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ABSTRACT

This research paper is about the methods, strategies, and the different types of idioms that should be taken into account at the moment of teaching and learning English idioms in the classroom. Idiom training promotes teaching the most common idioms and helps us to use them in a more realistic way, in order to reach a better understanding of them. Also, a survey was made to gather information about students' comprehension of idiomatic expressions. A classification of idioms is included, and the kinds of idioms that teachers should use for teaching this topic which should be considered as one of the most important elements in the English language. Idioms must be taught in order for students to be able to speak in the most correct and natural way in English.

Key words: methods, strategies, idioms, understanding, classification, teaching, speak.



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	1
TABLE OF CONTENTS	2
AUTHORSHIP	7
DEDICATION	8
ACKNOWLEDGMENT	9
INTRODUCTION	10
CHAPTER I	11
THE PROBLEM	11
1.1 TOPIC	11
1.2 DESCRIPTION OF THE PROBLEM	11
1.3 JUSTIFICATION	11
1.4 OBJECTIVES	12
CHAPTER II	13
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	13
2.1. SOME METHODOLOGIES ON TEACHING AND LEARNING A FOREIGN LANGUAGE	13
2.2 COGNITIVE LINGUISTIC APPROACH	14
2.3 MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCES APPROACH	15
2.4 HOW TO TEACH VOCABULARY	17
2.5 DIFFERENCES BETWEEN PHRASAL VERBS AND IDIOMATIC EXPRESSIONS	18
2.6 PREVIOUS STUDY	20
CHAPTER III.....	21
METHODOLOGY	21



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3.1 BASIC METHODOLOGY	21
CHAPTER IV	32
TYPES OF IDIOMS	32
4.1 TYPES OF IDIOMS	32
4.1.1 INTRANSITIVE VERBAL IDIOMS	32
4.1.2 TRANSITIVE VERBAL IDIOMS	35
4.1.3. NOMINAL, ADJECTIVAL, AND ADVERBIAL IDIOMS	40
CHAPTER V	44
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	44
5.1 CONCLUSIONS	44
5.2 RECOMMENDATIONS	45
WORKS CITED	46
APPENDICES	49



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FACULTAD DE FILOSOFÍA, LETRAS Y CIENCIAS DE LA EDUCACIÓN

CARRERA DE LENGUA Y LITERATURA INGLESA

“The Speaking Skill: Teaching and Using Idiomatic Expressions”

**Tesina previa a la obtención del Título de
Licenciada en Ciencias de la Educación
en la Especialización de Lengua y
Literatura Inglesa.**

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AUTHORSHIP

The comments, opinions, and ideas written during this research paper are the exclusive responsibility of its author, Gabriela Atariguana.

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DEDICATION

This is to my dear mother Sofia. She has always been my angel, my inspiration, and my strength. I am pretty sure wherever she is, she is proud of who I am now. She always wanted me to be the best, and this is my first gift for her because I am going to continue my education to the highest degree possible. I will always love you mom.



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INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, learning the English Language is very important because it may give people a lot of opportunities around the world. The learning of this language is not easy, much less if students do not learn the English that is used in real life. One topic that is not taught very often in classrooms is the use of idiomatic expressions. According to some experts, such as Suzanne Irujo, teaching idioms is a main part of the English language learning for second language learners and foreign language learners. However, this topic is not very easy for them because they might try to understand the idioms literally, which is incorrect, and this is why American people left out the idioms in a conversation with no-English native speakers. In accordance with some authors, Irujo and Dixson, the most appropriate way that students infer the meaning of idioms is understanding the context in which idioms are used. Of course, this is not the only method to teach idioms, but the teacher must remember that students will have a better understanding if they use idioms that are used in real life.



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CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM

1.1 Topic

The Speaking Skill: Teaching and Using Idiomatic Expressions

1.2 Description of the problem

Many students have learned English as a second and foreign language and can speak it pretty well. But the problem is that they are still unable to understand what native speakers are saying, since they often use idioms and phrasal verbs in their daily conversations. The cause of this problem is that idioms cannot be understood literally by the students because the meaning of idioms usually differs from the meaning of each word; and in these cases, people who have already learned English are confused because the rules that they learned are not applied at the moment of understanding idiomatic expressions.

1.3 Justification

I have chosen this topic because I consider that if students are learning English as a second language, it is very important for them to know idiomatic expressions, so they can communicate, understand, and use them in conversations, because when people learn a new language, the main target is to communicate with other people.

Another reason for having chosen my topic is that I know that idioms are not frequently taught in schools, high schools, and not even in universities; so I am interested in teaching them. I have worked in institutes, and just in one of them, I had to teach idioms; but teaching



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them was very superficial because I couldn't dedicate as much time as I wished.

Now, that I am working in an institute, I have talked to my director about teaching them in my classes; he told me that as soon as I finish my monograph, I could try them with my students in a workshop to evaluate my proposal. From his perspective as a native speaker, he knows that this topic is not considered as important as it should be when teaching English; therefore, he thinks that it is a good idea to teach them.

1.4 Objectives

General Objective

- To present a proposal to help students communicate by means of idiomatic expressions.

Specific Objectives

- To present a discussion about figurative language to show students how and why idioms are used in speaking and writing.
- To present a focus on the three different types of the most commonly used idioms.
- To analyze the two methods to teach idioms, The Cognitive Linguistics and Multiple Intelligences Methods.
- To assess students' feelings about learning, understanding, and using idiomatic expressions.



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CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Literature Review

Scientific information is going to be presented during this literature review in order to analyze the importance of the topic, The Speaking Skill: Teaching and Using Idiomatic Expressions. All this information will be helpful and significant for the topic. The themes in discussion are associated with foreign language learning as well as the speaking and listening skills. Consequently, the first subject that is going to be studied is Some Methodologies for Teaching and learning a foreign language.

2.1 Some Methodologies for Teaching and Learning a Foreign Language

Meunier and Granger state that “language acquisition is the learning of an inventory of patterns as arrangements of words with their associated structural meanings” (1). However, Richards and Rodgers point out that “*Acquisition* refers to the natural assimilation of language rules through using language for communication. *Learning* refers to the formal study of language rules and is a conscious process” (22). Students in schools, high schools, and universities of Ecuador learn the English language as a second language inside their classrooms. Outside the class they are surrounded by the Spanish language. They learn English inside their institutions, but after they leave the class, students are speaking Spanish all the time.

For teaching a foreign language, Morgan and Nail establish four methods: The Grammar/translation method, which was the main one at the end of the 19th century, since, in that time, the purpose of learning a new language was reading and writing, the lessons were based on translations, and grammar was taught by the rules given to the students. The Direct Method; all the lessons were taught



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with this method in the foreign language. Vocabulary was caught by students through visual elements, the speaking skill was developed through asking and answering questions, and grammar was taught inductively. Despite the fact that the learner was in contact with the foreign language, he/she was not able to assimilate it. The Audio-lingual/visual Methods were based on behaviorist learning theory. This meant the student followed what the teacher did. The lessons were made in order to present to students all the language structures, so students had to imitate those structures, and they used to go over and over pronunciation. Later on, this method was considered more like a habit since students did not have a role during the learning process. For the fourth method, Morgan and Nail cited Das. He said that Communicative Language Teaching could be considered as one of the latest in language teaching because of its supporters. CLT engages the two main questions: what is learned and how it is learnt (2-4).

Richards and Rodgers state that for the learning of a foreign language, the idea of Multiple Intelligences has attracted many teachers since MI goes further than traditional methods and books. When parents know about MI, they may supply their children with some helpful activities according to their intelligences; and as a result, every student can be intelligent in his/her own way (116).

Richards and Rodgers also point out that other “intelligences”, such as Emotional, Mechanical, and Practical Intelligences, have been suggested, but Gardner supports his MI saying that they are verified by eight database “signs”. These signs consist of intelligences that have dissimilar developmental and evolutionary histories (116).

2.2 Cognitive Linguistic Approach

What is the cognitive linguistics approach? According to Croft and Cruse, three major hypotheses exist that guide the Cognitive Linguistic Approach to language: (1).



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- Language is not an autonomous cognitive faculty.
- Grammar is conceptualization.
- Knowledge of language emerges from language use.

The first hypothesis means that the representation of linguistic knowledge is basically the same as the representation of other conceptual structures, and the processes in which that knowledge is used are not different from cognitive abilities that human beings use out of the area of language (2). The second hypothesis refers to the major aspect of human cognitive ability: the conceptualization of the experiences to be communicated. Finally, the third hypothesis proposes that semantics, syntax, morphology and phonology categories and structures are built up from people's own recognition of certain expressions on specific occasions of use (4).

Andrea Langlotz cites Chomskyan enterprise, Smith "[...] to understand language it is sometimes necessary to study extreme examples" (9). According to Langlotz, idioms have been considered as "extreme examples" of linguistic structuring and processing, since they are a very important part of any language. That is, idioms can expose intelligent creative behavior that develops basic knowledge-resources and the information processing capacities of a human mind (9-10).

Vyvyan Evans points out that "The cognitive linguistics enterprise... has shown that language reveals systematic processes at work in human imagination which cognitive linguistics have argued are central to the way we think" (778).

2.3 Multiple Intelligences Approach

Howard Gardner states that "An intelligence is a computational capacity –a capacity to process a certain kind of information –that originates in human biology and human psychology" (N. pag.). And According to Fink, the "Multiple



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Intelligences Theory, plus alternative teaching strategies and assessments that derive from MI, can successfully reach diverse students with a wide range of learning abilities and promote intellectual productivity” (13).

Thomas Armstrong has made a study of the eight intelligences that Gardner proposed.

Linguistic: It is considered as the ability to use words efficiently, whether orally or in writing. Linguistic intelligence has the capacity to manipulate the structure and phonology of language.

Logical-mathematical: This intelligence has the capacity of using numbers in an effective way and in a correct way. It includes sensitivity to logical patterns and relationships, and to statements and propositions.

Spatial: It is used to recognize the visual-spatial world precisely and to carry out transformations upon those perceptions. This intelligence engages understanding of color, line, shape, space, form, and the relationships that are present among these elements.

Bodily-kinesthetic: This Intelligence consists of using the whole body to communicate ideas and feelings and facility in using the hands in order to create or change things. Bodily-kinesthetic incorporates specific physical skills such as coordination, balance, dexterity, strength, flexibility, and speed.

Musical: It is the capacity to get, differentiate, transform, and express musical forms. It includes sensitivity to the rhythm, melody, and tone of music; and a person could have a figurative or formal comprehension of music.

Interpersonal: It is when a person has the skill to perceive and make distinctions concerning the intentions, moods, motivations, and feelings of other people. This may include facial expressions, voice, and gestures.



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Intrapersonal: It is the ability to act adaptively on the basis of one's self-knowledge. In this intelligence the person has an accurate picture of himself, awareness of intentions, temperaments; and the aptitude for self-discipline, self-understanding, and self-esteem.

Naturalist: It is the Intelligence that comprises the recognition and classification of the different species in flora and fauna of an individual's environment (6-7).

Armstrong makes an analysis of Gardner's theory about MI. He says that many people wonder why Gardner calls intelligences musical, spatial, and bodily-kinesthetic and not talents or aptitudes. This is because Gardner understood that people are used to hearing some common expressions such as "He's not very intelligent, but he has a wonderful aptitude for music"; therefore, Gardner was conscious of aptitude when he used the word *intelligence* to describe each category. In an interview, Gardner said that he was being intentionally provocative by calling the MI "intelligences" because if he had said that there were seven kinds of competencies, the rest of people would just have said "Yeah, yeah", but by calling them "intelligences", Gardner is trying to put them on a pedestal (8).

2.4 How to teach vocabulary

What is vocabulary and its most important aspects? Susanne Flohr defines vocabulary as the words that teachers have to introduce and explain to the students in a foreign language. For this, the teacher has to introduce the vocabulary in an easy way, so students can easily understand how to use new words. It is very important to teach the pronunciation and the spelling at the moment of teaching vocabulary because that is the way that a person will speak another language in order to be understood by a native speaker (3).

Boers and Lindstromberg point out that nowadays, theoreticians see learning vocabulary as the key to achieving a high level of proficiency. In spite of this,



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there is no solid agreement about whether vocabulary should be targeted for teaching or not (4).

According to them, there are some issues at the moment of vocabulary selection. Boers and Lindstromberg cite Liu and Nation, when referring to the fact that the scale of a L2 learner's task is indicated by the percentage of running words that must be known for some goals to be achievable. That is, if learners want to be able to know the meaning of unfamiliar words by guessing, at least they must know about 95% of word signs (9).

Boyle and Scanlon propose some strategies for teaching vocabulary. They pointed out five stages: Stage 1: Initial Reading or Decoding Stage (Grades 1-2, ages 6-7) Stage 2: Confirmation, Fluency, and Ungluing from Print (Grades 2-3, ages 7-8) Stage 3: Reading for Learning the New—A first Step (Grades 4-8, ages 9-13) Stage 4: Multiple Viewpoints—High School (Ages 14-18) Stage 5: Construction and Reconstruction—A World View (University and Adult) (153-156).

The last stage: Construction and Reconstruction—A World View. This is considered perhaps the most difficult stage because moving ahead depends on the learners' cognitive abilities, accumulation of knowledge, and motivation. During stage 5, students from university rely on their previous knowledge and comprehension skills. Some experienced students can use strategies with flexibility, depending on the type of text or purpose for studying. Students also become selective in what they want to read, and reading turns more critical. They use analysis, synthesis, and judgment to construct their truths (156).

2.5 Differences between Phrasal Verbs and Idiomatic Expressions

Iris Heuse cites Biber to define phrasal verbs. According to him, "Phrasal verbs are multi-words units followed by an adverbial particle" (2). Now, the definition of an idiom according to Irujo is "An idiom is a conventionalized expression whose meaning cannot be determined from the meaning of its parts" (1).



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Carl W. Hart says that phrasal verbs are either separable or non-separable, but there is no rule that states which ones are separable or not. He points out separable and non-separable phrasal verbs.

Separable phrasal verbs may be separated by their object; if the object is a noun, it is optional. For example, She took her coat off. Or She took off her coat. However, if a pronoun is used, it has to be placed between the verb and the particle. For example, She took it off (1). Non-separable phrasal verbs cannot be separated by their object. For example, He ran into a tree. NOT He ran a tree into. (1)

“...phrasal verbs and idioms often simplify communication. In fact, many idioms developed naturally as shortcuts to longer, more descriptive, and more laborious language” according to Brenner (N. pag.); he certifies that learning phrasal verbs has challenges. First, there are many phrasal verbs to learn. Second, they have some specific features that may make them a little bit difficult to learn. Brenner states that most phrasal verbs are impossible to guess the meaning of just from the individual words. For example, *eggs on* has nothing to do with eggs, chickens, or food; it means *to provoke*. Another point is while a person is learning idioms, it is common to make mistakes by choosing the wrong verb and expressing something embarrassing. Most phrasal verbs have more than one meaning. For example, *make out*: 1. Kiss passionately, 2. See with difficulty, 3. Manage a situation, 4. Write as a reminder or record (N. pag.).

Most idiomatic expressions have a key word that may carry out their meaning. These key words could be anything, such as colors, body parts, numbers, negative words, and question words. Brenner says that using them is also a good way to understand idioms (N. pag.).



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Irujo talks about the exposure to idioms. She explains that when second language learners are exposed to English, idioms are usually left out because native speakers employ easy vocabulary when talking to them. However, idiomatic expressions are very common on television and in movies, but this does not give the necessary information for learning English idioms because there is no direct interaction. Nevertheless, people seem to be more exposed to idioms that appear in non-interactive circumstances, where the meaning cannot be discussed rather than in circumstances where they could discuss them (236-237).

2.6 Previous study

Thomas C. Cooper from the University of Georgia made an experiment about the use of idioms with eighteen No Native Speakers of English whose ages differed from seventeen to forty-four years old. All these people had lived in the United States about 5 years. The materials used during this experiment were the following: twenty frequently used idioms – eight from standard, eight from conversational, and the last four from slang expressions. The data analysis that Cooper used was the following three point scale – one point for “I don’t know”, - two points for “a partially correct answer”, and – three points for “a correct answer”. The results of this experiment were as follows: guessing from context (28%), discussing and analyzing the idiom (24%), using the literal meaning (19%), repeating the idiom (17%), using background knowledge (7%), referring to a L1 idiom (5%), and others (2%) (N. pag.).

So, according to this study most people guessed from context and analyzed idioms to get to their meanings, which means that it is not necessary to memorize every idiom or to know every single word that composes it. If people have good background knowledge of English, it will not be too difficult for them to learn idioms.



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CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Basic Methodology

To achieve this research paper, the following steps were required.

- Qualitative and quantitative methods used for data collection of the topic.
- Investigation of the bibliographic methods that may be applied to teach idiomatic expressions.

For the qualitative and quantitative methods, a survey was applied and an interview was carried out.

Survey

Participants

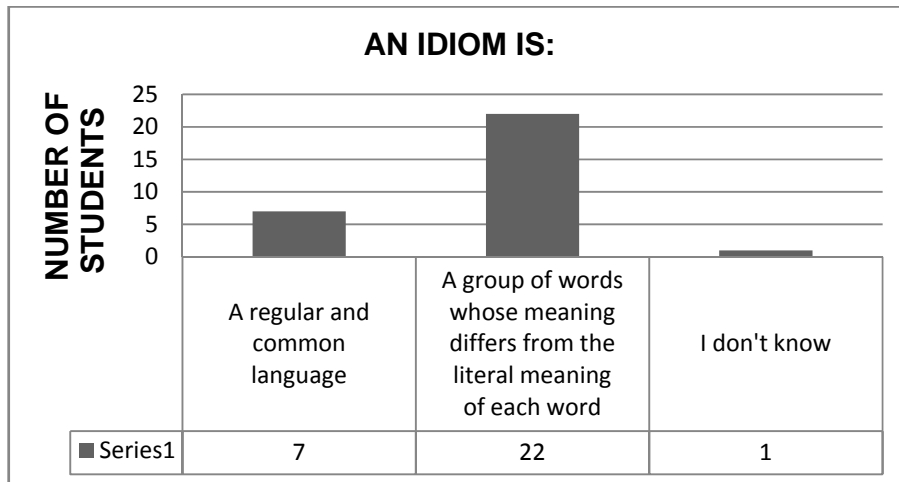
For the survey, students from the University of Cuenca were chosen as participants. These students are currently studying the English Language and Literature career in 6th level. There were thirty of them whose ages differed from 20 to 46 years old. The purpose of the survey was to determine the students' knowledge about idioms. The survey was divided into two parts as follows: the first part was multiple choices and the second part was yes/no questions with opinions (See appendix 1).

“1. Check the answer”



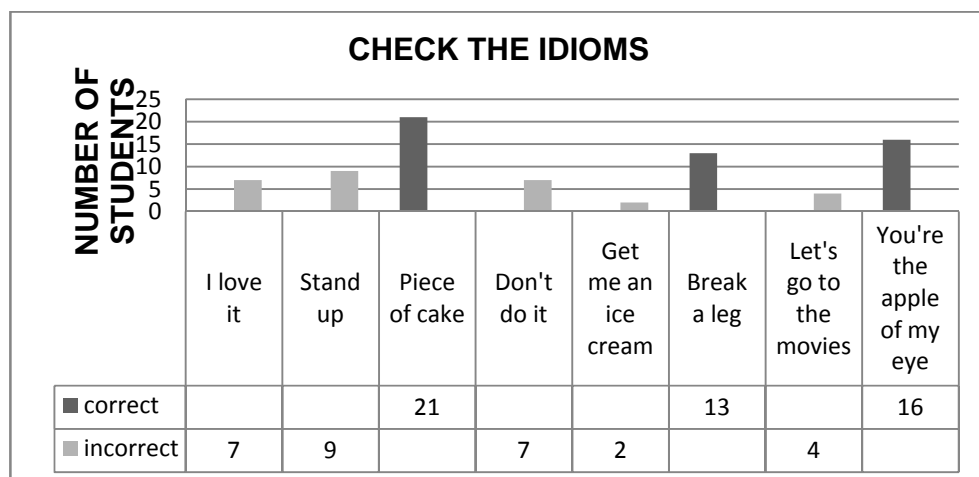
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The answers to the first question, “an idiom is: **1.** a regular and common language. **2.** A group of words whose meaning differs from the literal meaning of each word. **3.** I do not know” show that not all the students know the definition of an idiom; actually, some students thought an “idiom” was a synonym of “language”. This proves that all the students who are being prepared for becoming teachers need to learn what an idiom is.

“2. Check the idioms”



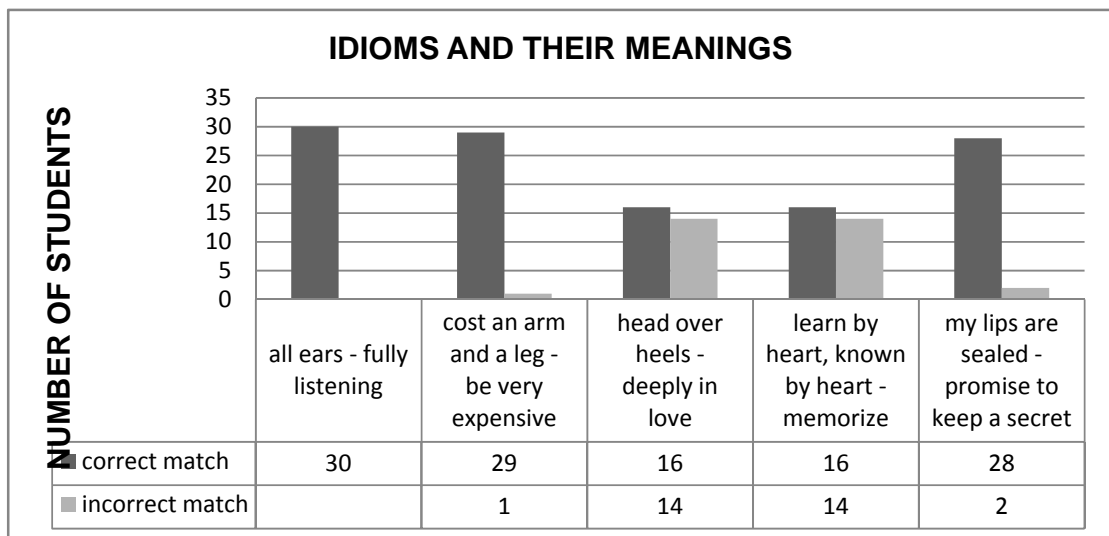


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The second question was “Check the idioms”. The purpose of this question was for students to get an idea about what idioms are and most of them got it; but there were some others who didn’t; and others didn’t even answer this question.

“3. Match the idioms with their meanings”



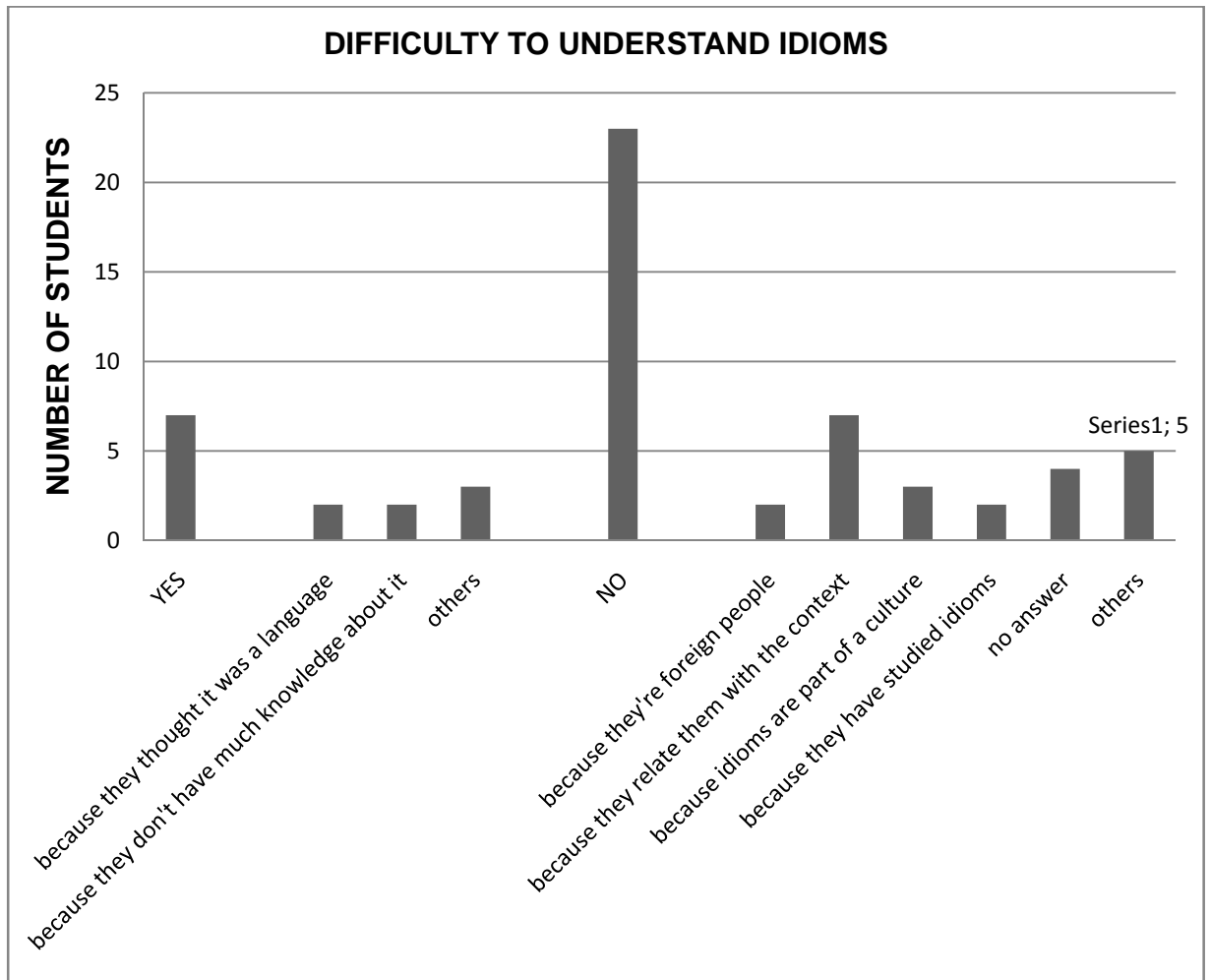
The third question, “Match the idioms with their meanings”. The students had to put the idioms with their meanings and many of them did it. This result shows that most of the students, based on their previous knowledge about vocabulary, got the correct matching. Others related the meanings to the context, but relating idioms with the context does not always mean that students can get the correct meaning. According to Irujo, “If learners try to rely on their first language to help them use idioms in their second, they will be successful in only a very few instances. In most cases, this strategy will produce an incorrect and often comical form” (237).

“4. Is it difficult for you to understand what an idiom is?”



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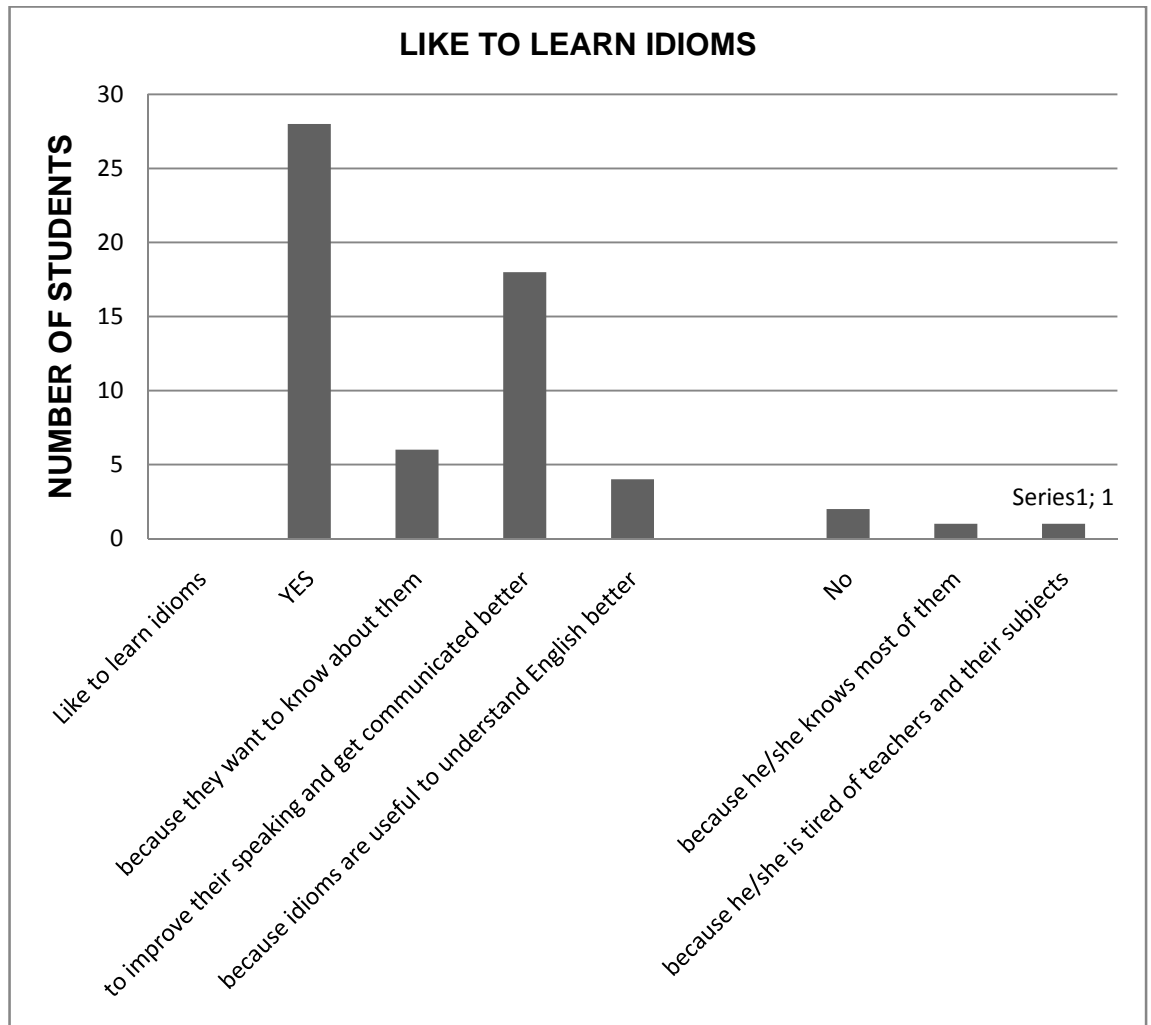
The fourth question “Is it difficult for you to understand what an idiom is?” In this question, most students answered “no”, that they do not have any difficulty when understanding idioms because most of the time they relate them with the context. However, this may not always work because as Irujo said that relating an idiom with context does not always work because the meaning may turn out in a humorous form.

“5. Would you like to learn idiomatic expressions?”



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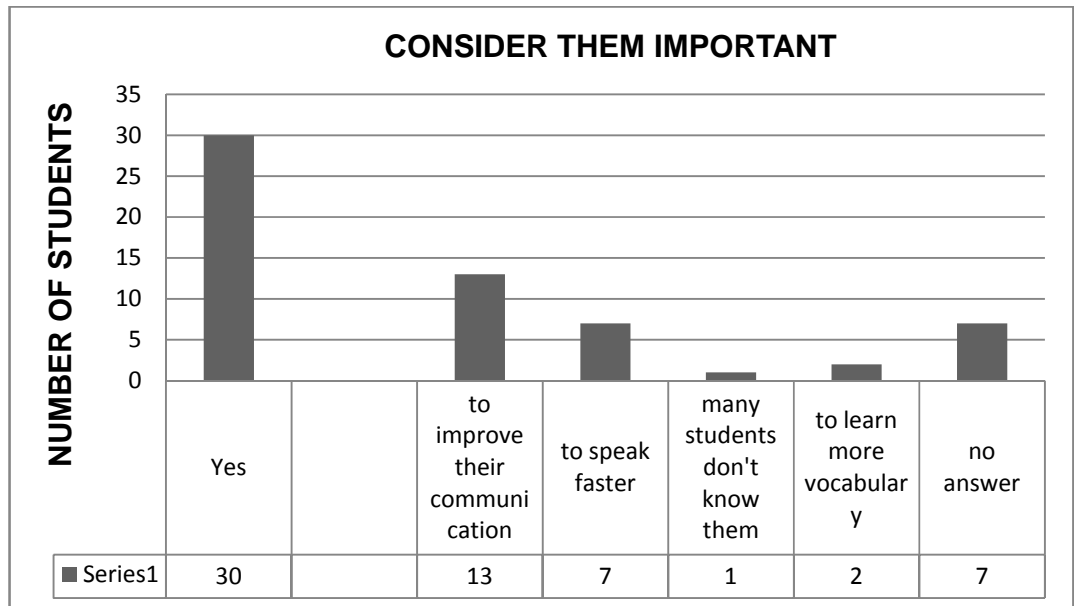
The fifth question was if “they would like to learn idioms”; most of them said “yes”. This demonstrates that students feel the necessity of learning idioms because they know that idioms are a main part of English communication.

“6. Do you consider the learning of them important?”



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The sixth question, “Do you consider the learning of them important?” In this question, all the students agreed on “yes” in order to improve their communication. Students considered this topic important for their learning because they know it will help them to get more knowledge, to speak in a more natural way, and to learn more vocabulary.

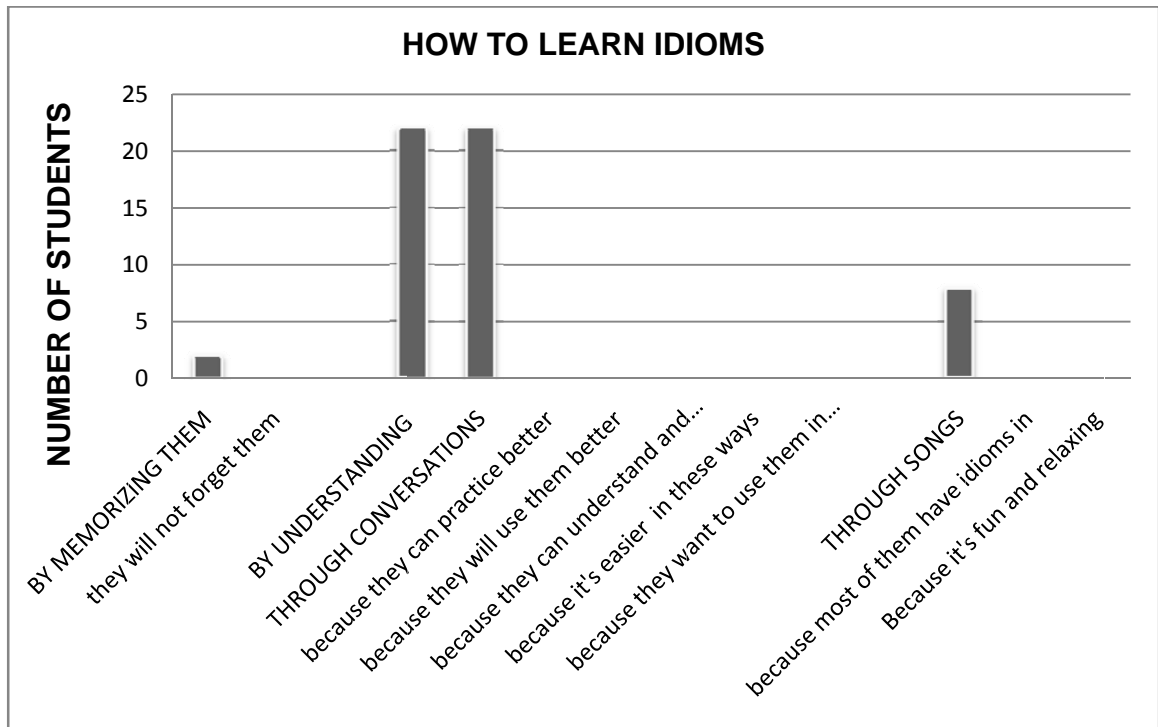
“7. How would you like to learn idioms?”

- By memorizing them _____
- By understanding them _____
- Through songs _____
- Through conversations _____



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The seventh question, “how to learn idioms”; most of the students chose the options “by understanding them” and “through conversations”. This proves what Boers and Lindstromberg pointed out about the levels-of-processing theory. “The third theory of central relevance to the issue of retention of linguistic expressions is *levels-of-processing theory*, according to which the deeper the level at which information is mentally processed (i.e. the more elaborate and effortful is the mental work that is done with the information), the more likely the information is to be committed to long term memory” (12).

Applying this survey helped me to identify how much students know about this topic which plays a very important role in the English language. At the end of this survey, some students wrote they thought they knew what an idiom was, but after this survey, they said that they were confused. They said they are going to check this topic better because they consider it important for their learning in the career.



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Interview

Participant

For the interview, I chose an expert who has experience in teaching English language. Her name is Carla Hermoza. Even though her native language is Spanish, she has an excellent proficiency of English because she studied in the United States. She has been teaching English for years. (See appendix 2)

Miss Hermoza thinks that teaching idioms is really important because students can communicate their ideas in an easier way and understand what other people say. On the other hand, she thinks that it is hard teaching them, but it is necessary since that is the way people can develop a better understanding of them and their use.

She said that idioms should be taught whenever it is possible, especially to advanced levels for the reason that advanced students have a wide vocabulary. It is also a good idea to teach idioms to basic levels in a graduated way because of the difficulty that students might have when getting the meaning.

“I know few teachers who use idioms in class...”she said. Her opinion about this is that teachers just follow the textbook, and some others don't like to include extra information in the program; others just teach from the grammatical point of view.

She also talked about the method that she uses to teach and the students' ages. She said that teaching them at any age is a good idea, taking into account students' levels and social backgrounds. The method that she likes using is through music because there are several idioms in songs; students enjoy them, and learn by having fun. Another method is through the



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intrapersonal intelligence, which is considered as the ability to act on the basis of self-knowledge, creating environments, and making decisions based on what is right for themselves. She prefers using this method because, according to her, students work better by themselves than in groups.

As a final point, she talked about her experience in teaching this topic. She said that it was hard at the beginning because the students got confused and felt too pushed; but later they got used to idioms by listening to them and by having conversations. It is a process in which the teacher must be very patient.

As a conclusion for this interview, she confirmed what I already read; the teaching of idioms is very important for students in order to develop communication, and that teaching idioms is hard. What was new for me is that she said that she could teach idioms to any age group, including at basic levels; it just depends on the method that the teacher uses and the kind of idioms that he/she teaches.

Investigation of the bibliographic methods that may be applied to teach idiomatic expressions

According to Frank Boers and Seth Lindstromberg, at this time, a significant amount of Foreign Language Teachers see learning vocabulary as the solution to get a high level of proficiency; and yet there is still no solid conclusion about whether vocabulary should be intentionally targeted for teaching or not.

Boers and Lindstromberg mention Laufer, and according to Laufer's summary, if a learner does not know the meaning of a word, he/she just tries to get to the meaning by inferring it from the context; and he/she will learn the meaning of it by the different encounters that he/she will have with it. Laufer surveyed a series of empirical investigations which showed the following:



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- Guessing word meanings from context is very problematic; however, learners seem predisposed to over-estimate their understanding of word meanings guessed from context.
- It is necessary to learn many low frequency words if proficiency is the objective.
- Genuine form-focused teaching can elaborate the knowledge by denotations and connotations because the more elaborated a person's knowledge, the more probably the person will control it (5).

Also, Boers and Lindstromberg establish that the cognitive linguistics method has three theories that are relevant for learning: dual coding theory, trace theory, and levels of processing theory.

Dual coding theory: it is the association of verbal information with mental images.

Trace theory: it considers that repeated encounters with an idiom tend to establish its traces in memory.

Levels of processing theory: if Ss have a good level and all the information they get is processed well, the most probable is that information will have a long term in their memory (11-12).

They also mention the Mnemonic Procedures which is considered very important because it helps students to learn words and phrases through symbols or codes. Some, which are very important, are the following:

- Incorporate the target expressions into a song.
- Arrange the first letters of the phrase to form an acronym.
- Create a rhyme like this, "One is a bun, two is a shoe, three is a tree, four is a door..." and so on up to say "ten". This rhyme method can help students learn lists of words. The learner must mentally review the sequence at appropriate intervals.



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It is been considered that not all learners may be susceptible in the same way to the effectiveness of Cognitive Linguistics pedagogy. A variable might be previous language learning experience which allows students to recognize patterns. Another one is cognitive style where learners get a predisposition for thinking in mental pictures.



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CHAPTER IV

TYPES OF IDIOMS

According to Dixson, Idiomatic Expressions have played a significant role in the English language. Actually, the use of idioms is so extensive that comprehension of them is very important to have successful communication; it is true in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. It is good if a student has excellent grammar and wide vocabulary, but if that student does not have enough knowledge of idioms, his speech will continue being common.

English teachers know that idiomatic expressions add accuracy to the language, and that is why teachers should include this topic during the teaching process. Nevertheless, teachers do realize that this is not an easy topic for students who learn English as a second or foreign language. What students will try to do to understand idioms is to translate them literally to their native language (xiii).

The best way to teach idioms is to present them in categories. There are thousands of idiomatic expressions and different types of them, which is why teachers must be very careful when teaching idioms. Following, there are three types of idiomatic expressions according to Ronald E. Feare.

4.1 Types of Idioms

4.1.1 Intransitive Verbal Idioms

Verbal idioms are very useful and common in English because many verbs can be joined with different particles or prepositions to make unique combinations of meaning.

The Intransitive Verbal Idioms are divided into three categories: Intransitive Verbs with Particles, Intransitive Verbs with Prepositions, and Intransitive Verbs with Particles and Prepositions.

1.1 Intransitive Verbs with Particles



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Students may infer the meaning of an idiom if they pay attention to the context, to the meaning of the accompanying words around, and the meaning of the whole sentence. By doing so, students will get the general meaning without using a dictionary. For example, in the following sentences students can get the meaning by the context.

- For three days the wind blew hard and strong, but on the fourth day it **died down**.
- My old car has a very bad engine; it will probably **break down** and need repairs.
- After I spent two hours trying to explain the difficult idea, John finally **caught on**.

Explanation of the idioms that are examples of Intransitive Verbs with Particles

- **To die down:** to become quieter.
My anger at him has **died down** since he apologized to me.
- **To come about:** to occur, to happen.
His success **came about** after he started working harder.
- **To stand out:** to be clearly seen.
Joe is so intelligent that he **stands out** in class.
- **To break down:** to stop working correctly.
The travelers were delayed because the bus had **broken down**.
- **To fall through:** to fail to occur.
The plan for a new park **fell through** because no citizen wanted higher taxes (3, 6, 7).

1.2 Intransitive Verbs with Prepositions

In this case, it would be a good idea that students underline the context clues by trying to get the meaning. For example:



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- When I graduate from college, I'd like to **go into** nursing and health services as a full-time career.
- The TV news can only **touch on** several daily events: it can't examine them deeply.
- Many athletes were **trying for** first place in the race, but only one of them could stand out as a winner (15).

Explanation of the idioms that are examples of Intransitive Verbs with Prepositions

- **To run over:** to rehearse.
The teacher **ran over** his notes before he gave his lecture.
- **To go through:** to waste.
The store **went through** its whole supply of the popular sale item.
- **To get over:** to recover from.
Will he ever **get over** his love for the woman who left him?
- **To part with:** to sell.
I had to **part with** my car because the monthly payments were too high.
- **To take after:** to look like.
Tom **takes after** his father. They both have red hair and freckles (18-21)

1.3 Intransitive Verbs with Particles and Prepositions

- I can **put up with** some noise while I'm studying, but I can't accept loud noise.
- Some people **go in for** sports like football, while other people **go in** for hobbies like reading.
- You can **look up to** a teacher who really wants to help you and always does his or her best.
- Because he did a very poor job and came up with bad results, his boss felt that he hadn't **lived up to** his responsibilities.



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- We tried for hours to solve our problem; Sally **came up with** an answer after she studied the problem carefully (27).

Explanation of the idioms that are examples of Intransitive Verbs with Particles and Prepositions

- **To go in for:** to be interested. This idiom is often followed by a *verb + ing* form.
She **goes in for** reading intelligent, interesting books.
- **To get through to:** to make someone understand.
He never wants to talk about his problem; I've tried to **get through to him**, but he won't open up.
- **To do away with:** to abolish.
The state legislature **did away with** the death penalty; now the state can't punish criminals severely.
- **To work up to:** to advance to.
John **worked up to** supervisor after twenty years as assistant.
- **To run around with:** to associate with regularly, to hang around with.
If you **run around with** bad people, you'll turn into a criminal too (30-33).

4.1.2 Transitive Verbal Idioms

Also, for the Transitive Verbal Idioms, different prepositions or particles can be used to form verbal idioms.

Transitive Verbal Idioms are divided as follows: Transitive Verbs with Movable Particles, Transitive Verbs with Immovable Particles, Transitive Verbs with Prepositions, and Transitive Verbs with Particles and Prepositions.

2.1 Transitive Verbs with Movable Particles



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As its name says, the particles can be removed from the verb or they can go together, either of them. Once again, as they are inside of idioms, it is good to try to infer the meanings by the context. For example:

- Nothing he told me was true; I'm angry that he **made up** the whole story.
- You have always **carried out** your duties well so I am going to give you a raise.
- How did the accident happen? That man **brought about** the accident when he hit the other car.
- The tour organization **called off** the trip because so few people showed up at the first orientation meeting.
- When people open up to each other, they usually **talk over** their problems (49-50).

Explanation of the idioms that are examples of Transitive Verbs with Movable Particles

- **To bring up:** 1) to introduce, to present. 2) to rear.
When the president **brought up** the energy matter, the committee looked into it carefully.
- **To put off:** to postpone, to delay, to defer.
I want to think over this matter fully, so I will **put** my decision **off** until next week. (In this sentence, it can be observed that the particle *off* was separated from the verb *put*).
- **To point out:** to explain, to indicate.
The policeman **pointed out** several driving laws I had violated.
- **To make out:** to distinguish, to manage to see.
It was very foggy so it was hard to **make out** the figures of people on the side of the road.
- **To clear up:** to make clear, to clarify, to remove doubt.



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No nurse could understand the doctor's point until he **cleared it up** (52-55).

2.2 Transitive Verbs with Immovable Particles

The particles cannot be separated from the verbs. For example,

- Fifty states, including Alaska and Hawaii, **make up** the United States.
- The chairman and his assistants **carried on** their meeting in the restaurant because they could not hold it in the conference room.
- His physical health was so poor that he had to **give up** smoking and drinking.
- A skunk is a small black animal, with a white stripe down its back, which **gives off** a terrible smell.
- At first, the lazy student almost gave up but eventually he **put forth** greater effort (63).

Explanation of the idioms that are examples of Transitive Verbs with Immovable Particles

- **To lead (someone) on:** to deceive, to mislead.
The salesman **led me on** about the quality of the product so that I would buy it.
- **To do (something) over:** 1. to repeat, to do again.
2. to redecorate.
1. The student's homework was so bad that I told him to **do it over**.
2. The redecorating company **did** my whole house **over**.
- **To see (someone) off:** to say goodbye (upon someone's departure)
Tom's parents **saw** him **off** at the airport when he left home to try for a job in Europe.
- **To kick (something) around:** to discuss or consider informally.
Don't just **kick** his proposal **around**; go into it more deeply.



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- **To take up:** to begin work on; to start as a hobby or sport.
More American students should **take up** a foreign language and follow it through until they know it well (65-66).

2.3 Transitive Verbs with Prepositions

When prepositions are used, there must be an object. All the verbs with prepositions have direct objects. For example,

- He tried hard to get ahead, so I can't **hold** his failure **against** him.
- Ten U.S. Senators helped to **put** the bill **through** Congress; the President was very grateful for this special support.
- The successful student **drew** pleasure **from** the fact that he had passed all his exams.
- When the alcoholic was considering suicide, the helpful psychiatrist **pulled** him **through** this difficult period.
- I **put** freedom **above** money because, without freedom, money doesn't mean anything (74-75).

Explanation of the idioms that are examples of Transitive Verbs with Prepositions

- **To engage in:** to make busy, to make occupied.
The employer **engaged** his new workers **in** hard labor.
- **To confuse with:** to fail, to tell apart.
It's hard to tell the Smith twins apart, so people often **confuse** one brother **with** the other.
- **To devote to:** to make much effort in, to dedicate oneself to.
The teacher **devoted** much time **to** going over the vocabulary.
- **To put above:** to regard as more important than.
A good husband and wife who want to succeed will **put** their marriage **above** all else.



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- **To lend to:** to make important, to make believable.
Proof of outer space people would **lend** credence **to** a belief in UFO'S (77-78).

2.4 Transitive Verbs with Particles and Prepositions

- At first he stuck to his own opinion stubbornly, but finally we **brought** him **around to** our way of thinking.
- I know I need a lot of money if I want to take off one year from work in order to travel, so each month I am **setting** \$ 100 **aside for** this purpose.
- I have no authority to approve your plan; you'll have to **take it up with** the president before you proceed.
- If you really don't care where your family settles down, then **leave it up to** your wife to find the best place.
- Because Alice couldn't hold back her deep anger any more, she decided to open up and **have it out with** her selfish boyfriend (101-102)

Explanation of the idioms that are examples of Transitive Verbs with Particles and Prepositions

- **To bring around to:** to change someone's mind about, to convince about.
In a strike situation, workers try to **bring** management **around to** their point of view by refusing to work.
- **To let in on:** to allow to know (a secret); to allow to take part in (a secret situation)
He **let** her **in on** his secret so that they could talk it over and finally lay it to rest.
- **To take up with:** to consult with, to raise a subject with (usually a person of higher authority)
Did the student **take** the grading issue **up with** his teacher?
- **To get out of:** to gain from, to obtain from.



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I have **gotten** much useful information **out of** this business course, so I should **get** much money **out of** my first business venture.

- **To have (it) out with:** to discuss angrily with (until something is laid to rest).

Should you **have it out with** a friend who constantly takes unfair advantage of you? (103-106).

4.1.3. Nominal, Adjectival, and Adverbial Idioms

3.1 Nominal Forms: Pairs of Nouns

By saying *nominal*, it refers, relates, or consists of a name or names specifically. Remember that it is always a good idea if students realize the meaning of idioms by reading the context and clues words. For example,

- All three of his children look just like him because they are his **flesh and blood**.
- Tom's quick temper is **part and parcel** of his personality; he was born with it and will never change.
- After 100,000 miles, my car has suffered a lot of **wear and tear**, especially on the old engine.
- Before going on vacation, Joe had quite a few **odds and ends** to take care of, like loan payments and various errands.
- Although the supervisors and managers received salary increases, the **rank and file** didn't (121)

Explanation of the idioms that are examples of Nominal Forms: Pairs of Nouns

- **Ups and Downs:** good and bad times; difficulties.
All married couples have their **ups and downs**, but they usually survive.
- **Give and Take:** cooperation, compromise, concession.



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If married couples don't believe in **give and take**, then they will suffer ups and downs.

- **Ins and Outs:** all the details, the important parts.

The corporate president knows all the **ins and outs** of the business world, both good and bad.

- **Heart and Soul:** one's entire energy, all of one's efforts.

The opera singer put her **heart and soul** into the difficult performance.

- **Pins and Needles:** a condition of great excitement or nervous.

The scary lightning and thunder storm had me on **pins and needles** all evening; it was fun! (123-125)

3.2 Adjectival Forms: Various Compounds

In the Adjectival Forms a hyphen is necessary to be used to form the compounds. For example,

- To me, the points in his lecture were **clear-cut**; he was not just full of hot air.
- A person who is free and easy in attitude also is generally **easy-going** in behavior.
- When someone puts his heart and soul into his work, he makes an **all-out** effort to do the best possible job.
- On the other hand, a free and easy person will only make a **half-hearted** effort to do the minimum required.
- The policeman managed to stay **level-headed** in the confrontation with the armed bank robbers (147).

Explanation of the idioms that are examples of Adjectival Forms: Various Compounds

- **Man to Man:** sincere, direct, heart-to-heart.

Let's have a **man-to-man** talk about our financial problems.



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- **Narrow-minded:** prejudiced; limited, short-sighted.
We can say that people who discriminate against minorities are very **narrow-minded**.
- **First-rate:** excellent, superior, of the best quality.
That exciting movie certainly was **first-rate**!
- **Stuck-up:** snobbish, conceited; selfish.
Why is the football star too **stuck-up** to talk to me?
- **Close-mouthed:** uncommunicative; secretive.
Some people are basically **close-mouthed** about their personal feelings and opinions (150-151).

3.3 Various Adverbial Forms

An adverb usually modifies a verb or a sentence. Following, various adverbial forms are presented. For example,

- Even though I've tried many times to repair my car, **time and again** it won't start.
- She never has time to take a vacation: she's busy with her work **day in and day out**.
- My old friend used to visit me **now and again** on some weekends, but lately her visits have been few and far between.
- **For now** we'll go to work by bus, but soon we'll have to buy a car for convenience.
- John finally was able to quit smoking **for good**; he'll never touch another cigarette (156).

Explanation of the idioms that are examples of Various Adverbial Forms

- **By and large:** generally.
I don't like sour fruit like lemons **by and large**.
- **Little by little:** gradually.



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Little by little, the foreign student improved his English abilities.

- **All at once**: suddenly.

All at once the soldiers attacked the enemy to surprise them.

- **Sooner or later**: eventually.

Even if you are suffering ups and downs, things will improve **sooner or later**.

- **High and low**: everywhere.

Jeff had to look **high and low** before he could find his old high school yearbook (159-160).

These three types of idioms could be presented, and the most important ones could be chosen. According to some authors, such as Irujo, it is important that students have exposure to idioms; it is better if they learn and understand idioms of real life. From the idioms book study, it can be observed that the best way to infer the meanings of the idioms is by guessing from the context, by using synonyms, and by clue words.



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CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusions

From the qualitative and quantitative information analyzed, it was confirmed that idioms are important in learning the English language. Also, it could be seen that students do not have enough knowledge about this topic, which means they have to improve their study of idioms, since idioms are a very important part of the English language and culture.

According to the information gathered, the authors demonstrated that idiomatic expressions are a main part of the English language, and at the same time, one of the hardest topics of English language learning, either for second language learners or foreign language learners. This is why authors say that it is very important that teachers teach idiomatic expressions and that the most important idioms be taught.

Two methods were analyzed during the literature review in order to teach idioms, the Cognitive Linguistics Approach according to Croft and Cruse; and Multiple Intelligences according to Gardner. The Cognitive Linguistics Method expresses the cognitive ability that human beings have to conceptualize their experiences to be communicated through morphological and phonological categories and structures built up by their own recognition of certain expressions for specific occasions of use. On the other hand, Multiple Intelligences goes further than all traditional books and methods. According to Gardner, intelligence is a capacity that humans have in order to be able to process any kind of information that they encounter.

Also, the authors say that the best way for teaching is that students learn from real life events. It is not enough to provide students with a long list of idioms with their meanings in order that students memorize them; it is much better if



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teachers show their students how to understand idioms and how to use them in real situations and conversations. The best way for teaching idioms and their meanings is to make students have a wide vocabulary, so they can be able to understand the context, synonyms, and clue words that surround idioms.

Teachers must choose the correct activities to teach such an important topic, and be very careful at the moment of evaluating students' learning and understanding of idiomatic expressions.

Also, during this research, three types of idioms were chosen to be taught according to Ronald E. Feare. 1. Intransitive Verbal Idioms; 2. Transitive Verbal Idioms; and 3. Adjectival Forms: Various Compounds. Each type of idiom has its derivations with corresponding meanings and examples.

5.2 Recommendations

Through the survey, the interview analysis, and the bibliographic research, it was observed that the topic of idiomatic expressions is not very often taught in institutions, since teachers are accustomed to follow only the books and the topics within them without adding any extra information. So, it is advisable that teachers pay much more attention to teaching this topic, since it is an essential part of the English Language.

If teachers are working with this topic, it is not recommendable that they just give students a long list with idioms and their meanings to be memorized. First, teachers must provide students with vocabulary, so they do not have problems at the moment of encountering idioms. It is not an easy job, but if teachers train students well, students will not have too many problems in understanding idiomatic expressions, even if they have never seen a certain expression before.

As some authors have said, students will learn much better if they face idioms in real life, and if they learn how and when to use them.



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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1



SURVEY TO DETERMINE STUDENTS' KNOWLEDGE ABOUT IDIOMS

Age: _____

Level: _____

PART 1

1. Check the answer

An idiom is:

- A regular and common language _____
- A group of words whose meaning differs from the literal meaning of each word _____
- I don't know _____

2. Check the idioms



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- I love it _____
- Stand up _____
- Piece of cake _____
- Don't do it _____
- Get me an ice cream _____
- Break a leg _____
- Let's go to the movies _____
- You're the apple of my eye _____

3. Match the idioms with their meanings

- a. all ears _____ deeply in love
- b. cost an arm and a leg _____ fully listening
- c. head over heels _____ be very expensive
- d. learn by heart, know by heart _____ promise to keep a secret
- e. my lips are sealed _____ memorize

PART 2

4. Is it difficult for you to understand what an idiom is?

- Yes _____
- No _____

Why?



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5. Would you like to learn idiomatic expressions?

Yes _____

No _____

Why?

6. Do you consider the learning of them important?

Yes _____

No _____

Why?

7. How would you like to learn idioms?

By memorizing them _____

By understanding them _____

Through songs _____

Through conversations _____



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Why?

Thank you for your cooperation!

Have a nice day!



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APPENDIX 2

TEACHING AND USING IDIOMATIC EXPRESSIONS

Interview

1. Do you think teaching idioms is important? Why?
2. Is teaching idiomatic expressions hard? Why?
3. How much time do you need to teach idioms to advanced levels? Explain.
4. When is the best time to teach students idiomatic expressions?
5. Would it be a good idea to teach idiomatic expressions to basic levels?
6. Which method would you apply for teaching idioms? Explain.
7. Should teachers use idioms inside the class all the time? Why? Why not?
8. At which age do you think it would be good to teach idioms? Explain.
9. What methodology did you use in teaching this? Did it work? How did you feel at the end? Would you like to continue teaching this topic?



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TEACHING AND USING IDIOMATIC EXPRESSIONS

Interview

- Good morning! What's your name?
- Good morning! My name is Carla Hermoza
- I want to make this interview in order to get information about the teaching of idiomatic expressions, so now I'm going to start with the questions.

1. Do you think teaching idioms is important? Why?

Absolutely, I guess teaching idioms is an accurate way to express ideas in a real manner due to native speakers speaking that way and there is no reason to teach English which students will find troublesome, either to say something or to understand what a person is saying.

2. Is teaching idiomatic expressions hard? Why?

Yes, it is but at the same time it is the way people speak in their lives. I could not say that I want to learn Spanish just based on grammatical points and not by living it. I would say, on the other hand, that once a student gets used to a few, he/she can be able to develop a better understanding of many others depending on the context.

3. How much time do you need to teach idioms to advanced levels? Explain.

Well, if it is an advanced level they should be familiar with a considerable amount of Idioms. Therefore, I would use idioms every moment; of course, considering that if someone cannot understand any, I can surely explain the meanings.

4. When is the best time to teach students idiomatic expressions?



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Whenever it is possible. My idea to teach English is to do my best. I try to make a native environment because I know that English in class and outside are different, and I just want to make the least possible difference.

5. Would it be a good idea to teach idiomatic expressions to basic levels?

I think yes, but of course not that many due to the complexity that the majority have in meaning. I guess little by little is a good idea to make students get used to them.

6. Which method would you apply for teaching idioms? Explain.

I really like to bring pretty often music; students enjoy it a lot and some of them already know the songs; there are a lot of idioms in the lyrics and they are of course, real. Another way that I like to apply idioms in my class is the intrapersonal one; some students like to work alone because they get distracted when they work in groups.

7. Should teachers use idioms inside the class all the time? Why? Why not?

I know few teachers who use idioms in class; however, most don't do that for several reasons: they follow the textbook, some don't like to add extra information to what is being taught, and some others just see English from the grammatical point of view.

8. Which age do you think it would be good to teach idioms? Explain.

I think it is a good idea to teach idioms at any age; taking into account the level, age, and social background. I guess it is a great idea to teach idioms based on talking and music and projects in which students can express their own ideas and if they can add any idioms to their speech, that will be awesome.

9. What has been your experience in teaching this? Did it work? How did you feel at the end? If not, would you like to teach this topic?



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At the beginning it is hard because students feel too pushed; later on, they can feel comfortable when listening and by asking questions; or make them talk; they can start using idioms. It is all a process, and we, as teachers, must have so much patience. It is step by step and no one learns at the same pace.

Hermoza, Carla. Personal interview. March 22nd, 2012