

BUSINESS ENGLISH

Idiomatic phrases similar in Italian and English

di Tom Roper

As reported in some of our previous articles, we can see many idioms or **idiomatic phrases** that are used throughout the English language and these can sometimes be completely alien to a non native speaker, bearing almost no **resemblance** to their native translations. However, sometimes this doesn't always need to be the case, I think it's time for us to take a look at those idiomatic phrases that mean **exactly the same** in English as they do in Italian. This means you can literally **translate** them and they will have the same significance in both languages, in turn this allows you to sound that bit more fluent in both tongues!

1. **In the blink of an eye** (in un batter d'occhio)

If you do something **incredibly quickly**, or it happens very fast we can use this idiomatic phrase to underline the speed of it happening. Don't forget the difference between "**blink**" with two eyes and "**wink**" with one. "In the blink of an eye he had his wallet stolen".

2. **Strike while the iron is hot** (battere il ferro finché caldo)

We use this idiom in situations where **acting quickly** to take advantage of an opportunity is the best course of action. Using exactly the same phrasing and words as in Italian an example could be: "Now there is an irresistible discount so strike while the iron is hot".

3. **Seventh heaven** (settimo cielo)

When a situation is almost **perfect** for you and you feel so happy with it, we can say you are in seventh heaven. Whilst this is slightly different in the two languages, the concept is the same, taken from the ancient Mesopotamian concept of seven heavens, with the last the location of the highest form of heaven, or "sky" in the Sumerian language.

4. **To be in the same boat** (essere nella stessa barca)

If we find ourselves in an **identical situation** to the person we are speaking to, or if we can **sympathise** with someone because we are **experiencing the same thing**, we use this phrase to show our common issue: “unfortunately the company is firing everyone, so we are all in the same boat”.

5. **To be on the same page** (essere sulla stessa pagina)

This is very similar to the example before, however this changes slightly with the meaning that we have both **understood** in the same manner, so both parties have the same level of **understanding**.

6. **Speak of the Devil** (parlare del Diavolo)

The first part of this phrase is identical, the second part changes slightly in English, as no one is sprouting horns but in English, “speak of the Devil and he shall appear” would be the continuation and it gives a similar meaning. If you are **talking** about **someone** and they just happen to enter the room or begin to call your phone, you could use this phrase.

While these are only some of the shared idioms that we find in both Italian and English, it is genuinely curious to see that there is a **shared line** between the two **histories** and **cultures** that allows for not everything to be completely different. Sometimes it means that we can understand each other better and be able to **sympathise** and **empathise** more easily which in turn leads to better communication. Keep reading to find out more of these shared idioms and idiomatic phrases and don't forget to comment with your examples or times that you have experienced strange idiomatic phrases.

