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THE USE OF IDIOMS AND PHRASAL VERBS IN EVERYDAY ENGLISH CONVERSATION

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Abstract: This article examines the role, functions, and specific characteristics of idioms and phrasal verbs in everyday English communication. The study aims to determine how these linguistic units contribute to the fluency, expressiveness, and effectiveness of oral communication. The work draws upon lexico-semantic and contextual analysis, as well as descriptive methods, to explore the structural and functional features of common idiomatic expressions and phrasal verbs used by native English speakers.
Keywords: English idioms, phrasal verbs, everyday communication, conversational English, lexical meaning, communicative competence, speech fluency, contextual learning, English language teaching.

Аннотация: В данной статье мы рассматриваем роль, функции и специфические особенности идиом и фразовых глаголов в повседневном английском общении. Цель исследования — определить, как эти языковые единицы способствуют беглости, выразительности и эффективности устной коммуникации. Работа опирается на лексико-семантический и контекстуальный анализ, а также на описательные методы, позволяющие изучить структурные и функциональные характеристики распространенных идиоматических выражений и фразовых глаголов, используемых носителями английского языка.
Ключевые слова: английские идиомы, фразовые глаголы, повседневное общение, разговорный английский язык, лексическое значение, коммуникативная компетенция, беглость речи, контекстуальное обучение, преподавание английского языка.

Introduction. In the contemporary era of globalization and intercultural communication, English has become not only a global means of communication but also a complex linguistic system that reflects cultural values, social relationships, and patterns of human interaction. Effective communication in English requires more than grammatical accuracy and knowledge of individual words; it also involves the ability to understand and appropriately use fixed expressions, idiomatic constructions, and multi-word lexical units that frequently occur in everyday speech. Among these linguistic phenomena, idioms and phrasal verbs occupy a significant position because they contribute to the naturalness, expressiveness, and cultural authenticity of spoken English.

Idioms and phrasal verbs are considered essential components of the English phraseological system. Unlike free combinations of words, these expressions often possess meanings that cannot be interpreted through the literal meanings of their individual elements. Idioms such as break the

ice, spill the beans, and hit the nail on the head demonstrate how English speakers use figurative expressions to convey complex ideas, emotions, and evaluations in a concise form. According to C. Fernando, idioms represent conventionalized expressions whose meanings are closely connected with linguistic context, cultural experience, and communicative purposes. The researcher emphasizes that idiomatic expressions perform important functions in discourse by expressing attitudes, creating cohesion, and reflecting social interaction [1].

Phrasal verbs, which consist of a verb combined with a particle or preposition, represent another important feature of everyday English conversation. Expressions such as look after, give up, find out, and carry on are widely used by native speakers and frequently appear in informal communication. Their importance is determined by their high frequency and semantic flexibility, as many phrasal verbs develop meanings that differ significantly from the meanings of their individual components. Research in English vocabulary studies shows that phrasal verbs are among the most challenging lexical units for language learners because their meanings are often unpredictable and strongly dependent on context [2].

The study of idioms and phrasal verbs has attracted considerable attention within modern linguistics, particularly in the fields of phraseology, cognitive linguistics, and applied linguistics. A. Cowie emphasizes that phraseological units should be analyzed not only as fixed combinations of words but also as meaningful structures that function within specific communicative environments. According to the researcher, the interpretation of multi-word expressions requires attention to their semantic characteristics, conventional usage, and pragmatic functions [3].

From the perspective of cognitive linguistics, idiomatic expressions provide valuable information about how speakers conceptualize reality through language. R. Gibbs argues that idioms are not simply arbitrary combinations of words but are often connected with conceptual metaphors and cognitive processes that influence human understanding and communication [4]. Therefore, the analysis of idioms contributes to a deeper understanding of the relationship between language, thought, and cultural perception.

The increasing importance of idioms and phrasal verbs is also related to their role in second-language acquisition and communicative competence. Although these expressions are frequently encountered in authentic English conversations, films, digital media, and everyday interactions, many learners experience difficulties in recognizing their meanings and using them appropriately. The main challenges are associated with semantic opacity, cultural specificity, and differences between literal and figurative interpretations. According to Wray and Perkins, formulaic language plays an important role in fluent communication because speakers often rely on ready-made expressions to increase efficiency and maintain natural interaction [5].

Modern approaches to language teaching increasingly emphasize the importance of contextual learning and exposure to authentic communication. Memorization of isolated meanings is often insufficient for mastering idioms and phrasal verbs because their usage depends on social context, speaker intention, and communicative situation. Therefore, the analysis of real spoken language, including conversations, media discourse, and corpus-based materials, provides valuable opportunities for understanding how these expressions function in natural communication [6].

Despite extensive research devoted to phraseology and vocabulary acquisition, the combined role of idioms and phrasal verbs in everyday English conversation remains an important area of

investigation. Many previous studies focus either on theoretical classification of idioms or on teaching difficulties related to phrasal verbs, while fewer studies examine their interaction as essential elements of spoken communication. This research addresses this gap by analyzing idioms and phrasal verbs as interconnected lexical resources that contribute to the effectiveness, expressiveness, and cultural richness of everyday English speech.

Main part. Idioms and phrasal verbs occupy a central position in the lexical system of modern English and represent important elements of everyday spoken communication. Their widespread use demonstrates that natural language interaction is based not only on individual words and grammatical structures but also on ready-made lexical combinations that allow speakers to express ideas quickly, effectively, and emotionally.

From the perspective of phraseology, idioms are considered fixed or semi-fixed expressions whose overall meanings cannot always be derived from the meanings of their individual components. For example, the expression break the ice does not refer to the physical action of breaking ice but means "to make people feel more comfortable in a social situation." Such expressions represent cultural and conceptual patterns developed within a language community. According to Fernando, idioms function as meaningful linguistic units that reflect social experience, cultural traditions, and patterns of human perception [1].

Phrasal verbs represent another important category of multi-word expressions in English. They consist of a combination of a verb and a particle, such as look up, take off, get along, or carry on. Although some phrasal verbs maintain a literal meaning, many acquire figurative meanings that cannot be predicted from their separate elements. For instance, give up means "to stop trying," while bring up may mean "to mention a topic" or "to raise a child." This semantic flexibility makes phrasal verbs highly productive but also challenging for learners of English.

Corpus-based studies demonstrate that phrasal verbs occur very frequently in spoken English and represent an essential part of everyday communication. Liu and Myers emphasize that many common phrasal verbs are polysemous and that their meanings vary significantly depending on the communicative register and context of usage [2]. Therefore, understanding phrasal verbs requires not only vocabulary knowledge but also awareness of contextual meaning.

Idioms perform several important communicative functions in spoken English. First, they increase the expressiveness of speech by allowing speakers to communicate emotions, evaluations, and attitudes in a concise form. Instead of providing a long explanation, speakers often use idiomatic expressions to convey complex meanings immediately.

For example:

- I'm feeling under the weather → I feel slightly ill.
- It cost an arm and a leg → It was extremely expensive.
- She spilled the beans → She revealed a secret.

These expressions demonstrate that idioms contribute not only to linguistic efficiency but also to emotional interaction between speakers.

Second, idioms serve a social function. Their appropriate use often indicates a speaker's familiarity with the language and cultural environment. Native speakers frequently use idiomatic expressions to create a sense of connection and informality during conversations. According to

Wray and Perkins, formulaic expressions support fluent communication because speakers rely on conventionalized language patterns to reduce processing effort and maintain interactional flow [3].

Third, idioms reflect cultural information. Many English idioms originate from historical events, traditions, occupations, and social practices. Therefore, their study provides insight into the worldview and cultural experiences of English-speaking communities.

Phrasal verbs are among the most frequently used lexical units in everyday English conversation. Unlike many formal verbs, phrasal verbs often create a more natural and informal style of communication. For example, native speakers commonly use find out instead of discover, put off instead of postpone, and get in touch instead of contact.

The frequent occurrence of phrasal verbs in spoken communication is explained by their simplicity, flexibility, and ability to express everyday actions. Research based on large English language corpora confirms that phrasal verbs have a particularly high frequency in spoken registers and represent essential vocabulary for communicative competence [4].

However, phrasal verbs also create significant difficulties for English learners because one combination may have several meanings. For example:

Phrasal verb	Meaning 1	Meaning 2
take off	remove something	an airplane leaves the ground
break down	stop functioning	analyze something
pick up	lift something	learn/acquire something
run into	meet unexpectedly	experience a problem

The table demonstrates that the interpretation of phrasal verbs depends strongly on context. Therefore, effective learning requires exposure to authentic conversations rather than memorization of isolated definitions.

The use of idioms and phrasal verbs is closely connected with the development of communicative competence. A speaker who understands these expressions is able to participate more naturally in conversations, interpret informal speech, and express meanings more effectively.

Modern approaches to language teaching emphasize that vocabulary knowledge should include not only individual words but also multi-word expressions. Idioms and phrasal verbs represent a significant part of formulaic language, which contributes to fluency and native-like communication. Studies show that learners who receive greater exposure to authentic English input demonstrate better understanding and usage of phrasal verbs and other multi-word structures

The relationship between idiomatic language and cultural competence is also important. Many misunderstandings in intercultural communication occur because learners interpret expressions literally rather than figuratively. For example, the idiom break a leg, which literally has a negative meaning, is traditionally used in English-speaking cultures as a wish for good luck.

Table 1.

Main characteristics of idioms and phrasal verbs in everyday English conversation

Linguistic unit	Structural features	Semantic characteristics	Communicative function
Idioms	Fixed or semi-fixed expressions	Figurative and culturally determined meanings	Express emotions, evaluations, and cultural ideas
Phrasal verbs	Verb + particle	Literal and figurative	Describe actions naturally

	combinations	meanings	and informally
Formulaic expressions	Repeated lexical patterns	Context-dependent meanings	Increase fluency and conversational efficiency

The analysis presented in Table 1 shows that idioms and phrasal verbs perform complementary functions in spoken English. Idioms mainly contribute to expressiveness and cultural meaning, whereas phrasal verbs provide flexibility and naturalness in describing everyday actions.

Despite their importance, idioms and phrasal verbs remain difficult areas for learners of English. The main challenge is the difference between literal and figurative meanings. Learners often attempt to translate these expressions word-for-word, which leads to misunderstanding.

Another difficulty is semantic variation. A single phrasal verb may have multiple meanings depending on context, while idioms may contain cultural references unfamiliar to non-native speakers. Therefore, successful acquisition requires systematic practice, contextual learning, and regular exposure to authentic spoken materials.

Overall, the analysis confirms that idioms and phrasal verbs are not secondary elements of English vocabulary but fundamental components of everyday communication. Their use reflects the dynamic relationship between language structure, cultural knowledge, and social interaction.

Conclusions and recommendations. The present study has demonstrated that idioms and phrasal verbs represent essential components of everyday English conversation and play a significant role in the effectiveness, naturalness, and cultural authenticity of spoken communication. These multi-word expressions are not merely additional vocabulary elements but important linguistic mechanisms through which speakers express emotions, attitudes, social relationships, and complex meanings in a concise and contextually appropriate manner.

The analysis has shown that idioms function as powerful expressive tools that reflect the cultural background and conceptual worldview of English-speaking communities. Their figurative meanings allow speakers to communicate ideas that cannot always be expressed effectively through individual lexical items. Idiomatic expressions contribute to the emotional richness of speech, strengthen interpersonal connections, and demonstrate the relationship between language and cultural experience. The research further reveals that contextual learning is one of the most effective approaches to mastering idioms and phrasal verbs. Since the meanings of these expressions are often determined by communicative situations, learning them through isolated word lists is insufficient. Authentic materials such as conversations, films, podcasts, online communication, and corpus-based resources provide learners with opportunities to observe their real usage and develop a deeper understanding of their pragmatic functions.

Based on the results of the research, the following recommendations can be proposed:

1. For English language teaching: Educational programs should integrate idioms and phrasal verbs systematically into vocabulary instruction. Teachers should introduce these expressions through meaningful contexts rather than isolated definitions, allowing learners to understand their practical usage and communicative functions.

2. For language learners: Students should focus on acquiring idioms and phrasal verbs through regular exposure to authentic English materials. Keeping vocabulary records with

examples, contexts, and possible meanings can help learners develop long-term understanding and effective usage.

3. For curriculum development: English language courses should include phraseological competence as an important component of communicative ability. Special attention should be given to commonly used expressions in everyday speech, professional communication, and intercultural interaction.

4. For further linguistic research: Future studies should investigate the development of idioms and phrasal verbs in digital communication environments, including social media, online conversations, and artificial intelligence-based communication. Corpus-based research may provide additional insights into emerging expressions and changing patterns of spoken English.

In conclusion, idioms and phrasal verbs are fundamental elements of contemporary English conversation that connect linguistic structure with cultural meaning and social interaction. Their study contributes not only to a better understanding of English vocabulary but also to the development of effective communication skills. A comprehensive approach to analyzing and teaching these expressions can significantly improve learners' fluency, intercultural awareness, and ability to participate successfully in authentic English communication.

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