their translation into Russian and Uzbek are given.*

Keywords: *idioms, difficulties, comprehension, context, to guess meaning, speech and writing, meaning.*

An Idiom is an expression whose meaning is different from the meaning of the individual words. For example, **to have your feet on the ground** is an idiom meaning **to be sensible**. We will come across a great many idioms when we listen to and read English. So it is important to learn about the meanings of idioms and about how they are used. Idioms are in such widespread use that it is inappropriate to ignore them. In my article I tried to write about idioms, because students have difficulties in translating them into their mother tongue. That is why any modern student needs to know them and learn more idioms. This helps students in reading and comprehension. Besides, students should know how to use them correctly in their speech and writing. English scientists A.B. Koonin [5], R.J. Dixon [3], J. Wright [1] and many others wrote books on idioms. Jon Wright points out in his book “Idioms organizer” words do not just come individually, they also come in expressions. These are thousands of them in English: 1) I could eat a horse. – In Russian: Я очень голоден. In Uzbek: Отни ҳам ея оламан. (Жуда очман маъносида). 2) Money doesn't grow on trees. – In Russian: Деньги не растут на деревьях (Деньги на улице не валяются) In Uzbek: Пул дарактларда ўсмайди. (Пулни топиш қийин маъносида). 3) I got there in the nick of time. – In Russian: Я дошёл до того места как раз вовремя. In Uzbek: Мен у ерга сўнги дақиқаларда етиб бордим.

Idioms have the meaning only as a unit. Professor A.B. Koonin defined idiom as “a stable combination of words with a fully or partially figurative meaning“. This definition emphasizes inherent and very important features of the idiomatic expressions. John Wright writes in his book “Idioms organizer”: “One of the reasons idiomatic language is difficult to translate is because it is the area of language clothes to culture. The metaphors of one culture will be different from those to another” [5, c. 12]. Robert J. Dixon says in his book “Essential idioms in English” that English teachers have long recognized that idiomatic expressions add grace and exactness to the language [3, c. 41].

The best way to understand an idiom is to see it in the context. If someone says: “This tin opener’s driving me round the bend! I think I’ll throw it away and get a new one next time I’m in town” [4, c. 23]. Then the context and common sense tell us that drive round the bend means something different from driving a car round a curve in the road. The context tells us the tin opener is not working properly and that’s having an effect on the person using it.

There are many types of idioms we can see: idioms with nouns and adjectives, idiomatic pairs, idioms with prepositions, verbal idioms, idioms from special subjects (banking/business/travel), and idioms with comparisons.

Table 1. In the chart below we can show some examples for the types of idioms

Verb +object (and/or adverbials)	Kill two birds with one stone	Produce two useful results by just doing one action. (In Russian: Убить двух зайцев одним выстрелом – In Uzbek: Бир ўқ билан икки қуённи отмоқ)
Prepositional phrase	In the blink of an eye	In an extremely short time. (In Russian: Очень быстро – In Uzbek: Қўз юмиб очгунча, яъни тезлик билан)
Compound	A bone of contention	Something which people argue and disagree over (In Russian: Тема, которая стоит обсуждения – In Uzbek: Бахслашишга арзийдиган нарса)
Similarity (as+adj+as, or like + noun)	As dry as a bone	Very dry indeed (In Russian: Совершенно сухой – In Uzbek: Жудаям қуруқ)
Binomial (word+and+word)	Rough and ready	Crude and lacking sophistication. (In Russian: Необработанный, неготовый – Маъромга етмаган)
Trinomial (word+word+and+word)	Cool, calm and collected	Relaxed in control, not nervous (In Russian: Спокойный, уравновешанный – In Uzbek: Ўзини босиб олган, оғир, босиқ, вазмин)
Whole clause sentence	To cut a long story	To tell the main points, but not all the fine details (In Russian:

	short	Сказать главное, говорить по сути – In Uzbek: Гапнинг индаллосини айтмоқ, мақсадга кўчмоқ)
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The meanings of idioms convey is non-compositional. It implies that you cannot understand the meaning of the whole phrase putting the meaning of each word together. If you look at the individual words it may not even make a sense grammatically. Even if you know the meaning off all the grammar of the phrase completely the meaning of the phrase may still be confusing. When the meaning of the idiom isn't clear, we can guess the meaning from the context.

For e.g.: 1) Take your life into your hands: You're taking your life into your hands crossing the road there. Now the meaning is more clear (do something very risky) – рисковать – таваккал ишга қўл урмоқ. 2) Go all out – Jack is going all out to win the contract, I hope he will succeed (meaning: to use a lot of energy and effort to do something). – Стараться изо всех сил. – Жон-жаҳди билан ҳаракат қилмоқ. 3) Anybody who is anybody. – Oh, you must come to the party! Anybody who is anybody will be there (all the important people) [2, с. 17]. – Важные люди – Казо-казолар. 4) Get on like a house on fire – Fortunately, we got on like a house on fire from the start. (Get on extremely well with someone) – Ладить – Яхши чиқишмоқ. 5) Let the cat out of the bag – We didn't tell anyone the news, but she let the cat out of the bag and now everyone knows. (You accidentally tell people a secret/something you shouldn't tell them) – Рассказать секрет – айтиш мумкин эмас бўлган гапни айтиб қўймоқ. 6) On the top of the world – I'm/feel on the top of the world today. I've just passed my exams (very happy indeed) – очень счастливый – боши осмонган етди. 7) Once in a blue moon – Snow falls in the city of San Diego, California, once in a blue moon (rarely, frequently) – очень редко – жуда камдан кам. 8) To make good – to succeed. – He is hard worker and I'm sure that he'll make good in that new job. – Преуспевать, достигать цели. – Муваффақиятга эришмоқ. Making a conclusion, we can say that learning such expressions is never an easy task for the student learning English as a second or foreign language. But trying to learn and use them is necessary and helps our speech to be more beautiful.

References

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