

## Analyzing Sentence Structures in English Idioms: a Simplified Syntactic Analysis with Tree Diagrams

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### Abstrak

Sintaks merupakan cabang ilmu linguistic yang menjelaskan tentang struktur kalimat, penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menyelidiki struktur sintaktis dalam idiom bahasa Inggris melalui analisis sintaktis yang disederhanakan dengan menggunakan diagram pohon. Sebagai bentuk ekspresi kiasan dengan makna unik, idiom seringkali menantang dalam pemahaman struktur gramatikalnya. Penelitian ini bertujuan meningkatkan pemahaman dengan memanfaatkan representasi visual melalui diagram pohon. Analisis difokuskan pada berbagai ungkapan idiomatik, dengan tujuan mengungkapkan komponen sintaktis yang mendasari makna kiasan. Temuan ini diharapkan memberikan kontribusi pada pemahaman linguistik dan pendidikan, menggambarkan peran penting struktur sintaktis dalam mendekripsi kompleksitas idiom bahasa Inggris.

**Kata kunci:** *Idiom, Sintaks, Struktur Kalimat, Diagram Pohon*

### Abstract

Syntax is a branch of linguistic science that explains the structure of sentences. This research aims to investigate the syntactic structure within English idioms through a simplified syntactic analysis using tree diagrams. As a form of figurative expression with unique meanings, idioms often pose challenges in understanding their grammatical structures. The goal of this study is to enhance comprehension by utilizing visual representations through tree diagrams. The analysis focuses on various idiomatic expressions, intending to reveal the syntactic components underlying their figurative meanings. These findings are expected to contribute to linguistic and educational understanding, illustrating the crucial role of syntactic structures in describing the complexity of English idioms.

**Keywords:** *Idiom, Syntax, Sentence Structure, Tree Diagrams*

### INTRODUCTION

Syntax is the study of language sentences in linguistics. Syntax, according to Gleason (128), is the principles of arranging of the construction created by the process of

derivation and inflection (word) into bigger constructions of various kinds. The preceding definition of syntax leads to the conclusion that syntax is the arrangement and relationship between words, phrases, and clauses that form sentences or bigger compositions based on grammatical rules. Language is sometimes defined as a system of arbitrary vocal symbols through which a social group communicates (Lyons, 3-4). People can expand their knowledge and learn new things by using language. Aside from that, humans utilize language to write, speak, and evaluate things. Furthermore, Brinton (in Slamet, 2019) stated that linguistics is a science that examines a language system, and there are several branches based on the subject of discussion, such as; The first, phonetic and phonology are studies that examine speech sounds or utterances of a specific language. Second, morphology is the study of the development of a word. Third, syntax is the study of how words are arranged and subsequently combined into huge units or sentence structures. Fourth, semantics is the study of the meaning of words in a specific language. The final topic, pragmatic, looks at function and meaning in the context of language application.

A sentence is a linguistic structure that contains a whole notion or idea. A sentence is a grammatical unit with the greatest syntactic unit from a clause or phrase in which word classes are functionally ordered, according to (Helmie & Kurniawati, 2022). Understanding sentence structure is required for sentence composition. In linguistics, sentence structure is referred to as syntax. Syntax is the study of the rules governing the form or pattern of sentences in a language. Syntax, as defined by (Suhendra et al., 2022), is a study that examines the organization of words into phrases. The phrases are joined into clauses, and the clauses are combined into sentences, which process meaning in order to communicate with others vocally and in writing. Syntax is a set of language rules that govern sentence production (Simatupang, 2019).

Because language is dynamic and evolving, it is often embellished with unique expressions that go beyond the literal boundaries of words. Among these linguistic embellishments, idioms stand out as fascinating phrases that add color, depth and cultural richness to communication. The linguistic study examines the complexity of these figurative expressions with the aim of discovering the structure that contributes to their unique charm. This study attempts to undertake a journey through the syntactic landscape of English idioms using a simplified syntactic analysis enriched with the visual aid of tree diagrams. English idioms, deeply intertwined in everyday conversations, offer a fascinating linguistic challenge. In addition to their literal meanings, idioms have images that reflect cultural nuances, historical context, and social norms. This study attempts to uncover the syntactic structure underlying English idioms using a simplified approach inspired by Noam Chomsky's "transformative generative grammar." The integration of trees as a visual representation aims to clarify the hierarchical relationships within these expressions.

As we delve deeper into the world of words, the research aims to contribute to a better understanding of how sentence structure works within these linguistic phenomena. By simplifying syntactic analysis and visual representation through tree diagrams, this study aims to provide a comprehensive and accessible framework for exploring the unique structures that define idioms. On this analytical journey, we aim to uncover hidden complexities that offer not only linguistic curiosities, but also insights into the cultural and

cognitive aspects of language. A conventional expression is an expression or sentence whose overall meaning is different from the sum of the meanings of its individual parts. It is a fixed, figurative expression in language whose meaning cannot be deduced from its individual elements. It is often based on cultural and contextual conventions, which form a unique form of linguistic ephemera that encompasses shared experiences, beliefs, or historical references within a particular linguistic community. Idioms play an important role in communication and contribute to the richness, expressiveness and cultural identity of a language. They require a meaning that goes beyond the literal interpretation of words and represents both a challenge and an opportunity for students and speakers.

## METHOD

Researchers used a qualitative approach in this study. Qualitative research contains non-numerical data, so the data analysed is in the form of words, not in the form of numbers. According to (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) Qualitative research is a method for observing objective theories with relationships between variables. (Herdianto et al., 2023) also said that the researcher is the key instrument. Therefore, qualitative research is research to examine natural objects, making researchers the key instrument. Qualitative research is a human instrument that seeks and selects information for the data to be used, conducts data collection, interprets the data, and provides conclusions on the data obtained. Data is raw material that can be used as the basis for study or analysis to produce information. The data of this research are idiom sentences used in daily life and are familiar to many people. In collecting data, the author took several steps such as collecting idioms that are often encountered in daily conversations, then presenting all the selected data, analysing each idiom using Noam Chomsky's theory, and drawing some idioms into a tree diagram.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section describes the result of the research and discussion. The problem formulation in this research will be answered, starting from all the identified data, then classified based on each kind of sentence, and each sort of sentence will be analyzed utilizing a tree diagram with Noam Chomsky's theory "Transformational Generative Grammar". The writer found 20 Idioms on website English First (EF). These Idioms contain The most common English idioms, Common English idioms & expressions and Familiar English idioms & proverbs

**Table 1.**

No.	Idioms	Meaning	Type of Idioms
1.	A blessing in disguise	a good thing that seemed bad at first	The most common English idioms
2.	Break a leg	Good luck	The most common English idioms
3.	Give someone the benefit of the doubt	Trust what someone says	The most common English idioms
4.	He's a chip off the old block	The son is like the father	Common English idioms & expressions

5.	Hit the nail on the head	Get something exactly right	Common English idioms & expressions
6.	Don't put all your eggs in one basket	What you're doing is too risky	Common English idioms & expressions
7.	A It takes one to know one	You're just as bad as I am	Common English idioms & expressions
8.	The elephant in the room	The big issue, the problem people are avoiding	Common English idioms & expressions
9.	Hit the sack	Go to sleep	The most common English idioms
10.	You can say that again	That's true, I agree	The most common English idioms
11.	Your guess is as good as mine	I have no idea	The most common English idioms
12.	A little learning is a dangerous thing	People who don't understand something fully are dangerous	Familiar English idioms & proverbs
13.	Get a second wind	Have more energy after having been tired	Familiar English idioms & proverbs
14.	Get wind of something	Hear news of something secret	Familiar English idioms & proverbs
15.	He's sitting on the fence	He can't make up his mind	Familiar English idioms & proverbs
16.	You can't make an omelet without breaking some eggs	There's always a cost to doing something	Familiar English idioms & proverbs
17.	You can catch more flies with honey than you can with vinegar	You'll get what you want by being nice	Familiar English idioms & proverbs
18.	That ship has sailed	It's too late	Familiar English idioms & proverbs
19.	There are other fish in the sea	It's ok to miss this opportunity. Others will arise	Common English idioms & expressions
20.	You can't judge a book by its cover	This person or thing may look bad, but it's good inside	Common English idioms & expressions

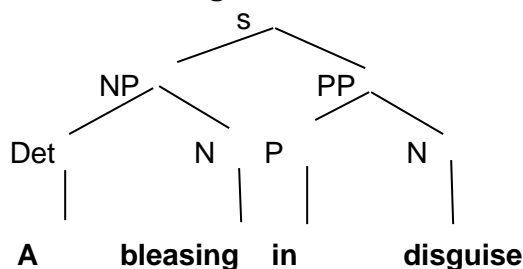
The total number of sentences presented in the aforementioned table is 20 idioms. Out of these, the writer intends to conduct an analysis based on Noam Chomsky's "Transformational Generative Grammar," which falls under three distinct idiom types. As per Purnomoadjie and

Mulyadi (2019), the theory of transformational generative grammar elucidates the construction of language by transforming the structure of phrases, as depicted in a tree diagram. This graphical representation illustrates the hierarchical relationships among sentence components. Rahmawati et al. (2022) further elaborate that there exist fundamental or primary phrase structure rules crucial for determining the grammatical structure. These rules are inclusive

1. of: S – NP (Aux) VP.
2. NP – {Det (Adj) N, Pro, N (PP)}.
3. VP – V (NP) (PP).
4. PP – P (NP).
5. AP – A (PP).

The analysis is as follows:

### 1. The Most Common English Idioms



**Figure 1 The tree diagrams of the most common English idioms**

On the tree diagram, “A” is a determiner, “Bleasing” is a noun and part of a noun phrase, “in” is a prepositions. And “disguise” is a noun. The sentence is the most common English idioms because are common in everyday conversation in the United States.

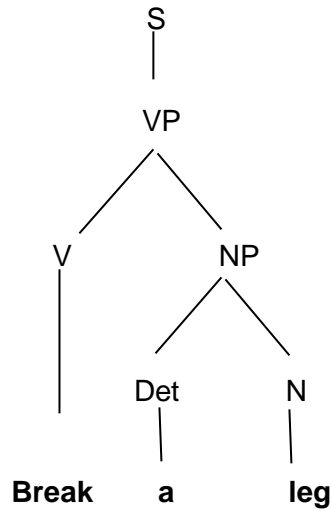


Figure 2 Figure 1 The tree diagrams of the most common English idioms

On the tree diagram, "Break" is a verb, "A" is a determiner, and "leg" is a noun. The sentence is the most common English idioms because are common in everyday conversation in the United States.

## 2. Common English Idioms & Expressions

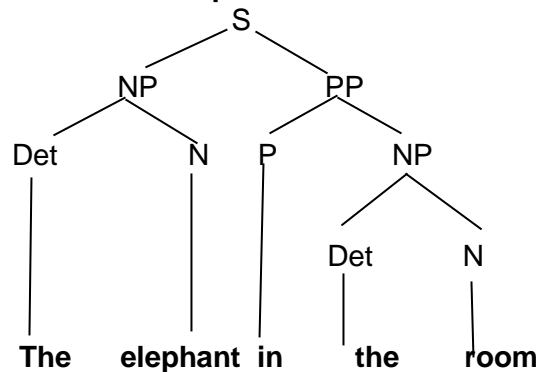
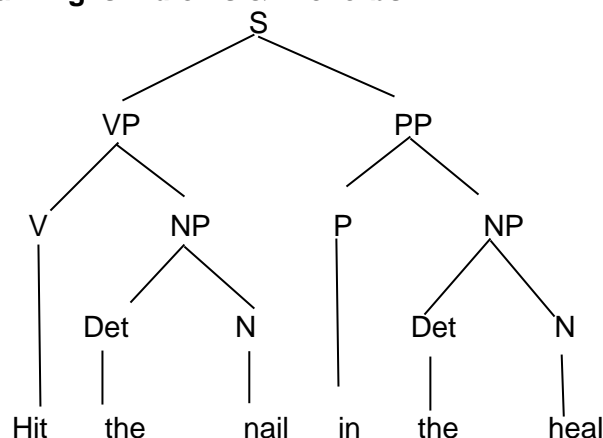


Figure 3 Tree Diagram of Common English idioms & expressions

On the tree diagram, "The" is a determiner, "Elephant" is a Noun, "In" is a prepositions. "The" is a determiner and part of a noun phrase. and "Room" is a noun which is combined into the prepositional phrase. This sentence is Common English idioms & expressions because used quite regularly in the United States.

### 3. Familiar English Idioms & Proverbs



**Figure 4 The Tree Diagram Familiar English Idioms & Proverbs**

On the tree diagram, “Hit” is a verb, “The” is a determiner, “Nail” is a noun, “In” is a preposition, “The” is a determiner and part of a noun phrase, and “heel” is a noun. This sentence is Familiar English Idioms & Proverbs because they are familiar and easily understood by native English speakers, but they are not usually in everyday conversation.

#### Discussion

In examining data extracted from an article published on the internet, the researcher utilizes the term “syntactic structure analysis,” referred to as a tree diagram proposed by Noam Chomsky. The tree structure or tree diagram serves as the framework for generative transformational grammar. The tree provides a detailed representation of sentences by displaying hierarchical relationships among their constituent parts (Chomsky, 2002). Additionally, Islami and Ardila (2022) assert that a tree diagram is the most commonly used method for analyzing sentences, employing inherent hierarchical structures. Furthermore, idioms employ various sentence forms based on their types. The first type is the most common English idiom, frequently used in everyday conversations in the United States. It is heard in movies and TV shows and can be used to make your English sound more like that of a native speaker.

The second type is compound sentences. In the examples of idioms mentioned in the article, the researcher did not find conjunctions, as the presented idioms are not inherently compound sentences that require conjunctions to connect two sentences into one. The third type is complex sentences. The purpose of using complex sentences is to combine or compare ideas. In the presented data, the researcher also did not find the use of conjunctions in each idiom. In summary, the researcher found that these idioms cannot be classified as compound or complex sentences unless the idiom appears within a pre-existing compound or complex sentence. In other words, idioms can appear in various sentence types, such as simple sentences, complex sentences, compound sentences, and others. However, these sentences are not always found in idioms.

## CONCLUSION

Through this research, the syntactic structure of English idiomatic is analysed using Noam Chomsky's Generative Transformation Grammar theory and the use of tree diagram as the main tool. From the analysis of 20 idioms divided into three main types, namely Most Common English Idioms, Common English Idioms & Expressions, and Familiar English Idioms & Proverbs, it is illustrated that each type of idiom has a different sentence pattern. The analysis shows that the first type of idioms, which are most commonly used in daily conversation, generally adopt a simple sentence structure with a nominal subject phrase and a predicate verb phrase. Meanwhile, the second and third types of idioms, although having different levels of familiarity, can also use more complex sentence structures, including prepositional phrases.

This research confirms that idiomatic is not limited to one particular sentence type and can appear in different types of sentence structures depending on the context. However, not all idioms can be categorised as compound or complex sentences unless they appear in pre-existing compound or complex sentences. This shows that idiomatic can adorn various types of sentences, ranging from simple to complex sentences. For future researchers, it is suggested to develop further analyses of various types of idioms in different languages as well as to extend this research to more complex idiomatic syntactic structures. In addition, further exploration of the relationship between idiomatic and cultural, social, and psychological aspects of its use can also be an interesting line of research. Research on idiomatic not only provides a deeper understanding of language, but also reveals the cultural and cognitive complexities contained in it, providing room for further research that is more in-depth and comprehensive.

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