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# Dictionaries

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أ. حلا يوسف



Dictionaries 2. 6

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Our lecture for today is about **Idiomatic Expressions**.

### Idiomatic expressions

Idiomatic expressions are a type of *informal language* that have a meaning different from the meaning of the words in the expression. These expressions reflect something peculiar to a particular language linguistically and culturally.

Let's take the idiomatic expression "kick the bucket" as an example. This expression means "to die". Obviously, the literal meaning of all the words of this idiom has nothing to do with death. Moreover, translating this idiom without having previous knowledge of the culture of English language won't lead to the correct meaning.

Let's take the idiomatic expression "kick the bucket" as an example. This expression means "to die". Obviously, the literal meaning of all the words of this idiom has nothing to do with death. Moreover, translating this idiom without having previous knowledge of the culture of English language won't lead to the correct meaning.

What do we mean by idiomatic expressions?

**Student:** a meaning that is different from the literal meaning.

**Instructor:** nice.

Are idiomatic expressions formal or informal?

**Student:** informal.

**Instructor:** ok. Generally speaking, idiomatic expressions are *informal language*.

Idiomatic expressions mean something different from the literal meaning. Idioms which are part of idiomatic expressions

their meaning as sentences are different from the meaning of the words that constitute them that's why you can't translate them word for word.

وهذا تلميذ أهمية معرفتنا بالـ (culture).

It means you need to know the cultural connotation of this idiom to understand its meaning.

Idiomatic expressions are: **informal**, they mean something different from their **literal meaning**, and they are related to a particular language in terms of language and culture.

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Grammatical rules of a language don't always apply to idiomatic expressions. For example, we can say "He kicked the bucket" which means "he died" but we cannot say "The bucket was kicked by him".

Do grammatical functions apply to idiomatic expressions?

Actually, it depends on the idiom and it depends on the grammatical rule itself.

For example, for (kick the bucket), we can say (he kicked the bucket) in the past or (he will kick the bucket) in case ( كان (الآن شخص مريض ويحضر و على وشك أن يموت passive voice and say (the bucket was kicked by him).

- Bucket: سطل

المعنى الحرفي لـ (he kicked the bucket) هو (رفس السطل) ولكن طبعاً نحن لا نترجم الـ (idioms) ترجمة حرفية، وهذا الـ (idiom) معناه (he died) وكما قلنا عادة (idioms) informal) وهذا الـ (idiom) يقبله بالعربي (فطس).

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**Phrasal verbs are also idiomatic.** The elements that make up



some phrasal verbs cannot be separated. For example, the parts of the phrasal verb "come across" which means "to find something accidentally". This means we can't add words between the two parts of this phrasal verb. On the other hand, other phrasal verbs like "take back" are separable. We could say "I need to take back my suit" and we can also say "I need to take my suit back".

ال (idiomatic) معنى يكون (phrasal verb)

When the meaning of the verb and the other parts is different from the phrasal verb as a whole, then this phrasal verb is idiomatic, for example, the meaning of (come across) as a phrasal verb is different from the literal meaning of its parts, so (come across) is an idiomatic phrasal verb.

In English, many verbs are followed by prepositions and adverbs. In some cases these combinations are called 'phrasal verbs', while in other cases they are prepositional verbs. What's the difference?

A prepositional verb is a verb that is followed by a preposition. The meaning of these two words together is usually very similar to the original meaning of the verb. For example, (to worry) and (to worry about "someone" or "something").

While the meaning of a phrasal verb is often different from the original meaning of the main verb, the meaning of a prepositional verb is usually the same as the main verb.

بعض ال (take back) مثل (separable) تكون (phrasal verbs) وبعضها الآخر (inseparable) مثل (come across)، وفي المحاضرة السابقة قلنا ان وضع الرمز (←→) بجانب ال (phrasal verb) يعني أنه (separable).

**Note:**

In separable phrasal verbs, if the object is a noun, it can

come either after the preposition/particle or between the verb and the preposition/particle, while if the object is a pronoun, we can't put the pronoun after the preposition/particle i.e. we have to put it between the verb and the preposition/particle. For example, we can say (take back my suit) or (take my suit back). However, we have to say (take it back) not (take baek-it).

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Dictionaryes of idiomatic expressions such as The Oxford Dictionary of Current Idiomatic English indicate both, the formal and informal usages of expressions. They also point out where is an expression used (American, British, Australian English, etc.).

Idioms and phrasal verbs mostly are informal, but it doesn't mean that there are no formal idioms and phrasal verbs.

Dictionaryes of idiomatic expressions tell us the region in which this idiom or this expression is used, for example, (something is not my cup of tea) is mostly used in Britain, but it's also understood in America, Australia etc.

- It's not my cup of tea = I don't like it

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Following is a list of English idiomatic expressions. Find their meanings and try to translate them to Arabic.

Expression	Meaning
Be tickled pink	
Hands down	
Under the weather	
It's raining cats and dogs	



A piece of cake	
Costs an arm and a leg	
Hold your horses	
When pigs fly	

Let us discuss these expressions one by one:

Expression	Meaning
Be tickled pink	to be very happy or amused

يمكن أن تجدوا هذا الـ (tickled pink) أو تحت كلمة (tickle)، ومثلاً عندما يبحثون عن (to be tickled pink) تحت (pink) ولا تجدونها يقولون لكم ابحثوا تحت (tickle) وهذا يسمى (cross reference).

Other idioms mean (to be very happy) are (on cloud nine) and (over the moon).

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Hands down	easily
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For example,

- You will pass the test **hands down**.

(a piece of cake) هو (idiom) بمعنى (easy) أي أن معناه (noun) وليس (adverb) كما في معنى (hands down)، وهذا يعني أنه يمكن أن أقول لكم:

- The test will be a **piece of cake**.

ولكن لا يمكن أن أقول لكم (a piece of cake) (you will pass the test) هذا يعني أنه عليكم الانتباه إلى طبيعة الـ (idiom) بمعنى هل هو يستخدم في مكان (noun) أم في مكان (adverb) الخ.

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Under the weather	you feel slightly ill
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إذا كان الشخص يعاني من رشح بسيط نقول إنه (under the weather)، ولما إذا كان الشخص مصاب بمرض خطير لا يمكن أن نقول إنه (under the weather).

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It's raining cats and dogs	to be raining heavily
A piece of cake	a thing that is very easy to do
Costs an arm and a leg	It is very expensive/it costs a lot of money

We have another idiom that means (costs an arm and leg) and this idiom is (it breaks the bank).

ولكن (it breaks the bank) استخدامه أقل.

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Hold your horses	Calm down/wait a moment
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We have another idiom that means (hold your horses) and this idiom is (hold the phone), and both of them mean (wait a moment).

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When pigs fly	something that is impossible to happen
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What's the meaning of the idiom (the elephant in the room)?

- The elephant in the room = something dangerous but you ignore it.

For example,

- Global warming is **the elephant in the room**.

It means global warming is dangerous but we ignore it.

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Translating idiomatic expressions presents a challenge for non-native speakers because of the fact mentioned earlier that the meaning of these expressions cannot be understood from the words that constitute it as well as being linguistic and culture specific. This matter is not restricted to idioms but also collocations. The source of this difficulty is that each language collocates items in its own way based on its linguistic and cultural conventions. An example of this is the Arabic expression "متوقد الذهن". This expression can be translated to English in several ways including "sharp witted", "witty", "smart"...etc. but could it be translated to "with a glowing mind"? Again, the reason for this is that each one of the two languages collocates linguistic items in a different way.

Paying attention to the culture is very important in translation idiomatic expressions. To describe someone who is very clever in Arabic we say (متوقد الذهن) and in English they say (sharp witted/witty) but they don't say (with a glowing mind).

لا يمكن أن نقول بالإنكليزي (with a glowing mind) لأن الـ (culture aspect) في اللغة العربية سمح لنا أن نقول (متوقد الذهن) بينما الـ (cultural aspect or specific) في اللغة الإنكليزية لا يسمح باستخدام عبارة (with a glowing mind).

Thank You



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