

**CLASSROOM PRACTICES FOR TEACHING IDIOMS TO THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS**

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**Abstract:** *Idioms can be confusing for English Language Learners. An idiom is “an expression that cannot be understood from the meanings of its separate words but that has a separate meaning of its own” according to Learners Dictionary. Once ELLs understand that some phrases in English are idioms, they can be on the lookout for them and will gain a clearer understanding of the English Language.*

**Key words:** *EFL students, English idioms, lingering debate, illustrate key vocabulary, reading comprehension, visuals, helpful strategy, acquire, social, linguistic knowledge.*

**Introduction.** The role of context is central in language learning. It’s common that EFL students don’t really understand the various meanings of new words in different contexts. That’s why EFL students don’t know how to apply the words they have learned practically in various contexts.

**Discussions and results.** It’s fundamental for teachers to provide a rich context for students’ language learning and practice. For instance, linguistic contextual information enhances adolescents’ interpretation of idioms [1]. The contextual cues surrounding a particular word can help readers get that’s meaning. In contrast, context-reduced language will be hard for readers to tolerate [2]. Consequently, it’s more effective for EFL students to learn language in meaningful contexts than learn isolated words through memorization and drilling. Stories have been popularly used to teach and entertain students in language learning. Interesting stories usually draw students’ attention and easily make students absorbed in them. Since contextual information is significantly effective for aiding students’ understanding English idioms, it is essential for EFL teachers to provide students with rich context. Thus, introducing English idioms within interesting stories can possibly help EFL students to understand and remember them better.

Although there is lingering debate regarding the effect of visuals on reading comprehension, some researchers claim that reading materials accompanied by visuals will be more comprehensible. For example, Scarcella and Oxford [3] stressed that teachers need to illustrate key vocabulary effectively by showing pictures and diagrams so as to improve the ESL students’ reading comprehension (p. 107). Mayer [4] found that words and pictures presented together helped students recall better than alone. It is efficient to provide interesting pictures to foster and reinforce vocabulary development. Consequently, visuals must be stimulating, interesting and motivating to students’ comprehension and retention of reading. According to the effect of illustrations on reading, we collected English idioms in one sentence context. English idioms were presented with pictures to one class of 26 learners while without pictures to the other class of 25 learners. They were told that those phrases were English idioms first and then they were asked to translate them into Kazakh. We found that English idioms with illustrations could increase college students’ idiom understanding better. Thus, it is effective to present English idioms accompanied by visual stimuli that clearly illustrates the idioms being taught.

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Students' discussing what they read is a helpful strategy to increase their comprehension. Group talk can provide learners with rich opportunities to acquire social and linguistic knowledge necessary for understanding new texts they encounter [5]. Klingner & Vaughn [6] stressed that ESL students engaging in collaborative talk during content reading, they assisted one another in understanding the meaning of challenging words, getting the main ideas, and answering questions about what they read. As a result, group discussion appears to be an effective technique to enhance students' reading comprehension.

Dialogues can provide situations for students to practice ordinary conversation and offer students ample practice with basic speaking skills in context. Firstly, dialogues can be viewed as short plays and used for students to act out rather than simply read aloud. Moreover, the dialogues the students write function as basic communication at all levels [7]. In addition, putting pupils into pairs for the role-play in the daily dialogues is an effective way of oral practice for various ages and levels.

Dialogues and role-play are useful written and oral activities so that we assigned our students in pairs to write one dialogue by using the English idioms introduced in class and then act out the dialogue out in the following class. Dialogue writing could motivate students to write without burden because of pair collaboration and role-play activity could help them remember the dialogue they wrote through repetitive practices. It was easier and more fun for them to remember English idioms because they shared and enjoyed learning English idioms with friends. Thus, dialogue writing and role-play are useful and interesting activities for students' meaningful and efficient drills.

**Conclusion.** Since it is vital for EFL learners to learn English idioms in order to master English, it is important for EFL teachers to design various activities for students to use with English idioms and subsequently acquire them efficiently. Moreover, students learn better when they are provided with collaborative activities because they can interact with peers and share fun in learning. Finally, when teachers integrate listening, speaking, reading and writing activities together in teaching English idioms, students can be involved in the application of English idioms in four skills. Thus, it is effective to teach EFL learners English idiom when they are provided with various activities to practice and utilize English idioms in different contexts.

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