SEMI-FIXED EXPRESSIONS

5.1 Overview

This chapter identifies and illustrates all the chunks that fit into the category called “Semi-fixed expressions”. Though Lewis identifies five different types under this category, the present study identifies only two broad categories, namely: sentence heads and other semi-fixed expressions which include discourse markers and sequencers. Sentence heads are referred to those clauses or phrases that allow a substitution in their place and which provide a chance to the speaker to complete them in many ways. Discourse markers are words which connect what is being expressed and what follows next in the spoken and written language. Sequencers too are a type of discourse makers that highlight the order of the happenings. The first part of the chapter focuses on these semi-fixed expressions by referring to their contexts and usage. The second part of the chapter lists discourse markers and sequencers. The final part of the chapter presents exercises and activities on the items listed.

5.2 Sentence Heads

1. But despite his humble behaviour

Possible combinations:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>But despite</th>
<th>his/her/their/your/our</th>
<th>acceptable/dignified/good</th>
<th>behaviour</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
But despite his humble, quiet behaviour, the villagers were quite cruel to Dhabboo.

But despite his humble behaviour he is not liked by his friends.

When it was time to sow, all the farmers got busy in their fields.

When it was time to sow, the farmers in the village, worked collectively in the fields.

A few days later when he came, that way again…

A few days later when he came, he was astonished to see his house full of gold coins.

If you feel sorry for him, why don’t you take him away?

If you feel sorry for the destitute children, you can contribute some money for their welfare.
5. As soon as he stepped out

As soon as he stepped out:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>As soon as he</th>
<th>he</th>
<th>purchased a car</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>she</td>
<td>went to his department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>They</td>
<td>came home</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

C: As soon as he stepped out of the circus ground…….

U: As soon as he left home, his mother received a call from his office that he was promoted.

6. If you see anything strange

If you see anything strange:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>If</th>
<th>you</th>
<th>notice</th>
<th>anything</th>
<th>eerie</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>they</td>
<td>observe</td>
<td>anything</td>
<td>peculiar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>finds</td>
<td></td>
<td>abnormal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

C: If you see anything strange, you must explain what it means or else you’ll be turned to stone.

U: If you find anything strange, report to us immediately.

7. But before the queen could ask for food

But before the queen could ask for food:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>But before</th>
<th>the king</th>
<th>help</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>the knight</td>
<td>assistance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>you</td>
<td>money</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>they</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
C: Before the queen could ask for food, the princess was ready to feed her.

U: Before Suri could ask for help, donations poured in from all corners of the country.

8. I would be grateful if you would

| I would be thankful if you she they could |

C: I would be grateful to you if you would accept my sons as your pupils.

U: I would be grateful to you if you would help me in completing the project.

9. We are really fortunate to have

| We are truly simply lucky blessed to have |

C: We are really fortunate to have such friends.

U: We are really fortunate to have her our research supervisor.

10. It was said that flowers would bloom

| It was said that plants would yield would blossom |

C: It was said that flowers would bloom only when the strongest of men came to the village.
U: It was said that children below fourteen should not be permitted to work.

11. If that were so

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>If</th>
<th>this</th>
<th>were so</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It</td>
<td>were so</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

C: If that were so why would we have a chapter on them in science…

U: If that were so, why would we have a debate?

12. In the evening when everyone had left

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In the evening</th>
<th>when</th>
<th>everybody</th>
<th>had gone</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>children</td>
<td>went out to play</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

C: In the evening, when everyone had left, he sat in the corridor, reading.

U: In the evening when everyone had left, he offered prayers to God.

13. Now let me see how

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Now let me see</th>
<th>what</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>when</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>where</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>why</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

C: Now let me see how that rascal Ranganna will get his daughter married.

U: Now let me see how things will work without my assistance.
14. As if in answer

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>As if in answer, a door opened and in came a veiled figure</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As if in answer, Paula nodded her head.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

15. I hereby appoint you

| I hereby appoint minister of everything!  | I hereby appoint you as the student coordinator for this year. |

16. Hearing the man’s cries

| Hearing the man’s cries, the guards from the soothing range came running. | Hearing the boy’s screams the neighbours called the police. |

17. As a token of appreciation

| As a token of appreciation of your services, I’m sending you a cheque for another 25,000. |           |
U: As a token of appreciation, the college would like to award meritorious scholarships for the students who secured university ranks.

18. As a matter of fact I am looking for

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>As a matter of fact</th>
<th>she</th>
<th>is</th>
<th>waiting for</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>he</td>
<td></td>
<td>is</td>
<td>hoping for</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>they</td>
<td></td>
<td>are</td>
<td>seeking for</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

C: As a matter of fact, we’re looking for a bird, the great Kahuka. The Bird of heaven, as it is sometimes called!

U: As a matter of fact I am looking for a good maid servant.

19. Now that he was old

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Now that</th>
<th>she</th>
<th>was</th>
<th>young</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>they</td>
<td></td>
<td>were</td>
<td>poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>he</td>
<td>is</td>
<td></td>
<td>rich</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>we/you</td>
<td>are</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>am</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

C: Now that he was old he preferred to fish in the local river.

U: Now that he was rich he stopped being stingy.

20. One day while he was

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>One day</th>
<th>while she was</th>
<th>playing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>while he was</td>
<td>studying</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

C: One day while he was fishing, he saw a strange bird.
U: One day while he was studying in the library, he saw a millipede next to him.

21. When he awoke

| When \( \text{she they I he we you} \) | slept rested |

C: When he awoke, it was late afternoon.

U: When he awoke, he was astonished to see his house cleanly swept.

22. As you may have heard

| As \( \text{he she may have} \) | Have seen experienced |

C: Our king, as you may have heard, is going through a bad period.

U: As you may have heard, the country is going through a financial crisis.

23. Troubled by his thoughts

| Troubled by her their deeds actions |
C:  Troubled by his thoughts, he did not notice that he had wandered away from his usual path and entered a new lane.

U:  Troubled by his thoughts, he was unable to concentrate on the lecture.

24. The way he was acting

| The way | she | he | it | was | behaving | responding |

C:  The way he was acting I thought he was the son of the club’s president at least!

U:  The way he was acting, I thought he was a great artist.

25. After much deliberation

| After | much | thinking | consideration | debate |

C:  After much deliberation by our four observers we have reached a decision.

U:  After much deliberation, he decided to take up the assignment.

26. The good part is that

| The | bad | worst | best | part | is that |
C: The good part is that you can sing and of course, participate in any competition you wish to.

U: The good part is that, your marks will not be deducted for wrong answers.

27. In pursuit of the stag

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In pursuit of</th>
<th>happiness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>wealth</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

C: In pursuit of the stag, the king left the hunting party behind.

U: In pursuit of riches, Tom left for the U.S.

5.3 DISCOURSE MARKERS

1. Then

C: Then, it was time for the final round.

U: I will first concentrate on my Ph.D. Then, I will think about going abroad.

2. And

C: And only cows can take part in this competition.

U: Go to the station to receive Sally. And, don’t forget to pick Tom on the way.

3. So

C: So, I will take these.

U: So, will you watch this movie on Sunday?
4. But

C: But, he gave up the third to save Raju.

U: You promised me to get a bottle of juice. But, you did not keep your promise.

5. And then

C: And then, suddenly Dhabboo made up his mind!

U: We first went to the temple with our friends. And then, to the museum.

6. Soon

C: Soon, Rahul’s car came and he dropped Ravi home.

U: Tom took permission from his boss to leave the office early. Soon, he received a call from his superior to be in the office as his presence was required.

7. Here

C: Here, take now these bananas to lure him.

U: Here, at this stage, you will have to add sulphuric acid to the solution.

8. Now

C: Now, trade me for the firebird…

U: Now, take a pinch of salt and add it to a glass of water.

9. Suddenly

C: Suddenly, the slats in the fence turned into sickles and cut down vegetables in the garden.

U: Suddenly, he barged into the class without seeking permission from the teacher.
10. And So

C: And so, the princes studied under the yogi.

U: Tom wanted to set up an industry in New York. And so, he shifted his family there though he was well established in California.

11. So Again

C: So again the princes set out.

U: Last night, we went out to eat in the new restaurant near my house. The food there tasted good. So again, we are planning to go tonight to dine there.

12. Meanwhile

C: Meanwhile, who’s this waiting by my boat?

U: Beat the egg in a container until there is lather. Meanwhile, heat the pan with a little oil on it.

13. Yet

C: Kosal is ruled by the benevolent monarch. Yet, people live in fear.

U: John knew that he would fail in the exam. Yet, he did not get disheartened.

14. Usually

C: Usually, he caught just enough for the day’s meals.

U: Usually, he eats oats for his breakfast. But today he has eaten cornflakes for a change.
15. Even today

C: Even today, when he wants it to rain, all he does is croak.

U: Even today, some of the mathematical problems of Mr. Ramanujan remain unsolved.

5.4 Sequencers

1. Finally

C: Finally, Lorilal announced the verdict.

U: Finally, after talking to the principal, the students calmed down and attended the classes.

2. Next

C: Next, my kohl will give you nice black circles around your eyes.

U: Next, take right and walk straight to reach the building you are looking for.

3. First

C: First, let me bring in a very true friend.

U: First, think about your career and next about other things.

4. Later

C: Later, he was showing another prospective customer around his estate.

U: Linda was a musician at first. Later, she took up teaching as her profession.
Exercises and Activities

5.5 Sentence Heads

Exercise 1

Match the sentence heads with their endings to make acceptable sentences.

| 1. But despite his humble quiet behaviour | a. help me proof read my thesis. |
| 2. When it was time to sow | b. there was a heavy rain. |
| 3. A few days later when he came | c. you can extend your help by giving some money. |
| 4. If you feel sorry for him | d. he was humiliated by his friends every day. |
| 5. As soon as he stepped out | e. the farmers tilled their fields. |
| 6. If you see anything strange | f. the princess fed her with affection. |
| 7. But before the queen could ask for food | g. he was aghast to see the house full of flower pots. |
| 8. I would be grateful to you if you could | h. bring it to our notice immediately. |

Activity 1

Ask the learners to sit in groups and instruct them to construct sentences using the sentence heads above. Then, nominate one learner from each group to read out the sentences.

Exercise 2

Insert the right sentence heads in the blanks using the ones given in the box.
If that were so We are really fortunate to have
It was said that flowers would bloom Now let me see
In the evening when everyone had left I hereby appoint you
As a matter of fact I am looking for As a token of appreciation
Hearing the man’s cries As if in answer

1. ____________ her as our principal.

2. ____________ only in some seasons.

3. ____________, why should there be a commotion?

4. ____________ he felt lonely.

5. ___________ how this gadget works.

6. ___________ Tom gave a gesture.

7. ___________ as the secretary of this organisation.

8. ___________ his wife rushed to him.

9. ___________ I would like to give you a memento.

10. _______________ s a job in a multi-national company.

**Activity**

Ask the learners to sit in groups. Hand over to them a slip of paper with three sentence heads at least. Write their continuations also on slips of papers and give them to other groups. Now ask the learners to go around the class to interact with other learners to find out the correct sentences. While the group with sentence heads tries to find out the correct combinations, the groups with possible combinations search for the right sentence heads.
Exercise 3

Choose the right sentence head from the four options to make a meaningful sentence.

1. _____________ he could not stand steady.
   a) But this is nothing       b) The way he was acting
   c) In the pursuit of       d) Now that he was old

2. _____________ dancing he fainted.
   a) As you may have heard   b) Troubled by his thoughts
   c) But this is nothing    d) One day while he was

3. _____________ he saw a puppy in his house.
   a) Troubled by his thoughts    b) When he awoke
   c) After much deliberation    d) The way he was acting

4. _____________, she faced many hardships in her life.
   a) Troubled by his thoughts    b) The good part is that
   c) Now that he is old        d) As you may have heard

5. _____________, she committed suicide.
   a) But this is nothing       b) Now that he is old
   c) One day while he was     d) Troubled by her thoughts

6. _____________, I thought she was filthy rich.
   a) In the pursuit of the stag  b) The way he was acting
   c) When he awoke             d) As you may have heard
7. ________________, he decided to take up a foreign assignment.
   a) In the pursuit of               b) one day while he was
   c) After much deliberation        d) But this is nothing
8. ________________, you will not have to pay anything to enrol on the course.
   a)  Now that he is old            b) Troubled by his memories
   c) The good part is that          d) When he awoke
9) ________________, happiness, he made a pilgrimage to Manasa Sarovar.
   a) After much deliberation        b) One day while he was
   c) In pursuit of                  d) The ways he was acting

**Exercise 4**

Make the learners sit in groups. Place all the sentence heads in a container. Instruct one learner from each group to pick a sentence head and write as many possible combinations as possible on the board. Allow the learner from the other groups to add to the combinations on the board.

**Activity 4**

Ask the learners to sit in groups. Give each group two slips of paper. While one slip of paper contains sentence heads with one word missing in it, the other slip contains the words which can fit into the blanks. Ask one learner from each group to go to the other groups to find out the words that can suit their sentence heads.
**Exercise 5**

Make sentences using the sentence heads given below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sentence Head</th>
<th>Sentence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>But despite his humble behaviour</td>
<td>I would be grateful if you would</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If you feel sorry for him</td>
<td>We are really fortunate to have</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If you see anything strange</td>
<td>As if in answer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As a token of appreciation</td>
<td>The good part is that</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As you may have heard</td>
<td>As a matter of fact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After much deliberation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Activity 5**

Ask the learners to sit in groups and instruct the groups to exchange their books with others. Tell them to go through the sentences framed and correct the sentences if there are any errors. If the learners find any difficulty while correcting them, they can approach the teacher.

**Activity 6**

Provide the learners a comic story to find out the sentence heads. Later instruct one of the learners in the class to read them out.

**5.6 Discourse Markers**

**Exercise 6**

Fill in the blanks with suitable discourse markers given in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discourse Markers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>even today</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>now</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>here</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>so again</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>soon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>so</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>but</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>suddenly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>then</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>now</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1) If you don’t like the course, _____ there is no point in joining.

2) First, heat the oil. ____ then, fry the potatoes.

3) My friend was in dire need of money _____ I went to his house to give him some money.

4) I rang you up many times the other day._____ you did not answer my call.

5) ______ after his joining the university, he was awarded a scholarship.

6) ______ is your daughter.

7) ______, it is time we left the college.

8) ______, he collapsed while walking.

**Activity 6**

Give the students a comic story to underline the discourse markers they come across. Later, nominate one leaner in the class to read them out.

**Exercise 7**

Fill in the blanks with suitable discourse markers by taking the aid of the phrases in the brackets.

1. My experiment in the laboratory failed. _____ my teacher asked me to repeat it(so for the second time).

2. I asked Raju to get some curd from the market. In the ________ let us cook the rice.(while this thing is going on)

3. She did not prepare well for the exam._______ she did well in it. (a word used to say that something is surprising)
4. Today she went to her office by bus. _______ she goes on foot. (the thing that most often happens)

5. _______ she cherishes her childhood memories. (till date)

5.7 Sequencers

Exercise 8

Fill in the blanks with suitable sequencers by taking the aid of the phrases in the brackets.

1. _________ he gave up his decision of quitting his job after much deliberation. (at last)

2. First you will have to go to the chairman to get the proposal approved. _______ you should go to the principal.

3. _________ consult the doctor without wasting time. (before you do anything)

4. Initially a few students started the mischief. _______ everyone in the class joined them. (to refer to a time after the present one)

Activity 8

Ask a learner to read out the discourse markers and sequencers they have underlined from the comic story they are provided with. Make the learners sit in groups. Ask each group to take three slips of paper placed in a container. See that the slips contain the discourse markers and sequencers from the exercise above. Instruct them to frame sentences with them. Later nominate one person from every group to read out their sentences.
5.8 Summary

This chapter has identified two kinds of semi-fixed expressions from the chosen comics. The first part of the chapter sentence heads has listed all the phrases found in the texts and has also provided their original context as well as an additionally created context. The second part of the chapter has presented the other semi-fixed expressions namely discourse markers and sequencers. Like in the first part, it has listed all the words and provided contexts along with their usage. Finally, the third part of the chapter has provided exercises and activities on these items. The chapter has ended by providing a key for the exercises.

5.9 Key

Exercise 1

1. d  2.e  3. g  4. c  5. b  6. h  7. f  8. a

Exercise 2

1. We are really fortunate to have
2. It is said that flowers would bloom
3. If that were so
4. In the evening when everyone had left
5. Now let me see
6. As if in answer
7. I hereby appoint you
8. Hearing the man’s cries
9. As a token of appreciation
10. As a matter of fact I am looking for
Exercise 3

1. Now that he was old
2. One day while he was
3. When he awoke
4. As you may have heard
5. Troubled by his memories
6. The ways he was acting
7. After much deliberation
8. The good part is that
9. In pursuit of

Exercise 5

1. But despite his humble behaviour, he is not liked by many.
2. If you feel sorry for him, go to him and console him.
3. If you see anything strange, don’t get frightened.
4. I would be grateful to you if you would help me complete my assignment.
5. We are really fortunate to gain an admission in this university.
6. As if in answer, he gave a stern look.
7. As a token of appreciation, I would like to give you a dictionary.
8. As you may have heard, only women should apply for the posts in this university.
9. After much deliberation, he agreed to send his daughter to the excursion.
10. As a matter of fact, I am not interested to work for this organisation.

11. The good part is that you will be permitted to enter the hostel anytime at nights.

**Exercise 6**
1. Then
2. And
3. So
4. But
5. Soon
6. Here
7. Now
8. Suddenly

**Exercise 7**
1. So again
2. Meanwhile
3. Yet
4. Usually
5. Even today

**Exercise 8**
1. Finally
2. Next
3. First
4. Later