

Interpreting Idioms By Efl Learners

Assist.Lecturer. Angham Abdul Kadhum Al-Rekaby

College of Education / University of Al-Qadisiya

Abstract

An idiom refers to an expression whose meaning cannot be deduced in relation to the combination of its units. The aim of the present study is to develop an account about the difficulty the English as a foreign language(EFL) learners encounter in interpreting and comprehending English idiomatic expressions, the ratio of correctness and mistakes they commit, the difference according to the type of the college whether colleges of Arts or Education, and the effect of the kind of idioms on their interpretation .It is argued that there will be some difference between the learners of colleges of Arts and of Education in interpreting idioms in favor of the former ,since their study is much more concerned with literary subjects which are full of idiomatic expressions, in addition there is little focus on Arabic subjects.

The study is grounded into two main sections . The first ,is a literature review of idioms tackling some definitions of the idiom, its main characteristics, types , fields and its relation to some other concepts like lexemes and collocations .The second , is the practical representation of this study Finally, the study concludes with some findings and suggestions .

1.0 Introduction

Idioms are a salient part of one's language, and one's repertoire is full of these expressions which are used in daily communications .Native speaker children encounter difficulty in interpreting idioms non-literarily .Encountering idiomatic expressions is also a thorny case for EFL learners because of the non-compositionality of the majority of idioms .The present study is brought forward to meet this very purpose. Therefore, the study aims at identifying :

- 1-The EFL learners' ability in interpreting and comprehending the meaning of idioms.
- 2-The EFL learners' ability in understanding the meanings of idioms in relation to the kind of the college whether Arts or Education.
- 3-The differences between EFL learners of colleges of Arts and Education as regards knowing the meanings of idioms.

The study hypothesizes that :

- 1-EFL learners of colleges of Arts and Education face difficulty in comprehending idioms non literarily.
- 2-The answers of EFL learners of the colleges of Arts are better than those of Education as their study is much concerned with literary subjects which are full of idioms .

1.1 What is an Idiom

It is a tough job to grasp the meaning of many idioms not for the learners of another language only but also for the language specialists. Many linguists congregate on the definitions that reflect the semantic opacity of idioms. According to those definitions the constituents of an idiom yield nothing for its meaning. The Free Encyclopedia Wikipedia (2008: 1)defines an idiom as the expression one cannot derive the meaning of which in

reliance to the literal meaning or the consequences of its units, because it is figuratively used. Instead the meaning is derived through its common use. Oxford English Dictionary (2007) presents an idiom as “a form of expression, grammatical construction, phrase, etc. peculiar to a language peculiarity of phraseology approved by the usage of the language and often having a signification other than its grammatical or logical one”. Palmer (1981: 36, 79) , in accordance with the definitions above, states that an idiom is a complex expression whose meaning one cannot predict from the meaning of its individual units. Fromkin and Rodman (1988:181) define an idiom as “fixed phrases, consisting of more than one word, with meanings that cannot be inferred by knowing the meanings of the individual words”. Notably, these definitions harden the fact that an idiom is a semantic unit consisting of different units whose meaning is not deduced or inferred easily depending on its units meanings.

Other scholars reinforce the un compositionality of an idiom. This view is adopted by Akmajian, et al. (1995: 552) who differentiate between what is compositional and un compositional, compositional refers to the sequence of words whose meanings is predictable in relation to the meanings of its constituents and grammatical relations. In contrast, depending on the grammatical relations or the meaning of the constituents has nothing to do with obtaining the meaning of some complex expression, and this un compositionality according to Akmajian et al., is the salient characteristic of the meanings of idioms in stating that idiom “is an expression whose meaning is un compositional”. This view in a way supports the definitions above.

Some other linguists like Robins (1981: 54) congregate attention on the relation between idioms and collocation to consider the former a case of the latter. For details see(1.4)

1.2 The Nature of Idioms:

An idiom takes its idiosyncratic nature neither from its given meaning nor from the given syntactic construction, but rather from the relation between the units of an idiom , to achieve a meaning away from its separate parts. To identify idioms while excluding all the non idioms, there should be some unique characteristics or properties which nearly, capture all or the majority of idioms in a language. Some scholars like Smith (1925:187) support the view that consider the illogic, irrelevance and absurdity are salient factors for most idioms.

Accordingly, some other linguists like Sadock (1972:392) hold the view that idioms differ from non idiomatic phrases in that they can not be moved or broken syntactically as other non idiomatic expressions. For instance the idiom in :

1- Helen (kick the bucket).

Can not be passivised to be

-The bucket is kicked by Helen

Again, this view is emphasized by some linguists like Fromkin and Rodman (1988: 182), who maintain that most idioms are “frozen in form and do not readily enter into other combination or allow the word order to change.” They add that an idiom should be dealt with as any other single lexeme, i.e., an idiom has its own lexical entry, yet an idiom and a lexeme are not used interchangeably (see 1.3). Therefore, the frozenness and fixedness can be mirrored in the following idiom:

2- Someone (eats your words)

The idiom between brackets can not be put in away like:

* a - someone eats your sentences, or

* b - someone swallows your words

(a) and (b) are not ordinary related to (2)

But, with taking the fixedness and the frozenness into account ,a great rate of idioms are susceptible to different variations and changes from the simplest inflections to the most complex intentional variations(Fiedler;2005:3).Currently ,if it is so ,why idioms are frequently accompanied with fixedness and frozenness as the salient characteristics of idioms rather than variability ?To answer this question, one should know the extent to which an idiom accepts variation .Actually ,the variations or changes are not open for an idiom; namely, the majority of idioms accept limited kinds of changes ,i.e., what is acceptable for one idiom is not necessarily acceptable for another. That is why they are fixed or frozen. Therefore, the non acceptance of passive form with kick the bucket is acceptable with spill the beans to be the beans are spilled (Palmer, 1981: 80).

All in all, the variations can be restricted to two main kinds: semantic and grammatical ones. Starting with the former, semantic variations, which affect meaning (Moon;1998:114),can be summarized by the following points:

- 1- Semantic properties may be broken by some idioms, for example the verb eat in (2) should normally be followed by something [+ edible], yet word is [- edible]. This means that the idiom in (2) does not follow the semantic property of the verb eat .
- 2-Moon(ibid)and Hornby(2005) maintain that a lexical item in an idiom may be replaced by a synonym ,keeping nearly the same meaning, as in : put/place somebody on a pedestal , cast/throw pearls before swine, at short/a moment's notice, etc.
- 3-Some changes may make a shift in the idiomatic meaning when antonyms are used ,as in the following instances : a lot/nothing going for you , in/out the ordinary way, in public/private, lose/take heart.(ibid)
- 4-Semantic variation can obtained by the adding or removing of some lexical item like the inserting of a verb,a noun ,an adjective ,a preposition ,etc. For example, the insertion of the adjective (good)in have a (good)laugh, or (out) in (out)on a limb, etc .

In contrast, some lexical items are omitted like the idiom silence is golden in which the phrase (speech is silver)is removed.(ibid)

On the other hand, some idioms break the grammatical structure, to be grammatically incorrect, still they are used, for instance the idiom (to be broke) which means (to have no money) is ungrammatical according to the English rules of grammar since it should be (to be broken). But the latter display the literal use to mean something is broken, for example:

3. The car is broken.

Whereas, the former, i.e., to be broke is used idiomatically and should be kept as it is shown in

4- He (is broke) and cannot buy a car.

Also, the idiom anything going although ill-formed yet it cannot be corrected to keep the idiomatic meaning.

Additionally, verb tenses, aspect, nominalization, and other changes are also permitted with some idioms. For instance the idiom agree to differ can be used with simple aspect or even perfective one as:

5-a-They agree to differ.

b-They have agreed to differ.

Besides, nominalization can be represented by the transforming of some verbs into verbal noun, participle, adjectives, etc. as in lose face to loss of face, turn up one's nose to upturned noses (Moon;1998:113)

All what is mentioned show some sort of variation, so, variability is a phenomenon relatively connected to idioms.

Fiedler (2005:4) argues that "100% fixedness is very seldom" he adds that such a kind of fixedness, as Fraser (1970) and Moon (1998) state, is restricted to ill formed and cranberry idioms in which some constituents are unique for an idiom, like kith in kith and kin, behalf in behalf of someone, etc.

1.3 Idioms and Lexemes:

In order to reduce the ambiguity because of the term (word), some linguists use a term so called (lexeme) which refers to the smallest semantic distinctive unit which is irreducible (Fernand and Flavell, 1981: 9). It is also adequately defined by Trask (1993: 158), labeling it as a (lexical item) rather than lexeme, as an abstract unit which has one or more significances or functions which is for grammatical requirements varied to different forms. Any lexeme or lexical item has its own entry in any adequate dictionary to provide full account for that lexeme, i.e., phonological, grammatical and semantic explanation (Trask, 1993:158; and Fernand, and Flavell, 1981: 9).

In accordance, idiomatic expressions have their own lexical entries in dictionaries, but this does not give the right to say that both lexemes and idiomatic expressions are synonyms. In fact, it is relatively adequate to say all idioms are lexemes, since they are irreducible and do not obtain their presented significance depending on their separated part, i.e., each has its own semantic significance. At the same time, one can not state that all lexemes are idioms, because of some reasons, for instance, the lexeme BOOK has different forms to be book, books, the book, a book, etc., indicating the singular, the plural, the definite and the indefinite reference, respectively. Also, the lexeme VISIT has forms like: visit, visits, visiting, to visit etc, in which each form has its unique functions. However, one can easily note that whenever a certain form is used the whole lexeme is affected by that change. But this is not so with the case of idiomatic expression in which if it accepts any change, not the whole idiom is affected, for instance, the idiom go like clockwork can be changed as follows:

- goes like clock work

- went like clock work

- be going like clock work, etc.

So, it is obvious that one part suffers different change, that is, go.

1.4 Idioms and Collocations:

Collocation is first used by some Fairthian linguists in lexicology, referring to items that habitually co-occur with each other (Crystal;1997:69, Finch, 2005: 145) as in: full moon, white coffee, white wine. Robins (1970:53) agrees with this definition with reference to the co-occurrence in sentences, stating that collocation refers to the normal presence of a particular word with another in sentences. But this does not always happen since some collocations do not exist in sentences only.

Collocations are characterized by some features, they are:

1-Non-substitutability: The substitution of one word instead of another related word or even a synonym is not possible in a collocation. For example, we cannot say yellow wine instead

of white wine although both yellow and white are the names of colors. And one cannot say complete moon instead of full moon although complete and full are synonyms(Wikipedia;2008:2)

2-Non-modifiability: Applying of syntactic transformations or modification in a collocation are also not possible . For example, John kicked the green bucket or the bucket was kicked have nothing to do with dying (ibid).But this is not true in all cases(see 1.2)

3-With collocation one deals with a word in relation to another one in an individual lexical company, in contrast to syntax which deals with the words as members of classes in relation to others (Robins;1981:54).

Accordingly, collocations and idioms are inseparable because they almost share the same characteristics. Yet ,does that mean idioms and collocations are two labels for one concept ?In fact ,the most salient difference between them is that the meanings of idioms cannot be easily deduced .Hence , all idioms are collocations but not all collocations are idioms, this view is reinforced by Robins(ibid) stating that idioms are "special cases of collocations"; he adds that idioms are "habitual collocations of more than one word that tend to be used together ,with semantic function not readily deducible from other uses of the component words apart from each other" .

Therefore, whenever the collocation meaning cannot be deduced or inferred easily, it is then an idiom.

1.5 Types of Idioms:

Scholars like Palmer (1981: 81) and Fraser (1970: 91) consider idiomatic expression classification a matter of degree. Fraser (ibid) states that idioms can be ordered according to certain hierarchy, so called *frozensness hierarchy*, of six levels. It starts with the sixth level (L6) which represents the most transparent expressions which are completely flexible and they are, in this case, not idioms. Then ,the hierarchy grades till the first level (L1) which represents the expressions that are completely opaque, i.e., completely fixed and frozen idioms. Palmer, on the other hand, confines these levels to two main, obvious levels: partial, and complete idioms. Beginning with the former, partial idioms refers to those expressions a part of which preserves its usual significance (Palmer, ibid),as in the second part of expressions like white wine, red hair, and black coffee, etc., (wine, hair, and coffee)is used to refer to alcoholic drink made from grapes or other fruits, to the mass of hairs on a person's head and to a drink made by adding hot water to certain powder made from special seeds of a tropical tree, respectively. The color terms, white, red, and black, however, are not so, i.e., they are not literal or usual meaning preservers.(ibid)

In contrast, complete or opaque idioms are the idioms whose parts are not used equivalently, but are used out of their usual meanings (ibid). For instance, grit your teeth, be out for something, and rate race, are all idiomatic expressions of opaque kind since not any part of each can be taken for granted to deduce the meaning. They respectively mean: to have courage in a difficult situation, to try hard to get or do something, and the way of life in which everyone is rushing to be better than everyone else (Hornby, 2005: 337, 527, 610).

The classification that is adopted in this study is Brinton , et al. (1985:250-51) and Vicker's(2008:2) , which in one way or another, is in harmony with Palmer's classification. They state that idioms vary along a continuum from the more literal to those that are completely opaque. Therefore, some idioms are obviously transparent i.e.,they are in a direct relation to literal meaning , like all by itself .Others are, in one way or another, more opaque but interpretable, i.e., indirectly related to literal meaning, like change hands. Whereas the

idioms of the third kind are completely opaque and cannot be interpreted in relation to the meanings of the individual words, like prey on somebody's mind.

1.6 The Fields of Idioms:

Thematically, some scholars like Abisamra (2002), and Cooper (1998), as well as, dictionaries of idioms such as *Idioms Connection* (1997, 2008), classify idioms, whether alphabetically or according to the origin they descend from, to some fields. Subsequently, idioms like(animal idioms, court idioms, body idioms, money idioms, head idioms, idioms that express emotions, etc.,) all represent different fields of many other ones related to idioms. Accordingly idioms like:

- As dry as a bone
- bad blood
- blood is thicker than water
- difficult to stomach, etc.,

all belong to body idioms field. Also, expressions like:

- above par
- bottom dollar
- cash and carry
- dirt cheap, etc.,

All belong to money idioms. In fact, idioms cannot be counted, therefore, it is hard to cover all the fields of idioms in this study, that is why it is restricted to seven fields only(see 2.1.3).

2.0 Introductory Note:

This section attempts to display a practical representation of what is theoretically presented in section one. It starts with a subsection related to the procedure of the study. The other subsection will display the results of this study.

2.1 The Procedure of the Study:

This subsection includes: identifying the population of the study and the sample; designing a questionnaire, as well as applying the questionnaire on the selected sample.

2.1.1 The Population of the Study:

The population of the study, at hand, is limited to fourth year English students at Iraqi colleges, two of which are colleges of Arts: Mustansiriya and Kufa universities. The other two are colleges of Education: Qadisiya and Babylon Universities. The number of the fourth year students at Al-Mustansiriya is (112) , Al-Kufa (67), Al-Qadisiya (166) , and at Babylon (199) . Therefore, the whole number of the population is (544) .

2.1.2. The Sample of the Study:

The sample is (200) English students, (50) students from each of the four colleges. These students are randomly chosen, and they are roughly equated regarding the educational level, the age, and the stage of studying.

2.1.3 Designing The Questionnaire:

To obtain the aims of the study and to validate its hypotheses, the researcher designs a questionnaire to know the EFL learners' abilities in interpreting the meaning of the idiomatic expression. Hence, the questionnaire is designed as follows:

A- Identifying the fields of the Questionnaire:

It is observed that idioms can be distributed to different fields. As it is hard to cover all of them in this study, the researcher tries the very best to select some fields which reflect the greatest value for the learners and be within the learner's ability to comprehend, that is, the researcher concentrates attention on seven fields which are most in touch with the learner's real life. Therefore, education and school, food, time, heart, head, relationship and love, and sports idioms are the seven fields selected to be tested in this study.

B- Structuring the Items:

Each of the seven fields has been designed to test eight items which are carefully designed to be varied and be comprehensive to cover not only one level of idioms but rather all the different levels, i.e., the relatively transparent, which are directly related to literal meaning, opaque but interpretable, and completely opaque idioms. The questionnaire, thus, consists of fifty six items, each is accompanied by three alternatives (a, b, c) only one of which is correct. The examined learner should choose only one alternative to be the correct choice.

C- The Validity of the Items:

The fifty six items are given to an expert jury in Al-Kufa and Al-Qadisiya universities for assuring their validity and their fields. All the jury members agree on the items validity.

D- The Questionnaire Instruction:

The questionnaire instruction may help the examined learners in how to deal with the questionnaire. Thus, the researcher guides them to answer (56) items by presenting an example consisting of an item with three alternatives, putting a tick (✓) beside the correct answer.

E- The Scoring of the Questionnaire:

The questionnaire is scored by giving one mark for the correct alternative and zero for the opposite, that is, incorrect alternatives. As the fifty six items represent different levels of idioms in each separate field, the researcher isolate the correct answer of any item, and how it is frequented to check its difficulty.

F- The Statistical Means:

The statistical means used is what is called Chi-Square and item difficulty. Chi-square is used for one and two samples. Chi-Square is the statistical means which is used to compare the observed frequencies with the expected ones (Hayslett and Murphy, 1979: 168-171). The observed frequencies are those that are obtained by experiment or the study in general. Whereas, the expected frequencies are the theoretical ones, which are not in relation to what is observed (ibid). Additionally, in order to know the difficulty of an item the item difficulty means is applied in which the marks the students get are ordered from the highest to the lowest. The researcher then selects 27% from the highest, and an equal percentage from the

lowest since these two groups represent the extremes. Later on ,the correct answers are accounted in each group and being divided all on the number of the students in these two groups as a whole. The result will tell about an item difficulty. According to this means the ratio between 0 and 0.20 represents the highest difficulty, between 0.20 and 0.80 represents moderate difficulty ,and between 0.80 and 100 represents the simplest items (Al-Zawbai, etal; 1981:73). It is observed that the students' answers range between all these levels of difficulty as it is shown in appendix (1).

2.2. The Results:

- The first Aim:

Identifying the EFL learners' ability in interpreting and comprehending the meaning of idioms.

When Chi-Square for one sample is used, the results of the study prove the failure of the EFL learners' in knowing the meanings of a great number of idioms. It is observed that counted χ^2 is (163, 2) which is higher than χ^2 table which is (3,84), with significance level (0.05) and free degree is(1). As it is shown in table (1).

Sample	Correct answers	Incorrect answers	Counted χ^2	χ^2 table	Significance level
200	4924	6276	163.2	3,84	0.05

Table (1)

- The Second Aim:

Identifying the EFL learners' ability in understanding the meanings of idioms in relation to the kind of the college whether Arts or Education.

For colleges of Arts: Al-Mustansiriya and Al-Kufa, the results of the study show that a great number of the examined students cannot find the correct alternative of many idiomatic expressions. It is noticed that counted χ^2 is (36.78) in comparison with χ^2 table (3,84). This result shows a statistical significance level is (0.05) and the free degree is (1) as it is shown in table(2)

College	Number of the sample	Correct answers	Incorrect answers	Counted χ^2	χ^2 table	Statistical significance
Arts	100	2570	3030	37.78	3,84	0.05
Al-Mustansiriya						
Al-Kufa						

Table (2)

Furthermore, regarding colleges of Education : Al-Qadisiya and Babylon, the results show that there is some difference which has statistical significance between correct answer,

and incorrect answers in favor of the latter, i.e., the sample of the colleges of Education fails in denoting or knowing the idiomatic expressions meanings. The results, however, show that counted χ^2 is (142.08) in comparison with χ^2 table(3,84), the significant level is (0.05) and free degree is (1). This is shown in table (3)

College	Sample number	Correct answers	Incorrect answers	Counted χ^2	χ^2 table	Statistical significance
Arts	100	2354	3246	142.08	3,84	0.05
Al-Qadisiya						
Babylon						

Table (3)

- The Third Aim:

Identifying the differences between EFL learners of colleges of Arts and Education as regards knowing the meanings of idioms.

Making use of chi-square for two independent samples, the study results in finding some difference which has statistical significance between the learners of colleges of Arts and Education. It displays that the examined students of Arts' correct answers are higher than those of Education ones'. Therefore. The counted χ^2 is (16.88) in comparison with (3,84) which is χ^2 table. The significance level is (0.05) and free degree is (1). This is shown in table (4).

College	Sample number	Correct answers	Incorrect answers	Counted χ^2	χ^2 table	Statistical significance
Arts	100	2570	3030	16.88	3,84	0.05
Education	100	2354	3246			

Table (4)

Conclusions:

- 1-EFL learners are not easily able to understand or interpret the meanings of idioms, and this verifies the first hypothesis.
- 2-EFL learners at Arts colleges are more successful in interpreting the meanings of idioms than learners at Education colleges .This is because ,but it may be not the sole reason, the study at colleges of Arts devotes great attention on literary works, like stories ,novels ,drama ,etc. ,which are full of idiomatic expressions. This verifies the second hypothesis.
- 3-Idioms are not those lexical companies that one can easily forestall or retrain from their use since native speakers of that language cannot do such a thing , i.e., in their communications they highly depend on idiomatic expressions.
- 4-One cannot say that s/he master a second language unless they master its idiomatic expressions.

5-It is observed the fifty six items are in accordance with the results of item difficulty . So, the very difficult items, between 0 and 0.20 ,represent the opaque idioms . The moderate items, between 0.20 and 0.80 ,represent the idioms partially opaque. The simple items, between 0.80 and 100 , represent the idioms directly related to literal meaning.

Suggestions:

- 1-Methodologists and specialists, since idioms are so frequently encountered whether in spoken or written discourse, should make studies to find out suitable procedure to deal with idioms.
- 2-Since the more foreign language users encounter idioms in discourse, the better they master idioms ,and because idioms are culture –specific, there is a need to send foreign English specialists as well as learners abroad to give them a chance to be in contact with native speakers.

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Appendix

	<u>Item Difficulty</u>
1. The woman (<i>died of a broken heart</i>) several times.	0.20
a. suffered from excessive longing or envy.	
b. suffered from a failed romance.	
c. felt sad or hopeless.	
2. Mr. Jack (<i>has a heart of stone</i>).	0.60
a. is strong.	
b. is cold and unfriendly.	
c. is fond of someone sincerely.	
3- Thomas is (<i>a bleeding heart</i>).	0.10
a. destroyed.	
b. sympathized for people such as poor people.	
c. made someone feel good.	
4. I will (follow my heart).	0.90
a. act according to feelings.	
b. depend on my mind.	
c. depend on my parent's feelings.	
5. Tony always (opens his heart) to his friends.	0.50
a. breaks his heart.	
b. talks openly about his feelings.	
c. has the courage or compassion to do something.	
6- My sister (<i>has lost her heart</i>).	0.40
a. is unwilling to say or do something.	
b. forgets something.	
c. feels discouraged because of failure.	
7. I (<i>took heart from</i>) the fact that many people volunteered to help me.	0.15
a. was encouraged by.	
b. was strongly affected by	
c. was startled by	
8. The mother (wore her heart on her sleeve) when she talked about her sick son.	0.30
a. felt discouraged.	
b. showed her feelings openly.	
c. felt unhappy.	
9. The test was (<i>as easy as ABC</i>)	0.95
a. better than average.	
b. very easy.	
c. lower than average.	
10. The student should (<i>catch up to</i>) the rest of the class.	0.65
a. call the names of other students.	
b. work hard to reach those who are ahead.	
c. try to imitate others.	
11. I (<i>cover a lot of ground</i>) of the grammar class, at the end of that semester.	0.48
a. cover traditional ideas or methods.	
b. complete a lot of material.	

- c. begin to develop new methods.
12. My son is (*a bookworm*) 0.35
 a. memorizing books by heart.
 b. copying other's work.
 c. reading a lot.
13. That one is the (*teacher's pet*) 0.65
 a. the one who works well.
 b. the one who obeys the teacher's orders.
 c. the teacher's favorite student.
14. Tom is to (*read through the book*) before the next class. 0.70
 a. know the alphabet or the most basic things about the book.
 b. read all of the book.
 c. learn the book by heart.
15. I want to (*teach Jorge a lesson*) because he always behaves badly. 0.15
 a. punish him.
 b. teach him something.
 c. try to tell him how to do things.
16. My mother has learned everything from the (*university of life*). 0.67
 a. higher education.
 b. daily life experiences.
 c. university of sociology.
17. The employees (*backed the wrong horse*) in the election for the boss. 0.72
 a. made things with hesitating.
 b. made things unconsciously.
 c. made the wrong choice.
18. Her ideas always (*came out of left field*). 0.18
 a. came from the left side.
 b. be completely unexpected.
 c. made an error or mistake.
19. The student gained confidence when there were many teachers (*in her corner*). 0.75
 a. on her side.
 b. at the same level.
 c. know the fact about something.
20. She likes (*the sport of kings*). 0.77
 a. baseball.
 b. horse racing.
 c. hunting.
21. The woman decided to (*throw her hat into the ring*) for the presidential election. 0.20
 a. take part.
 b. not to take part.
 c. admit defeat.
22. Obama is (*a team player*). 0.78
 a. someone supported by other.
 b. someone keeps one attention.
23. The boss of the company (*hands the torch to*) his daughter when he goes abroad. 0.90
 a. hands over a particular duty.
 b. gives hints to.

- c. supports or helps.
24. Tom and John are now (*out of the running*) because of their behavior. 0.85
 a. eliminated from contest.
 b. ran by themselves.
 c. left the contest.
25. Hellene really (*digs the man*) next door. 0.13
 a. likes someone a lot.
 b. hates someone a lot.
 c. abandons someone.
26. Jack and Rita's relationship appears to be (*on the rocks*). 0.10
 a. ended by marriage.
 b. experiencing problems.
 c. repairing a broken relation.
27. The President lives a case of (*unrequited love*). 0.85
 a. one-way love.
 b. undesirable love.
 c. romantic love.
28. After several months the couple decided to (*tie the knot*). 0.55
 a. end the relationship.
 b. go on and to date each other.
 c. get married.
29. Before long, the young woman had (*stolen the young man's heart*) 0.16
 a. dated the young man.
 b. made the young man fall in love with her.
 c. got serious relation with the young man.
30. Mark went (*on a blind date*) but it wasn't successful. 0.35
 a. on a date where he didn't know the other person.
 b. on a double date.
 c. out with someone.
31. they enforced to (*split up*) their relation. 0.5
 a. make it serious.
 b. establish a regular routine after getting married.
 c. end their relation.
32. After along thinking they decided to (set a date). 0.15
 a. break up.
 b. decide on a date for wedding.
 c. fall in love with each other.
33. She (*eats like a bird*). 0.84
 a. eats only a small amount of food.
 b. eats nothing.
 c. eats only vegetables.
34. To deal with Johnson I should (*walk on eggs*) 0.65
 a. be very warm and cozy.
 b. be cool.
 c. be very cautious.
35. They have made the neighbor (*eat dirt*) when he accuses them of lying. 0.55
 a. clean something.

- b. accept another person's bad treatment or insults.
c. get rid of dirty things.
36. She is (*in the soup now*). 0.73
a. in serious trouble.
b. in love with someone.
c. having a desire to eat food.
37. The government wants (*a slice of the cake*). 0.73
a. to eat some cake.
b. to do some projects.
c. a share of something.
38. You want to (*teach my grandma to suck eggs*), I'm an expert. 0.10
a. tell someone who knows better than you how to do something.
b. teach traditions and old things.
c. teach the wrong person.
39. That man is (*the top banana*) at that station. 0.13
a. the boss.
b. the tallest.
c. gentleman.
40. You (*cannot make an omelet without breaking the eggs*). 0.45
a. are very active and a good worker.
b. entertains someone in a lavish manner.
c. cannot do something without problems.
41. She is (*absent-minded*). 0.75
a. stupid.
b. slightly crazy.
c. forgetful.
42. He (*has a one-track mind*). 0.66
a. has a mind which thinks only about one thing.
b. imagines something that does not actually exist.
c. is confused.
43. She (*has rocks in her head*). 0.55
a. is restricted.
b. is stupid.
c. is harsh.
44. The father needs to (*get into his daughter's head*). 0.32
a. stop her from annoying.
b. decide to do something.
c. understand her well to communicate with her. 0.16
45. The rich (*have their heads in the clouds*).
a. are unaware of what is going on.
b. are thinking a lot.
c. raise their heads.
46. Nowadays, My (*head is buzzing*). 0.90
a. is worried of something.
b. is too difficult for someone.
c. is thinking of many things at the same time.

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47. What happens in Iraq will (curl your hair). 0.42
a. frighten you.
b. make you dizzy.
c. make you faint.
48. There is a (*brain drain*) from Iraq to other countries. 0.67
a. believing of something not true by repeating it.
b. trying to develop an idea.
c. loss of talented educated people from one place to another. 0.54
49. She is sharing a company (*for the time being*).
a. the action will continue into the future.
b. the action doesn't last for future.
c. at present.
50. (*Time flies*) and you are lucky if you catch the last bus. 0.89
a. before the set time.
b. crunch time.
c. time passes very quickly.
51. He is (*not born yesterday*). 0.17
a. not to be young.
b. not to be naïve or easily fooled.
c. not to be stupid.
52. (*The time is ripe*) to give each what deserves. 0.36
a. exactly the right time has come.
b. enough time to relax or behave normally.
c. at a time in the past.
53. Tota's birth (*brightens up the day*). 0.63
a. makes the day happy and charming.
b. makes the day move quickly.
c. makes the day important.
54. Don't worry, (*tomorrow's another day*). 0.63
a. time passes by unnoticed.
b. thing might turn out better in the future.
c. not to worry about how long something will take.
55. You have (*time of your life*). 0.18
a. a wonderful time.
b. the last opportunity to do something.
c. a chance to travel faster.
56. There is some (*time off*) to make extra reading. 0.92
a. time when event is temporarily stopped.
b. time when one doesn't have to work
c. time when one repeats doing something.