

# Embark on a journey to become an exceptional interpreter with native-speaker proficiency”

-How to acquire American slang and idioms

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# Why slang and idioms?

- Effective communication
- Viewed as accomplished and polished
- Strike a chord of solidarity with listeners
- Break the ice
- Establish rapports
- Be viewed as an insider or in-group

# Used for

- Special effects
- Emphasis
- Expressing attitudes
- Showing resourcefulness in borrowing the verbiage of a group
- Stylistic choice
- Adding spice and flavor to chats and conversations
- Revealing ongoing feelings and emotions

# Definitions

- Idioms: if you understand every word in a text or an expression and still fail to grasp what it is all about, chances are you are encountering an idiom; assign a new meaning to a group of words which already has its own meaning.
  - What goes around comes around
  - Play it by ear
  - Give it up for John
  - A long shot
  - Step up to the plate
  - Push the envelope
  - On the fly

# Definitions

- Slangs consist of a lexicon of non-standard words and phrases in a given language. Use of these words and phrases is typically associated with the subversion of a standard variety (such as Standard English) and is likely to be interpreted by listeners as implying particular attitudes on the part of the speaker. In some contexts a speaker's selection of slang words or phrases may convey prestige, indicating group membership or distinguishing group members from those who are not a part of the group.

(From Wikipedia)

- A frequent flyer
- Knock-outs
- Inside the Beltway
- Bummer!
- Holy Grail
- Takeaways

# Categories

- Leximic/parts of speech
  - Verbal
  - Nominal
  - Adjective
  - Adverbial
- Tournures/turn of phrases/phraseological
  - Rigid
  - Cannot show up in any other form whatever
- Sayings and proverbs

# How to interpret this?

- “Sam is a real cool cat. He never blows his stack and hardly ever flies off the handle. What’s more, he knows how to get away with things... Well, of course, he is getting on, too. His hair is pepper and salt, but he knows how to make up for lost time by taking it easy. He gets up early, works out, and turns in early. He takes care of the hot dog stand like a breeze until he gets time off. Sam’s got it made; this is it for him.”

(From Handbook of Commonly Used American Idioms- by Adam Makkai, et al.)

# Any knacks for acquiring them?

- Absolutely
- Passion and determination
- What's the plan?
- Specific goals and targets- divide and conquer
- Proficiency and fluency
- From listening, speaking, reading, writing, and interpreting/translating

# Rules of thumb

- Be inquisitive and curious
- Be sensitive to details
- Remember the contexts where they are used/occur
- Never use them until you've heard them being used by a native speaker
- Keep notes and jot down things
- Review them from time to time
- Check and verify with native speakers of English
- Google
- Keep slang/idiom dictionaries handy

# Listening

- Variety
- Specificity
- Shadowing
- Three times
- Pronunciation, intonation, speed
- Voice organ muscles and mind coordination
- Play the piano analogy
- Practitioner vs. theorist
- Keep notes and consult resources

# Speaking

## -forget about saving the face

- Reading aloud and hearing yourself
- Mistakes and errors
- Follow the native speaker/broadcaster
- Don't use any idioms or slang until you've heard them being used by a native speaker
- Self-esteem and face-saving
- Confidence-building
- Get prepared and develop interests and hobbies
- Don't miss any opportunity of public speaking
- The high-way analogy

# Reading for fun, ideas and language

- Extensive
- Intensive
- Lifelong interest, pastime, infatuation
- Keep notes and diary
- Go through them from time to time
- Talk about your reading with others
- Have the dictionary handy
- Learn from native speakers

# Writing- a hard thing to do, but doable

- Reading on the topic/subject
- Keep notes
- Think through
- Draft
- Hook the reader/lock the reader into a shared experience
- Beginning, body, transition, conclusion and the end
- To the point, simple but clear language
- What to keep, and what to abandon
- Edit, revise, and the loop
- Read to others and get feedbacks
- Give you plenty of time before the deadline
- Leave it and come back later
- Write and think as a native speaker

# Medical slang

- 404 moment- on card rounds when a patient's medical record cannot be located (from internet error message: 404 page not found)
- Acute lead poisoning- gun shot
- Basement admission- will end up in a hospital morgue
- COPD- chronic old person/chronic obstructive pulmonary disease
- D&D- death and donuts: night shifts
- Doorknob rounds- the entire presentation takes place in 5 seconds while the consultant's hand never leaves the doorknob to the entrance of the patient's room

# Medical slang (continued)

- DOTS- dead on the spot (of an accident)
- Freud squad- psychiatrists
- Full moon- full or overcrowded waiting room
- Hi5- HIV positive
- Hit and run- the act of speaking quickly so as not to be late for another engagement
- Icing on the cake- lethal tumor discovered in the X-ray of a heart attack victim
- White cloud- an on-call doctor who has uneventful nights as opposed to a Black cloud

# Medical slang (continued)

- Eternal care unit- died
- Blamestorming- the process of figuring out who to blame when something goes wrong
- Doughnut- CT scanner
- Frequent flyer- people who frequently come to the ER/hospital
- Round trip- take the patient from the ICU for a test

# Sources

- Fox, Adam, et al., *Medical Slang*
- Kipfer, Barbara A, *American Slang*, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition
- Makkai, Adam et al., *Handbook of Commonly Used American Idioms*, Barron's, 5<sup>th</sup> Edition