Learning and mastering idiomatic expressions is one of the key objectives in the process of foreign language teaching at the advanced level. Teaching idiomatic expressions is significant and necessary considering that these units contain marks of cultural and historical development of a nation and are characteristic to all languages.

Native speakers use a great number of idiomatic expressions in their speech while those who study foreign language struggle with understanding the meaning of such word combinations and therefore reproduce complex statements instead of set expressions that are often met in native speakers' speech.

When a French would say: «il y a un mot en plus dans la liste», non-native speaker would say: «il y a un ajout d’un mot». Be sure, that an American or British would understand word for word translation of the Russian saying as “cat in a bag”, though its actual meaning is rendered by the English saying “to buy a pig in a poke”. Russian expression “have butterflies” is used to describe a state of falling in love, while in English this expression is used to express anxiety, fear.

Being a part of common language, idioms are met in all spheres of everyday life (newspaper, advertisements, magazines, songs, films, Internet). They are an essential feature of efficient communication with the use of foreign language, particularly on the advanced level. Ability to understand and adequately use idiomatic expressions in speech is an indicator of high level in foreign language proficiency.

The word “idiom” comes from Greek «idiōma» that means “peculiarity, singularity”.

Idiomatic expressions are a kind of locution used as a unity which meaning can’t be derived just from the meaning of its constituent parts.

Teaching idiomatic expressions is recommended by Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). Some of set expressions (for example French «en avoir plein le dos») are taught already on A level. However, greater amount of set expressions is introduced to students on B and C levels. We are referring here to learning more complicated units such as «se mettre martel en tête» in French, that means "to think about something ceaselessly, worry about something.

Learning idioms in the context rather than isolated seems to be most reasonable. It gives foreign language students an opportunity not only to understand the meaning of an idiomatic expression but also to see real life situations when native speakers use them.

It is most essential to demonstrate students the use of idioms in everyday oral activity. It will allow them to use those expressions autonomously while speaking. A teacher can specially select articles, texts, videos, a great number of other modern resources to achieve this objective. It will not only contribute to better mastering of the material but also will help to create a foreign language communication environment in class. It will have a positive effect on teaching process and motivation development to study foreign language in general.

Keywords: Idiomatic expressions, foreign language teaching, communication, Common European Framework of Reference.

1 INTRODUCTION

Being a constituent part of a common, everyday language, idioms appear in all spheres of everyday life (newspapers, advertisements, magazines, journals, songs, films, the Internet). They are essential characteristics of effective communication in foreign language, on advanced level in particular. Ability to understand and adequately use idioms in speech indicates high level of language proficiency.
Idioms study and comprehension is one of the main objectives in the process of teaching foreign language on advanced level. It is considered to be desirable and valuable taking into account that they contain a mark of cultural and historical development of a nation and feature all languages.

2 METHODOLOGY

Primary error, which foreign language learners face while perceiving idioms, is word for word translation of units that can’t be semantically divided and which meaning can’t be derived from each component meaning. It happens because native language doesn’t possess similar structures as a foreign one.

Another difficulty refers to a culture which contains those idioms. Even having high enough level of language proficiency a learner can’t derive meaning of set expressions without basic knowledge about culture of the language under study. In similar situation, a Spanish would say “dormir a pierna suelta”, but a French would say “dormir à poings fermés”.

During study of literature for Higher Education Institutions we found that contemporary text-books give little martial about communicative phraseological units, concerning French language in particular. Thus, we can assume that learners lack of using authentic speech patterns containing idioms and it results in wrong translation and comprehension of phraseological units during communication. Therefore, communicative approach to teaching foreign language is not realized in full and ability to communicate on international level is not developed.

Yet, we found that such scholars as B.C. Cronk, S.D. Lima, W.A. Schweigert [2], G. Denhière, J.C. Vestiggel [3], G.V. Ovchinnikova [5] carried out researches devoted to issues of phraseological units usage in life communication.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Idiomatic expressions: definition and basic characteristics

An idiom represents a unit that is characterized by its own structure, semantics and stylistic connotation. Semantic shift in meaning of lexical components is a differentiating sign of a phraseological unit. Thus, a word being a part of a phraseological unit, lose its genuine meaning and acquires a new one, that is semantically connected with the other unit components.

In the article we will refer to a phraseological unit the following: a fixed phrase (set expression where no word can be substituted), a proverb (minor pieces of poetic folk art expressed in short rhythmic sayings that contain common idea, conclusion, allegory with didactic approach), a saying (short, fixed statement of enlightening nature that is a complete statement reflecting centuries-old experience of a nation and with a full sentence structure), an aphorism (ingenious, complete ideas said or written in laconic, memorable text form, that is repeated time and time again by other people), an idiom (set and above-word expression, that can’t be divided or separated, that is used as a unity and meaning of it can’t be derives from meaning of components).

Following O.S. Akhmanova we understand idioms as “word combinations that present specific and unique features of the language in its syntactic and semantic structure” [1]. It should be reminded that the very word “idiom” comes from Greek «idiōma», that means peculiarity, specificity.

French language contains quite a large number of idiomatic expressions. According to estimation of some scholars more than 3200 units [4].

In terms of a meaning idiomatic expression can match a simple lexical unit (a word) or a complex one (a sentence). Thus, for example, an idiom "casser les pieds" is a simple lexical unit with the meaning "to annoy", while an expression "faire les quatre cents coups" is referred to a complex syntactic unit with the meaning "to lead a riotous life".

Some idiomatic expressions allow word for word translation, for example "jeter du bois dans le feu" (throw more wood into the stove). Such expressions can be used both in direct and in figurative sense. Other idiomatic units don’t allow word-for-word translation. It is impossible to translate word-for-word an expression “appeler un chat un chat” that means “call things as they are” though if to translate word-for-word it is “call a cat a cat".
As idioms bring some difficulties for perception, comprehension, reproduction and translation, it is sensible to use tools aimed at identification, memorizing and reproduction these expressions at classes with learners.

3.2 The importance of teaching idiomatic expressions at foreign language classes

Teaching foreign language is mainly based on the knowledge of words semantics [6]. Therefore, study of idiomatic expressions seems to be extremely important especially due to their cultural and linguistic peculiarities.

While teaching idiomatic expressions and mastering oral speech skills among students with the help of those speech patterns a teacher faces the following tasks: to arise interest to idioms; desire to know them and use them in a foreign language communication process; help learners understand the whole content; teach identification and understanding idiomatic expressions in oral speech and provide their memorizing.

Native speakers use in their speech a great number of idiomatic expressions, while learners of foreign language struggle trying to comprehend their meaning or in their turn generate complex expressions instead of using those that are often used by native speakers.

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Teaching idiomatic expressions is recommended by Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). Some of set expressions (for example French «en avoir plein le dos») are taught already on A level. However, greater amount of set expressions is introduced to students on B and C levels. We are referring here to learning more complicated units such as «se mettre martel en tête» in French, that means "to think about something ceaselessly, worry about something.

3.3 Tools and techniques for teaching idiomatic expressions

Most idioms in French language are divided into simple categories such, for example, as idioms connected with names of body parts, animal names, colors, human appearances, professions etc. So, to start with it is advisable to choose idiomatic expressions from one category according to the topic under study. It is not recommended to present more than 5-8 expressions at a time, because difficulty with their perception and reproduction will prevent successful mastering those expressions. Context presentation of idioms is considered most sensible than isolated approach. It will enable learners not just to understand the meaning of the expression but also see the situations when native speakers use them. For example, to introduce French idiom «mener quelqu’un par le bout du nez» (eng. "to twist somebody round your little finger") is advisable in the following contexts: “Je peux même accepter que le gouvernement se laisse aveuglément mener par le bout du nez” (eng. “I can even accept the government being led blindly by the nose”); “Madeleine, c’est l’histoire d’un grand dadais qui se fait mener par le bout du nez” (eng. “Madeleine is about this nerdy kind of guy under this woman’s thumb”).

After contextual introduction of idioms learners are offered to elicit their meaning. Then learners are to give their own examples of how to use the expressions under study. These steps are to be applied for all idioms of the particular topic. At the next stage students can be given a task to find equivalents to studied idioms in the native language, if it is possible.

Thus, learners will not only have an opportunity to fix idiom usage in speech but also will have an opportunity to hear other contexts where they are and can be used.

To continue mastering idiom usage learners can be offered different exercises with the task to fill gaps with proper idioms or to match idioms to their meaning. Here are several examples from the French language:

1. Aujourd’hui, tu n’es pas dans ton assiette:
   a) Tu n’aimes pas ton repas  b) tu ne te sens pas bien.

2. Elle est réglée comme une horloge:
a) Elle est routinière  
b) elle est à l’heure.

3 Il a mangé de la vache enragée.

a) Il a très faim  
b) il est très en colère.

It is worth noting that such approach to idiomatic expressions study encourages better memorizing lexical and syntactical forms alongside with apprehension and understanding those units.

4 CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, we need to point out that expressions under study reflect mentality and life style of any nation. Each language contains figural expressions (figures of speech) used by native speakers in various situations. Therefore, such expressions can be meaningful in one language and absolutely meaningless in the other. It results in importance of demonstrating to learners the degree of frequency those idioms are used in everyday life that can be done through mass media, newspaper and journal articles, songs, films and advertising messages. Having seen the way idioms are used in everyday speech learners will be able to autonomously use expressions in their speech. To achieve it a teacher can make a selection of articles, texts, videos using all modern resources including the Internet. It will not just contribute to better mastering of structures under study but also create an atmosphere of foreign language communication that will have a positive effect on teaching process, motivation development to study foreign language in the whole.

REFERENCES