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DEVELOPING COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE OF STUDENTS THROUGH TEACHING SPORT IDIOMATIC EXPRESSIONS

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Abstract. The present article aims at demystifying the cultural relationship of sport terms and expressions, which are used in different contexts in daily life communications. The British use lots of idioms in their speeches, which is tend to be quite difficult to understand by most of the English language learners.

Key words: *sports terms and idioms, linguistic competence, sociolinguistic competence, non-sporting situations, common culture, linguocultural traditions.*

In recent years, an extensive number of researches are being done to modify effective methods and approaches of learning foreign languages. The results show that traditional ways of foreign language learning which are based on developing only linguistic competence is not enough and suggest you should develop the other competencies such as sociolinguistic and pragmatic competencies as main parts of communicative competence. We tried to display the interrelationship of these competencies through the studies of some sport idioms and expressions in non-sporting situations. Members of common culture have a lot in common in the ways of delivering, interpreting information based on their own social rules, rituals, traditions and customs. Moreover, every nation has its unique way of understanding and perceiving any sport or game in its own way, thus attaching some symbolic significance to it understandable within the scope of the linguocultural traditions of the country it has originated in. Our observations indicate that the wide use of sports idioms and expressions in non-sporting situations, particularly in everyday speech, may lead to misunderstanding in the communication because of a lack of sociolinguistic competence. “Obvious is the fact that the character and essence of cross-cultural interrelations depends, to a great extent, on the participants’ ability to understand each other in order to reach an agreement. It is also well known that

mutual understanding is in most cases defined by the ethnic culture of each side and the psychology of the ethnic group.”¹

It is obvious that language is a mean of expressing one’s identity. Therefore, it is impossible to understand a foreign language unless you at least have some idea about the culture of the nation. On top of that, Native English speakers use all kinds of idioms. Idioms are expressions that say things that aren’t literal. If you don’t know someone is using an idiom, it might sound like they’re talking about something else. Idioms are essential for those who wish to become more fluent. Any student can get confused after watching some English TV shows or in the communication with English native speakers. He may know all of the words and their individual meanings, but he can not work out what they meant when put together. After all, even native speakers may not know every single idiom in the English language. The British love football, rugby and cricket, and they watch tennis once a year when it’s Wimbledon.

During our lessons, we often come across such kind of situation: some students who speak English very well whereas some speak like native speakers. Mostly, the difference between them is related to the ability to understand idioms and cultural references and slip them into conversation.

Sports are a great source of enjoyment and competition for people around the world. There are many expressions related to sports in English that we use in our daily lives. We often use sports-related terms in our daily lives to describe moments of success, difficulty, failure and fairness. Reading and understanding definitions is helpful. But, the more you are **exposed to** idioms by hearing them used, the more understanding and using them will come naturally to you. Here we have given some sport idioms and their explanations to help you understand well and use them effectively in non-sporting situations.

¹ Gevorg Barseghyan. Sports idioms and their interpretation in different dimensions. *Armenian Folia Anglistika. International Journal of English studies.*

Get the ball rolling – It is really common expression used in our daily life communications. Originally, if the ball is rolling in a ball game, it means the ball is in the game and the game has already started. Therefore, this idiom is often used when you are about to start something as in the meaning “start/begin” in situations not related to sports:

a) *I was held up in the bank. Accept my sincere apology for being late for the meeting. Let's **get the ball rolling**.*

b) *I always find some difficulties to **get the ball rolling** before knowing all details.*

That's not a cricket – this term means unsportsmanlike, unfair and dishonorable. Eric Partridge traced this term to 1867 but believed it was not widely used until the early twentieth century. Among the early references in print is Stanley Houghton's 1914 play, *The Partners*, “. . . *but it is not playing the game. In other words, Cynthia, it is not cricket.*” Although cricket is a sport popular exclusively in Great Britain and most of its former colonies, the term crossed the Atlantic and became a cliché in the United States as well. Cricket is one of the ethnic values which is idiomatically used in other spheres of life, and its significance is ascribed to the universal concept of fair versus unfair.

a) *I know you want to avoid confrontation, but **it's not cricket** to break up with someone by text message.*

b) *I don't see why you think **it's not cricket** – everyone else does it all the time.*

Keep one's eyes on the ball – this idiom originates from the game of baseball. Focusing on the ball is really important thing in the ball games. Losing your focus on the ball equals with your defeat and failure. To achieve any success you have to keep paying attention.

a) I wish you could **keep your eye on the ball** or you will never make any progress with your Italian.

b) To do well in this office, you'll have to **keep your eye on the ball**.

This is a slam dunk - A very forceful move. This term comes from basketball, where it denotes a strong and often dramatic shot in which the player leaps up and thrusts the ball into the basket from above. Both term and technique date from the 1960s, and by the 1980s the term was being used in business, politics, and other areas, both as a noun and as a verb (to slam dunk). So if something is a slam dunk, it is a sure thing; it is very easy thing to do/accomplish.

- a) *So it's an easy decision. It is a slam dunk.*
- b) *There's no doubt that he's guilty. The case is a slam dunk.*

Get into the swing of things - This idiom originated from tennis in the 19th century and means getting associated with anything is going on. If you get into the swing of things or get into the swing of it, you get used to doing something and you start doing it well or start enjoying it.

- a) *She only started work last week, but she quickly **got into the swing of things**.*
- b) *It didn't take people long to relax and **get into the swing of things**.*

Somehow the above mentioned sport idioms and expressions help us to reveal the problems on idioms as an obstacle for English learners. These problems deal with difficulties related to comprehension and usage of idioms and the connection of the language with culture. Idioms can be considered as an unseparable lexical unit and to know its features characterized by linguistic competence of a learner whereas the sociolinguistic competence deals with idioms related to culture. The usage of idioms in speech based on contextual meaning is estimated as pragmatic competence. Our observations allow us to conclude that idiomatic expressions originating from sports will continue to be in great essence in the English language for international communication.

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