

Chapter 1

Attaining Knowledge of Idiomatics in the Age of Corona and Beyond

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ABSTRACT

This chapter investigates the affordances of technological processes and educational resources for attaining knowledge of idiomatics. It first explores the training practices language practitioners will need to foster a tech-driven pedagogy of the reconstructive nature of idiomatics understanding and production in English. Following a brief review of the most significant themes and concepts spanning the literature of idiomatics, the chapter then anchors its communication-of-information pedagogy in an online methodology of idiomatics teaching-and-learning. Said methodology facilitates and enhances idiomatic-figurative synergism in discursive and communicative contexts. Thereafter, the chapter highlights and examines the most critical implications in applying idiomatics resourcefully. Recommendations for idiomatics training-and-teaching are also suggested.

INTRODUCTION

Under the crushing shadow of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), a global pandemic caused by the severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) now impacting the lives and livelihood of billions of people in 220 countries and territories around the world, online pedagogy in American higher education is fast becoming the leading topic of discussion and the subject of intense research interest for online teacher training. How best to address online teaching and learning in the Age of Coronavirus and beyond remains a challenge not easily solved even by those who claim to have attained “expert” status in the delivery of online instruction. With the death toll rising daily, economic activity grinding to a halt, and (mis/dis)information in a constant state of flux, emotions are riding high, ethical dilemmas are put to the test, emotional health and wellbeing are now an open question. And yes, toilet paper and hand sanitizers are the latest missing-in-action games played across stores, big and

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small. New safety protocols, including health checks, mandatory use of masks/face coverings, distributed workforce, remote workplaces, social distancing in public spaces, empty sports and entertainment venues, faceless classrooms, zoombombings and more, are fast becoming the ‘New Normal’ in the Age of Coronavirus. Add to that new words, phrases, shortenings, abbreviations, and terms—Pandemic, COVID-19, CARES Act, Flatten the Curve, Safer at Home, Self-quarantine, Social Distancing, Elbow Bumping, Virtual Learning, Webinar, Zoom—and the picture of living during this Corona-speak period of extreme and unprecedented uncertainty is far from complete. The Coronavirus pandemic has changed the world around us forever: transparency now gives way to the politics of urgency, changing ideologies challenge the decrees of government agencies, uncivil discourse tests public policy. New fiscal forces in the trillions of dollars ripple through global economies like wildfire set ablaze by an enemy unseen. Turbulence ahead, we fasten our seatbelts, tighten our belts, pinch pennies around the house. We wash our hands time and again. We abandon old rituals like handshaking and hugging in favor of forming new habits: elbow bumping and a head nod from afar. Uncertainty feels destabilizing. Our sense of identity as language professionals is fractured. Social shifts heighten our growing anxiety of what changes tomorrow may bring still. We fall prey to the insecurities living rent free in our heads 24/7. One after the other, the Domino pieces fall in an unending spiral chain reaction. The Coronaphobia domino effect is all but complete. Enter paralysis by analysis.

And yet, we soldier on. Calls for “pulling ourselves up by our bootstraps” give way to COVID-19 rapid response research grants now dotting the academic landscape of inquiry, innovation, and knowledge enterprise. Digital technologies are lauded like never before in the annals of information computing. Social media the latest superstars in staying connected online, in cultivating relationships, in solidifying connections, increasingly across space and time, any device, anytime, anywhere, with anyone. Creating, sharing, and exchanging information and ideas in virtual communities and networks in real time are as commonplace as the air our lungs demand. *Facebook*, *Twitter*, and *LinkedIn*, the social networks we use to socialize and customize our individual profiles. *Instagram*, *Snapchat*, and *YouTube*, the media sharing networks we use to upload and download content, photos, and (live) videos. *Pinterest*, *Flipboard*, and *Reddit*, the bookmarking and content curation networks we use to expose, discover, share, and save new and trending media and content (web pages, articles, blog posts, images, and videos). *Yelp*, *CNET*, and *TripAdvisor*, the consumer review networks we use to advertise, review, and post products, events, services, and programs.

Amid all the digital noise, “necessity, the mother of invention” finds new disciples willing to push the envelope, to chart new frontiers forward, to leave the past in the dustbins of history. We have no choice but to march forward on tomorrow. There is no escaping it. There is no denying it. The writing is on the wall already. Serious as a heart attack waiting in the wings, it is staring us down. It is calling our name. Being information and media literate in a digital society is no longer a luxury a select few get to exploit. Ready or not, we need to familiarize ourselves with the rapidly evolving digital landscape that professes to drive inquiry, communication, and critical thought forward. If *necessity is the mother of invention*, then *play is its father*. We need to ‘play’ with the media to determine the promise such digital technologies hold for online teaching and learning. We need to experiment with the communication outlets and tools to create, collect, and convey information and data in both synchronous and asynchronous delivery modes. And we need to insist that our learners demonstrate their learning in a multiplicity of digital forms, especially those that are most meaningful to them. Those exemplifying research-driven practices warranting effective and efficient use of communication technologies should be accorded high priority. Conversely, those falling short on their promise to access, organize, analyze, evaluate, and create new understanding *with a purpose* and *for a purpose* ought to be excised from the list of media to be pursued

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