**Which image would you like to see in an idiom dictionary? Testing L1 English speakers’ visual preferences of metaphoric idioms**

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Idioms are important elements of language use that are characterized by figurative processes of meaning construction (see, e.g., Gibbs 1994; Dobrovol’skji 1997; Langlotz 2006). In the context of second language acquisition, understanding and using idioms is an indication of language proficiency. Although previous research established that both etymological information and imagery play an important role in metaphoric language processing (Katz et al., 1988), the positive effects of visual input remain unclear particularly for idiom learning (e.g., Boers & Lindstromberg 2008; Boers et al. 2009). The often contradictory results stem, most likely, from ineffective visuals. Boers et al. (2009), for instance, noted that their photos and illustrations depicted the literal origins of the idiomatic expressions, which conflicted with explanatory notes on figurative meaning, thus triggering weaker retention compared to the no-visual control group.

To take a further step in exploring the potential usefulness of images in contexts of idiom learning, the present study investigates which type of image L1 English speakers prefer to see in combination with an English idiom in a dictionary. We focus on the following types of images (see Figure 1):

* Type A, which depicts the literal scene set up by the constituents of the idiom.
* Type B, which depicts the meaning of the idiom (i.e. the figurative referent).
* Type C, which combines the visualization of the figurative meaning of the idiom with the depiction of the literal scene of its constituents.

To investigate whether the different types of images will trigger preferential choices, we collected ratings from 60 L1 English speakers on 21 idioms in English. Each idiom was accompanied by 3 visuals (Type A, B, and C). Participants were asked on a scale how well the idiom would work in a dictionary and how familiar they are with the idiom. The results showed that the preferred image type combines the literal and metaphorical components of an idiom (Type C).

**References**

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