

Typology of Idiomatic Expressions in the Dialogue of Chapter One of “*Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*”

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Abstract: This study aims to analyze idiomatic expressions found in the dialogue of Chapter One of *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*. The objectives are to identify the idiomatic expressions, classify them based on Fernando’s (1996) typology, and analyze their contextual meanings and functions in dialogue. This study employs a descriptive qualitative method using dialogue excerpts from the selected chapter as the data source. The findings reveal that there are eleven idiomatic expressions identified in the dialogue, consisting of two *pure idioms*, seven *semi-idioms*, and two *literal idioms*. *Semi-idioms* are the most dominant type, reflecting a balance between literal and figurative meaning in everyday conversational contexts. The findings also show that interpretation of idiomatic meaning depends heavily on contextual factors, including the surrounding dialogue, narrative information, situational circumstances, and interpersonal relationships between the characters. In addition, the analysis demonstrates that idiomatic expressions serve various functions in the dialogue, including expressing authority, conveying evaluation and personal attitudes, managing interpersonal relationships, and influencing the psychological responses of other characters. The findings suggest that idiomatic expressions are not used randomly, but also closely related to the communicative needs of the characters and the interactional contexts in which they occur.

Keywords: Idiomatic Expressions; Fernando's Typology; Contextual Meaning; Pragmatic Function; Literary Dialogue.

INTRODUCTION

In the field of language, idiomatic expressions play an essential role in conveying meaning beyond literal interpretation. Idiomatic expressions are multi-word units that display varying degrees of fixedness and non-literalness (Fernando, 1996). Nunberg et al. (1994) emphasize that idiomatic expressions vary in their degree of compositionality, with some allowing partial interpretation while others are highly non-compositional. Due to this nature, idiomatic expressions often present challenges for language users, especially non-native speakers, as their meanings cannot always be inferred directly from the words that compose them. However, challenges in understanding idiomatic expressions are not limited to non-native speakers. Native speakers may also encounter difficulties, particularly due to regional variation and cultural diversity within the English-speaking world.

Idiomatcity evolves alongside language development, cultural change, and technological advancement. As new forms of communication emerge, innovative figurative expressions are continuously created to reflect contemporary experiences. Consequently, native speakers may also need to interpret unfamiliar idiomatic expressions using contextual clues rather than relying on prior linguistic knowledge. Taken together, these factors indicate that understanding idiomatic expressions is a complex and dynamic challenge shaped by linguistic, cultural, and contextual influences.

To observe idiomatic expressions in authentic contexts, literary works provide rich sources of data, as they reflect language use in creative, context-specific ways. Novels, in particular, often combine narrative and dialogue that mirror real-life communication. Among literary works, Rowling’s

Harry Potter series offers a distinctive linguistic environment, balancing imaginative storytelling with conversational language that closely resembles everyday interaction.

Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets, the second book in the series, is selected because it presents a wider range of social interactions and more developed character relationships than the first instalment. This study will focus on Chapter One of *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* because opening chapters typically introduce characters and situations through relatively self-contained dialogue.

Building on the discussion above, this research focuses on identifying and categorizing idiomatic expressions found in Chapter One of *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* using Fernando’s (1996) typology, followed by an analysis of their meanings and functions in dialogue context. By examining idiomatic expressions in an authentic literary setting, this study aims to deepen understanding of idiomatcity and provide insights relevant to language learning and teaching.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research employs a qualitative descriptive approach. According to Creswell (2009), a qualitative approach is used to explore and understand the meanings that individuals or groups ascribe to social or human problems. The qualitative descriptive approach is selected because this study focuses on analyzing textual data rather than numerical data.

The object of this research is *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*. This novel is selected for its rich use of language, particularly the presence of idiomatic expressions in character dialogue, which provide authentic data for linguistic analysis. The scope of this research is limited to Chapter One

of the novel, entitled *The Worst Birthday*. Such a restriction allows the analysis to be conducted in greater depth and detail, with the expectation that the findings will be more substantial.

The data are limited to expressions that function idiomatically, whose meanings range from highly opaque to partially literal, as well as to expressions whose meanings are transparent yet considered conventionalized and fixed, as proposed by Fernando (1996). In addition, the selected idiomatic expressions are analyzed not only in terms of their types, but also in terms of their contextual meanings and functions within the dialogue.

In this study, the researcher serves as the primary instrument in collecting and analyzing the data, as is typical in qualitative research. The researcher is directly involved in all stages of the research process, from data identification to interpretation. However, the analysis is not based solely on the researcher's intuition. To ensure validity and reliability, the identification of idiomatic expressions is guided by established theoretical criteria and supported by external references, such as idiom dictionaries and relevant linguistic studies. Furthermore, each expression is evaluated based on its semantic properties, particularly its degree of non-compositionality and conventionalized usage in context. This systematic approach minimizes subjectivity and ensures that the analysis remains consistent and theoretically grounded.

The data are collected through a documentary technique, as the primary source of data is a written literary text. The compiled expressions are then verified using authoritative lexical and idiom references, such as the *Oxford Dictionary of Idioms* (2020) and *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*. The selected expressions are further examined based on Fernando's (1996) framework of idiomaticity, which considers the degree of fixedness, semantic opacity, and conventionalization. While the verification stage focuses on data selection using external references, this step serves as an analytical validation to ensure that each expression consistently meets the established criteria for idiomaticity.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

After conducting data identification, verification, and classification, the researcher found eleven idiomatic expressions in the dialogue of Chapter One of *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*. The identified idiomatic expressions are presented in the following table.

Table 1: Identification of Idiomatic Expressions

No.	Idiomatic Expressions	Type
1	Not like the sound of	Semi-idiom
2	Magic word	Semi-idiom
3	Under this roof	Semi-idiom
4	All right	Semi-idiom
5	A big deal	Semi-idiom
6	Too right	Literal idiom
7	Signed and sealed	Semi-idiom
8	Stay out of someone's way	Literal idiom
9	Chuck someone out	Semi-idiom
10	Jiggery pokery	Pure idiom
11	Hocus pocus	Pure idiom

The classification results show that the idiomatic expressions identified in this study are distributed across the categories proposed by Fernando (1996). Among the eleven expressions, two are classified as *pure idioms*, seven as *semi-idioms*, and two as *literal idioms*.

The predominance of *semi-idioms* may be understood in relation to Fernando's (1996) description of *semi-idioms* as expressions in which one component retains its literal meaning while another carries a figurative interpretation. Compared with *pure idioms*, whose meanings are largely opaque, *semi-idioms* remain relatively accessible because part of their meanings can still be inferred from their lexical component. At the same time, they provide greater figurative nuance than *literal idioms*, whose meanings remain largely transparent. The distribution may also be associated with the contextual characteristics of Chapter One. The chapter is set primarily within the domestic environment of the Dursley household and consists largely of everyday conversations between Harry Potter and the Dursleys. However, these interactions are not merely casual exchanges. Much of the dialogue involves authority, judgment, a subtle form of indirect resistance, second-handed threat, and responses to restrictive control. In such contexts, *semi-idioms* appear particularly suitable because they allow speakers to communicate attitudes and interpersonal meanings while remaining sufficiently clear and immediately understandable.

Overall, the distribution of idiom types in the data suggests that the occurrence of idiomatic expressions in the data is not random, but reflects the relationship between the semantic characteristics of each idiom type and the communicative demands of the dialogue. The predominance of *semi-idioms* may be associated with their ability to balance figurative meaning and semantic accessibility, making them particularly suitable for the domestic and interaction-driven context of Chapter One. Meanwhile, the lower frequencies of *pure* and *literal idioms* indicate that highly opaque and highly transparent expressions occupy more limited roles within the dialogues examined in this study.

The contextual meaning analysis showed that the interpretation of idiomatic expressions depended heavily on contextual factors, including the situation, narrative information, speaker intention, and relationships between characters. Most expressions could not be interpreted solely through their literal meanings and required consideration of the surrounding dialogue to determine their intended meaning.

For example, the expression "*magic word*" refers to the polite expression "please" rather than indicates a word associated with magic or supernatural power. Similarly, the expression "*not like the sound of*" denotes an impression or an idea of something rather than refers to its literal meaning of auditory perception or something that can be heard, which is does not make any sense, since, as it is commonly understood, inanimate objects do not produce sounds of their own accord as living beings do.

Overall, the findings suggest that idiomatic meaning is not fixed, but contextually negotiated within the narrative. Understanding an idiom requires consideration not only of its conventional meaning, but also of the conversational setting,

narrative information, speaker intention, and interpersonal relationships surrounding its use.

In terms of pragmatic functions of idiomatic expressions in the dialogue, the analysis reveals that the identified idiomatic expressions were used to express evaluation, authority, convey indirect resistance, manage interpersonal relationships, and influence the psychological responses of other character. These functions help speakers deliver meanings more effectively while also reflecting interpersonal relationships among the characters.

Expression such as “*too right*” functions as an emphatic agreement used by Uncle Vernon to reinforce an expectation of compliance. Although it appears in the form of agreement, its primary function is not simply to acknowledge Harry’s statement, but to emphasize that the stated action is expected and must be carried out. The use of the idiomatic expression, instead of a more neutral response such as “yes” or “that’s correct,” serves a pragmatic function of intensification, strengthening the force of the utterance and conveying insistence. It transforms what could be interpreted as agreement into a forceful assertion of authority.

Meanwhile, the expression “*jiggery pokery*” functions as a mock-magical utterance used by Harry to imitate the sound and style of a spell and to intimidate Dudley. In the dialogue context, the expression does not convey literal semantic meaning, but instead simulates the act of spell-casting in order to produce a reaction from the addressee. By resembling the sound pattern of magical incantation, the utterance appears believable to Dudley, who reacts with fear and panic.

The findings also indicate that idiomatic expressions contributed to characterization. The choice of particular expressions reflects the personalities, attitudes, and social positions of the speakers. As a result, idiomatic language not only fulfilled communicative purposes, but also enriched the portrayal of relationships and interactions within the dialogue.

CONCLUSION

This study identified eleven idiomatic expressions in the selected chapter of the novel, comprising two pure idioms, seven semi-idioms, and two literal idioms. Semi-idioms were the most frequently occurring type, indicating that they are commonly used in literary dialogue because they combine figurative meaning with lexical transparency, enabling characters to express attitudes and interpersonal meanings while maintaining comprehensibility. The analysis also revealed that the meanings of idiomatic expressions are highly dependent on context. Their interpretations were determined through surrounding dialogue, narrative descriptions, situational contexts, and the relationships between characters. These findings demonstrate that idiomatic expressions serve not only as linguistic features but also as communicative devices that contribute to characterization and the natural flow of interaction in literary texts.

Future studies are encouraged to analyze idiomatic expressions in a broader corpus, including multiple novels, genres, or translated literary works, to provide more comprehensive insights into idiom use across different contexts. Further research may also examine the translation of idiomatic expressions, readers’ interpretation of idioms, or the

pedagogical implications of teaching idiomatic language in English language learning, thereby expanding the understanding of idioms from both linguistic and applied perspectives.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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