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THE IMPORTANCE OF TEACHING ENGLISH IDIOMS

Sayfullaeva Yulduz Erkinovna –

ESL teacher of TSUL (Tashkent, Uzbekistan)

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Abstract. Teaching vocabulary is regarded as an important aspect of developing learners' language skills and teachers are responsible for coming up with different ways of helping them memorize seemingly hard words in English. One of such challenges is connected with idioms, as idioms are rather tedious to learn by heart especially considering the variety of idioms existing in various spheres of life.

Key words: *grouping, idiomatic expression, contextualization.*

Idioms are significant cultural element of any language and it is considered an important stage in learning foreign language. An idiom itself is an expression that has figurative meaning from combination of certain words and cannot be translated directly when in collocation and different from the meaning of the individual words. Consequently, you cannot guess the meaning of an idiom from the words it contains. And so people experience problems while translating. However, idioms make speakers' language colorful and when non- native speakers use idioms in their speeches, they will sound very fluent. However it is not less important to use them correctly, otherwise speaker will “destroy” the phrase, and therefore teacher should approach to teaching idioms wisely and sparingly.

It will be better if teacher chooses the idioms that can be easily grouped, for instance, most of them fall into categories, like idioms with colors, animals or parts of the body. To succeed in teaching idioms from each category will be enough for the first time as overwhelming students will fail the process.

Idioms should be introduced in context, for example, in simple conversations, where the meaning of the idiom would be clear as student understands the situation where the idiom is used and give the synonyms for better comprehension. To introduce the idiom *Blue*, present a dialogue like following one:

-Sarah: Angela seems pretty unhappy these days, I wonder why she is feeling *blue*.

-Carlos: She has been pretty *blue* since her pet dog died.

-Sarah: Oh! Let's try to cheer her up.

Students may be asked to guess or figure out the meaning of the idiom from the context of the conversation and provide other examples of what it means *to feel/be blue*, and then teacher may give synonymic idioms, for example, *down in the mouth*.

The main goal is to get students not only understand, but also learn to use idioms effectively. Creating their own conversations using idioms and acting them out will help. In addition, teacher can teach idioms providing pictures to explain the context. This kind of exercises works best when pictures are colorful or humorous illustrations. By showing pictures or flashcards and having students guess the meaning of the idiom you will help them to understand and make them laugh too.

It is important that teachers use real life, authentic materials to show learners how some idioms are used in newspapers and magazine articles, advertisements, videos or cartoons. First of all students must realize that native speakers always use idioms and they are closely related to culture realia, therefore they cannot be translated into mother tongue straightly. As it was mentioned above, idioms are the elements of culture and while learning language it is necessary to learn the culture of the country, which is language you are learning.

There are tens of thousands idioms used in English language and people whose first language is not English face problems in dealing with definitions. Besides, native English speakers in Great Britain sometimes cannot understand American idioms. Sometimes American idioms are known around the world, and sometimes an expression is known just in a particular state. As vocabulary and culture are linked together, speakers can gain more vocabulary through idioms and contrarily, can learn more about idioms from being unconcealed to the target culture.

An idiom's meaning can be influenced by culture, national coloring. There are many cases when idioms are based on an old prejudice, and the same prejudice may

lead the listener or reader from other culture to misunderstanding. For instance, “A *black cat crossed her way*” would not mean the same things to people of different nationalities. To the English people a black cat means “good luck”, to Americans the opposite. Also the topics into which idioms are categorized are according to the culture, for example in America there are many idioms concerning sports and for people who don’t understand American baseball, the expression ‘he struck out’ may have quite different, or no meaning. However, native speakers will know that this idiom is referred to someone who couldn’t achieve a goal.

Many idioms were come from work and technology or referring to farm animals, such idioms like “*the black sheep of the family*” “*take the bull by the horns*”.

Some of them came to existence from literature and history. *Sour grapes, the goose that laid golden eggs*”. There are some that came from feelings and emotions, for example, *give him a black look*. Also idioms can be formed from conjunctions, prepositions and nouns, for example, *ifs and buts, the ins and outs*. Verbs as nouns, the *do’s and don’ts, on the make*. All these can easily confuse the learner.

As it was mentioned before, while learning idioms students should be given special tasks as making up dialogues, or situations using the idiom they have learned, it helps to develop their language skills. Moreover the main aim is to develop communicative competence, in order students could communicate in English in academic purposes and real life situations, also it develops socio-cultural competence, and therefore it is important to teach idioms in a correct way.

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