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METHODS OF TEACHING ENGLISH IDIOMS TO ESL

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Annotation

Idioms are usually vivid and forceful. They have been described as the crystallization of language. Without idioms our language would become dull and dry. For one thing, most idioms contain an extremely profound and rich meaning. For another, most idioms carry a vivid image. Idioms mirror the national characteristics in a language and thus always rich in cultural connotation and national flavor.

They are commonly used in everyday conversation, not in formal writing. So, students need to learn more idioms if they want to talk more naturally and to understand the ideas of whom they are talking to because, in everyday conversation native speakers often use them.

This article is discussed the methods of teaching English idioms to ESL.

Key words

idioms, methods of teaching idioms, Idiomatic Expressions.

There are several language teaching methods in use today. One of them is teaching languages with the help of activities. If you can arrange activities for your English conversation group, you will probably find that activities afford excellent practice in English. Activities are enjoyable. It is now very generally accepted that language teaching not merely can be but should be enjoyable. This is not to assume that it is easy, but only that there is no need, by including enjoyment, to make it more difficult. It is not easy to teach the meaning of an idiom. That's why, if we teach English idioms-we must use new methods of teaching English.

By developing a clear understanding of figurative language, students can further comprehend texts that contain metaphorical and lexical meanings beyond the basic word level. In this lesson, students explore figurative language with a focus on the literal versus the metaphorical translations of idioms. Through read-alouds, teacher modeling, and student-centered activities that are presented in the classroom, students will further develop their understanding of figurative language.

By knowing the origins of idioms, students can more easily figure out the metaphorical meanings.

Discussions focused on the origins of words and phrases help students understand how language transforms over time and, thereby, enables them to hypothesize in a more meaningful way the meaning of unfamiliar words or phrases.

We enjoy teaching idioms because we find them fascinating. A good way of teaching idioms is that of grouping them according to topic, e.g, idioms that have to do with parts of the body, idioms about colour, etc.

We also find it very interesting to contrast and compare idioms in English with the students' or our native language (Uzbek). This is because one can discuss the origin of the idiom and how different languages may express the same idea in similar ways. Another way of teaching idioms is finding them in a context.

If we teach idioms along with the other simple word lists. We believe, that the English Teacher has to help the learners get to know how to use the Dictionary very effectively. There comes a challenging task of teaching pronunciation, functional category, distinct layers of meaning, usage and model sentences along with idioms and phrasal verbs. We recommend you majorly use pictures to make the process easier than you can even imagine. We use 8-12 steps to teach a group of idioms. For example;

Show them the pictures and ask random questions about what they know about the pictures and in this case pictures of the animals. (Emphasize on the most common characteristics of those animals);

- Tell them a story using the idioms you intend to teach.
- Write the idioms on the board as you are telling the story.
- Ask them to guess what the new idioms mean according to the context.
- You could have a group work here if possible.
- Tell them the meaning of the idioms.
- Give them extra examples using the new idioms (in context if possible)
- You could ask them to create their own examples.
- Re-tell the story focusing on the new idioms.
- Give then a group work activity to write very short stories using the new idioms (you could make a homework out of this step if you are pressed with time)
- Ask them to read their short stories to keep them motivated.
- Ask the other students to summarize their partners' stories.

You should rely on your artistic talent to draw pictures for them. They will be amused. This is a rough method that you could surely make much more interesting by adding your own steps by considering the class situation.

Now the exact meaning of the idiom is difficult to figure out without more clues but by analyzing the context surrounding the idiom you can get a pretty good idea of what it means.

It is important to note that using an idiom should not be the main aim of your classes. I believe it's alright for students to understand them, but to actually use them in spoken language may seem a little embarrassing, not to mention "fake". It's easy to understand this when you see a non-native of your language trying to use idiomatic expressions. It may sound funny but not appropriate for a formal conversation.

If you don't teach idioms to your students, you are depriving them of the some of the cultural richness of the English language. Just imagine your speech without all the popular sayings that are indeed a very relevant part of our culture and the "lingo" that helps all speakers of a certain age or social group to have a special identity or even a certain "private language."

When teachers encourage students' natural inclinations toward narrative forms of meaning making, in conjunction with text-based lessons, the students appear more engaged with textual content and demonstrate less resistance to reading material that might otherwise be challenging or frustrating.

Students respond to texts through narrative approaches, encouraging them to engage in role-playing and to allow memories, images, and stories to surface as they begin to develop interpretations.

Students are more likely to understand, recall, and care about what a metaphor means after having played with the word through a highly personalized, storied exploration of their own experiences of metaphorical language.

English idioms do not mean what they literally mean; however, mass media, textbooks and everyday language represent rich sources of idiomatic expressions. In addition, previous studies indicated that English idioms are difficult for English students, and then they would be much more

problematic for students. Therefore, this article presents various effective activities for students to learn English idioms effectively. Besides introducing English idioms in story contexts and with visuals, collaboration activities, such as group talk, Readers Theater, retelling, dialogue writing and role-play, can act as a key to increasing students' motivation and involvement in learning English idioms.

It is difficult for English students to master English idioms, let alone students because the figurative meanings of English idioms cannot be predicted through an analysis of their individual word meanings. It is not surprising, "The trouble with foreigners in this country is that they take everything Americans say literally" (Buchwald, 2000, p. 104). However, idioms are common in American daily life and provide a rich source of American culture (Cooper, 1999).

Teaching English Idioms in Contexts. The Role of Context in Learning Language. The role of context is central in language learning. It's common that students don't really understand the various meanings of new words in different contexts. That's why students don't know how to apply the words they have learned practically in various contexts. It's fundamental for teachers to provide a rich context for students' language learning and practice. For instance, linguistic contextual information enhances adolescents' interpretation of idioms. The contextual cues surrounding a particular word can help readers get that's meaning. In contrast, context-reduced language will be hard for readers to tolerate. Consequently, it's more effective for students to learn language in meaningful contexts than learn isolated words through memorization and drilling.

Introducing English Idioms in Story Contexts. Stories have been popularly used to teach and entertain students in language learning. Interesting stories usually draw students' attention and easily make students absorbed in them. Since contextual information is significantly effective for aiding students' understanding English idioms, it is essential for teachers to provide students with rich context. Thus, introducing English idioms within interesting stories can possibly help students to understand and remember them better.

Teaching English Idioms with Rich Illustrations. The Role of Illustrations in Reading. Although there is lingering debate regarding the effect of visuals on reading comprehension, some researchers claim that reading materials accompanied by visuals will be more comprehensible. Words and pictures presented together helped students recall better than alone. It is efficient to provide interesting pictures to foster and reinforce vocabulary development. Consequently, visuals must be stimulating, interesting and motivating to students' comprehension and retention of reading.

Presenting English Idioms with Rich Illustrations. According to the effect of illustrations on reading, you collected English idioms in one sentence context. English idioms were presented with pictures to one group of 30 students while without pictures to the other class of 30 students. They were told that those phrases were English idioms first and then they were asked to translate them into Uzbek. You found that English idioms with illustrations could increase students idiom understanding better. Thus, it is effective to present English idioms accompanied by visual stimuli that clearly illustrates the idioms being taught.

Teaching English Idioms with Group Discussion. Group Discussion in Reading Comprehension. Students' discussing what they read is a helpful strategy to increase their comprehension. Group talk can provide learners with rich opportunities to acquire social and linguistic knowledge necessary for understanding new texts they encounter. Students engaging in collaborative talk during content reading, they assisted one another in understanding the meaning of challenging words, getting the main

ideas, and answering questions about what they read. As a result, group discussion appears to be an effective technique to enhance students' reading comprehension.

Applying Group Discussion in Understanding English Idioms. Students are likely to be passive learners when they receive lectures only in classrooms. On the contrary, small group discussion could stimulate students to be involved in the active process of constructing knowledge. Furthermore, during group discussions, students will learn from each other, whether consciously or unconsciously. Accordingly, you applied group discussion in students' active learning of English idioms before explaining the meaning of idioms to them. Students in group discussion could understand English idioms better than when they were introduced to English idioms within a story only. This demonstrated the significant effect of group talk on students' understanding of English idioms.

Teaching English Idioms with Readers Theater. Readers Theater in Reading. Readers Theater has been viewed as an interesting and motivating strategy that can provide readers with a legitimate reason to reread text and further improve their word recognition, reading fluency and reading comprehension. Researchers claim that Readers Theater offers a way to improve fluency and enhance comprehension as well as to create interest in and enthusiasm for learning. Even slow learners can benefit from Readers Theater because there is no memorization required and there is no risk for them at all. Apparently, Readers Theater provides enough opportunity for practice--repeated reading in language learning. This activity also enhances interaction opportunities with peers and makes the reading task more appealing than learning alone.

Applying Readers Theater to Practice English Idioms. You used Readers Theater to help students practice English idioms in order to enhance students' retaining them. Class observation and students' interviews further revealed their positive attitudes, such as excitement toward the implementation of Readers Theater in reading classes. Moreover, students retained English idioms better by applying Readers Theater because it provided students with opportunities for idiom oral practice because of rereading scripts. Consequently, it is obvious to see that Readers Theater has a significant effect on students' learning and retaining English idioms.

Teach English Idioms with Retelling and Rewriting. Retelling in Reading. Retelling has been a good strategy to know how much students have learned and to increase their comprehension. Retelling activities can facilitate students' reading retrieval because the activities can encourage students to try to recall. Their recalling help teachers understand how much information their students have obtained.

Applying Retelling and Rewriting to Practice English Idioms. Since retelling activities are good techniques to facilitate students' reading retrieval, this motivates you to apply the activities in teaching English idioms. After, you introduced the meanings of English idioms to your students, you asked your students in pairs to retell the content in their own words instead of the English idioms and to rewrite sentences provided in class by using English idioms. The retelling and rewriting activities provided students with more chances to be aware of the meanings of English idioms and be familiar with the English idioms they have just learned.

Teach English Idioms with Dialogue Writing and Role-Play. Dialogue Writing and Role-play in Reading. Dialogues can provide situations for students to practice ordinary conversation and offer students ample practice with basic speaking skills in context. Firstly, dialogues can be viewed as short plays and used for students to act out rather than simply read aloud. Moreover, the dialogues the students write function as basic communication at all levels. In addition, putting pupils into pairs for the role-play in the daily dialogues is an effective way of oral practice for various ages and levels. Role-plays are also excellent activities for learners' speaking in the relatively safe environment of the

classroom before they must do so in a real environment. Therefore, dialogues offer students opportunities to act out and practice oral skill before encountering the real world.

Applying English Idioms through Dialogue Writing and Role-play. Dialogues and role-play are useful written and oral activities so that you assigned your students in pairs to write one dialogue by using the English idioms introduced in class and then act out the dialogue out in the following class. Dialogue writing could motivate students to write without burden because of pair collaboration and role-play activity could help them remember the dialogue they wrote through repetitive practices. It was easier and more fun for them to remember English idioms because they shared and enjoyed learning English idioms with friends. Thus, dialogue writing and role-play are useful and interesting activities for students' meaningful and efficient drills.

Since it is vital for students to learn English idioms in order to master English, it is important for teachers to design various activities for students to use with English idioms and subsequently acquire them efficiently. Moreover, students learn better when they are provided with collaborative activities because they can interact with peers and share fun in learning. Finally, when teachers integrate listening, speaking, reading and writing activities together in teaching English idioms, students can be involved in the application of English idioms in four skills. Thus, it is effective to teach students English idiom when they are provided with various activities to practice and utilize English idioms in different contexts.

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