

ENGLISH IDIOMS AND METAPHORS: SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES

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Abstract: Both idioms and metaphors are inseparable part of the English language and culture like many languages that helps to understand the language entirely. There are some similarities between these two notions however they are not in the same thing. This article discusses about them.

Key words and expressions: idioms, metaphors, literal meaning, standard metaphors, implied metaphors, dead metaphors, common idioms.

In linguistics, the terms 'metaphor', 'idioms', 'phrases', 'proverbs', etc. play a completely crucial role, as these technical phrases are typically used to explain figurative expressions. These phrases are broadly used to hyperlink thoughts collectively in writing, and to create flamboyant images for the reader. Some ideas are small and very particular. Other ideas are big. They bring lots of related ideas to mind. For example, we all know what a 'coin' is. It is a small piece of metal which we use to pay for things. It is a part of a much bigger idea - 'money'. When we think of money we think of saving it, earning it, wasting it, spending it, being generous with it, being mean with it. Money is a bigger idea than coins or banknotes. When we use the common metaphor - time is money - we know what we mean. Many of the words we use with money, we also use with time:

We have time to spare.

We waste time.

We spend time doing something.

We run out of time.

We save time [7, 12].

An idiom can have a figurative and literal meaning while a metaphor is a figure of speech that refers to one thing to show a fact about another thing. Metaphor will help to understand the differences between these two English literally devices. When we have a good grasp of this type of figurative language, we can make our writing more engaging and interesting. There are several sources for Idioms, but the big contribution is figurative language, especially metaphors. When a metaphor is first used, it is fresh and vivid and people have to think through the image to appreciate what it conveys. Literally meaning of idioms “id- i -om” or “i- dē- om”. An expression in the usage of a language that is peculiar to itself either in having a meaning that cannot be derived from the conjoined meaning of its elements. Idioms are a type of figurative language which writers can use to add dynamism and character to otherwise style of writing. Many idioms were invented by William Shakespeare that were used in his famous plays. The most common English idioms nowadays are:

1. A blessing in disguise (a good thing that seemed bad at first)
2. A daytime a dozen (something common)
3. Beat around the bush (avoid saying what you mean, usually because it is uncomfortable)
5. Cold feet (being nervous to go through with something)
6. Raining Cats and Dogs (raining a lot outside)
7. Dead as a doornail (totally dead)

A metaphor is another form of figurative language. Like similes. Metaphors compare two things that share one characteristic but are not alike otherwise. Metaphor examples:

1. The night sky was a blanket of stars. (compares the covering of night with the covering of blanket.)
2. You are such an angel for helping me out (compares your kindness with the kindness of an angel).

3. This decision is really weighing on my mind (compares the emotional weight of the decision with the physical weight of something heavy) [8].

Like idioms metaphors are not literal. They are often used as poetic devices. The biggest difference between idioms and metaphors is how they are used. Idioms are almost nonsensical expressions, while there is a clear comparison in a metaphor [9].

Idioms are used to make a point in a colloquial way. Metaphors are used to compare two things. For example, describing a rainy day as “raining cats and dogs” is an idiom, not a metaphor, because it is not comparing rain to anything that makes sense. It’s just an expression that means “raining a lot”.

My mum has a green thumb in the garden. (Idiom)

She lovingly tends her babies in the garden. (Metaphor)

The director punished us because of red-handed us (Idiom- something doing wrong)

The Director’s eyes were a glaring light on our actions. (Metaphor- judgement was like a bright light on us).

My spouse has been over the moon since his team won the game. (Idiom- he has been very happy, because, his team won the game.)

He is glowing since his team was a winner (metaphor – his excitement is as bright as a light.)

Metaphors tend to sound more poetic than idioms. Idioms are more common in everyday speech while metaphors are more effective way to compare concepts in writing.

Some metaphors have become so well known that they have practically become idioms themselves.

Madina is the black sheep of her family. (It means a person who doesn’t fit in with their surroundings. Compares a sheep that doesn’t fit in with their flock.)

My English teacher is an open book. (“open book” compares a book that’s easy to read with a person who easily provides information”.)

There are several figures of speech that can be considered types of metaphors.

They include:

- Simile
- Hyperbola
- Metonymy
- Personification

Metaphors usually fall into one of these four categories.

1. Standard metaphor: This compares two unlike things with a sentence that says X is Y.

2. Implied metaphor: This type of metaphor compares two things but does not name one of the things.

3. Extended Metaphor: Extended metaphors extend past one sentence. They may include the entire story or poem to create descriptive comparisons.

4. Dead metaphor: When a metaphor changes its meaning over time due to over-use, it no longer conveys the original meaning and becomes a dead metaphor. Dead metaphors can also be simply over-used metaphors, even if the meaning is still known.

The class was a zoo before students' day. (Standard metaphor)

The mean girl prowled about, ready to pounce on her prey the moment an opportunity presented. (implied metaphor.) "Hope is the thing with features" by Emily Dickinson. (In this poem, the entire poem describes hope like a little bird complete with features that can weather any storm. Time is running out: we understand this metaphor which means it is losing its impactfulness (dead metaphor).

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