

# The Effects of Using more Slang and Idioms in English Lessons

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As far as the second-language acquisition is concerned, it is a hard fact that students in Macao lack of the advantages of studying abroad. However, we should always bear in mind that students in Macao can also acquire English excellently. We English teachers in Macao should always strive for exposing the students to the environments which are as close as those foreign countries, in which students are exposed to some very exotic usages of English. Nonetheless, with regard to the linguistic differences of English learning environments between Macao and those English-Speaking countries, we always seem to overlook one of the most distant linguistic elements which students in Macao can hardly be exposed to, which are 'Idioms' and 'Slang'.

There are quite a number of definitions to slang and idioms but we would all agree that, to put it less technically, they are some informal words and expressions people use frequently and are easily understood mutually within speakers in a certain region, besides; they are usually interesting to Second-Language learners. In this passage, I will humbly talk about the success of using more slang and idioms in English lessons, the ways to use them efficiently and the cautions of using them.

Students always cannot obtain satisfaction

and pleasure in English lessons and students' attention to teachers is therefore very difficult to control, so is their intrinsic motivation too. Abraham Maslow (1970) claimed that intrinsic motivation is clearly superior to extrinsic. As his claim tells, it is very clear that once students' interest is aroused, they learn in speedy and effective ways but how to arouse students' interest is always a problem. I am fairly confident to say that slang and idioms are such a good tool to arouse students' interest in English. Students frequently find teachers' instruction very boring because they have been listening to the very similar language patterns ever since their first lessons of English. The situation of their decreasing interest in English lesson is understandable as even teachers will get bored with the same textbook which has been used for years! A change is needed indeed.

Here is my own example. In every class, I must introduce students with a couple of slang or idioms before the end of every lesson, such as 'This test is not rocket science', 'What happens happens', etc. (Certainly, more slang or idioms, as a booster to students' motivation and attention, can be introduced to them at any suitable moment during the lesson.) Surprisingly, their response to the slang and idioms is very positive and beyond my expectation! Gradu-



ally, I tried to integrate the use of slang and idioms into the language of my instruction. The outcome is satisfactory. They feel satisfied and pleased because they have learnt something they have never learnt before and they are interested in slang too! In other words, they are exposed to a classroom where 'The Same Old Boring Language' is no longer spoken but the "New Language" instead! They even always remind me, in their break time, to teach them idioms when I forget to! Clearly enough, their satisfaction and pleasure is really valuable because it can gradually become their intrinsic motivation in learning English. The atmosphere in class will also benefit from their willingness to know more about those funny words and phrases. Gradually, they will search for more to fulfill their satisfaction and obtain pleasure, fostering their self-learning skills.

Linguistically, as a second-language learner, everyone certainly wants to be an 'accent free' English speaker and to speak in a more native way, so do the students. They always want their English to be distinguishable from other learners. If slang and idioms can fulfill their desire, why not teach more of them?

How do teachers prepare themselves for handy use of slang and idioms in classroom? A good idiom dictionary helps a lot because it provides a large numbers of idioms and slang covering American usages and British usages, examples are provided too. After deciding which slang or idioms will be used in class, teachers should have a paper note showing those chosen in case our memory does not serve us well. (A paper note can also show you the things you have introduced to students so that we will not repeat them and we can easily pick some for quizzes or tests) A better effect can be made if, in your lesson plan, you have a set of standard language involving the slang or idioms that you are about to use in the lessons, such as 'Come on! This test is not Rocket Science!', 'You are going ahead fast, you are now on the ball!', you will have a more efficient lesson and will not be struggling to come up with a certain slang or idiom to use.

There are some cautions when using nonstandard words or phrases in classroom. Slang and idioms vary in different countries, even in different regions of a country. As a result, we teachers need to know everything about the slang and idioms we

teach because we do not want our students to use a British slang to an American and get someone offended. Also, we should not use slang or idioms excessively because the lesson will be very artificial with deliberate use of slang and idioms.

To sum up, slang and idioms are great resources to English teachers. It helps students linguistically and, more importantly, psychologically too. Because students are trained not only in a way, their language learning process is taken care of but also the learning atmosphere in classroom. If slang is used in a proper manner, it can boost the motivation of students in learning English. There are millions of

slang waiting to be used in classes, what we need to do to make the most of slang and idioms is to work very hard trying to have a very good integration of slang or idioms and the teaching materials. A few words before I wrap this article up: A good language teacher helps a lot; the funny and joyful part of a language may also be able to offer its help! 🍵

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