

*Republic of Iraq
Ministry of Higher Education
and scientific research
University of Samarra
College of education*



SURRA MAN RA'A

Scientific Refereed Journal

Issued by
college of Education
University of Samarra

Vol. 18. /No. 72. 17th Year.
March / 2022 A.D/ Dhul Qi'dah 1443 AH

Deposit number in Iraqi national library and archives
Baghdad, 2341 - year 2019
ISSN 1813 - 1735



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International code: ISSN 1813 – 1735

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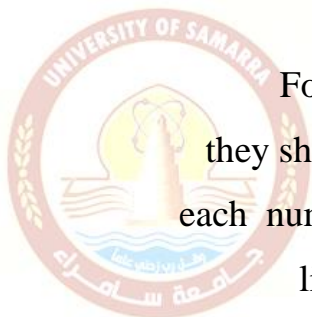
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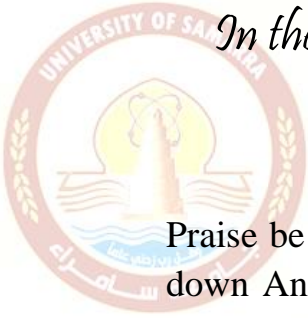
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In the name of Allah the Most Merciful and Compassionate

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Praise be to Allah, who has honored us with Quran, a book that He sent down And we are honored by the best of the Prophet sent by him, may prayers and peace be upon our master Muhammad and all his family and companions.

In a time when adherence to constants of all kinds became rare, and clinging to values became scarce

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Allah grants success.


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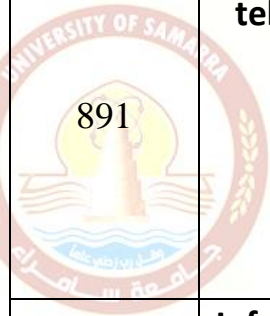
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Investigate the difficulties of the Iraqi efl learners in understanding the figurative meaning of English idiomatic expressions

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Abstract

Idiomatic expressions are essential for making progress in language learning. This study attempts to investigate Iraqi EFL learners' difficulties in understanding the figurative meaning of English idioms. The sample of the study is about 27 5th grade students in a secondary school are selected to participate in this study based on a convenience method. In this study, qualitative research methods such as focus group interviews, students' learning diaries, and classroom observation are used to find out what difficulties that students face in understanding the figurative meaning of English idioms. The results show that learning idioms are a difficult task for students, many of the students have difficulties in understanding the figurative meaning of idioms. In addition, the results show that there are many factors affect the lack of figurative meaning of idioms. This study will provide important pedagogical recommendations to improve students' knowledge of the figurative meaning of idioms.

Keywords: Difficulties, figurative meaning, idioms, Iraqi EFL secondary school learners.

تحري صعوبات الطلبة العراقيين الدارسين اللغة الإنجليزية كلفة أجنبية في فهم المعنى المجازي للتعبيرات الاصطلاحية الإنجليزية

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ملخص البحث:

تعد التعبيرات الاصطلاحية من اساسيات التقدم في تعلم أي لغة. تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى كشف الصعوبات التي يواجهها دارسوا اللغة الإنجليزية بوصفها لغة أجنبية في فهم المعنى المجازي للتعبير الاصطلاحية الإنجليزية. تتكون عينة الدراسة من ٢٧ طالبًا من طلبة الصف الخامس الثانوي. استخدمت الدراسة طرائق بحث نوعية مثل المقابلات الجماعية ومذكرات الطلاب والملاحظة الصفية لمعرفة الصعوبات التي يواجهها هؤلاء المتعلمون في فهم المعنى المجازي للتعبير الإنجليزية. تكشف النتائج ان تعلم المصطلحات يعتبر مهمة شاقة على الطلبة، وان كثير منهم يعانون من صعوبة فهم المعنى المجازي للتعبير الاصطلاحية. اضافة على ذلك، اوضحت النتائج أن هناك عدة عوامل أثرت على افتقارهم إلى المعنى المجازي للمصطلحات. ستقدم هذه الدراسة توصيات تربوية مهمة لتعزيز معرفة المتعلمين بالمعنى المجازي للتعبير الاصطلاحية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الصعوبات، المعنى المجازي، المصطلحات، طلبة المدرسة الثانوية للغة الإنجليزية كلفة أجنبية



1.1 Introduction

Idioms are a very important part of the English language. You can see and hear idioms in all kinds of speaking and writing. People use idioms in order to make their language richer and more colorful and to convey subtle shades of meaning or intention. (Gail Brenner, 2003). An idiom is considered as a type of formulaic language that cannot be understood literally as individual words. O'Dell and McCarthy (2010) present many types of formulaic expressions: greetings and good wishes, e.g., see you soon; prepositional phrases, e.g., in a hurry; proverbs, sayings, and quotations, e.g., do not put all your eggs in one basket; compounds, e.g., car park; phrasal verbs, e.g., look after; and collocations, e.g., blond hair and idioms, e.g., I put my foot in it. In another classification of formulaic expressions, Howarth (1998) presents several types of expressions: free combinations (e.g., an interesting question), restricted collocations (e.g., a thorny question) and idioms. Accordingly, the researcher presents a close attention to the types of idioms by dividing them into two types: figurative idioms (non-literal meaning such as blow your own trumpet) and pure idioms such as opaque, e.g. blow the gaff. Therefore, this study focuses on idioms and pays most attention to figurative idioms (e.g., do a U-turn, to be on the same page).

"Idioms, as shown previously, are a special kind of multi-word units that have at least one element with a figurative (i.e. non-literal) meaning and where there is a fairly clear relationship between the figurative and literal meanings" (Zyzik, 2009:1). In another definition, Nordquist (2019) and Aboulalaei (2015) define an idiom as a set of two or more words that mean something other than the literal meaning of the individual words. Similarly, idioms are defined as "fixed combinations of words whose meanings are often difficult to infer from the meaning of each word", e.g. "to hit the roof" used to mean to "react in a very angry way" (O'Dell and McCarthy

(2017: 6). Moon (2017) defines idioms as very complex multi-word terms that have a holistic meaning that is not the sum of their parts. In this case, these definitions suggest that idiomatic expressions are often used to give a non-literal meaning to a word that can express complex ideas based on everyday things in a simple way (e.g., Ahmed and I don't see eye to eye), [meaning they disagree with each other]. In the broadest sense, idiomatic expressions have a figurative rather than a literal meaning, and they are often used to have a metaphorical meaning to replace a literal meaning. Thus, an idiom is defined as "a string of words whose meaning is different from the meaning conveyed by the individual words" (Larson (1984: 20). Therefore, idioms can be used to cover different figurative ideas. According to the Oxford dictionary, the idiom of "Do not cry over spilt milk" means that (do not cry over spilt milk) and it means that it is not useful to regret or commiserate over something that has already happened. Another example is "money does not grow on trees" to emphasize that money is not so easy to be obtained. O'Dell and McCarthy (2010) also mention that idioms can be used for many purposes, such as "sank like a stone" to emphasize that something has completely failed, "pricked up one's ears" to express agreement with the previous speaker, "gone up in the world" to comment on people, "knock something into shape" to comment on a situation, and "debt of honor" to attract the reader's attention.

As the previous definitions and illustrated examples have shown, understanding the figurative meaning of idioms is a complex and arduous task, and idioms are not always literal. Therefore, learners need to find out the non-literal meaning of idioms. From the semantic point of view, this study adopts the definition of the word 'idiom', which represents idioms in complex ideas based on everyday things to cover various figurative meanings in a simple way (e.g. to have your feet on the ground [means to be practical and sensible]. According to Brenner (2003), idiomatic expressions have a more precise meaning than the literal meaning of words. For



example, the expression that it runs in the family is shorter and more concise than saying that a physical trait or personality trait is "fairly common throughout the extended family and across several generations." In a narrow sense, this study considers Zyzik's (2009) and Moon's (2017) definition of idioms which represent idioms as multi-word items.

1.2 The Problem of the Study

"Idioms always cause a lot of problems to learners of a foreign language. Students usually find difficulties in recognizing an expression as idiomatic, and then understanding its exact meaning. This is mainly due to the fact that idiomatic expressions carry a metaphorical sense that makes the comprehension of an idiom difficult if not impossible" (Abdulhussein 2021: 1111). The main problem of this study that students have a confusion because they are not always aware of the figurative meaning of the expressions and the students do not know about the importance of teaching and learning idioms. The researches hypothesis that students and teachers feel that learning and teaching idioms are not important at the secondary school level. As a result, little attention has been paid to the teaching and learning of idioms in secondary schools in Iraq (Yousif, 2012). In particular, the use of figurative expressions seems to be neglected in Iraqi secondary school education. Accordingly, figurative meanings of idioms are considered the most difficult aspect of vocabulary learning for non-native speakers of English. Figurative language such as idioms is considered more complex and derivative than seemingly simple literal language (Glucksberg, 2001). Therefore, "multi-word idioms are typically presented as a problem in teaching and learning a foreign language. This problem is attributed to non-compositionality, whether syntactic, semantic or pragmatic in nature, means they must be recognized, learned, decoded and encoded as holistic units" (Moon, 1997 :47). Accordingly, the learners observe to be lacking of the

capability of using idioms in their daily conversations. Many researchers reveal that EFL learners are not confident in their comprehension and use of idiomatic expressions (Lazar, 1996; Moon, 1997; Tran, 2013; Vasiljevic, 2015).

As for the Iraqi context, it is known that idioms are considered one of the biggest challenges for EFL Iraqi learners (Joodi, 2012; Abdulhussein, 2021; Yousif, 2012; Abdul-Majeed & Sallumi, 2014; Dalaf, 2020; Al-Rekaby, 2008; Ali, 2011; Abdulhsadi, 2014). For example, Joodi (2012) mentions that learning idioms have always been very difficult for EFL students. Dalaf (2020) mentions that learning idioms are a complex area that requires a higher understanding of figurative meanings and may be cause some difficulties for learners. The researcher found that Iraqi EFL students have serious difficulties in understanding the figurative meanings of idioms. They sound unnatural in their spoken and written language because there is usually not much emphasis on idiomatic expressions in classroom teaching and learning. Lazar (1996:3) states that figurative language is an often neglected area in teaching vocabulary. Moon (1998) describes that "idiom is an ambiguous term used in conflicting ways". Idioms are described as "the idiosyncrasies of a language, they often defy the rules of logic and present great difficulties to non-native speakers" (The American Heritage Dictionary of Idioms, 2013). According to Abdulla (2006), it is very difficult to understand and use idiomatic expressions that have a figurative meaning. Considering this problem and besides the limited qualitative research on the idiomatic difficulties of an Iraqi EFL learner, the present study aims to fill the research gap.

To overcome the problem of this study, this paper attempts to investigate the difficulties of EFL learners have in understanding the figurative meaning of idioms and to explore the sources of the difficulties in order to find possible solutions to the current research problem. The expected results may provide learners with suggestions that could help them overcome their difficulties in learning idioms.



1.3 Related Research

Numerous studies have been conducted to explore the challenges that EFL learners face in learning English idioms (Al-Khawaldeh, Jaradat, Al-Momani, & Bani-Khair, 2016; Hussein, Khanji, & Makhzoomy, 2000; Noor & Fallatah, 2010; Abdulhussein, 2021; Yousif, 2012; Ali, 2011; Ali, 2020; Dalaf, 2020). They showed that learners whose native language is not English (non-native speakers) have serious difficulties in understanding the figurative meaning of idiomatic expressions. These studies showed that EFL learners have very low idiomatic competence and very limited awareness of idioms. For example, in the Jordanian context, Al-Khawaldeh, Jaradat, Al-Momani, & Bani-Khair (2016) investigated the difficulties of Jordanian EFL students in learning idioms. The results showed that 70% of the students found that English idiomatic expressions were very difficult to learn. In particular, the results showed that these students have very low idiomatic competence and do not know the most commonly used idioms. In the same Jordanian context, Hussein, Khanji & Makhzoomy (2000) investigated the extent to which English idioms were mastered by MA students majoring in English who enrolled in the translation programme at Yarmouk University. Unlike the similar idioms, it was found that a high percentage of the students were unable to correctly answer the different idioms between English and Arabic. In general, these students showed low proficiency in using idioms, especially those that are different from Arabic. Similarly, in the Omani context, Ali (2016) investigated the difficulties encountered by Omani students majoring in English Language Teaching and Literature. The results show that the main difficulty in producing the meaning of English idioms is not due to the lack of equivalence, but to the linguistic ability that enables students to find an appropriate equivalent.

Similar results are found in the Saudi context, Alhaysony (2017) investigated the difficulties in understanding idiomatic expressions encountered by EFL Saudi

university students majoring in English at Aljouf University. The results showed that all students seem to have difficulty in understanding the figurative meaning of idiomatic expressions. This difficulty can be attributed to the fact that idioms are arbitrary and not literal. Furthermore, the researcher attributed this difficulty to the fact that idioms may be neglected and are not part of the course syllabi. It is expected that the results of the current study are very similar to the results of Alhaysonys. This result is not consistent with Noor & Fallatah's (2010) study, which investigated the ability of 60 Saudi English major students to recognise and understand pure English idioms in contexts. In contrast to Alhaysony's finding, the result showed that most of these students recognised and understood idioms in context.

The above findings (excluded Noor & Fallatah excluded) indicate that idioms are a major challenge for EFL Arabic learners. Moreover, these studies focused on the university student level and neglected to focus on the secondary school level. Furthermore, most of these studies are conducted quantitatively and neglected the deeper qualitative research. In the Iraqi context, researcher has also shown that few studies on idioms focus on secondary school students. Most research focuses on the university student level. Therefore, the current study will focus on investigating the difficulties of secondary school students by using purely qualitative research methods, as there is not much research in this regard.

As for the Iraqi context, the research revealed that idiomatic expressions often cause great difficulties to Iraqi students and teachers. For example, Abdulhussein (2021) found that Iraqi EFL students encounter difficulties in translating idioms from English to Arabic and vice versa. However, he found that transparent idioms (the relationship between the figurative and literal meanings) are easily understood based on their literal meanings. In particular, the highest score was recorded in the results of EFL Iraqi students due to their simple structure and a high degree of closeness between their literal and figurative meanings. This result is consistent with that of



Hussein, Khanji & Makhzoomy (2000) who found that MA. Students enrolled in a translation programme at Yarmouk University in Jordan scored highest on identical English and Arabic idioms (e.g., 84% for the idiom "to stand between two fires" and 36% for the idiom "to take up arms"). Similarly, Yousif (2012) tested the performance of Iraqi EFL students at the Department of English, University of Mosul, in using idioms. The results showed that the students' proficiency was lower on idioms that they were not familiar with or that had no equivalent in their native language. On the other hand, their competence was much better with equivalent idioms. These results might suggest that great attention should be paid to the teaching of transparent idioms.

As for idiomatic errors in the Iraqi context, Ali (2011) investigated the errors of EFL students make on idioms in the Department of English, College of Education, University of Tikrit. The results showed that the mastery of English idioms among these students is poor and unsatisfactory. In another study, Dalaf (2020) investigated the level of mastery and awareness of idioms among EFL English students at Al-Mustansiryiah University, College of Basic Education. The results showed that students had difficulty in determining the figurative meanings of idioms when they occurred both alone and in context. In other words, they were unable to form correct sentences using the idioms. Recently, Ali (2020) investigated the difficulties of EFL university students in learning the communicative force of idioms in relation to colour idioms. The results showed that these students made a lot of mistakes because they are not familiar with such colour idioms.

It is no surprise that these results show that many Iraqi learners have problems with idiom learning. These studies have shown that the lack of functional meaning of idioms is one of the biggest challenges for Iraqi EFL learners. Therefore, this study attempts to shed light on one of the problematic issues that EFL learners suffer from

or struggle within their learning. This study aims to help learners understand their difficulties in learning idioms.

1.4 The Aim of the Study

The study aims to investigate the difficulties of Iraqi EFL learners in understanding the figurative meaning of English idioms and to determine the causes (source) of these EFL learners' difficulties in learning idioms.

1.5 Research Questions

What difficulties do Iraqi EFL secondary school students encounter in understanding the figurative meaning of English idioms?

What are the sources of these students' difficulties in understanding the figurative meaning of English idioms?

1.6 Participants of the Study

Twenty-seven Iraqi EFL 5th grade students (male and female) from an Iraqi secondary school in Malaysia are selected based on a convenience method to participate in this study in the academic year 2015 – 2016. They are native speakers of Arabic who study English as a foreign language. The rationale for selecting this sample is based on Webb (2007:133) who stated, "As more and more words are learned at the early ages of learners, a cumulative increase in vocabulary knowledge can facilitate vocabulary acquisition and make future vocabulary learning less difficult."

1.7 Methodology

1.7.1 Material and Procedure

Since English idioms are considered as an important part of every day English, the study focuses on idiomatic expressions that are commonly used in daily life and academic situations. In the study, a qualitative research method is used to find out the difficulties of learners in understanding the figurative meaning of English idioms. These methods used to investigate the difficulties and the sources of these



learners' difficulties. With the aim of this study, students' learning diaries, focus group interviews, and classroom observation that are used in this study to investigate learners' difficulties with everyday and academic-related idioms. To assist learners, the more complex uses of idioms excluded from this study. To allow learners to write about their difficulties with learning idioms, a learning diaries are used. Similarly, a focus group interview is used to allow learners to talk about their difficulties in learning idioms. In addition, a classroom observation is conducted based on Fink's (2003) model, which is based on three components: Learner and teacher knowledge of subject matter (e.g., knowledge of the figurative meaning of idioms), teacher-student interactions (e.g., interactions in teaching and learning idioms), instructional design (e.g., instructions for teaching and learning idioms), and course management (e.g., organization of materials). The data obtained from these three instruments are analyzed using thematic analysis based on Creswell's (2012:244) model. This model involves five steps of checklist coding process as shown below.

Initially read text data in to many pages of text

Divide the text into many segments of information

Label the segments of information with codes

Reduce overlap and redundancy of codes

Collapse codes into themes

1.8 Results and Discussion

The subjects' responses to the qualitative research methods were analyzed to answer research questions (1) and (2). The results show that learners are confused in using idioms and have problems in understanding the figurative meaning of idiomatic expressions. More specifically, these learners reported their difficulties in understanding the figurative meaning of idioms as follows:

Int. p (2):

"ما استخدمنا طريقة تدريس فعالة نكدر نتعلم بيها المصطلحات بسهولة، اكثر شي علمونا (مدرسينا) نحفظ قوائم من الكلمات ومعانيها بالعربي وهاي طريقة مو زينة (غير مفيدة) حسب ما اشوفها".

Translation:

(We did not use an effective teaching method to learn idioms easily. Our teachers taught us how to memorize lists of words and their meanings in Arabic. This method is not useful in my opinion).

Int. p (1):

"اني اعرف (افهم) عندي مشكلة بتعلم المصطلحات احتاج اتخطاها بس ما اعرف شلون اكرر اتخطاها، مشكلتنا ما نعرف شون نستخدم المصطلحات، يعني: ما تعلمنا طريقة نستخدمها حتى تفيدنا نتعامل وي المصطلحات بطريقة ناجحة".

Translation:

(I understand that I have a problem in learning idioms that I need to solve, but I do not know how to overcome it. Our problem is that we do not know how to use the idiomatic expressions. I mean, we have not learned any particular method for successfully dealing with these idioms).

Int. P. (4):

"صعب كلش اعرف معنى المصطلح واعتقد السبب هو اهتمام قليل بتدريس المصطلحات بمرحلتنا الدراسية من قبل المدرسين اضافة ما استخدمنا قواميس حتى نتعلم المصطلحات".

Translation:

(It is very difficult to know the meaning of an idiom and I think the reason is that there is little interest in teaching idioms in our level of study by English teachers. In addition, we did not use dictionaries to learn idioms).



Int. P. (8):

"صعب نفهم المصطلحات لان معانيها مو حرفية واحنة كل تركيزنا على الترجمة والمعاني الحرفية للكلمات، يعني: الكلمة ومعناها ، اضافة الى ذلك اختلاف الثقافة بين العربي والانكليزي خلانا نواجه صعوبة في فهم معنى المصطلحات والدليل مثل المصطلح "break one's leg" ما كدرنا نفهمه بسبب اختلاف الثقافه بين اللغة العربية والانكليزية".

Translation:

(It is difficult to understand idioms because their meanings are not literal and we focus on the translation and literal meaning of the words, that is, the word and its meaning. In addition, the cultural differences between the Arabic and English languages made it difficult for us to understand the idiomatic meaning. This was evident in the idiom "to break one's leg.", we cannot understand it because of the cultural differences between the Arabic and English languages).

LD. P. (8):

"احنه نواجه صعوبات كون اللغة الانكليزية واللغة العربية مختلفات من حيث .عامل اختلاف الثقافة يعتبر سبب رئيسي لصعوبة فهم معاني المصطلحات. مثلا من الصعب جدا نجد مثل او ترجمة مطابقة للمصطلحات الانكليزية باللغة العربية".

Translation:

(We have difficulties because the English language and the Arabic language are culturally different, The factor of cultural differences is a major reason for our difficulty in understanding the meaning of idioms, for example, it is very difficult to find a similar or an identical translation of the English idioms in the Arabic language).

LD. P. (17):

"أكبر مشكلة تواجهه بتعلمنا المصطلحات هي ترجمة وفهم المصطلحات لان كل ترجمتنا حرفية كلمة كلمة ودائما نقارن المصطلحات الانكليزية وي لغتنا الام".

Translation:

"The biggest problem in learning idioms is the translation and understanding the meaning of these idioms because our translation is literal, that is, translated word by word and we always compare the English idioms with our native language."

LD. P. (12)

"اجد من الصعوبة فهم المصطلحات، مثلا لمن كنت تعرض بعض المصطلحات اني استغربت لان ما كنت سامعها قبل، هذا يعتبر شي جديد (المصطلحات) لان لا المنهج ولا المدرسين مطيها اهمية".

Translation:

"I found it difficult to understand idiomatic expressions. For example, when you introduced some idioms, I was surprised because I had never heard them before. This is something (idiomatic area) new because it was neglected by both curricula and teachers".

LD. P (11):

"المصطلحات صعبة وما اشعر بالراحة من احاول استخدمهن بحديثي او بكتابتي لان ما مارستهم ولا مركز عليهم بدراستي سابقا واضاف: ما درسنا المصطلحات بتفصيل درسنا بس الكلمات الانكليزية بشكل عام، دائما يعاملون شي واحد ويترجموهن حرفيا. وهذا سببنا ارباكننا بفهم معاني المصطلحات لان متعودين نترجم حرفيا من لغتنا الام".

Translation:

(Idioms are difficult. I feel uncomfortable trying to use these expressions in conversations and writing because I have not practiced and focused on them in my previous learning. He adds, "We did not study idioms in detail, our focus was on



English vocabulary in general (focus on the word and its literal meaning), and they (teachers) always treat them (idioms and isolated words) as one thing, that is, they translate them literally. Therefore, we are confused and we cannot understand the meaning of many idioms because we translate the words too literally from our native language).

As shown above, students showed that idioms pose a great challenge because their figurative meaning cannot be inferred from the individual words. Specifically, the result showed that knowing the meaning of idiomatic expressions and determining when to use them appropriately is one of the most difficult tasks for these learners. Therefore, these students were confused even when using the most common and simple idioms of English, such as a piece of cake, it's raining cats and dogs, etc. For example, they were observed sitting on the fence when asked to give the meaning of the following idioms and try to incorporate them into an example sentence, as shown below:

“It’s raining cats and dogs” (raining heavily)

The idea that comes to mind for these students when they hear or see this phrase is the literal meaning of this idiom. Therefore, they asked the following question: how can it rain cats and dogs? It was found that they are confused with this idiom because they have no idea about its figurative meaning (functional meaning), that is, they do not know that the intended meaning of this idiom is to describe a heavy downpour (it rains heavily). Moreover, they were confused with this idiom because they do not have an equivalent for this idiom in their native language. Therefore, they decided to use the literal meaning for cats and dogs instead of focusing on the figurative meaning of cats and dogs. They said "إنها تمطر قططاً وكلاباً" [inha tamtur qutat wa kilab] which literally means that it is raining cats and dogs. Therefore, it is difficult to learn idioms by memorizing a list of words with their literal meaning in

isolation. As can be seen in the following excerpts, students reported their confusion in understanding the figurative meaning of this idiom as follows:

Int. p (9):

"اني استغربت انو يوجد معنى اخر للقطط والكلاب، يعني: تمطر بغزارة، بصراحة، هذا شي جديد ولاول مرة مار علي بدراستي".

Translation:

(I was surprised that there is another meaning for cats and dogs, meaning: "raining heavily". Frankly speaking, this is something new and this was the first time I hear about it in my study).

Int. p (5):

"اني اعرف هذا معنى غير منطقي (تمطر قطط وكلاب)، حقيقة ما اكرر اترجمها بغير طريقة، صعبة اترجم شي اني ما عندي فكره عنه".

Translation:

(I know this meaning is illogical (the literal meaning of "it is raining cats and dogs"). In fact, it is difficult to translate it in another way, it is difficult to translate something that I have no idea about it).

Int. p (3):

"كمصطلح (تمطر كلاب وقطط) ، ما اعرف شنو معنى هذا المصطلح، اني فقط اعرف ترجمة الكلمات بشكل منفصل، حقيقة اجهل المعنى المجازي لهذا المصطلح واعتقد تحتاج طرق فعالة حتى نفهم هيچ مصطلحات معقدة".

Translation:

(As an idiom (It's raining cats and dogs), I don't know what its meaning is; I just know the meaning of its words separately. In fact, I ignore the figurative meaning of this idiom and I think we need effective strategies to understand such complicated idioms).



“Feeling under the weather” (to feel ill)

However, “to be under the weather” is one of the most common phrases in English, it sounds strange to say it when these students are sick to mean that they are not feeling very well or feeling a little sick. Similar to the idiom mentioned above, it sounds easy to get confused with this idiom because it can not be translated literally. In this vein, the students indicated that they already know the words they use in the context of illness, such as sick, ill, and cold, but they do not know the figurative meaning of the idiom “to feel under the weather” and what it means “to feel sick or ill”. As can be seen in the following excerpts, students reported their confusion regarding understanding the figurative meaning of this idiom as follows:

Int. p (9):

"ابد ما جنت اعرف انو هذا المصطلح معناه مريض، مثلا اني ترجمته عندما شخص ما طالع بره ومبتهج بالحو ، وهاي ترجمة حرفيه من لغتنا الام".

Translation:

(I never know this idiom means “sick”. For example, I translated it into “to feel happy when someone was outdoors under the weather”, and this is a literal translation from our mother tongue).

LD. P. (18):

"ما اعرف اي شي عن هذا المصطلح، ما اعرف انو يعني مريض نعرف الكلمات الي نستخدمه مع المرض مثل sick or ill لان تعلمنا هاي الكلمات بشكل منفرد وليس كمصطلحات".

Translation:

“We do not know anything about this idiom. I do not know it means “sick”. We know the words that we use with the disease, such as sick or ill” because we learned these words individually but not as idioms”.

Int. P. (6):

"صعبة كلش نتوصل لمعنى هذا المصطلح الا اذا ركزنا على هذا الموضوع بدراستنا".

Translation:

(It is difficult to know the meaning of this idiom unless we focus on this issue in our study).

- **“Break a leg” (to wish someone luck)**

Similar to the above idioms, it was found that the students were confused about the idiom “break a leg”. None of the students succeeded in finding a suitable equivalent for this idiom. They resorted to the literal meaning so that it would not make sense if these words were taken literally. These students were confused with this idiom because they have no idea of its figurative meaning, that is, they do not know that the idiom is used to “wish good luck or wish someone luck”. When they heard the phrase “break one's leg”, they thought it meant to break someone's leg. This suggests that these students were not familiar with this idiom. They thought it was more of a threat than an endorsement. As seen in the following excerpts, students reported their confusion regarding understanding the figurative meaning of this idiom as follows:

Int. P. (5):

“اني اعتقدت هذا المصطلح سلبي ، يعتبر دعاء سلبي على الشخص الي يكسر رجله”

Translation:

(I thought this idiom (break a leg) was negative. It considers a negative prayer for the person who breaks his leg).

Int. P. (10):

“بالطبع، يختلف بثقافتنا، بثقافتنا معناه العكس تماما وهذا خلانا نواجه صعوبة في فهم هذا المصطلح”.

Translation:

(Of course, it is different in our culture, it has the opposite meaning and that is why we face difficulty in understanding this idiom).

LD. P. (12):



"استغربت لمن تعلمت معنى هذا المصطلح ايجابي ويعني تمنى حظ سعيد. اضافة الى ذلك واجهت صعوبة لان ما متعلم شلون ادور عن معنى المصطلح بالقاموس، لذلك نحتاج تركيز على استخدام القاموس".

Translation:

(I was surprised to learn that this idiom has a positive meaning and means wishing someone good luck. In addition, I faced difficulty because I never learn how to find out the meaning of idioms in dictionaries, hence we need to focus on the use of a dictionary).

As a conclusion from the above, students reported that they had difficulty in finding an appropriate meaning for these idiomatic expressions. It was observed that these students were not able to recognize, understand and find out the equivalent of these idioms in standard and colloquial Arabic. Moreover, As indicated by the student's responses, the majority of students lack sufficient background knowledge about the figurative meaning of idioms. Therefore, the results suggest that understanding the figurative meaning of idioms is one of the biggest challenges for these students. The result was consistent with the previous research (Al-Khawaldeh, Jaradat, Al-Momani, & Bani-Khair, 2016; Hussein, Khanji, & Makhzoomy, 2000; Noor & Fallatah, 2010; Abdulhussein, 2021; Yousif, 2012; Ali, 2011; Ali, 2020; Dalaf, 2020). They showed that EFL learners have serious difficulties in understanding the figurative meaning of idiomatic expressions.

These results may be due to the fact that Arabic does not have idioms similar to English, so it is difficult for learners to determine the meaning of these idioms literally. In particular, this difficulty arises from the fact that the words of an idiom should not be translated literally; these (idioms) are never translated word for word" (Newmark, 1988, P.125). Therefore, the literal meaning of all these idioms may seem absurd as they have a metaphorical meaning that is difficult to be understood

by these students. As a result, these students were confused when asked to use the idioms mentioned above or to indicate their figurative meaning. "However, figurative meaning is different from the literal meaning in that it is used for imaginative description or special effect. Thus, the meaning of the individual words of an expression has nothing to do with understanding the overall meaning" (Mohammad & Abdul Hussein, 2014:10).

As can be seen above, the results showed that idiom expressions must be very confusing for these students. Therefore, these students showed many factors that affected their learning of idioms such as: unfamiliar idioms, the cultural differences between Arabic and English, the lack of focus on idiomatic expressions in the subjects boy both teachers and the curricula, the lack of focus on analogous idioms in their native language, the negative influence of the first language and literal translation, the lack of presenting idioms in a context, and lack of using dictionaries. Obviously, these factors contributed to the learners' difficulty in understanding the figurative meaning of idioms. Therefore, it was observed that learners have difficulty and lack the ability to deal with idioms deeply and meaningfully. These findings are probably due to the fact that idioms are not used as a focus topic in their curricula. It is confirmed by Sabah (2022), Abdullah (2006), and (Hussein, Khanji, & Makhzoomy 2000) who stated that EFL students are perplexed when dealing with idiomatic expressions because these idioms are avoided in the classroom and idioms are usually not taught because they are considered by many foreign language teachers as the most difficult component of vocabulary.

All of these reasons have resulted in many of these foreign learners of English being unsure of how to use English idioms. Obviously, these learners do not have the opportunity to put their idioms into practice and find out if they are performing well and what they need to improve their use of idioms. According to McLaughlin



(1990, p. 626), “there is no learning without awareness,” so teachers need to help learners raise their awareness by giving examples and practicing idiom use activities.

1.9 Conclusion and Recommendations

In summary, the results show that idioms pose a serious challenge to language comprehension because their meaning cannot be retrieved from words, so understanding idioms is crucial for effective language learning. The results suggest that Iraqi learners have serious difficulties in understanding the figurative meaning of idioms. Therefore, in light of the findings, it is strongly recommended to pay more attention to and practice the most useful figurative idioms, focusing on meaning negotiation strategies. In other words, students need to be familiarized with the figurative meaning and correct usage of idioms. These results confirmed that idioms need special attention, especially at the secondary school level. Most importantly, the results recommend that much more attention should be paid to the role of culture in learning idioms. According to Kuleli (2020, P.226), “it can be agreed that the concept of "culture" consists of shared values, common beliefs and practices, customs, artistic expressions, symbols, norms such as written or unwritten rules, artifacts, fiction and heroes, religious themes, cuisine, sports, and language”. To help students learn idioms, it is recommended to use a good idiom dictionary that provides important examples of how idioms are used in the appropriate context. According to Moon (2017), dictionaries can help learners consolidate their words by presenting the lexicon as a series of cues. Therefore, a dictionary can be used as one of those important ways to become familiar with idioms. Moreover, it has been noted that these students have learned idioms out of context and therefore have difficulty understanding these idioms. Therefore, these students need to know how to use these idioms in context, then it will be easy for them to understand and use idioms appropriately. Abdullah (2006, P. 26) said, “When idioms are put into context, their meaning becomes clearer”.

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ISSN : 1813 – 1735

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

كلمة العدد

الحمد لله الذي أكرمنا بخير كتاب أنزله، وشرفنا بخير نبي أرسله، والصلاة، والسلام على سيدنا محمد وعلى آله وصحبه أجمعين.
وبعد

ففي زمان صار التمسك بالثواب بأنواعها نادرا والتشبث بالقيم بات نذرا تمضي مجلة سر من رأى في مسيرتها متمسكة بما يميزها ويرسخ اقدامها في أرض أساسها الضوابط والمعايير المحترمة في كل جوانبها سواء أكان ذلك في نوعية البحوث العلمية او مكانة المحكمين ونزاهتهم أو في إدارة ينماز افرادها بالالتزام والمهنية والاحترافية في عملهم والرائد لا يكذب اهله نحمد الله على فضله ومنه في توفيقنا وتسديدنا لما فيه الخير والعطاء .

والله ولي التوفيق

الأستاذ المساعد الدكتور

قيس علاوي خلف السامرائي

مدير التحرير

ISSN : 1813 – 1735

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الاشتراك في المجلة



تدفع المؤسسات الحكومية والجامعات ومراكز البحث بدل اشتراك قدره (٢٥٠٠٠) دينار داخل القطر للعدد الواحد وتخاطب سكرتارية المجلة على العنوان المدرج في أدناه لغرض الاشتراك أو التبادل.

المراسلات

د. قيس علاوي خلف

مدير تحرير مجلة سر من رأى

جمهورية العراق / سامراء

ص.ب/١٦٥

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ISSN : 1813 – 1735

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الأسس الطباعية للبحث



- ❖ يطبع البحث على الآلة الحاسبة، وعلى ورق حجم (A4) وبوجه واحد.
- ❖ لا يتجاوز عدد صفحاته (٢٠) صفحة بما فيها: البيانات، والخرائط، والمصورات، وإذا زاد البحث على ذلك يتحمل الباحث دفع مبلغ (٢٠٠٠) دينار عن كل صفحة إضافية، على أن تقدم النسخ الأصلية الخاصة بالأشكال والخرائط على ورق (تريست)، وبواسطة برنامج (Microsoft Word).
- ❖ بعد الأخذ بملحوظات المقيمين يرفق قرص (CD) مع البحث المصحح.
- ❖ تكون الطباعة بحرف (Simplified Arabic)، وبحجم (١٤).
- ❖ تكتب الهوامش في آخر البحث بنفس خط المتن، وبحجم (١٢)، على أن تذكر معلومات المصدر كاملة عند وروده أول مرة، لتغني عن كتابة قائمة للمصادر.
- ❖ يقسم البحث على مقدمة وعناوين مناسبة تدل عليه، لتغني عن قائمة المحتويات.
- ❖ لا تلزم المجلة بإعادة البحث إلى صاحبه، إذا اعترض على نشره الخبراء، ويكتفى بالاعتذار.
- ❖ منهج البحث العلمي والتوثيق من سمات المجلة المحكمة.
- ❖ تعنون المراسلات باسم (رئيس التحرير) أو مدير التحرير.
- ❖ إذا كان البحث يحتوي على آيات قرآنية، يكون نمط الآيات وفق برنامج مصحف المدينة ولا يتم نشر البحث خلاف ذلك.

مجلة سر من رأى

جمهورية العراق . سامراء . كلية التربية . ص ب ١٦٥

ISSN 1813-1735

مدير التحرير: د. قيس علاوي خلف

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تعليمات النشر في مجلة (سر من رأى)



ترحب مجلة (سر من رأى) العلمية المحكمة بإسهام الباحثين في القطر وسواه من الأقطار، فتخطو بهم ومعهم خطوات واثقة نحو مستقبل مشرق في نواحي الحياة، وفيما يأتي بعض ضوابط النشر فيها:

الأسس الفنية والتنظيمية

- ❖ تستقبل المجلة البحوث العلمية في مجالات العلوم الانسانية كافة.
- ❖ تقوم هيئة التحرير البحوث علميًا مع خبراء مشهود لهم بالكفاية العلمية في اختصاصهم الدقيق.
- ❖ ترفض المجلة نشر البحوث التي لا تطابق منهج البحث العلمي المعروف.
- ❖ يلزم الباحث بالأخذ بما يرد من ملحوظات حول بحثه، من خلال ما يحدده الخبراء المقومون.
- ❖ ألا يكون البحث مقدمًا إلى مجلة أخرى، ولم ينشر سابقًا، وعلى الباحث أن يتعهد خطيًا بذلك.
- ❖ يشترط أن يقوم الباحث ببحثه المقدم.
- ❖ يثبت على الصفحة الأولى ما يأتي: (عنوان البحث، والاختصاص الدقيق للبحث، واسم الباحث، ولقبه العلمي، ومكان عمله، وبريده الإلكتروني، ورقم هاتفه، وكلمات مفتاحيه باللغتين العربية والانكليزية)، وفي حالة وجود أكثر من باحث تذكر أسمائهم وعناوينهم، لتسهيل عملية الاتصال بهم.
- ❖ يطبع موجزا للبحث في صفحة مستقلة، وباللغتين العربية والإنكليزية، على أن لا يزيد عن صفحة واحدة.
- ❖ يعتمد أسلوب البحث العلمي في كتابة هوامش البحث ومصادره، ويعتمد الباحث المنهج البحثي الخاص باختصاصه، وتذكر الكتب المستعملة في البحث على النحو الآتي: اسم الكتاب، واسم المؤلف، ورقم الطبعة، ومكان النشر، وجهة النشر، وسنة النشر، والجزء (إن وجد)، والصفحة. أما الدوريات فتكتب على النحو الآتي: اسم الدورية، وعددها، وتاريخ صدورها، وجهة الإصدار، والصفحة.

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- ❖ لا يعد قبول النشر ملزما للمجلة بنشر البحث العلمي ضمن الاعداد إلا ما يليق بسمعتها الدولية.

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ISSN: 1813 - 1735

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مجلة سمرقند

للدراستات الإنسانية

مجلة علمية فصلية محكمة
تصدر عن كلية التربية في جامعة سامراء

المجلد الثامن عشر / العدد الثاني والسبعون - السنة السابعة عشرة
ذي القعدة ١٤٤٣ هـ - حزيران ٢٠٢٢ م

الرمز الدولي: ISSN 1813 – 1735

رقم الايداع في دارالكتب والوثائق ببغداد ٢٣٤١ لسنة ٢٠١٩

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ISSN : 1813 – 1735

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مجلة علمية فصلية محكمة
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ذي القعدة ١٤٤٣هـ / حزيران ٢٠٢٢م

رقم الإيداع في دار الكتب والوثائق ببغداد ٢٣٤١ لسنة ٢٠١٩

ISSN 1813-1735