



STRUCTURAL CLASSIFICATION OF ENGLISH IDIOMS

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Abstract: Idioms are complex phrases whose meaning is not deducible from those of the various elements that make up the phrase. Take, for instance, the phrase “to rain cats and dogs” defined as “to rain very heavily.” This is an example of an idiom. The phrase ‘over the moon,’ which means very happy, is another idiom. In both examples, such phrases would pose a challenge in determining what it actually means literally. The majority of Idioms have a wide scope of different combinations and structures which are largely fixed and in most cases irrational and tend to disregard even the most standard grammatical principles. Some idioms are fairly straightforward (in general; come out; at first; the root of all evil), while others are rather ambiguous (on end; pact it in; high and low; hard crash). Some idioms are named people (like a jack of all trades, uncle sam), some are metaphors (like as clear as a bell, as the crow flies). Idioms also include proverbs and expressions (every cloud has a silver lining, still waters are deep).

Key words: idioms, expressions, phrases, comparative word groups.

People will write, read, compose, or make phrases that speak to the very life springs of the introspections, aspirations, and beliefs-the symbolizations to the nothingness of being. Many idioms are equal to phrases in other languages and may be well understood by learners. Other idioms stem from older verbs that have since changed their meanings through years. To hold their horses means to stop, wait patiently for someone or something. This originates from a rhyme when people used to ride horses and had to hold their horses in waiting for someone or something. "Hold your horses," I said when my friend was about to leave the shop.

The above idioms also relate to various sports played in the commonwealth or the united states and then develop the need for culture-specific knowledge for one to understand them easily. The phrase, "to cover all your bases," means to prepare for or deal with a situation as thoroughly as possible. This idiom comes from the American



game of baseball, where you must cover or protect bases. I tried covering all my bases when I went to the job interview.

Structural Principle of Classifying Phraseological Units is their Ability to Perform the Same Syntactical Functions as Words. Traditional structuralism included the following major groups of phraseological units: these contribute to research in its various areas.

A. Verbal. For instance: to run for one's {dear} life, to get (win) the upper hand, to talk through one's hat, to make a song and dance about something, to sit pretty (American sl).

B. Substantive. For instance: dog's life, cat and dog life, calf love, white lie, tall order, birds of feather, birds of passage, red tape, brown study.

C. Adjectival. For instance: high and mighty, spick-and-span, completely new, and safe and sound. In this group, the so-called comparative word-groups are particularly expressive and at times amusing in their unanticipated and capricious associations: as cool as a cucumber; as nervous as a cat; as weak as a kitten; as good as gold (usually said of children); as pretty as a picture; as large as life; as slippery as an eel; as thick as thieves; as drunk as an owl (sl.); as mad as a hatter/a hare in March.

D. Adverbial. E.g. high and low (as in They searched for him high and low), by hook or by crook (as in She decided that, by hook or by crook, she must marry him), for love or money (as in He came to the conclusion that a really good job couldn't be found for love or money), in cold blood (as in The crime was said to have been committed in cold blood), in the dead of night, between the devil and the deep sea (in a situation in which danger threatens whatever course of action one takes), to the bitter end (as in to fight to the bitter end), by a long chalk (as in It is not the same thing, by a long chalk).

E. Interjectional. E. g. my God! by Jove! by George! goodness gracious! good Heavens! sakes alive! (Amer.) Professor Smirnitsky offered a model of classification of English phraseological units which is interesting as an attempt to combine the structural and semantic principles. Phraseological units in this classification system are grouped



according to the number and semantic significance of their constituent parts. Accordingly two large groups are established:

- A. One-summit phraseological units, which have only one meaningful constituent (e. g. give up, make out, pull out, be tired, be surprised);
- B. Two-summit and multi-summit units having two or more meaningful constituents (e.g. black art, first night, common sense, to fish in troubled waters).

Phraseological units can be classified into four such types according to their functional characteristics in communication as determined by their structural-semantic characteristics.

1. Nominative phraseological units include word-gunch, including phrase with just one meaningful word, as well as coordinative phrases type wear and tear, well and good.

Word-groups with a predicative structure would also belong to this first class, such as as the crow flies, and, moreover, predicative phrases of the type see how the land lies, ships that pass in the night. 2. Nominative-communicative phraseological units-nominative word groups looking like to break the ice-the ice is broken, that is, verb word groups which are transformed into a sentence when the verbs are used in Passive Voice.

Other than nominative or communicative phraseological units are interjectional word-groups.

3. Communicative phraseological units imply proverbs and sayings, which take up the fourth level.

These four categories will also take their shape from the structures of each of these phraseological units. Further on, the sub-categories will have further rubrics representing the types of structural-semantic meanings based on the kind of relations between their constituents and according to whether the meanings are fully or partially transferred.

The classification system actually possesses quite a number of subtypes and gradations and reflects very objectively the wealth of types of phraseological units in



existence in the language. It is based on very much scientific and contemporary criteria and is a serious attempt to unite under one classification system all of the relevant aspects of phraseological units.

Intransitive verbal idioms

1. **to die down**- to become more quiet; to diminish, to subside

Normal subjects: feelings (as excitement, nervousness, anger, love/hatred); natural events (like storm, wind, and fire); sounds (like music, voices, noises)

My anger at him has died down since he apologized to me.

After the storm, the strong winds died down.

The loud music died down after the police came.

2. **to come about**-to happen, to occur; to be caused

Usual subjects: *events* (accident, death, failure/success, defeat); *situations* (problem, discussion, argument)

This idiom is most often used in a *How-question*, when we want to know the *cause* of something.

How did the automobile accident **come about**?

His success **came about** after he started working harder.

The argument **came about** because they were talking about politics.

3. **to stand out**-to be noticeable, to be prominent; to be clearly seen

Usual subjects: color, tone; figure, shape; people

With this subject, there is a *contrast* with something else.

A very tall man wearing a big hat **stood out** in the crowd of people.

The large black letters on this small white sign really **stand out**.



Joe is so intelligent that he **stands out** in class.

4. **to break down**-to fail to function, to stop working properly

Usual subjects: *machines* (typewriter, engine, air conditioning); *vehicles*(car, truck, plane, train, etc.)

The travelers were delayed because the bus had **broken down**.

It would be very regrettable if the air conditioning **broke down** on a very hot day.

5. **to fall through**-to fail to occur, not to happen

Usual subjects: plan, project, arrangement, agreement, contract

If your new contract agreement **falls through**, the workers in your company will go on strike.

The plan for a new park **fell through** because no citizen wanted higher taxes.

The project is so well planned that it couldn't possibly **fall through**.

6. Getting ahead-the progress one makes; the success that is achieved

Usual subjects: people

Anyone should be able to get ahead if he or she really makes that effort.

Can a criminal get ahead thereby also stealing money from a bank?

Those politicians would dream of getting ahead in the national politics arena.

7. get around-move about or travel

Usual subjects: living things, animals; information news, idea, secret, gossip

It's difficult to get around a person with a broken leg.

He knows everyone well; he gets around rather well.

How did my secret get around to all my friends so quickly?



Intransitive verbs with prepositions

1. Believe in - 1) to have a trust or confidence

about 2) to favor, support

#1 Usual subjects: people

Usual noun phrases: people (friends, family, advisor); qualities of people (virtue, honesty, frankness, sincerity)

I believe in Joe because he believes in me; in other words, we trust each other.

Do you believe in your friends to help you when you need it?

#2

Usual subjects: people

Usual NPs: idea, situation, plan

For definition #2, the NP is often a verb + ing form.

The President believes in the idea of a world government.

If you believe in joining our political party, then contribute your share of money.

2. Go into-examine, to consider, to discuss (in detail).

Subscription:

Subject: People; lecture, speech, book, discussion

Common NPs: problem, question; issue, topic; details.

In his speech, the president **went into** the many problems of the company.

The President's speech **went into** the many problems of the economy.

This book **goes into** the life of Albert Einstein in much detail.



The topic was so interesting that our discussion **went into** its many aspects for several hours.

3. **to run over**-to review; to rehearse

Usual subjects: people

Usual NPs: notes, minutes (of a meeting); part (in a play)

The teacher **ran over** his notes before he gave his lecture.

Run over your part in the play at least three times before we rehearse it together.

You should **run over** new vocabulary every night.

4. **to run across**-to meet (someone) or to find (something) unexpectedly

Usual subjects: people

Usual NPs: *people* (old friend, forgotten classmate); things

While he was looking on at the football game he **ran across** an old classmate from his high school days.

I **ran across** some old pictures in the garage which I hadn't seen in years.

In the library, I **ran across** a good reference for my term paper.

5. **to touch on**-to talk briefly about; to discuss superficially

Usual subjects: *people* (author, speaker, teacher); book lecture

Usual NPs: subject, topic, question, idea

In his book, the author only **touched on** the reasons for his ideas; he didn't go into them deeply.

The professor's lecture **touched on** the most important ideas we had to know for the test; it was mainly a review lecture.



Even though I wanted to know all the details about my illness, the doctor only **touched on** them and then quickly discussed medicine.

6. **to try for**-to attempt to win; to try to get

Usual subjects: people

Usual NPs: *award* (prize, medal); *record*; *position* (job, post, employment)

In a contest, everyone usually **tries for** first place.

He **tried for** a new record by running faster than anyone else in the world.

I've **tried for** several jobs, but they have all fallen through. Inexperienced workers who **try for** employment which requires special skills usually fail.

7. **to turn to**-to ask help of; to get advice from

Usual subjects: people

Usual NPs: *people* (friend, parent, classmate, teacher); notes, encyclopedia, dictionary

Too many students **turn to** the dictionary to learn the meaning of a word instead of trying to catch on from the context.

In short, if we talk about idioms in the English language, then there are thousands of them. Idioms are the phrases or the statements where the whole sentence refers to a different meaning from the actual word meanings. In the case where one wants to understand a language, it is not sufficient to understand the idioms within that language but also to devise a plan to understand its "hidden" meaning rather than a literal one. Many idioms correspond with other languages and are much easier for the learner to comprehend. While others have evolved from older sayings that have succumbed to changes over time. 'To hold one's horses' means to stop and waiting patiently for someone or something. It originates from a time when people rode and would have to hold their horses in waiting for someone or something.

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