

DUALITY OF MEANING IN SPORTS SPECIFIC TERMINOLOGY: TOWARD BETTER COMPETENCE IN “PLAYING THE GAME”

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Abstract. *Given the prevalence of sports culture and terminology in individuals' lifestyle as well as semantic and pragmatic aspects of sports jargon, the application of sports terms is becoming a major part of the culture and communication in many countries. Consequently, research in this area can reveal systems which have many instructive applications in different cultural, semantic and pragmatic settings. Accordingly, this study examines the issue of duality of meaning at the interface of semantics and pragmatics in sports specific terminology. The main objective is to explore whether terms used in sports context could be associated with and/or interpreted at distinctive dual (sport vs. non-sport) situations. Another objective is to seek out how a deeper understanding of linguistic and pragmatic experience of sports terminology can help make learners more effective communicators. Eventually, it is attempted to remedy the communicative situation by enhancing individuals' communicative competence and so make hints on how to “play the game” well in different contexts. For this purpose, 114 frequently-used sports expressions from seven different fields were selected through convenient sampling and were then sorted and analyzed. Following the content analysis, it was revealed that the terms used in sports context could be interpreted as not only being related to the sports events but also could be associated with non-sports situations such as business or social interactions. In the same vein, considering the duality of meaning, gaining a mastery of sports jargon is indispensable for learners to enhance their communicative competence in “playing the game”. Regarding the implications, since one of the major goals of linguistic research into meaning is to illuminate the knowledge involved in communication, studying the rules governing the composition of word meanings into sentences and discourses allows individuals to build systems which can interact with their users in deeper communicative situations. The result of this investigation can provide a more profound understanding of the elegance and complexity of sports jargon in the uniquely human system of linguistic communication.*

Key words: *Duality of meaning, jargon, sports events, sports specific expressions, terminology.*

1. INTRODUCTION

For a long time over the past years, there have been various types of sports programs reported from both television programs and other mass media. Such programs vary from the sports events that are most well-known throughout the world, such as the Olympic Games, the FIFA World Cup, Asian Football Cup, the UEFA Champions League and the

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World Rally Championship, to more minor sports events like occasional or regional tournaments around various corners of the world.

Since sports and games have been a part of the way of life, there are many English idioms derived from these sources and sports culture and its terminology are prevalent in everyday English. Indeed, sports idioms are a part of a nation's cultural and linguistic assets where "members of common culture not only share the same information but also the methods of coding, storing and retrieving the information. Examination of the ethnocultural relevance of sports idioms in English speech occurs in areas such as news, business, social and political discourse as well as in areas where rituals, traditions, and customs are very closely connected with language and form part and parcel of the linguacultural "realia", thus the occurrence can be of note for both philologists and linguists. In this way, it is likely that the study of lexical semantics/pragmatics and the conceptual distinctions implicit in the vocabulary of this jargon can improve dictionaries which enable speakers of a language to extend their knowledge of its stock of words. Besides, it can improve materials which help those acquiring a second language through instruction (Clark, 1996).

In his essay, "The Idea of Duration", Bergson (2002) discusses multiplicity in light of the notion of unity. Whereas a unity refers to a given thing in as far as it is a whole, multiplicity refers to the "parts [of the unity] which can be considered separately" (p.49). Besides, Bergson distinguishes two kinds of multiplicity: one form of multiplicity refers to "parts which are quantitative, distinct, and countable", and the other form of multiplicity refers to "parts that are qualitative, which interpenetrate, and which each can give rise to qualitatively different perception of the whole" (pp. 72-74). In semantics and discourse, multiplicity of meaning refers to the idea that texts can have multiple interpretations, often varying significantly based on context, reader perspective, and cultural background. Still again, semantic dualism holds that what we say (the content of a sentence) is different from the referents of our speech (the actual entities).

Regarding the significance of terminology and professional jargon in ESP contexts, Lourido-Badía (2023) maintains that the teaching of English for Specific Purposes has become a trend inside university programs due to the clear necessity of acquiring, not only General English, but also field-specific input in the language in order to be able to increase the quality of students' performance in international job positions. Also, according to Oishi (2015, cited in Marušić, 2023), global professionals are looking to improve their English skills quickly since "they can't wait years to improve productivity and efficiency in English at work".

Given the sports activities, due to the present societies' mania for games as well as the extensive coverage of sports events by the mass media, many terms and idiomatic expressions have been incorporated into English. In the same way, considering the semantic and pragmatic characteristics of sports jargon and terminology, the application of sports terms is becoming a major part of the culture and communication in many countries so that research in these areas can reveal principles and systems which have many instructive applications in different cultural, semantic and pragmatic settings. For instance, advertisements in many societies are replete with sports terms and idioms associated with play and sports, so that they have mostly become associated with people's everyday life and business (Mirza Suzani, 2007).

Considering the aforementioned points, one of the main objectives of the current study is to explore whether terms used in sports context could be associated with and/or interpreted at distinctive dual (sport vs. non-sport) situations. Another objective is to seek out how a deeper understanding of linguistic and pragmatic experience of sports terminology can help make

learners more effective communicators. Eventually, it is attempted to remedy the communicative situation by enhancing individuals' communicative competence and so make hints on how to “play the game” well in different communicative and professional contexts.

1.1. Duality of meaning of sports terms at the interface of semantics and pragmatics

According to Chierchia and McConnell-Ginet (1990), meaning seems at once the most obvious feature of language and the most obscure aspect to study. It is obvious because it is what we use to communicate with each other and to convey ‘what we mean’ effectively. However, the steps in understanding something said to us in a language in which we are fluent are so rapid, so transparent, that we have little conscious feel for the principles and knowledge which underlie this communicative ability. In this vein, Grice (1989) differentiates two levels of context-dependent meaning *what is said* and *what is meant*, and Yule (2020) maintains that human language is organized at two levels or layers simultaneously; also, Jackendoff (1983) suggests questions of ‘semantics’ and ‘pragmatics’ are an important part of the study of linguistic structure which encompass several different investigations: how each language provides words and idioms for fundamental concepts and ideas (lexical semantics), how the parts of a sentence are integrated into the basis for understanding its meaning (compositional semantics), and how our assessment of what someone means on a particular occasion depends not only on what is actually said but also on aspects of the context of its saying and an assessment of the information and beliefs we share with the speaker.

Given that the communicators’ spell-boundness by the primary meaning is a serious downside (Mirza Suzani, 2005), it is often observed that sports terms and idioms mostly have semantic duality, i.e., having the same form and spelling they may carry two different levels of meaning and hence be interpreted at two different layers of meaning. In other words, sports idioms and expressions can act as a double-edged sword by application in sports contexts with strictly specific meaning as well as application in other-than-sports contexts with more general meaning. As an example, while the well-known term “hat-trick” in a sports-based context means “three points or goals scored by the same player in a particular match or game,” in non-sports context it has the more general meaning of “three successes achieved by one person consecutively” (*Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, 2003). Likewise, the terms “dash” and “bar” can have different meanings depending on their appearance in sports contexts or non-sports situations (see Hartley and Viney, 1995).

1.1.1. Sports terms with strictly specific meaning

The use of some sports terms is strictly specific to particular contexts. For example, the “place” where a sport or game is played can differ from one sport to another. While a *court* is used for playing volleyball, basketball or tennis, a *course* is needed for golf and a *pitch* for football. Likewise, boxing is held in a *ring*, skating in a *rink*, shooting in a *range*, car-racing in a *circuit* and horse-racing in a *track* or *course*. The athletes who go swimming need *pools* and those who do athletics need *tracks* (see Thomas, 1995). In the same vein, a golf player holds a *club* in his hand, a squash/tennis/badminton player uses a *racket* playing those games and a *bat* should be held in hand when playing cricket/table-tennis/baseball game. On the other hand, for playing snooker/pool/billiards one needs to hold a *cue* in his/her hands, and finally for archery, hockey, canoeing, rowing and fishing *bows*, *sticks*, *paddles*, *oars*, and *rods/lines* are used respectively (see McCarthy and O'Del, 1994).

There are many other sports terms used in strictly specific contexts. For instance, regardless of a few exceptions, we use *play* with sports played with a ball (e.g., play tennis); *go* with sports ending in -ing (e.g., go fishing) and *do* with individual type of sports or martial arts (e.g., do yoga) (see Richards et al., 1997). The use of strictly specific terms is also evident in many other sports. For example, the expression "*Hail Mary*" in football, is used for a long shot, a desperate last-ditch attempt, as if relying on a prayer, the (Catholic) "*Hail Mary*" (*Ave Maria*), which means usually a long pass into the end zone to win the game. In the same vein, in the world of motor sports, the comprehension of motor sports such as rallies, Formula One racing, motocross or even cycling, high technical content is expected, because *shock absorbers* are always breaking, *axles* have to be changed, drivers may have problems with their *differentials* and mountain bikers might have trouble adjusting their *forks*. Sometimes, a specific sports term may carry different meanings in different sports contexts, for example the term *gambit* originates in wrestling from the Italian *gambetto*, which means tripping the opponent, however the term arrives in modern parlance through chess, and while in boxing it means strategem or tactic, in *chess* it means an opening system that involves a pawn sacrifice to gain the initiative right from the start. In Table 1, some further sports expressions together with their specific meanings in the relevant contexts are presented.

Table 1 Some sports expressions together with their specific meanings in the relevant contexts

Sports expression	Context	Meaning
four faults	show-jumping	the rider has lost four penalty points
a bull's eye!	archery/shooting	right in the middle of the target!
three-nil	football	the score is three goals to zero
on your marks, get set.	Athletics	get ready to start the race
forty-love	Tennis	the score is forty points to zero
it's a foul, ref!	Football	referee, sb has broken the rules!
fore!	golf	get out of the way of the ball!
seconds out!	Boxing	assistants out of the ring!
they're off!	horse-racing	the race has begun!
touch base	baseball	to connect with or briefly meet
Blindsided	football	caught unprepared
strike out	baseball	to fail
learn the ropes	Sailing	to understand how to do a job
take a rain check	baseball	to accept an offer for a later time
on target	Darts	on schedule to succeed
knock it out of the park	baseball	to do the job extraordinarily well
across the board	Cards	equal for everyone
call the shots	billiards	make the decisions
get off the hook	fishing	to escape
give it your best shot	hunting	try your hardest
get a second wind	sailing	have a burst of energy after tiring
go overboard	sailing	do or say more than you need to
hold all the aces	Cards	expected to win or succeed
race against time	Track	almost no time left to accomplish sth
skate on thin ice	skating	do sth risky
take the bull by the horns	bull fighting	accept the challenges and try one's hardest
take the wind out of one's sails	sailing	make sb feel deflated

As indicated in Table 1, sports idioms generally originate from a specific sport such as baseball or sailing and over time these phrases can come to mean something that are likely to be used in everyday life. In other words, while most sports idioms can still be used when discussing sports, they may even become more common in other areas of life in the world.

1.1.2. Sports terms in other-than-sports situations

It is not unlikely that sports terms and idioms be applied in contexts other than sports situations. For instance, as a sports term, the term “deal”, derived from card games, can be considered as a business transaction which is the basis of an economical society. Likewise, the sports expressions “That’s the ball game; that’s the way the game is played; that’s the game” can summarize any transaction in life. If one does not understand “the rules of the game”, it means more than the rules of a, let’s say, just card game or a sports event. It can mean that one doesn’t understand how life is played, how a culture works, how business is transacted, how schools work, how people meet and many other everyday events. Even the conduct of war is a “game” and a “level playing field” for ground troops necessitates mass bombing of the enemy. The most popular idioms are often those derived from those games most ingrained in the societies’ consciousness that have a wide audience or have been played for many years, such as wrestling in Iranian community or martial arts in the Far East. In addition, team sports, such as football and soccer have captured the corporate imagination to such a degree that people working on a project are called the “team” and a project “a ball”. Also, a quality control team is composed of “team players” who don’t want to “drop the ball”; their goal is to produce a superior product, to “score” in the marketing world by selling these products. In the same vein, to a competent listener, “to make an end run” immediately conveys going around an immediate superior to the boss; “to pinch hit” or “carry the ball” for someone means to substitute or work on a project for someone.

1.2. Movement from specific to non-specific (derived) meanings

One of the main aims in linguistic research has always been to determine how an analyzed segment of language functions, that is, what are the most prototypical words, what are the words not occurring at all, and what are the most frequently used collocations and expression. According to Sinclair (1996, cited in Marušić, 2023), a corpus is a collection of pieces of language that are selected and ordered according to explicit linguistic criteria in order to be used as a sample of the language. In the same vein, Sinclair makes a distinction between corpora comprising general language (GL) and those containing LSP, i.e., corpora which record a language in ordinary use from corpora which record more specialized kinds of language behavior (ibid.).

Considering this, the corpus of the present study includes sports terms and idioms related to different fields of sports used to check “the real state of affairs” when it comes to authentic language in use. *Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary* (2003) defines an idiom as, “a group of words whose meaning is different from the meanings of the individual words”. On the other hand, *Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary* (2004) defines an idiom as, “a peculiar way of saying something which has become established after long use”. In other words, idioms are words or phrases which cannot be understood literally. Also, idioms are difficult for the non-native speaker to learn in isolation from their original source. With regard to the significance of idioms, it is mentioned that without using idioms, languages become harsh, because words are like the skeleton of the

language and idioms are like its soul. Therefore, as Ghaffari (2001) suggests, wrong translation of idioms may damage the soul of the language.

Table 2 Some common expressions with both sports-specific and general (derived) meanings

Idiomatic expression	Sports-based meaning	General (derived) meaning
the game	the sports event	competition, as in business
play the game	to participate in a contest	to know the rules
That's the ball game	The game is over	It is finished
ringside seat	a seat near to the game or fight	to be where the action is
glass jaw	a fighter/boxer who is especially vulnerable or susceptible to a knockout	a destructive criticism
home court advantage	to play a game on a team's home field or court	to have a particular advantage over the other side
Gambit	an opening system in chess that involves a pawn sacrifice to gain the initiative right from the start	a tactic or strategy
end around	an attempt to run around one's own end (of a line of players) and towards the goal	an attempt to avoid or bypass opposition
out of bounds	outside the boundaries of play	not correct, not according to the rules
play-off	teams playing against each other until one team wins	to compete to win sth
keep the ball rolling	to continue paying or rolling the ball	to keep sth going
no sweat	easy game requiring little sweat	no problem
hands down	a jockey, certain of victory, with dropping his hands, while relaxing his hold on the reins	with great ease; unconditionally
Swing	a stroke with one or both arms	to make sth happen
slam dunk	a forceful shot in which the player jumps to the basket and slams the ball in	a forceful, dramatic move against sb; a sure thing
all over but the shouting	finished and only the cheering is left	decided, concluded
take sides	to divide into opposing teams	to favor one viewpoint over another
play along (with)	to play the game with sb	to cooperate for a time
defensive play	to play defensively	to be defensive on a business project
Quarterback	the player on the field responsible for coordinating and directing play	a mastermind

Because sports and games have been a part of the way of life, there are many English idioms derived from these sources. There is no doubt that sports culture and its terminology are prevalent in everyday English. People everywhere love to talk about sports and it is rather hard not to get excited about big global events like the Olympic Games. In addition, sports can bring people together or they can divide people. Either way, they are often a good conversation starter for English learners. Grouping of idioms into categories according to a particular sport or game, on the other hand, can facilitate

the process of more successful comprehension. In this way, the language users can make use of their analytical ability to understand an idiom in the framework of the game from which it originated. For instance, the expression "Two strikes against him" is a statement from the sport of baseball that denotes that one strike is left before the batter is declared out. Some phrases, such as play hardball are much more common in the derived or more general sense. The sentence, "Let's play hardball on this contract", used in business or negotiations is more typical of this phrase than, "We play hardball when we play baseball". If the idiom is infrequently or never used in its original or sport-based sense, it is more likely that it appears in more general sense. Another point to note is that the recognition, understanding and interpretation processes will be facilitated if the learners or communicators try to learn groups of idioms within the context of groups of sports and games with which they are associated. Table 2 presents further examples of some common idiomatic expressions with both sports-specific and general (derived) meanings.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

2.1. Corpus

The corpus of the present study comprised relevant and frequently-used sports terms related to different fields of sports used to check "the real state of affairs" when it comes to authentic language in use. Thus, in the current qualitative study, 114 relevant and frequently-used sports terms related to different fields of sports were selected through convenient sampling and content analyzed in both general and sport-based contexts. The corpus of the study was collected from an assortment of relevant printed and online sources in different fields of sports, including professional books and jargon dictionaries as well as online websites and weblogs comprising sports terminology and jargon (see <http://www.sportsidioms.com/index.htm>). The fields of sports investigated comprised baseball, combat sports, target ball sports, tennis and court sports, archery, hunting, shooting and western as well as track and field.

2.2. Procedures

114 frequently-used sports terms and expressions related to different fields of sports were collected from an assortment of relevant printed and electronic sources in different fields of sports. The sources included professional books and jargon dictionaries as well as electronic sites and weblogs containing sports jargon. For content analysis, the sport or game was described within each category and a schematic drawing of the field on which it is played was included to enhance better comprehension of the expressions implemented. In this vein, sports and games were grouped into seven categories including baseball, combat sports, target ball sports, tennis and court sports, archery, hunting, shooting and western, which comprised idioms basic to sports activities and games. Then, for each sport or game, the pertinent idiom associated with each game or sport category was presented along with both specific (original) and general (derived) meaning applications.

3. RESULTS

After the data on different fields of sports were collected, a content analysis was conducted rigorously. A detailed description of the corpus gathered and used in the study is presented in Table 3.

Table 3 A detailed description of the corpus of the expressions used in the study

Field(s) of sport	N (sports-specific expressions)	N (general expressions)	Sum (sports-specific and general expressions)
Baseball	13	13	26
Combat sports	6	6	12
Target ball sports	5	5	10
Tennis and court sports	2	2	4
Archery	3	3	6
Hunting, shooting and western	11	11	22
Track and field	17	17	34
Total	57	57	114

3.1. Baseball

Baseball, like many other popular sports in numerous countries, has its own jargon and expressions, the mastery of which can be of great help to a successful interaction. Usually *major* teams have the best professional players and more *fans* or people who watch the games. A baseball team has nine people: *the pitcher, the catcher, first, second and third basemen, the shortstop, the left, middle and right fielders*. Baseball is played on four bases, first, second, third and home, on a diamond shaped field. The pitcher, the catcher, the basemen and the shortstop play in the *infield*. The fielders play in the *outfield* or the area around the infield. The pitcher throws (*pitches*) a ball to a *batter* on the opposing team, who tries to hit this ball with a *bat* and run around the bases.

There are many other idiomatic expressions used in baseball. For example, an *inning* is played when both teams have made three outs. A game is nine innings unless the score is *tied* at the end of nine innings. Then the game is played extra innings until one team has more *runs* at the end of the extra innings. Some other idioms used in this sport together with their dual meanings are presented in Table 4.

3.2. Combat sports: Boxing and wrestling

Boxing is a popular sport all over the world with the championship matches in the Olympic games watched by millions on television each year. The rules of boxing are as specific as its specialized jargon. In boxing two fighters use gloved hands to hit each other on areas of the upper body. Matches or *bouts* are won by a *knockout* where a contestant is knocked to the floor and counted out, and a *technical decision* is made, where a contestant loses by points; or he is hurt so badly he has to retire from the fight .

The history of some expression in boxing can be of interest to the readers. For instance, the expression *throw in the towel (or sponge)* means to stop the fight (or more generally, to give up and not to pursue an objective). The reason is that in the early days of boxing, opponents used bare fists to hit each other. When hit, a sponge was used to wipe away blood. When a fighter was no longer able to fight, his manager would throw the bloody sponge into the ring to stop the fight.

Table 4 Semantic duality in idioms used in baseball

Idiom	Sports-based meaning	General (derived) meaning
Pitch	to throw or toss	to give sth to sb
play ball	to play a ball game with sb	to do business with sb, to cooperate
knock one out of the ball park	to hit a ball out of the baseball park	to have a great idea, to do sth extremely well
grand slam	to hit a home run with bases loaded	sudden, sweeping victory
pitch sb a curve	to pitch a curve ball to the batter	to surprise sb unpleasantly
a lot on the ball	to throw a ball with a twist	capable and skilled
fast ball baseball	a ball thrown fast by the pitcher	not understand; to lose an opportunity
pinch hit for sb	to substitute for another batter	to substitute for another person
out in left field	out in the left field of the baseball	away from what is happening
he's up	he is next in the lineup to bat	he is next
major league	the best teams	the most important person or business
minor league	baseball player or team that is good, but not the best	a person, business or entity that is not the most important
drop the ball	to make an error	to blunder, to fail in some way

Wrestling, having particularly a long background in Iranian and Greco-Roman cultures and history, is also a very old sport in which two opponents struggle hand to hand to throw each other to the ground or to a *mat*. Depending on the type of wrestling (i.e., freestyle or Greco-Roman styles), different grips or *holds* are used. Some of the other terms used in combat sports are presented in Table 5, as follows:

Table 5 Semantic duality in idioms used in combat sports

Idiom	Sports-based meaning	General (derived) meaning
Heavyweight	a competitor in the strongest/heaviest division	to be the most important
Lightweight	not as strong as those in the heavyweight division	to be of lesser importance
a one-two punch	to deliver or receive two punches together	to be in a difficult situation
hit below the belt	to hit another boxer below the belt	to hurt sb unnecessarily
no holds barred	An extremely dangerous wrestling match	to do anything to achieve a result
down and out	to be hit such that one falls down and is counted "out"	to be in a bad situation and to need help

3.3. Target ball sports

One of the most well-known target ball sports is golf. It is a game in which each player uses clubs to hit a small ball into a series of holes on a golf course, which usually

has eighteen holes. Players compete individually or in teams, playing the golf course in groups of two, three or four persons. There are two basic forms of play: match play and stroke play. In match play the player who wins the most holes wins the game. In stroke play the player who has the fewest strokes wins the game. In Table 6 further idioms used in target ball sports are presented.

Table 6 Semantic duality in idioms used in target ball sports

Idiom	Sports-based meaning	General (derived) meaning
hole in one	to hit the ball into the hole with one stroke	to succeed the first time
par for the course	a standard for a hole on the golf course	to be below or above the standard set
Scratch	to be equal for all competitors	to be equal
tee it up	a place a golf ball on a tee to be hit	a place a golf ball on a tee to be hit
below or above par	to be below or above the standard set	to do worse or better

3.4. Tennis and court sports

The court sports include such competitive sports as tennis, handball, squash, badminton and paddle ball, as well as more casual adaptations of the court and ball concept for a game. The court sports have their own jargon. In Table 7 some common idioms used for tennis and other court sports will be illustrated.

Table 7 Semantic duality in idioms used in tennis and court sports

Idiom	Sports-based meaning	General (derived) meaning
to draw the line	line to mark the end of a court	to define a limit in anything
The ball's in your court	It's your turn to hit the ball	It's the other persons decision/turn to act

3.5. Archery

Archery is a sport in which competitors shoot arrows with a bow at a target (target archery) or shoot animals for game (hunting) or for fish (fishing). A target is something one shoots or aims at for scoring. Table 8 presents some common idioms used in archery and their meanings in different contexts.

Table 8 Semantic duality in idioms used in archery

Idiom	Sports-based meaning	General (derived) meaning
bull's eye	the center of a target	to win the point, to get the business deal
on target	to hit the target with a bow and arrow	on schedule, precisely right
wide of the mark	not on target or the bull's eye	to do less than expected

It can be interesting to know that the expression "bull's eye" has been derived from an old English sport in which bull-baiting dogs tried to pull a bull by his nose to the ground. Gamblers would place a bet "on the bull's eye" if he wished to make a bet. Crowns, an English coin, were used to bet so frequently "on the bull's eye" that the coin itself came to

be called a bull's-eye. Later, the term was applied to the black center of a target. The idiom right on the money is also derived from the ancient interchangeable use of a coin, bull's-eye and the center of a target.

3.6. Hunting, shooting and western

For a long time, guns and pistols have been used for protection, to hunt for food and for recreation. Even in today's modern world we still see people riding herd on the free range with a gun in hand and "shooting from the hip" in battles. However, nowadays people may not have to *grab a bull by its horns*, except as recreation and pastime.

In the present world, almost every man and boy and some women could learn to shoot and to hunt for game and guns may not be a necessity for protection and for food anymore, but shooting and hunting continue to be popular sports.

Because the activity of hunting and shooting seems so necessary and is so popular today, there are many idioms derived from these activities. Today to *set one's sights on something* usually means to set a goal or objective rather than to sight an object with one's gun. Further expressions on hunting, shooting and western can be found in Table 9.

Table 9 Semantic duality in idioms used in hunting, shooting, and western

Idiom	Sports-based meaning	General (derived) meaning
shoot/shot down	to shoot a duck or bird down	to stop sth because it won't work
hound sb/sth	to run hounds or dogs after sb/sth	to urge continually
bark up the wrong tree	not barking at the animal that the hunter wants	to make a wrong choice
quick on the trigger	to shoot a gun quickly	to be fast
like a sitting duck	as a duck sits on water	to be unaware of sth to happen
set one's sights on sth	to line up the sight of a rifle or bow	to want or desire sth
call off the dogs	to order dogs away from the chase	to stop pursuing sth
straight from the shoulder	to hold a gun up at the shoulder and shoot it	to be frank
throw sb off the track	to try to divert or confuse pursuers	to confuse sb
riding for a fall	to be riding fast and/or dangerously	to risk an accident or failure
hold at bay	hunting dogs barking at game or prey until the hunter can arrive	to keep sth/sb stopped a while until sth else can be done

3.7. Track and field

Track and field sports include a variety of running, jumping and throwing contests, which take place on an oval track surrounding the field events area. There are many idioms in English concerned with both track and field and horse racing. Horse racing as a sports events and betting on horses has been one of the first forms of recreation in many countries and because horses have been used for transportation, recreation and racing, there are many idioms associated with their use.

There are two basic types of horse racing, flat racing and races where the horses jump over fences and other obstacles. Races vary according to distance, terrain or ground surface, type of horse, prize money and weighting system. Some idioms used in track and field along with their different senses are mentioned in Table 10.

Table 10 Semantic duality in idioms used in track and field

Idiom	Sports-based meaning	General (derived) meaning
a head start	to start with an advantage	to begin early
jump the gun	to begin before the official starts the race	to begin too soon
pass the baton	to give the baton to the next runner in a relay race	to continue the task
against the clock	to compete in sports in a timed event or against another competitor's time	to be in a hurry to meet a deadline or time for completion of sth
from scratch	from the starting line for a race	from the beginning
put sth/sb through paces	to move in a particular way, usually with speed, along a measured course	to show sth/sb how to do sth according to a predetermined standard
hit one's stride	the horse is running its fastest	to do one's best
dark horse	a horse no one thinks will win but does	a person no one thinks will win but does
winning hands down	to win a horse race with one's hands down	to do the best one can in a competitive situation
runner-up	to be second	to be second in any competition
off to a running start	moving at the start	a good start on sth
down to the wire	refers to the wire used to mark the end of a race	the last few minutes before sth must be accomplished
under the wire	Wire refers to the finish line	just barely in time; on time
neck and neck	The horses are running together	to be an even race
in the stretch/ down the stretch	in the final part of a race track between the last turn and the finish line	in the final stages of an event, such as a business or political campaign
riding for a fall	to be riding fast and/or dangerously	to risk an accident or failure
win by a nose	at the finish, to win by the length of a nose	to finish just a little better than the next person or business

As shown in Tables 4-10, idioms in general and sports idioms in particular are difficult for the non-native speaker to tackle in isolation from their original source, particularly if the non-native speaker does not have sufficient familiarity with such terms beforehand. A word of caution to note is that a satisfactory understanding of idioms, requires that a careful reader pay special attention to various layers of meaning in both sports-based contexts and non-sports-based situations. In addition, as indicated in the above examples, sports-based jargon is one of the hardest forms of language to deal with.

In the area of translation and interpretation, almost all translators concur that translation of sports-specific jargon is one of the most troublesome tasks to deal with. In translation from SL to TL a translator may encounter various sorts of vicissitudes. In times, the translator may not be able to find appropriate equivalent(s) in the TL and hence resort to the original term in SL. As an example, many terms used in Persian for different fields of sports and/or technical terminology are originally foreign terms for which no equivalent(s) has been proposed so far. An extremely familiar term is the term used for

calling the most popular sport in Iran – perhaps, after wrestling - That is, football in English (SL) and the borrowed term “*futbal*” in Persian (TL). It is interesting to mention that over the past years in Arabic (TL) for the same English (SL) word the equivalent “*al-korat-al qadam*” has been used as a result of loan-translation. The study, application and translation of sports terminology, on the other hand, are replete with limitations and restrictions, so that it may be unfortunate to confess that making use of sports-based examples can frequently alienate the target audience and slow translators down, resulting in delays and cost overruns.

4. DISCUSSION

There are regional and personal variations in the use of sports idioms and expressions. If interlocutors can not understand the games as well as their terms and idioms, it may hinder interaction at any stage of development. If, on the other hand, the audience attempt to listen and understand well, they will understand the sport and the way it is played, understand better the idiomatic expressions derived from it and henceforth, will be able produce a more successful comprehension out of the texts and then enhance communicative competence accordingly. Likewise, they may be well amazed at the number of persons and institutions, particularly businesses and businessmen, who use idiomatic terms, based on sports, to summarize a point.

Indeed, a close examination of most words reveals that they have many different senses and the rules which combine them into sentence meanings will frequently yield several possibilities for interpretation. Usually we resolve potential ambiguity unconsciously—unless someone carefully constructs a pun which turns on an ambiguity. Consider for example this pun, taken from Douglas Adams' “The hitchhiker's guide to the galaxy”. Ford and Arthur, are stowaways on a space ship.

Ford: You should prepare yourself for the jump into hyperspace; it's unpleasantly like being drunk.

Arthur: What's so unpleasant about being drunk?

Ford: Just ask a glass of water.

The passage turns on the ambiguity of the word 'drunk', which can be an adjective, meaning 'affected by alcohol', or the passive form of the verb 'drink'. Arthur takes Ford as intending the first sense of 'drunk'—with good reason: he's unlikely to mean that someone would drink him. But Ford reveals that the bizarre interpretation is what he intends. The art of the image is the metaphorical treatment of a person as a liquid; the joke turns on the sleight of hand which makes our semantic interpreter lean in one direction before pulling us back in an unexpected way with a disambiguation.

Indeed, as Jackendoff (1983) maintains questions of 'semantics' and 'pragmatics' have constantly been an important part of the study of every linguistic structure; in the same vein, sports terms can in times present a challenge in the process of communication as they frequently represent semantic duality, and hence can be interpreted as not only being related to the sports events but also as associated with non-sports situations such as business or social interactions. Consequently, distinguishing any term within its category can be a great help to enhance better understanding and more successful communication and the learning process will be facilitated if the students try to learn groups of idioms within the context of groups of games with which they are associated.

It should be noted that due to the key role of sports in everyday life and global interactions, an appropriate understanding of sports terms and expressions is presently indispensable. In addition, with the increasingly important role of sports in the development of global interactions and understanding among the world's nations, there have been many terms incorporated into English as idiomatic expressions as a result of the mass media's mania for sports events; therefore, grouping of idioms into categories according to particular common characteristics or particular sport or game identity can facilitate the process of understanding and interpretation of this jargon. It is also suggested that in the process of rendition of sports terms from SL to TL, a translator ought to use his or her analytical abilities to recognize the given idiom in the framework of the game from which it originates. Another noteworthy point is that in dealing with translation of sports terms a careful translator should pay special attention to the different meanings or connotations that are associated with each sports term or idiom, as it is a *must* for every translator to differentiate between denotative meanings of words and expressions and their connotative meanings. To a translator or interpreter, "I'll deliver the target" connotes the transfer of a translated file, while to a hunting goods supplier, it may mean something very different. Therefore, it is a requirement for every translator that after introduction to the game or sport category get familiar with both original or sports-based meanings and more general (derived) meanings and connotations in their own contexts.

5. CONCLUSION

Sports idioms are a part of a nation's cultural and linguistic assets where members of common culture not only share the same information but also the methods of coding, storing and retrieving the information. Examination of the ethnocultural relevance of sports idioms in English speech occurs in areas such as news, business, social and political discourse as well as in areas where rituals, traditions, and customs are very closely connected with language and form part and parcel of the linguacultural "realia".

From a linguistic perspective, the Communicative Method supports the idea that "when students are involved in real communication, their natural strategies for language acquisition will be used" (British Council, 2021) and that this issue will permit them to learn how to really use the language. In this vein, the examples provided in this study illustrate the issue of semantic duality in sports idioms at the interface of semantics pragmatics as well as the communicators' semantic and pragmatic abilities in action, and as Allen (1995) maintains, since one of the major goals of linguistic research into meaning is to illuminate the processes and knowledge involved in interaction and communication, studying the rules governing the composition of word meanings into sentence meanings and larger discourses allows us to build systems which can interact with their users in more naturalistic language. Investigating how our understanding of what is said on mass media is influenced by our individual linguistic and cultural assumptions and experience, which are much less visible than what is explicitly said, can help make us more conscious and effective communicators. The result of all of these (sometimes very abstract) investigations is a deeper understanding and appreciation of the complexity and expressive elegance of particular languages and the uniquely human system of linguistic communication.

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