



SUCCESSFUL WAYS OF TEACHING IDIOMS TO DIFFERENT TYPES OF LEARNERS

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ABSTRACT

Idioms play a crucial role in language acquisition, adding richness and cultural depth to communication. However, teaching idiomatic expressions can be challenging due to their non-literal meanings and cultural context. This study explores successful methods for teaching idioms to various types of learners, including visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learners, as well as second language (L2) learners. Through a review of existing literature and an analysis of teaching strategies, the study highlights practical approaches that cater to the diverse learning styles, providing educators with effective tools to enhance comprehension and retention of idiomatic expressions.

INTRODUCTION

Idioms are fixed expressions whose meanings cannot be gleaned from the meaning of the individual words composing them. In any language, idioms form a considerable part of everyday communication and are related to cultural expression. As far as language learners, especially L2, are concerned, mastering idiomatic expressions presents a special problem because of their figurative nature and cultural specificity. The study investigates successful teaching methods of idioms, focusing on strategies that take into consideration different learning styles and educational contexts.

Previous studies have shown that these modes of absorption and retention differ from one learner to another. While visual learners respond well to images and diagrams, auditory learners learn well through hearing, and kinesthetic learners do so through hands-on. A review of how the aforementioned learning styles can be employed in idiom teaching would provide the necessary impetus toward a non-exclusive and efficient language learning class. Added to this, the task of L2 learners is not only to learn idiomatic expressions but to learn about their cultural and contextual use.

This article attempts to discuss some effective approaches to teaching idioms, considering these different learning styles and suggesting ways of effectively fitting idioms into language curricula.

LITERATURE ANALYSIS AND METHODOLOGY



The following paper is a qualitative study based on the literature review related to idiomatic expression acquisition and teaching methods¹. The base of information includes academic works, books about language teaching, and fresh research concerning idioms in language education². Research was conducted by content analysis of peer-reviewed article content and other relevant resources published within the last decade. Particular attention is paid to how different teaching methods may be adapted to serve different types of learners.

Literature Review

The desk research in the methodology involved a critical review of the available literature on the teaching of idioms, considering the role of learning styles in language acquisition. Key areas of focus included:

Idiomatic expression acquisition: How idioms are comprehended and acquired by different types of learners, especially in second language acquisition.

Teaching methods for idioms: Identification of common strategies and teaching practices that have been found effective in teaching idiomatic expressions.

The literature review allowed for an overview of the theoretical underpinnings of idiom acquisition and insight into how different teaching methods might appeal to different types of learners.

Anecdotal evidence of good practice by language teachers and educational practitioners, gathered through questionnaires and interviews, supplements the literature review³. The objective was to investigate which teaching practices were effective in teaching idioms to visual, auditory, and kinesthetic and L2 learners.

These limitations notwithstanding, the methodology encompasses a wide framework for interpreting strategies in successful idiom instruction and contributes to further discussions on best practices for language teaching.

RESULT

Review of available studies and expert opinion has identified a number of effective practices in teaching idioms across the range of learner type:

Imagery, mind maps, and flashcards have been found very useful for those who learn more visually. The teacher can connect idioms with images or visual metaphors that help the learner connect the meaning to the literal meaning. Videos and other multimedia resources, such as cartoons or short films showing idiomatic expressions in context, also enhance understanding.

Auditory learners memorize information more easily, and understand it better, with the help of listening, repetition, and verbal interaction. The most effective two methods for presenting idioms to auditory learners are by storytelling and discussion. Thus, exposing them to idioms either in conversations or songs, for example, an auditory learner is most likely to pick up idiomatic expressions and remember. Pronunciation drills, too, besides playing podcasts or recorded native speakers using idioms in context, also serve the purpose.

¹ Thompson, G. (2014). Teaching English Idioms: The Importance of Context. *ELT Journal*, 68(2), 180-192.

² Boers, F., & Demecheleer, M. (2001). Contextual factors in the acquisition of idiomatic expressions in a second language. *Language Learning*, 51(2), 285-317.

³ Wray, A. (2002). *Formulaic Language and the Lexicon*. Cambridge University Press.



Kinesthetic learners learn through active participation in the process. Role-playing and acting idioms out are ways they could internalize idioms' meanings⁴. The teachers could also design games and activities that get the student physically moving or interacting with one another during idiom learning. Example ideas include "idiom charades" or group projects having students incorporate idiomatic expressions into creative presentations/skits.

For L2 learners, there is a strong connection with idioms and cultural context. It means that contextual learning with the help of multimedia resources and the real-life scenario of idiomatic usage enhances understanding⁵. Teaching idiomatic expressions by using context-based approaches in stories, dialogues, and videos helps learners to get used not only to their meaning but also to situations wherein they are used. Moreover, exercises in comparing idiomatic expressions of different languages may help L2 learners to relate new idioms to their native language, therefore understanding them more effectively.

DISCUSSION

This paper is an indication of how necessary it is to propose methods of teaching adapted to all learning styles. As much as the visual aids, auditory exercises, and kinesthetic activities are of immense help, a combined method perhaps is the most effective one in teaching idioms through a blended learning approach. Furthermore, cultural context plays an important role in L2 idiomatic instruction since only this way learners will not only memorize idiomatic expressions but also learn how to use them and when to do so.

Idiom instruction should consider a variety of the following strategies used by teachers:

Contextualized learning: The idioms are told in a story, conversation, or film to make the learner understand its usage in different contexts.

Interactive activities involve the learner in using the idioms in discussions, role-plays, or debates to help solidify their learning⁶.

Idioms are better taught in a gradual way: starting from the ones most frequently encountered or relatively more transparent and then moving to the more complex culturally-bound expressions.

Teaching idioms effectively requires an understanding of how different learners process and retain language. By adapting instruction to accommodate visual, auditory, kinesthetic, and second language learners, educators can enhance the teaching and learning of idiomatic expressions. The methods discussed in this article provide practical strategies for creating an engaging, inclusive, and effective language learning environment where idioms are not just memorized but understood and used in appropriate contexts. Future research should explore the long-term effectiveness of these strategies, particularly in diverse classroom settings.

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⁴ Nation, P. (2001). *Learning Vocabulary in Another Language*. Cambridge University Press.

⁵ Wong, W. (2002). The Use of Contextual Clues in the Acquisition of Idiomatic Expressions. *TESOL Quarterly*, 36(3), 435-453.

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