# Realizing Idioms in Conversational Texts of English Textbooks for The Eleventh Year

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## Abstract

This study focuses on how idioms are realized in conversational texts of English textbooks for the eleventh year: *English for Change* and *Bahasa Inggris Tingkat Lanjut*. The textbooks were published concerning the Emancipated Curriculum (*Kurikulum Merdeka*) in Indonesia which focuses on learners' autonomy and real-life communication. Therefore, examining how well educational materials support these goals is essential. The idioms were identified as one of the formulaic expressions categorized using Biber et al. (1999). To conduct and produce the results, the researcher plays a role in collecting, analyzing, interpreting, grouping data into codes, and concluding collected data. By employing a descriptive analysis of the conversational texts from the selected textbooks, this study contributes to the understanding of pedagogical approaches to teaching conversational language. It offers insights for educators, curriculum developers, and textbook authors. The findings showed that the types of idioms realized from the textbooks are phrasal verbs (15 data), prepositional verbs (2 data), and phrasal-prepositional verbs (3 data). Nevertheless, no data was found for multi-word verb combinations. Understanding idioms is important for good communication because it helps to better understand the language, express ourselves more clearly, and learn about different cultures.

Keywords: Conversational Texts, English Textbooks, Idioms

## INTRODUCTION

As Indonesia adopts the Emancipated Curriculum and its emphasis on communicative competence, it is essential to incorporate educational materials that enable students to engage with language that reflects actual conversational practices. As one of the most important teaching and learning sources of materials to meet educational objectives, English textbooks should contain formulaic language components to ensure students' exposure to enhancing formulaic competence and achieving communicative goals (Wray, 2002; Wray & Perkins, 2000; Nattinger & DeCarrico, 1992). As such, textbooks must provide linguistic knowledge and equip learners with the skills necessary to navigate various communicative contexts effectively, such as providing students with authentic conversational texts.

In Celce-Murcia's (2007) communicative competence theory, formulaic competence is one major communicative sub-competence in the ELT area. Learning the concept of formulaicity can greatly assist EFL students in becoming as proficient in communicating and expressing ideas in a language as native speakers. However, despite years of formal schooling in the English language, students

are not yet able to express their ideas, thoughts, and feelings clearly in the English language (Gani et al., 2015; Tumansery & Munden, 2020), especially in Indonesia, where students have little to no exposure to using the target language in the real world.

Textbooks play a paramount role in the teaching process. Similarly, Cunningsworth (1995) and Hutchinson & Torres (1994) defined textbooks as a resource for accomplishing goals and objectives related to the needs of students, which provide input into classroom lessons in the form of texts, activities, explanations, and more. Thus, an English textbook is a book containing activities, materials, and tasks that students use when learning English. A textbook is viewed as a reliable source of materials to study from. This statement is supported by Sheldon (1988, p. 237); he mentioned that textbooks are valid sources because renowned authorities in the field of teaching languages write the textbooks.

As cited in Vitta (2021), ELT textbooks are thought of as professionally produced materials that aid in the language learning process by (1) providing language input, (2) designing activities that make use of this input, and (3) organizing the input and related activities into a curriculum (McGrath, 2002; Miller, 2011; Ur, 1996; Wong, 2017 in Vitta, 2023). This suggests that in a textbook, the contents should cover a variety of language skills of competencies that are commonly referred to as communicative competence, including elements in a language that are designed and organized in different activities to meet the purpose of the curriculum and help with the students in proficiency attainment.

Formulaic expressions play a significant role in language use, making up a large portion of spoken and written communication. They are fixed phrases or word combinations that help organize discourse, express precise meanings, and make language processing easier for both speakers and listeners. Another definition of Formulaic Expressions was described by Neno & Agustien (2016) as fixed or prefabricated chunks, which are commonly used by native speakers in everyday life. Moreover, several studies found that formulaic expressions in EFL textbooks were unlikely to present and model conversational language (Northbrook & Conklin, 2018; Northbrook & Conklin, 2019; Northbrook et al., 2022). Another study conducted by Sukur (2020) revealed that several English textbooks in Indonesia lacked the topics for the students to promote their formulaic competence. It was implied that while developing materials for English teaching and learning, the content of the formulaic expressions in teaching and learning materials in the textbook should be taken into account. In contrast, even though formulaic expressions are essential for improving EFL students' communicative skills, Diepenbroek & Derwing (2013 in Mucherino, 2019) found that textbooks that are used in classrooms usually do not focus on them or "often too decontextualized to truly give an understanding of how to use them appropriately" (p. 2).

Several studies related to formulaic expressions in written discourse have been conducted (Mustapa & Agustien, 2017; Tianyu, 2019; Sukur, 2020; and Wu, 2020). Mustapa and Agustien (2017) focused on analyzing formulaic expressions used in conversational texts. They emphasized that formulaic expressions are needed for students' fluency and native-like English speaking skills and should be introduced in textbooks. Textbooks support the content of formulaic expressions, which can be analyzed from the conversational texts. Tianyu (2019) conducted a study that analyzed the frequency and features of Formulaic Expressions in three English textbooks for Chinese junior school students.

In this study, 'formulaic sequences' is used to refer to formulaic expressions. It was emphasized that Formulaic Expressions play a significant role in enhancing language competence.

Moreover, Sukur (2020) conducted a study about the impact of disregarding the application of formulaic expressions in English textbooks. Wu (2020) conducted a study to examine the prevalence and types of spoken formulaic expressions in Taiwanese elementary (EM), junior high (JH), and senior high (SH) textbook series. Similar to Tianyu's study in 2019, 'formulaic sequences' is used to refer to formulaic expressions in this study. It was mentioned that Formulaic expressions must be incorporated into instructional materials because they support learners' development of speaking fluency and native-like language use (Shin & Nation, 2007 in Wu, 2020; Martinez & Schmitt, 2012 in Wu, 2020).

Various terms are referring to the phenomena of formulaic language. In this study, Formulaic Expressions (FEs) are used to refer to "groups of words (multi-word units) memorized (as a whole) rather than generated (from individual words) in the sense that they are fixed expressions whose interpretations and functions could not predicted by somebody who merely knew the grammar and the vocabulary of the language" (Fillmore, 1979 in Alwhan, 2019 p. 28). Various scholars have conducted studies concerning what units are considered as formulaic, but many gray areas persist. This study mainly uses Biber et al. (1999), who categorized formulaic expressions into six linguistic units, namely collocations, idioms, lexical bundles, binomial expressions, inserts, and free combinations of verb + particle.

Idioms are word combinations whose meanings cannot be inferred from the individual words' meanings (Biber et al., 2000). Another definition was stated by Jabbari (2016 in Wahyuningsih, 2020), who defined idiom as "a set of words or phrases that has a figurative meaning conventionally understood by native speakers (p. 507). Understanding an idiom is not a piece of cake and it is complicated to be understood by beginners of English language learners. Biber et al. (1999) mentioned that idioms are not only wh-questions, such as: "How do you do?" and "What's up?" but also complete noun phrases and prepositional phrases. They stated examples of noun phrase idioms including phrases like a piece of cake and a slap in the face. Moreover, prepositional phrase idioms included phrases like, for the time being, in a nutshell, up to date, and out of order.

According to Biber's theory, idioms can be summarized and grouped into four major kinds of combinations:

A. Phrasal verbs: e.g. carry out, pick up

A phrasal verb is a combination of a verb and a particle (an adverb or a preposition) that together form a single semantic unit, often with a meaning different from the individual words. These verbs are common in spoken and informal English, making communication more natural and expressive.

B. Prepositional verbs (verb + preposition): e.g. make use of, step on

A prepositional verb is a combination of a verb and a preposition that functions as a single unit, where the preposition is necessary to complete the verb's meaning. Unlike phrasal verbs, prepositional verbs do not have separable parts.

C. Phrasal-prepositional verbs (verb + noun phrase): e.g. get away with

A phrasal-prepositional verb is a multi-word verb that consists of a main verb, an adverbial particle, and a preposition. This combination functions as a single unit, with a meaning that is often different from the sum of its parts.

D. Other multi-word verb combinations (verb + noun phrase + preposition): e.g., throw the book (at), kick the bucket; (verb + prepositional phrase): e.g., take into account, fall in love, gets on my nerves; (verb + verb): e.g., make do.

These structures function as a single unit and often have idiomatic meanings. Idioms like "take into account" are usually employed in academic prose or other forms of expository writing. Meanwhile, most wh-question, noun phrase, and prepositional phrase expressions are used in fiction and are rarely stated in other registers. What is more, Biber et al. (1999) mentioned that idioms like a piece of cake, how do you do, and a slap in the face is rarely found in conversation.

While various studies on formulaic expressions have been conducted focusing on comprehension, few have specifically examined how idioms are realized in the conversational texts within English textbooks. Due to the importance of idioms which helps learners better understand language in a way that they can express themselves more clearly and learn about different cultures, it is necessary to analyze how idioms appear in textbook dialogues. Idioms have meanings that go beyond the words themselves, making conversations more interesting and expressive. Liu (2017) explains that knowing idioms can improve language fluency and make social interactions smoother. Idioms also reflect cultural values and traditions, giving insight into how people think and communicate (Fernando, 1996). Conversations can be confusing without knowing idioms, especially between people from different cultures. Using idioms correctly makes communication more effective and meaningful.

## METHODOLOGY
### Research Design

The proposed study conducted a qualitative research design. This approach analyzes information through multiple steps of analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Creswell (2016), Hatch (2002), and Marshall & Rossman (2016 in Creswell & Creswell, 2017, p. 295) agreed that qualitative research collects data in a natural setting which is gathered directly from people or objects. Furthermore, the researchers are the ones who collect the data, analyze it, interpret it, group it into codes and themes, and make conclusions from it.

### Data Source

This study used discourse as the object of the research which is in line with Mayring (2000). The research objects included idioms in formulaic expressions that are presented in conversational texts of two English textbooks *English for Change* and *Bahasa Inggris Tingkat Lanjut*. The first textbook was written by Puji Astuti, Aria Septi Anggaira, Atti Herawati, Yeyet Nurhayati, Dadan, and Dayang Suriani which was published in 2022 and the second textbook was written by Rida Afrilyasanti and published in 2021. These textbooks were published by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia (Kemendikbud) which has been used during the Emancipated Curriculum.

To conduct and produce the results, the researcher collects data, analyzes data, interprets data, groups data into codes and themes, and concludes collected data. The theory proposed by Biber et al. (1999) is used as a guide to conduct this study. Then, the researcher reports the study's findings by providing descriptions, conclusions, and suggestions for further research.

Data Collection

    In collecting the data, the researcher categorized each data that contains idioms. The research instrument is used to categorize each type of formulaic expressions that occurred in two textbooks into the classification from the theory of Biber et al. (1999). The last procedure is reading through the chapters and identifying idioms in the two textbooks that are needed for analysis. It was found that there are idioms in each chapter of the textbook which also helps to decide the subchapters or parts in the coursebook that will be observed.

Data Analysis

    The final step of analyzing data is drawing conclusions from the information that is gathered from the conversational texts, both from *English for Change* and *Bahasa Inggris Tingkat Lanjut* textbooks. The data of this study is reported and described according to the result of the analysis of conversational texts from the two English textbooks: *English for Change* and *Bahasa Inggris Tingkat Lanjut.* The conclusions from the information gathered will be elaborated and presented descriptively.

**RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

Idioms were realized in 9 (nine) conversational texts from the two English textbooks. The data are presented in the following table:

Table 1. Data from English for Change Textbook

| Code | Datum from CT | Types of Idioms |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Showing off | Phrasal verb |
| 2 | Came up with | Phrasal-prepositional verb |
| 3 | Cut back on | Phrasal-prepositional verb |
| 4.1 | End up | Phrasal verb |
| 4.2 | Put aside | Phrasal verb |
| 4.3 | Set up | Phrasal verb |
| 4.4 | Help you out | Phrasal verb |
| 4.5 | Heading off | Phrasal verb |
| 4.6 | Saved buddy up | Phrasal verb |
| 4.7 | Save that up | Phrasal verb |
| 4.8 | Get into | Prepositional verb |
| 4.9 | Screw off | Phrasal verb |
| 5.1 | Put down | Phrasal verb |
| 5.2 | Look forward to | Phrasal-prepositional verb |
| 5.3 | Save for | Prepositional verb |
| 5.4 | Hanging out | Phrasal verb |

Code index:
Text 1: Unit 1. Digital Literacies and My Identities, Activity 6a and 6b Listening
Text 2: Unit 1. Digital Literacies and My Identities, Activity 8 Listening
Text 3: Unit 3. Healthy Life for a Healthy Future, Activity 5 Listening Exercise
Text 4: Unit 5. Personal Money Management, Activity 8 Viewing
Text 5: Unit 5. Personal Money Management, Activity 3 Presenting

    There are 9 (nine) conversational texts from the "English for Change" textbook and it was found that 5 (five) of them contain idioms. The first idiom, phrasal verbs, was found in 11 (eleven) data. This means that the phrasal verb is the most frequent idiom in this textbook. Below are examples of the use of phrasal verbs in the conversational text:

Code 1
    A: I see where you're heading, Gendis. I am with you. I think they use their social media

mainly for **showing off**, which is not healthy for themselves and others.

"Showing off" is a combination of a verb and a particle (an adverb or a preposition) that together form a single semantic unit, often with a meaning different from the individual words. Showing off means behaving in a way that is meant to attract attention, admiration, or approval, often by displaying one's skills, possessions, or achievements. It can have a negative connotation, implying arrogance or a desire to impress others excessively. By understanding the word "showing off" in the dialogue, students will understand that they have different meanings (Xalilova & Atoyeva, 2023) like just the word "show", which means to present or to reveal. In this example, the speaker talks about the use of social media for showing off, which means to attract attention. Student can mistakenly interpret the meaning of the text if they only understand the word "show" which means present in their social media. Therefore, students will improve their communication skills to be more natural and expressive.

Code 4.1

A: Many kids **end up** being the first job as teenagers whether is be mowing the lawn, babysitting, being employed in a fast-food restaurant or being employed in law, …

In this sentence, "end up" means the final result or outcome of something, usually in a way that wasn't planned. It shows that no matter the options, many kids eventually get their first job, whether mowing the lawn, babysitting, working in fast food, or even in a law job. This is a common experience for many kids as they start working. Understanding the difference between "end up" and "end" is important because they have different meanings and are used in different situations. "End" means the finish or stop of something, like an event or action.

On the other hand, "end up" means the final result, especially when something happens unexpectedly. In this example, speaker A means that many kids will eventually get their first job. However, if students only understand the word "end", the meaning will be "to stop the first job". Knowing how to use these idioms correctly helps clarify communication, especially when discussing unexpected outcomes.

Code 5.4

A: … I stopped **hanging out** with my friends. …

In the sentence, "hanging out" means spending time with others in a relaxed and casual way, without doing anything important. It usually involves talking, joking, or just being together. "Stopped hanging out" means the person no longer spends time with their friends like they used to, showing a change in their friendships or social life.
We need to learn how "hanging out" and "hang" are used because they have meanings that are different from the basic meaning of "hang." In daily English, "hanging out" means spending time with friends in a relaxed way. "Hang" alone can mean something different, like making something dangle. When "hang" is used with words, like "out," the meaning changes. Knowing this helps us understand and speak English more like native speakers.

The second type of idiom, prepositional verbs, were shown in 2 (two) data. Below are the uses of prepositional verbs in the conversational text:

Code 4.8

A: They will **get into** your account detective. You guys enjoyed this video. …

In this sentence, "get into" is a prepositional verb that means to access or break into something, like a computer account. It does not mean to go inside physically, but to enter or use something, often without permission. In this case, it suggests that someone might hack the account, which is a common way the phrase is used when talking about computers or online security.

Learning prepositional verbs like "get" and "get into" is necessary because their meanings can change when a preposition is added. It aligns with Kennedy et al. (2018) who analyzed the verb "get". For example, "get" usually means to receive something, but "get into" can mean to start liking something, to go inside, or to be accepted somewhere, like a school.

In this example, speaker A means to access the account. Therefore "get into" is the correct idiom to be used. If the students mistakenly interpret the text with the word "get", the meaning will be different; that is "to receive or acquire the account". These phrases do not always mean exactly what the words seem to say, so understanding them helps you speak and understand English more easily.

Code 5.3
A: … Last year, I started working after school to **save for** college. …

In the sentence, "save for" means to keep money instead of spending it, so that it can be used later for something important. "Save" means to set money aside, and "for" shows the reason — here, to pay for college. Together, "save for" shows planning by saving money for a future need.

We need to know the difference between "save" and "save for" because they mean different things and can change what we are trying to say. "Save" usually means to keep something safe, but "save for" means keeping something for a special reason. Understanding this helps us speak and write more clearly so others do not get confused.

Furthermore, there are 3 (three) data belongs to phrasal-prepositional verbs. However, no data was found related to other multi-word combinations. Below are examples of the use of phrasal - prepositional verbs in the conversational text:

Code 9.3
A: Ranjit is first up again today, and I **look forward to** his new presentation. Jorge, could you dim the lights please?

"Look forward to" is a phrasal-prepositional verb that consists of a main verb "look", an adverbial particle "forward", and a preposition "to". This combination functions as a single unit, with a meaning that is often different (Massini, 2019) from the sum of its parts. In a single unit, "look" means to express by the eyes or facial expression, to search for, while, from the sum of its part, "look forward to" means to feel excited or happy about something that will happen in the future. It is often used when anticipating an event or experience with enthusiasm.

Code 2
A: … Who **came up with** the idea of us doing some investigation on the issue? It was me.

In this sentence, "came up with" means "thought of" or "created". It's a combination of the verb "came", the word "up", and the preposition "with" which together show the action of coming up with an idea or plan. It's not meant literally, but instead refers to creating or suggesting something, in this case, the idea to investigate the issue. The speaker is saying he/she was the one who thought of the idea.

Table 2. Data from Bahasa Inggris Tingkat Lanjut Textbook

| Code | Datum from CT | Types of Idioms |
|------|---------------|-----------------|
| 1 | Wrap up | Phrasal verb |
| 2 | Made up | Phrasal verb |
| 3 | Running out | Phrasal verb |
| 4 | Logged in | Phrasal verb |

Code index:
Text 1: Unit 1 Legend. Activity 1 Speaking
Text 2: Unit 2 Fairy Tale. Activity 5 Listening
Text 3: Unit 4 Analytical Exposition Text. Activity 1 Speaking
Text 4: Unit 5 Hortatory Exposition Text. Activity 1 Speaking

The table shows that idioms are realized in 4 conversational texts. However, only the first type of idioms was found in the texts. Phrasal verbs are realized in 4 data from the textbook. Below are the uses of phrasal verbs from the text:

Code 1
A: Well, it's time to **wrap up** the show. ….

In this sentence, "wrap up" means to finish or conclude something. The show, likely an event or performance, is almost over, and it's time to start bringing it to an end. The phrase "wrap up" signals that the event is finishing. Knowing the difference between "wrap up" and "wrap" is important because they mean different things and are used in different situations. "Wrap up" means to finish or complete something, like an event or task, while "wrap" usually refers to covering something, like a gift. Using "wrap up" correctly helps avoid confusion when talking about finishing something, while "wrap" is more about physically covering or enclosing something. In this example, speaker A aims to finish the show. Therefore, "wrap up" is the correct idiom to be used in this context. It means differently if students use the meaning of "wrap" which means to cover the show. Knowing when to use each one makes the message clearer.

Code 2
A: It's not actually not a good thing as he **made up** some lies. …

"Made up" means creating something that is not real or true. This sentence refers to telling lies—stories or facts that aren't true. When someone "makes up" lies, they are not just mistaken, but purposely creating false information to trick others. So, "made up" shows that the person is being dishonest by inventing things that did not happen or are not real. Knowing the difference between "made up" and "made" is important because they have different meanings and can change how a message is understood. "Made up" means creating something that is not real, often with a sense of lying or making things up, while "made" just means to create something, without suggesting falsehood. Confusing these two can cause misunderstandings, as "made up" can imply dishonesty, while "made" refers to something real. Knowing the difference helps ensure the message is clear, especially when discussing truth or honesty.

Code 3
A: First, the time is very short. I am **running out** of time. …

In this sentence, **"running out"** is a phrasal verb meaning time is almost finished. It does not mean someone is actually running, but that there is not much time left. This expression is often used when someone feels rushed or is close to a deadline. Knowing the difference between the idiom "run out" and the verb "run" is important because those words have different meanings. "Run" usually means to move

quickly on foot or operate something, like a machine. "Run out" means to use up all of something, like time or supplies. Using them correctly helps avoid confusion. It is supported by Asri & Rochmawati (2017) who suggested understanding idiomatic expressions, especially in cross-cultural communication. Mixing them up can make the message unclear.

Code 4

    A: Your account's privacy setting is set to public, and you are **logged in.**

    "Logged in" is a combination of a verb and a particle (an adverb or a preposition) that together form a single semantic unit, often with a meaning that is different from the individual words. "Log in" means to enter a computer system, website, or application by providing credentials such as a username and password. It is commonly used in technology-related contexts. By understanding the word "logged in" in the dialogue, students will understand that they have different meanings like just the word "log", which means to cut or to make notes. In this example, speaker A means to get access into an account. Therefore, the idiom "log in" is used in this text. It means differently if students interpret the meaning becomes "to cut an account" if they only understand the word "log". Understanding idioms and phrasal verbs like "log in" helps in effective communication (Alshayban, 2022), as their meanings often differ from the individual words they contain.

## CONCLUSION

    To sum up, this study shows that idioms appear only in a limited way in the conversational texts of two Indonesian English textbooks for the eleventh year— *English for Change* and *Bahasa Inggris Tingkat Lanjut*. Most of the idioms found are phrasal verbs (15 data). This is because most

idioms are structured with a verb that combines a verb and a preposition or a verb and an adverb. Furthermore, fewer examples are of prepositional verbs (2 data). It is a combination of a verb and a preposition that functions as a single unit, where the preposition is necessary to complete the verb's meaning. Besides, phrasal-prepositional verbs (3 data) are realized from the textbooks. It is a combination of a phrase and a preposition. Nevertheless, none of other multi-word idiom types. This shows that while idioms are important for helping students understand and use English more naturally, they are not fully included in these textbooks. Since idioms are common in everyday English and help learners speak more fluently and understand cultural meaning, the lack of them in textbooks may prevent students from improving their real-life communication skills.

    Including more idioms in English textbooks is important to meet the goals of the Emancipated Curriculum, which focuses on real-life communication and student independence. Comprehending idioms is crucial in effective communication as it enhances language comprehension, facilitates clearer self-expression, and provides insights into diverse cultural perspectives. Idioms help students speak more fluently and understand cultural meanings in English. Because of this, textbook writers and curriculum makers should add a wider range of idioms to help students be more confident and effective in using English in everyday situations. Future research may need to explore more about the use of other types of idioms and formulaic expressions in other textbooks in diverse school grades to get meaningful learning for, students especially in their communication skills.

    These results highlight the importance of including more idioms and formulaic expressions in learning materials. If the curriculum wants students to use English

confidently and independently, then textbooks must include language that reflects real conversations. Adding a wider range of idioms will help learners speak more naturally and understand English as it is used by native speakers. This study reminds us that effective language teaching depends on how well learning materials prepare students for real-world communication. To truly support students in becoming fluent and confident English users, idioms must be treated as a core part of language learning, not an afterthought.

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