

Examples of using proverbs in studying the language

Proverbs belong to the traditional verbal folklore genres and the wisdom of proverbs has been guidance for people worldwide in their social interaction throughout the ages. Proverbs are concise, easy to remember and useful in every situation in life due to their content of everyday experiences.



“A good expression is always to the point” – speaks an old English proverb.

- A proverb is usually recognised by the fixed, often short form and is therefore quite easy to memorise. Many proverbs also contain metaphors. Proverbs often have multiple meanings and are therefore dependent on context and should be analysed in whatever context they are found (Mieder, 2004).
- The traditional function of proverbs is didactic, as they contain “wisdom, truth, morals and traditional views” (Mieder, 2004:3; Abadi, 2000; Obelkevich, 1994).

The use of proverbs...

- Durbin Rowland (1926) points at some arguments proves the use of proverbs in language studying. Rowland says that proverbs “stick in the mind”, “build up vocabulary”, “illustrate admirably the phraseology and idiomatic expressions of the foreign tongue”, “contribute gradually to a surer feeling for the foreign tongue” and proverbs “consume very little time”(pp. 89-90).
- Joseph Raymond (1945) states his arguments for proverbs as a teaching device.

Examples of using proverbs in studying the language.

Phonetic. “Th” sound .

Nothing seek, nothing find. – Не поищешь – не найдешь.

He that will thrive, must rise at five. – Кто рано встает, тому Бог дает.

What is worth doing is worth doing well. – Если уж делать что-то, то делать хорошо.

Modal verbs.

All men can't be first. – Не всем дано быть первыми

Beggar can never be bankrupt. – Бедняк никогда не обанкротится.

Fair face may hide a foul heart. – Лицом хорош, да душой непригож.

Cracked bell can never sound well. – Треснутый колокол уже никогда хорошо звенеть не будет.

The English do love their apples

- **An apple a day keeps the doctor away** – Proverb – meaning if you have an apple every day, you will stay healthy
- **A rotten apple in the barrel** – a bad person or thing amongst the good ones
- **The apple of my eye** someone very special
- **Adam's apple** laryngeal prominence – i.e. the thyroid cartilage which shows as a lump on men's throats"



- The English language is rich in **imagery, metaphors, proverbs and sayings**. These are expressions which English speakers take for granted, but among the oldies you might find one here that you have not used before.



- **Take a bowl of fruit** - almost every type of fruit is represented in our speech, quite apart from the literal meaning.

If you speak English well, you will find this information **entertaining** and, If you are learning English as a second language, you will, in addition, **find this summary** of **Proverbs and Sayings About Fruit** very useful:

English is short of proverbs about grapes

- The grapes of wrath – the results of anger
- (this is also the name of a brilliant modern classic book by John Steinbeck, which was made into an equally brilliant film, starring Peter Fonda)
- Sour grapes An expression used to describe a situation where someone is criticizing something they really want but can't have, or saying they don't want it. The precise words you would use are "it's just sour grapes"



- The cherry on the cake – the most important or appealing part of something
- For instance "I have a good job and the cherry on the cake is that I get six weeks' paid leave"
- Cherry picking – Cherry picking is the act of pointing at individual cases or data that seem to confirm a particular position, while ignoring a portion of related cases or data that may contradict that position



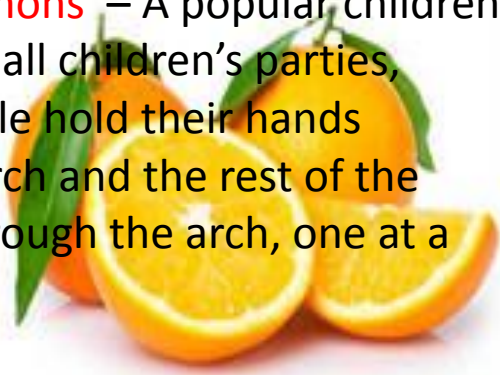


A Kiwi – a New Zealander (The kiwi fruit is presumably very prolific in New Zealand).

Oranges are not the only fruit – Not everyone is the same, i.e it takes all sorts to make the world.

There is also a book called "Oranges are not the Only Fruit" by Jeannette Winterton which was made into a very successful television drama series, about a girl growing up as a lesbian, and the effect on her family and friend relationships.

Oranges and Lemons – A popular children's song, sung at small children's parties, where two people hold their hands together in an arch and the rest of the children pass through the arch, one at a time:



Oranges and Lemons

Say the bells of St Clements

You owe me five farthings

Say the bells of St Martins

When will you pay me

Say the bells of Old Bailey

When I grow rich

Say the bells of Shoreditch

When will that be

Say the bells of Stepney

I do not know

say the great bells of Bow

Here comes a chopper to chop off your head

Here comes a candle to light you to bed.

Chip-chop chip-chop last man's head!



(and with that, the axe comes down on the head of the child passing through the arch, and chops it off – figuratively of course – and that child is "Out". The game continues until, one-by-one all the children save one are "Out", and the last remaining one is the winner).

But no English Proverbs about
peaches, lemons, limes or plums



- **A peach** – a beauty or you can say someone is peachy
- **A lemon** – A bit of an idiot
- **A limey** - a British person (from the practice in the British navy of giving sailors lime juice to prevent scurvy on long journeys)
- **A plum** an adjective meaning especially good e.g. a plum job

