



Kev's English Podcast: Episode 20 English and Iranian Idioms

In this episode, I talk to my colleague Payman (based in Tehran) who is the founder of IELTS9.PRO (Telegram and Web), a platform for helping Iranians take IELTS so that they might leave Iran. We talk about some Iranian Idioms and how they translate, or not, into English.

If you want lessons, click here <https://www.italki.com/en/teacher/1078268>

If you want to see my videos, click here <https://www.youtube.com/@TheEnglishNative>

Hello and welcome to Kev's English Podcast, Real English, every week.

Hello, hello, hello, Kev's English Podcast. Today, something interesting for today, me and Peyman, who you probably saw in the previous episode, he was telling me about on all these different Persian sites, all these teachers keep posting idioms and they say, you know, if you want to be a native speaker, these are the idioms that you need to use, but apparently they lose something in translation, to put it mildly. So, Peyman's going to show me some of these idioms and I'm going to see if I can guess what the English equivalent of these idioms are.

So, we'll see. Tell us a bit about this, where these idioms come from, where did you find them, who is claiming that these are what English people actually speak? Well, I was just reading a website page the other day and I came across with some Persian idioms. I needed to ask a native English speaker to make sure that if they are accurate or not.

Okay, well now I'm intrigued, I'm intrigued, let's have a look and I'll tell you how accurate these are, okay? So, we've got five expressions here, let's go one by one. The first one, literally it means a talent reigns from every one of his or her fingers. I can give you three options, you can choose A, B or C. He is lucky, she is lucky, he's a fortune teller or she's a fortune teller or C, he's very talented or she's very talented.

In terms of the fingers, the only one that I can think of is like, she's got green fingers, meaning that she's good at gardening. That's farming, yeah. That's the only one I can think of in terms of fingers.

That's what you say though, we say somebody's got green fingers, it means that they're good in the garden, you know, green things, actually fingers. Look, the key word here is talent, the talent is

reigning. So, a talent reigns from every one of his or her fingers, A, he or she is lucky, B, he or she is a fortune teller, C, he or she is very talented.

Probably C because luck and talent are not the same thing. Yeah, that's right, he or she is very talented. So, when we want to refer to someone who is very talented, we use this expression as her English, she or he is very talented or in British English you might say all-rounder, an all-rounder.

So, describe someone who is like, you know, excels in many things, can sing a song, play the piano at the same time. Usually, when we talk about someone who's an all rounder, we have that expression, a jack-of-all-trades, master of none, right. So, as we would say, yeah, so say somebody like a handyman, you say, you know, well, what it kind of means, a jack-of-all-trades, meaning they can do plumbing and blah, blah, blah, but master of none.

So, that's what we would say like an all-rounder, which is not the same as saying that they are talented in all things, just that they know a bit about lots of different things. But some people are skilled at so many things, they can do it maybe perfectly. So, we say that Azhar English is really talented, something like this.

So, what's the second one? Literally, it means I rubbed soap on my stomach and we've got three options. I got my hopes up, I got ready, I went to see a doctor. So, I rubbed soap.

Can you imagine rubbing soap on your stomach? So, why are you doing that? So, to get ready or to see a doctor? Probably not, a doctor. To get your hopes up? You're invited to someone's house for lunch and now you're expecting a shish kebab, but when you get there, it's something cheap and you ended up with, oh my god, I was waiting for something, you know, better. Having too high expectations.

That's a strange one though, rubbing soap on your stomach. So, what's the next one? This one is God means God. So, literally, it means God as an attorney.

We use it in our speaking when we want to say that, look, God is watching. Well, we have an expression that some people say when they say it, only God can judge me. So, some people sometimes have it like a t-shirt, like in America, you know, like only God can judge me.

So, it's like kind of saying a society cannot judge me, judge my actions. Only God can do that. So, that's the only phrase I can think of talking about, you know, an advocate or a sort of judge.

Only God can judge me. So, as in like, you can't judge me. It's not your only business, but that's the business of God.

So, that's the only thing I can think of now. Now, I'm at a restaurant and I've known this restaurant for a long time and I'm telling my friends, look, this restaurant's food is fantastic. So, it's really... Oh, right, right.

I see. Well, you could say, like, we might say, as God is my witness. So, when we want to emphasise that we're telling the absolute truth, we're not lying, we might say, as God is my witness.

So, the answer is clear, honestly. True, yeah. So, that one's pretty similar, yeah.

Next one. So, gur means grave. Gon kon, it means lose, okay.

Gur reto gon kon, go lose your grave. A, be patient. B, get the hell out of here.

C, you are too heavy. Imagine someone's bothering you so much that you can't take it anymore. You don't, for example, you say, oh, you don't deserve to be in my life anymore.

So, gur reto gon kon, go lose your grave. You might say, get lost, get out of my life, probably. Yeah, get lost, yes.

But how about the options, A, B or C? Be patient, get the hell out of here, you are too heavy. Probably B. Yeah, yeah, get the hell out of here. You can see, I don't know, you can see the picture, we've got the picture of a skirt, dasdhan vedominet.

So, dasd means hand, dasdhan, my hand, vedominet, to your skirt. Literally, it means my hand to your skirt. Let's say, it's kind of dramatic and emotional phrase.

You really need some help. So, you're desperately, you know, asking someone, please help, I need your help. My child isn't feeling well and I'm not feeling good or I need some money, please, dasdhan vedominet, please, my hand to your skirt.

The options are, I follow you, I beg you for help, I really like your skirt. Well, it's kind of a begging, it's a form. A begging, like a beggar or a supplicant might do.

Touching the hem of a garment, that's what I, I can't think of any particular English idiom for that one. Or kneeling, someone is kneeling down in front of a king and holding or grabbing the shoes or the end of the pants or trousers and helping, asking for help. Maybe it's something like that.

Petition or petitioning or pleading. Teacher gives the student five idioms and asks him or her to use it in his speaking for, for example, in one minute or in two minutes. So, I'll just give you a quick story, right.

So, I had a student who was taking the IELTS test, this is a few years back. And he'd been to some, some like school or something. And we were doing a part two question, a topic card.

And because he'd been told that he had to include idioms, you know, so he said, So, to cut a long story short, once in a blue moon, you know, a rolling stone, it gathers no moss. And he basically tried to use an idiom in every, every sentence and it just sounded nonsensical, you know. So, to cut a long story short, okay, well, you know, blah, blah, blah, blah.

But it was really, you know, as we all know, a rolling stone gathers no moss. Once in a blue moon, but I can't remember all, but it was just coming out with all this stuff. And I said, you know, why are you doing that? I said, oh, well, because, you know, some teacher said that to get a high speaking school, you have to use idioms.

I said, yeah, but only when appropriate. If the examiner thinks that you're trying to force it in, it doesn't fit, it will lower your score, not increase it. So you can use them, once in a blue moon, to cut a long story short, you know, a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush or whatever, but they've got to fit.

On Instagram there have been loads of videos about how to say chandomin. Now I will tell you what it is, chandomin. It's a Persian word we use when we refer to the position or order of something in a sequence or queue.

For example, which number president was Joe Biden, or is this the end time, I reminded you. So the

end time, which number, and one teacher said we can use which so ever was Joe Biden, which so ever president was Joe Biden, or something like this, or which number president, what number president was Joe Biden, when we want to refer to the position or order of something. Or the position or the order of you're reminding someone, how many times should I tell you, okay, or is this the end time, or what's your birth order when you want to ask the child, are you the middle child, are you the second, I mean, are you the first child, is there any fix? I could say, well, you know, your relative pronouns, which, or what, but we usually use what if it's a question, you know, which, which president was Joe Biden, or what number president, if you qualify it with an adjective.

So you wouldn't say which number, well, would you say that which number president, or which president was Joe Biden, or what number, I would probably use which is a relative pronoun, in that case, which number president, you could probably use what number president, but I would use which. There's not a lot of difference in meaning in that, because it's ordinal, first, second, first, 47th, 40, well, as it currently is, it's 47th. How about the order of a child, which number child are you? What, what, what, what number child are you, you could say that, which, it doesn't make a lot of difference, really.

So, I mean, is it common to ask these questions like this in English? Oh, you could ask which, which, so if you know that they're, that they've got some brothers and sisters, you could say, which, which child are you, or, you know, they say, oh, I'm the youngest, I'm the oldest, I'm the second, I'm the third, or whatever, you know, you could say that. And how about this, is this the nth time that I reminded you, could it be changed into, which number time is that I'm reminding you? You wouldn't say that, no, you say, how, how many times, you say, how many times have I told you this, how many times, that's what you say, you wouldn't say, which number, what is the number of times I have told you this, because that's just saying that, you say, how, how many times have I told you that, or how, how many times are you gonna, blah, blah, blah, blah, not, what is the number of times that you're gonna, you know, you just say, how, how many more times, how many more times are you gonna, etc. Something else, so I've got a which so ever, so which so ever, because one teacher said we can use which so ever, is that wrong, which so? I certainly wouldn't be saying that.

One more thing, this is the last one, so it refers to a lie told with good intentions, often to avoid, you know, when we want to avoid hurting someone's feelings or to prevent harm. We call that a little white lie. Yeah, but one teacher said that this is not a white lie, it is expedient lie.

It may well be expedient, but in terms of how we would express it, it's always a white lie, say it's a white lie, a little white lie. For example, someone asks, do you like my dress? I say, yeah, that's pretty good, it's really beautiful. Or if your girlfriend or your wife says, do I look fat in this? And you say, no, no, that's a white lie.

So, excellent, so anyway, I'll see you later on and we'll be talking about some other topics, okay? Right, thanks for that, Peyman, very interesting. We'll talk again soon. Yeah, thank you.

See you.