

The Effectiveness of Teaching Idioms in Electoral Speeches

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Abstract

There has been a considerable amount of interest in the study of idioms. English is a language with a vast idiomatic basis, which makes its learning very exciting and intriguing. Idioms, constitute a notoriously difficult area of foreign language learning and teaching. The sheer number of idioms and their high frequency in discourse make idioms an important aspect of vocabulary acquisition and language learning in general. Nowadays language learning is based on the need for interaction with others. This research aims to respond to a need for a proper method of teaching election idioms to High School students. From the growing body of this research, it follows that applying cooperative techniques for teaching election idioms, can improve learning outcomes and can also effectively improve language communication. The results of the pre-test and pro-test show that the cooperative method of teaching election idioms turned out to be more effective than the competitive method in both idioms comprehension and production.

Keywords: Idiomatic expression; Political discourse; Electoral speech; Cooperative method; Competitive method.

1. Introduction

“Since idiomatic expressions are so frequently encountered in both spoken and written discourse, they require special attention in language programs and should not be relegated to a position of secondary importance in the curriculum.”

Cooper, 1998

The 21st century skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, creativity, and collaboration demand teachers to increase learner effectiveness and efficiency as well as learner engagement and satisfaction. Consequently, they must create a stimulating and effective learning environment which brings about more positive student attitudes toward learning. This kind of innovative teaching becomes necessity when teaching English idiomatic expressions. Idiomatic expressions are phrases that carry different meanings than the literal definition of their component words (Kim, 2011).

Idiomatic expressions pervade English with a peculiar flavor and give it astounding variety, bright character and color. They help language learners understand English culture, penetrate into customs and lifestyle of the English people, and gain a deeper insight into the English history. However, learning idioms presents a host of difficulties to English learners, primarily because they don't know the culture and history behind English idioms. That is why they often use idioms incongruous with the situation. Indeed, English learners utilize idiomatic expressions very carefully, being afraid of using them incorrectly and being misunderstood. Adequate knowledge and appropriate use of idioms in an EFL setting is an important indicator of communicative competence of English. The comprehension and productions of idioms is included in the figurative competence which includes a set of abilities, such as the skill to decode the various (dominant, peripheral) meanings of a word, the ability to suspend a literal-referential strategy, to produce novel figurative expressions and to construct a coherent semantic representation related to a given figurative expression (Ambrose, 2008).

Unlike native speakers of English, non-native speakers lack the ability to use idiomatic expressions and to understand their meanings adequately. This presents a problem in non-native speakers' knowledge and proficiency of the English language and is considered a gap in their language learning process. It requires its speakers to have connotative word comprehension and an understanding of figurative language, and idioms fall into this final category (Cowie, 1983).

1.1. Novelty

The present study is novel due to the fact that no study has delved into an examination of idioms in electoral speech from methodological standpoint. The lack of their clear methodology emphasizes the significance of this

topic, specifically in the frame of discourse. The results obtained in this academic study can be effectively used in teaching English election idioms and in cultural studies.

2. Statement of the Problem

The *aim* of this research is to respond to a need for a proper method of teaching election idioms for High School students in the grade 11. This study is based on the *assumption* that cooperative method enhances both foreign language learners' reading, speaking abilities and enables the students to conduct a thorough analysis of political discourse.

3. Research Questions

Regarding problems of teaching idiomatic expressions and on the basis of the ultimate goal of this study, the following research questions were proposed:

- Which are the basic dimensions of discourse?
- Which are the problems of teaching idiomatic expressions?
- Is there any significant difference between cooperative and competitive methods of enhancing EFL learners understanding of election idioms?

3.1. The Main Dimensions of Discourse: Political Discourse

Discourse is the creation and organization of the segments of a language above as well as below the sentence. It is segments of language which may be bigger or smaller than a single sentence but the adduced meaning is always beyond the sentence. The term "discourse" applies to both spoken and written language, in fact to any sample of language used for any purpose. Any series of speech events or any combination of sentences in written form where successive sentences or utterances hang together is discourse. Discourse cannot be confined to sentential boundaries. It is something that goes beyond the limits of sentence. In another words discourse is "any coherent succession of sentences, spoken or written" (Matthews, 2005). Thus, the question put forward before us is two-faceted: firstly, to have a thorough look at *discourse* definitions, trying to define discourse as a heterogeneous unit with its specific structure and unique function, secondly, outline the traits of political discourse.

Two paradigms in linguistics - formalist paradigm and functionalist paradigm make different background assumptions about the goals of a linguistic theory, the methods for studying language, and the nature of data and empirical evidence. These differences in paradigm also influence definitions of discourse. A definition as derived from formalist assumptions is that discourse is "language above the sentence or above the clause". Another definition derived from the functionalist paradigm views discourse as "language use". This definition observes the relationship the discourse has with the context. A third definition of discourse attempts to bridge the formalist-functionalist dichotomy. The relationship between form (structure) and function is an important issue in discourse (Stubbs, 1983).

Formalist or structural analysis of discourse describes it at several levels or dimensions of analysis and in terms of many different units, categories, schematic patterns or relations. Structural analyses focus on the way different units function in relation to each other but they disregard the functional relations with the context of which discourse is a part (Dijk, 1985).

Structurally based analysis of discourse find "constituents"(smaller linguistic units that have particular "relationship" with one another and that can occur in a restricted number of (often ruled-governed) "arrangements". Structural views of discourse analysis accept that discourse is comprised of "units". Many contemporary structural analysis of discourse view the sentence "as the unit of which discourse is comprised". The structural view of discourse analysis places discourse "in a hierarchy of language structures thus fostering the view that one can describe language in a unitary way that continues unimpeded from morpheme to clause to sentence to discourse" (Fasold, 1990). But this kind of analysis does not pay attention to the purposes and functions for which so called "units" are designed to serve in human affairs. Discourse analysis is necessarily the analysis of language in use. The functionalist view of discourse analysis asserts that the study of discourse is the study of any aspect of language use. Any study which is not dealing with single sentences, contrived by the linguist, out of context, may be called discourse analysis (Fasold, 1990).

Discourse analysis cannot be restricted to the description of linguistic forms *independent of the purposes and functions* which these forms perform. Functional analyses of discourse rely less upon the strictly grammatical characteristics of utterances as sentences, than upon the way utterances are situated in contexts. Discourse analysis deals language in use- written text of all kinds and spoken data (Halliday, 1976).

Even though the text and discourse are used interchangeably with concern to literary analytical studies, these two are two diverging subjects. This confusion arises due to the similar nature of the two in their literary analytical studies as textual analysis and discourse analysis. While there are instances where text and discourse are used as basically synonymous terms, there is a difference in their definitions as regards agents (who and whom) and purpose fulfilled. In text, agents are not a critical factor: there may be agents, there may not be. To study text, you study the written words that communicate some information: structure, theme, meaning, rhetorical devices, etc. To study or analyze discourse, you study who is communicating with whom through what medium and for what social purpose. To study or analyze the text, you will note the overall structure and you will grasp the meaning of the content as it answers your question (Goody, 1977).

Discourse analysis has grown into a wide-ranging and heterogeneous discipline which finds its unity in the description of language above as well as below the sentence and an interest in the contexts and cultural influences which affect language in use. Discourse analysis has received ever-increasing attention from different disciplines. It includes taxonomy, speech act theory, interactional sociolinguistics, pragmatics, conversation analysis and ranges from philosophy to linguistics from semiotics to sociology to politics, and so on. Such a wide range of its fields indicates that the notion of discourse is itself quite broad. This may also suggest why discourse analysis has emerged as a special interest in the past few decades-the fact that diverse fields find the study of discourse useful indicates larger cultural and epistemological shifts.

At the present stage of the development of civilization the vital importance of the world political situation has made politics and *political discourse* a subject for intensive interdisciplinary researches as well as a subject for special teaching. The growing academic interest towards political discourse can be regarded as a social request, aimed to study not only the peculiarities of political thought and actions, but also those linguistic and rhetoric means politicians employ to affect and control public opinion.

Critical review of special researches devoted to the study of political discourse has revealed that it can be analyzed from at least four viewpoints:

- From the political point of view on the basis of which conclusions of political nature are made;
- From the linguistic viewpoint proper, when the researcher analyses the textual aspect of political discourse considering it as a verbal macro sign in its socio-cultural and political context;
- From the psychological point of view the aim of which is to reveal and define those strategies that are employed by a politician covertly or overtly in his/her speech to gain political influence upon the addressee;
- From the individual-hermeneutic viewpoint during which the speaker's personal attitudes towards the target political situation are revealed.

Out of these four, we consider linguistic studies of paramount importance since political thought and actions are inseparable from political speech. Words, actions, and events work together; words interpret events or actions, as well as constitute political facts, while actions in various ways help words gain their political efficacy. The analysis of political discourse (or political rhetoric) should treat discourse as an instrument of doing politics, either in a strategic or constitutive sense. In fact, any political idea or action is born, prepared, realized and controlled with the help of language (Nimmo and Combs, 1983).

The growing research interest towards political discourse has brought the birth of a new trend in linguistics - the trend of so called "political linguistics". Such a situation is quite natural as throughout different stages of its development linguistic theory has always demonstrated great interest in the functional studies of the language system in various spheres of real life (Threadgold, 1986).

What is political discourse? The definition of this term is closely connected with two understandings of politics - wide and narrow, i.e. more concrete. A wide definition of politics includes the activities of those organizations that belong to civil society and which are not necessarily regulated by the state but at the same time compete for resources -trades unions, business associations, environmental groups, etc. It can also include the activity of the media because they produce discourse on, for example, politics, social conflict, and international relations. Non-institutional actors in social conflict may, similarly, be seen as engaged in politics. Moreover, many apparently non-political institutions, such as schools, universities and hospitals are the products of public policy, which is in turn determined by ideological choices. Such institutions are regulated by large administrations which produce their own form of public discourse. There is no such thing as political language, but a wide and diverse set of discourses, or genres, or registers that can be classified as forms of political language. It would be feasible to identify a set of "canonical" forms of political discourse: policy papers, ministerial speeches, government press releases or press conferences, parliamentary discourse, party manifestos (or platforms), *electoral speeches*, etc. They are all characterized by the fact that they are spoken or written by (or for) primary political actors-members of the government or the opposition, members of parliament, leaders of political parties, candidates for office. In other words, in its wide sense, political discourse can be defined as a language of mass media or other institutions that is generally used in social and political spheres of communication (Bayley, 2005). There has been a considerable amount of interests in the study of how language functions within specific institutional contexts. Political discourse being a broad macro-category, studies on political language have included investigations into very different sub-genres such as electoral language, party political language, the language of diplomacy and international relations, the language of social conflict, the language of parliament, and so on (Bayley, 2005).

Politicians are always campaigning. They run campaigns to get votes to win their political office or seat. It does not matter if the politician is running for local, state or federal office, a politician is always communicating with the voters, and much of that communication is in the language of campaigns. In order to understand what a politician is saying, however, students might need to become familiar with campaign vocabulary. Explicit teaching of election terms is important for all students, particularly for English language learners. That is because campaign vocabulary is filled with idioms, which means "a word or phrase that is not taken literally" (Cook, 1993). For example, the idiomatic phrase "to throw one's hat in the ring", means to announce one's candidacy or enter a contest. This term comes from boxing, where throwing a hat in the ring meant a challenge; now it nearly always refers to political candidacy (Cook, 1993).

Since in electoral language idiomatic expressions are dominant, in the next step of our study we shall go further insights of this specific word-layer and the benefits for its teaching.

3.2. Benefits and Difficulties of Teaching Idioms

The English language being very flexible constantly enriches its vocabulary with words invented by language speakers, making it more colorful with new idiomatic expressions, and, at times, refills its stocks with the borrowings and neologisms. English just amazes by its extraordinary linguistic diversity. Understanding the lexicon of English demands more than knowing the denotative meaning of words, it requires its speakers to have connotative word comprehension and more - an understanding of figurative language. Such units with typical figurative sense are defined as idiomatic expressions (Cooper, 1998). Idioms are always something special about any language; they build up some distinctive features which make one language different from another. What is more, idioms reflect certain cultural traditions and depict the national character. Idioms are not a separate part of the language which one can choose either to use or to omit, but they form an essential part of the general vocabulary of English. Idioms appear in every language, and English has thousands of them. They are often confusing because the meaning of the whole group of words taken together has little, often nothing, to do with the meanings of the words taken one by one. In order to understand a language, we must know what the idioms in that language mean. If we try to figure out the meaning of an idiom literally, word by word, we will get befuddled. We have to know its hidden meaning. Because of idioms, learning a language can be complicated. Since vocabulary and culture are intertwined, speakers can gain more vocabulary through idioms and conversely, can learn more about idioms from being exposed to the target culture. The more comprehensible input there is the more learners' listening, speaking, writing and reading skills will improve (Kounin, 1970).

Native speakers tend to use idiomatic expressions spontaneously without thinking of the figurative meaning. It is natural that non-native speakers find idioms difficult to understand because they do not know what the image of the idiomatic expression is based on. For example, if non-native speakers of English come across the expression a "carrot and stick" method ("Carrot and stick" method is a motivational approach that involves offering a "carrot" (a reward for good behavior) and a "stick" (a negative consequence for poor behavior), they will find it uneasy because they are unable to realize that it is based on the image of a donkey that is encouraged to move forward by dangling a carrot in front of it or by hitting it with a stick. Thus, it is almost impossible for a non-native speaker who is unfamiliar with this idiom to imagine that such an idiom is used to describe any event which involves rewards (a carrot) and threats (the stick). If a non-native speaker is unfamiliar with the idiom "show you the ropes" and comes across such an expression, he or she will find it difficult to immediately understand. As such, they will find it difficult to realize that this expression proposes to teach one how a certain job is done. If these non-native speakers were told that such an idiomatic expression is used in a sailing context in which experienced sailors teach a novice how to handle the ropes on a boat, this may help them to understand and realize its meaning. Consequently, realizing the image that the idiom is based on and the origin of the idiom could help in resolving the figurative meaning of that particular idiom. Using the idiom in a certain context rather than using it alone may also help non-natives who are unfamiliar with that idiom to realize and figure out the metaphorical meaning (Boers, 2008).

Idioms share cultural and historical information and broaden people's understanding and manipulation of a language.

Differences in idiomatic expressions within a single language can lead to confusion and misunderstanding. When understanding metaphors in cross-cultural communication, people tend to transplant their own cognitive mode of a metaphor into another, which becomes the main reason of the misunderstanding in cross-cultural communication. The importance of idiomatic expressions also lies in the fact that it is an everyday routine of the native English speakers' language (Yule, 2006).

Learning idiomatic expressions by non-natives leads them to better English proficiency, help their second or foreign language seem more native-like, and more creative.

When you learn English idioms, you take English out of textbook and into the real world. The English language can be considered as being made up of two components: "Textbook English" and "Natural English". The textbook form of English is composed using proper English vocabulary, while strictly adhering to the rules of English grammar. The sentences in English textbook are necessarily grammatically correct and complete in all respects. The natural form of English, on the other hand, allows liberal use of slang, jargon, phrases and idioms, lending a colorful hue to the language. Natural English is spoken at an informal level, and it is the idioms in the language that give it a natural, conversational and creative feel (Gillett, 2004).

Idioms help learners to encounter and understand the workings of natural human language; that is, they help them to gain a deeper knowledge of the creative expression of human thought and language development over time. Rooted in the peoples' history, politics, sports, and culture, idioms become the mirror of their world, their hopes and fears, their lives and deaths. In short, idioms become part of the spiritual soul of their language.

Offering students systematic opportunities to encounter idioms during their language training therefore enables them to acquire new perspectives on life, viewing different cultural realities through the eyes of the people who create and use these turns of phrase. Oftentimes, the etymological origins of fixed, institutionalized idiomatic expressions reveal important information about their metaphorical register and imagery (Hoffman, 1984).

Teaching students the popular idioms used in political campaigns allows teachers the opportunity to incorporate civics into their curriculum. The new Social Studies Frameworks for College, Career, and Civic Life (C3s) outlines the requirements teachers must follow to prepare students to participate in a productive constitutional democracy: "...[student] civic engagement requires knowledge of the history, principles, and foundations of our American democracy, and the ability to participate in civic and democratic processes." Helping students understand the language of political campaigns makes them better-prepared citizens in the future when they exercise their right to vote (Gibbs, 1989).

3.3. Teaching Election Idioms Through Cooperative and Competitive Methods

In the decade of *cooperative learning*, cooperative teaching techniques can be applied to the learning of various areas of knowledge. The cooperative teaching techniques are those which provide opportunities for comprehensible and meaningful input and output by using group work in a non-threatening environment that is conducive to language learning (Ghaith, 2003).

It is currently believed that cooperative teaching techniques can be used for various areas of knowledge and cooperative teaching and learning will improve learning outcomes. It follows that cooperative learning can also be applied to learning idioms. Cooperative learning is the instructional use of small groups so that the students work together to achieve shared goals. The term “cooperative learning” works interchangeably with “collaborative learning”, and it is the grouping and pairing of students for the purpose of achieving an academic goal (Gokhale, 1995).

The difference between cooperative learning and group work is that in group work the teacher is an information provider but in cooperative learning the teacher is a facilitator (Zingaro, 2008). Cooperative learning takes place within a group, each member of which can take on a specific role. The roles can be *a function role*: upholding a functional responsibility, *a resource role*: supplying information for the group, *cognitive role*: taking part in higher-level-thinking, and *perspective role*: involvement with one perspective. Cooperation-based instruction is based on Piagetian theory, Bandura’s social learning theory, and Vygotskian theory. Socially oriented lessons and group interaction, which are the constituents of communicative language teaching, are the essence of cooperative learning (Chen, 2005).

The cooperative learning methods can be of two categories. In the first category, teachers exactly follow the well-defined and lock-step procedures; in the second category, teachers use a conceptual framework as a pattern to fit their specific situations. The former is direct cooperative learning and the latter is conceptual-cooperative learning method (Johnson, 2000). Cooperative learning is claimed to have several advantages. It improves academic performance and interpersonal and communication skills. It can also provide students with insights about the principles of decision making, which may promote their democratic skills (Clemen and Hampton, 1994). By cooperative learning, participants’ interest and critical thinking can be increased, learners’ anxiety decreases, their participation and learning retention increases, and it provides a non-threatening environment for learning, hence learners’ language proficiency, social maturity, and affective growth are increased by cooperative learning (Chen, 2005). Cooperative learning can effectively improve language communication. Cooperative teaching techniques can be useful in providing a large amount of comprehensible input which is necessary for improving learning. Cooperative learning is also said to develop the leadership skill of students, and to provide a condition in which students respect each other (Apple, 2006).

Competitive learning is the opposite of cooperative learning. In competitive learning, the participants are not compared and each participant attempts to achieve his or her goal individually (Liang, 2002). It is believed that in this approach to teaching, learner’s self-interest and unawareness of others’ accomplishment increases. This way, owing to the built-in self-centeredness, the success of others becomes threatening. In the traditional learning model based on competitive learning, classes are teacher-centered and learners are non-active. In such an approach, it is the teachers who are in charge of the teaching/learning process. Still, it is sometimes claimed that this approach to learning idioms prepares students for real life experiences and enhances their self-confidence and self-reliance. Nonetheless, the use of competitive learning may cause students to develop apprehension and expressive and behavioral problems (Baker, 2007).

4. Methodology

- Participants. The study was conducted with the help of 20 students, male and female, studying at Vahan Tekeyan’s high school, Armenia. The age of the students varied from 16 to 17 years old and the participants were assigned into two groups: control group and experimental group.
- Instrumentation (Instruments).
- To run the study at first the students took a Pre-Test.

Pre-test was administered to evaluate the effect of competitive method on understanding of each idiomatic expression. The test consisted of 6 tasks and its reliability was assured since it was regarded as a standard test. The items of the test were based on the learners’ textbooks, including translations, definitions, synonyms.

The Post test was administered to measure the effect of cooperative method on understanding election idioms. The test included electoral speeches of presidents and politicians. The time allocated for each test to be done was 30 minutes.

To calculate the effectiveness of treatment on the difference between the control and experimental groups, the papers were scored and analyzed.

5. Results

The results are tabulated below. Table I illustrates the allocation of marks of participants in pre-test.

Table-1. Pre-test results

<i>Marks</i>	<i>Number of students</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Excellent (9-10)	0	0%
Good (7-8)	1	5%
Satisfactory (4-6)	9	45%
Unsatisfactory (1-3)	10	50%

From the table it can be seen that the percentage index of the satisfactory mark is 45%. This is really a bad result for students of this level. As for the unsatisfactory mark, this one comes to be the highest one among all the marks. The percentage index of it is 50%.

The descriptive statistics of the pro-test is presented in [table 2](#)

Table-2.The descriptive statistics of the pro-test

<i>Marks</i>	<i>Number of students</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Excellent (9-10)	11	55%
Good (7-8)	8	40%
Satisfactory (4-6)	1	5%
Unsatisfactory (1-3)	0	0%

The results of the survey show that cooperative method is really an effective way of teaching election idioms, as the percentage of the excellent mark is 55% with 11 students, that is to say, the majority of students got excellent marks; the percentage index of good mark is 40% with 8 students. Only 5% of the students got satisfactory marks. Astoundingly, no student got an unsatisfactory mark.

Table-3.The results of the two surveys
Competitive Method *Cooperative Method*

<i>Marks</i>	<i>Numbers of students</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Numbers of students</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Excellent (9-10)	0	0%	11	55%
Good (7-8)	1	5%	8	40%
Satisfactory (4-6)	9	45%	1	5%
Unsatisfactory(1-3)	10	50%	0	0%

[Table 3](#) displays the mean scores between two groups with two tests grades. The comparative study of data of two methods show the positive impact of cooperative method on enhancing lexical accuracy of election phrases; as the percentage of excellent marks increased from 0% to 55%. This is a great achievement for both the students and the teacher. As for good marks, it is worth mentioning, that the percentage of students getting this score has increased from 5% to 40%. Therefore, the mean scores of the students in experiment class are higher than the scores in the control group.

6. Conclusion

Based on the findings of the present study, it may be concluded that, the cooperative method of teaching election idioms turned out to be more effective than the competitive method on both idioms comprehension and production. Nonetheless, apart from their implications for idioms instruction, these findings can have implications for syllabus and textbook designers as well. Knowledge of the advantages and functions of cooperative teaching method may help syllabus designers to make more informed decisions about the content and activities of idioms course books and to provide textbooks and exercises for cooperative class works rather than individualistic ones.

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Appendix A

Competitive Method

12th Grade

Pre-Test

Task 1. Read the sentence and determine the meaning of each political idiom. (3 points)

1. When the politician was caught stealing from the taxpayers, everyone thought he would receive a severe punishment, but all he got was a **slap on the wrist**.
2. Tom wanted **to get down to brass tacks**, but the lawyer kept chatting about the weather.
3. Linda Sanchez, the Democratic caucus's vice chairwoman, sent a jolt through the caucus when she publicly called for the current regime **to pass the torch**.
4. There's a **charm offensive** underway, and there's a real effort on part to reach out to these campaigns and offer help, said a senior Democratic aide.

Task 2. Complete the sentences using the following political idioms: *to toe the party line, two-horse race, to get on / off your soapbox, to vote with your feet*. (2 points)

1. This presidential election was just
2. When a politiciannothing can stop his talking.
3. He'll have to learn, if he wants to get on.
4. I told her that if she didn't like the job she could always

Task 3. Find political idioms in the following paragraphs and tell the right meaning of them. (3 points)

1. Presidential elections in the US take place in early November, but the newly elected president doesn't start his term until January. The previous president is considered a lame duck from election until the new president starts. Everyone knows they're on their way out, so it's difficult for them to get much accomplished.
2. On Friday night, the Democratic nominee for governor, Gretchen Whitmer, campaigned in Ann Arbor with Senator Bernie Sanders to rally young voters-not because she needed help, but because Michigan Democrats now think they could flip as many as four House seats in the state and win other races to loosen the Republican's grip on power here (NYT).

Task 4. Match the idiomatic expression with the picture that is relevant to its meaning: 1. *political hot potato*, 2. *to press the flesh*, 3. *to throw the book at*, 4. *to vote with your feet* (2 points).



a



b



c



d

Appendix B

Cooperative Method

12th Grade

Post-Test

Task 1. Look at the pictures and study the following election idioms. (2 points)

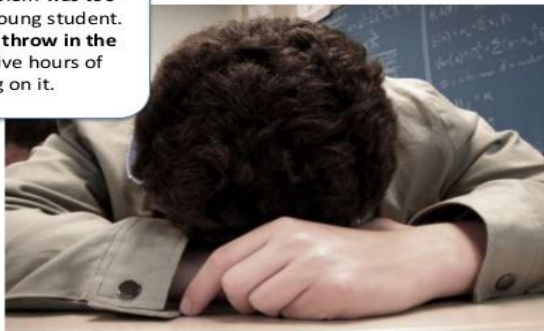
Cast your vote
To vote



I became a Canadian citizen this year. I'm excited to **cast my vote** in the elections in October!

Throw in the towel
To quit or give up

The math problem was too much for the young student. He decided to **throw in the towel** after five hours of working on it.



Abstain from voting
Not to vote even when you are eligible to do so



Many of the candidates this year seem inexperienced. I'm thinking of **abstaining from voting**.

Vote with your feet
To show your opinion by leaving an organization or by no longer supporting, using, or buying something

The business tycoon **voted with his feet** on the issue of climate change. He decided not to do business with anyone involved in coal mining.



Election fever
To talk about and have many activities related to the elections; to be engrossed with the elections



You know that **election fever** has started when you see many lawns in the neighbourhood displaying these signs.

Task 2. Listen to the dialogue. Explain the meaning of the idioms based on the context. (3 points) (CD is attached)

Task 3. Listen to the dialogue again and fill in the gaps. (3 points) (CD is attached)

Tatiana: Hey Natalia, the election is coming soon. Do you know who you are going to vote for?

Natalia: I am not sure. I feel so overwhelmed. Maybe I won't this year! What if I vote for the wrong person!

Tatiana: Natalia, you need to calm down. Do not.....!

Natalia: It's just that everyone I see has and there are so many conflicting opinions and important issues to consider.

Tatiana: Maybe so, but I don't thinkis the answer.

Natalia: Well, what do you suggest I do?

Tatiana: Research the issues and each of the candidates. Figure out which candidate most closely matches your values. Later, if you feel that you voted for the wrong person, you can always

Natalia:? What do you mean?

Tatiana: I mean that if later on, you find that you are not satisfied with the performance of your candidate, you can vote for another.

Natalia: I suppose you're right. I'll start researching the candidates today!

Task 4. Make up a conversation using the same election idioms used in the dialogue above. (2 points)

Appendix C

Election Idioms and Phrases

1. **Always a bridesmaid, never a bride:** used to talk about someone who is never the most important person in a situation.
2. **A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush:** Something of some value that one already has; not risking what one has for possibilities.
3. **Bleeding Heart:** A term describing people whose hearts "bleed" with sympathy for the downtrodden; used to criticize liberals who favor government spending for social programs.
4. **The buck stops here:** said by someone who is responsible for making decisions and who will be blamed if things go wrong.
5. **Bully Pulpit:** The Presidency, when used by the President to inspire or moralize. Whenever the President seeks to rouse the American people, he is said to be speaking from the bully pulpit. When the term first came into use, "bully" was slang for "first rate" or "admirable."
6. **Caught between a rock and a hard place:** in a very difficult position; facing a hard decision.
7. **A chain is only as strong as its weakest link:** A successful group or team relies on each member doing well.
8. **Cheat/fool me once, shame on you. Cheat/fool me twice, shame on me!:** After being tricked once, one should be wary, so that the person cannot trick you again.
9. **Close only counts in horseshoes and hand grenades:** Coming close but not succeeding is not good enough.
10. **Closing the barn door after the horse escapes:** If people try to fix something after the problem has occurred.
11. **Convention Bounce:** Traditionally, after the official convention of the party of a US Presidential candidate during an election year, that party's nominee would see an increase in voter approval in polls.
12. **Do not count your chickens before they hatch:** you should not count on something before it happens.
13. **Do not make a mountain out of a molehill:** meaning it's not that important.
14. **Do not put all your eggs in one basket:** to make everything dependent on only one thing; to place all one's resources in one place, account, etc.
15. **Do not put the horse before the cart:** Do not do things in the wrong order. (This can imply that the person you are addressing is impatient.)
16. **The end justifies the means:** A good outcome excuses any wrongs committed to attaining it.
17. **Fishing Expedition:** An investigation with no defined purpose, often by one party seeking damaging information about another.
18. **Give him/her enough rope to hang him/herself:** If one gives someone enough freedom of action, they may destroy themselves by foolish actions.
19. **Hang your hat:** to depend on or believe in something.
20. **He who hesitates is lost:** One who cannot come to a decision will suffer for it.
21. **Hindsight is 20/20:** A perfect understanding of an event after it has happened; a term usually used with sarcasm in response to criticism of one's decision.
22. **If at first you do not succeed, try and try again:** Don't let a first-time failure stop further attempts.
23. **If wishes were horses then beggars would ride:** If people could achieve their dreams simply by wishing for them, life would be very easy.
24. **If you cannot take the heat, stay out of the kitchen:** If the pressures of some situation are too much for you, you should leave that situation. (Somewhat insulting; implies that the person addressed cannot tolerate pressure.)
25. **It is not whether you win or lose it is how you play the game:** Reaching a goal is less important than giving our best effort.
26. **Jumping on the bandwagon:** to support something that is popular.
27. **Kicking the Can down the Road:** a delaying of a difficult decision made by passing short and temporary measures or laws instead.
28. **Lame Duck:** An officeholder whose term has expired or cannot be continued, who thus has lessened power.
29. **The lesser of two evils:** The lesser of two evils is the principle that when faced with selecting from two unpleasant options, the one which is least harmful should be chosen.
30. **Let us run it up the flagpole and see who salutes:** to tell people about an idea in order to see what they think of it.
31. **Opportunity only knocks once:** You will only have one chance to do something important or profitable.
32. **One-two-horse race:** a [competition](#), [election](#), etc, in which there are only two [teams](#) or [candidates](#) with a [chance](#) of [winning](#).
33. **A political football:** A problem that doesn't get solved because the politics of the issue get in the way or the issue is very controversial.
34. **A political hot potato:** Something potentially dangerous or embarrassing.
35. **Politically correct/incorrect (PC):** To use or not use language that is offensive to some person or group - often shortened to PC.
36. **Politics makes strange bedfellows:** Political interests can bring together people who otherwise have little in common.
37. **Press the flesh:** to shake hands.

38. **Put my foot in my mouth:** to say something that you regret; to say something stupid, insulting, or hurtful.
39. **Reach Across the Aisle:** A term for making an effort to negotiate with member(s) of the opposite party.
40. **Skeletons in the closet:** a hidden and shocking secret.
41. **The squeaky wheel gets the grease:** When people say that the squeaky wheel gets the grease, they mean that the person who complains or protests the loudest attracts attention and service.
42. **Sticks and stones may break my bones, but names will never harm me:** Something in response to an insult which means that people cannot hurt you with bad things they say or write about you.
43. **Straight as an arrow:** Honest, genuine qualities in a person.
44. **Talking Points:** A set of notes or summaries on a particular topic that is recited, word for word, whenever the topic is discussed.
45. **Throw the book at:** charge or punish (someone) as severely as possible.
46. **Throw in the towel:** to give up.
47. **Throw your hat into the ring:** to announce your intention of entering a competition or election.
48. **Toe the party line:** to conform to the rules or standards of the political party.
49. **To get on/off your soapbox:** To talk a lot about a subject you feel strongly about.
50. **To slap on the wrist:** a mild reprimand or punishment.
51. **To be on the same boat:** to be in the same [unpleasant situation](#) as other [people](#).
52. **To get down to brass tacks:** start to consider the basic facts or practical details.
53. **To beat around the bush:** discuss a matter without coming to the point.
54. **To bend over backwards:** make every effort to achieve something, especially to be fair or helpful.
55. **To knock one's socks off:** amaze or impress someone.
56. **To get on your soapbox:** to [express your opinions](#) about a [particular subject forcefully](#).
57. **Vote with your feet:** To express one's dissatisfaction with something by leaving, especially by walking away.
58. **Where there is smoke, there is fire:** If it looks like something is wrong, something probably is wrong.
59. **Whistle stop:** a brief appearance of a political candidate in a small town, traditionally on the observation platform of a train.
60. **Witch Hunt:** A vindictive, often irrational, investigation that preys on public fears. Refers to witch hunts in 17th century Salem, Massachusetts, where many innocent women accused of witchcraft were burned at the stake or drowned.