

Time Related Idiomatic Language: A Corpus-based Approach to TEFL with Reference to MICASE and the Hyland Corpus

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From the ancient time of sundials and hour glasses to the modern day emphasis on time management skills, time has always been a key issue worthy of investigation by philosophers like Husserl, Heidegger and Derrida and more recently by business managers. However, relatively little attention has been paid by the academic community to include it in EFL classes. Dictionaries normally give only the meaning and not the context in which words and expressions occur. Therefore, students despite knowing the meaning, often find it difficult to use them appropriately. Thus it is essential to understand the concepts behind words and expressions. One way of doing this is to ‘look for those contexts in corpora that are rich in knowledge about the concept, such as contexts that contain definitions or explanations, rather than contexts which simply contain an example of the term in use’ (Bowker & Pearson, 2002). This paper uses a corpus-based approach for the selection and prioritization of teaching time-related idiomatic expressions (both written and spoken) in this case, academic discourse, by drawing on the Hyland Corpus and Michigan Corpus of Academic Spoken English (MICASE). In the present research, a list of time related idiomatic expressions, based on an article in English Teaching FORUM (1996), Cambridge Dictionary of American Idioms (2003) and Shehzad (forthcoming) was compiled and used as a reference. This inventory was used to investigate its usage in the academic corpora to provide a guideline to EAP teachers, material designers and text book writers. The major findings of the research show that academic spoken English uses relatively different idiomatic phrases from the written language. For

instance, although there are more than three thousand entries for the word *TIME*, there is no expression like *burn the midnight oil* or *till the cows come home*, in MICASE. This helps in answering the question why foreign students sound like 'books read aloud'. The paper concludes with some pedagogical ideas.

Native speakers of a language use idiomatic language fluently, frequently and naturally. Idiomatic expressions act like a lubricant that makes language flow smoothly. Non native students feel embarrassed and frustrated if they cannot understand the idioms the interlocutor is using. Thus, being conversant with the idiomatic language helps students to be better speakers and negotiators, putting them in a better position to maintain the communication. Therefore, idiomatic expressions require special attention in language programmes and "should not be relegated to a secondary position in the curriculum" (Cooper, 1998, p. 257). Idiomatic expressions are widely accepted amongst language teachers and linguists as useful building blocks for the construction of effective communication. An idiom according to World Book Dictionary (2001, p. 1049) is "a phrase or expression whose meaning cannot be understood from the ordinary meanings of the words in it." Cooper (1998, p. 256) opines that an idiom can have a literal meaning "but its alternate, figurative meaning must be understood metaphorically." The literal meaning of an idiomatic expression is often different from its figurative meaning. The concept of whole vs. its parts is discussed by Irujo (1986, p. 289) who defines an idiom as a "conventionalized expression whose meaning cannot be determined from the meaning of its parts." Idioms have been intensively studied by many scholars. Pollio et al. (1977) analyzed approximately 200,000 words from political debates, taped psychotherapy sessions and compositions written by students and adults and found out that their subjects used 4.08 idioms per minute. On the other hand, some scholars tried to hypothesize, how we process idioms such as Cronk and Schweigert (1993) suggested that the literal meaning is processed first whereas according to Cooper (1998) literal and figurative meanings are processed at the same time and Gibbs (1986) presented the direct access hypothesis in which the

figurative meaning is retrieved directly from the mental lexicon. Irujo (1986) studied the influence of first language on the comprehension production of second language idioms.

Recently there has been an increased research interest in linguistic analyses through corpus based techniques. With the accessibility of computers we can find out what people actually say or write, as opposed to the intuited usage. In contrast to the examples given in the ordinary textbooks which are based on the writers' intuition or linguists' expert opinion, the corpus examples expose students to the kind of sentences that have actually been used in real life situations. A linguist through access to a corpus can call up all the examples of a word or phrase from millions of words of text in few seconds.

Corpora also provide an opportunity to analyze the existing teaching materials critically. Ways of expressing qualification and frequency in ESL (English as a second language) textbooks have been examined by Kennedy (1987a, b). Holmes (1988) studied ways of expressing doubt and certainty in ESL textbooks and future time expressions in German textbooks of English were considered by Mindt (1996).

However, corpus based studies of the use of idioms in academic settings are few; to name some: Simpson and Mendis (2003) and Liu (2003). Hence, the need for more work in this area, Liu (2003) used four major English idiom dictionaries and three phrasal verb dictionaries and searched three corpora; Barlow's (2000) Corpus of Professional American Television programmes, and Michigan Corpus of Academic Spoken English (MICASE), whereas, Simpson and Mendis (2003) focused only on Academic English as represented in MICASE. On the other hand, the present paper deals with a small scale but specific research about time-related idioms through the use of corpus-based techniques as will be discussed in the following pages.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The main aim of teaching English as a foreign language in most parts of

the world as Shehzad (2003a, p. vii) discusses is the “advancement and spread of knowledge and understanding of the language [English] for practical and functional purposes.” In the today’s dot.com era, the world is shrinking fast and the students no more merely require literature of a far off country just for leisure reading and fun. The desire and need to communicate with people from different nationalities is felt more than ever and English language is the most popular common ground. Thus the prime objective of TEFL should be to enable the learners to “communicate effectively in real life situations about the social and cultural concepts like real people do” (Shehzad, 2003b, p. ix) with the appropriate use of idiomatic language. Wray and Perkins (2000) approach the issue from a psycholinguistic perspective and acknowledge the socio-pragmatic and interactive purposes of such expressions.

Fluent use of the idiomatic language is often considered a characteristic to be found only in a native speaker (Fernando, 1996; Schmitt, 2000; Wray, 2000). It is perhaps true that a native speaker has a vast repository of idioms and idiomatic expressions. This equation of idioms with a native speaker or a successful non-native speaker makes it desirable to teach them in EFL classes. In fact, the mention of the word ‘idiom’ conjures up language that is thought to be entertaining, engaging, casual, charming, colorful and memorable (Simpson & Mendis, 2003). Because of such reasons, as Fernando (1996) describes, ‘no translator or language teacher can afford to ignore idioms or idiomaticity if a natural use of the target language is an aim’ (p. 234). Wray (1999) takes this view further and opines that the absence of formulaic sequences, in fact, can lead to unidiomatic speech that is unlike a native speaker’s speech.

Idioms are fixed expressions in the sense that the words, their order or the grammatical form cannot be changed like a non-idiomatic expression. Bermon (2000) defines idiom as a phrase that has a different meaning from the meaning of its separate components. Simpson and Mendis (2003, p. 423) call this *Semantic Opacity* which means that the ‘meaning of such expressions is not transparent based on the sum of their constituent parts’.

More recently, with the work of scholars such as Fernando (1996);

McCarthy (1998); Moon (1998), the interest in the idioms has shifted from the lexical and grammatical form to their pragmatic, interactive and discourse-level features for learners of all ages, the comprehension of the idiomatic expressions is facilitated by contextual support (Cacciari & Levorato, 1989; Nippold & Martin, 1989). Thanasoulas (1999, p. 1) giving the example that saying to a student that ‘to kick the bucket’ means to die is like trying to teach the maths without a blackboard. He stresses, “what is needed is simple, albeit of paramount importance: context”. Thus to access the authentic contexts, the corpora, namely the Michigan Corpus of Academic Spoken English (MICASE) and the Hyland Corpus as described in the following section, were used in the present research.

METHODOLOGY

This section deals with two aspects: one the rationale for using time related idioms and the other gives a description of the academic corpora used for the present research.

Why Time-related Idioms

Time is a complex phenomenon that has always fascinated the realms of man’s imagination. It is still being investigated by the scientists and pondered upon by the philosophers (see Sayal, 2004) and psychologists. In its simple form it is a period during which an action or event occurs and a dimension representing succession of such actions or events as *Time* is one of the fundamental quantities of the physical world.

Time is like a puzzle which is wrapped up in a cryptogram and boxed up in an enigma and probably why this quality of description has made some of us very excited on learning this strange subject. “Time is nature’s way of keeping everything from happening at once” (Anonymous). Philosophers like Plato treated time metaphorically as the moving image of eternity whereas

Aristotle described time physically as the number or measure of motion. St. Augustine looked at time from psychological perspective and called it an illusionary product of our mind. From the ancient Obelisks (slender, tapering, four-sided monuments) to Merkheth (astronomical tool), Sundials and Water clocks, not only the methods of measuring time have undergone changes but the concept itself has taken various shifts.

However, ELT teachers in Pakistan have somehow ignored to include time-related idioms/ idiomatic language in their classes. The occasional use of any time-related idioms in the textbooks or teaching materials seems to be more accidental than a matter of choice. Thus the present paper, instead of finding a perfect definition of *Time*, which is beyond the scope of this paper, addresses the issue of teaching time-related idioms in the ESL/EFL classes, deriving force from corpus linguistics.

Corpora

Simpson and Mendis (2003) argue that a corpus is a much better starting point than an invented list of idioms because such lists are devoid of a coherent focus on a particular language domain, for example, academic English. Taking up their suggestion a little further, in the present research an inventory of the idioms and corpora, both were used. A list of 54 idioms/idiomatic expressions related to *time* was compiled with the help of an article *Time, Time, Time* appeared in *English Teaching FORUM* (1996), *The Concise Oxford Dictionary* (1990) and Shehzad (forthcoming). Since this is a preliminary study of time-related idioms with the use of corpus – based techniques, the inventory used is neither exhaustive nor complete and should be taken up as a starting point for further research. Since the major aim of this research is to show that many idioms investigated here do not form part of the academic spoken language (MICASE) nor do they of the genre of written language (The Hyland Corpus).

MICASE

Michigan Corpus of Academic Spoken English (MICASE) is a specialized corpus of 1.7 million words of academic discourse. The corpus contains 197 hours of recorded speech of 152 speech events including lectures, dissertation defenses, office hour interactions and study group sessions.

The Hyland Corpus

The Hyland Corpus is a collection of 240 published research papers mostly from social sciences and humanities. The disciplines include: biology, electrical and mechanical engineering, linguistics, marketing, philosophy, sociology and physics. The corpus was created by Ken Hyland (2000).

Wordsmith Tools

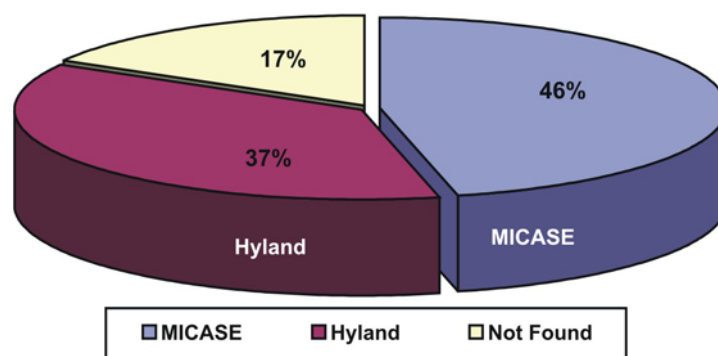
Michigan Corpus of Academic Spoken Language (MICASE) and the Hyland Corpus as explained below were searched through the special software, WordSmith tools (Scott, 2000). The *Concordance*, a special feature of the software was used to study the context of the idioms/idiomatic phrases. The *Concordance* gives a chance to see any word or phrase in context so that we know what sort of company it keeps. (WordSmith Tools Manual).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The inventory as described under six headings and discussed in the following pages was searched in the two corpora used under reference. The first obvious fact noted after the data analysis, as shown in Figure 1. was the absence of many idioms/idiomatic phrases of the target inventory, in the two corpora, namely MICASE and the Hyland Corpus. 46% idioms of the inventory were present in MICASE and 37% in the Hyland Corpus. The

project manager of MICASE, herself acknowledges that “MICASE is a relatively small corpus, and the frequency of any given idiom in naturally occurring discourse is typically low” (Simpson and Mendis, 2003:423) on comparing the list of idioms compiled from three ESL textbooks: Madden and Rohlck, 1997; McCarthy and O’ Dell, 1997; Redman and Shaw, 1999.

FIGURE 1
Occurrence of Time-related Idioms/Phrases in MICASE and the Hyland Corpus



Grouping idioms/ expressions according to different topics can make them easier for students to learn. It also makes the teachers’ job easier to relate the exercises to topic-based units in course books (Bermon, 2000). In the present research following this principle, the list was further divided into the following sub-topics to have deeper information about their usage in the corpora under investigation. This also helped in understanding which ones were more popular than the others.

Time

Idioms/idiomatic phrases having the word *time* in them not only constituted the larger part of the inventory but were also found in great numbers in both the corpora. 165 entries for, *at the same time* were followed by 61 of *in time* in MICASE. Similarly, in the Hyland Corpus, the figure of

140 for, *at the same time* was followed by 42 for, *in time*.

TABLE 1
Entries for *Time* in MICASE and the Hyland Corpus

Serial	Idioms	MICASE	Hyland
1	At the same time	165	140
2	In time	61	42
3	On time	26	5
4	Time to time	6	4
5	Timely	2	9
6	Time-being	3	7
7	It's about time	3	-
8	Timeless	1	4
9	Time-consuming	1	8
10	Time and again	1	-
11	In the fullness of time	1	-
12	Best of times	-	1
13	The time has come	-	1
14	In the nick of time	-	-
15	Time out of mind	-	-
16	Time on our hands	-	-
17	Take time off	-	-
18	Time-tested	-	-
19	Time-honored	-	1
20	Mark time	-	-
21	Out on time	-	-
	TOTAL	270	222

Some concordance examples of: *at the same time* from the Hyland Corpus and MICASE are given here.

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Concord - [ATxTHExSAMExTIME: 140 entries (sort: 1L_1R)]

N	Concordance	Set	Tag	Word No.	File	%
1	endas (see Nunan, 1987, 1989). At the same time, my reading wa			609	e:\hylandv-l9714.txt	10
2	informal city', see Laguerre 1994). At the same time, we acknowle			339	e:\hylandv-s9707.txt	5
3	(e.g., Wilson 1987; Wood 1995). At the same time, recent trends			268	e:\hylandv-s9721.txt	3
4	f all the stages (see also Fig. 2). At the same time we see that the			5,734	e:\hylandv-m9712.txt	94
5	ame way as natural science. 5. At the same time Lipset forgot th			8,161	e:\hylandv-s9703.txt	84
6	well known and documented [7]. At the same time, if is often argu			2,339	e:\hylandv-s9730.txt	39
7	e causal powers, while accepting at the same time the causal clos			787	e:\hylandv-p9716.txt	27
8	the police. It was acknowledges at the same time, however, that t			6,115	e:\hylandv-s9710.txt	65
9	for greater competitive advantage. At the same time, though the te			1,842	e:\hylandv-m9723.txt	25
10	endency on her carer is affirmed. At the same time, Thomas know			4,735	e:\hylandv-s9712.txt	71
11	vention) activity is carried out, all at the same time. We live in the			3,666	e:\hylandv-l9720.txt	92
12	gions) long tradition of almsgiving. At the same time as this harden			452	e:\hylandv-s9705.txt	7
13	epistemically privileged, it is also, at the same time, normatively sov			6,100	e:\hylandv-p9725.txt	70
14	is good, legitimate, fair, etc., I am at the same time convinced that t			7,700	e:\hylandv-s9726.txt	92
15	s assumed m the Z direction, and at the same time, in order to sim			1,658	e:\hylandv-g9705.txt	40
16	emological position, but also, and at the same time, an ideological r			5,874	e:\hylandv-p9727.txt	68
17	a set of independent variables and at the same time show the direct			1,467	e:\hylandv-l9701.txt	25
18	roleum extraction and refining and at the same time view the compa			2,069	e:\hylandv-m9705.txt	18
19	possible care by their officers and at the same time be subjected to			7,647	e:\hylandv-s9708.txt	86
20	f... criminal defence lawyers' and at the same time 'a considerable			392	e:\hylandv-s9718.txt	17
21	each partition of a population, and at the same time that it is decrea			5,373	e:\hylandv-p9722.txt	76
22	not organise their thoughts and, at the same time, present what t			3,159	e:\hylandv-l9705.txt	38
23	tence, there would be a tone and, at the same time, a string of aste			4,668	e:\hylandv-l9703.txt	53
24	ards, riding on the fiber side and, at the same time, the structures f			2,080	e:\hylandv-e9724.txt	72
25	to recognize his contribution) and, at the same time, encouraged su			360	e:\hylandv-s9716.txt	6
26	than injustice. However, they are, at the same time, grounded on re			7,638	e:\hylandv-s9726.txt	91

Search Results - Microsoft Internet Explorer

Address: e:\c1-&dist=&ctbpos=both&sevent=All&gen=All&adv=All&age=All&adisc=All&apos=All&plevel=All&inss=All&pdmode=All&lang=All

MICASE Search Results

Concordance Search Results

Sort filters: 1: None 2: None 3: None sort

1 to 165 of 165 matches

File #	Key Word in Context	Sp. ID
Total matches: 165		
ADV105SU068 1	cultural faux pas but then at the same time um, it's absolutely not surprising	S1
ADV105SU068 2	even thinks they're talented but at the same time, there's something there that i'm	S1
ADV105SU068 3	few paragraphs yeah um, but at the same time, i, i mean if you	S1
ADV105SU068 4	a, a marker of quality at the same time, um, you can't get to	S1
ADV285S3135 5	for, those kind of considerations at the same time as you're thinking, you know	S1
ADV700JU023 6	i could do organic but, at the same time, i mean i really th	S3
ADV700JU023 7	to sign up for that at the same time as Accounting two-seventy-one	S3

Table 1 demonstrates that expressions such as *in the nick of time*, *time out of mind*, *time on our hands*, *take time off*, *time tested*, *mark time* and *out on time* are missing from both the corpora. Based on this fact, it can be speculated that these are the least preferred time related idioms used in academic discourse (both written and spoken).

Moment

Table 2 displays occurrence of idioms/phrases related to *moment*. There were more instances found in MICASE than the Hyland Corpus. *At the moment* occurred 28 times in MICASE and 14 times in the Hyland Corpus.

TABLE 2
Entries for Moment in MICASE and the Hyland Corpus

Serial	Idioms	MICASE	Hyland
1	At the moment	28	14
2	For the moment	6	11
3	In just a moment	-	5
4	Of the moment	3	0
5	There is never a dull moment	-	0
6	At a moment's notice	-	0
7	On the spur of the moment	-	0
Total		37	30

Some concordance examples of *at the moment*, from the Hyland Corpus and MICASE are given here.

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The screenshot shows a concordance search tool window titled "MICASE Search Results - Microsoft Internet Explorer". The search criteria are: `m1&c1=&dist=&ctxpos=both&spevent=All&gen=All&adv=All&age=All&adisc=All&apos=All&plev=All&nss=All&pdmode=All&lang=All`. The results are displayed in a table with columns for File #, Key Word in Context, and Sp. ID.

File #	Key Word in Context	Sp. ID
COL999MX036 1	driven, by the salient constructs at the moment in the head, but that	S2
COL999MX036 2	enormous stress on our staffs at the moment, and we need to think	S2
COL999MX040 3	to think of the author at the moment	S8
COL999MX059 4	our, basic decision table. now at the moment we haven't put in the	S2
DEF420MX022 5	pretty much it at the at the moment. um, so there is a	S2
LAB175SU032 6	s- oh absolutely. um at the moment the, oh absolutely the air	S1
LAB175SU032 7	put into its final form at the of its creation, but it	S1

While

The third category was idioms related to the lexical item *while* which was mostly found in MICASE.

TABLE 3
Entries for *While* in MICASE and the Hyland Corpus

Serial	Idioms	MICASE	Hyland
1	Once in a while	14	1
2	Quite a while	8	-
3	While away	-	-
	Total	22	1

Table 3 shows a much higher number of *while* related idioms in MICASE as compared to a negligible number of the Hyland Corpus reflecting its tendency to be used in the spoken language. *Once in a while* is the highest occurring idiom.

Some examples from the Hyland Corpus and MICASE of *once in a while* are given here.





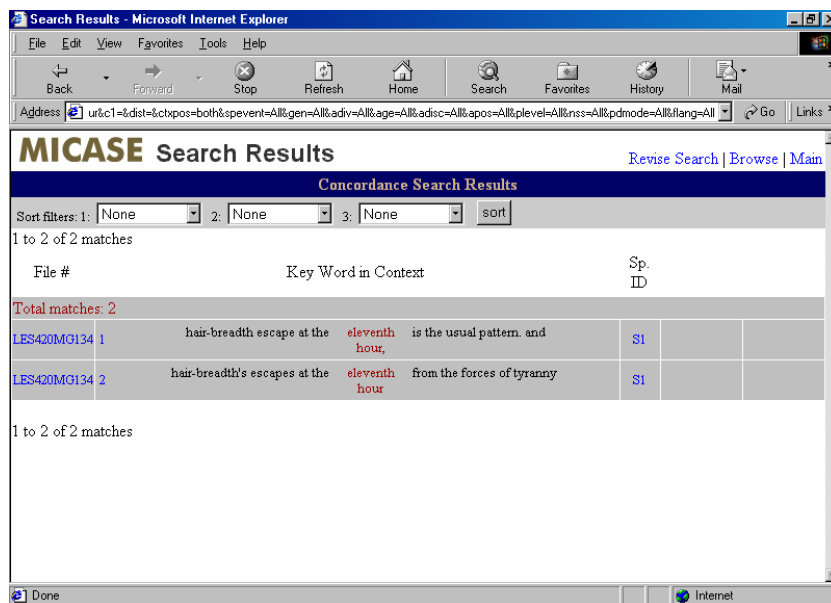
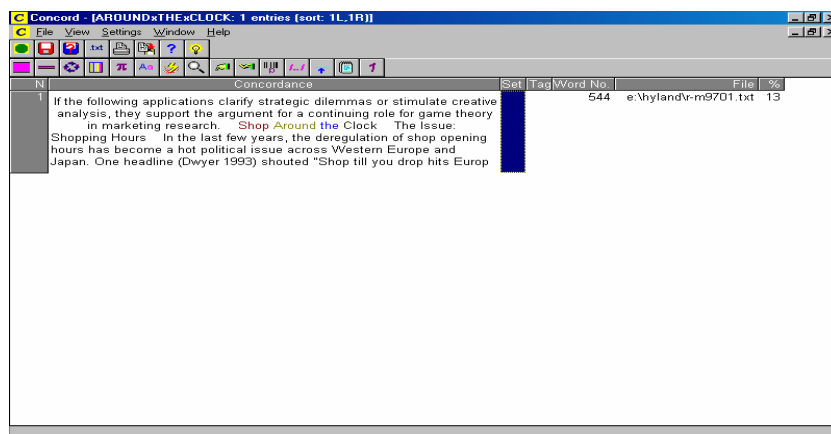
Clock

The clock plays an important role not only in everyday life but also in the time-related idioms/idiomatic phrases. Eight idioms about the clock were listed but surprisingly only 4 were found in MICASE and one in the Hyland Corpus. *Punching a clock*, a pet phrase used in factories and companies was not expected to be used in an academic environment but the occurrence of others was also rare. *At the eleventh hour*, *around the clock*, *turn back the clock* are quite popular phrases in the Pakistani context (Table 4).

TABLE 4
Entries for Clock in MICASE and the Hyland Corpus

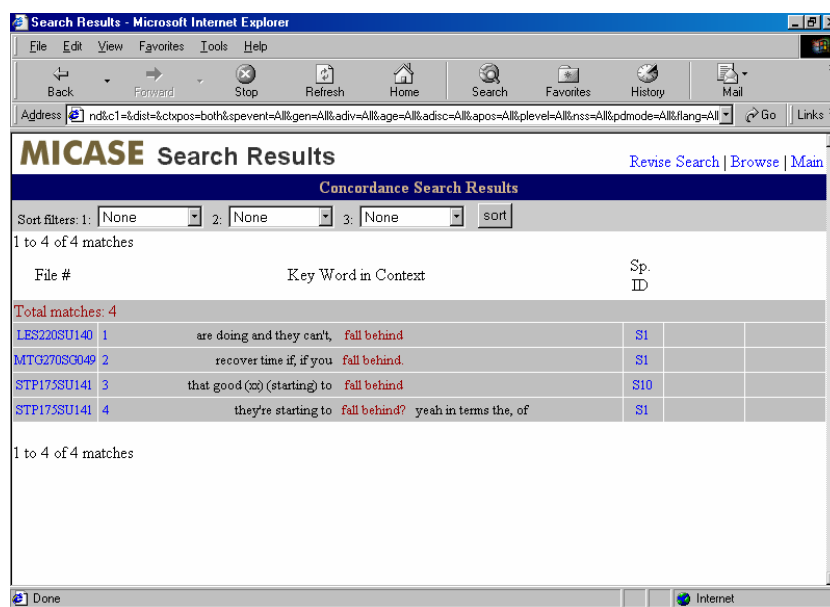
Serial	Idioms	MICASE	Hyland
1	Fall behind	4	-
2	Clockwork	2	-
3	Eleventh hour	2	-
4	Around the clock	-	1
5	Like clockwork	-	-
6	Punch a clock	-	-
7	Turn back the clock	-	-
8	Race against time/clock	-	-
Total		8	1

The only example of *round the clock* from the Hyland Corpus and only two examples of *eleventh hour* from MICASE are given here.



Four examples of *fall behind* from MICASE are provided here.

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Now

Now is the next sub-topic that was looked for in the written (the Hyland Corpus) and spoken (MICASE) corpora. *Now* occurred six times more in the spoken academic corpus than in the genre of research articles included in the Hyland Corpus. The highest number was of, *every now and then* (Table 5).

TABLE 5
Entries for *Now* in MICASE and the Hyland Corpus

Serial	Idioms	MICASE	Hyland
1	Every now and then	8	-
2	Just now	5	-
3	Here and now	3	-
4	Now and again	2	1
5	Now you are talking	-	1
6	Now or never	-	-

Some interesting examples of *every now and then* are:

- Guess what they run into every now and then ...
- Well we're beginning to slip every now and then ...
- University of Michigan, and uh every now and then around campus here you find ...

A concordance sample of *every now and then* from MICASE has also been included here.

MICASE Search Results [Revise Search](#) | [Browse](#) | [Main](#)

Concordance Search Results

Sort filters: 1: None 2: None 3: None sort

1 to 8 of 8 matches

File #	Key Word in Context	Sp. ID
Total matches: 8		
COL999MXD40 1	me about my research, except every now and then uh both my mother and	S8
LEL175SU098 2	guess what they run into every now and then. other receptors. other insulin receptors	S1
LEL183SU066 3	well we're beginning to slip, every now and then, are we the best company	S1
MTG999ST015 4	mails right i see them every now and then they come to the wrong	R1
SEM363VO029 5	Michigan State University, and uh every now and then around campus here you find	S1
SEM363VO029 6	see a sulfur zipping by every now and then but it's predominantly oxide. F	S1
SEM363VO029 7	every day or check it every now you may forget you need	S1

Others

Some other miscellaneous time-related idioms were also investigated. The most interesting one was the use of the phrase *deadline*. The common use of *deadline* in the academic spoken corpus of a university reflects the importance of deadlines for the students and faculty as they keep

encountering assignments and tests and working on projects. In the research papers it is the subject matter of the research itself and deadlines are concerned with the authors of the papers as long as the writing and submission of the papers are concerned (Table 6).

TABLE 6
Some Other *Time-related* Idioms in MICASE and the Hyland Corpus

Serial	Idioms	MICASE	Hyland
1	Deadline	39	1
2	Days would be numbered	-	-
3	Days are/were numbered	-	-
4	Burn the midnight oil	-	-
5	Down to the wire (to the very end)	-	-
6	Under the wire	-	-
7	Till the cows come home	-	-
8	Every so often	1	1
Total		40	2

On the other hand, there was no instance of the idioms such as *burn the midnight oil* that is common occurrence in the Pakistani ELT context and most probably in the whole Asian scenario.

PEDAGOGICAL RELEVANCE

Corpus-based pedagogy can provide innovative ways to deal with language, which relieves the teacher of the fallacy of 'know all' and leads students to self empowerment. According to Nilson and Nilson (2003), by knowing the origins of idioms, students can easily figure out the metaphorical meanings. This discussion can also help understand how language transforms over time and how socio-cultural factors influence the meaning of words and phrases.

Discussion about the History of Idioms

Discussion about the history of idioms in the class can quite effectively be utilized for teaching, learning, practicing and understanding idioms. During the middle ages, simple sundials placed above doorways were used to identify midday and four 'tides' (important times or periods of the sunlit day). Twelve o'clock is the peak time of the sunlit day. Hence, the idioms, 'at the eleventh hour' and 'In the wick of time' evolved.

Similarly, different forms of environment can affect one's conception of time; psychological time as apposed to chronological time. Rich, spatial environment can make the experience seem longer than it actually is. Time seems to pass slowly because our senses respond to varied stimuli. We wish 'time to stay' and 'stop'. On the other hand, in case of a familiar environment 'time goes by' more quickly and 'it seems to fly'. In literature, these situations are often portrayed beautifully, for instance in James Joyce's 'Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man' time has been slowed down almost to a stand still of action. Japanese haiku poem also freezes the moment epitomized by the poet. On the other hand, about Shakespeare, it is said that he deliberately speeded up the action at the end of his plays to counteract the flagging attention of the audience. Thus a discussion about the history of idioms would not only help them understanding their historical usage but also would encourage exploring their current usages.

Narratives

Another way to teach time-related language is to use it through and in narratives. Students respond faster through narrative approaches as they engage in role-play and develop various interpretations by using their personal experiences, memories, images and imagination. Zigo (2001, p. 65) comments that when teachers use/encourage students' natural inclinations, in conjunction with text-based lessons, they become more "engaged with textual content and demonstrate less resistance to material that might otherwise be

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challenging or frustrating”.

Poetry

Students may also be encouraged to try to write poems based on the concept of time and time-related idioms. For instance the students may write something simple such as:

Time to take some *time out* and
Its *about time* to be with the band
Music all around to have *best of time*
Everlasting wish, in the *fullness of time*.

Why not take some *time off*
To have some *time of mind*:
Mark the valued *time tested* time
As *time on our hands, at the same time*.

Sample Exercises:

1. Choose some idioms/idiomatic expressions and try using them in the form of a narrative/drama/ role play. Work in pairs or groups as deemed necessary.
2. Tell your partner about something that is happening in your life. Use as many time-related idioms as you can.

CONCLUSION

The results of this study clearly reflect that many idioms investigated in the present research are neither part of the academic spoken language nor of the genre of research papers. So why bother stuffing our ESL/EFL students with such rare occurrences? There is no denying that the use of literary idioms

provide a native like ability to communicate and handle complex situations of an advanced level with an ease. However, Thanasoulas (1999) warns that if literary idioms used inadvertently and at random where more informal language is required, the speaker runs the risk of sounding bookish and unnatural. The examples from the authentic corpora can help in students clearly seeing and understanding the contexts in which such language use is appropriate and adequate. Thus it is suggested that care should be taken in differentiating idioms from the formal, informal, spoken, written and literary purposes (e.g., *under the wire* is informal, *burn the mid night oil* is literary and *deadline* is formal). Some idioms sound odd for use in everyday language, except perhaps as a joke for instance if someone says, 'I burned the midnight oil to do my homework last night'. However, I do not intend preaching the exclusion of such idioms from the English language classes, I maintain that these should be taught but with caution and by highlighting the sensitivities of their usage. Some pedagogical ideas are given in the earlier section. The present paper does not provide a solution. What it does, however, is raise questions about our current teaching materials and can be helpful in opening new vistas for corpus linguistic research in this area.

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