

IDIOMATIC EXPRESSIONS OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND THEIR NATIONAL-CULTURAL PECULIARITIES

Kidralieva Bagila Sadirbekovna,

Teacher of English at the M. Auezov South Kazakhstan University.

Jemima220584@gmail.com

Idiomatic expressions, often referred to as idioms, are a rich and essential component of the English language. These phrases, while figurative, offer significant insights into the cultural and historical contexts of English-speaking societies. Unlike literal language, idioms convey meanings that cannot be deduced merely by understanding the individual words. This article explores the national-cultural peculiarities of idiomatic expressions in English, shedding light on how these phrases reflect the values, history, and social norms of English-speaking cultures. Idiomatic expressions are phrases or sentences whose meanings are not apparent from the meanings of their individual words. They are often culturally specific and rooted in the collective experiences of a society. For example, the idiom "spill the beans," meaning to reveal a secret, originates from ancient practices and conveys more than its literal words suggest.

"Bite the Bullet" meaning: To endure a painful or unpleasant situation.

Cultural Context: This idiom dates back to historical military practices where soldiers would bite on bullets during surgery to cope with the pain without anesthetics. It reflects a time when enduring hardship was often necessary, particularly in military or medical contexts.

"Spill the Beans" meaning: To disclose a secret.

Cultural Context: Originating from ancient Greek voting practices where beans were used as ballots, spilling the beans could inadvertently reveal the outcome. This idiom underscores the value placed on discretion and confidentiality.

"Under the Weather" meaning: Feeling ill.

Cultural Context: This phrase likely has maritime origins, referring to sailors who would be sent below deck during bad weather, often leading to seasickness. It highlights the seafaring history and the impact of weather on health and well-being.

"Break the Ice" meaning: To initiate conversation and reduce tension.

Cultural Context: Derived from the practice of ships breaking ice to navigate frozen waters, this idiom symbolizes initiating interaction to overcome initial social barriers. It reflects the importance of communication and social harmony.

"The Ball is in Your Court" meaning: It is your turn to act.

Cultural Context: Originating from sports, particularly tennis, this idiom emphasizes personal responsibility and initiative. It reflects the value placed on individual action and accountability.

"Kick the Bucket" meaning: To die.

Cultural Context: The exact origin is debated, but one theory ties it to slaughterhouses, where animals kicked the bucket beneath them when slaughtered. This idiom, though colloquial, addresses the inevitability of death with a casual tone, reflecting a cultural tendency to use euphemisms for sensitive topics.

"Let the Cat Out of the Bag" meaning: To reveal a secret.

Cultural Context: Likely from a market scam where cats were substituted for piglets, this idiom reflects historical practices in trade and the importance of honesty in commerce.

Idioms often encapsulate historical events and societal changes. For instance, the phrase "read the riot act" originates from an actual historical act in 18th-century England, where authorities would read the Riot Act to disperse crowds. This idiom now means to issue a stern warning, reflecting how historical governance practices have influenced modern language. Idioms serve as cultural barometers, offering insights into the societal norms and values of a particular time. The idiom "keep your nose to the grindstone," meaning to work hard and diligently, reflects a historical emphasis on labor and productivity, prevalent during the Industrial Revolution.

Conclusion

Idiomatic expressions in the English language are deeply intertwined with cultural and historical contexts. They not only enrich the language but also provide a window into the societal values, historical events, and everyday practices of English-speaking cultures. Understanding these idioms and their origins enhances comprehension and appreciation of the language, offering learners and speakers a deeper cultural insight. Through idioms, the English language preserves its historical essence, making it a dynamic and culturally rich means of communication.

THE LIST OF USED LITERATURE

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