

THE NOTION OF IDIOMATICITY

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Abstract: *The notion of idiomaticity is introduced in the article. There are presented different definitions by various researchers and their considerations have been compared.*

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There are lots of definitions to the term idiomaticity. For example, D.Sanford [41,78] states that there isn't general meaning in the components of idiomatic compound words. We just use the very necessary in our research ideas on the idioms. But we must mention here, that the term "idioms, idiomatic" were used by American scientist Ch. Hockett, as "lexical and syntactical units the structure of which couldn't be explained" [1,67].

The original conception of idioms were given by W.Chafe [2,145] who considered the idioms to be the most important in the language usage and who was sure that they (idioms) should be studied and supplied with explanation.

F. Householder [3] finds idioms to be the main and elementary language units. U.Veinreich defines the idioms as the compound expressions which meanings couldn't be explained without the definition of their components.

As for us, we define the idioms as the units of the thematically groups and our analysis of them are based on the examples of the just animated ones, which are presented in our research in comparison with the person's character, behaviour, and in one word, with the person being.

We'll analyze next idiom: "he let the cat out of the bag". This idiom means "to reveal the secret" (sirdi ashiw) and it's word to word translation is "ol pishiqli qaptan shigarip jiberdi" In order to understand its idiomatic meaning one should reveal it's metaphoric meaning. In the idiom cat is used as metaphor. Secretful nature of cat is taken into account.

Ch.Filmore [4] states that one must know all the matters concerning to the language in order to understand the idiomatic words and expressions. In the 3rd part of the XIX century the term "idiomatic" was at the centre of main investigations on Linguistics. The term was used by Sh.Bally to name phraseological units for the first time.

Idiomaticity is based on the opposition between idiomatic phraseological units on the one hand, and word-combinations whose global meanings depend on the meanings of their components – on the other hand. The main parameter of this category is the idiomatic globality of nomination, that is the impossibility to deduce the meaning of the

whole from the meanings of the components. But the difference between idiomatic word-combinations on the one hand, and those which realize the category of reproducibility without being idiomatic on the other, consists in the following: idiomatic units form a global whole; the meaning of the idiomatic word-combinations cannot be understood if we simply sum up the meanings of its components or constituents [5]. For instance, regularly reproduced combinations like absolutely impossible, a round face, to turn right, the brave words are non-idiomatic in the sense that they realize the main nominative meanings of their components. The meaning of the whole can be easily traced back to the meanings of its constituent parts. Contrasted with these are idiomatic word-combinations which are determined by specific collocational relationships between words; in those cases the semantic globality of nomination reigns supreme over the formal separability of the elements, as for example:

1. ... and any halting sentences he could produce about himself would be handsomely paid for...

2. Don't pull such a long face, executioner!

3. When Mr. Dowler arrived at this point he turned the corner at which he had been so longly hesitating and fell fast asleep.

4. Perhaps, you are turning into a blue stocking after all.

The word-combinations handsomely paid, to pull a long face, to turn the corner, a blue stocking are highly idiomatic because the meaning of the whole is not deducible from the meanings of its constituent parts. Indeed, handsomely paid means "to pay generously", to pull a long face means "to look serious or dismal", to turn the corner means "to be getting better after a difficult period", the meaning of the idiom a blue stocking has nothing to do with stocking of blue colour. All idiomatic expressions are usually connotative.

What constitutes an idiom is often a decision at the discretion of the researcher . Simpson and Mendis (2003) posited that mentioning the word idioms conjures up language that is perceived to be entertaining, engaging, casual, charming, colorful, and memorable. As Simpson and Mendis put it, an idiom is a group of words occurring in a more or less fixed phrase and whose overall meaning cannot be predicted by analyzing the meaning of its constituent parts. Bromley [7] defined idioms as figurative expressions that represent one concept in terms of another that may be thought of as analogous. Carter saw idioms as restricted collocations that cannot be understood from the literal meaning of the words that make them up. In a similar way, Huizenga (2000) considered an idiom as a group of words having a meaning different from the meaning of its individual parts. In the same fashion, Feare (1980) stated that an idiom, in general, is an expression that has a special meaning, and this meaning cannot be understood completely by looking at the individual words in the idiom. Idioms are not only lexemes which capture everyday situations semantically, but they are linguistic units that deduce the complexity of social interactions; idioms contain information, and they also

provide a method of handling special situations (Strässler, 1982). Fernando deemed idioms as “indivisible units whose components cannot be varied and varied only within definable units” [5]. As Wood saw it, an idiom is “a complex expression which is wholly non-compositional in meaning and wholly non-productive in form” [9]. Nattinger and Decarrico defined idioms as “complex bits of frozen syntax whose meaning cannot be derived from the meaning of their constituents, that is, whose meanings are more than simply the sum of their individual parts”.

According to Moon, “Idiom is an ambiguous term, used in conflicting ways” [8]. An idiom is also “any defined unit whose definition does not predict all of its properties” [9]. In addition, Seidl and McMordie (1988) stated that an idiom is “a number of words which, when taken together, have a different meaning from the individual meanings of each word” [6]. Schmitt and Carter [7] observed that meaning of idioms cannot be derived from the sum of the meanings of the component words, and that idioms do not always follow grammatical rules. Chafe (1968, as cited in Lennon, 1998) presented the characteristics of idioms as follows.

1. The meaning of an idiom is comparable to the meaning of a single lexical item.
2. Most, if not all, idioms exhibit certain transformational deficiencies.
3. A minority of idioms may be grammatically deviant.
4. The idiom may admit of a literal meaning, but the idiomatic meaning will be primary and occur more frequently.

Lennon (1998) suggested that there is a distinction of degree between idiomatic language and idioms. As Lennon further noted, at the top end of the scale of idiomaticity there are conventionalized combinations of lexical items in a language whose meaning cannot necessarily be adduced from the sum of their parts. In addition to idiomatic language and idioms, formulaic language or sequence is another commonly used term used in discussion of idiomaticity. Wray (2000) asserted that in recent years there has been a growing interest in targeting formulaic language in second language instruction. Wray (2002) defined the formulaic sequence as follows: a sequence, continuous or discontinuous, of words or other elements, which is, or appears to be prefabricated: that is, stored and retrieved whole from memory at the time of use, rather than being subject to generation or analysis by the language grammar. Idioms belong to the category of nonliteral or figurative language that also includes metaphors, similes and proverbs.

As mentioned earlier, there are many definitions available which suggests that researchers have not been able to settle for a single explanation. In the following section we provide examples of how idioms can be defined differently. An idiom is a phrase that is commonly used within a given culture and understood to have a meaning different from its literal meaning. Glucksberg (2001) states that “what sets idioms apart from most other fixed expressions is their ‘non-logical’ nature, that is, the absence of any discernable relation between their linguistic meanings and their idiomatic

meanings” [26, 68]. This point of view is supported by Cooper (1998) who compares idioms to metaphors; “an idiom can have a literal meaning, but its alternate, figurative meaning must be understood metaphorically. For example, over the hill can mean on the other side of the hill, but the figurative meaning is to be very old” [2, 255]. D’Angelo Bromley (1994) goes even further by saying that “its meaning cannot be inferred grammatically, neither can meaning be determined from its literal translation, nor can meaning always be determined from the surrounding material” [5, 274].

Without a doubt, this presents language learners with a special vocabulary-learning problem. The quasi-metaphorical idiom refers to idioms that convey meaning via their allusional content. Glucksberg (2001) describes these as similar to metaphors. “They call to mind a prototypical or stereotypical instance of an entire category of people, events, situations or actions” and “they can simultaneously refer to an ideal exemplar of a concept and characterize some event or situation as an instance of that concept”. An example of a fully compositional idiom that might be used when saying that something is done prematurely is crossing one’s bridges before coming to them. Since it is compositional, it can be varied and still make sense when used in future situations: he burned his bridges behind him or he burned all of his bridges in front of him [2, 75]. Significant attempts have been made to categorize idioms. Fernando (1996) puts idioms into three categories: pure idioms (kick the bucket = die, bread and butter = main income, earning activity), semiliteral idioms (use something as a step stone) and literal idioms (according to). While Makkai’s work in 1972 classifies idioms into lexemic idioms and sememic idioms. Grant (2007) also categorizes idioms as core idioms, figuratives or ONCEs - one non-compositional element.

In this study, an idiom is defined as a group of words that co-occur in more or less fixed phrase whose figurative meaning cannot be predicted by analyzing the meaning of its components, as Simpson and Mendis (2003) and Zyzik (2011) define it. In other words, it can be called figurative idioms or figurative idiomatic expressions, for example, catch fire, under the microscope. As it is stressed in this definition, a figurative idiom can be identified by asking the question: Is it possible to understand the meaning of this multi-word unit by adding up the meaning of each word in the unit? This definition also distinguishes idioms from collocations. In contrast to idioms, the meaning of collocations is predictable from the meaning of the individual words in the unit.

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