



SEMANTIC AND PRAGMATIC CHARACTERISTICS OF IDIOMATIC EXPRESSIONS IN CONTEMPORARY ENGLISH DISCOURSE

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Annotatsiya. Ushbu maqolada zamonaviy ingliz tilidagi idiomalar qanday qilib yashirin, ko'chma ma'nolarni ifodalashi va muayyan kommunikativ maqsadlarga xizmat qilishi tahlil qilinadi. Tadqiqot natijalariga ko'ra, idiomalar shunchaki til bezaklari emas, balki muhim pragmatik vositalardir. Ular so'zlovchilarga o'z munosabati, hissiyotlarini ifodalash, ijtimoiy aloqalarni saqlash imkonini beradi hamda madaniy o'ziga xoslik va kontekstga moslikni aks ettiradi. Idiomalarning ushbu semantik va pragmatik ikki tomonlamaligi til o'qitish, tarjima va madaniyatlararo muloqot sohalarida katta ahamiyatga ega.

Kalit so'zlar: idiomatik ifodalar; semantika; pragmatika; ko'chma ma'no; zamonaviy ingliz tili nutqi; kontekstual ma'no; til va madaniyat; metafora; nutq tahlili; kommunikatsiya.

Abstract. This article examines how idioms in contemporary English convey implicit, figurative meanings and serve specific communicative purposes. It finds that idioms are not just linguistic ornaments but essential pragmatic tools. They allow speakers to express attitudes, emotions, and maintain social relationships, reflecting cultural identity and contextual sensitivity. Understanding this dual semantic-pragmatic nature is valuable for language teaching, translation, and intercultural communication.

Keywords: idiomatic expressions; semantics; pragmatics; figurative meaning; contemporary English discourse; contextual meaning; language and culture; metaphor; discourse analysis; communication.

Аннотация. В данной статье рассматривается, как идиомы современного английского языка передают скрытые, переносные значения и выполняют определённые коммуникативные функции. Установлено, что идиомы — это не просто языковые украшения, а важные прагматические инструменты. Они позволяют говорящим выражать эмоции, отношение, поддерживать социальные связи, отражая культурную идентичность и чувствительность к контексту. Понимание этой двойственной — семантической и прагматической — природы идиом имеет большую ценность для преподавания языка, перевода и межкультурной коммуникации.

Ключевые слова: идиоматические выражения; семантика; прагматика; переносное значение; современный английский дискурс; контекстуальное значение; язык и культура; метафора; анализ дискурса; коммуникация

INTRODUCTION.



Idioms are fundamental to language, consisting of fixed phrases whose overall meaning differs from their literal words. In modern English, they function not merely as stylistic flourishes but as crucial instruments for efficiently communicating complex ideas, attitudes, and cultural values. Their interpretation depends on both semantics (literal and figurative meaning) and pragmatics (context, speaker intention, and social norms). Therefore, understanding idioms requires analyzing how they function in real-world communication, not just their dictionary definitions.

Previous research establishes that idioms vary in semantic transparency—some hint at their meaning, while others are opaque and require cultural knowledge. Pragmatically, they serve diverse roles, such as expressing humor or strengthening social bonds. However, the dynamic relationship between an idiom's semantic meaning and its pragmatic use in modern discourse is not fully understood.

This study aims to address this gap by analyzing the semantic and pragmatic characteristics of idioms in contemporary English. It will investigate how idioms facilitate meaning-making and effective communication across various contexts, using authentic examples from media and daily life to explore the intricate connections between language, culture, and discourse.

Scholarly interest in idioms stems from their unique status as fixed phrases whose meanings are not literal. Semantically, researchers like Fernando (1996) classify idioms as transparent (where meaning can be inferred) or opaque (requiring cultural knowledge). Moon (1998) further highlights that their meaning depends on specific word patterns and context.

Pragmatically, idioms serve functions beyond their words. Gibbs (1994) notes they express emotion, humor, and social cohesion. This aligns with Grice's (1975) theory of conversational implicature, where listeners use context to decipher the speaker's indirect meaning. Furthermore, Lakoff and Johnson (1980) argue that many idioms are rooted in conceptual metaphors that shape our thought.

While recent studies confirm idioms adapt to modern media and online discourse, a systematic analysis of their combined semantic and pragmatic roles in contemporary English is still needed. This study addresses that gap by using a qualitative approach to examine real-world examples from sources like news, social media, and film, illustrating how idioms function within modern communication.

The analysis focuses on two main aspects: semantic properties and pragmatic functions. For semantic analysis, each idiom is examined for literal meaning, figurative meaning, transparency, and metaphorical motivation, following the frameworks suggested by Fernando (1996) Lakoff & Johnson (1980) and A. Latipov (2016). For pragmatic analysis, idioms are studied in context to determine their communicative functions, such as expressing emotions, emphasizing points, signaling humor, or facilitating social interaction, in line with Gibbs (1994) Grice's (1975) and A. Latipov (2016) principles of conversational implicature.

The study uses contextual analysis to identify how idioms contribute to discourse meaning. Each selected idiom is presented with its source, interpreted semantically, and then analyzed for pragmatic significance. This method allows a detailed examination of the interaction between literal and figurative meaning and the role of context in shaping interpretation. By combining semantic and pragmatic analysis, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of idioms in contemporary English communication.

In contemporary English discourse, idiomatic expressions serve multiple functions, combining semantic richness with pragmatic utility. This section examines selected idioms from authentic sources to illustrate their dual nature.

1. Semantic Analysis:

The idiom “spill the beans” semantically means “to reveal a secret.” Its literal meaning is transparent but does not convey the intended figurative sense without contextual understanding. Similarly, “kick the bucket” literally refers to striking a pail with one's foot, but semantically it represents “to die,” an opaque idiom that requires cultural knowledge for comprehension. Some idioms, like “break the ice”, are partially transparent; the metaphorical meaning—initiating conversation or easing tension—can be inferred from the words themselves. Semantic analysis shows that idioms range from fully transparent to highly opaque, and understanding them requires knowledge of both language and cultural conventions.



2. Pragmatic analysis:

Pragmatically, idioms perform specific communicative functions in context. For instance, in social interactions, “break the ice” is often used to initiate conversation in a polite and friendly manner, serving an interpersonal function. In contrast, “spill the beans” may carry emotional or evaluative connotations, signaling mild blame, surprise, or playfulness depending on the speaker’s tone and situation. Another example, “hit the nail on the head”, functions pragmatically to emphasize accuracy or agreement, often reinforcing the speaker’s point in discussions.

3. Idioms in contemporary media:

Modern media and online discourse frequently employ idioms to create relatability and engagement. Headlines like “Tech Giants Spill the Beans on New Innovations” use idioms both semantically (revealing information) and pragmatically (capturing reader interest). Similarly, social media posts often rely on idioms to express humor, sarcasm, or social commentary, illustrating how idiomatic expressions adapt to new communication channels while retaining their traditional semantic and pragmatic roles.

4. Discussion:

The analysis demonstrates that idiomatic expressions are not merely stylistic ornaments but integral tools for meaning-making. Semantically, they compress complex ideas into concise forms; pragmatically, they guide interpretation, signal speaker intention, and reflect social and cultural norms. Understanding idioms in contemporary discourse requires attention to both literal meaning and contextual usage, highlighting the inseparable link between semantics and pragmatics in modern English communication.

This study confirms that idioms in contemporary English serve a dual purpose. While their semantic meaning can range from transparent to opaque, their primary function is pragmatic—they are used to express emotion, add emphasis, foster social interaction, and convey humor or irony. Real-world examples show that idioms are not just linguistic ornaments but vital tools that provide cultural and contextual depth to communication.

Grasping idioms requires an integrated understanding of both their core meaning and their context of use. This has significant practical value for language teaching, translation, and intercultural communication, as proficiency with idioms leads to more natural and effective language use. Future research could focus on the evolution of idioms in digital communication and across different cultures to further understand their changing role in modern English.

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