

**BỘ GIÁO DỤC VÀ ĐÀO TẠO
TRƯỜNG ĐẠI HỌC DÂN LẬP HẢI PHÒNG**



ISO 9001 : 2008

KHÓA LUẬN TỐT NGHIỆP

NGÀNH: TIẾNG ANH

HẢI PHÒNG - 2012

**HAIPHONG PRIVATE UNIVERSITY
FACULTY OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES**



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GRADUATION PAPER

**A STUDY ON BUSINESS IDIOMS RELATING TO
SPECIFIC BUSINESS ACTIVITIES**

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**Class:
NA 1201**

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HAI PHONG - 2012

BỘ GIÁO DỤC VÀ ĐÀO TẠO
TRƯỜNG ĐẠI HỌC DÂN LẬP HẢI PHÒNG

Nhiệm vụ đề tài tốt nghiệp

Sinh viên:Mã số:.....

Lớp:Ngành:.....

Tên đề tài:
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Nhiệm vụ đề tài

1. Nội dung và các yêu cầu cần giải quyết trong nhiệm vụ đề tài tốt nghiệp (về lý luận, thực tiễn, các số liệu cần tính toán và các bản vẽ).

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2. Các số liệu cần thiết để thiết kế, tính toán.

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3. Địa điểm thực tập tốt nghiệp.

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CÁN BỘ HƯỚNG DẪN ĐỀ TÀI

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Họ và tên:.....

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Đề tài tốt nghiệp được giao ngày tháng năm 2012

Yêu cầu phải hoàn thành xong trước ngày tháng năm 2012

Đã nhận nhiệm vụ ĐTTN

Sinh viên

Đã giao nhiệm vụ ĐTTN

Người hướng dẫn

Hải Phòng, ngày tháng năm 2012

HIỆU TRƯỞNG

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1. Tinh thần thái độ của sinh viên trong quá trình làm đề tài tốt nghiệp:

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Hải Phòng, ngày tháng năm 2012

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1. Đánh giá chất lượng đề tài tốt nghiệp về các mặt thu thập và phân tích tài liệu, số liệu ban đầu, giá trị lí luận và thực tiễn của đề tài.

2. Cho điểm của người chấm phản biện :

(Điểm ghi bằng số và chữ)

Ngày..... tháng..... năm 2012

Người chấm phản biện

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Part one: Introduction.

1. Rationale.

Language is prominent in daily life. Without language, society cannot develop. In detail, language is an essential tool in every activity: politics, economy, education, etc. Nowadays, the more society develops, the more social activities are, and as a result, the more diverse language is.

Everything has two sides, language is not an exception. On one side, language makes society develop, on other side, language diversity is also barrier of development. Each country has its own language; even one country has many different languages. To break the disadvantages of language barrier and as result of politic and economic dominance of English empiricism in the past, English has been considered “the world’s language”.

Learning English as ESL, learners have many difficulties; one of them is learning English idioms. Idiom is common part of language, native speakers like to use idioms in communication so frequently that they even do not realize while using them. One of the key to speaking, writing like a native is the ability to use and understand casual expressions or idioms. English is full of idioms. You will not learn these expressions in a standard textbook, but you hear them all the time in everyday conversation. You also meet them in books, newspapers, magazines, TV shows, and on the internet. Idioms add color to the language, learning idioms is really a challenge for English learners, however.

Recognizing the importance of business in modern world as well as using business idioms in business activities, I am particularly interested in business idioms during my study in university. As in Oxford dictionary, business is the activity of making, selling, buying, supplying goods or services, etc. It is obvious that business is complicated, diverse field.

Similarly, business idioms are also diverse as business activities. As said above, natives like to use idioms, therefore, to understand and have success in business, proper use of idioms is one of the most important factors.

For my money, in the future, I myself take part in business activities as translator and interpreter, good knowledge of idioms is favorable condition in work. My study on business idioms relating to specific business activities is an excellent chance to diversify and improve my knowledge of English idioms.

2. Aims of the study.

Being aware of the fact that idioms are an extremely difficult topic and merely well- understood by foreign English learners and even if native speakers of English who take the idioms for granted because when they use idioms, they do not know that they are using them. This study focuses on following aims:

- Widening the English vocabulary of business field.
- Helping the learners use right idioms in relevant situations.
- Raising the learners' awareness of the importance business idioms and their effects on communication.

3. Scope of the study.

Idioms are treasure of each country and all that I know about idioms is very little. Due to time frame and limited knowledge, in this paper, I am only concerned with theoretical background of idioms and English idioms relating to several specific business activities (buying, selling, producing and negotiating).

4. Methods of the study.

In order to study English idioms in general and business idioms in particular, I have applied following methods:

- Having discussion with supervisors, experts and friends.

- Collecting books studying on language to improve the knowledge and have reliable citations.
- Accessing internet or reference in workbook, dictionary and search libraries.

5. Design of the study.

This paper provides a clear organization consisting three main parts that help an easy exploration and practical benefits gained for readers as well.

Part one is the introduction, which includes rational, scope of the study, aims of the study, method of study and design of the study.

Part two is the development, which consists of three chapters as following:

Chapter1: Theoretical background, dealing with idioms of definition and common features, overviews of business activities and business idioms.

Chapter2: Business idioms relating to specific business activities: buying, selling, producing and negotiating.

Part three is conclusion, which restates the knowledge mentioned through two chapters above. A suggestion for further research on idioms is also provided in this part.

Part two- Development

Chapter I: Theoretical background

I.1. Idioms

I.1.1. Definitions of idiom

There are hundreds of languages all over the world, each nation has its own language, and even one nation has many different languages. Language is a complicated field, all its components too. Idiom is not an exception. It is easy to meet idioms in all fields of life: economy, polity, arts, etc. However, have you ever taken “What is an idiom?” under consideration?

➤ *“Idiom is a group of words whose meaning is different from the meanings of the individual words”.*

Hornby (2005) - P. 770

We can see that the definition of idiom in Oxford Advanced Learners' Dictionary is so clear and understandable. In construction, English idiom is not one word but “a group of words”. The number of words of an idiom is not limited. An idiom can contain two words:

- ✓ “*To date*” (until now),
- ✓ “*Time flies*” (time seems to pass very quickly),
- ✓ “*Money talks*” (people who have a lot of money have more power and influence than others),

Three words:

- ✓ “*True to form*” (used to say that somebody behaving in the way that you expect them to behave, especially when this is annoying),
- ✓ “*An object lesson*” (used to express surprise at something new or unexpected you have been told),

In meaning, the meaning of idiom is different from the meaning of the individual words, it is impossible for us to deduce the true meaning by looking up separated word in dictionary.

For example:

✓ “*To stay ahead of the game*”, a listener only know the meanings of “stay ahead” and “game” and would unable to deduce the expression’s true meaning “be the most successful in an industry”. “The game” is not a normal entertainment, but “an industry.”

✓ “*Big cheese*”, immediately in our mind appears the image of a big piece of a type of food made from milk that can be either soft or hard and usually white or yellow in color. It is literal meaning, the true meaning is different- “humorous way of referring to an important, powerful person in an organization”.

Besides, there are also vast definitions of English idioms from various sources as well- known books, language researches, etc.

➤ “An idiom is an expression not readily analyzable from its grammatical construction or from the meaning of its component parts. It is the part of the distinctive form or construction of a particular language that has a specific form or style present only in that language.”

The New International Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary

➤ “An idiom is an expression whose meaning is not predictable, from the usual grammatical rules of a language or from the usual meanings of its constituent elements.”

Random House Webster’s College Dictionary

“Not readily analyzable” in The New International Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary and “not predictable” in Random House Webster’s College Dictionary are similar, that is distinctive feature of English idioms.

Some others found on internet:

➤ “An idiom is an expression, word, or phrase that has a figurative meaning that is comprehended in regard to a common use of that expression that is separate from the literal meaning or definition of the words of which it is made. There are estimated to be at least 25,000 idiomatic expressions in the English language.

(<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Idiom>)

➤ “An idiom is a figure of speech that does not have the obvious presented meaning.”

(http://wiki.answers.com/Q/What_is_an_idiom)

➤ “An idiom is a turn of phrase that is usually very language- specific.”

(www.wisegeek.com/what-is-an-idiom.htm)

➤ “Idiom is an expression that means something other than the literal meanings of its individual words.”

(<http://grammar.about.com/od/il/g/idiomterm.htm>)

➤ “An idiom is a combination of words that has a meaning that is different from the meanings of the individual words themselves. It can have a literal meaning in one situation and a different idiomatic meaning in another situation. It is a phrase which does not always follow the normal rules of meaning and grammar.”

(<http://www.idiomconnection.com/whatis.html>)

In *Vietnamese Dictionary*, the definition of idiom is explained with the same opinion:

➤ “Thành ngữ là một tập hợp từ đã quen dùng mà nghĩa thường không giải thích được một cách đơn giản bằng nghĩa thường của các từ tạo nên nó”

As can be seen from the above definitions, there are different ways of defining an idiom. In general, most of the linguists share the same point

that an idiom is a fixed expression whose meaning cannot be worked out by looking at the meaning of its individual words.

1.2.2. Functions of idioms

Idioms may play different roles. They are used to name objects, actions or describe situations. They may express certain generalizations, advice, make evaluation, emphasize...

1.2.2.1. To name objects:

✓ “*A lemon*” (Huyen, p. 90): something that does not work (usually an electrical appliance or mechanical item).

Eg: This car is *a lemon*. It has broken down 5 times since we bought it last month.

✓ -“*White elephant*” (Hornby, p.1741): a thing that is useless and no longer needed, although it may have cost a lot of money.

Eg: The new office block has become an expensive *white elephant*.

✓ *The apple of one’s eye* (Huyen, p.90): a person or thing that is loved more than any other.

Eg: He adores his little daughter- she is *the apple of his eye*.

1.2.2.2. To name actions:

✓ “*To keep one’s nose clean*” (Huyen, p.76): to avoid doing anything wrong or illegal.

Eg: Since leaving the prison, he has managed to *keep his nose clean*.

✓ “*To hit the hay*” (Huyen, p.63): to go to bed

Eg: He usually *hits the hay* right after back home at night.

✓ “*To eat one’s word*” (Huyen, p.139): to admit that what somebody said was wrong.

Eg: After predicting disastrous results, he had to *eat his words* with the success of the new product.

I.2.2.3. To describe situation:

✓ “*On the horns of a dilemma*” (Hornby, p.751): in a situation in which you have to make a choice between things that are equally unpleasant

Eg: Be careful! You are *on the horns of a dilemma*.

✓ “*Dog eats dog*” (Hornby, p.451): a situation in business, politics... where there are a lot of competition and people are willing to harm each other in order to succeed.

Eg: I am afraid in this line of work it is *a case of dog eat dog*.

✓ “*The blind leading the blind*” (Hornby, p.151): a situation in which people with almost no experience or knowledge to give advice to others who also have no experience or knowledge.

Eg: They are *the blind leading the blind*.

In relation to words, within the group of idioms, we can refer to idioms equivalent to single words. They may be replaced by a single word (of course= certainly, kick the bucket= die, in the family way= pregnant). They may also correspond to non- idiomatic phrases (collocations: a big fish= an important person, as red as a turkey coke= very angry), or they may be correlated with approximate description (have green fingers= have natural ability in growing plants).

Idioms correlate with word classes (parts of speech). They may be divided into noun, verbal, adjectival and adverbial idioms, etc.

✓ “*Drunk as lords*” (adj): After his fifth cocktail, Michael was as drunk as a lord.

(<http://idioms.thefreedictionary.com/lord>)

✓ “*At all cost*” (adv): I intend to have that car *at all costs*.

(<http://idioms.thefreedictionary.com/lord>)

✓ “*A piece of cake*” (n): No problem. When you know what you're doing, it's *a piece of cake*.

✓ “*Run like clockwork*” (v): I want this office *to run like clockwork*—with everything on time and everything done right.

(<http://idioms.thefreedictionary.com/lord>)

From the pragmatic point of view and discourse, some linguists, including Fernando (1996) speak about:

- “Ideational” idioms (“the state and way of the world” idioms, expressing namely: actions, events, situations, people, things, attitudes, emotions...): red herring, bury the hatchet, as white as a sheet.
- “Interpersonal” idioms (expressing greeting, agreement, rejections...): so long, never mind.
- “Relational” idioms (ensuring cohesion...): by the way, in addition to, last but not least

Another linguist named Moon (1998) based on functions of idioms, distinguishes the following groups of idioms:

- Informational (conveying information of different kind): in the red, rub shoulders with, one's kith and kin.
- Evaluative (giving the speaker's attitude to the situation): works wonders, wash one's hands of something, a different kettle of fish.
- Situational (expressing conventions, clauses, exclamation, relating to extra lingual context): walls have ears, so long, take of the devil, long time no see
- Moralizing (expressing modality, truth values, advice, request): mark my words, more or less, at all, in effect

- Organizational (organizing the text, signaling discourse structure): by the way, all in all, let alone, in the light, on the other hand, in other words.

1.2.3. Common features

The definitions of the English idioms have been discussed in the above; an English idiom has its different characters from other words and expressions. The idioms mainly have two aspects of characters: semantic features and structural stability.

First of all, **semantic features** of idioms consist of literal meaning and figurative meaning.

The literal meaning creates a simple picture in our mind. For example, when the learners are reminded the expression “*behind closed doors*” we think that people are “at or towards the back of a closed piece of wood or glass... where people can get in or out of the room, building...,” simply.

The figurative meaning means using an image to stand for another idea. For instance, “*behind closed doors*” does not denote “at or towards the back of closed piece of wood...where people can get in or out of a room, building...”, but it means “*with only particular people being allowed to attend or know what is happening*” or “*in private*”. It is clearer in this sentence: The merger was discussed *behind closed doors*. The meeting of merger is very important, there only few people attend and know what is happening, in other words, the meeting is secret event.

Another example: “*cook the book*”. Cooking is daily activity when we want to eat something for the breakfast, lunch or dinner. “Cook” means “prepare food by heating it for example by boiling, baking, or frying it”, “book” is “a set of printed pages that are fastened inside a cover so that you can turn them and read them” or “a written work published in printed or electronic form”. Therefore, it is funny when we understand the expression literally.

The true meaning or figurative meaning relating to business of this expression is “*to put false information in a company’s account*”.

The semantic unity of idioms is reflected in the illogical relationship between the literal meaning of each constituent and the meaning of the idiom.

1) “*Clean house*”. The literal meaning of it is “to make where we live in free from dirt or dust by washing or rubbing it”, which is far from the expression’s idiomatic meaning- “to make an organization... more honest and efficient, for example by removing people or things that are not necessary, not wanted”.

2) “*Keep your head above water*”. The literal meaning of the expression is “keep a part of the body which is on top of the neck containing the eyes, nose...above water”. It expresses the essential effort when you are in danger in pool, river, for example. However, the figurative business meaning of it is “to deal with a difficult situation, especially on in which you have financial problems, and just manage to survive”.

Second of all, it is the **syntactic features** of structural stability. The structure of an idiom is a large extent invariable, unlike free phrases. The constituent of most idioms cannot be changed, inverted, deleted or added.

For example, the idiom “*ups and downs*” cannot be inverted “downs and ups” or the idiom “*aid and abet*” cannot be turned into “abet and aid”.

Take one more idiom “*on account of*”, for example, it means “because of”. If the preposition “of” is deleted- “*on account*”, the idiomatic meaning will be changed, it refer to benefit you receive when buy something, you pay nothing or only a small mount immediately and the rest later” instead of.

Syntactical feature with forms of idioms consist of short form and long form.

As defined on <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Idiom>, idioms could be simple words:

- ✓ *Cannibalize*: to launch a new product which takes market share away.
- ✓ *Bandwidth*: the physical and mental limit of your working ability.

Idioms which play as phrases in the sentence or a sentence consist of more than one word.

For instance:

- ✓ “*A big gun*” plays as a noun phrase in the sentence “They are bringing in the *big gun*.”
- ✓ “*Time is money*” plays as a sentence.

Many idioms are fixed, long sentences:

- ✓ “*A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush*”.
- ✓ “*What you lose on the swings you gain on the roundabouts*”.

I.2. Business idioms

I.2.1. An overview of business idioms

Business idiom is an idiom relating to and used regularly in business activities. Business idiom is a part of idiom treasure; therefore they have features, functions like idiom in general. Business idioms have semantic features of literal meaning and figurative meaning, syntactic feature of stability.

- ✓ “*Wheeling and dealing*”:

- Literal meaning: *wheeling*: pushing or pulling something that has wheel.

Dealing: buying and selling illegal drugs.

- Figurative meaning: to be involved in complicated, if not dishonest, deals in business or politics.

- The idiom would be meaningless if it was changed into “dealing and wheeling”.

Like idioms in general, business idioms name objects, actions, describe situations in business activities:

- ✓ “*White elephant*”: a thing that is useless or no longer needed, although it may have cost a lot of money.
- ✓ “*Hold all the aces*”: A person who holds all the aces is in a very strong position because they have more advantages than anyone else.
- ✓ “*Conflict of interest*”: a situation in which there are two jobs, aims, roles, etc, and it is not possible for both of them to be treated equally and fairly at the same time.

Business idioms are also very diverse. We can not give the exact number of business idioms. Although, there are some books such as 1000 everyday idioms in business (Glenn), 101 American English idioms (Harry Collis), Scholastic Dictionary of Idioms (more than 600 phrases, sayings, expressions), etc, they are their own opinions only. Each linguist gives different quantities and way of classification as I am referring afterwards. The diversity of business activities in modern word is main factor deciding the popularity of idioms in this field. More and more industry complexes are built, foreign investors continuously finance in other countries, especially developing countries, and the number of businessmen also increases. We can meet business idioms everywhere at anytime.

1.2.2. Classifications of business idioms:

1.2.2.1. Syntactic classification

According to the syntactic classification, idioms can be classified into 6 groups: verb phrase, prepositional phrase, adjective phrase, adverbial phrase, noun phrase and sentence.

❖ *Verb phrase*

In linguistics, a verb phrase or VP is a syntactic unit composed of at least one verb and the dependents of that verb. A verb phrase may be constructed from a single verb; often, however, the verb phrase will consist of various combinations of the main verb and any auxiliary verbs, plus optional specifiers, complements, and adjuncts.

(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Verb_phrase)

✓ “*Back out of sth*” (Oxford of Business, page 29): to decide that you are no longer going to take part in sth that has been agreed.

Eg: He lost confidence and *backed out of* the deal at the last minute.

✓ “*Beat sb/ sth down to sth*” (Oxford of Business, page 37): to persuade sb to reduce the price at which they are selling sth.

Eg: He wanted \$8000 for the car but I *beat him down to* \$6000.

✓ “*Move on to sth*” (Oxford of Business, page 308): to progress or start sth new.

Eg: I have been here for 5 years, it’s time to *move on*.

❖ *Noun phrase.*

A word group with a noun or pronoun as its head. The noun head can be accompanied by modifiers, determiners (such as the, a, her), and/or complements. A noun phrase (often abbreviated as NP) most commonly functions as a subject, object, or complement.

(<http://grammar.about.com/od/mo/g/nounphraseterm.htm>)

✓ “*A blank cheque*”: If you give someone *a blank cheque*, you authorize them to do what they think is best in a difficult situation.

(www.learn-english-today.com/idioms/idiom-categories/business-work.htm)

Eg: Tom was given a *blank cheque* and told to negotiate the best deal possible.

✓ “A *cash cow*”: A product or service which is a regular source of income for a company is called a cash cow.

(www.learn-english-today.com/idioms/idiom-categories/business-work.htm)

Eg: His latest invention turned out to be a real *cash cow*.

✓ “*Cog in the machine*”: If you say that someone is a cog in the machine, you mean that, while they are necessary, they only play a small part in an organization or plan.

(www.learn-english-today.com/idioms/idiom-categories/business-work.htm)

Eg: The police quickly realized that the suspect was just a *cog in the machine*.

❖ *Adjective phrase*

A word group with an adjective as its head. This adjective may be accompanied by modifiers, determiners, and/or qualifiers. Adjective phrases modify nouns. They may be attributive (appearing before the noun) or predicative (appearing after a linking verb), but not all adjectives can be used in both positions.

(<http://grammar.about.com/od/ab/g/adjectivephraseterm.htm>)

✓ “*Bait and switch*”: This term refers to a deceptive commercial practice of advertising a low-priced item to attract customers, then telling them that the product is out of stock and persuading them to buy a more expensive article.

(www.learn-english-today.com/idioms/idiom-categories/business-work.htm)

Eg: This store is famous for its *bait and switch* tactics.

✓ “*Cut and dried*”: To refer to a situation, a problem or a solution as cut and dried means that it is considered clear and straightforward, with no likely complications.

(www.learn-english-today.com/idioms/idiom-categories/business-work.htm)

Eg: When the new manager arrived, he didn't find the situation as *cut and dried* as he had expected.

✓ “*Above and beyond the call of duty*”: If a person does something which is above and beyond the call of duty, they show a greater degree of courage or effort than is usually required or expected in their job.

(www.learn-english-today.com/idioms/idiom-categories/business-work.htm)

Eg: The fire-fighter received a medal for his action which went *above and beyond the call of duty*.

✓ “*Going concern*”: This expression refers to a business or activity that is dynamic and successful.

(www.learn-english-today.com/idioms/idiom-categories/business-work.htm)

Eg: They opened a coffee shop that is a *going concern* today.

❖ *Adverbial phrase*

An adverbial phrase (AdvP) is a linguistic term for a group of two or more words operating adverbially, when viewed in terms of their syntactic function.

(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adverbial_phrase)

✓ “*At your earliest convenience*” (Oxford of Business, p.101): as soon as possible.

Eg: Please phone me *at your earliest convenience*.

✓ “*Once in blue moon*” (Glenn, p.151): hardly.

Eg: We work in different departments, so I only see her *once in blue moon*.

✓ “*In the long run*” (Glenn, p.6): - over a long period of time

Eg: The single currency may- *in the long run*- be a good idea.

✓ “*To date*” (Glenn, p.5): until now.

Eg: *To date*, more than \$100m has invested in about 950 companies under the terms of the Enterprise Investment Scheme.

❖ *Sentence*

✓ “*Forewarned is forearmed*” (Glenn, p.2): if you know about problems, dangers... before they happen, you can be better prepared for them.

Eg: No business is immune to negative word- of- mouth, and *forewarned is forearmed*.

✓ “*Money does not grow on tree*” (Glenn, p.10): money is valuable and you should not waste it.

Eg: *Money doesn't grow on trees* and it is necessary to work hard and manage it well.

✓ “*Money talks*” (Glenn, p.9): people have a lot of money have more power and influence than others.

Eg: When it comes to keeping high- performance employees, *money talks*, the best way to reward them is bonuses.

✓ “*One thing leads to another thing*” (Glenn, page 79): used to suggest that the way one event or action leads to others is so obvious that it does not need to be stated.

Eg: He offered me a ride home one night and well, *one thing leads to another* and now we are married.

❖ *Interjection.(Exclamation).*

An Interjection is a word which expresses sudden feelings and emotions of heart i.e., joy, grief, wonder, fear, anger, surprise, approval and disgust etc. in business, interjection are used commonly in speaking. People always avoid using interjection on writing because of formality.

Common interjections:

O! Oh! Ooh! Aye! Hello! Well! Ha! Ho! Hurrah! Ah! Alas! Hush ! etc.

- Certain groups of words are also used as Interjections:--

Ah me! Dear me! Good heaven! Good gracious! Well done! For shame!
etc.

Note :

An Interjection is always followed by a mark of exclamation (!).

e.g:

- Hello ! What are you doing there ?
- Hurrah ! We have won the match.
- Oh ! I got such a fright.

(<http://grammar-world.com/interjection>)

I.2.2.2. Semantic classification

❖ *Positive meaning:*

Positive meaning idioms are idioms used to express something or somebody which is good, for example a good situation, a hard- working worker, or to praise somebody, etc...

✓ “*Work like a horse*”: to work very hard.

(<http://www.idiomconnection.com/animal.html#A4>)

Eg: My grandfather *worked like a horse* when he was a young man.

- ✓ “*Blue chip company*”: a company with a solid reputation for the quality of its products and the stability of its growth and earnings.

(www.learn-english-today.com/idioms/idiom-categories/business-work.htm)

Eg: It's usually safe to invest in a *blue-chip company*.

- ✓ “*Business as usual*”: After an unpleasant or unexpected event, this expression means that everything is continuing in a normal way in spite of the difficulties.

(www.learn-english-today.com/idioms/idiom-categories/business-work.htm)

Eg: It was *business as usual* at the supermarket the day after the hold-up.

❖ *Neutral meaning*

Neutral means having neither a positive nor negative. Neutral meaning idioms are most idioms express the rules, actions as daily habit of business activities.

- ✓ -“*Carve out a niche*”: A person or company who carves out a niche focuses on a particular segment of the market, to which they supply a product or service, and develop their expertise in that area.

(www.learn-english-today.com/idioms/idiom-categories/business-work.htm)

Eg: In today's competitive market it's better to *carve out a niche* and try to become the best in that area.

- ✓ “*Balance the books*”:to check that all the money in a business is accounted for

(www.idiomconnection.com/business.html)

Eg: The accountant spent several days trying to *balance the books* of his company.

✓ “*Call a meeting to order*”: to start a meeting

(www.idiomconnection.com/business.html)

Eg: Our supervisor *called the meeting to order* after everyone arrived

❖ *Negative meaning*

In contrast with positive meaning, negative meaning idioms are idioms expressing what is negative in business.

✓ “*Pass the buck*”: If you say that someone is passing the buck, you are accusing them of not taking responsibility for a problem and expecting someone else to handle it.

(www.learn-english-today.com/idioms/idiom-categories/business-work.htm)

Eg: I was tempted to *pass the buck*.

✓ “*Too many chiefs and not enough Indian*”: This expression refers to a situation where there are too many people giving instructions and not enough people doing the work.

(www.learn-english-today.com/idioms/idiom-categories/business-work.htm)

Eg: The business wasn't successful. There were *too many chiefs and not enough Indians*."

✓ “*Dead wood*”: The term *dead wood* refers to people or things which are no longer considered useful or necessary.

(www.learn-english-today.com/idioms/idiom-categories/business-work.htm)

Eg: The management wants to reduce costs by cutting out the *dead wood*.

I.3.2.3. Style classification

❖ *Informal idioms:*

Almost all idioms are informal in general and business idioms in particular. They are friendly, slangs and vulgar.

✓ “*Be all the rage*”: to be extremely fashionable and popular.

(Hornby (2006), p.387)

Eg: Fake leopard print, so fashionable in the seventies, is *all the rage* again now.

(<http://idioms.thefreedictionary.com/be+all+the+rage>)

✓ “*Rake in something*”: to earn a lot of money, especially when it is done easily.

(Hornby (2006), p.387)

Eg: The store’s been *raking it in* recently.

✓ “*A cut and paste job*”: a document that somebody has created quickly by taking ideas and sections of text from other documents.

(Hornby (2006), p.117)

Eg: You are so irresponsible with *a cut and paste job*.

❖ *Formal idioms:*

In English, there are few formal idioms. They are mainly used in writing.

✓ “*Be/ fall prey to something*”: to be harmed or affected by something bad.

(Hornby (2006), p.366)

Eg: The rebuilding program *fell prey to cutbacks*.

✓ “*Bring something /somebody before something somebody*”: to present something/somebody for discussion or judgment.

(Hornby (2006), p.51)

Eg: The case will *be brought before the bankruptcy judge* today.

I.3.2.4. Business objectives classifications

Books on Business English on market are more and more due to increasingly demand. These books mainly focus on improving business vocabulary and communicating skill. Business idioms books are essential parts in business like using idioms in daily life. Business idioms usually classified according to various business objectives.

For example, **Glenn** divided 1000 idioms into one group of 25 fundamental idioms and 39 different groups according to business objectives and relevant points:

1. Fundamental: - *The ground rules*
- *Time is money*
2. Time: - *Move with the time*
- *The sooner the better.*
3. Money: - *Money talks*
- *Throw good money after bad.*
4. Information: - *Let the cat out of the bag*
- *Spill the beans*
5. Experience: - *Live and learn*
- *On object lesson.*
6. Work: - *Be snowed under with something*
- *At full stretch*
7. Routine: - *The order of the day*
- *In the normal course of events.*
8. Trading: - *Wheel and deal*
- *At a price*
9. Thinking: - *Rack one's brain.*

- *Jump to conclusions*
- 10. Understanding: - *Have a good head on something*
 - *Know one's stuff*
- 11. Discussion: - *Agree to differ*
 - *For the sake of argument*
- 12. Meetings - *Get down to business*
 - *Go over old ground*
- 13. Speaking: - *Not mince one's words*
 - *Speak one's mind*
- 14. Decision: - *Make up one's mind*
 - *The pros and cons*
- 15. Priorities: - *First thing first*
 - *In the first place*
- 16. Planning: - *Be in the pipeline*
 - *Look forward to doing something*
- 17. Problem: - *Be one of those days*
 - *Be out of order*
- 18. Emergencies: - *Come to ahead*
 - *Come to the boil*
- 19. Action: - *Actions speak louder than words*
 - *Get the show on the road*
- 20. Successes: - *Nothing succeeds like success*
 - *Come out on top*
- 21. Failure: - *You can't win them all*
 - *Go back to the drawing board*
- 22. Mistakes: - *Put one's foot on it*

- *Make a hash of something*
- 23. Criticism: - *Tear something to piece*
 - *A bone of contention*
- 24. Reaction: - *Not bat an eyelid*
 - *Take a dim view of something*
- 25. Opportunities: - *Take advantage of something*
 - *Make the most of something*
- 26. Risk: - *Keep one's fingers crossed*
 - *Be touch and go*
- 27. Competition: - *Give somebody an edge*
 - *Gain ground*
- 28. Teamwork: - *Two heads are better than one*
 - *Too many cooks spoil the broth*
- 29. Quality: - *Not hold a candle to somebody*
 - *Be in a class of one's own*
- 30. Negotiation: - *Meet somebody halfway*
 - *Give and take*
- 31. Result: - *The acid test*
 - *A mixed bag*
- 32. Responsibility: - *Carry the can*
 - *Pass the buck*
- 33. Ethics: - *Honesty is the best policy*
 - *Be fair and square*
- 34. Psychology: - *What makes somebody tick*
 - *Show what one is made of*
- 35. Colleagues: - *An Aunt Sally*

- *A whizz kid*

36. Politics: - *Pull strings*

- *You scratch my back and I will scratch yours*

37. Career: - *Set one's sight on something*

- *Be cut out for something*

38. Contacts: - *It takes all sorts (to make a world)*

- *Be on good terms with somebody*

39. Socializing: - *All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy*

- *Break the ice*

40. Miscellaneous: - *On no account*

- *Let a lone*

Not only from plenty of books, on learning English websites on Internet, are business idioms classified according to different categories also.

Idioms classification based on business objectives:

1. Accounting- idioms:

- *Balance the book*: to check that all the money in a business is accounted for.

- *To check all the money*: an accountant

2. Advertising- idioms:

- *Bang for the buck*: value for the money spent

- *Run an ad*: place or put an advertisement in a publication.

- *Plug a product*: promote a product.

3. Banking- idioms:

- *Bail a company out/ bail out a company*: to rescue a company with financial problems

- *Banker's hours*: short work hours (similar to a bank).

4. Meeting- idioms:

- *Adjourn a meeting*: to end a meeting.
- *Call a meeting to order*: to start a meeting.

5. Sales- idioms:

- *Buyer's market*: a situation where there are more sellers than buyers of a product or service and the buyers have an advantage.
- *Come in high*: to charge too much for your services, to ask for a price that is too high.

<http://www.idiomconnection.com/business.html>

Business idioms are also classified by relations with some key words:

1. Cash idioms:

- *Cash-and-carry*: selling something for cash only and with no delivery.
- *Cash in on sth*: to make money from an opportunity.

2. Check idioms:

- *Cut someone a check*: to write a check.
- *Give someone a blank check*: let someone act as they want or as they think is necessary.

3. Dime idioms:

- *A dime a dozen*: easy to get therefore of little value.
- *Nickel and dime someone*: to charge many small amounts of money (which eventually equal a large amount of money).

4. Dollar idioms:

- *Almighty dollar*: money when it is viewed as more important than anything else.
- *As phony as a three-dollar bill*: phony, not genuine.

5. Penny/ cent idioms:

- *Cost a pretty penny*: cost a lot of money.

- *Pennies from heaven*: money that you do not expect to get.
- *Red cent*: a small amount of money.

<http://www.idiomconnection.com/money.html>

In this chapter, I have given the background knowledge of English idioms in general and business idioms in particular. There are different opinions of definitions, functions, features and classifications constructed by various linguists. Each of them studying on an aspect of idioms promotes their own ways and attitude with convincing argue. Although business idiom is also a small part of idioms, with what have been presented in I.2, it is obvious that business idioms play very important part especially in the modern world of business dominance. Moreover, the diversity of business idioms as a part of English idioms more confirms the importance of studying and widening English learners' idioms treasure.

Chapter II: A study on business idioms relating to specific business activities.

Business is a large realm because of its components, features and a number of different activities. It is impossible for economists to give the exact number of business activities. If the society develops, this number will increase more and more, leading to the development of language. In details, it is vocabulary treasure in general and idioms in particular. In my study on business idioms relating to specific business activities, four main business activities are being focused are producing, buying, selling and negotiating. For each part, relevant idioms are given and explained in meaning and usage.

II.1. Business idioms relating to producing

Production is the initial process of all business activities. This process produces all kinds of commodities: foods, drinks, clothes, etc. Nowadays, when the society develops more and more rapidly, the demands of human-being are increasingly higher. Many factories, companies, plants, etc have been built with the aim of meeting the demands of consumers as well as possible.

To have effective production requires many factors. One of these factors is the time. A company has an order; they are planning for reasonable production so that the order can be finished on time. The idiom “*Don’t let the grass grow under our feet*” (Huyen, p.141) is considered as a slogan in producing, reminding people not to delay in getting things done. “Grass grow under our feet” when we standstill too long at a stop, figuratively, it is stagnating productivity- a bad situation that every business avoid.

Production is not always convenient. In fact, each company experiences at least a difficult period because of overloaded orders. In this case, time is the most important factor, determining company’s reputation.

In following sentence:

“Consequently, they must work *against the clock* to diversify their economy before the oil revenue run out.” (Glenn, p.5)

The idioms “*against the clock*” (Glenn, p.5) as an adverbial means that people do it fast in order to finish before a particular time.

Another idiom is “*a race against time*” (<http://www.learn-english-today.com/idioms/idiom-categories/business-work.htm>) in the sentence:

“Michelle said: “We've been told she needs to be operated on early, so it's a race against time.”

(<http://idioms.thefreedictionary.com/a+race+against+time>). It, as a noun phrase, also refers to time factor. “A race” is a competition between people, animals... to see which one is the faster or fastest. For this idiom, “*a race*” is a competition between workers and the time. The time, which is limited is flying, to finish some order, workers had to work hard. Workers win only if they finish their job before fixed limited time.

Besides idioms relating to time factor in production, idioms relating to quantity also used popularly:

✓ “*In abundance*”: in large quantities.

(Hornby, p.6)

Eg: Fruit and vegetable are grown *in abundance* on the island.

✓ “*In volume*”: in large quantities.

(Liem, p.181)

Eg: We are only a small business and cannot afford to by those devices *in volume*.

✓ “*In short supply*”: not existing in large enough quantities to satisfy demands.

(Liem, p.52)

Eg: Experienced computer programmers are *in short supply* at our company.

✓ “*Be badly off*”: to have not enough of something.

(Hornby, p.100)

Eg: They *were worse off* now than when they started the business.

(<http://www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/british/badly-off>)

In production activities, I would like to give some idioms about working spirit. The way people work, their passion to daily work play an important role in success of the company. If the workers try their best, be responsible for their duties, it is certain that all difficulties will be conquered. There are many idioms reflecting this important factor- human resource.

✓ “*Burning the candle at both ends*”

(Glenn, p.23)

Eg: He is *burning the candle at both ends*.

Usually, a candle is burned at one end, and it is hard if the candle is burned at both ends. It is early to disappearance. This rule is the same for people. Two ends of a candle make listeners think of “daytime” and “night time”. Every day, workers work 8 hours in day time, like burning one end of the candle. If he/ she works at night also, like burning both ends. As a result, the workers become very tired due to tried to do too many things, like the candle with both ends burned.

✓ “*Keep one’s nose to the grindstone*”

(Glenn, p.21)

Eg: I have to *keep my nose to the grindstone* until the exams are over.

In this idiom, the image of “nose” and “grindstone” are used to express how hard one person work. The nose is always toward the grindstone like the workers always toward their job despite of difficulties.

Several other idioms also refer to working spirit:

- ✓ “*Burning the midnight oil*” (Glenn, p.22): to work late at night.
- ✓ “*To work one’s fingers to the bone*” (Huyen, p.133): to work very hard.
- ✓ “*Get one’s teeth into something*” (Glenn, p.21): get somebody busy with something.
- ✓ “*Bend over backward*” (Huyen, p.127): to make a great effort to do something.

II.2. Business idioms relating to buying

Buying, in my opinion, is the most popular activity in business activities I want to mention. One day, a person needs to buy essential commodities (foods, drinks, etc) at least, we never wonder exactly how many times we do it because it is too often. For a company, there are so many buying activities that there is separated office called accounting to manage these activities. Business idioms relating to buying are so popular.

When we say: “We are *in the market for* something” means that we are interested in buying something.

Whenever we want to buy something, firstly, we take its quality under consideration. In the sentence: “We had difficult in *double- checking* the costs of the new products before the price list was posted up.”(Liem, p.36), “double- check” means to check something for second time or even more with great care.

The quality or price of a product cannot be evaluated through its appearance. Therefore, “double-check” is necessary, we need to check what we want to buy carefully.

Another example: “There are a lot of good applicants applying for the job so they need time to *pick and choose*.”(Liem, p.36), “*pick and choose*” means to choose carefully among people or things. This idiom is constructed by two verbs “*pick*” and “*choose*”. The idiom’s meaning is

mainly expressed by the verb “*choose*”- to choose... How goods are chosen is expressed by “*pick*”. We do not choose them at random, but carefully by picking up to check what we are buying. Now, online shopping is a new type of business, but with a disadvantage that buyers cannot “*pick and choose*”, and be cheated.

✓ “*Run the gauntlet*”

(Liem, p.72)

Eg: Once we *run the gauntlet*, there should be no more doubts.

Gauntlet is a strong glove with a wide covering for the wrist, used for example when driving; the verb “*run*” has meaning of “*to do test/ check on something*”. Simple meaning of this idiom is to do check on the gauntlet, but its business idiomatic meaning is to check the durability and effectiveness of something like a manufacturing line, machine, etc...

After evaluating quality of what we want to buy, price is the immediate thereafter problem. Normally, there are three levels of price: cheap, expensive and acceptable price.

If we buy something with amount of money less than usual, we use the idiom:

✓ “*On the cheap*”: spending less money than you usually need to spend to do something.

(Hornby, p.249)

Eg: A guide of decorating your house *on the cheap*.

✓ “*For a song*”: very cheaply, at a low price.

(Glenn, p.10)

Eg: He bought the company *for a song* just over ten years ago.

✓ “*Dirt cheap*”: very cheap.

(<http://www.idiomconnection.com/money.html>)

Eg: The land was *dirt cheap* when we bought it.

Whereas, many things cost a lot of money:

- ✓ “*At a price*”: costing a lot of money.

(Hornby, p.1195)

Eg: You can buy strawberries all year around but *at a price*.

- ✓ “*At a premium*” (Liem, p.71): at a higher than normal price.

Eg: When flat- screen televisions first came out, they were selling *at a premium*.

(Liem, p.71)

- ✓ “*Cost/ pay an arm and a leg*”: to cost/pay a lot of money.

(<http://www.idiomconnection.com/money.html>)

Eg: My new television *cost an arm and a leg*.

(<http://www.idiomconnection.com/money.html>)

For the best, buying activities always aims at an acceptable agreement which benefits both sides. With the meaning of “reasonable price”, there is an idiom:

- ✓ “*In the right ballpark*”

(Hornby (2006), p.32)

Eg: If you said five million you’d better be *in the right ballpark*.

One essential part to get most profitable purchase is to bargain:

- ✓ “*Let’s dicker*”

(Liem, p.54)

“*Dicker*” means to argue about or discuss something with somebody, especially in order to agree on a price. This idiom seems to be the slogan of all buyers.

Another idiom also refers to bargaining but a little different:

- ✓ “*Drive a hard bargain*” (Glenn, p.29): to argue in an aggressive way and force somebody to agree on the best possible price or arrangement.

Eg: The truth is that we need to their business a great deal more than they need ours. In other words, we can expect them to *drive a hard bargain*.

(Glenn, p.29)

The last step of buying is paying. As researched, there are a number of idioms with the meaning of “to pay”:

- ✓ “*Fork out money (for something)/ fork money out (for something)*”.

(<http://www.idiomconnection.com/money.html>)

Eg: I had to *fork out much money* to get my car fixed.

- ✓ “*Fork over some money/ fork some money over*”.

(<http://www.idiomconnection.com/money.html>)

Eg: I *forked over much money* for the painting that is hanging on my wall.

- ✓ “*Foot the bill*”.

(<http://www.usingenglish.com/reference/idioms/foot+the+bill.html>)

Eg: My sister is *footing the bill* for her daughter’s education so she is making sure that she studies hard.

(http://www.learn4good.com/languages/evrd_idioms/idom.php3#foot%20the%20bill)

- ✓ “*Pick up the tab/ check*”.

Eg: I *picked up the tab* for my sister and her three children at the restaurant.

(http://www.learn4good.com/languages/evrd_idioms/idom.php3#foot%20the%20bill)

There are also idioms reflecting the ways of payment:

- ✓ “*Cash in hand*”: pay in cash especially so that the person being paid can avoid paying tax on the amount.

(Hornby (2006), p.67)

Eg: *Cash in hand* payment is the most popular in Vietnam now.

- ✓ “*Pay off (something)*”: to pay the total amount of something one time.

(<http://www.idiomconnection.com/money.html>)

Eg: I *paid off* my student loan after one year of work.

✓ “*Pay by installment*” (buy something on hire purchase): to pay for something gradually until paid off.

(Hornby (2006), p. 249)

Eg: We paid by installment for our house.

There are two idioms used when somebody buys something by the amount of money over its real value:

✓ “*Pay through the nose*”: to pay too much money for something.

(Glenn, p.29)

Eg: If you are selling fragile vast by mail, you may have to *pay through the nose* to see that it arrives intact.

✓ “*Pay an arm and a leg*”: to pay a high price for something.

(<http://www.idiomconnection.com/money.html>)

Eg: I *paid an arm and a leg* for my car but I am not very happy with it.

(<http://www.idiomconnection.com/money.html>)

Buyers “*pay through the nose*” or “*pay an arm and a leg*” for something when they want to products at any cost, may be, and money is no object to them.

II.3. Business idioms relating to selling

Selling is always considered as number one priority for any company. Particularly, in dog eat dog world, this field is much more concerned.

Firstly, an idiom is used to confirm the aim of selling:

✓ “*Bring somebody up to scratch*”: to make buyers satisfy with the product they bought and services they are supplied.

(<http://www.thefreedictionary.com/up+to+scratch>)

Eg: The most importance of marketing is to *bring customers up to scratch*. Secondly, it is looking for consumers. The number of consumers decides whether the company is prospect or not. The more consumers a company has, the larger company scale is. Therefore, looking for and developing consumers are very important:

✓ “*Ply for hire/ trade/ business*”: to look for consumers, passengers... in order to do business.

(Hornby, p.1161)

Eg: Honda is planning a campaign to *ply for business* next week.

✓ “*Drum up business*”: to create work or find new consumers.

(Liem, p.79)

Eg: Sales have been very gloomy because of economic crisis recently. Do you have any ideas for *drumming up business*?

Developing consumers system also depends on market condition. If the market is new and potential, looking for consumers will be much easier.

This kind of market is called:

✓ “*Low hanging fruit*”: market where consumers can be found easily.

(<http://www.bizeng.mobi/bizidiomspre-2000.htm>)

Eg: First, we'll introduce these solar-powered foot warmers in Siberia and try to get the *low-hanging fruit*.

The literal meaning of this idiom is so understandable: fruit is at low position of the tree, so it is easy to get it. But the idiom is not so simple. It refers to a market where consumers can be found easily.

After looking for consumers in order to do business at some market, next step is to bring product in public so that everyone knows about the product and could buy them when they want. It is expressed by the idiom:

✓ “*Put something on the market*” (Glenn, p.30).

Eg: Last year's export slowdown coincided with a period when large amount of unwanted property was being *put on the market*.

✓ “*On the (open) market*”: available for sale (without any restriction).

(<http://www.idiomconnection.com/money.html>)

Eg: There are many good cameras *on the market* now.

Price is also worth to be concerned. If you are a buyer, you bargain, also you are a seller; you are responsible for fixing your product's price.

The price you give could be expensive against usual price:

✓ “*Price something out of the market*”: to charge such a high price for the goods, services that nobody wants to buy them.

Eg: You *price your house out of the market*, so I cannot buy it.

“*Out of the market*” means “over usual price”. A product is priced out of the market; it is separated from common price rules. As the consequence, this product cannot be sold.

Usually, sellers give the most reasonable prices:

✓ “*Best offer*”: selling something with the most reasonable price.

(Liem, P.111)

Eg: His offer seems to be the *best one*. I think we can make order right now.

In current competitive world, besides high quality, more advantageous price surely attracts more consumers. With the same kind of product, which company give best offer would sell more than others.

Another way to attract consumers is reducing the price for a limited period of time.

✓ “*On offer*”

Eg: Many electronic items are *on offer* this week.

In above sentence, electronic items are bought “*on offer*” means bought with the price lower than usual even cheapest, and the time for this is on for “this week” but not lasting forever. Due to time limitation people gain time for buying, leading to rapidly increase of selling volume.

In respect of selling result, there are several idioms a followed:

For example:

✓ “*Out the door*”: losing consumers.

(Liem, p.55)

Eg: Her unfriendly attitude sent a lot of customers *out the door*. I cannot hire any more.

If selling methods are not effective, the number of consumers will decrease. No one wants to buy the product your company manufactures, use the service you supplies. More seriously, your loyal consumers would refuse to use any more- you are out the door.

In contrast, when commodities are sold quickly, profit increasingly increases. There are two idioms are used in this case:

✓ “*Fly off the shelves*”

(Liem, p.151)

Eg: DVD players are *flying off the shelves*.

✓ “*Sell like hotcakes*”

(Liem, p.64)

Eg: The laptops have been *selling like hotcakes* for the last few years.

Both idioms mean “sell quickly”.

In idiom “*Fly off the shelves*”, the imagine of products flying away the shelves expresses the figurative meaning- sell quickly. The products cannot fly themselves to anywhere, but they are sold quickly to meet high demand of consumers.

For idiom “*Sell like hotcakes*”, listeners will think about a bakery where are crowded with full of buyers. It is so crowded that the cakes are sold even still hot.

II.4. Business idioms relating to negotiating

Of business activities, negotiation does not directly make profit but plays very important part. In modern business world, the competitiveness becomes stronger more and more. Therefore, a successful negotiation would create good relationships with partners, bring much more profit to the company.

In negotiating, being in stronger position is always the prominent aim.

✓ “*Turn the table on somebody*”: to change a situation so that you are now in stronger position than the person who used to be in the stronger than you.

(Glenn, p.119)

Eg: If you do that and they call you back, you should have *turned the table on them* and be in a much stronger position.

✓ “*Strengthen one’s hand*”: make somebody more powerful.

(Glenn, p.119)

Eg: His announcements *strengthened our hand*.

Literally, the expression means to make one’s hand become stronger, relating to physical condition. But here, “*hand*” refers to power, position in a negotiation. So, idiomatically, “*Strengthen one’s hand*” means to improve somebody’s position, power to gain success as they expected.

Another idiom:

✓ “*Have somebody over a barrel*”: in situation in which they must accept or do what you want.

(Glenn, p.117)

If you have somebody over a barrel, it means that you have him / her in a situation, in which he/ she must accept or do what you want.

Eg: They *have got us over a barrel*. Either we have to agree to their terms or we lost the money.

✓ “*Have the upper hand*”

(Glenn, p.118)

Eg: At Netscape’s urging, the US Department of Justice began investigating whether Microsoft was using its near monopoly in PC operating systems to *gain the upper hand* in what has come to be known as “*the browsers wars*”.

Hand one more time is symbol of power. The preposition “*upper*” makes people think of something at the position of being higher than others. From those, it is inferred that “*have the upper hand*” means to have stronger power, to get advantages over somebody so that you are in control of a particular situation.

In a negotiation, we are either in stronger or weaker position.

In stronger position:

✓ We *have an ace up our sleeve*.

“*Have an ace up our sleeve*” means have a secret advantage, for example a piece of information or a skill that you are ready to use if you need it.

One more, when you are in strong position, you control the situation, and of course, you can refuse to do what is disadvantage or set a limit. It is manifested in idiom:

✓ “*Draw the line at something*”

(Glenn, p.119)

Eg: If you buy a minimum of 500 units, we are willing to offer you a reduction of 20%. But that our best and final offer. We have to *draw the line* somewhere.

Even more, when you are sure that we are winner, we are ready to make the situation more difficult for other.

✓ “*Play cat and mouse with somebody*”: to play cruel game with somebody in your power by changing your behavior very often, so that they become nervous and do not know what to expect.

(Glenn, p.118)

Eg: I have the feeling they’re *playing cat and mouse with us*.

✓ “*Call somebody bluff*”: to tell somebody to do what they are threatening to do because you believe that they will not be cruel or brave enough to do it. The idiom seems to be a challenge.

(Glenn, p.117)

Eg: Go ahead and *call his bluff*.

However, if you are in weaker position with many disadvantages, you will be under other side’s control. As the result, there is no choice; you must accept what they request. In other words:

✓ “*Beggars cannot be the choosers*”

That is a regulation in negotiation for weaker side. People speak this idiom when there is no choice and must satisfied with what is available.

(Glenn, p 117)

Other idioms for weak side in negotiating:

✓ “*Meet somebody halfway*”: to reach an agreement with somebody by giving them part of what they want.

(Glenn, p.117)

Eg: If he won’t agree to this, we’ll have to meet him halfway.

✓ “*Give and take*”: to be willing, in a relationship, to accept what somebody wants and give up some of what you want.

(Glenn, p.117)

Eg: On the surface, it looks like a joint venture, but when you get down to the details, you're doing all the work. There is no real *give and take*.

People usually remind each other: "You are going to have to learn to *give and take*." "*Give and take*" seems to be regulation in business. This idiom is constructed by two opposite verb- "*give*" means to provide somebody with something, and "*take*" means to receive something from others- express clearly this natural regulation.

One idiom about the way of negotiating:

✓ "*Lay one's cards on the table*": to tell somebody honestly what your plans, ideas, etc... are.

(Glenn, p.118)

Eg: If you *lay all your cards on the table* at the beginning of the negotiation, and the other side says no, you cannot regain control of the situation.

Everything would become easier and more comfortable if it is brought straightforward. This is a factor of success, and save time as well.

This chapter includes most popular idioms in daily business activities derived from various business books by myself. Among many business activities, I take these four activities (producing, buying, selling, and negotiating) under consideration with detail explanations and examples. I hope that the classification in my own way of business idioms will be helpful in improving English vocabulary.

Chapter III: Implication

III.1. Some difficulties faced by the learners of English when studying idioms in general and business idioms in particular.

English is a language particularly rich in idiomatic expressions. Without idioms, English would lose much of its variety and humor both in speaking and writing. Understanding the meaning and the context of the idiomatic expressions will help students develop their English ability. Using idioms appropriately in oral and written discourse also generates confidence in the students and respect in those with whom he or she communicates for the rich vocabulary, concise expressions and philosophical saying form idioms. Idiomatic expressions add color to every language in general and in English in particular. Idioms bring us so many benefits but what challenges or problems so non- native English learners have to face as they try to master the English language?

Firstly, the richness and diversity of the English idioms **requires sufficient culture background knowledge** to fully comprehend and master. English idioms derived from the culture of the nation and from day-to-day life. Learning idioms presents a host of difficulties to English learners, primarily because they do not know the culture and history behind English idioms.

For example:

- ✓ “*Naked truth*”: the plain, unvarnished truth, the truth without trimmings. (The fable says that Truth and Falsehood went bathing; Falsehood came first out of the water, and dressed herself in Truth’s garment. Truth, unwilling to take those of Falsehood, went naked)
- ✓ “*Sour grapes*”: disparage sth that is beyond one’s reach. (The allusion is to Aesop’s well- known fable of the fox, which tried in vain to get at some grapes, but when he found they were beyond his reach, he went away saying “I see they are sour”)

Many idioms, for instance, come from favorite traditional British activities such as fighting, sailing, hunting, and playing games.

For example:

✓ “*Carry the ball*”: American football, rugby, etc:

To take charge, to assume responsibility. In some ball games (for example American or Canadian football, rugby, etc.), the ball can be carried to advance toward a goal. ADHI dates figurative usage the "early 1900s".

✓ “*Down to the wire*”: Horse racing:

To the very end or last minute. From the length of wire stretched across a racetrack at the finish line. AHDH dates its figurative use to about 1900.

As well as being quite specialist in meaning, some of the words in idioms were used two or three hundred years ago, or longer and can be little obscure. Even the majority of native language speakers cannot always know the origin of idioms they use, though they utilize them in every day communication, they know their meanings and feel where it is appropriate to use this or that idiom. That is why students often idioms incongruous with the situation. They find idioms very problematic to both understand and memorize.

For example:

✓ “*Don't throw the baby out with the bath water.*”

This means be careful what you throw out – check first to see there is nothing valuable hidden in it!

✓ “*To bring home the bacon*”

It means to provide a good life for his family

(<http://abceda.com/id1.html>)

Secondly, English **idioms meanings are not literal but figurative**. Idioms is defined as an expression that does not mean what it literally says. Hence, its meaning is often quite different from the word-for-word translation. Learners cannot understand the meaning of the whole phrase by putting the meanings of each word together. If learners look at the individual words, it may not even make sense grammatically. Idioms have the meaning only as a unit. They cannot be understood by defining the separate words.

For example, if someone says:

“I think it’s time to *hit the hay*”

He or she means:

“I think it’s *bed-time!*”

The idiom cannot be understood by looking up the words “*hit*” and “*hay*”. In fact, most idioms need to be understood basing on their figurative meanings rather than their literal meanings.

Another example,

“*Go down Memory Lane*”

This idiom means “*think about the past*” (the metaphorical meaning), not “*walk down a street called “Memory Lane”*” (the literal meaning).

Thirdly, English idioms are **fixed in their form, both grammar and vocabulary**. They are fixed in their form, hence any substitutions and rearranging in their structure can lead to completely loss of their idiomatic meaning.

For instance

“*Pull your socks up*”

It means “*improve the way you are behaving*”. If it is changed into “*pull up your sock*” or “*pull your stockings up*”, it must be interpreted literally for it has lost its idiomatic meaning.

2. Suggested solutions

Studying foreign languages in general and idioms in particular is really a difficult task, but with suitable methods, it certainly becomes a piece of cake. Based on my own experience and suggestions from others, I personally would like to give some solutions for studying idioms effectively:

Firstly, **classifying English idioms according to different categories** would help learners collecting all relevant idioms, it is like learning family words. Some categories are colors, animals, education, economy, politic, etc.

- Animal Idioms
- Arm, Hand, & Finger Idioms
- Bird Idioms
- Body Idioms
- Business Idioms
- Business Negotiation Idioms
- Card Playing Idioms
- Clothes Idioms
- Color Idioms
- Court & Judge Idioms
- Ear, Eye, & Nose Idioms
- Education & School Idioms
- Fish, Insect, & Reptile Idioms
- Food Idioms
- Head & Mind Idioms
- Heart Idioms
- Initials
- Leg & Foot Idioms
- Legal & Law Idioms
- Love & Relationship Idioms
- Medical & Health Idioms
- Money Idioms
- Mouth & Teeth Idioms
- Number Idioms
- Religion Idioms
- Sports Idioms

(www.idiomconnection.com/)

Another way is collecting idioms with keywords,

For example: “*business*”, “*keep*”, “*cash*”, etc.

Secondly, I suggested **learning English idioms through their origins**. Behind each idiom, there is a story or an incident preceding it helping students easily remember to use in their daily communication. Understanding the origin of the idioms, students may clearly understand the background of some idiomatic expressions in order to apply to the suitable situations in life.

Thirdly, **making sentences when studying a new idiom** would make learners understand the meaning fully as well as its usage in relevant situations. One idiom may have several equivalents and these equivalents are used at different situations, formally or formally for instance.

Fourthly, the vital factor of foreign language learners is **hard studying**. Learners need to practice every day, try to apply them in daily communication. When using idioms as a habit, it means that he/ she is native speaker already.

Finally, to widen the knowledge of idioms, **watching TV shows, reading newspaper, magazines are very helpful**. Idioms are used so popularly in these kinds of public telecommunication, of course, they always correctly used, considered as reliable sources.

Part three: Conclusion

Being considered as an important part of English vocabulary, idiom treasure is complicate but interesting for studying. The more I study on, the more I feel exciting in it. This study is really chance for me to improve my knowledge of idioms.

My graduation paper has three parts: Part one- Introduction, Part two- Development, Part three- Conclusion. Part two is main part of my study, in which I study English idioms of different definitions, common features, and distinctive functions. Particularly, the outstanding in my paper is studying on business idioms and business idioms relating to specific business activities. I have tried my best to find out all relevant information from numerous reliable sources. In addition, many idioms are introduced and explained clearly, accompanied by detail examples. The business idioms in Chapter II- Part two are classified by myself based on their meanings and usages. I hope to receive readers' sympathy.

My study just discussed a very small part of English idioms, but I hope that it could contribute partly to learners in the process of studying English. All above, contribution, coming from readers would make my paper better and better.

Because the limitation of my knowledge and time, the research could not go through all aspects of English idioms. Therefore, in order to get more comprehensive understanding of this subject, I strongly recommend further researches. Initially, I suggest the research of cultural factors affecting to idioms. Be a Vietnamese, I would like to study on Vietnamese equivalent of English idioms, especially business idioms.

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Appendix

Exercise 1: Fill the missing words in the sentences below. Choose from the following:

- In the black
- In the red
- A lemon
- Cost(s) an arm and a leg
- Dirt cheap
- Lost his shirt
- Snowed under
- Foot in the door
- On purpose
- Hole all the ace

1. Given the high unemployment figures in some countries, employers.....
2. I have to stay at late at the office tonight and finish some things because I amwith work.
3. She needed money badly. So she had a garage sale in which she sold a lot of her things.....
4. Bob invested a lot of money in stocks and.....
5. Theo earns a thousand dollars a week. He doesn't have to worry about having enough money. He is always.....
6. Everything in that fancy department store..... I cannot afford to buy anything there, not even a pencil.
7. Don't tell me that was an accident. You did it.....
8. I never have enough money to pay my bills. I am always.....
9. You should take any job in that company, just to get your.....

10. The new tape player I bought was.....and I am going to take it back to the store for a new one.

Exercise 2: Choose the correct answers:

1. If the final exam was **a piece of cake**, it was

- a. very difficult
- b. very easy
- c. too long

2. If you see something **in black and white**, it is

- a. typed
- b. easy to understand
- c. photocopied

3. If Laura's **in seventh heaven**, she is

- a. feeling very sick
- b. very happy
- c. unhappy

4. If you are **pulling Abigail's leg**, you are

- a. joking with her
- b. hurting her
- c. stopping her

5. Someone who **works like a dog**

- a. sleeps a lot
- b. works hard
- c. never work

6. If Belinda "**beats around the bush**", that means she

- a. leaves town
- b. talks angrily

c. does not give a direct answer

7. “It is raining **cats and dogs**” means

a. a short light rain

b. it is raining hard

c. it is not raining anymore

8. If you **put your cards on the table**, you

a. are not hiding anything

b. have no more money

c. stop working

9. If something is **dirt cheap**, it is

a. not cheap

b. not good

c. very cheap

10. “**Under the table**” means

a. quickly

b. secretly

c. slowly

Exercise 3: Match the idioms in column A with suitable explanations in column B:

A	B
1. be in the market for sth	a. promote a product
2. in volume	b. make somebody else responsible
3. in short supply	c. be interested in buying sth
4. plug a product	d. costing a lot of money
5. balance the book	e. in large quantities
6. pass the buck	f. not existing in large enough quantities to satisfy demands
7. money talks	g. to check that all the money in a business is accounted for
8. in the pipeline	h. being discussed, planed and prepared and will happen and exist soon.
9. the pros and cons	i. people have a lot money have more power and influence than others
10. at a price	j. the advantage and disadvantage of sth

Keys to exercises

Exercise 1:

1. Hole all the aces
2. Snowed under
3. Dirt cheap
4. Lost his shirt
5. In the black
6. costs an arm and a leg
7. on purpose
8. in the red
9. foot in the door
10. a lemon

Exercise 2:

1.b, 2.a, 3.b, 4.a, 5.b, 6.c, 7.b, 8.b, 9.c, 10.b.

Exercise 3:

1.c, 2.e, 3.f, 4.a, 5.g, 6.b, 7.i, 8.h, 9.j, 10.d.