



I'm Not Hanging Noodles on Your Ears and Other Intriguing Idioms From Around the World

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"I'm not hanging noodles on your ears." In Moscow, this curious, engagingly colorful assertion is common parlance, but unless you're Russian your reaction is probably "Say what?" The same idea in English is equally odd: "I'm not pulling your leg." Both mean: Believe me.

As author Jag Bhalla demonstrates, these amusing, often hilarious phrases provide a unique perspective on how different cultures perceive and describe the world. Organized by theme—food, love, romance, and many more—they embody cultural traditions and attitudes, capture linguistic nuance, and shed fascinating light on "the whole ball of wax." For example, when English-speakers are hard at work, we're "nose to the grindstone," but industrious Chinese toil "with liver and brains spilled on the ground" and busy Indians have "no time to die."

If you're already fluent in 10 languages, you probably won't need this book, but you'll "get a kick out of it" anyhow; for the rest of us, it's a must. Either way, this surprising, often thought-provoking little tome is gift-friendly in appearance, a perfect impulse buy for word lovers, travelers, and anyone else who enjoys looking at life in a riotous, unusual way. And we're not hanging noodles from your ear.

I'm Not Hanging Noodles on Your Ears and Other Intriguing Idioms From Around the World Details

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Donalee says

A book for all linguists and general word freaks. It is my new favorite bathroom book, with Heidegger and a Hippo Walk Through Those Pearly Gates: Using Philosophy (and Jokes!) to Explore Life, Death, the Afterlife, and Everything in Between coming in a close second. If you really loved me, friends, you would not allow me into bookstores.

Mitch says

This light-hearted book is all about idioms, and I'm not hanging noodles on your ears, here. Idioms are colorful short collections of words that describe all sorts of things and are pretty universal, language-wise. An example: two people who cannot reconcile with one another 'cannot share the same sky' according to the Chinese.

Occasionally, idioms contain nuggets of wisdom, but always get you trying to figure out what they mean. The author, though given to pun abuse, introduces each chapter with some simplified scholarly work before laying out a fresh selection of idioms from around the world.

I'll leave you with one that impressed me. (No, not 'Never try to catch two frogs with one hand...') Try this instead: "The best time to plant a tree is twenty years ago, the second best is now."

Lindsay says

This is a fun, informal collection of idioms from a few different languages, including Russian, French, Spanish, Italian, Hindi, Chinese, Japanese, and German. I say informal because the author isn't any sort of linguistic expert, and he admits to not even being 100% sure as to the accuracy of all the idioms, or their rate of current usage and relevance. However, the book is very well organized, easy to read, and is a great source for a number of more "technical" books and articles about language and idioms. Bhalla admits that the book is more for entertainment than educational purposes (i.e., don't rely on it when really learning another language), and I think it lives up to this expectation just fine.

I must admit to being a little disappointed at first that the book isn't more technical, but I eventually got over it and came to appreciate it as a fun reference, perhaps one that I could take examples from the next time I teach English idioms. The only thing that consistently bothered me about the book was that sometimes I had a hard time following the organization of the start-of-chapter introductions. Different paragraphs don't always flow well from one to the next, and the author seems to ramble on sometimes before finally delving into the idioms themselves. Overall, it's certainly not the best thing I've ever read, but for a book comprised mostly of lists and intended for informal use, I can't complain too much.

Robin says

Jam-packed with the little culture-through-language oddities I love learning about. A little more commentary interspersed throughout would have been nice, because the plain list format can get too tedious to read. (But preferably of the more almost-clinical, detached but interesting curator type, because sometimes the author's book and chapter introductions, though enthusiastic, can get a little... bombastic?)

I like the themed chapters (colors, countries, etc.) but my beef with this is that idioms in the original language are not provided, just the English translations. It makes it hard to verify these with a native speaker. Still in the process of having the boyfriend confirm and translate the Chinese idioms, so I might actually be able to use them, and am tempted to have friends who major in German and French to look into theirs. Because though interesting to read about, if you try to use these idioms in their English versions, sometimes it doesn't translate back as clearly, and your attempt at showing off that you know these idioms just ends up with a confused local. (Of course, sometimes that's what people will do, they will unconsciously transliterate their local saying into English, and sometimes you get a vague sense of what they're trying to say.) So, original examples would have helped, but maybe that's a tall order. It **is** quite an expansive book already. Some of the idioms are repeated though, under different chapters.

If you just want a peek at how the rest of the world thinks (the English "when pigs fly" is "when crawfish sing on the mountains" or "when frogs grow hair" elsewhere), this is nice to flip through. I'd recommend this as a bathroom book.

Jeannie says

I absolutely loved the book "The Meaning of Tingo", and thought that this would be more of the same. Wrong! Jag Bhalla's twist is that, while he provides idioms and lingo from across the globe, it is all in English and none of the actual languages are represented. Sadly, this is a vital part of what makes texts such as "Tingo" so enjoyable; and without the actual foreign vocabulary, this just feels entirely pointless.

Ashley says

"I'm no expert in these languages, linguistics, etymology, or culture, but let me tell you about all of those things anyway, along with a lot of unrelated and minimally-cited facts." That's what I took away from the introduction and the chapter headings of this book. Fortunately, Bhalla is considerate enough to remind the reader that they're free to skip over it, instead reading only the listed idioms. As Bhalla's musings on culture were frequently inexplicable and only tangentially relevant, I found myself taking that advice and skimming through to the actual lists of idioms. Even then, the idioms repeat rather frequently, and all are presented without any context, etymology, or even the untranslated original phrase. This gives the curious reader no way to research a particularly intriguing idiom, and instead makes one rely on Bhalla's word alone.

Sara says

A fun, quick read. The title means "I'm not pulling your leg". It's a book of funny idioms from other languages that sound very odd to English speaking people. Of course, many of our own idioms don't make any sense either.

Next time I put on makeup, I'll remember to say I'm sugaring my waffle (French). Other fun phrases are "Look like the Mona Lisa after a spanking" which is Czech for being poorly dressed and "Smoke belches from the seven openings on the head" which is Chinese for being very angry.

The author's commentary at the beginning of each chapter was the best part. He has a good sense of humor. His rant about the excesses of modern capitalism was surprising but interesting.

Sarah Sammis says

I think I'm Not Hanging Noodles on Your Ears is the first book I've read after hearing about it via a twitter litchat. With being unemployed and having very little budget for books right now I didn't expect to read the book soon. My library though had a copy sitting on the new books shelf.

I like language books and was intrigued by the title. "I'm not hanging noodles on your ears" is the Russian equivalent of "I'm not pulling your leg." The title reminds me of how my grandmother would threaten to "hit us over the head with wet noodles" if we were telling tall tales.

The book is divided into topics and after an introduction at the start of each chapter (topic) the list of idiom begins. Each chapter has at least one comic illustration of an included idiom. It's fun to see how different countries approach the same topic. I enjoyed the ones from Spanish speaking countries best having run into a number of idioms while learning the language.

Sometimes though an idiom will be repeated two or more times in a few pages making for an on-going sense of deja vu while reading. The author explains at the start of the book that there is some duplication of idioms but I would have preferred greater care in minimizing the duplication.

Ronald Wise says

I began this book expecting to find idiomatic expressions translated from other languages, some of which would be amusing, and others which might reveal how other cultures perceive their worlds. Very few of those listed herein met either of those criteria. The categories seemed rather arbitrary, and by the time I finished the book, it seemed some of the same ones were reappearing repeatedly.

So the surprising parts of this book - and why I kept reading - were the essays introducing each chapter. They focused on such things as the evolution of the English language and recent cognitive-linguistic research and theories. Some of these essays hardly seemed related to the purported purpose of this book, but they were refreshing tangents.

As for the idioms themselves, a book listing them would appear to not be a sustainable approach to studying

them. Their number quickly surpassed my interest or ability to remember. They probably lose something in the translation and to be fully appreciated one would need to have at least a basic understanding of the source languages. Their study would therefore be more valuable as part of studying a specific language or culture.

The best find in this book was material taken from Ammon Shea's *Reading the OED*, of which author Jag Bhalla provided a sample list of useful English words which were no longer in current use. My favorites were "mythistory"•, "kakistocracy", and "criticaster". I verified them in the OED and have already used a couple of them. Now I will have to read Shea's book.

Ahmad Rajab says

As a part of our reading club plan we read and discussed this book. The theme of the month was (languages) so we chose this book. It has some good and interested chapters which i like. I didn't enjoy many of the other topics.

Kurt Pankau says

Man, this was hard to get through. I picked this up as research, and there are a lot of really useful nuggets in here, but it's confusingly laid-out, poorly formatted for an e-book, and badly needs editing. Sections are headed by paragraphs of editorializing that have less-and-less to do with the contents as the book progresses. And as the book progresses, the sheer volume of repeated expressions becomes more-and-more obvious. It gets so sloppy towards the end that one can't help thinking Bhalla never expected anyone to actually finish.

It might make for decent toilet-reading, but be aware that much of the prose is skimmable. I'd rate it even lower except that there were some genuinely good bits buried in here, and it turned out to be quite useful for my research purposes. It was just a lot of work to mine those nuggets out.

Anna says

This book and the topic - idioms in different languages - had such a great potential.
But it was just a potential.

What you get is only the English translation of the idioms (so how do you know the translators didn't suck or someone didn't pull their leg in translations?), and only from a handful of languages. If it had had the original expressions, it would have been much better. This would be my biggest complaint.

Many idioms were also repeated twice.

Most idioms (apart of Hindi and Chinese) were just from a handful of Western languages.

I can't remember any of the fanciest idioms any more (and I finished browsing the book yesterday), but I'm sure there were some.

My second biggest complaint would be that mostly any idiom was explained with another idiom in English. How is that helpful, unless the sole target audience for the book is those who are already familiar with idioms in English? Guess what? I suck in trying to understand idioms in most languages. I understand the

words, and they make no sense. So we had idioms only explained in English? Fine; let me give you some more examples that were not present in the book, and you tell me what they are supposed to mean. (* = I have no clue what it means either)

Learn a thing and put it aside. (Sicilian - at least this one is easy to understand right?)

Like a plucked chicken. (Finnish, as are the rest unless otherwise specified)

Like a greased lightning. (Swedish)

Likes like a crazy person [likes] porridge.

One digs a hole to every second person. *

Like a flea in tar.

Repair one's bones.

To pull logs.

Pick raisins from a sweet bread.

Butts over shoulders.

Mug sized (or mug-going?)

Like Isaac's church.*

Like syphilis from Töölö. *

Pour oil on waves. *

Wood hay.

In their heads.

Release a frog from one's mouth.

On top of a fike-net.

I hope those are enough to make my point understood. If you understood all the example phrases here, congratulations. I didn't. (And they would probably have been interesting enough to be included).

Jason says

Pretty interesting look at idioms around the world but full of strange rants and tangents often unrelated to the book's subject or even to the field of linguistics. At one point the author begins a chapter about numerical idioms with a long diatribe against capitalism and an exposé about how the work of economist Adam Smith has been taken out of context and misinterpreted. Fine. But I just wanted to read about some fun idioms and maybe discover some of their origins--by the way, there's virtually no etymology to be found here. Similarly, the author ends the book by pointing out the errors of The Enlightenment. What were those errors? Too rational. OK. Can we get back to some idioms. The Spanish and Italian ones seem particularly creative. The Japanese ones are inscrutable and possibly insane.

The book isn't all bad. The idioms are fun. There are some cool drawings. And the author's reference section at the end of the book would be a great place for anyone to start educating himself on popular linguistics. All the heavyweights are included.

Susan says

Funny, interesting, and punny, too! What does it say that a Spanish office worker is an "ink sucker", while a German one is an "ink pisser"? Along the way, Bhalla throws in a little psychology, a little political science, some linguistics, and a lot of humor.

Evelyn Porter says

To be read in small doses. A great book for world travelers and those interested in foreign languages. Fascinating look at how other cultures express themselves. The only negative is that the author sometimes gets mired in his own linguistic mud pit.
