



## FIXED EXPRESSIONS AND FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE AS KEY ELEMENTS OF MEANING CONSTRUCTION IN ENGLISH

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**Abstract:** *This article examines fixed expressions and figurative language as fundamental linguistic mechanisms in the construction of meaning in the English language. Fixed expressions function as stable lexical units, whereas figurative language enables indirect, imaginative, and culturally grounded representation of meaning. The study analyzes their structural, semantic, and pragmatic features, as well as their role in discourse and language education. The findings indicate that mastery of these elements significantly enhances communicative effectiveness, interpretative accuracy, and intercultural competence.*

**Keywords:** *fixed expressions, figurative language, idiomatic meaning, metaphor, discourse, linguistics*

### INTRODUCTION

Language functions not only through literal meanings but also through conventionalized patterns and non-literal expressions. In English, fixed expressions and figurative language constitute an essential component of both spoken and written discourse. These linguistic phenomena allow speakers to express ideas concisely, convey emotions, and reflect culturally shared knowledge. Contemporary linguistic research emphasizes that fluency and naturalness in language use largely depend on the appropriate application of formulaic expressions and figurative devices. Learners who rely exclusively on literal interpretation often encounter difficulties when processing authentic texts. Therefore, a systematic examination of fixed expressions and figurative language is crucial for both theoretical linguistics and applied



language studies. The aim of this article is to analyze the nature of fixed expressions and figurative language, classify their main types, and determine their role in effective communication.

## **LINGUISTIC FOUNDATIONS OF FIXED EXPRESSIONS**

Fixed expressions are multi-word units characterized by semantic stability and restricted structural variation. Unlike freely generated phrases, they are stored in the mental lexicon as holistic units. This feature enables rapid retrieval during communication, thereby increasing fluency and processing efficiency. From a semantic perspective, fixed expressions often display partial or complete non-compositionality, meaning that their overall interpretation cannot be derived directly from the meanings of their individual components. Pragmatically, they serve as socially conventionalized and culturally meaningful forms of expression.

## **CLASSIFICATION OF FIXED EXPRESSIONS**

**Idiomatic Expressions.** Idioms represent the most figurative category of fixed expressions. Their meanings are conventionalized and resistant to literal interpretation. Expressions such as *break the ice* or *hit the nail on the head* convey abstract meanings related to social interaction and accuracy.

**Collocations.** Collocations are semi-fixed word combinations that frequently co-occur in natural language use. Although their meanings remain transparent, deviations from standard collocations often result in unnatural or non-native-like language production. Therefore, mastery of collocations is essential for achieving linguistic competence.

**Proverbs and Set Sayings.** Proverbs are culturally transmitted expressions that encapsulate collective experience, moral values, and social norms. Their fixed structure and generalized meaning make them effective tools in persuasive and didactic discourse.

**Phrasal Verbs.** Phrasal verbs consist of a lexical verb combined with one or more particles and often convey idiomatic meanings. They are highly productive in English and play a significant role in informal and conversational communication.



## FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE AND ITS INTERPRETIVE NATURE

Figurative language involves the extension of meaning through imagery, comparison, and conceptual association. Rather than conveying ideas directly, it invites interpretation based on shared cognitive and cultural knowledge. This type of language is not limited to literary contexts; it is widely employed in everyday communication, media discourse, education, and academic writing. Figurative expressions enable abstract concepts to be understood through concrete and familiar experiences.

## MAJOR FIGURATIVE DEVICES IN ENGLISH

**Metaphor.** Metaphors allow speakers to conceptualize one domain of experience in terms of another. Expressions such as knowledge is power demonstrate how metaphor shapes abstract thinking and discourse organization.

**Simile.** Similes establish explicit comparisons using markers such as like or as. They perform descriptive and explanatory functions, particularly in narrative and pedagogical contexts.

**Hyperbole.** Hyperbole intensifies meaning through deliberate exaggeration. Although not factually accurate, it effectively conveys emotional intensity and subjective evaluation.

**Personification.** Personification attributes human characteristics to inanimate objects or abstract concepts, thereby enhancing expressiveness and emotional engagement.

**Metonymy and Synecdoche.** These devices rely on associative relationships to represent complex ideas concisely. They are frequently used in political, journalistic, and academic discourse.

## INTERACTION BETWEEN FIXED EXPRESSIONS AND FIGURATIVE MEANING

Many fixed expressions originate from figurative language. Over time, their metaphorical motivation becomes less transparent, resulting in lexicalized units perceived as conventional expressions rather than creative constructions. This



process illustrates the dynamic interaction between linguistic creativity and conventionalization, whereby figurative innovation contributes to the expansion of the lexical system.

## COMMUNICATIVE AND EDUCATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE

Fixed expressions and figurative language play a crucial role in ensuring discourse coherence, stylistic diversity, and pragmatic appropriateness. They facilitate social interaction by signaling attitudes, emotions, and shared cultural values.

In language education, these elements are central to the development of communicative competence and cultural literacy. Integrating them into instructional materials enhances learners' ability to comprehend authentic texts and produce natural, contextually appropriate speech.

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