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INTERPERSONAL IDIOMATIC EXPRESSIONS: CONVIVIALITY AND CONFLICT IN VERBAL INTERACTIONS

English is a language with a vast idiomatic basis, which makes its learning very exciting and intriguing. There are about 4,000 idioms used in English. The problem of idiomatic expressions was studied by many prominent linguists such as A. V. Koonin [7], A. Makkai [9], U. Weinreich [11], B. Fraser [4], A. P. Cowie [1], L. P. Smith [10], O. Jespersen [6], G. Leech [8], M. Halliday [5], C. Fernando [2], A. Firth [3] and many others.

U. Weinreich and B. Fraser focus on lexically and grammatically regular idioms; L. P. Smith and O. Jespersen focus on the idiosyncrasies of English, many of which are lexically and grammatically irregular.

In the article "Idioms within a Transformational Grammar" B. Fraser explores the transformational potential of idioms. He says: "I shall regard an idiom in a constituent of series of constituents for, which the semantic interpretation is not a compositional function of the formatives of which it is composed" [4, 23].

According to their role in a discourse, idiomatic expressions can be divided into two types: ideational idiomatic expressions and interpersonal or pragmatic idioms.

If ideational idiomatic expressions of various types provide language-users with a resource for communicating information about the world in an impressionistic way, interpersonal ones provide them with the following: 1) a resource for signposting verbal interactions so that beginnings (greetings), middles (the development of the exchange), and endings (farewells); 2) a resource for expressing through different interpersonal functions, the two great forces of social life: conviviality and conflict.

So, the aim of the article is to analyze interpersonal idioms according to their pragmatic functions.

Interpersonal idioms are very different from ideational ones in several of their characteristics, understandable in view of their different functions. Also serving as vehicles for the interpersonal function are restricted collocations and common locutions:

Interpersonal idiomatic expressions are overtly or covertly marked for interaction, most commonly in terms of *you, I, and me*, e.g. *Believe (you) me; Let me tell you; I wouldn't worry* (literal idioms); *You're kidding / joking; mind you; Are you deaf?* (semi-idioms); *Has the cat got your tongue?* (a pure idiom), etc.

They are discourse-oriented expressions as they imply preceding co-text even as citation items, e.g. *the question is ...; a good question* (semi-idioms); *That's true, as I said before; thank you / thanks a lot* (literal idioms) etc.

They contribute to structuring talk so that a coherent organization is discernible in different sorts of talk, e.g. *Hi, how are you?; Who's next?* (beginning); *Have you heard this one?; To change the subject, by the way* (body of a discourse); *See you*

later (end). These expressions are all literal idioms, except for the rhetorical question, *Have you heard this one?* (semi-idiom); and *by the way* (a pure idiom).

Though there are many interpersonal idioms that are non-literal pure idioms, e.g. *come off it*, or variant semi-literal, semi-idioms such as: *There / Here you go*, *There / Here you are*, etc., they are not at the same time imagist and metaphorical in the way typical ideational idioms are [2, 14].

Interpersonal idiomatic expressions provide a resource for the language-user to be a coherent conversationalist, sometimes even a polished one depending on individual aptitude. Equally importantly, they determine the emotional key of a discourse as one of attraction or antagonism.

Convivial can be defined as “sociability resulting in amity”. Amity, however, does not normally arise involuntarily. With regard to verbal behaviour, what produces amity is conformity to the social mores governing who says what to whom, when and where.

The model of a dramatic performance, such as a play, lends itself very well to bringing out the salient characteristics of convivial verbal behaviour. A. Firth implied such a model when he characterized speakers as bundles of social personae saying what their fellows expect them to say in appropriate settings. A similar view is also put forward by M. Halliday. In this respect, most interpersonal idiomatic expressions are very different from ideational ones, which though conventionalized, are not formulaic in their uses. However, it is precisely their formulaic use, which results in interpersonal expressions promoting conviviality. Any deviation from such formulaic use could be regarded as a tactless joke or a faux pas such as saying *Happy Birthday* when it is not someone’s birthday, or *My deepest sympathy* when there has been no bereavement [5, 116].

G. Leech characterizes the nature of such routines, as a kind of constructive self-effacement by each interlocutor so that given such a mutually congenial state, a specific outcome, productive, not destructive, will result. The formula for such constructive self-effacement, the one which in effect underlies all of the six maxims (Tact, Generosity, Approbation, Modesty, Agreement, and Sympathy) which make up Leech’s Politeness Principle, takes the form:

1. Minimize cost to other: maximize cost to self;
2. maximize benefit to other: minimize benefit to self;
3. where the benefits to the other take the form of praise, agreement, approbation, or sympathy and the cost to self a particular form of self-effacement [8, 81].

Conventionalized as they are to the point of being formulaic, interpersonal idiomatic expressions of G. Leech’s politeness maxims exemplify powerfully the workings of the idiom principle within situational contexts of conviviality and conflict.

The key strategy apparent in polite verbal behaviour is mutual alignment as evidenced by the use of such familiar expressions to promote amity. The assumption that mutual alignment will occur in the course of talk is implicit in Leech’s politeness maxims: request – compliance (Generosity); apology – acceptance (Sympathy) assertion – endorsement (Agreement), etc.

Failure to observe the Politeness Principle results in non-productive situations

as, for instance, when a speaker resorts to irony. Irony may be intended as ‘insincere politeness’, but like mockery, it is a better weapon to outwit an opponent than unconcealed antagonism if an interaction takes the form of a verbal contest [8, 81].

Grice’s Co-operative Principle as Leech points out, complements and so works together with the Politeness Principle to prevent “uncooperative and impolite behaviour”. Four categories, each with its maxims and sub-maxims, comprise the Co-operative Principle. These can be summarized as follows:

1. Quantity relates to the amount of information as is required (for the current purpose of the exchange). In other words, do not say too much or too little.

2. Quality relates to truth-value, i.e. “be truthful”, and provide adequate evidence for what you say.

3. Relation concerns relevance, especially with regard to the subject matter of talk and also to shifts in topic.

4. Manner enjoins avoidance of obscurity, ambiguity, prolixity, and incoherence (disorderliness). In other words, “Be perspicuous” [8, 84].

The Politeness Principle and the Co-operative Principle ensure productive talk. Non-productive talk, generally conflictive, often arises from covert or overt power struggles. Hierarchy is a fact of social life giving people at the top ascendancy over those below. The Politeness Principle, in particular, requires that power be mitigated in appropriate ways. That a stock of interpersonal idiomatic expressions already exists in the English vocabulary makes it so much easier for speakers to do this. The principle of least effort is very evident in the use of these interpersonal expressions [8, 90].

Service encounters, like medical and legal consultations or job interviews, have specific purposes prescribed by social convention: the exchange of goods and services. Of all these types of verbal exchange, the service encounter is the most explicit in terms of what is being exchanged: the goods and services are visible and the money, cheque, or credit card payment immediate. The verbal interaction itself embodies a relatively easily recognizable structure, which, if reduced to its typical form, appears as an obligatory *request-compliance-sale-purchase-closure* sequence. In reality, most service encounters generally show optional elements arising from contextual variables and, consequently, have a more extended structure than the obligatory one. There could, for example, be a repetition of this sequence, a kind of loopback. Other optional elements are also possible: “repairs” such as a request for clarification, and “foils”, for example, a sales request which elicits a rejection due to the unavailability of an item, resulting in a modification of the original request. The sheer commonness of service encounters has made almost every speaker’s turn in the progression of the interaction into either an idiom or a restricted collocation [2, 21].

Many such expressions suggest the dominance of the customer, especially with regard to terms of address, for example, *Sir / Madam vs. waiter* as in (1) below. The customer also decides if a sale is to take place, and, if so, when it is completed as in (1).

However, the waiter and the vendor have the power to keep customers waiting by passing them over in favour of other customers. A vendor can refuse a customer

service as for instance, a chemist, if the customer has no prescription for sales-restricted drugs. A vendor can reserve the right to check customer's bags and even charge them with shoplifting. In the case of the shoplifting charge, customers, of course, can countersue if wrongly prosecuted.

Examples (1) to (3) illustrate the way in which both vendors of various sorts and customers preserve the status quo in the conventionally prescribed manner:

E.g.

1. [at a delicatessen]

Vendor: *Morning. Something I can get for you?*

Customer: *Oh, yeah. Is that an Australian or Greek feeta? The one over there?*

V: *That one's Greek.*

C: *Great. Um, just give me that little piece at the back.*

V: *Anything else?*

C: *Nah, that's great.*

V: *Rightie oh. That'll be two fifty-three.*

C: *Here we go. Thanks a lot.*

V: *Bye now.*

C: *By <...> Oh, ah, actually d'ya reckon I could have a <...> oh, about two-fifty grams of black olives as well? Sorry!*

V: *Sure, no problem. Two-fifty, was it?*

C: *Yep, thanks.*

V: *There ya go. One forty-three, love. Thanks.*

C: *Tah, bye.*

V: *See you later.*

2. [at the butcher's]

Vendor: *Who's next? (Indication by customer) Good morning. What can I do for you?*

Customer: *Good morning. I'd like a kilo of mince, please.*

V: *Will there be anything else, Madam?*

C: *How much is your leg-ham?*

V: *Eighteen dollars fifty a kilo.*

C: *No, thanks, that'll be all.*

V: *That's three ninety-three thanks.*

C: *(Hands money)*

V: *There's your change.*

C: *Thank you. Bye.*

V: *Bye. Have a nice day.*

3. [at the hotel]

Waiter: *Good evening, sir.*

Customer: *Good evening. I have a table booked in the name of Griffiths.*

W: *Yes, Mr. Griffiths for two.*

C: *Thank you.*

W: *This way, please.(after meal)*

C: Waiter, *could I have the bill*, please?

W: Certainly, sir. (On the way out)

C: *Thank you*, dinner was excellent.

W: *Thank you*. Good night, sir, *good night*, madam.

C: *Good night*.

Some of the idiomatic expressions occurring in the service encounter, for example, those functioning as initiators and terminators, are not confined to this type of verbal interaction:

Initiators: *Good morning; Good evening*

Terminators: *See you later; Have a nice day; Good night; bye (for) now*.

Others are typical of the service encounter, and, consequently, act as identificatory makers of this type of interaction:

Initiators: *Something I can get (for) you? (1); who's next?; What can I do for you? (2)*, and from a similar exchange elsewhere in my corpus, *Can I help you?; Are you ready to order? varied in a similar exchange to Would you like to order now?*

Terminators: *Here we go or There you go (1); Could I have the bill, please? (3); Thanks a lot (1) or Thank you (2)*

These initiators and terminators comprise invariant literal idioms (e.g. *Who's next?*), variant semi-literal, semi-idioms (e.g. *Here we go, There you go, There I Here you are*), variant literal idioms (e.g. *Thank you, thanks a lot*), and common locutions (*Are you ready to order?, Would you like to order now?*, etc). Typical expressions associated with the body of the service-encounter script are: (*Will there be*) *anything else? (1), (2); That'll be all, No, thanks (2); Thanks a lot (1) (Just) give me (that) (1); I'd like a / some <...>, How much is ...?, Here's your change (2); I have a table booked in the name of <...>, A table for <...> (two, five, etc.), This way, please (3)*.

These expressions all exemplify idiomaticity by virtue of the habitual co-occurrence of a set of lexical constituents. Common locutions such as *Anything else?* and literal idioms such as *That'll be all*, etc. are marked for cohesion with their preceding co-text by virtue of their semantic content: they indicate prior requests and compliances or imminent compliance as in *No problem (1)*. The common literal idiom *No worries* is also a possibility in a situation of compliance. *Thanks a lot*, like *thank you*, may also occur in the body of a discourse.

The conviviality of (1) to (3), consistently maintained throughout, arises from close adherence to what is expected. Consequently, no power struggles arise.

The expected, for example, *Who's next?*, is commonplace, and therefore relatively low in information value. In (1) to (3) the words highest in information value are the variables in common locutions such as *I'd like some <...>, How much is <...>?, a table for <...>*, as well as response to an idiom like *Who's next?* also high in information value as it indicates who is next in the queue.

In the matter of information, interpersonal idiomatic expressions, it is worth mentioning, are very different from ideational ones. Not only are all ideational idioms high in information content, especially when subjected to novel variation, but additionally, the discourses they occur in do not have the quality of a script whose

lines are familiar to the speakers as in the routinized type of verbal interactions presented above.

Conviviality was defined as “sociability resulting in amity”. In convivial interactions, mutual alignment, the strategy adopted to achieve compatible goals, creates goodwill, and above all, the preservation of the other’s “face”, or social persona.

In conflictive interactions, the participants are at variance with or in open opposition to another. Consequently, instead of accord, there is discord arising from opposed goals.

To bring out the salient characteristics of convivial verbal behaviour more clearly, may be used the model of a play, a dramatic performance. Such a model focuses on the co-operation arising from mutual alignment with the participants generally saying what the other person expects them to say. Mutual alignment is absent in conflictive interactions since the dynamics of such interchanges arises from opposed goals. Hence, the model most appropriate for such changes is one in which opposed goals constitute an essential element as in a game with two or more contestants each playing to win within the constraints of a set of rules [2, 70].

If winning this goal, then winning requires a choice of options from a set of options, i.e. a strategy. Each player strives via his / her chosen strategy for the winning pay-off, i.e. outwitting the component.

Competitive language-games exemplifying as they do incompatible goals include arguments, the genre selected for illustrating conflict in relation to interpersonal idioms.

The purpose of an argument is to validate your reasons for holding a particular opinion and by this means refute that of your interlocutor [2, 71].

4. [part of a discussion on industrial relations in Australia]

A: Forget about the old days Joe, they are over with.

B: But ...

A: This is Australia 1991!

B: I know, *but let me tell you* – I’ve got to tell ...

A: Yeah, but Joe we don’t ...

B: 9,000 men in 1950, 900 men today, 90% of the workforce is gone <...>.

A: Okay Joe *let me* just say this, we’ll finish the debate right now <...> in eh <...> Hong Kong and Tokyo it takes them one day to turn <...> eh <...> a container ship around.

B: You don’t *know what you’re talking about*, mate.

A: Mate, I *do know what I’m talking about*...

The male participants, in this segment from a talk-back radio session. Treat each other as peers equal in status and power, a fact underpinned by their using the same restricted collocation (*let me tell you / say smth*) and terms of address to make a point and to dismiss the other’s argument: *don’t / do know what you / I’m talking about*.

Example (5) is a request for advice, but the host (A), despite the light-heartedness of his initial comments, violates the Agreement Maxim in attempt to provoke a conflict:

5. [part of an exchange containing a caller’s (B) request for information and advice]

A: Well, *come on*, what ya gotta say, woman?

B: Can you help me with my ballot for my elections?

A: *Ohhh God!* Yes, *my dear*, the elections, *go ahead*.

B: It's important.

A: It's not important <...> *go ahead*.

The mixture of condescension (*woman, my dear, Ohhh God!*) and, going on the accompanying idioms, mock imperiousness (*come on "be quick", "make an effort"* – pure idiom, and the twice-repeated *go ahead, "proceed"* – a literal idiom) may be felt by the caller as challenging her "face" and so could weaken conviviality. This caller, unlike the one in (4), wants help, not conflictive argument. However, the host in an attempt to turn the exchange into a debate, contradicts her assessment of the elections, and then orders her to continue in a kind of cat-and-mouse game.

Idiomatic expressions appropriate for use in conflict situations are far fewer than those indicative of conviviality in the corpora consulted. This disparity could be attributed to conviviality being much more valued as a social norm than conflict. In the process of being socialized, speakers are normally schooled in the "scripts" exemplifying politeness; conflictive expressions are not normally taught. Both Leech's Politeness Principle and Grice's Co-operative Principle are from a social point of view regulative principles functioning to control anti-social behaviour by the use of appropriate expressions, interpersonal ones being very common among these.

The verbal strategies for worsting one's opponents, for example, challenge, irony, etc., are generally acquired as a result of painful experience. The expressions embodying such strategies are then also learnt should the violation of the Politeness Principle and the Co-operative Principle be called for by the exigencies of a particular situation.

So, the salient attributes of interpersonal idiomatic expressions are:

1. Form: many interpersonal idiomatic expressions are, overtly or covertly, marked for interaction by their pronouns.
2. Function: these expressions constitute forms of social behaviour realizing as they do various pragmatic functions such as greeting, thanking, challenging, etc. As they show a far wider contextual distribution than ideational idioms, appearing in discourses as different as encounters, and casual conversation.

The nature of the idiomaticity of the linguistic units directly involved in the sphere of verbal communication differs somewhat from the idiomaticity of semantically and syntactically restricted sequences of words functioning as a single nominative unit. The idiomaticity of such grammatically significant units that characterize conversational discourse in pragmatic nature, it consists in their specialization in serving very definite communicative functions. Idioms serve as peculiar markers of discourse providing for its logical coherence and sequential organization. They play an important role in the realization of the verbal impact and, finally, ensuring the effective conversational interaction of participants of discourse.

Further, more research needs to be conducted to understand the functions and the form of interpersonal idioms as maker of conviviality in small talks, institutionalized good wishes, and as makers of conflict expressing disbelief or arrogance.

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Summary

The article deals with the peculiarities of functioning and using English pragmatic idioms as makers of conviviality which arises through politeness evident through greeting, farewells and thanks, and conflict, which arises through challenge, dubiety, irony, disbelief etc. in verbal interaction. The difference between ideational idiomatic expressions and pragmatic idioms are considered in the article. The examples of using interpersonal idiomatic expressions in various real-life situations are presented.

Keywords: idiom, pragmatic (interpersonal) idiom, conviviality makers, conflict makers, verbal behaviour, дискурс.

Анотація

Стаття присвячена особливостям функціонування та вживання у вербальній взаємодії англomовних прагматичних ідіом як засобів досягнення порозуміння, що виявляється через ввічливість і виражається за допомогою привітання, прощання чи подяки, а також міжособистісних ідіом як засобів спричинення конфліктної ситуації, що виявляється через заперечення, сумнів, іронію, недовіру тощо. У статті розглядаються відмінності між образними ідіоматичними виразами та прагматичними ідіомами, наводяться та аналізуються приклади вживання міжособистісних ідіом у різних життєвих ситуаціях.

Ключові слова: ідіома, прагматична (міжособистісна) ідіома, засоби досягнення порозуміння, засоби спричинення конфлікту, вербальна поведінка, дискурс.

Аннотация

Статья посвящена особенностям функционирования и использования в вербальном взаимодействии англоязычных прагматических идиом как средств достижения взаимопонимания, которое проявляется через вежливость и выражается с помощью приветствия, прощания или благодарности, а также межличностных идиом как средств, провоцирующих конфликтные ситуации, которые проявляются через отрицание, сомнение, иронию, недоверие и т.д. В статье рассматриваются отличия между образными идиоматическими выражениями и прагматическими идиомами, а также приводятся примеры употребления межличностных идиом в разных жизненных ситуациях.

Ключевые слова: идиома, прагматическая (межличностная) идиома, средства достижения взаимопонимания, средства, провоцирующие конфликтные ситуации, вербальное поведение, дискурс.