



### RESEARCH ARTICLE

## THE IMPORTANCE OF IDIOMS IN LEARNING ENGLISH LANGUAGE BY THE ALBANIAN STUDENTS IN EFL CLASSROOMS.

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### Abstract

Learning English language has become a necessity in many aspects so has become teaching it. Apart from learning grammar, this includes learning and teaching vocabulary. Building ones vocabulary helps Albanian students in an EFL classroom and outside of it speak more fluently. There is still a problem when it comes to speaking English fluently: students' ability to understand native speakers or when reading an authentic book or any other written material meant for native speakers. One of the biggest challenges is understanding idioms and anything that has idiomatic meaning therefore learning and teaching idioms is as important as learning and teaching other parts of English language. It is thus very important for teachers to make idioms as more understandable and memorable to the students as possible. In this way, the students may become near native speakers of English, if not native ones. It is worth to mention that to overcome this obstacle, researchers on one hand, and teachers respectively professors on the other have to try their best to bring their students as closer as possible to the native speakers' culture and this, of course, includes teaching them idioms and helping them not only learn but also acquire idioms.

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### Introduction:-

It is widely known that English is an international language therefore learning and teaching it has not only become necessary but this has also made people all over the world strive best to learn it as better as possible. Apart from this, this has made professors find ways to teach it faster and better to their students, especially in an EFL classroom. On one hand, teachers try to identify their students' needs. On the other hand, they try to divide their lessons in as many parts as possible to make it easier to their students. In other words they divide English in chunks and some of the teachers focus on the importance of learning and teaching idioms based on the fact that idioms are the part which students find very difficult.

Furthermore, learning idioms will enable students speak much better which is one of the skills many students want to have. There is one issue many students do not understand: why do the people have to use idiomatic language for something people could have said differently? Why do they actually have to make it more difficult for other people understand them?

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**The role of idioms in learning English through culture and classification of idioms:-**

Idiomatic language is directly linked with the culture of the people whose language one wants to learn. Idioms are part of the culture, too. Different researchers have categorized idioms in groups and one of the groups they mention is proverbs. Hinkel (2017, pp.5-6), for instance, writes about idioms and different categories of idioms and the following are some of the categories he mentions: a) frequently recurring and culture-specific expressions; b) collocations; c) fixed phrases with specific and well-defined meanings, as well as phrasal verbs; d) figurative expressions (such as metaphors) for instance, you are my sunshine; e) proverbs, for example, make hay while the sun shines; f) culturally- bound sayings ( such as, not my cup of tea). Based on this classification of idioms, it can be said that learning idioms is vital to learning English language be it for communication or else for writing in an EFL classroom or outside of it. So, idioms are part of the culture of different people hence learning them will help students not only speak better but also understand the native speakers easier.

**Statement of the problem:-**

The problem this study puts emphasis on is the importance of idioms in learning English as well as the necessity for teachers to come up with new methods to teach idioms to the students as well as make it all easier to them to learn and memorize them. This study sheds light on some of the ways different researchers have used to measure the extent to which EFL students memorize and learn idioms better and easier and the importance of learning and teaching them. Through this, efforts are made to find new possible ways to make it all more practical to Albanian students, too.

**Research hypothesis:-**

The above statement of the problem brings us to the following hypothesis:-

1. Learning English idioms is very important to Albanian students.
2. Bringing the Albanian EFL students as closer as possible to English culture helps them learn English idioms easier.
3. It is vitally important for teachers of English to bring students as closer as possible to English culture in order to teach idioms to them.

**Literature review:-**

Teaching English is a very precious job which also includes teaching idioms. Apart from knowing about the importance of teaching idioms by teachers and learning them by students, people must consider the methods to teach them which is more beneficial. This is a solution to the problem of understanding and acquiring idioms in an English speaking setting in which non-native speakers of English want to understand equally with the native ones. This enables filling in the gaps between the two cultures: English culture and that of the non-native speakers'.

There has been long research on idioms, their importance and the ways to teach them. Some teachers make use of pictures; some others show students different movies where some of the idioms meant to be taught are used and some others bring along different newspapers (or just articles from the newspapers) and discuss the meaning of particular idioms with their students. Generally speaking, the main point is to help students 'get in touch' with the native speakers and, of course, the language itself as much as possible. So, creating an English-speaking environment in an EFL classroom is of great importance. Therefore, mastering idioms makes a non-native speaker of English sound more proficient in producing and understanding it.

**Why is it difficult for EFL students understand and memorize idioms?:-**

Non-native speakers often find it difficult to understand English be it in spoken or written especially when idiomatic language is used. One of the biggest reasons is that, sometimes, words and phrases such as phrasal verbs are used literally and sometimes idiomatically. This causes that people in general and EFL students in particular generalize the meaning of these phrasal verbs hence misunderstand them. For instance, look out can mean to look out of the windows or to be careful depending on the context.

Apart from this, the fact that the words used in an idiomatic expression give a completely new meaning of the sentence and translating them separately does not give the overall translation of the idiomatic translation adds to this difficulty. So, a student cannot translate the words that constitute an idiomatic expression separately and then find out the meaning of the whole idiom. This poses a big dilemma for translators, too. Therefore, learning the cultural aspect of the language to translate from is also important be it merely for communication or for translation of documents or oral translation.

Based on this, we have to bear in mind that there are different cultures, social groups which use different jargons and idiomatic language. Another point here is that language is subject to changes by these different groups/ categories of people hence the difficulty of understanding them sometimes by the native speakers themselves. The solution to this lies in keeping in touch with the language, if not with people directly. It is, thus, up to us teachers to be up-to-date with all the changes and dialects including the idiomatic language used by them.

#### **The impact of culture on learning idioms in an EFL classroom:-**

In some cases, EFL classrooms consist of members from the same nationality, but in some others, there are students from different cultural backgrounds. Not only does it bring changes in using the language but it may also cause unsatisfaction and misunderstanding if these students do not overcome this obstacle. Sometimes, people use gestures which have different meanings in different countries (cultures) for instance moving head up and down in Kosova means Yes, and left and right means NO. It means the opposite in Albania for instance. Another example is thumb up and down which means OK or NOT OK in different countries. This, of course, has to do with culture.

Idiomatic language is also connected with the everyday life of the people from different cultures. Sometimes gender also plays an important part. In his book "Language, culture and communication: the meaning of messages", Bonvillian (2008, p.186), more specifically in the Language and Gender: English and English Speakers part, he mentions examples of masculine and feminine expressions. He takes examples of the following two sentences:

"You are driving rather fast, aren't you?"

"Well, I guess it's approximately four feet high." (Bonvillian, 2008, p.186)

He further claims that,

The styles of speech illustrated here are more typical of women than of men because women and men are socialized to express themselves in different ways in accordance with cultural norms that teach and reinforce differentiated gender roles. Gender itself is a social construct. ( Bonvillian, 2008, p.186).

#### **The importance of technology in teaching and learning idioms in an EFL classroom:-**

Teaching of English in general and idioms in particular has also become easier with the development/ advance of technology. There are different phone or computer applications which can make this all easier. Now, almost everyone has got a phone, an i-pad or a lap top therefore making use of any of these in an EFL classroom would be of great help to our students. There should be ways for teachers to enhance learning of idioms at home, too. So, teachers should be able to also check how much their students have improved.

#### **Conclusion:-**

To sum it all up, English language has become a key to success not only in an EFL classroom but also in our everyday life. Being able to speak fluently can help students achieve their goals be it academic or else for finding a job. In this context, the most difficult part is learning idioms/ idiomatic language. Using different methods can make this all easier including making use of technology in an EFL classroom. This is also important to the Albanian EFL students and teachers in Kosovo.

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