



Value of Animal Idioms in Bringing about Native-Like Proficiency among EFL Learners

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Abstract

Native-like proficiency in English requires learning idioms but they are difficult to master. Beginning with idioms having pictorial quality and universally known animals can greatly help initial learners of EFL for testing this hypothesis, learners from the first semester of five different BS programs at Kohat University of Science and Technology, were taught different idioms, in a one-month English language teaching program. They were evaluated at the end of the course at short notice. Eleven categories of idioms were formed and 20 idioms belonging to each category were set in the test. The learners' scores on idioms involving common and well-known animals were higher as compared to the scores on another type of idioms. It was found that such idioms are learned, retained and recalled effectively because they rely on sound mental images and are easy to remember because of their tangibility, picturesqueness, imagery, and universally known common behavior.

Key Words: Idioms, Proficiency, Universality, Imagery, Memorization, EFL

Introduction

Idioms form an integral segment of every language. They make the expression clear, forceful and impressive. Idiomatic language is difficult to master and impossible to avoid altogether; idioms are arbitrary in nature and their meanings cannot be guessed from the meanings of the words that constitute them. Besides, the number of idioms in English is very high and there are minor differences between them due to which they get mixed up with one another, leading to confusion for the learners of English as a foreign language. Therefore, unfortunately, English learners have to learn each idiom by heart individually. The researcher proposes that instead of fearing idioms as arbitrary, we should devise learning and mastering them systematically. Some system operative inside them should be discovered e.g. many English idioms are alliterative e.g. *fit as a fiddle, cool as a cucumber* etc; or words inside them are organized in such a way that they are easiest to utter, so that idioms like, '*blood, sweat, and tears*,' '*give and take*,' '*rough and tumble*,' '*raining cats and dogs*,' and '*home and dry*' would be difficult to utter, if we change the order of their words.

English is full of animal idioms and the researcher proposes that it would accrue more benefits if we begin learning it with animal idioms. For the children and EFL learners, animals serve as interesting and easy teaching aids. Learning and retaining idioms related to animals of known behavior is easier and accompanied by enjoyment leading to better and effective learning. Animals are attractive, interesting, tangible, observable, useful, pictorial, commonly known, constant in their behavior, present in other languages and cultures, easy to remember and hard to forget, therefore, idioms having animals would be easier to master as compared to other idioms having abstract or less known entities.

Literature Review

Jiang (2000) considers language as the mirror of a culture, as through language can be seen as the culture by its people. Cultural beliefs of a society, its customs, attitudes and norms, and all its typical attitudes get reflected in

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its idioms (Cakir, 2011). Idioms are used in written and spoken discourse both and are understood among the Indicators of native-like proficiency (Cowie & Mackin, 1975). By making the language more deep, accurate and colorful, idioms perform very significant functions stylistically and pragmatically. Idioms do not simply help in the lexical realization of meaning but rather play their role in the interaction proceeding between hearer/reader and speaker/writer inside the discourse context Moon (1998).

Foreign language learners require proficiency in idioms because they are used in a multitude of situations and play a very significant role. However, defined as 'dead metaphors', idioms remain an obstacle, defying all rules of logic and remain a linguistic idiosyncrasy for FL learners due to their figurative and arbitrary nature. Idioms, for not being literal, do not say what they mean (Irujo, 1986). Johnson-Laird's (1993) believed that idioms would not have been there if natural language were designed by a logician.

According to Lindstromberg and Boers (2008), idioms being multi-word chunks are learned through a slow process requiring a lot of encounters with the expressions to be learned. In view of the limited chances of contact with the language to be learned, only those idioms are taken up by the learners incidentally that enjoy high frequency. Even the incidental taking up of the idioms is not easy because the focus of people is more on meaning than on linguistic form in communication. It is estimated that the English language contains more than 10,000 idioms (Brenner, 2003). It was found by Asl (2013) and by Wray (2000) that most specifically in EFL environments, teachers gave less attention to idioms because their focus was mostly over the rules of grammar and they wanted to make the English language as simple as possible. Similarly, an analysis of the materials of teacher-trainees was carried out by Khan and Daşkin (2014), according to which idiomatic expressions were scarcely found in the teaching material to be taught to English learners. This deficiency of failing to understand idiomatic expressions is one of the causes of communication failure. Idioms, metaphors and proverbs pertain to the sociocultural aspect of language and proper attention must be given to them while teaching a foreign language.

Most of the times FL Learners fail to recognize figurative usage of phrases. According to the study conducted by Cieslicka's (2006), despite the fact that the L2 learners knew the idiomatic usage and where the phrases are made available in figurative contexts, yet it was observed that they activated the literal meanings of idioms. And in cases where even they succeed in recognizing that the expression has been used figuratively, L2 learners, as compared to native speakers, do not possess the skills to demystify the meaning of an idiom by processing the contextual clues, due to their limited vocabulary and weak proficiency. Due to lack of skills, L2 learners often fail to cash upon the contextual clues, the contexts do not possess the richness so as to help learners in deducing the meaning from unfamiliar idioms and incidentally get the idioms (Boers, Eyckmans & Stengers, 2007). However, if learners get through in inferring correct meaning, even then they cannot retain it instantly to be used subsequently.

Wasow, Sag and Nunberg (1983), were optimistic in believing that figurative meanings of the idiomatic expressions can be derived through the meanings of their individual parts and that the two levels of meanings get mapped in conventionalized ways instead of arbitrary ways. Glucksberg (2001) notices that apart from some of the non-compositional idiomatic phrases, there are other idioms that are completely compositional, having a very obvious and simple semantic mapping in between their constituent words and their idiomatic referents.

In order to learn idioms successfully, the information needs to be noticed, then encoded, then stored and then made to retrieve. According to Lindstromberg and Boers (2008), McPherron and Randolph (2014), memory processes can be facilitated by teachers firstly, in the input stage, by attracting learners' attention so that they notice the idiom concerned, secondly by adopting approaches that are based on cognition that lead to in-depth coding and more stable memory symptoms, so that the figurative expressions become part of their long-term memory, thirdly, by presenting learners with opportunities of re-noticing and retrieving the idiom for fortifying their knowledge.

To help learners master animal idioms, they may be taught by showing the concerned feature of the animal in reality or in a movie clip. The deeper is the coding of input, the more successful will be the storing and retrieving of the target information. As compared to the information that is processed in a superficial and simple manner, the semantically encoded information, having detailed and rich representations will be more open to access (Baddeley, 1999).

Methodology

A single month zero-level, English language course was taught at the language laboratory of the Department of English, to a sample size of ten students, comprising five males and five females (volunteers), from a population of first semester students from BS English, BS chemistry, BS Economics, and BS sociology of Kohat University of Science and Technology, Kohat. Apart from teaching other aspects of the English language, a single hour teaching was reserved on a daily basis purely for the teaching of English idioms and their practice. Four weeks after the course finished, a surprise test of the students was arranged on a short notice of one hour. Giving a long duration for the preparation of the test on idioms would have let the students learn all the idioms by heart and as a result, we would not have been able to differentiate between the idioms that were easy to learn and remember and those that were difficult. The idioms were taught randomly from different categories. A total of 220 idioms, 20 from each category, were set in the evaluation test. The authors had a rough idea of forming different categories of idioms, beginning with idioms having common animals and moving towards idioms having no animals, with the prediction that the idioms having animals would be relatively easier to remember and reproduce.

In the evaluation process, various types of techniques, structures, and questions were used to test the students' knowledge of idioms. Each category of the idioms was evaluated according to whichever of the following ways suited them:

1. Asking learners to use given idioms in sentences for making their meanings clear.
2. Asking learners to supply meanings of given idioms.
3. Asking learners to explain idioms used in a specific context inside a given passage.
4. Asking learners to supply the keyword missing from the idiom used in a given Passage.
5. Asking learners to supply the most appropriate idiom from a list, in a blank left open inside an easily comprehensible passage.
6. Asking learners to match idioms from one column with their respective correct meanings in the other column.

The researcher tried to explore how, why, and in what sequence different types of animal idioms were retained more than those that were retained less, so as to know which categories of idioms are more apt for the EFL students to begin with and, among the different categories of idioms, which order learners should proceed in while mastering English idioms.

Analysis, Results, and Discussion

The following categories of English idioms were formed and placed in a sequence, on the basis of those including animals and leading to those that did not include animals.

The ensuing sequence of categories along with the analysis and explanation of each is as follows:

Idioms dealing with the typical behavior of common animals present in every culture with the help of “as....as...a.....” construction.

The category includes idioms like *as busy as a beaver*, *as busy as a bee*, *as strong as an ox*, *as healthy as a horse*, *as slow as a snail*, *as proud as a peacock*, *as sly as a fox*, *as stubborn as a mule*, *as scared as a rabbit*, *as quiet as a mouse*, *happy as a flea in a doghouse*, *innocent as a lamb*, *as poor as a church mouse*, *as sick as a dog*, *as happy as a lark*, etc.

There are idiomatic expressions made with the help of “as...as...a...” in which the animal is inherently and essentially related to the phenomenon described and the characteristic of animal mentioned is always very well-known and prominent. Therefore, besides enhancing the power of expression, they are difficult to forget and easy to reproduce in relevant contexts.

For making reference to a human quality or habit, different languages and cultures use idioms having animals considered to possess that quality. However, indifferent or even the same culture, idioms like *as strong as a horse*, and *as strong as an ox* different animals are mentioned as possessing the same quality. Sometimes the same animal

may be considered to possess different qualities in the same culture e.g. idioms like, *as meek as a lamb*, *as gentle as a lamb*, and *as innocent as a lamb*, show three different qualities of a lamb.

For evaluation, either the quality of the animal was supposed to be supplied in a blank. The reason for 94% correct responses was that a lot of the animals mentioned are widely known to possess certain qualities and behavior related to daily life. They possess pictorial qualities and are imaginable. Besides, their construction is very easy and does not involve any other intricacies of meaning and cultural connotations.

Idioms Dealing with the Typical Behavior of Common Animals Present in Every Culture and having nearly Equivalent and Prominent Idioms in the Learner's Language.

The category includes idioms like *run with the hare and hunt with the hounds*, *don't count your chickens before they hatch*, *snake in the grass*, *paper tiger*, *a little bird told me*, *cry wolf*, *tail between one's legs*, *casting pearls before swine*, *neither fish nor fowl*, *turn tail*, *why buy a cow when you can get milk for free?* etc.

Correct responses were 89% because the idioms contained well-known animals of known behavior. Besides, possessing the qualities of concreteness, commonness, universality, picturesqueness, and imagery, a type of reinforcement to the learning and remembering of these idioms was provided by the availability of almost similar type of idioms in the L1 of the learner e.g. the idiom, 'snake in the grass' has almost similar idioms with even the same animal in Pashto, the first author's mother tongue, i.e. "*da nashtonee maar*" and in Urdu, his national language i.e. "*aasteen ka saamp*" both meaning 'a snake in the sleeve'.

For deciphering culturally novel idioms from another culture and language, learners use knowledge of their own culture and native language. They are relatively easier because of the similar prominent idioms from native language help in guessing the meaning. They offer a fresh way of understanding the same idea and are accompanied by curiosity, enjoyment and fun.

Idioms Dealing with the Typical Qualities and Behavior of Common Animals Present in Every Culture

The category includes idioms like *dog eat dog*, *take to something like a duck to water*, *eagle eyes*, *snail mail*, *small dog tall weeds*, *monkey see monkey do*, *ants in one's pants*, etc.

A high score of 83% proves that despite having no one-to-one correspondence with the idioms of L1, the animals mentioned in these idioms exist universally and have constant universal qualities. The mentioned qualities matched the animals' typical behavior. Their meanings were relatively easier to guess rightly, although such types of idioms do not mean the same in different contexts and cultures. Besides being easier to understand and remember, they attract most EFL learners due to the animals mentioned in them. Frequent and constant encounters with these animals also help us remember these idioms.

Lessons on animal idioms are accompanied by fun and interest and are not as dry as most grammar lessons. Animal idioms are fit for EFL beginners because they can be effectively taught with the help of models, pictures or video clips that make them have more permanent and lasting imprints on our minds.

Animal Idioms made of Units, the Meanings of which are Helpful in Guessing the somewhat Correct Meaning of the Idiom

The category includes idioms like *make an ass of yourself*, *wouldn't hurt a fly*, *let sleeping dogs lie*, *walk into the lion's den*, *hold your horses*, *a fly in the ointment*, *dog tired*, *have a whale of a time*, *don't count your chickens before they hatch*, *you can't teach an old dog new tricks*, *a fish out of water*, *ants in one's pants*, *make a beeline*, *every dog has its day*, *help a lame dog over stile*, *let sleeping dogs lie*, *quick as a dog can lick a dish*, *why keep a dog and bark yourself?*, *love me love my dog*, *kill two birds with one stone*, *big fish in a small pond*, *kill two birds with one stone*, *worm one's way out of*, *other fish to fry*, *hold your horses*, *monkey business*, *fish in troubled waters*, *flea in one's ear*, *let the cat out of the bag* etc.

Obvious reason for the high score of 87% seems to be the close relationship between the constituent words and collective meaning of the idioms. Especially when used in an appropriate context, the constituent words of the idiom are quite helpful in interpreting, guessing and recollecting the intended meaning of the idiom. Since

animals are tangible, picturesque and easily comprehensible entities, therefore they apply more to our mind and are easy to understand and remember.

Idioms dealing with Animals Specific to Culture of the Target Language or Animals outside the Culture of the Learner's Language

The category includes idioms like *play possum* (Australian animal), *packed like sardines* (American red herring), *dead as a dodo*, *damp squib*, *as happy as a clam*, *weasel out of something*, *kangaroo court* (having an animal from New Zealand), *go the whole hog*, etc.

The percentage of students in this category was 71%. Although the animals and their behavior were not universally known and the learners had, at the most, read about them and their behavior or had in some cases seen them on TV, yet their idea and vision about them were either less clear or confusing. Still, as compared to the abstract entities, these idioms were found easier to understand and remember because of their tangibility and imagery and therefore the score of the students was satisfactorily well on the idioms of this category.

Idioms dealing with the Common Animals that are Universally Present in every Culture but the Meanings Associated with these Idioms are Totally Arbitrary

The category includes idioms like *raining cats and dogs*, *little bird told me*, *my dogs are barking*, *(the) birds and the bees*, *straight from the horse's mouth*, *get your goat*, *fishy*, *have a cow*, *nest egg*, *pig out*, *smell a rat*, *dog days*, *rat race*, *to rat on somebody*, *eat crow*, etc.

In the following sentence, 'I learned about the birds and the bees when my cousin was born', the idiom, *(the) birds and the bees*, is used to refer to sex education. In order to discuss topics that are not appropriate to be discussed publicly or especially in front of children, we hide behind animal idioms while discussing them. Although birds and bees are available everywhere and they have no specific association with sex, yet as per the peculiar nature of an idiom, they have been used in the English language to refer to sex education.

The score of the students in this category was 66% which is not as good as the score in the other above-mentioned categories. The conventional definition of idioms, being 'dead metaphors' or groups of words, whose meanings are different to the collective meanings of their constituent parts, started to reflect itself very clearly from this category onwards. The animals mentioned are known universally but the meaning associated with them in the idioms is not related to the typical behavior of the animal. There is arbitrariness inside them and the meaning of the idiom cannot be guessed from the animal used inside the idiom or from the known behavior of that animal. The tangibility of the idiom due to the presence of the animals was somewhat helpful in making the idiom appealing and easy to remember, however, the different meaning associated with the animal was a bit hard to remember and the concerned idioms required more effort on the part of the learner to master them.

As a beginner, the EFL learner should be provided, in the first instance, with examples of animal idioms in which the meaning of the idiom and the animal mentioned inside them are closely related as mentioned in the categories discussed above. In the next phase, they can have idioms of this category whose meanings are not related to the animals mentioned inside them, and where their imagery and picturesqueness can help students in remembering them.

Idioms having Animals or Activities (Games etc.) related to them and the Meaning of Idioms are Related to the Culture, Environment or History of the Target Language

The category includes idioms like *holy cow*, *wooden horse*, *stag night/party*, *hen night/party*, *like turkeys voting for Christmas*, *ostrich strategy/politics*, *the world is your oyster*, *take the bull by the horns*, *on the pig's back*, *stool pigeon*, *shank's pony*, *cold turkey*, *live high off the hog*, *doggie bag*, *sitting duck*, *dead duck*, *lame duck*, *like water off a duck's back*, *neither fish nor fowl*, *all his geese are swans*, *cook someone's goose*, *have goose pimples*, *hit the bulls-eye*, *guinea pig*, *live high off the hog*, *back/bet on the wrong horse*, *dark horse*, *wild goose chase*, etc.

The score was 59%. The reason for this satisfactory fair score can be that some cultures use animal idioms for expressing some special meaning, which is neither universally observable nor associated specifically with a

quality of the animal mentioned, however, once the idiom is understood, it sticks to the memory because of the figurative quality of the animal. The reason for the use of that specific animal can also be some incident or phenomenon related to the history or culture of that nation. The idiom, 'stag night', is related to male and the idiom, 'hen night', is related to females in Britain. 'Stag night' is based on a celebration held for a male by the male's Briton friends before his wedding. The same is known as bachelor or Bachelorette parties in America. Both these celebrations are known to have descended from ancient Greece. Similarly 'wooden horse' is an expression related to Trojan wars, therefore, any idiom based on wooden horse would be understandable to that nation better than others. We also have national animals of different countries and we normally use the name of that animal when we mention the people of that nation e.g. we use the word 'kiwis' and 'kangaroos' to mention the people of New Zealand and Australia respectively. Regarding such type of animals, only students who had read about the animals due to a special interest in animals or who had come across the animal through a TV channel like 'National Geographic', scored relatively higher on idioms from this category. The origin of the idiom may also possibly relate either to some specific historical or to cultural events of the nation of the target language, due to which the meaning of the idiom cannot be guessed by the learner. Knowledge about the animal and its behavior along with knowledge about the culture or history of the nation of the target language were the requirements for mastering the idioms concerned. All students had not the same degree of interest and knowledge about them. The level of interest of the story related to each idiom was also one of the factors. Students who utilized their knowledge of culture in learning the idioms, and afterward remembered the events, with which the idioms were related, were found successful and scored higher on the idioms of this category.

Idioms dealing with Concrete and Universal Inanimate Objects

The category includes idioms like *chew the fat* (to have gossip), *my neck of the woods* (the place where I live), *break a leg* (good luck), *throw a spanner in the works* (to complicate a work), *hit the sack* (go to sleep), *kick the bucket* (to die), *that's the last straw* (my patience has run out) etc.

The score of the students in this category was 37 %. The tangibility and imagery of these idioms was helpful in understanding, remembering and recollecting them. In some cases the objects were related to the meaning of the overall meaning of the idiom and in some cases they were not. The students' score was not fair because the inanimate items, as compared to animals, firstly, are too high in number, resulting in countless number of idioms and secondly the difference between the resulting idioms was found to be very intermixing, causing confusion for the students in reproducing the correct meaning of the idioms concerned. The L1 effect or the previous knowledge of the students about similar idioms interfered with their knowledge regarding the fresh idioms and therefore lead to ambiguity on the part of the learners.

Idioms Dealing with Concrete Items or events from the Culture, Environment or History of the Target Language

The category includes idioms like *send someone to Coventry* (to isolate someone deliberately), *it's the best thing since sliced bread* (really good), *on a sticky wicket* (in a difficult situation), *as the actress said to the bishop* (used for sexual reference), *not the full shilling* (that someone disable to understand reality), *a nosy Parker* (interfering sort of person), *break a leg!* (Good luck!), *taking the piss* (cracking a joke on someone), *pop one's clogs* (to die), *on the ball* (performing a good job), *ten a penny* (very common and easy to get), *on a banner* (when someone is on a spree of excessive drinking or mischief), *leg it* (make a run for it), *a quart into a pint pot* (putting too much into a small space), *in the clink* (in prison).

The score of the students in this category was 41%. Here, we have concrete objects and people, having close relationship to the culture and history of English language. Just as burger is a type of food said to have been introduced by the Duke of Norfolk, so similarly, sliced bread is said to have made great contribution in the life of the people of England. Because of this knowledge in the background, the idiom, *it's the best thing since sliced bread* (meaning really good), will carry more meaning and comprehensibility in the context of England. The idiom, *a nosy Parker* coming from Matthew Parker, the Archbishop of Canterbury, stands for an interfering type of person. Cricket is the national game of UK which is also believed to be the place of its origin. The idiom 'on

a *sticky wicket*’ (meaning facing a difficult situation) is not easily understandable to the people of other countries where this game is not popular, known or played. The idiom, *‘that’s what she said’* is used for highlighting a reference having sex, but particularly in Britain, we have its equivalent in the idiom, *‘as the actress said to the bishop’*. With a thumbs-up gesture, the idiom, *‘break a leg!’* (Wishing you good luck!) has in its background, those successful theater performers who would bow so many times at the end of a show that they would break a leg. The idiom, *taking the piss*, is a figurative way of saying by Irish people that you are joking with someone. The process mentioned in the idiom, *pop one’s clogs*, is a euphemistic way of saying to die in England.

Languages differ in idioms and one of the causes is the difference in cultures. It is not only that idioms in Pashto and Urdu languages differ from those of English language but rather within English language, because of the cultural difference, the idioms spoken in UK English might be different from the idioms used in the English of US, South Africa, New Zealand and Australia. The domain from which the idioms are derived may altogether be absent from the learner’s culture or quite different to it. If a learner is not aware of the domain of sailing and the speaker uses an English idiom from the domain of sailing, the learner would automatically fail to understand it.

If we organize idioms with respect to the domain and origin from which they are derived, then it becomes quite easy to interpret them. If we come to know that the idiom, *‘taking a back seat’* comes from the domain of driving, then it will be easier to guess its meaning in the sentence, *‘my wife was already cooking the food, so I decided to take a back seat’*.

The idioms were difficult to reproduce, despite their tangibility and imagery, because the concrete objects mentioned were not considerably universal, were related to special historical and cultural events of the English nation, and were used in the arbitrary sense instead of their ordinary sense.

Despite being universal, some domains might enjoy more importance in one culture as compared to another. English being a seafaring nation, domain of sailing is one of the important domains traced in English language and its idioms e.g. *clear the decks*, *a leading light*, *be on an even keel* etc. English stands unique in the area of sports and games as most of its idioms are found derived from domains like hunting, including idioms like *it’s open season on someone*, *don’t beat about the bush*, *it’s in the bag*, horse racing, including idioms like *win hands down*, *neck and neck*, *go off the rails* etc., card games including idioms like *follow suit*, *come up trumps*, *not miss a trick* etc., gambling including idioms like *hedge your bets*, *raise the ante*, *pay over the odds* etc., and running contests including idioms like *have the inside track*, *jump the gun*, *quick off the mark* etc.

Idioms dealing with Abstract Things from the Culture, Environment or History the Target Language

The category includes idioms like *under the weather* (ill), *pardon my French* (excuse my use of profanity), *Bob’s your uncle!* / *Fanny’s your aunt* (concluding words meaning there you have it), *you can say that again* (true, I agree with you), *your guess is as good as mine* (I have no idea), *cutting corners* (bungling something up for saving money and time), *cut somebody some slack* (not to be so critical) *Gordon Benet* (an exclamation of surprise, *As happy as Larry* (the man supposed to be the happiest one in all Ireland), *every Tom Dick and Harry* (not every ordinary person), etc.

The score was 34 % which is not fair; firstly, because the things used were abstract instead of concrete; Children are normally encouraged to learn initially through imagery and EFL students, as beginners of a foreign language, are no less than children to rely on imagery. Secondly, because the individual meanings of these abstract things have no relationship to the overall meaning of the idiom, they become difficult to remember and reproduce, as compared to idioms that have animals mentioned inside them.

Idioms dealing with prepositions instead of Abstract or Concrete Objects

The category includes idioms like *act up* (to misbehave), *come up* (to happen (usually unexpectedly)), *throw up* (to vomit), *hang out* (to socialize or get together with someone), *pull off* (to successfully complete a difficult task), *pick on* (to tease; to make fun of or bully), *grow on* (to eventually become liked by), *wind down* (to relax), *pipe down* (to be less loud), *what’s up* (how are you? what is worrying you?), *look out* (be careful), *give in* (to yield), *take in* (to deceive), *hang in there* (don’t give up) etc. The score of the students in this category was 21 %. The scores of

the students revealed that these are the most difficult of idioms to master because there is no clue present to understand them. There is no animal, no object, no abstraction to help us in remembering and reproducing the idioms concerned. The mind has no other option in utilizing its ability to master such idioms except than to keep them remembered after too much practice.

The idiom, to look out, for instance is so confusing because it is made up of words that point to some other obvious direction and a learner is more inclined to interpret it literally whereas the literal meaning is very much different to the actual meaning of the idiom.

Conclusion

Gaining mastery over the use of idioms is important for attaining native-like proficiency in a language, more specifically in English, because it is a language abundant with idioms. The language proficiency attained through idioms is higher because idioms, being carriers of the culture and worldview of its people, lead to more communicative competence. Associating linguistic expression with an animal renders the expression difficult to forget. Similarly, sometimes one quality of an animal is picked up by one language and culture, whereas another quality is picked up by another. So, we can use different idioms related to the same animal to enrich our expression in different languages. Every language speaker has relation to animals in their culture, and animal idioms appeal more to the sensibilities of people, especially the children. Particularly in English language a great many number of animals are related to very basic characteristics or habits of human beings. Therefore to mention or highlight a quality or habit, a mention of the animal possessing it is made, making the idiom almost unforgettable and glued to the mind. This research helped us in understanding that the conventional belief that constituent parts of idioms cannot help in learning the meaning of the total idiom and that all idioms operated arbitrarily and therefore had to be learnt by heart got partly refuted. A clue to mastering idioms of a foreign language was discovered to help EFL learners. Through the discovered pattern idioms of a foreign language can be taught effectively in a logical and systematic order by following the simple pedagogical rules of moving from easy to difficult, simple to complex and known to unknown. Because animals are interesting, attractive, mobile, universal, concrete, and picturesque, therefore, animal idioms are learnt, remembered and reproduced in various degrees better than idioms having other abstract and concrete things. Their learning involves pleasure and keeps the fresh learners motivated for continuous learning. Animal idioms serve to enlighten us on the worldview and ideology of the natives of the target language which is important for developing thinking habit in the target language.

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