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I have taught at IPC Tertiary Institute since 2003 and received my Trinity LTCL Diploma (TESOL) in 2009. I will complete my Master of TESOL Leadership from Massey University this November. As Assistant Dean at IPC, I administer undergraduate diploma papers, teach ESOL learners, and train tertiary teachers. My research interests include learner autonomy, vocational English, and TESOL professional learning.

Book Reviews


By Lynn Grant
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In the book’s introductory chapter, “Who is afraid of teaching idioms?”, the authors answer, “We are.” (p.1). Recognising that idioms are very difficult for learners to understand and use, they were motivated to write this book by their “own experiences as English language teachers...coupled with their desire to find effective ways to address idioms” (p.3). Their book is firmly grounded in the classroom and based on both research into idioms as well as teachers’ and students’ experience of teaching and learning idioms.

The book is comprised of two parts: Part One (Chapters 2-5) covering theoretical and pedagogical research into learning and teaching idioms, and Part Two (Chapters 6-10) focusing on teaching idioms to English language learners around the world.

Part One

Chapter 2, *What is an Idiom?* identifies criteria used for defining idioms and outlines a number of definitions of idioms.

Chapter 3, *How are idioms acquired?* asks whether teaching methods would change if English language instructors had a better understanding of the different definitions of idioms and clearer insights into how the brain works. The authors explain the diverse parts of the brain and show how each part is related to learning, especially developing second language vocabulary and, in particular, idioms.

Chapter 4, *How are idioms taught?* gives a brief history of vocabulary teaching, including the development of corpus linguistics. The authors discuss how to choose new idioms to teach and present a table with examples of idiom lists from textbooks (p.80).

Chapter 5, *How are idioms taught?* summarises effective classroom activities and strategies. The chapter also includes corpus-based activities and URLs of seven useful corpora for teaching idioms.

Part Two

Chapter 6, *Teacher perspectives on teaching English idioms* presents results of an international survey on idiom use in language classrooms (see Appendix C). 43.9% of teachers address idioms in their classrooms at least once a week, while 37.5% rarely or never address idioms. Teachers reported that their ability to teach idioms was impacted by their lack of time and materials, textbooks not addressing idioms, and difficulty choosing valuable idioms.
Chapter 7, Student perspectives on teaching English idioms explains that 47 students also took the survey, with 72.2% of them perceiving idioms as important or very important. The students were asked to rank activities for learning idioms and which idioms (from a given list) they found difficult to learn.

Chapter 8, Example lessons for teaching idioms from around the world represents the 'twelve best lessons' from those who sent submissions for inclusion in the book. Plus, one of the book's authors (Randolph) shares a lesson on idioms.

Chapter 9, Overview and critiques of resources for teaching and learning idioms summarises and critiques useful textbooks, online resources, and dictionaries. The authors offer practical suggestions for teachers looking for materials to use in their classrooms.

Chapter 10, Conclusion: Keep the ball rolling. Strategies, resources and tips for developing your own idiom researches and curriculum begins with the authors' answer to their introductory question, "Who is afraid of teaching idioms?" changing from "We are" to "We were" (p. 227). The authors note the importance of classroom teachers becoming researchers.

The book ends with a number of glossaries, including a table showing Liu's (2008) ten most common terms in professional, media, and academic corpora (p.74). One thing not covered here is the frequency of certain idioms in different genres of spoken or written English. This would help teachers and learners select useful idioms to focus on. Nevertheless, the authors state that they have attempted throughout this book to connect the two perspectives of researching and teaching. They seem to have done this well.