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French fixed expressions:
**Language initiation in writing skill of lower intermediate
level for French as foreign language learners**

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Abstract :

Language mastery is based on complex language knowledge and skills. To achieve a high level of proficiency in one language, it is not enough to know many words and know how to apply grammar rules, but it is also important to understand and use specific expressions in that language. The use of expressions allows people to express themselves figuratively more naturally in the target language. Native speakers generally prefer to use expressions rather than producing new lexical combinations. For example, if a native French speaker says "He runs away **very quickly**", he will tend to use a common phrase such as « *Il s'est enfui à toutes jambes* » or « *Il est partie en coup de vent* », rather than « *Il a fui très vite* ». Similarly, if he wants to describe the intensity of his difficulties, he will be more likely to use the expression « *de peine et de misère* » than « *avec beaucoup de difficulté* ». These examples show that to express self-figurations naturally in one foreign language, one must make sentences that are not only in orthographic and grammar, but also able to use expressions frozen (expression figée) in the target language.

Keywords: fixed expression, writing skill, A2 level of CEFR

I- Introduction

To express oneself and understand a discourse, it is not enough to know the words, but one must also master the meaning of groups of words that have a fixed autonomous form and a figurative meaning. Usually, a native speaker is not necessarily aware of the degree of

freezing of his mother tongue: it is quite natural for him to use turns that are part of his language practice. But from the point of view of a person in the process of acquiring a foreign language, fixed constructions can hinder understanding and pose difficulties. A simple example: the idiomatic expression « *ne pas avoir la langue dans sa poche* » "not having the language in your pocket" has a figurative meaning -"To be very talkative". The learner probably understands that this is an expression because the phrase is not logical, however, we cannot be sure that he understands the meaning of such a metaphorical expression. He can also understand this same expression in reverse, coming to the conclusion that a person who does not have the language in his pocket does not speak a language well. Thus, in order to work to dispel some of these misunderstandings, and to help students of French as a foreign language understand and use these expressions correctly, I chose to analyze the teaching of expression fixed in French as a Foreign Language (FLE).

In fact, in the case where the teacher asks beginner non-native speakers to distinguish the following words: to hit, to tap, to beat, they will have a lot of trouble, especially if he adds a noun for each verb, for example: a rug, a door, the head, they will do a lot of compositions of words that make the natives laugh, combinations can be proposed in this case to better understand the distinction between the words: beat a carpet, knock on the door, type the head (level A).

The fixed expressions pose a lot of problems for the learners and it is because of their irregularities that are related to the history of the French language. French has undergone many phonetic, orthographic, morphological, syntactic and lexical changes during its evolution. It was the pronunciation and the grammar that were fixed in the first place while the lexicon evolves daily. It is a process that never stops because the language is alive and it is constantly developing. The lexicon is the most marked by changes and this is also the reason why French has so many irregularities and exceptions. Since it has undergone many changes under different influences, a language rich in various vocabularies is born.

We have therefore described as fixed expressions what is sometimes called figurative meaning, metaphor or cliché. But we have retained only cases where the possibilities of variations of the figurative part were weak.

This paper will therefore deal with the use of fixed expressions in class, how we proceed, what types of fixed expressions students first learn, which are not known and which are used incorrectly in the sentence. This study is aimed at students in the fourth semester and aims at integrating the lexicon of fixed expression into a written production. This work will also include a survey of learners studying French to see if they master the fixed expressions and how, in addition, their results and sheets with the phrases and exercises that teachers can use in class.

Phraseology

In recent decades, linguists have been studying the study of phraseology as an autonomous discipline. In the preface to *Petit Robert*, phraseology is defined as: "group of words forming a unit and cannot be modified at will". According to Alain Rey and Sophie Chantreau's *Dictionary of Phrases and Phrases*, the concept of phraseology is again defined:

Il s'agit (dans ce dictionnaire) de phraséologie, c'est-à-dire d'un système de particularités expressives liées aux conditions sociales dans lesquelles la langue est actualisée, c'est-à-dire à des usages. Ceci recouvre deux aspects d'une même réalité, expression et locution étant très généralement employés comme deux synonymes. L'un et l'autre sont indispensables à l'idée courante, concrète, pratique que nous avons du langage.

« It is (in this dictionary) of phraseology, that is to say of a system of expressive peculiarities related to the social conditions in which the language is updated, that is to say to uses. This covers two aspects of the same reality, expression and phrase being very generally used as two synonyms. Both are indispensable to the common, concrete, practical idea of language. »

Christelle Cavalla (2009), in her article « The phraseology in the classroom of FLE » offers two types of exercises to work on idiomatic expressions: those that go from form to meaning (semasiology) and others that go from meaning to form (onomasiology). In the first, we could emphasize the morphosyntactic expression structure. For example, we propose exercises: put the words in order to form the expression, complete the expression with the pronouns / with the good article, transform these formulas into affirmative expressions (or the opposite), complete the expressions by helping you from the list of words below, etc. As emphasized

González Rey (2015) distinguishes three phraseological units (what she calls the objects of study of phraseology): collocations, idiomatic expressions and preemies. But she mainly analyzes collocations and idiomatic expressions. The main difference between these two units is that the collocations are more transparent than the idiomatic expressions with regard to the meaning: the sense, compositional, remains the sum of the senses of the constituents. This characteristic stems from the fact that collocations are not fixed expressions like idiomatic expressions, but semi-fixed, that is to say, that they can be modified, or that the elements that make up the collocation can, of the same way, be separated. This is not possible for idioms that are frozen blocks.

Most linguists delimit two large groups of phraseological units, as we have just seen: on the one hand, we speak of semi-fixed collocations or synthases, and on the other hand, of idiomatic expressions, which are fixed synthases, constituting a syntactic and semantic unit. We note that it is the non-compositionality of meaning that distinguishes idiomatic expressions from other fixed or semi-fixed expressions, and that makes them unique.

In the early months of Foreign language learning (but also throughout this process), phraseology is one of the things the teacher should not let go of. We notice, however, that in class these elements are often neglected. The establishment of idiomatic expressions promotes

true communication skills. It is true that a good learning of idiomatic expressions requires a lot of effort, of memory and especially of practice: it is useless to memorize frozen expressions without putting them in context and in practice, because they are then forgotten. In addition, it should be remembered that the teaching-learning of idiomatic expressions is synonymous with learning the traditions and past of the target culture. These units have a complexity and ambiguity that makes their study difficult, but it is for this reason that phraseology as a discipline is necessary to study these units, which we do not forget are present everywhere in the discourse.

Fixed expressions

It is the criterion of fixation, of which I am going to speak now, which makes that the meaning of an expression cannot be definable starting from the elements which compose it, losing these elements their referential function. It is this criterion that makes it very difficult for a foreigner to know how to correctly use idiomatic expressions in context. We always want to make good use of them and use them to express some ideas or feelings in a precise way, and we know that a good knowledge of idiomatic expressions is synonymous with good second language proficiency.

González-Rey (2007:7) emphasizes that fixed expressions are present in all the speeches of users who use the same linguistic code, who share the same knowledge, the same experiences, and the same points of view. Indeed, the correct use of these expressions requires not only a shared knowledge of language and culture, but it also contributes to the creation of a certain solidarity between speakers. The fixed expressions form an essential notion of language. As Alain Rey says, "no language can be learned or described without them" (2003:VIII).

In the field of language sciences, "it is indisputable that at present, fixedness has become a fundamental dimension in the description of languages" (Mejri, 2005). This importance is undoubtedly due to the fact that, in language, polylexical units far exceed monolexical units (Gross,

1988). In the field of language didactics, it is the publication of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages which allows them to find a place in class practices and gives them a new lease on life. In literature, they have long been considered trivial and reveal the lack of creativity that does not mix well with the literature that must be inventive, innovative. "However, reality has partly denied that, because if we look closely at literary prose, we realize that idiomatic expressions are not only the prerogative of second-rate literature, but that all genres make regular and important use of these linguistic clichés "(Capra, 2010). The use of expressions fixed in the literary text is not without effects on its aesthetics, since they can account for an added value through the sounds and the prosody characteristic of these same expressions. In addition, the study of the reappropriation of expressions frozen by the literary text inevitably brings us back to the notions of intertextuality and interculturality. Their inscription in the literary text makes it possible to echo it with other worlds: cultural, social, literary, etc.

In the case of idiomatic expressions, since they are intimately related to the culture of a country and their meaning does not derive from the arrangement of the words that compose them, they shield understanding. "Ignorance of the meaning of an expression causes a break in the coherence of the speech, and thus, a hole of information in the procedure of the communication" (González Rey, 1995:157). Because of this, a non-native learner must know these expressions and use them wisely for successful communication. Proverbs can also be a barrier to understanding even native learners of a language, especially since the proverb is produced in a context and time determined and over.

Idioms and fixed expressions such as phrases, proverbs and sayings are an integral part of the language. They originate from literature or popular wisdom and belong to the socio-cultural heritage of the language.

Fixed expression in French as foreign language (FLE) class.

The use of these expressions adds to the variety and linguistic mixing. It gives the learner a power of action by looking into another way of conveying a message. It is a way of expressing itself at the same time popular, familiar, amusing, unusual, imaginative, and innovative and which gives a color particular to the language.

Each language expresses reality according to its way of seeing things and it is this different way of seeing things that are difficult to teach in FLE classrooms. But it is these cultural differences between the foreign language and the mother tongue, which will enrich the teaching-learning process of the FLE. It is to avoid this problem of "blocking" that an apprenticeship of these units must be considered since the beginning of the learning of a foreign language. This will introduce the students of FLE into the ambience of the target culture through the language. Students will know some aspects of the target culture in a fun and effortless way. In addition, fixed expressions are hardly dealt with in the FLE manuals. But one thing is clear, as soon as we, the foreigners, travel to France; we immediately notice that the idiomatic expressions are very used by the French. Expressions like *mettre une mine*, *être un cafard*, *avoir un poil dans la main*, *se faire cramer ou mettre un vent à quelqu'un*, are everywhere in the street. It is then that we understand that we know very little about idiomatic expressions, and that, nevertheless, they have an important status in the French language. The study of French expressions is essential for FFL students, and it is thanks to a new discipline, the phrase ale, that fixed expressions find their place in the didactics of the French language.

For idiomatic expressions and fixed expressions to be used and valued by the learner, it is important to:

1. To put them to good use in the context of communication. Learning for a dynamic and relevant application is first and foremost appropriate in context and daily on the part of the teacher during his interventions and conversations with students;

2. to identify these expressions in the texts read or heard, in order to identify the meaning (by coconstruction, deduction, analogy, having fun translating word by word in the process of building meaning or find their equivalent in the first language of the learner);
3. To make known and make use of proverbs and other expressions known and used by students in their environment;
4. To encourage students to recognize that the expressions are not necessarily the same from one Francophone culture to another and sometimes constitute regionalisms.

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Writing skills of level A2 of the CEFR

The global scale of the common reference of the CEFR defines level A2's user capable of the following linguistic skills:

1. Can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment).
2. Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters.
3. Can describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate need.

General linguistic range :

1. Has a repertoire of basic language which enables him/her to deal with everyday situations with predictable content, though he/she will generally have to compromise the message and search for words.
2. Can produce brief everyday expressions in order to satisfy simple needs of a concrete type: personal details, daily routines, wants and needs, requests for information.
3. Can use basic sentence patterns and communicate with memorized phrases, groups of a few words and formulae about themselves and other people, what they do, places, possessions etc.
4. Has a limited repertoire of short memorized phrases covering predictable survival situations; frequent breakdowns and misunderstandings occurred in non-routine situations. (<http://www.delfdalf.fr/level-a2-cefr-common-european-framework-of-reference-for-languages.html>)

II- Methodology

This is a descriptive study. According to Gay (1992:217), descriptive research involves collecting data in order to test hypotheses or to answer questions concerning the current status of the subject of the study. A descriptive study determines and reports the way things are. Descriptive research is scientific research that describes about event, phenomena or fact systematically dealing with certain area or population.

As far as form is concerned, this study is divided into two main parts. In the first part I focused on selecting French fixed expressions which were accorded to elements of French civilization. I gave definitions of fixed expressions, their division and the equivalence in English with practical examples.

The second part will focus on the application in class of writing skill. I will describe it, explain the process of initiating the language sense using French fixed expression. In setting up the project in FLE, we have

temporarily set aside the relationship between lexicon and written production. Then I will test students according to their level of French and after I analyze their results in detail. I will also describe possible mistakes, propose solutions and reveal whether the search has met my expectations.

In my analysis, I will include, by each animal name, some idiomatic expressions, of which I will give the context of use with an example sentence, the signified, the category to which the expression in question (appearances, character, attitude, moods and behavior, health, human relations, activities, judgments, action and time) and origin.

III- Result and Discussion

A- French fixed expressions

French fixed expressions highlight the figurative meaning of a word or phrase. The vocabulary of the human body, the animal world and nature have largely contributed to pictorially describe character traits, behaviors and attitudes. In France, there are many expressions built from the lexicon of animals and food. The French language offers us a wide range of animal expressions with which we can communicate and express our feelings.

Table 1: Theme : Animals

Idiomatic Expressions and fixed expressions	Contexte of utilisation	Équivalent in english
<i>Avoir des fourmis dans les jambes</i>	<i>Je suis resté assis trop longtemps, j'ai des fourmis dans les jambes.</i> I sat too long, I have ants in my legs.	My legs fell asleep
<i>Avoir la chair de poule</i>	<i>La musique dans ce film me donne la chair de poule. J'ai tellement froid que j'en ai la chair de poule.</i> The music in this film gives me goose bumps. I'm so cold that I get goose bumps.	To have goose bumps
<i>Avoir un chat dans la gorge</i>	<i>Je ne peux pas parler, j'ai un chat dans la gorge.</i> I cannot speak, I have a cat in my throat.	Have a frog in one's throat
<i>Donner sa langue au chat</i>	<i>Je ne trouve pas la réponse. Alors, je donne ma langue au chat.</i> I cannot find the answer. So, I give my tongue to the cat.	To give up
<i>Être comme un poisson dans l'eau</i>	<i>Mia est comme un poisson dans l'eau à l'école.</i> Mia is like a fish in the water at school.	To fit right in
<i>Jacasser comme une pie</i>	<i>Arrête de jacasser comme une pie. C'est le temps de travailler.</i> Stop chattering like a magpie. It's time to work.	Just jibber-jabber till the cows come home
<i>Un froid de canard</i>	<i>Habillez-vous chaudement! Il fait un froid de canard.</i> Dress warmly! It's freezing cold.	It is freezing cold

Table 2 : Theme: food

Idiomatic Expressions et fixed expressions	Contexte of utilisation	Équivalent in English
<i>Avoir du pain sur la planche</i>	<i>Il ne reste que deux jours et on a encore beaucoup de pain sur la planche.</i> There are only two days left and we still have a lot of work to do.	To have your hands full
<i>En rang d'oignons</i>	<i>Les pupitres sont placés en rang d'oignons!</i> The desks are placed in rows of onions!	In line, in a row
<i>Être du gâteau/ être de la tarte</i>	<i>Lire ce livre, c'est du gâteau!</i> <i>Gravir cette colline, ce n'est pas de la tarte!</i> Read this book, it's a piece of cake! Climb this hill, it's not pie!	To be a piece of cake
<i>Être haut comme trois pommes</i>	<i>Ton petit frère est haut comme trois pommes.</i> Your little brother is tall like three apples.	To be yea-high
<i>Être rouge comme une tomate</i>	<i>Quand je dois parler en public, je deviens rouge comme une tomate.</i> When I have to speak in public, I become red like a tomato.	Red as a beet
<i>Les carottes sont cuites</i>	<i>Maman a dit non. Les carottes sont cuites.</i> Mom said no. The carrots are cooked.	It's all up
<i>Ne pas être dans son assiette</i>	<i>J'ai mal à la gorge. Je ne suis pas dans mon assiette. Il n'a pas l'air d'être dans son assiette.</i> I have a sore throat. I'm not on my plate. He does not seem to be on his plate.	Not feeling like yourself
<i>pousser comme une mauvaise herbe</i>	<i>Jacques est tellement grand. Il pousse comme de la mauvaise herbe!</i> Jacques is so big. It grows like weed!	Sprouting like weeds

<i>Raconter des salades</i>	<i>Ce n'est pas possible! Arrête de raconter des salades!</i> It is not possible! Stop telling salads!	Spinning fairy tales
<i>S'occuper de ses oignons</i>	<i>Ce n'est pas de tes affaires. Mêlé-toi de tes oignons.</i> This is not your business. Mingle with your onions.	Minding one's business
<i>Se vendre comme des petits pains chauds</i>	<i>Les nouveaux jouets se vendent comme des petits pains chauds.</i> New toys are selling like hot cakes.	Selling like hotcakes
<i>Tomber dans les pommes</i>	<i>J'ai eu si peur que je suis presque tombé dans les pommes.</i> I was so scared that I almost fell in the apples.	Passing out, fainting

B- Treatment in class.

Educational sheet

Support: French fixed expression

Level: Intermediate A2

Objectives: Written skill using fixed expressions

Functional:

- recognize a narrative text
- know the meaning of fixed expressions
- find equivalence in Indonesian

Linguistics:

- Tenses: past tense
- Chronological connectors
- Character characterization

Approach :

1. The first step is to display the illustrations of the expressions on the board. You should know that illustrations represent literal expressions, so they do not always make sense for foreign learners. Idiomatic expressions are a specificity of our languages and allow to make a mental image. With this activity, we highlight the importance of the visual and the image in the learning of a language and at the same time we have fun with the words. I chose five expressions to begin with: *tomber dans les pommes* / *poser un lapin* / *raconter des salades* / *être lessivée* / *avoir le coup de foudre*. (Falling in apples / posing a rabbit / telling salads / being leached / having love at first sight). Each expression is thus presented to the learners with the corresponding illustration.
2. In a second step, we ask the learners if they understand each word forming the expression. The use of translation is justified here by the enrichment of the lexicon and also for the amusing aspect. Literal translations make the learners laugh and this has a positive effect on memorization.
3. Learners look for the pictorial sense with the help of the teacher. We pitch the learners and give them clues: the expression can be used to talk about their feelings, the expression is related to this or that situation.
4. The next step is the contextualization of the expression: we guide learners and help them to put idiomatic expressions in appropriate contexts. The use of the expression in its context is fundamental because it is not for the learners to simply know this expression. The goal is for them to know how to use it in the right context.
5. After having collected the examples proposed by the learners, we can propose them additional sentences including the expressions in a precise context. Learners can then move to a production stage and create a situation where all the expressions to which they have been exposed can be used.

Evaluation

Language competency: Lower intermediate level of writing skill (A2)

Theme: Fixed Expressions

Test 1

Choisissez cinq expressions dans les tableaux (Animal et aliment) et utilisez-les dans des expressions. Donnez le contexte et des exemples dans votre phrase pour expliquer le sens de l'expression.

Choose five expression from table 1 and table 2 and use them in sentences. Give the context and examples in your phrases to explain the meaning of the expressions.

Test 2

Rédigez un passage de 80 mots en utilisant les expressions figées que vous aviez traitées dans vos phrases. Vous devriez développer un thème convenant aux expressions choisies.

Write a passage of 80 words using the fixed expressions that you had treated in your sentences. You should develop a theme suitable for the chosen expressions.

Test 3

*Lisez les texte- ci dessous, puis **reformulez-les avec vos propres mots**. Faites attention avec les expressions figées dans le texte.*

Read the text below, then rephrase it with your own words. Pay attention with the expressions fixed in the text.

1. *Julien, mon collègue de bureau, est souvent de mauvais poil le matin. Mais aujourd'hui, il est arrivé rouge de colère au travail après s'être pris une prune pour avoir grillé un feu rouge. En fait, au bureau, tout le monde en a sa claque de ses colères à répétition mais il faut le comprendre. Il joue de malchance depuis plusieurs mois. Et c'est bien normal qu'il l'ait mauvaise. Julien m'a aidé plusieurs fois dans le passé et j'aimerais bien pouvoir lui renvoyer l'ascenseur.*

2. Depuis que Paul est au chômage, c'est sa femme qui fait bouillir la marmite. Cette situation dure depuis la faillite de son entreprise informatique il y a plusieurs mois. Ils ne sont pas encore à sec grâce aux allocations mais les fins de mois sont quand même difficiles. Pôle emploi a proposé plusieurs petits boulots que Paul a acceptés pour finalement ne gagner qu'un salaire de misère. Alors pour mettre un peu de beurre dans les épinards, Paul aide ses voisins très âgés. Il les emmène faire les courses, il leur coupe la pelouse et s'occupe du bricolage. Grâce à eux, la période de vaches maigres n'a pas duré.

Analyze

We have opted, in our study, for the classification that distributes the errors in a text into two main categories, content errors that are the result of the misunderstanding of the instructions and the lack of overall organization of the text, and errors of form, that affect the language with all its aspects.

1. Errors due to misunderstanding of instructions to follow even before beginning to write their texts, learners are obliged to read the instructions and better understand them in order to apply them. This act is not always obvious to them because it could be taken, by its complexity, for a "mental aggression" exerted by their teacher. Learners find themselves in an ambiguous situation in which they do not know what to do, how to do it, or when to do it.

In this regard, in our study, we have focused on two very critical shortcomings. The first is due to the inability of the learner, on the one hand, to give common sense to the keywords constituting the subject, and, on the other hand, to correctly answer the questions corresponding to the advanced instructions. This problem of misunderstanding automatically induces him to produce texts that do not obviously touch the essence of the proposed subject.

2. Errors due to the lack of organization of the text

When we chose to work on this type of error, we were aware that this task would not be easy as it will affect several levels of the overall organization of texts. The thematic progression which is absent in all the written productions put under examination. They do not develop their

stories following a thematic progression that will obviously ensure a logical sequence of events in history, such as constant theme progression, breakthrough progression or linear progression).

3. Morphological errors -Grammatical errors

To analyze grammatical errors, we chose to work on three levels: agreement, gender, and time. Note that this classification of grammatical errors is based, on the one hand, on the criterion of their "frequency" in the different student texts, and, on the other hand, on our experience as a researcher in language didactics and former FFL teacher in the qualifying secondary cycle. Errors affecting the agreement, Agreement Subject - Verb in French, as in most modern languages, the verb agrees with his subject by taking the marks of verbal flexion or otherwise called "endings". Such a rule is still a source of problems for some students in the FFL class, who fail to apply it correctly depending on the context.

4. Spelling errors

Spelling errors are present in all copies of students without exception. They are listed according to two levels of learner inadequacy, namely phonological and grammatical.

IV- Conclusion

Idiomatic expressions, like all fixed expressions, form a captivating and multifaceted object of study. They are present in all languages, because the fixation is a central notion of language. The fixedness is the essential characteristic that unites all the phraseological units, it is therefore necessary to understand its aspects. For this we have chosen the most relevant features that in the teaching of FLE are essential to recognize for the teacher, but also for the learner, to understand the functioning of idiomatic expressions in the language.

Assimilating fixed expressions in French as foreign language teaching promotes communicative competence as well as social interaction. The benefits of teaching learning the expressions justify the need and the need to work the pictorial expressions in a progressive and continuous way throughout the learning process.

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