



## English Idioms in Asian Englishes: A Corpus-Based Investigation

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### ABSTRACT

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The goal of this study was to investigate the use of English idioms in Asian Englishes, particularly, Indian English, Singapore English, Malaysian English, Philippine English and Hong Kong English. Research on the varieties of English in the past have concentrated on the grammatical features, emerging lexicons, phonology and many other aspects of the English varieties. In all the studies reviewed, the field of figurative language seems to have been neglected. To fill this gap, this study used the five Asian components of the Global Web-Based English (GloWbE) corpus. The idioms that were explored in the paper were based on the study of Simpson and Mendis (2013) which listed 32 most frequent idioms. Since the list given by Simpson and Mendis (2013) are idioms common in their context, the list was trimmed down into ten by searching their occurrences in the Philippine corpus. The data revealed that the idioms included in this study were also seen as being used by the speakers of the Asian Englishes. We can speculate that the occurrence of these idioms in their speech is a reflection of the Asian speakers' attempt to achieve native-like speech. Using the idioms listed in this study, it appeared that Indian English has recorded the most number of occurrences while Hong Kong English has the least. Some forms or variants of the idioms have also emerged from some Asian Englishes which may reflect the uniqueness of the particular English variety as they try to embrace and own the language.

### KEYWORDS

idioms, Asian Englishes, Indian English, Singapore English, Malaysia English, Philippine English, HongKong English

## 1. Introduction

Quirk in the 1960s has made a plea for linguistic tolerance after having emphasized that English is not a possession of the English people and that we must realize that there is no single “correct” English, and no single *standard* of correctness. Other scholars have forwarded the same arguments that the English used by the British and the Americans are not the only acceptable model to be set for our language learners. Researchers since then have focused on investigations on different aspects of Englishes across the world. Research studies have highlighted the grammatical features, emerging lexicons, variations in phonology and many other aspects of the English varieties. However, it has been noticed that the field of figurative language, specifically the use of idioms, seemed to have been disregarded.

Idioms are expressions whose meaning cannot be derived from their constituent parts. Idioms are formed by combining lexical items and eventually constitutes a meaning of its own which is different from the particular individual lexical items. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) extended the definition of the term by saying that idioms are also known as the metaphor that serves as a device of poetic imagination and the rhetorical flourish dedicates for most languages. Vasiljek’s (2011) study takes a different route by looking at idioms as instances of conceptual metaphors (CM) which are grounded in physical and social experience. Aside from this, considering the alleged arbitrary semantics of idiomatic language and fixed word order, Boers, Eyckmans and Stengers (2007) mentioned that the only way learners could master these expressions was by rote memorization. Conceived as “dead metaphors”, idioms are fixed multiword units which must be learned as a whole. As a result, second-language teaching materials often either ignored idioms completely, or just listed them as ‘other expressions’, without providing any opportunities for practice (Irujo 1986).

In recent years, studies about idiomatic expressions led to redefining the concept of idioms. Grant and Bauer (2004) point out that idiomatic phrases differ in their degree of figurativeness and compositionality. They identify two basic categories of idioms: ‘core- idioms’ which are non-compositional and non-figurative, and ‘figuratives,’ which are more metaphorically transparent, and can be traced back to their compositional elements. Only a small number of idioms are “core idioms”; most idiomatic expressions have been shown to be semantically motivated. Fernando (1996) developed a scale system in classifying idiomatic expressions and habitual collocations. In her classification, idioms fall into three categories: pure (nonliteral), semiliteral, and literal.

Despite the widespread belief that idioms are used sparingly in academic speaking and writing, Miller (2018) asserts that this is contrary to what research indicates. She specifically mentioned the huge occurrence of *in the pipeline*, an English idiom referring to something abstract, such as a project, that is in progress but is not yet complete. This idiom appeared in 3,916 articles and books in the Springer Exemplar corpus, which clearly showed that idioms are used to a large extent even in academic discourse.

In the Philippines, the idioms, being part of the field of figurative language, have been taught by language teachers in their classes in their attempt to make the writing outputs of their students more colorful and literary especially in creative writing classes. This must be arising from the fact that the ability to understand and use formulaic language appropriately, like idioms, is a key to nativelike fluency. Fernando (1996, as cited by Simpson and Mendis 2003) so firmly said that English teachers cannot afford to ignore idioms or idiomaticity if a natural use of the target language is an aim. This is further echoed by Wray (1999) who maintained that formulaic language benefits both comprehension and production because such expressions appear to be stored and retrieved as holistic, unanalyzed chunks and thus contribute to economy of expression.

Studies about how idioms are best taught among second language learners have been conducted. Vasiljevic (2013) explored whether raising the learners’ awareness of the underlying CMs would help them retain the

meaning and the form of the idiomatic expressions. She concluded that the mapping between idiomatic expressions and conceptual metaphors will be more transparent to learners when conceptual metaphors are presented in their native language. Boers, Eyckmans, and Stengers (2007) show that inferring idiomatic meaning is likely to facilitate recall. The inferencing process requires an element of mental elaboration, which is believed to promote the retention of input. There are also some studies (e.g., Knight 1994, Stahl and Fairbanks 1986) which suggest that a combination of definitional and contextual approaches to vocabulary learning is more effective than either approach in isolation.

The above studies mentioned looked into the appropriate ways of teaching idioms among second language learners for better understanding, retention and recall. In all the studies reviewed, what has been neglected is the investigation of idiomatic expressions and its use as seen in the different varieties of Asian Englishes. This is the gap that the paper addresses. Employing Global Web-Based English (GloWbE) corpus, this paper seeks to investigate whether the English idioms, which obviously originated from the parent Englishes, are still used by the speakers of the Asian Englishes. This is coming from the assumption that in our attempt to achieve a nativelike proficiency, there must have been a conscious effort on our part to imitate the expressions used by the native speakers.

This article investigates the use of English idiomatic expressions among speakers of English in Asia. Hence, this paper looks into English idioms in the following varieties of English: Philippine English, Singapore English, Hong Kong English, Indian English, and Malaysian English. Specifically, the paper answers the following questions:

1. What English idioms are dominant in Asian Englishes?
2. How are English idioms used in Asian Englishes?
3. What emerging observations on the use of English idioms are seen in the Asian Englishes corpora?

## 2. Method

### 2.1 Corpus Materials

As to the choice of English idioms, we began by examining textbooks that may possibly contain the commonly used idioms, but we changed our parameter because being included in the textbooks does not equate to popularity of the idioms. Next, we searched for the most common English idioms by checking websites with already established reputation that released the list. However, the results led to long list of idioms which this paper may not be able to manage considering time constraints. Hence, another strategy was sought. We looked for a scholarly paper that lists the commonly used English idioms using certain parameters. The study of Simpson and Mendis (2013) listed 32 most frequent idioms found in Michigan Corpus of Academic Spoken English (MICASE), a specialized corpus of contemporary speech recorded at the University of Michigan from 1997 to 2001. MICASE, available and searchable via the Web, contains 197 hours of recorded speech, totaling about 1.7 million words in 152 speech events. They, however, stressed that the list they gave is not an authoritative or definitive list of the most commonly used idioms, given the stated limitations of a 1.7-million word corpus; it is nevertheless a worthwhile resource which this present paper has taken advantage of.

The following is the list of idioms given Simpson and Mendis (2013) which was the basis of this paper.

**Table 1. Most Frequent Idioms in MICASE**

Idioms	Idioms
bottom line	out the door
the big picture	rule of thumb
come into play	take (something) at face value
what the hell	beat to death
down the line	put the heat on
what the heck	a ball park idea/guess
flip a coin	come out of the closet
on (the right) track	full-fledged
knee-jerk	get a handle on
hand in hand	goes to show
right (straight) off the bat	nitty-gritty
carrot and stick	on the same page
draw a/the line (between)	ring a bell
on target	split hairs
thumbs up	take a stab at it
fall in love	take someone's word for it

Since the list given by Simpson and Mendis (2013) are idioms common in their context, we searched the occurrences of these idioms in the Philippine corpus included in the Global Web-Based English (GloWbE) corpus. This is done to identify the 10 most commonly used idioms as seen in the Philippine corpus which we eventually compared with the other Asian Englishes.

After searching the occurrence of the 32 idioms in the Philippine corpus in the GloWbE, the following table summarizes the 11 commonly used idioms in the Philippine corpus of the Glowbe.

**Table 2. Commonly Used Idioms in the Philippine Component of the GlowBE Corpus**

Idioms	No. of Tokens
fall in love	422
hand in hand	183
what the hell	181
what the heck	118
on the right track	112
thumbs up	106
rule of thumb	104
goes to show	90
the big picture	85
bottomline	81
full-fledged	81

With this list in mind, the search of idiom tokens was carried out using the Global Web-Based English (GloWbE) which consists of 1.9 billion words of texts from twenty different countries: United States, Canada, Great Britain, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, India, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Singapore, Malaysia, Philippines, Hongkong, South Africa, Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya, Tanzania and Jamaica. This corpus is unique because it allows researchers to carry out comparisons between varieties on English. This is something that the present paper considered important as it endeavors to investigate the differences and similarities in the way Asian English speakers use the identified English idioms. The Asian varieties included in this study are: Philippine English, Singapore English, Hong Kong English, Indian English, and Malaysian English.

The following table lists the countries included in this paper together with the size of the respective corpus found in the GloWbE.

**Table 3. Corpus Size of the Asian Countries under Study**

English variety	Number of words in GloWbE
Great Britain	387,615,074
United States	386,809,355
India	96,430,888
Singapore	42,974,705
Philippines	43,248,407
Malaysia	41,643,730
Hongkong	40,450,291

## 2.2 Searching the Corpus

We searched the entire GloWbE corpus by encoding the tokens or possible variations thereof using the search tool on the corpus website. For example, to search the frequency of the idiom *to take some's word for it*, the following entries were entered: *take \* word for it, took \* word for it*. While searching for the frequency of use of these identified idioms among the Asian Englishes in the outer circle, we kept in mind other emerging observations on the use of the identified idioms among the five varieties under study. It is imperative to look at the results one by one to ensure that the string of words is used as idioms or not. Hence, analysis of the features and patterns of idiom use in general also demanded a close reading.

## 2.3 Weeding out Data

The process of weeding out data or eliminating those occurrences in which the word or phrase is not used as an idiom was a lengthy one. The researchers had to do a close reading of all the occurrences, one after the other, to check if the word or phrase was used as an idiom or not. For example, the idiom *the bottomline* means the ultimate result, the upshot, the main point or crucial factor. If used as an idiom, it may appear like, '*The bottom line is that the chairman wants to dictate all of the board's decisions.*' However, there are instances in the corpus when the idiom *the bottomline* is used to refer to a name of a TV show, or the lower structure of an organization as seen in the following extracts:

*... concept of discussion as he goes up-front in ABS-CBN's newest reality talkshow "Bottomline" starting November 28 (Saturday night) after Banana Split. (PH G 19 abs-cbn.com)*

*... we zero production out of Sudan and what is the impact on our bottomline? It is about US\$1bil (RM3.11 bil) a year. (MY G 14 ... star888.blogspot.com)*

As in the above instances from the Philippines and Malaysian corpus where the word or phrase is not used as an idiom, then they have to be eliminated from the data and were not counted as part of the occurrences.

### 3. Findings and Discussion

The data revealed that the selected idioms in this study generally have high occurrences in the Great Britain and United States corpus. This is not something surprising because these fixed expressions have its origins from these parent Englishes.

**Table 4. Occurrences of the Idioms in Great Britain and US Corpus**

Idioms	Great Britain (GB)	United States (US)
fall in love	1,628	2,048
hand in hand	1,303	1,093
what the hell	2,341	3,424
what the heck	429	1,214
on the right track	682	922
thumbs up	685	824
rule of thumb	789	898
goes to show	1,277	1,049
the big picture	832	1,621
bottomline	31	99
full-fledged	152	538

Generally, the US corpus showed a bigger number of occurrence in all the idioms as compared with GB corpus, except for the idiom *hand in hand*. Out of the idioms included in this study, the idiom, *bottomline* has the lowest frequency at 31 occurrences out of the 387,615,074 word data from the GB corpus.

This paper is not dwelling on the occurrences of these on American English and British English. This paper intends to look at how these idioms are reflected in the five chosen English varieties to see if the Asian speakers have attempted to copy these fixed expressions in their attempt to achieve native-like speech.

The following table now presents the occurrences of the idioms in the English varieties included in this study.

**Table 5. Occurrences of the Idioms in Asian Englishes**

Idioms	Indian English (IE)	Philippine English (PhilE)	Singapore English (SingE)	Malaysia English (ME)	Hongkong English (HE)
fall in love	714	422	463	230	224
fell in love	362	429	421	242	223
hand in hand	355	183	123	170	166
what the hell	268	148	208	128	92
what the heck	109	110	117	108	50
on the right track	192	112	92	131	84
on track	670	247	271	329	364
thumbs up	187	106	191	166	84
rule of thumb	166	104	141	135	99
goes to show	153	90	121	138	60
the big picture	187	87	122	109	96
bottomline	66	46	25	31	5
full-fledged	369	95	82	99	55

Based on the above data, it is clear that the idioms are still reflected in the corpus of the five Asian Englishes which is an indication that idioms are used by the speakers on these English varieties. Consistent in the above table

is the findings that the Indian English has the most number of idiom occurrences in all the idioms studied. This may be attributed to the fact that among the 5 Englishes, the Indian English has the most number of word corpus which is 96,430,888, that is twice the size of the four Asian Englishes. Of the five Asian Englishes, it is evident that the Hong Kong English has the least number of idiom occurrence. Philippine English seems to play on the same level with Singapore English in terms of using the idioms. Ella and Dita (2017), in reference to the use of phrasal-prepositional verbs which include idiomaticity, opine that the conservative use of formulaic expressions could be attributed to the lack of familiarity to these expressions, especially because English has the status of either second or foreign language in Asia.

It is also noteworthy to mention that the Indian English corpus has even a higher occurrence of two idioms as compared to the GB corpus.

**Table 6. Occurrences of Two Idioms in Great Britain and Indian English Corpus**

Idioms	Great Britain (GB)	Indian English (IE)
bottomline	31	66
full-fledged	152	369

It is clear from the above table that Indian English has a higher frequency of occurrence in two of the idioms studied: *bottomline* and *full-fledged*. This is something unusual because these idioms have originated from the parent Englishes, however it appears that in two of the idioms, the Indian English corpus seemed to have embraced these idioms more than the GB speakers. It is clear that the idioms in the IE corpus are twice in size compared with the GB corpus despite the fact that GB corpus has 387,615,074 word corpus as opposed to the IE corpus which is only 96,430,888.

The following are sample extracts from the Asian Englishes on their use of the idioms studied.

### ***Fall in love***

***Fall in love*** is an idiomatic expression which means to be completely enamored of someone or something. (e.g., *They met in school and fell in love.* or *I fell in love with the red car.*)

This idiom came in two variants, the present form and past form: *fall in love* and *fell in love*. Based on the occurrences, the idiom may be used alone or it may be followed by a prepositional phrase as in the following instances:

... *American citizen, then they got divorce in the US. Then I met and **fall in love** and now we are planning to get married.* (PH G 71 philfaqs.com)

*Leonard talked about best friends who **fell in love** with each other because at its core are kindness, patience, and respect obviously referring to Penny.* (US G 1 ... bangtheory.wikia.com)

The meaning of the idiom above is reflected in all the Asian Englishes.

*However, if you want to keep yourself open to a new relationship and **fall in love**, then you are going to have to let these things go.* (IN G 15 expertscolumn.com)

*He was in awe of how amazing my baby was and she **fell in love** with her. She told me that it was all because of me. I was the reason my baby learned how to love and be independent. (PH G 12 bosanchez.ph)*

*“I realised I didn’t want to be alone, I wanted to **fall in love** again, but I wasn’t sure I could,” she said. (MY G 54 dailychili.com)*

*By becoming the partner you want to find, you will **fall in love** with you, make yourself irresistible to others, nad be available in ... (SG G 83 pickson.com)*

*They had this kindness that made me **fall in love** with the country, this smile, and this way of seeing life. (HK G 21 frenchhk.com)*

### **Hand in hand**

In British or American English, *hand in hand* means holding each other’s hand. So, if two people are *hand in hand*, they are holding each other’s nearest hand usually while walking or sitting together. This is done to show their affection to one another. In other words, they are together. It may also mean that if two things go *hand in hand*, then they are closely connected and cannot be considered separately from each other. As in the following sentence:

*For us, research and teaching go **hand in hand**.*

The following are some samples where the idiom was used in the five Englishes.

*... 60 million illiterate and semi-illiterate in America today. Because poverty and illiteracy go **hand in hand**, the poor are disenfranchised, cut off from the... (IN G 101 lawmin.nic.in)*

*“Our vigilance will never rest. We’ll be united, **hand in hand**. We’ll show the world just where we stand and reach out for ...” (SG G 26 travelerfolio.com)*

*Mindanao peace has been thrown open. The tableau that depicts government troops working **hand in hand** with Muslim rebels in peace keeping operation. (PH G13 filamstar.net)*

*The Malaysian industrial Development Authority (MIDA) must work **hand in hand** with the solar companies to come up with incentives ... (MY G 55 mir.com.my)*

The above samples from the corpus show that the idiom is usually used after a verb as a modifier which means *together* as in *go hand in hand, went hand in hand, work hand in hand, walk hand in hand, join hand in hand, discover hand in hand, move hand in hand*.

### **What the hell / What the heck**

*What the hell* is an informal phrase which is regarded to be the intensive form of *what*. Here, the phrase *the hell* is an intensifier of the *wh*-word. When uttered, it is something that a person asks when he/she is not happy with



something and he/she wants to know what is going on and why the situation is occurring. Another variant of this idiom is *what the heck*, which is used as a euphemistic term of *hell*.

The following samples from the Asian Englishes corpus illustrate the use of these phrases:

*What the hell? They overturned the government in Egypt? What the hell is going on? Libya?! Are we? Is everything okay?* (IN G 5 blogtoplist.com)

*... that game because the other team didn't expect it. What the hell you guys talking about????? At the moment tower pushing and tower...* (PH G 78 playdota.com)

*... of the wheel! What are you doing? Hey. Hey. What the hell? Goddamn it. I'm sorry Daddy. Let' go after them.* (SG B 156 invest.5ecer.com)

*Now, I wonder why I just can not Just Do it. What the hell am I contemplating about? Arghghgh! \*pulls hair and bangs heads to the keyboard\** (MY G 10 ... nklater.blogspot.com)

*Will my insurance cover this? What will the hospital be like? And what the hell is this 'birth plan' that I keep reading about?* (HK B 91 expectingexpats.com)

### **On the right track**

*On the right track* is an idiom which means that you are going in the right direction in terms of progress and not physical movement. For example, in a classroom where a student gives an answer which is close to what the teacher is looking for, then the teacher may say, "*That's not quite correct, but you're on the right track.*"

Here are some examples taken from the corpus of the five Asian Englishes:

*But we are confident that in the longer run, India is on the right track. This pace has to be expedited.* (IN G 35 ... times.indiatimes.com)

*What is it we want? How do we know we're on the right track if we don't take the time to regularly clear our vision.* (MY G 3 arkay6.com)

*This will help you get your life rebuilt and back on the right track where you belong. There is nothing wrong with wanting to do better for yourself.* (SG B 78 selfhelpstation.com)

*If you are getting that right then you are on the right track! The exercises will come, don't worry you'll get plenty of practice.* (HK G 17 ...conditionproject.com)

*The only way we can be on the right track is when we are living and doing things with the Holy Spirit.* (PH G 40 philstar.com)

A simple variant of the idiom also exists in the five Asian Englishes on a greater detail: *on track*. The simplified idiom generated the following tokens:

**Table 6. Occurrences of the Idiom *on track* in Asian Englishes**

Idioms	Indian English (IE)	Philippine English (PhilE)	Singapore English (SingE)	Malaysia English (ME)	Hongkong English (HE)
on the right track	192	112	92	131	84
on track	670	247	271	329	364

It is evident that the simplified form of the idiom, without the modifier, is used more frequently in the Asian Englishes covered in this study. This may be attributed to the fact that speakers tend to economize and simplify their speech. Some of the samples are below indicate that the idiom usually come after a verb like *be*, *stay*, *get* or other modifiers like *back*, *out*.

*If you would vote for the man and not the party, we could have gotten our country back **on track** – one day, mark my words, you will see ... Almost 50% of Americans (legal humans, not dogs and the people the the Dems got to vote twice and the illegals they absentee balloted and paid/drove them to the poll in busloads ...) 50% voted for Romney. (US G 12 forbes.com)*

*At least it was dry. Starting at fourth, we got out **on track** and immediately you are allowed to overtake. The race heat is a combination of time and consistency allowing all types of Porsche racecars to participate from GT3, GT3 RS and GT2 cars. (PH G 3 business.inquirer.net)*

### Thumbs up

When used as a nonverbal sign, this is used to show approval of something. When verbalized, this idiom means the same thing, giving support or approval of something.

Here are few examples from the corpus:

*So far almost all car drivers that I came across have given me the ‘**thumbs up**’ sign of encouragement; sometimes they were curious to find out how ... (IN G 31 ... india.indiatimes.com)*

*South Korea’s former education minister is among foreign experts who have given the **thumbs up** to Malaysia’s new education blueprint. (MY B 128 mybaru1.blospot.com)*

*... plan my next Paris trip especially around these sales. What fun! And two **thumbs up** on both dresses – they’re lovely! (SG G 9 expatedna.com)*

*During the intermission several audience members shook my friend’s hand and gave him the **thumbs up** for his actions. (HK G 29 interlude.hk)*

*So in conclusion, I say to you fellow cyclist, two **thumbs up**! Pat yourself on the back every once in a while. (PH G 11 commuterorlando.com)*

From the samples above, it is evident that the idiom is used in the same way whether it is used as a nonverbal sign or as an idiom. Literally, thumbs up is a sign of encouragement and approval. Figuratively, the idiom is also

a manifestation of support and approval of something. Generally, the idiom goes with the verb *give* serving as the direct object of the verb.

### Rule of thumb

When this idiom is used, you are referring to a method of judging a situation or condition that is not exact but is based on experience. It may refer to a general rule about something which is right in most cases.

Here are few samples from the corpus that illustrate the use of the idiom.

*Most Indian women are unlikely to follow suit. The simple **rule of thumb** is to wait for the woman to offer her hand in greeting.* (IN G 9 cirrie.buffalo.edu)

*While choosing a good decision can be hard, there's a good **rule of thumb** we can always use. When you are about to make a decision, ...* (MY G 35 wiselifeadvice.com)

*As far as how much food items you should take, an excellent **rule of thumb** would be to only bring the amount of meals that you need.* (PH G 70 gamezone.nfo.ph)

*Sometimes even just an e-mail address is enough. A quick **rule of thumb** is that each field reduces conversion by 10 percent.* (SG G 11 iphoneunity.com)

*First, Wang clearly conducted himself dishonourably. It's a good **rule of thumb** to not send any email that you wouldn't want seen public.* (HK G 49 zhongnanhaiblog.com)

It must be noticed from the above samples from the corpus that the idiom is used as a noun which refers to a rule that is regarded effective and right. This idiom is most often accompanied by a pre-modifier like *a, simple, good, general, excellent, quick, rough, basic, best, old, common, important* and many others. Among these modifiers, it is the article *a* that generated the most number of responses in the Asian Englishes corpora.

### Goes to show

When this phrase is used, it means that it demonstrates or indicates that something has been proven true. Like you can say, *just goes to show that superheroes come in all shapes and sizes.*

The following sentences illustrates the use of the idiom in the five Asian Englishes:

*But I have learned how to do most factors by myself. It **goes to show** exactly where there is a will, anything can be completed.* (IN B 133 ... moneywithwebsite.com)

*I chased the hell out of them and never settled for less. It just **goes to show** that anyone can have what they want if they fight hard enough for it.* (SG G 16 offbeatgirl.com)

*Fortunately, I got all the data and photos back without much problem but it just **goes to show** the power of backing up.* (MY G 33 ... ritwins.bogspot.com)

*And of course voters and candidates will find ways around term limits. That only **goes to show** why legislated maximum successive term limits are absurd. (PH B 80 propinoy.net)*

*So destroying them would show the anger towards Miss Starngeworth. It **goes to show** that we should not fight evil with evil. (HK G 14 sites.cdnis.edu.hk)*

### **The big picture**

When used as a noun, this phrase refers to the general, overall or long-term scheme of something. Informally, especially in American English, it refers to the situation as a whole, or the whole story of something.

The following extracts show how the idiom was used in the corpus of this study.

*“And it’s about instinct and luck. One needs to take risks without losing sight of **the big picture**.” # But the question of literature’ intangibles is a private one. On the other hand, the question of what we fantasize about reading – and publishing – is very much a social question. (IN G 8 livemint.com)*

*The Khannas have a way of neutralising negatives by constantly reminding you of **the big picture** – that things could be far worse. (SG B 102 paragkhanna.com)*

*To solve this issue we should look at **the big picture** and approach it in a holistic manner. (MY G 27 thestar.com.my)*

*This is a big learning experience for us but maybe I will see **the big picture** of it in a few days but right now, I’m very disappointed. (PH B 83 ... ersbrew.blogspot.com)*

*“Hongkong is stuck in arguing, filibustering and losing of **the big picture**,” he cautioned. (HK G 9 chinadailyapac.com)*

Functioning as noun in the utterances, the idiom may come after a preposition and serve as an object of the preposition. In some cases, it may serve as the subject of a particular utterance. In most cases, it serves as the direct object of verbs like *see, look, get, focus, miss, articulate, ignore, understand* and many others.

### **Bottomline**

The ultimate result; also, the main point or crucial factor. It may also mean the primary or most important consideration. For example, ‘*The bottom line is that the chairman wants to dictate all of the board’s decisions.*’

Here are few examples from the corpus:

*It is done so that you DO NOT face the problem of content duplication. **Bottomline**, simple IGNORE the error and there is NO NEED to remove labels. (MY G 2 bloggerstop.net)*

*They can and should be made more energy efficient but the **bottomline** is to understand the need for comprehensive regulations... (IN G 49 india.indiatimes.com)*

*But that really means nothing to the average enthusiast, the **bottomline**? It's small, it's compact, it works like a DSLR.* (SG B 28 cooksnapeatlove.com)

*I first read that Marian is eventually chosen to play Angeline in TOW because the **bottomline** is "It's another remake."* (PH G 9 pilipinasinshowbiz.com)

*If however, the answer is still no, then **bottomline** is that you believe inter racial marriage between Chinese and white should be discouraged.* (HK G 1 ... dcanto.wordpress.com)

The idiom, when used, is usually followed by an idea or two which is considered to be the most important consideration in what is being talked about. As in the above examples, the idiom may be followed by a question mark and then a statement mentioning the most important consideration. Or in most cases, it forms part of the initial position of the sentence and then is followed by a statement mentioning the most important or crucial consideration /factor.

### **Full-fledged**

This idiom means that someone is fully developed or accomplished in a particular area. It may also mean that someone has achieved the full status of one's life.

The following illustrate the use of the idiom.

*A chapel had been built there in 1954. It too became a **full-fledged** parish in 1994.* (IN G 159 cbci.in)

*This tablet also comes pre-installed with Polaris Office, which is a **full-fledged** suite for creating and editing various files including Excel and Powerpoint.* (MY G 4 ... hives.thestar.com.my)

*Can you tell us about what you were doing then? I was a **full-fledged** commercial photographer from around 25 to 40 years old.* (SG B 76 gobeyond.sg)

*The Wall Street Journal said that, while Hong Kong was not a **full-fledged** democracy yet, there was enough uncertainty in the election to give Beijing leaders ...* (HK G19 hrchina.org)

*But it was Off the Wall (1979) which marked the start of his **full-fledged** solo career, and he formally parted with his siblings.* (PH G 30 songarea.com)

As seen in the corpus, the idiom is used as a modifier of nouns like *parish, suite, commercial photographer, democracy, solo career* and so on and so forth. This means that the idiom may refer not only to a person but even to inanimate objects.

It is also worth mentioning that this idiom has another variant that was found only in the Philippine English and Singapore English corpus, that is *full-pledged*. There were 15 instances of this token that was found in the corpus of the Philippine English and 2 tokens in Singapore English.

Here are some examples:

*Back then I mind it, you know, but now that I am a **full-pledged** fighter, a **full-pledged** warrior, I don't mind bleeding a little bit.* (PH G 7 pinoywatchdog.com)

*I am not just a simple stay at home mommy but I am also a **full-pledged** blogger who has the need to build contacts from the outside world. (PH G 13 mommyrub.com)*

*I'm a fan of Tiger Airways Extra-leg spaces as the seat spaces are usually broader than the normal **full-pledged** airlines and pampering my leg with the well-deserved comfort of fully-stretched and no more tight-constraints. (SG B 30 sylistic.com)*

*While if KKJ returns to his own body, he can do so many things like becoming a **full-pledged** doctor because he's healthy and he can still stay with DR if he wants to but of course with so many complications but who cares as long as you'll be together with the one you love. (SG B 14 koalasplayground.com)*

The above findings may lead us to speculate that in the speakers' attempt to imitate the native speakers' fixed expressions, the sounds in their first languages may have influenced the modification in the production of certain sounds; hence, they produce full-pledged instead of full-fledged. This phenomenon, as seen on literature, is brought about by the massive expansion and popularity of English. Nativization, as explained by Saghal (1991), is a process of transferring a local language to a new cultural environment. Further, this phenomenon has allowed language to diffuse and internationalize, acculturate and indigenize, adapt and diversify which results in localized or nativized lexical items. Similarly, the work of David and Dumanig (2008) has concluded that, undoubtedly, English is a global language, but from the perspective of learners of English in different countries, it has also become their language as many local lexical items have been assimilated in these varieties. And in this paper, the use of idioms in the selected Asian countries has proven how they have made these idioms part of their own linguistic repertoire.

Moreover, these findings may slowly lead us to a conclusion forwarded by Yorio (1989) that there appears to be a correlation between grammatical proficiency and the successful use of conventionalized language forms or idioms. The study echoed that idiomaticity, or native-like quality in language is characterized by the absence of grammatical errors. Hence, they concluded that idiomaticity is an excellent indicator of bilingual system proficiency which deserves to be further studied. Further, the occurrences of these idioms in the Asian Englishes corpora is a clear indication of their belief that the use of these idioms may make them better speakers of the language. This is further echoed in the study conducted by Liontas (2002) which found that second language learners want idioms to be an integral part of their language and training and that they have specific beliefs about the importance of learning idioms.

#### 4. Conclusion

The data revealed that the idioms included in this study, which apparently have originated from the parent Englishes, were also seen as being used by the speakers of the Asian Englishes covered in this study: Indian English, Singapore English, Malaysian English, Philippine English and Hong Kong English. We can speculate that the occurrence of these idioms in their speech is a reflection of the Asian speakers' attempt to achieve native-like speech. Using the idioms listed in this study, it appeared that Indian English has recorded the most number of idiom occurrence while Hong Kong English has the least number of occurrences.

However, a striking finding is that Indian English has recorded a greater number of tokens in the idioms, *bottomline* and *full-fledged*, as compared to the corpus of Great Britain. This would imply that Indian speakers may have embraced the use of these two idioms in their speech. Finally, it is revealed that some forms or variants

of some of the idioms have emerged from some Asian Englishes which may reflect the uniqueness of the particular English variety as they try to own the language.

When it comes to teaching idioms in the classroom, we strongly suggest that these idioms be presented in authentic contexts rather than directly lifting from textbooks. This means teachers may as well take advantage of the existing corpora in order to reflect the actual usage of these idioms by the different speakers of English. This also means that these idiomatic expressions may be taught from a discourse perspective with an emphasis on their sociopragmatic features. Additionally, given the conservative use of idioms among ESL speakers, it is highly recommended that these expressions be explicitly included in the syllabuses of English language teaching, especially in the elementary and high school level.

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Examples in: English  
 Applicable Languages: English  
 Applicable Level: General Education