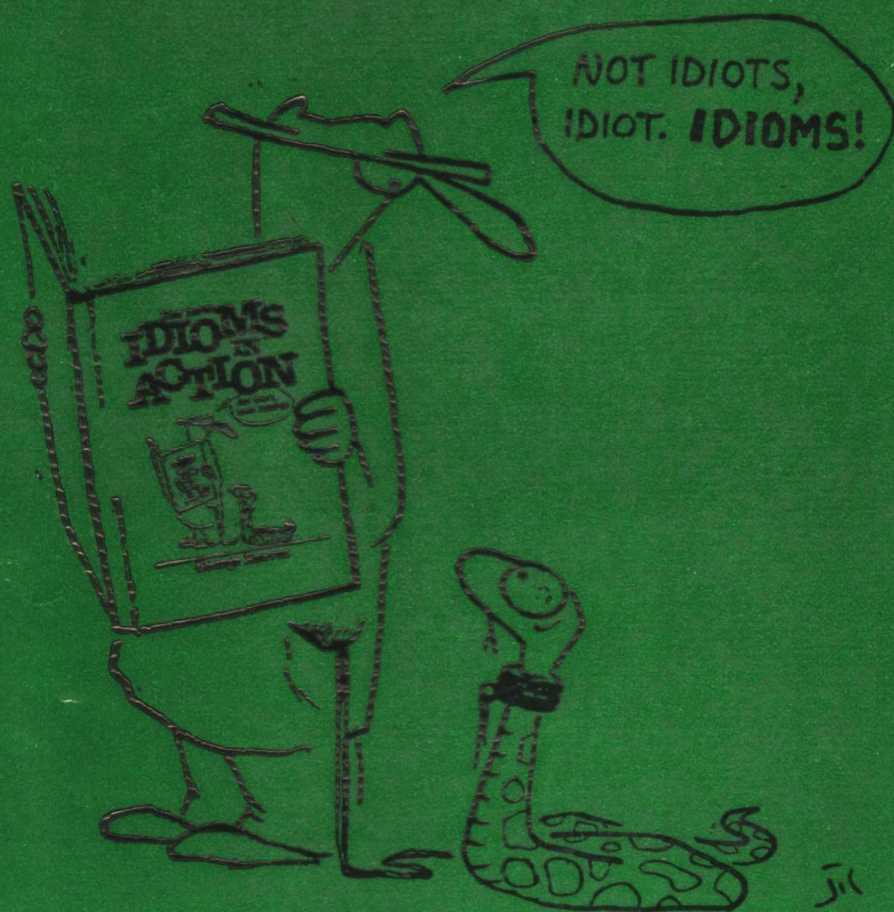


The New IDIOMS IN ACTION

George Reeves



HEINLE & HEINLE PUBLISHERS

世界图书出版公司

The New --- --- IDIOMS IN ACTION

George Reeves



HEINLE & HEINLE PUBLISHERS

*A Division of Wadsworth, Inc.
Boston, Massachusetts 02116*

世界图书出版公司

北京·广州·上海·西安

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Reeves, George, 1929-
The new idioms in action.

Includes index.

1. English language--Text-books for foreign
speakers. 2. English language--Idioms. I. Title.
PE1128.R433 1985 428.3'4 85-5102
ISBN 0-88377-301-5

ISBN 0-8384-2652-2

COPYRIGHT © 1985 by Newbury House/Heinle & Heinle, A Division of
Wadsworth, Inc. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. No part of this book may be
reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic
or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or any
information storage and retrieval system, without permission, in
writing, from the Publisher.

Reprint authorized by International Thomson Publishing
Reprinted by World Publishing Corporation, Beijing, 1994

For Sale in The People's Republic of China
(excluding Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan)

ISBN 7-5062-1736-8

PREFACE

Idiomatic English is real English. It's the English that English-speaking people normally use. It's the blood and guts of their language.

That's why ESL and EFL students must learn it. That's why they must experience idioms and use idioms—hear them, say them, write them.

The next step is more complicated. They need to learn how idioms “fit” spoken and written language. They need to see links between situation and structure. They need to understand the unity between human interaction and words, culture, and grammar.

Finally, to make “real-people English” theirs, students must feel caught up in getting it. That is why my idioms appear in contexts that not only inform and amuse but—more important—implicate students' deeper interests and values. That is why my dialogs tell of a love-hate relationship between a man and a woman of different background, nationality, and race. That is why national pride, cultural preconceptions, and problems of race and sex challenge students on every page. That is why customs, values, and beliefs—of peoples everywhere—permeate the idiom-learning process. That is why idioms appear not as merely useful but as expressive of our human condition.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In revising the original *Idioms in Action*, I turned it into a different book. Earl Stevick must bear blame: His landmark *Memory, Meaning, and Method* (Newbury House Publishers, 1976) made me want to relate language to the whole student—head, heart, and funnybone. Simon, Howe, and Kirschenbaum's *Values Clarification* (Hart Publishing Company, 1977) suggested how to do it. ("The Alligator River Story," at the end of *Sex-Mad Americans*, comes from them.) Of course, how can I forget Sue Marsick, who first interested me in values clarification and whose "Three Telegrams" ends **Heart Attacks: The American Way of Death**. I especially wish to thank Anne Dow, director of the EFL program at Harvard University, for her permission to teach there an earlier version of *The New Idioms*. Nor can I forget Suzanne Griffin, whose thorough, thoughtful comments helped me more than I care to admit, or Judy E. Winn-Bell Olsen (The Alemany Press) who graciously let me use seven of her idiom games, all of them *Communication-Starters*. Finally, I owe much to Professor Norman Prange, friend, colleague, grammarian.

As for the python and its sinister master who slither and slink their way through this book—they are the creations of a superb cartoonist. Jan Romare, thank you.

Final thanks go, of course, to my typist Carolyn Olszewski, who came through . . . beautifully.

TO THE TEACHER

Levels of Use—TOEFL 425–500.
TOEFL 500–550.

How the Book Works

What is the aim of each lesson? **The Spoken and Written Mastery of Idioms in a Variety of Contexts.**

How is it achieved? By two preparatory and six applicatory exercises, each of which challenges students with a particular language activity:

ROLE PLAYING, the first exercise, contextualizes five idioms in a short, provocative dialog. Students infer the meanings of the idioms from it.

LESSON 5: ARE AMERICANS IMPOLITE?

Mimi On the whole, Americans aren't polite. Most of them have bad manners.

Sam I don't believe it!

Mimi Well, what do you **think of** strangers who call you by your first name? On Wednesday I moved into my apartment. On Thursday the janitor came to fix the heating. **Right away** he called me Anne-Marie. The next day the postman called me Annie. **In fact**, two minutes after they meet me, Americans use my first name.

Sam But it's an American custom. They only mean to be friendly.

Mimi We are used to politeness in France.

Sam But customs are different in your country. That's why some American tourists **think of** the French as unfriendly.

Mimi They're idiots!

IDIOM CHECK then defines each idiom and gives examples, synonyms, antonyms, and constraints—lexical, grammatical, sociolinguistic.

in fact Really; in reality; actually—often used emphatically.

Hitler isn't dead. In fact, he's alive and living in Paraguay.

Mimi didn't believe Sam. In fact, she called him a liar.

Equivalent: **in point of fact**.

be used to Be accustomed to; have the habit of + ING.

John is used to smokING cigars.

For many years Henry walked in his sleep. His wife was used to it.

Contrast: **used to** (Lesson 13).

[SPELLING], the third exercise, supplies paragraph-length contexts. The no-error format guides students to good grammar and correct spelling.

Directions: Write (or say) the appropriate idiom. Use one letter for each blank.

get up • at first • ahead of time • get on (someone's) nerves
• of course

Mimi makes mistakes on idioms and becomes angry. Idioms g/e/t
 person tense
 person

o/n h/e/r m/e/r/r/e/s, so she leaves bed early to study them.

person
 She even g/e/t/s u/p at 5:00 a.m. O/f c/o/k/u/s/e,
 she is never late with her ESL homework. She always finishes it
a/h/e/a/d o/f t/i/m/e.

A/t f/i/r/s/t Mimi didn't do too well in Professor Smith's ESL
 class, but after a few weeks she got A's on her idiom tests.

[SUBSTITUTING] calls for replacing the capitalized words with their idiomatic equivalent and recopying the sentence correctly. It aims to cue, channel, and sharpen idiom comprehension.

Sam left his bed late today. Sam got up late today

[CHOOSING] requires just that: choosing the idiom appropriate to the context by means of lexical and syntactical clues.

At first Mimi came to English class ahead of time, but now she's always late.

[COMPLETING] asks students to select the appropriate idiom, as in choosing. They must then use their own words to *complete the context*, thus preparing themselves for the freer idiomatic writing and speaking which follows.

My boyfriend could do two things at the same time. He could
drive a car and watch the pretty girls walk by

UPPER INTERMEDIATE

[CONTEXTUALIZING], with six to ten interrelated sentences, provides enough ideas for a short talk or for one to two idiomatic paragraphs. Without having to worry about where their next idea is coming from, students can concentrate on how best—in *their own words*—to contextualize their idioms.

- 1) John didn't like his job; it made him nervous.
- 2) His boss was angry with him.
- 3) He said to John, "Come to work early."
- 4) John didn't listen.
- 5) Every morning he slept later and later.
- 6) He was always late to work.
- 7) His boss fired him.

Students might say or write something like this:

Why didn't John GET UP earlier? OF COURSE, he had his reasons: He didn't like his job; it GOT ON HIS NERVES. AT FIRST his boss only warned him about being late to work. A few weeks later, he fired him.

I agree with John. Who likes to GET UP and go to work every morning? No one. Who arrives AHEAD OF TIME? Only the boss.

WORK, the final exercise, encourages students to write about, speak about, and compare American culture with their own. It does this by having them act as judges or as participants in a culturally ambiguous situation. It also ties in with **role playing** so as to keep newly acquired idioms "on stage." For example, the situation described below—connected by subject with the dialog **Are Americans Impolite**—enlarges upon Mimi and Sam's discussion of first names:

Discuss (write about) your choice, using the idioms you have just learned.

Your ESL teacher is a 35-year-old woman, Mrs. Jane Smith. She asks you to call her Jane. How do you feel about her request?

1. I feel that she wants to be my friend and I use her first name freely.
2. I know that she wants me to relax, but I feel uneasy when I call her Jane.
3. I rarely use her name.
4. I don't call her any name at all.
5. I continue to call her "Mrs. Smith."

Student and teacher might interact like this:

Ms. Wong In my previous English class, I had a similar problem: my teacher wanted us to use her first name. I was surprised. In fact, I was shocked. In China we **think of** our teacher as a superior person. It would be impolite to use her first name.

Teacher How did you solve your problem?

Ms. Wong I didn't call her by any name.

Teacher But why didn't you call her "Mrs." and her last name?

Ms. Wong What if she got angry at me for not doing what she asked?

Teacher I understand your feelings.

Ms. Wong Many Americans use people's first names **right away**. **On the whole**, Americans are very informal compared with us Chinese. Even though I know this, I am used to my own customs and it's difficult to . . .

Teacher I understand. Now tell me—in China were there persons who called *you* by your first name but expected you to call *them* by their formal name?

Ms. Wong Yes . . . etc.

Suggestions to Make Your Life Easier

1. Have your students do their **sample lesson** in class. Check that they follow directions and finish each exercise correctly. (*Cuts down on future student errors.*)
2. Even if you assign an idiom lesson for homework, always read aloud **Role Playing**. Then read it again, asking your students to repeat each sentence after you. Better yet, assign students to role-play it. (*Result: Gets students started on their homework.*)
3. If time permits, discuss **Idiom Check**. Urge students to refer to it while they do their exercises. (*Cuts down on errors.*)
4. On written work students can profitably correct their own mistakes in **Spelling, Substituting, and Choosing**. Simply read the correct version aloud to them *before* you collect their lessons. (*No need to be a robot corrector.*)
5. **PEER-GROUP TEACHING**: The first three or four times your class does **Completing and Contextualizing**, group students into twos or threes and let each group work out a common answer to be given orally or written on the chalkboard. (*Builds confidence in intermediates.*)
6. For lower intermediate students, do **Valuing** orally in peer groups. (*Resist temptation: Except for grammatical corrections, STAY OUT of the discussions.*)
7. For you "comp" teachers who want your students to get in some oral idiom practice, here's a useful way: With student books open, read **Role Playing**. Students close their books and you reread, stopping at each place an idiom appears. Ask which idiom. **THEN**, with everyone helping, have students produce the entire sentence, idiom included. And so on. (*Time required: 10 to 15 minutes.*)
8. **Idiom Review Exercises** help students to sharpen their recall and comprehension for upcoming tests.
9. **BILEVEL TEAROUT TESTS** every three lessons let you monitor student progress.

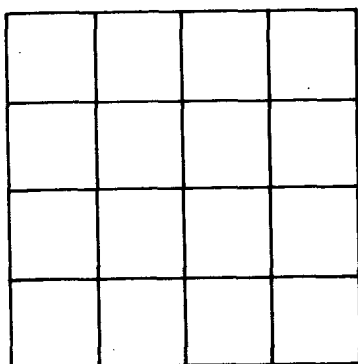
10. Contractions and ellipses permeate real-life conversations *and Role Playing*. So familiarize your students right away with **CONTRACTIONS** (see page 184) and **ELLIPTICAL CONSTRUCTIONS** (see page 185).

11. **LOG SHEET OF IDIOMATIC ENGLISH**. Ask your students to keep a "log" of what they're hearing and what they're saying outside ESL class. The better they keep their log, the more real English becomes to them. (See page 195.)

12. Students write their own **DIALOGS**—idiomatic give-and-take on American life. They then take turns role playing. (*Videotape your students if you can.*)

13. GAMES

a. *Bingo*:



Make a ditto master of a large bingo grid with 16 or 25 squares (4×4 or 5×5) and run off copies. Pass out copies of this empty grid to your students.

Dictate 25 idioms (or a mix of idioms and other new vocabulary covered in class) to your students. They are to write the words on the grid in *random order*—that is, each grid should have the same words but in different squares. (If everybody had exactly the same order of words, everybody would get "bingo" at the same time.)

After you have dictated all the words and students have written them in their grids, you are ready to play the game. Give a *paraphrase* of each idiom or other word, either by itself or in the context of a sentence. Students must recognize the idiom from the paraphrase and mark it on their grids.

The first student to have five marks in a row (or four, if you're playing with 16-square grids) is the winner. He or she calls "bingo!" and wins a prize, such as a ballpoint pen, or a paperback.

b. *Concentration:*

1 □	2 □	3 □	4 □
5 □	6 □	7 □	8 □
9 □	10 □	11 □	12 □
13 □	14 □	15 □	16 □
17 □	18 □	19 □	20 □
21 □	22 □	23 □	24 □
25 □	26 □	27 □	28 □

Use a large piece of paperboard or butcher paper for this. Mark off 16 or more squares, with space between squares. In the space between, mark each square with a number, a letter, a recognizable symbol, or some combination.

You will need half as many idioms as squares: that is, if you have 16 squares, choose 8 idioms; if you have 20 squares, choose 10 idioms; etc. Write these idioms, one each, on cards that will fit into the squares you have marked off on your large piece of paper. Then take an equal number of new cards and write paraphrases of these idioms on them.

Put your cards—half of them idioms, half of them paraphrases—in the squares you have marked off, in totally random order, *face down*.

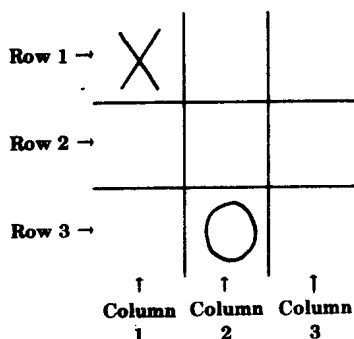
Students are divided into teams. They take turns guessing which two numbers will make an idiom-definition pair. When a guess has been made, the two numbered cards are turned face up so that the class can see if they make a pair. If they *do* match, a point is given to that team and they get another turn. If the cards don't match, they are again turned face down, and the other team has a turn guessing which numbers might make a pair.

As the game progresses, students with good concentration will remember the location of idioms and paraphrases revealed during wrong guesses and will be able to match them for right guesses. Each student should have his or her own turn at guessing, but they may be prompted by other team members.

This can be a game of great excitement, hilarity, and general camaraderie, particularly with chewing gum "prizes" for all. It's a good Friday or "just-before-holiday" game.

c. *Tic-Tac-Toe:*

This brings much the same response as Concentration but requires somewhat more strategy and is recommended as a more “advanced” game.



Draw a tic-tac-toe grid on the board—a large one. Mark the rows “Row 1—Row 2—Row 3” and the columns “Column 1—Column 2—Column 3.” Be sure everyone can identify the squares within the grid (as in the “top row, middle column” or “row 1, column 2.”)

Play a regular game of tic-tac-toe with the class—them against you. They tell you where to mark their X; you mark your own O. Or have two students play but tell you where to draw the X’s and O’s while the class watches.

When the dynamics of the game are understood, you are ready to “plug in” the idioms. Take nine cards, each of which has the paraphrase of one idiom written on it. Put one card in each square of the tic-tac-toe grid. (You can make it harder by putting the cards face down, so students have less time to figure them out.)

Divide the class into team X and team O. Each team has only one turn to direct you, until all members have had a turn (though members of the same team can help each other).

When a team member tells you which square to mark with X or O, he or she must first correctly perform the task of that square—in this case, correctly stating the idiom when given the paraphrase. Or you might want to have the idiom on the card, and ask the student to use it correctly in a sentence. (This is harder.)

If the student performs the task correctly, remove the card and place X or O in that square.

If the student does *not* do the task correctly, it becomes the other team’s turn. They may choose to work on the same square, or choose a different one.

This becomes quite exciting when several squares are marked, and there is one crucial square remaining to determine which team will get the three-in-a-row to win. I have had games where a crucial task was botched several times in succession as the turn traded back and forth between teams and the tension mounted.

The winning team, of course, is the one who first gets three X’s or O’s in a row.

d. *Relays:*

Recognition Relay: Make a list of 20 to 25 idioms, or mix idioms and other vocabulary. Then make a second list of the same words, in different order. If possible, write these two lists on the blackboard before class, or during a class break, or write them on sheets of butcher paper to tape on the board at the proper time.

Divide the class into two teams, and mark a starting line behind which they must stand. Then read out the words to them, one at a time, in random order. As you say a word, a member of each team races to that team's list (two lists, remember? one for each team) on the board and draws a line through the word. (Remember, the words are in different order on each list.) Team members may help each other by calling "up," "down," etc., but it must be in English.

The first student to find the word on the list and cross it out wins a point for his or her team. It's a good idea to appoint a student to watch closely to see who actually makes it first—you may be distracted by the enthusiasm of your class.

When you read out the next word, a new member of each team should come to the board, and so on, until all members have had their chance. If your students' motor abilities vary widely because of age or handicap, you may want to line up each team beforehand, so that you can match their abilities before the competition starts. If you have just one student whose abilities are very different from the others', you could appoint that person scorekeeper or judge of who gets each point.

Another idea, one which "tones down" this rather boisterous competition, is to have contestants walk to the board and pick up the chalk before you read the words for them to mark off.

I have described this as a two-team competition. Of course, you can have as many teams as you have patience to make lists for and attention to keep track of. More teams means more turns and more practice for each student.

Conversion Relay: Again, two teams. They take turns running up to the front, taking a slip of paper with a paraphrase, converting the paraphrase to an idiom. If one team misses (in this game, they go alternately, not simultaneously) the other gets a chance at that paraphrase, plus the next one, which is their official turn. Keep score.

Usage Relay: Same as conversion relay, but students get slips of paper with idioms and must put them into appropriate sentences.

e. *Card Match-up Competition:*

Students are on their feet, ready to move around. Half of them are given a card with an idiom written on it; the other half have a paraphrase or a sentence with a blank where the idiom should go.

Students must mix and find their partner with the corresponding card. You can make this a race or a sociable mixer. Good icebreaker for new classes.

TO THE STUDENT

What Is an Idiom?

Combine two or more words to say something and maybe you have an idiom. If you can't understand its meaning from its individual words, then, for sure, you have an idiom. **In time** is an idiom. So is **on time**.

Are There Different Kinds of Idioms?

There sure are. There are idioms that act like adverbs (**in time, on time**), others like verbs (**get on, get off**) and some like nouns (**run-in** as in **I had a run-in with my boss**).

Why Study Idioms That I Already Know?

Because you don't really know them. You only recognize them. For example, you probably recognize **in time** and **on time**. But can you tell the difference between them? Can you use them correctly in sentences?

No? Then it's like having a car in the garage but not knowing how to drive it.

In short, unused knowledge cannot help you. That is why *The New Idioms in Action* makes you **USE, USE, USE** your everyday idioms. So do its exercises carefully and soon you will—

1. Speak and write many of the most frequent (and useful) idioms in the English language.
2. Sound less like a book and more like a human being.
3. Use your English better and better.

Study Aids

1. A *Correction Guide* to help you understand and correct your idiom mistakes.
2. A *Log Sheet of Idiomatic Usage* for idioms you hear or speak outside ESL class.
3. An *Index* to tell you which lesson contains which idiom.
4. A *Lexicon* to list the meaning of each idiom, a sentence exemplifying that meaning, and sometimes a second sentence for exemplifying another frequent meaning.
5. A *List of Contractions* to help you to make your English sound natural, not stiff.
6. A *List of Elliptical Constructions* to show you how to "shorten" sentences.
7. *Idiom Review Exercises* to help you to spell your idioms correctly and understand them better. Use them just before idiom tests.
8. *Names and Nicknames* to help you and Americans to be friends.

Fun Things

1. *Colorful Sayings* come at the end of every lesson. They're just for you. Enjoy them. Laugh at them. Can you think of similar expressions in your native language?
2. *Games*. There are seven idiom games. Ask your teacher about playing them in class. What a fun way to learn!

CONTENTS

Preface	iv
Acknowledgments	v
To the Teacher	vii
To the Student	xv

PART ONE • Simple Past, Present, and Future Tenses (plus Present Continuous)

SAMPLE LESSON: Mimi Practices Her Idioms	
get up at first ahead of time get on (someone's) nerves of course	2
1 God and the French	
go back come back from now on see to What's the matter?	11
2 Is Sam Prejudiced?	
go on what's more come from change (one's) mind get rid of	16
3 Mimi Invites Sam to Dinner	
run into at home have to get on get off	21
4 Work! Work! Work!	
get behind be broke take a trip at the same time time off	28
5 Are Americans Impolite?	
on the whole think of right away in fact be used to	33
6 What Time? French or American?	
had better on time in time quite a few talk (something) over	38
7 The School Cafeteria: Mimi Criticizes American Breakfasts	
at (the) most it's no wonder pick out take advantage of have a good time	45
8 Will Sam Work in His Underwear?	
put on catch cold take off think (something) over find fault with	50
9 Is God a Woman?	
give up How come? bring up find out on the other hand	55
10 Heart Attacks: The American Way of Death	
in a hurry make sense as for put in What about...?	62
11 The Sex-Mad Americans	
go too far have over all right not at all do without	67
12 Finding a Job	
make a living call on for the time being all day long sooner or later	72
13 About Time	
in a while once in a while all the time used to about time	79
14 American TV: For Kids and Idiots?	
make a point of turn on keep up with put up with turn off	84
15 Want to Get Married? Go Skiing	
look forward to as usual hear from at least make sure	89

PART TWO • All Tenses (Simple and Continuous)

16 American Last Names: A Lesson in Multiplication leave out figure out look into by far keep on	99
17 A Land of Immigrants: Some Facts and Figures that is by the way let ... see point out take part in	104
18 Americans Go Shopping take up pick up all at once go up get the better of	109
19 American Houses: Too Much Alike? tell A from B it is a question of no matter let ... alone not much of a	116
20 Would Mimi Kill Sam? Would Sam Kill Mimi? ask for about to take place might as well come to	121
21 America and the Race Problem once and for all as yet even so step by step all in all	126
22 Sam Doesn't Phone all along call up go away make fun of on purpose	133
23 Religion in America: Some Facts read up on look up call off keep quiet have in mind	138
24 Do Americans Like Their Neighbors? let go of give back every other run out of make out	143
25 A Sexy Hairdo look for just now have (someone) do (something) go ahead for once	150
26 Are Americans Individualists? at last instead of have on would rather get along (with)	155
27 How Much is Too Much? cut out let ... know do with feel up to cut down on	160
28 Mimi Has a Toothache put off so far look after get ready stop by	167
29 Sam Proposes take out so much make a difference keep from never mind	172
30 Calling Up Sam's Parents take it easy more or less be short of get to be out of	177
Contractions By Category	184
Common Elliptical Constructions	185
Names and Nicknames	186
Lexicon	187
A Student's Log of Idiomatic English	195
Index	196
Correction Guide	198