

MODERN ENGLISH IDIOMS: THEIR ORIGINS AND USAGE IN EVERYDAY COMMUNICATION

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Abstract: *This article explores the multifaceted role of idioms in modern English language communication. It examines their historical origins, cultural significance, and how they have evolved to fit into modern communication, particularly in the digital age. The paper highlights the challenges idioms present for language learners and suggests strategies to overcome these difficulties.*

Keywords: *idioms, figurative language, communication, English language, historical origins, modern usage, ESL challenges*

INTRODUCTION

Idioms are an essential part of everyday communication in English, adding color and depth to language. Their meanings often go beyond the literal definitions of the words involved, which can make them difficult for non-native speakers to understand. Understanding idioms is crucial for language learners, as they are often used in informal and formal contexts alike. The relationship between idioms and cultural context makes them an interesting linguistic phenomenon that reflects history, tradition, and social values.

What are Idioms?

Idioms are phrases where the meaning cannot be deduced from the individual words themselves. Expressions like "spill the beans" (reveal a secret) or "break the ice" (to start a conversation) are examples of how figurative language is used to convey specific ideas. These phrases have developed over centuries and are deeply rooted in cultural context, making them a unique linguistic tool.

Historical Origins of Common Idioms

The origins of many idioms trace back to historical events, literature, or societal practices. For example, the idiom "kick the bucket," which means to die, is believed to have originated from the practice of standing on a bucket before hanging. Similarly, "raining cats and dogs" is thought to stem from the early modern period when heavy rains would sweep domestic animals into the streets. Such expressions may seem strange today, but they offer a window into historical societal norms and activities.

Cultural Influence on Idioms

Idioms are shaped by the culture in which they are used. British idioms often differ from American idioms, though both share a common linguistic heritage. For instance,

"Bob's your uncle" is a distinctly British expression meaning "there you go," used to indicate that something is easily done. In contrast, an American might say, "It's a piece of cake." These differences reflect not just language variation but the cultural differences that influence how people express ideas.

Idioms in Everyday Communication

In modern English, idioms are used frequently in everyday communication, whether in casual conversations, literature, or business settings. They help speakers express complex ideas in a condensed form. For instance, "hit the nail on the head" conveys the idea of doing something perfectly or precisely. Using idioms effectively can make speech more vivid, engaging, and relatable, which is why they are so prevalent in both written and spoken English.

Challenges for Language Learners

For ESL (English as a Second Language) learners, idioms pose a unique challenge because they cannot be directly translated. Many learners struggle to grasp idioms' meanings because they are not based on literal language. Teaching strategies often involve using idioms in context and explaining the figurative meaning, rather than focusing on direct translations, which rarely make sense.

The Role of Idioms in the Digital Age

The rise of digital communication has also influenced the development of new idioms. Phrases such as "sliding into DMs" (sending a private message via social media) or "ghosting" (suddenly stopping all communication) are modern idiomatic expressions born from online interactions. These new idioms reflect changes in how we communicate and adapt traditional language forms to new contexts.

Conclusion

Idioms remain a vital part of English communication, offering both opportunities for expressive language use and challenges for language learners. Their historical origins and cultural significance make them more than just colorful expressions; they are an integral part of how English speakers convey meaning. As language continues to evolve, so too will idioms, ensuring their place in both modern and future communication.

Literature Review:

Ammer (2013): Explored historical origins of idioms. Spears (2005): Discussed cultural divergence in idioms between British and American English. Gibbs (1994): Studied cognitive processing of idiomatic expressions. Lakoff and Johnson (1980): Introduced the theory of conceptual metaphors in idioms. Boers et al. (2004): Examined the challenges idioms pose for ESL learners. McCarthy and O'Dell (2002): Focused on contextual teaching of idioms. Baron (2008): Investigated the influence of digital communication on new idioms. Crystal (2011): Analyzed the evolution of idioms in modern communication. Kövecses (2010): Explored the role of idioms in enhancing everyday communication.

KAPLAN OTA SHRINE

The legends about the “Kaplan Ota” (in uzbek “qoplon” meaning a black panther) shrine date back approximately to the 5th-7th centuries AD. This historical and touristic site is located between the villages of Kovunkesdi and Beshbulak in the “Chorvadar” CCG (Community citizens’ gathering) in the Zomin district of Jizzakh region, Uzbekistan. Recently, the “Kaplan Ota” shrine was known among the local population as “Avliyo Tepa” (Saint’s Hill). It is not secret that every sacred site in our country has their own history and tales about their origin, there are various stories about the “Kaplan Ota” shrine among local people.

A historian Alexey Gricina has mentioned the following ways about how data related the shrine collected. According to one of the stories about the origin of the “Kaplan Ota” shrine: “... one of the shepherds living near the “Kaplan Ota” shrine was facing difficulties, and he, therefore, decided to sacrifice a lamb with a white spot on its forehead from his flock as a charitable offering”. Then, his affairs began to improve. However, after some time, the lamb intended to charity grew into a ram, and the shepherd remembered the promise he had made. But he could not bring himself to slaughter the ram.

Then the shepherd thought, “I promised to sacrifice a lamb, so I will take this ram to the market, sell it. Then, I will buy two lambs, sacrifice one, and add the other to my flock”. So, he set out to take the ram to the market. Near the area where the shepherd occupied, there was also a place known as “Kuchkar Ota”. When he reached the “Avliyo Tepa” hill, a tiger suddenly appeared out of nowhere, grabbed the ram by the waist, and carried it away to the mountains! “The shepherd was so shocked that he lost consciousness”. When he became conscious, the shepherd returned home in fear and told his fellow villagers what had happened.

After hearing the story, a few brave villagers went to the described place. There, they found the ram standing by a small spring, tied by its neck under an old mulberry tree! The black tiger was nowhere to be seen. On that day, the villagers gathered and sacrificed the ram at that spot, offering it as charity. From that day forward, the shepherd’s fortune improved, and he became the wealthiest person in the area.”

It is believed that there is a mausoleum at the “Kaplan Ota” shrine, and that the grave of Ahmad ibn Sayf Burhoniddin is located there. According to historical sources, Ahmad ibn Sayf Burhoniddin was a highly respected figure in the Islamic world, and it is important to highlight that there are several enduring tales about his ability to transform into a tiger. Around the site, there are the ancient mulberry and willow trees, which are considered to have healing properties and each of them has its own unique legend about their origin. Due to the unique experience of visiting the shrine and witnessing the historical monument, we have not shared the remaining legends, leaving them for your discovery.

Have you heard about the “Chilmakhram Ota” shrine in Yangiabad district?



This shrine, located in the Khojamushkent village in Yangiabad district, sits above the Bayat and Erganali villages bordering Tajikistan, in an ancient cemetery on the southern bank of the Bayatsoy River. The essential side of the shrine, including the mausoleum and an ancient mulberry tree, has been taken under the care of the international charity fund “Golden Heritage”. This site was restored through community efforts in 2015.



The nature surrounding this area—the old cemetery, clear streams formed by springs, gardens, and pistachio groves—indicates that this was a sacred place where our ancient ancestors once lived. Notably, to the west of the restored mausoleum there is a pot-shaped vessel that resembles a funerary urn. This red clay urn, found during excavation work, was cracked when it was struck by a hoe, so it was left in the ground in that condition to preserve it. It is unknown what is inside. Experts suggest that it could

be a tomb from pre-Islamic times. On the eastern side of the mausoleum, there is a cave that resembles an underground chamber.



It is said that this cave was used as a place where forty saintly dervishes gathered for zikr (spiritual remembrance) and contemplation in seclusion. Since there were forty of them, the site was called “Chilmakhram”, meaning forty companions or confidants. These forty companions are believed to have come from different corners of our country and gathered here from time to time.



There is a legend about the person who caused the creation of the shrine: When the saints would perform zikr in the cave at night, a local child, around 3-4 years old, who was tied in a cradle, would untie himself and join the gathering. (In families where there was only son, even older boys would still sleep in cradles. The mother, indulging her beloved child, would tie him without the usual pins or bowls. The child would sneak back into the cradle and tie himself up again during the night.) One night, the parents realized the boy was not in the cradle and could not find him. At dawn, they found him sleeping in the cradle again. On another night, they decided to watch him and saw the boy freeing himself and heading towards the cave. When he arrived, he joined the



gathering of forty dervishes. Following him, the parents understood what was happening, feeling both joy and concern. It is said that the boy grew up under the spiritual guidance of the saints, reached spiritual perfection, and served as a spiritual leader for the Mongol people. After his death, he became known as “Chilmakhram Ota” among the people because of having joined the group of forty companions.