Challenges and Strategies of Acquiring English Idioms for EFL Undergraduate Saudi Students

Nahla Nadeem[*]

King AbdulAziz University, Rabigh branch

Shahd Almowalad

King AbdulAziz University, Rabigh branch

Abstract

Learning idioms is one of the key areas in acquiring English language vocabulary and achieving language proficiency. In spite of their great importance in acquiring fluency, they are often neglected in the EFL classroom. Therefore, the aim of the present study is to investigate the challenges facing EFL Saudi students in learning English idioms and the effective strategies that they can utilize to understand idiomatic expressions. The subjects were 50 male and female Saudi EFL students at the Department of English enrolled in the first semester of the academic year 2022/2023 in King Abdulaziz University- Rabigh branch. The researcher prepared a questionnaire to identify the strategies employed by students to facilitate learning idioms and to explore the difficulties that they faced during their learning. The study findings showed that the participants had great difficulty in acquiring and understanding idioms. Moreover, study results also revealed that the most commonly used strategies were guessing the meaning of idiomatic expressions from the context, learning idioms outside the classroom, breaking them into parts to guess their meaning and translating them into the first language.

Keywords: idioms, figurative language, vocabulary learning strategies, Saudi EFL students

INTRODUCTION

Many linguists regard idioms as an important area of study. According to De Caro (2009), English will lose much of its diversity if idioms are not used. Idioms are an important part of English vocabulary and English idiomatic expressions must be mastered by EFL learners in order to achieve native-like proficiency (Nation & Meara, 2002). Many academics believe that mastering idioms is an indicator of proficiency for EFL/ESL students. Idioms cannot be avoided or postponed because they are an important part of figurative language, and their use by EFL learners can help them improve their communicative competence (Khan & Can Daşkin, 2014). Idioms are difficult to learn, so EFL teachers and students may avoid using them in their communication even though they are considered a high level of proficiency in English (Liu, 2008). According to Cooper (1999), EFL learners who avoid using idioms may sound unnatural and influent. There is no doubt that there needs to be more research in this area in order to improve our

understanding of the problems facing Saudi EFL learners in acquiring idioms. In fact, figurative language is frequently overlooked in vocabulary instruction despite its critical importance (Lazar, 1996). This is even more critical in areas where EFL learners had little to no exposure to the English language as in the case in Rabigh, KSA.

Figurative language, particularly idioms, receives very little attention in English classes at both the university and English language institutes level. Teaching English idioms is avoided in English classes because most EFL instructors lack sufficient knowledge of English idioms and do not understand the importance of idiomatic expressions in everyday communication. Therefore, the present study aims to explore the problems that Saudi EFL university learners experience in acquiring English idioms particularly in Rabigh, the sources of difficulties in learning them, and the strategies they use to acquire and comprehend them. Specifically, the present study aims to answer the following research questions:

1) What are the main challenges that Saudi EFL students face while learning English idioms?

2) What are the main strategies Saudi EFL students use to understand the meaning of idioms?

In the next section, I will review some of the recent studies on the difficulties facing Saudi EFL learners in acquiring, comprehending, and using English idioms.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Definition of idioms

There are multiple definitions of idioms and fixed expressions. Researchers in the field have attempted to define what constitutes an idiom, but due to the different theoretical classification criteria used in the definition, phraseologists are still unable to agree on a shared set of terms or clearly describe the entire process. The literature contains a wide variety of definitions of idioms. Larso (1984) defines an idiom as "a set of words whose meaning varies from that communicated by the individual words" (p. 20). According to Alexander (1987), idioms are "multi-word units that must be learned as a whole, along with associated sociolinguistic, cultural, and pragmatic rules of use" (p. 178). Richards and Schmidt (1990) defined an idiom as "an expression that functions as a single unit and whose meaning cannot be deduced from separate parts" (p. 246). According to Baker (1992), idioms are "frozen patterns of language that permit little or no variation in shape and, in the case of idioms, often convey meaning that cannot be deduced from their individual components" (p. 63). An idiom, according to Marlies (1995), is „"an expression whose overall figurative meaning cannot be derived from the meaning of its parts" (p. 283).

An idiom can also be defined as a fixed expression whose meaning cannot be derived from the meanings of its constituent parts. Thus, the phrase "kick the bucket" has nothing to do with kicking or buckets, but simply means "to die." Idioms, in other words, are not literal expressions (Ifill, 2002). This definition is similar to that of Moon (2006), who defined an idiom as a fixed sequence of words with meaning beyond the sum of their

constituent parts. Mitsis (2004) defines an idiom as a nonliteral expression that begins with usual collocations, continues with stable or fixed collocations and metaphorical collocations, and ends with idioms of absolute abstract meaning. Moreover, Idioms according to Al-Kadi (2015, p. 513), are expressions that cannot be literally translated because their meanings are unpredictable from the usual meaning of their constituents, particularly idioms with political, historical, or socio-cultural backgrounds. Although it is difficult to define idioms, one thing these definitions have in common is that the meaning of an idiom cannot be deduced from its constituent parts.

The significance of acquiring idioms

Idioms are a significant component of acquiring vocabulary in the ESL/EFL contexts. Thawabteh (2011) demonstrated that idioms are a universal aspect of all languages; they are regarded as an inherent part of human communication. Moreover, they befuddle novice learners to a large extent. They may cause non-native speakers not only linguistic but also cultural and technical difficulties. As a result, these difficulties may have a negative impact on communication. Studies have revealed that the correct and suitable use of idioms is a distinguishing feature of native-level command of the language and a trusted indicator of foreign learners' proficiency (see Cowie et al., 1983). Ignoring idioms can cause a variety of problems for a learner. Idioms are essential for effective communication in both academic and non-academic contexts. Idioms must be clearly explained in academic settings because failure to comprehend idioms may have an impact on academic performance, written composition, reading comprehension, and vocabulary, especially since the prevalence of idioms in classroom language increases as students advance in age and grade (see Dixon, 1994; Lundblom & Woods, 2012).

The first reason idioms are so important is that they are pervasive (Bortfeld, 2003). Native speakers frequently use idioms and find it difficult to speak or write without them (Seidl & McMordie, 1978). According to Dixon (1994), idioms are essential for effective communication, whether in listening, speaking, reading, or writing. "There are, in fact, no known languages that do not have some idioms," Makkai (1978, p.83). Since English idioms are commonly used in a variety of everyday situations, they must be included in the EFL curriculum (see Pollio et al., 1977). Another reason for the importance of idioms is that they indicate proficiency. Idiom knowledge is regarded as an important indicator of proficiency and intercultural consciousness (Boers, Eyckmans & Demecheleer, 2004; Celce-Murcia, 2008; Ellis, 1997). Non-natives who use formulaic language in spoken and written discourse are considered more competent (Boers, Eyckmans, Kappel, Stengers & Demecheleer, 2006; Ohlrogge, 2009). Idioms aid in expanding a learner's understanding of a language's culture and history. Language mastery is incomplete without a comprehension of the language culture which is revealed in its idiomatic expressions. Taking this into consideration, idioms are essential for mastery of a foreign or second language. This means that the more idioms one knows, the more natural sounding one's English becomes. Furthermore, by learning idioms, one learns about the culture of the community that speaks the language (Al-kadi, 2015).

Finally, idiomatic expressions reflect a figurative sense, which provides a unique influence or creative descriptions of how the world is perceived. These expressions are

significant because they lend a distinct flavor and color to language. Overall, using idioms is crucial for EFL/ESL learners, and incorporating idioms into second language learning is necessary (Foster, 2001; Howarth, 1998; Wray, 2002). Furthermore, students must be aware of the importance of learning idioms and recognize the need for idioms to be included in the language curricula.

The learning Strategies of acquiring idioms

Irujo (1986) presented various challenges and difficulties in appropriately learning idioms in a language-learning context. In general, students frequently do not know whether to consider the idiomatic or literal meaning of idioms in different contexts. This may be the case when idioms vary in their level of formality especially that most idioms have literal counterparts. For example, the lack of exact counterparts between Arabic and English presents a significant challenge for Arab EFL students; the idioms in Arabic and English vary. According to McPartland (2000), the simplest idioms to learn are those with exact counterparts in the learner's native language, and the most complex and challenging idioms to learn are those with no equivalent in L1 and whose meaning cannot be deduced from the combined meaning of their individual words. Saleh and Zakaria (2013) stated that one of the major challenges of L2 idiom learning is that idioms are frequently unpredictable in terms of meaning.

Researchers have different perspectives on how idioms are processed, preserved, and retrieved. Nelson (1992) contended that language learners directly access the figurative denotation of idioms whereas Liontas (2002) contended that language learners comprehend idiomatic expressions primarily by processing them literally and then recalling the figurative interpretation. This means that idioms must be processed literally before their figurative meanings can be accessed. Cooper (1999) studied the understanding strategies employed by L2 learners when attempting to decipher the meanings of English idioms in one- or two-sentence contexts. He maintained that guessing the meaning of idioms in context was by far the most commonly used strategy while other EFL students prefer to discuss and analyze idioms or simply use their literal meaning. According to Bulut and Yazici (2004), L2 learners depend heavily on the literal meaning transmitted in the context to assume what it means. Contextual clues can also help learners comprehend unfamiliar idioms. According to Palmer and Brooks (2004), the interpretation of figurative language is primarily related to the background knowledge that a learner uses to explain the expression from context. They stated that figurative language understanding is based on an individual learner's schemata; therefore, direct or explicit guidance is frequently required to provide the knowledge to comprehend not only the figurative language but also the context. Overall, the most effective strategy was guessing from context (Zyzik, 2009).

Many studies have been conducted to show the efficiency of mnemonic strategies. According to Clark and Paivio (1991), encouragement of "dual coding" is a mnemonic strategy with proven effectiveness. This strategy aid students in developing and processing lexical comprehension that includes both imagistic and symbolic/propositional elements. Many researchers, on the other hand, have investigated the role of L1 in L2 idiom processing. This strategy is a double-edged sword

as L2 learners who depend on their native language for L2 idiom processing may mistakenly understand and comprehend L2 idioms. This phenomenon has been dubbed the "interlingual factor" (see Cornell, 1999, p. 6). According to Irujo (1986), using L1 may help L2 learners understand L2 idioms that are similar or identical to L1 equivalents. Simultaneously, idioms with no similar or identical L1 equivalents pose difficulties for L2 learners.

Rohani et al. (2012) explored the effect of context on the EFL students' processing strategies while understanding idioms. The study included 70 intermediate English major students (16 males and 54 females) from Kerman's Shahid Bahonar University. The findings revealed that think-aloud was the most commonly used strategy by language learners to understand unfamiliar idioms. The results of the think-aloud process revealed a variety of strategies used by students to understand the meaning of new idioms, including referencing background knowledge, referencing context, translation, focusing on keywords, visualization, guessing, and paraphrasing. Another study, conducted by Saleh and Zakaria (2013), investigated the difficulties Libyan students faced when learning idioms, as well as the strategies they used to understand them. They explored the strategies students used to improve their understanding and use of idiomatic expressions. A questionnaire was used to collect information from 40 Libyan students majoring in various fields. The findings revealed that EFL students found it difficult to learn and comprehend idioms owing to the lack of cultural background behind them and less frequent exposure to them. Furthermore, the participants employed a variety of strategies to comprehend idioms. The most successful strategy was to guess from context and the second most successful strategy was to refer to an equal L1 idiom.

Smadi and Alrishan (2015) investigated Jordanian university EFL graduate students' strategies while translating English idioms into Arabic. They took a translation test that included 16 idioms from various categories. The study findings revealed that Jordanian EFL students use strategies such as paraphrasing, which was the most efficient strategy, followed by literal translation when translating idioms. Al-khawaldeh et al. (2016) investigated students' perceptions about learning idioms, their most frequently used idiom-learning strategies, and the difficulties they faced when trying to learn idioms. The sample consisted of one hundred and fifty undergraduate English language learners at Hashemite University in Jordan. The findings revealed that the participants did not know the significance of dealing with idioms. They also showed that the difficulties students faced in learning idioms were due to lack of exposure to idioms and a lack of cultural knowledge behind them. Furthermore, the students apply several strategies, with the most effective being the inference of meaning from context.

Similarly, Alhaysony (2017) studied the strategies Saudi learners utilized to understand English idioms and explored their difficulties in learning and understanding these idioms. A questionnaire and semi-structured interview were used to collect data from Eighty-five students majoring in English language at Aljouf University who participated in this study. The study findings revealed that students had great difficulty in understanding idioms. They also showed that the most frequently used strategies were guessing and predicting and identifying the meaning of idioms. Moreover, the results showed that the participants

faced some difficulties when learning English idioms. Orfan (2020) investigated students' attitudes toward the importance of learning idioms, difficulties encountered when learning idiomatic expressions, and strategies used to learn and understand them. This study included 337 students majoring in English language and literature. The findings revealed that students had a very positive attitude toward learning idioms. Their challenges stemmed from a lack of cultural knowledge, analogues for English idioms in their L1, and a lack of context. Furthermore, the results of the study revealed that the participants used a variety of strategies to understand idioms.

Finally, Ta'amneh (2021) conducted a study to explore lecturers' strategies while teaching and translating English idiomatic expressions in the EFL classroom. A questionnaire was used to collect data from one hundred and twenty-nine students enrolled in the second semester of the academic year 2020/2021. The results revealed that the participants had difficulty comprehending idioms. They also showed that the most frequently used strategies were guessing the meaning of idioms from the context, translating them into their first language, and looking up unknown idioms in the dictionary. So far, previous research has provided valuable information about the process of learning idioms by discussing new approaches and strategies. They also address the difficulties that learners face when learning idiomatic expressions. The current study examines the strategies and difficulties that EFL university students in Rabigh face when learning English idioms- an area that is often neglected in examining strategies of acquiring new vocabulary particularly idioms. It specifically explores the students' perspectives of the main challenges they face and the strategies they employ while learning English idioms.

METHODOLOGY

Participants

The participants of the study were 50 male & female EFL students who were majoring in English language and students in the language institute at King Abdulaziz University in Rabigh.

Instruments

The present study used an online questionnaire using google forms[1]. Students were asked to indicate their degree of agreement with each statement on a 5-point Likert scale (5= totally agree to 1= totally disagree). Some of the questionnaire items were adapted from previous questionnaires such as Alhaysony (2017), Al-kadi (2015), Al-Khwaldeh et al. (2016), Orfan (2020), Saleh & Zakaria (2013), Ta'amneh (2021). The survey included 10 statements within three sections as follows:

- **Section 1. General view:** The questionnaire began with a very general question regarding the perception of Saudi EFL learners regarding the learning of idioms.

---

[1]Here is the questionnaire link:
https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSf22fZuf71A3xhX34uZ5s1oEuDjH8cy6V_VG2N5e4A9buyARg/viewform

- **Section 2. Difficulties:** The section was used to discover the difficulties that students encountered while learning as illustrated in the literature. It included three statements describing three possible difficulties: differences in meaning between the idioms' components and its overall meaning, figurative meanings, and poor instruction in the classroom.

- **Section 3. Strategies:** The section was designed to identify the strategies used by EFL students to learn idiomatic expressions. There were six statements describing the following strategies: guessing from context, translating into L1, breaking them down into parts, using a variety of strategies, learning familiar idioms, and learning outside of the classroom.

Procedure

The questionnaire was designed using Google Forms (See Appendix 1). It was distributed to the students via a link on the department WhatsApp group. The questionnaire was available for a period of three weeks.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using SPSS software and the percentages obtained from Google forms. Negative statements of the survey (n=1) were transformed using the compute function in SPSS. A statistical analysis of the data was conducted using SPSS, which examined the frequency, percent, mean, and standard deviation in the data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The descriptive statistics of learners' views of EFL learners regarding the importance of learning of idioms are presented in Table 1.
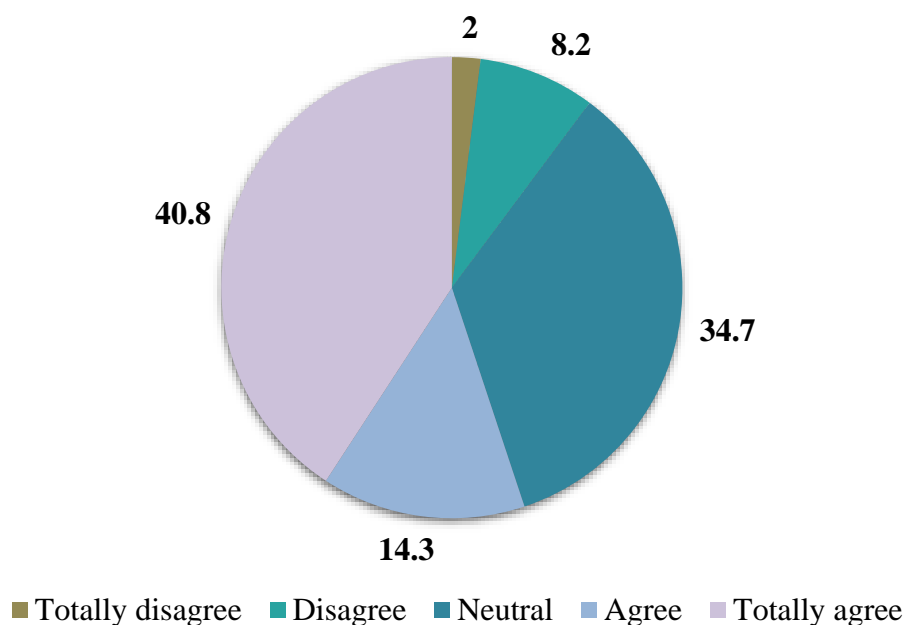

Figure 1. Learners views' regarding the importance of learning of idioms

Figure (1) shows the participants' awareness of the importance of learning idiomatic expressions. As shown in the figure (1), 55.1% of the students agreed and strongly agreed with the questionnaire statements which showed that idiom learning appeared to be a highly valued skill among the study participants. A comparison of the various difficulties and strategies for learning idioms is presented in the following sections to answer the research questions.

Results showing the difficulties facing the participants in learning idioms

Table (1) below shows the descriptive statistics of the percentages obtained from the respondents with regards the difficulties they face in learning idioms.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of the different difficulties

		Frequency (N=49)	Percent (%)	Mean	SD
Poor instruction in classroom	Totally disagree	4	8.2	3.04	1.24
	Disagree	15	30.6		
	Neutral	14	28.6		
	Agree	7	14.3		
	Totally agree	9	18.4		
Differences in meaning between components and overall meaning	Totally disagree	5	10.2	3.31	1.33
	Disagree	10	20.4		
	Neutral	11	22.4		
	Agree	11	22.4		
	Totally agree	12	24.5		
Figurative meanings	Totally disagree	2	4.1	3.86	1.17
	Disagree	3	6.1		
	Neutral	16	32.7		
	Agree	7	14.3		
	Totally agree	21	42.9		

As shown in Table 1, students found it difficult to comprehend and understand idiomatic expressions, with 57.2% agreeing and strongly agreeing that understanding English figurative expressions was a challenge. This indicates that the students do not have enough knowledge about English idiomatic expressions. This comes in line with Ta'amneh (2021) findings which showed that EFL students found learning idioms challenging. Another reason for the difficulty is the difference in meaning between individual words and the overall meaning, as reported by 46.9% of respondents. A third reason why idioms are difficult to learn is that they are not properly taught in the classroom. In this regard, 38.8% of participants disagreed and strongly disagreed with the first statement, whereas 32.7% agreed and strongly agreed. This is one of the statements that received a high level of disagreement. This indicates that students were not deprived of opportunities to learn idiomatic expressions properly in the classroom. The study results contradict with other researches' findings that idioms are difficult to learn because they are not taught well in the classroom (Alhaysony, 2017; Saleh & Zakaria, 2013; Ta'amneh, 2021).

Results showing the different strategies the participants used in learning idioms

The descriptive statistics of the percentages for the responses of the difficulties are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of the different strategies

		Frequency	Percent	Mean	SD
Guessing from context	Totally disagree	4	8.2	3.88	1.27
	Disagree	3	6.1		
	Neutral	9	18.4		
	Agree	12	24.5		
	Totally agree	21	42.9		
Breaking down into parts	Totally disagree	9	18.4	3.41	1.43
	Disagree	4	8.2		
	Neutral	6	12.2		
	Agree	18	36.7		
	Totally agree	12	24.5		
Translating into L1	Totally disagree	5	10.2	3.55	1.37
	Disagree	6	12.2		
	Neutral	13	26.5		
	Agree	7	14.3		
	Totally agree	18	36.7		
Learning outside the classroom	Totally disagree	1	2.0	3.96	1.14
	Disagree	5	10.2		
	Neutral	11	22.4		
	Agree	10	20.4		
	Totally agree	22	44.9		
Learning familiar idioms	Totally disagree	5	10.2	3.06	1.20
	Disagree	11	22.4		
	Neutral	16	32.7		
	Agree	10	20.4		
	Totally agree	7	14.3		
Using a variety of strategies	Totally disagree	5	10.2	3.51	1.39
	Disagree	8	16.3		
	Neutral	10	20.4		
	Agree	9	18.4		
	Totally agree	17	34.7		

Based on Table 2, guessing the meaning of idioms from context was the most commonly used strategy. This strategy received a high level of agreement, with 67.4% agreeing and strongly agreeing and 14.3% disagreeing. It is evident that the majority of students interpret idioms in terms of context. This result suggests that context plays a crucial role in understanding idiomatic expressions. This result supports other researchers' findings about the importance of including context when teaching and learning idioms (Alhaysony, 2017; Irujo, 1986; Saleh & Zakaria, 2013; Ta'amneh, 2021).

Learning idioms outside the classroom was the second most commonly used strategy, with 65.3% agreeing or strongly agreeing, and a few disagreeing (12.2%). This result is in line with the findings of Orfan (2020) who believed that because students use this

strategy, they encounter idiomatic expressions many times in various contexts, which results in them being retained in their long-term memory. However, it contradicts with other researches'findings such as Alhaysony (2017), Al-Khawaldeh et al. (2016) and Ta'amneh (2021). According to their findings it was the less commonly used strategy.

Breaking idioms into parts for a better understanding was the third most commonly used strategy with a percentage of agreement (61.2%) and disagreement (26.6%). In this case, the students try to determine the meaning of an idiom by breaking it down into its constituent parts and guessing the meaning of each component. Thus, this indicates that the students need to be instructed regarding the appropriate deconstruction and construction of idioms. This result corresponds with the findings of more recent studies; e.g., Alhaysony (2017), and Ta'amneh (2020).

Further, it was revealed by the students that they tend to use different strategies in order to process English idioms. With a percentage of 53.1% of respondents agreeing, and 26.5% disagreeing, this was the fourth highest statement in terms of agreement. The results indicate that different learners may use a variety of strategies when learning idioms. This result corresponds with other researchers' findings about the students tendency to use different strategies to process English idioms (see Alhaysony, 2017; Saleh & Zakaria, 2013).

The translation of idioms into Arabic to understand their meaning was the fifth most commonly used strategy with 51% agreeing while 22.4% disagreed. Students are dependent on their mother tongue in understanding English idioms. This shows that the students use translation to mother tongue as a strategy to know the meaning of idioms and they rely heavily on their first language to understand idioms because they do not have good knowledge of English vocabulary. This result also lends support to previous studies (see Alhaysony, 2017; Saleh & Zakaria, 2013; Ta'amneh, 2021).

Finally, the least frequently used strategy was avoiding learning unfamiliar idioms with 34.7% agreeing and 26.5% disagreeing. This indicates that idioms are difficult because they have unfamiliar words. This result is similar with the findings of (Alhaysony, 2017; Al-Kadi, 2015; Orfan, 2020; Saleh & Zakaria, 2013).

Summary of the Findings

The findings of this study showed that idioms were difficult due to a number of factors that started from understanding English figurative expressions and ending with the complex process of interpreting idioms. Additionally, differences in meaning between components and overall meaning was one of the factors that affect students' understanding of the idioms. The participants also used various strategies while processing Idioms. The most successful strategies were guessing the meaning from the context as well as Learning idioms outside the classroom, and breaking idioms into parts and guessing the meaning of each component.

CONCLUSION, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The present study examined the difficulties that Saudi university EFL students face when using and understanding English idiomatic expressions as well as the strategies they

employ to identify the meaning of such expressions. Although the study included a relatively small sample, the study findings revealed key tendencies in acquiring English idioms. To illustrate, the findings revealed that the majority of students have difficulties when learning and understanding idioms. The study also shed light on different reasons behind the difficulty of learning idioms. For example, understanding English figurative expressions, meaning of individual words are different from the total expression.

Based on the results, there are many pedagogical recommendations. First of all, instructors should pay special attention to teaching vocabulary strategies and idiomatic expressions in the English classroom. Moreover, curriculum designers should incorporate idiomatic expressions and effective strategies for acquiring idioms into various EFL courses. The results also illustrated the most frequently used strategies among Saudi EFL students; for example, guessing the meaning of idiomatic expressions from the context, learning idioms outside the classroom, breaking them into parts to guess their meaning and translating them to the first language. This indicates that the students employ a variety of strategies to improve their learning and overcome various difficulties. Since these strategies proved to be effective, they should be used in the English classroom in the same order of significance from more commonly used strategy to least used strategies.

REFERENCES

Alexander, R. (1987). Problems in understanding and teaching idiomaticity in English. *Anglistik and Eneglichunterricht*, 32(2), 105-122.

Alhaysony, M. H. (2017). Strategies and Difficulties of Understanding English Idioms: A case study of Saudi University EFL Students. *International Journal of English Linguistics*, 7(3), 70–84.

Al-Kadi, A. (2015). Towards idiomatic competence of Yemeni EFL undergraduates. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 6(3), 513-523. https://doi.org/10.17507/jltr.0603.06

Al-Khawaldeh, N., Jaradat, A., Al-Momani, H., & Bani-Khair, B. (2016). Figurative idiomatic language: Strategies and difficulties of understanding English idioms. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics and English Literature*, *5*(6), 119-133.

Baker, M. (2018). *In other words: A coursebook on translation*. Routledge.

Boers, F., Demecheleer, M., & Eyckmans, J. (2004). Cross-cultural variation as a variable in comprehending and remembering figurative idioms. *European Journal of English Studies*, *8*(3), 375-388.

Boers, F., Eyckmans, J., Kappel, J., Stengers, H., & Demecheleer, M. (2006). Formulaic sequences and perceived oral proficiency: Putting a lexical approach to the test. *Language teaching research*, *10*(3), 245-261.

Bortfeld, H. (2003). Comprehending idioms cross-linguistically. *Experimental psychology*, *50*(3), 217-230.

Bulut, T., & Yazici, I. (2004). Idiom processing in L2: through rose-colored glasses. *The Reading Matrix, 4*(2), 105-116.

Celce-Murcia, M. (2008). Rethinking the role of communicative competence in language teaching. In *Intercultural language use and language learning* (pp. 41-57). Springer, Dordrecht.

Clark, J. M., & Paivio, A. (1991). Dual coding theory and education. *Educational psychology review*, *3*(3), 149-210.

Cooper, T. C. (1999). Processing of idioms by L2 learners of English. *TESOL quarterly*, *33*(2), 233-262.

Cornell, A. (1999). Idioms: an approach to identifying major pitfalls for learners.

Cowie, A. P., Mackin, R., & McCaig, I. R. (1983). Oxford Dictionary of Current Idiomatic English Volume 2: Phrase, Clause & Sentence, Idioms.

De Caro, E. E. R. (2009). The advantages and importance of learning and using idioms in English. *Cuadernos de Lingüística Hispánica*, (14), 121-136.

Ellis, R. (1997). *SLA research and language teaching*. Oxford University Press, 198 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016-4314.

Howarth, P. (1998). Phraseology and second language proficiency. *Applied linguistics*, *19*(1), 24-44.

Ifill, T. (2002). Seeking the Nature of Idioms: A Study in Idiomatic Structure. Haverford College.

Irujo, S. (1986). A piece of cake: learning and teaching idioms. *ELT journal*, *40*(3), 236-242.

Irujo, S. (1986). Don't put your leg in your mouth: Transfer in the acquisition of idioms in a second language. *TESOL Quarterly*, 20(2), 287-304.

Khan, Ö., & Can Daskin, N. (2014). " You Reap What You Sow" Idioms in Materials Designed by EFL Teacher-Trainees. *Novitas-ROYAL (Research on Youth and Language)*, *8*(2), 97-118.

Kövecses, Z. & Szabo, P. (1996). Idioms: A view from cognitive linguistics. *Applied Linguistics*, 17(3), 326-355.

Larson, M. (1984). Meaning-Based Translation: A Guide to Cross-Language Equivalence. Lanham. *MD. New York and London: University Press of America*.

Lazar, G. (1996). Using figurative language to expand students' vocabulary. *ELT journal*, *50*(1), 43-51.

Littlemore, J., & Low, G. (2006). Metaphoric competence, second language learning, and communicative language ability. *Applied linguistics*, *27*(2), 268-294.

Liontas, J. (2002). Exploring second language learners' notions of idiomaticity. *System*, *30*(3), 289-313.

Liu, D. (2008). Idioms. *Description, Comprehension, Acquisition, and Pedagogy. New York & London: Routledge*.

Lundblom, E. E., & Woods, J. J. (2012). Working in the classroom: Improving idiom comprehension through classwide peer tutoring. *Communication Disorders Quarterly*, *33*(4), 202-219.

McPartland, P. (2000). *Take it easy: American idioms* (2nd ed.). White Plains, NY: Longman-Pearson Education.

Mitsis, N. (2004). Language teaching through the communication approach. *Athens: Gutenberg.*

Moon, R. (2006). Vocabulary connections: Multi-word items in English. In N. Schmitt & M. McCarthy (Eds.), *Vocabulary: Description, Acquisition and Pedagogy* (pp. 40-63). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Nation, P. & Meara, P. (2002). Vocabulary. In N. Schmitt (Ed.), *An introduction to applied linguistics* (pp. 35– 54). London, England: Edward Arnold.

Nattinger, J. R., & DeCarrico, J. S. (1992). *Lexical phrases and language teaching*. Oxford University Press.

Nelson, E. (1992). Memory for metaphor by nonfluent bilinguals. *Journal of Psycholinguistic Research*, *21*(2), 111-125.

Orfan, S. (2020). Afghan EFL Students' Difficulties and Strategies in Learning and Understanding English Idioms. *Cogent Arts and Humanities*, 7(1), 1-13.

Ortega, B. A. (2004). Wray, Alison (2002): Formulaic Language And The Lexicón. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 332 Págs. *ELUA: Estudios de Lingüística. Universidad de Alicante*, (18), 349.

Palmer, B., & Brooks, M. (2004). Reading until the cows come home: Figurative language and reading comprehension. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, *47*(5), 370-379.

Pollio, H. R., Barlow, J. M., Fine, H., & Pollio, M. R. (1977). *Psychology and the poetics of growth: Figurative language in psychology, psychotherapy, and education*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Richards, J., & Schmidt, R. (1990). Longman dictionary of language teaching and applied linguistics.

Rohani, G., Ketabi, S., & Tavakoli, M. (2012). The Effect of Context on the EFL Learners' Idiom Processing Strategies. *English Language Teaching*, *5*(9), 104-114.

Saleh, N., & Zakaria, N. (2013). Investigating the difficulties faced in understanding, and strategies used in processing, English idioms by the Libyan students. *International Journal of English Language and Translation Studies*, *1*(2), 69-90.

Seidl, J., & Mordie, M. (1978). *English Idioms and How to Use Them*. Oxford University Press.

Smadi, O., & Alrishan, A. (2015). Strategies used by Jordanian EFL university graduate students in translating idioms into Arabic. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 6(6), 45-55.

Ta'amneh, M. A. A. A. (2021). Strategies and Difficulties of Learning English Idioms Among University Students. *Strategies*, *12*(23).

Thawabteh, M. (2011). Linguistic, cultural and technical problems in English-Arabic subtitling. *SKASE journal of translation and interpretation*, *5*(1), 24-44.

APPENDIX 1: SURVEY STATEMENTS

1.   Learning idioms is very important for EFL students.

Totally disagree □ Disagree □ Neutral □ Agree □ Totally agree

2. Idioms are difficult to learn because they are not well taught in the classroom.

Totally disagree □ Disagree □ Neutral □ Agree □ Totally agree

3. Idioms are difficult because the meaning of the individual words are different from the total meaning of expression.

Totally disagree □ Disagree □ Neutral □ Agree □ Totally agree

4. It is difficult to understand English figurative expressions.

Totally disagree □ Disagree □ Neutral □ Agree □ Totally agree

5. I guess idioms meaning from the context.

Totally disagree □ Disagree □ Neutral □ Agree □ Totally agree

6. I don't learn unfamiliar idioms.

Totally disagree □ Disagree □ Neutral □ Agree □ Totally agree

7. I break idioms down into parts to figure out what they mean.

Totally disagree □ Disagree □ Neutral □ Agree □ Totally agree

 8. To understand the meanings of idioms, I translate them into Arabic.

Totally disagree □ Disagree □ Neutral □ Agree □ Totally agree

9. I usually learn idioms outside the classroom.

Totally disagree □ Disagree □ Neutral □ Agree □ Totally agree

10. I use many different strategies when learning idioms.

Totally disagree □ Disagree □ Neutral □ Agree □ Totally agree