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Teaching English Idioms to L2 Learners: ESL Teachers' Perspective

by

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Abstract

This study aims to investigate the perspective of ESL teachers on idioms in language teaching and learning. It looks into three major points that make idioms such an obstacle to English learners: a) the difficulty of idioms including comprehension and usage, b) language connection with culture, and c) methods of teaching idioms.

In this study, I surveyed ten native and nonnative English teachers (3 males and 7 females) whose ages ranged from 21 to 45 and older. All the participants were from the Intensive English Center IEC at St. Cloud State University SCSU. The survey consisted of eight open ended questions. It asked participants to write about their perspectives of teaching English idioms, the role idioms play in teaching ESL students, and the participants' methods of teaching idioms. Participants were asked to elaborate on their answers with the help of examples and situations from their experiences in the survey.

The results of the study show that all teachers without exceptions agreed that idioms play an important role in ELT which is a significant finding; the frequency of idioms magnifies their importance. Also, 70% of the participants agreed that idioms are difficult for ESL learners; however, 30% native teachers had contrasting opinions. That is, the difficulty of idioms lies in using them correctly. Participants agreed unanimously that there is a strong connection between idioms and culture. Participants understand the influence of culture on the profession. With regard to idiom teaching methodology, more than half the participants preferred to combine the explicit and the implicit approached to teach idioms in their classes. Two of the four remaining participants preferred the explicit approach and two preferred the implicit approach. Moreover, 60% of the teachers in the study found that teaching literary

terms to ESL learners is beneficial because understanding one aspect of language helped them

understand other aspects.

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Chapter I: Introduction

No doubt, idioms are an important part of language and culture around the world. Idioms cause difficulties for English as Second Language (ESL) learners because their meanings are unpredictable. Nonnative speakers can find themselves in "hot water" for example when encountered with idioms. To many ESL or English as a foreign language, EFL, learners, idioms are a stumbling block in their way to learn English. Obviously, this is because the meaning of the words that constitute an idiom does not match the intended meaning of the idiom. This study looks at the reasons behind the difficulties of English idioms that learners encounter in listening, reading, and speaking. Also, it looks at practical methods to teach idioms.

According to Irujo (1986b), "idioms do not say what they mean' because they are not literal" (p. 326). It is not only the meaning of idioms that Second language L2 learners struggle with, but also the proper usage of idioms. Irujo stated that using idioms correctly is a very difficult task for English learners even if they know the intended meanings. Therefore, mastering idioms becomes a hard goal for L2 learners since the meaning of the text cannot be determined through individual analysis of each word (Chuang, 2013).

From another dimension, the difficulty of idioms probably stems from the fact that idioms are deeply rooted in the culture of the target language. There are morals, themes, and stories behind idioms and L2 learners do not have a chance to learn and read about them. Cakir (2011) pointed out that idioms are the reflection of customs, cultural beliefs, specific features, social attitudes and norms of a society. Cakir's viewpoint echoes the relationship between culture and language that Brown (1994) drew; language and culture are two parts of

each other; they should never be separated. Therefore, it is important for language learners to have some background knowledge of the culture of the language they are learning. To me a culture without a language or a language without a culture is inconceivable and impossible in reality because they produce each other; separating them would be like a book without scripts or a body without a soul. According to Jiang (2000) "language is the mirror of culture, in the sense that people can see a culture through its language" (p. 328).

Idioms are so commonly used that L2 learners would come across them in all form of discourse such as conversations, lectures, books, and newspapers (Cooper, 2012) and "especially in movies and TV" (P 234). Native speakers use a plethora of idioms during the course of each day. In this regard, Cakir (2011) stated that people sometimes a flourish to their opinions with these cultural-specific expressions, and it requires an efficient competence in the target language to achieve successful communication.

Although idioms and most figurative expressions are used extensively by native speakers in all form of discourse, they seem to be a neglected topic in L2 teaching materials (Tarcaoanu, 2012). According to Asl (2013) and Wray (2000), idioms received less attention in particularly in EFL settings because teachers try to simplify the English language to their students and most of the focus is directed to grammar rules. Recently, Khan and Daşkin (2014) presented through their analysis of teacher-trainees' materials and they hardly found idiomatic expressions to teach English learners. This lack of understanding of idiomatic expressions then can lead to communication failure. According to Cakir (2011), it is important to concentrate on the sociocultural aspects of the target language such as idioms, proverbs, and metaphors in foreign language teaching. L2 learners frequently confront idiomatic

expressions when they come across idioms in their reading and listening. Cakir (2011) concluded that the more language teachers use idioms in classroom activities, the better students master them.

Statement of Problem

After presenting the problem of English idioms, it is appropriate to state the purpose of the study. This study concerns itself with ESL teachers' perspective on idioms in language teaching and learning. It looks at three major points that make idioms such a complicated obstacle to English learners: a) difficulty of idioms including comprehension and usage, b) language connection with culture, and c) methods of teaching idioms.

1. My research questions for this study are

2. How do teachers perceive the teaching of idioms?

3. What are teachers' perceptions of the relationship between language, culture, and idioms? Which method of teaching idioms in L2 does teacher prefers the traditional method or the conceptual metaphors instruction?

Chapter II: Literature Review

It is essential at the beginning of the study to define idioms and understand what they are. There are ongoing debates on what constitutes an idiom. Different viewpoints about the definition of idioms are displayed in this section of the study. The Webster Dictionary defines idioms as, "an expression whose meaning cannot be predicted from the usual meanings of its constituent elements." An idiom is described as a group of words that have a specific meaning; one cannot figure its meaning through literal translation (Bateni, 2010). According to Cain, Oakhill, and Lemmon (2005), an idiom is a "figurative expression that usually can be interpreted literally but that takes a nonliteral meaning when used in a specific context" (p. 66). Grant and Bauer (2004) have a more technical definition, that is, the term idiom is used to include a wide variety of different types of multi-word units (MWUs). They believe the term MWU comprises idioms and "open and restricted collocations" (p. 38); however, MWUs does not include the category of phrasal verbs. Also, they defined MWU as a "fixed and recurrent pattern of lexical material sanctioned by usage'' (p. 38). Idioms, metaphors, similes, and proverbs belong to the category of "nonliteral" or figurative language which is difficult to interpret and to learn because they do not mean what they literally state.

According to Irujo (1986b) idioms are "conventionalized expressions" whose meaning cannot be determined from the meaning of their parts and they differ from other figurative expressions such as similes and metaphors (p. 288). According to Van der Merwe and Adendorff (2012), similes have more explicit meaning than idioms. They even have simpler grammatical structure than idioms. Similes are more easily understood than other figurative

language because simile is explicit comparison while metaphor is implicit comparison (Roberts & Kreuz, 1994).

Idioms are particular expressions consisting of at least two words occur more frequently than proverbs and the other nonliteral expressions in written and spoken language. In other words, L2 learners cannot infer the meaning of the figurative language neither from the context nor from the translation of individual words in a string because the literal meaning does not lead to the actual intended meaning.

After defining idioms, it is time to review the research regarding them. Earlier studies on English idioms only involved native speakers such as (Kainulainen, 2006, p. 30; Titone & Connine, 1994). Other researchers focused on the frequency of English idioms such as (Grant, 2007; Liu, 2003). Asl (2013) adds few studies focused on finding a suitable method in teaching idiomatic expressions.

Recently, much of the attention has been on teaching idioms to L2 learners after the recognition of the significant role that idioms play in learning English (Cooper, 2012; Irujo, 1986a; Liontas, 2003). Other studies were devoted to explain the processing of L2 idioms and the role of L1 in the process such as Kellerman study (1983). Samani and Hashemian (2012) stated that learning idioms not only assists language learners in better communication, but also helps them learning the culture and society of the target language. Also, Elkilic (2008) stated that English is rich with idioms and learning them constitutes the soul of the language. With regard to idiom usage, Stight (1979) stated that the proper use of idioms is an important part of learning a second language.

Before addressing the three major points of this study, it is important to look at the classification of idioms. Irujo (1986a) divided idioms into three types; identical, similar and different. These classifications were according to the similarity between the first language, L1, and second language, L2. Her study was to investigate whether or not L2 learners rely on their native language to comprehend and produce L2 idioms. The results of her study portrayed that identical and similar idioms between the two languages were easy to comprehend and produce, whereas different idioms between the two languages were hard to comprehend and produce. A similar study was done by Cakir (2011). In his study, 62 students in the English department in a Turkish university had to write the equivalents of English idioms in their L1, Turkish. The results revealed that identical and similar idioms were easily interpreted because the participants were able to supply the Turkish equivalent correctly. However, with regard to the different idioms, students were unable to perceive their meanings simply because such idioms do not exist in the students' mother tongue language.

Difficulty of Idioms; Comprehension and Usage

No doubt, L2 learners encounter difficulties during the acquisition of the English language. Understanding idioms is one of these difficulties. According to Cooper (2012), L2 learners would encounter idioms in all kind of discourse; news, lectures, movies, books and daily conversations. Furthermore, Chuang (2013) denoted in her research study that mastering these multiword units or language chunks is not easy for language learners since the meanings of these texts cannot be determined through the analysis of their individual word meanings. Therefore, idioms represent a hindrance in the linguistic development of L2 learners.

Because of the difficulty of understanding idioms, this section looks into reading processes to see how idioms are comprehended. Generally, language receptive organs transmit data to the brain to be processed and the brain performs what is known as comprehension. Data, in this context, refers to language in either form written or heard. Therefore, comprehension is defined as the process of understanding that requires mental operations. These operations are divided into two levels; the low-level and high-level and they take place simultaneously. Two well-known models depict reading processes: the text model and the situational model. For details about reading comprehension processing, check Grabe (2009).

With regard to idiom comprehension, Holsinger and Kaiser (2013) stated that it is less clear how comprehenders arrive at the idiomatic interpretation. They wondered whether literal processing is necessary to reach the idiomatic interpretation. They found that context clues have an essential role to play during reading processes. The results of their research study revealed that when readers expect a literal interpretation in a situation where the sentence turns out to be idiomatic, real-time processing is disrupted more than if comprehenders are expecting an idiomatic interpretation and the sentence turns out to be literal. Their study revealed that idiomatic texts consume more time be comprehended than literal ones.

Interestingly, models of processing idioms are two types in terms of accessing the idiomatic meaning first or the literal meaning. The first type proposes that literal computation has priority over access to idiomatic meaning whereas the other type proposes that idiomatic and literal processes occur independently of each other. Investigating the first type, I found two hypotheses: Configuration Hypothesis and Hybrid Representation Hypothesis. According

to Cacciari and Tabossi (1988), the Configuration Hypothesis proposed that literal processing precedes access to idiomatic meaning. That is to say, readers proceed with literal interpretation until they are faced with sufficient cues to recognize words as being an idiomatic, then the idiomatic meaning is retrieved and enters into the comprehension processes. Further, literal processing has priority over idiomatic processing and it proceeds automatically. Cacciari and Tabossi claimed that literal processing is the default and logical mode we follow to interpret texts. Similarly, the Hybrid Representation Hypothesis favored the primacy of literal processing over the idiomatic processing (Cutting & Bock, 1997). That is, when we read, we always think of the literal meaning. Then we think of the idiomatic meaning when we see sufficient clues in the text.

Contrary to the models that support the dominance of literal processing, Bobrow and Bell (1973) suggested the Lexical model. This model viewed idioms as big words and they are linked directly with semantic information so computational interpretation needed for these connection. The Lexical model believes idiomatic and literal processes occur in parallel. In similar fashion, Gibbs (1980) proposed the Direct Access model which accesses the idiomatic interpretation of text.

Language Connection with Culture

No doubt, there is an intimate relationship between language and culture. They are inseparable. Words and expressions people produce convey their cultures. According to Jiang (2000), language is a part of culture and plays an important role in it. Jiang stated that the "referents of language" are the events, states, entities, processes, characteristics, and relations that exist in the culture, whether these are referred to by single words or by phrases (p. 332).

Jiang's study concluded that there is always an interactive influence between language and culture and they cannot exist without each other because they "combine to form a living organism" (p. 328).

Nida (1998) considered culture to be "more extensive than language," that is, a single word can refer to different concepts in different cultures. Language forms we use carry meanings that are not interpreted alike because they are associated with culture. The opposite is also true, people from different cultures point to different things by using the same language forms. The word lunch for example, refers to pizza and hamburger in American culture while it refers to steamed bread or rice in the Chinese culture (p. 29).

In the same vein, Brown (1994) portrayed the relationship between language and culture as an intricately interwoven relationship. Separating the two is infeasible and if it happened the significance of either language or culture would be lost (p. 165). Jiang (2000) listed few metaphors about language and culture in her study that deserve mentioning, i.e., language is the mirror of culture and people can see a culture through its language.

Since language and culture are densely intertwined (Pulverness, 2003) and the relationship between L2 teaching and L2 culture is "seamless" (Kramsch, 2001), many research studies have emphasized that without the study of culture teaching L2 is "inaccurate and incomplete" (Genc & Bada, 2005, p. 73). Acquiring a new language is more than learning its grammar and vocabulary. According to Bada (2000) there is a need for cultural literacy in language teaching because learners come across "significant hardship" in communicating meaning to native speakers as a result of being unexposed to cultural elements of the L2 society (p. 101).

Methods of Teaching Idioms

Since native speakers use a numerous of idioms during the course of every day and since it is important to teach idioms to L2 learners, teaching idioms received much more attention recently and it becomes a topic in teaching ESL and EFL after it was a neglected topic (Tărcăoanu, 2012). It is important to have a clear view on how to implement a methodology to teach idioms. However, the argument between the traditional method and the conceptual metaphors instruction on how to teach idioms is not over.

ESL and EFL teachers have a variety of methods to apply in their classes in order to teach idioms. These teaching methods can be organized under two broad methods. The traditional method encourages teaching idioms explicitly in context. Or the conceptual metaphor method that teaches English idioms after obtaining some knowledge of the terms. The traditional method teaches idioms in context, Liontas (2003) stated that the context can effectively facilitate understanding as well as learning and teaching of idioms and idiomatic expressions. Liontas's study concluded that "the absence of context" creates obstacles "on learning and comprehending idioms" (p. 288). Within the method of teaching idioms explicitly in context, there are two competing views; teaching idioms with an extended context and with a limited context. Kainulainen (2006) emphasized the role of extended context over limited context to assist L2 learners comprehend idioms correctly. Kainulainen concluded her study by stating that the more contexts surround an idiom, the more likely the L2 learner participants will come to the correct meaning.

Another study conducted by Asl (2013) aimed at finding a suitable method for teaching idiomatic expressions and idioms. The study also contended that extended context

such as stories, have a significant effect on learning idioms and idiomatic expressions than directly teaching the meaning of the expressions. It is a similar case of teaching vocabulary; teaching vocabulary in context is better than teaching laundry lists of vocabulary alone. Asl interpreted the results in the light of the schema theory. That is to say, long contexts such as stories activate large number of schemata and short contexts activate small number of schemata. Engaging large number of schemata in processing the context is "helpful" for learning and retaining the meaning of idioms (p. 8).

The other method suggests teaching English idioms through the conceptual metaphor. According to Lakoff (1987), conceptual metaphor refers to the connection between two sematic areas at the level of thought. And according to Richards (1967), language is virtually metaphorical (p. 80). The essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 5). Lakoff and Johnson claimed that metaphor is not a "matter of language", words. It is our conceptual system that is metaphorically structured and defined (p. 6) and the meaning of many idioms depends on the metaphorical conceptual system (Samani & Hashemian, 2012). Conceptual metaphor can facilitate the comprehension of idioms. Being unaware of metaphorical concepts or unfamiliar with them, L2 learners often do not understand and do not use metaphors in "natural communication" (p. 250). Lakoff and Johnson (1980) recommended teachers and learners of L2 to be aware of the conceptual metaphor of the target language to be able to understand idioms.

In order to apply the conceptual metaphor method, English learners need to obtain some knowledge of literature terms such as metaphor, metonymy, simile and personification.

This knowledge of literature is gained through special classes and courses. For example, Lexical Competence and The Application of Metaphoric Expressions in Translation were two similar courses in two different studies. The former was conducted by Cakir (2011) on Turkish learners of English and the later by Samani and Hashemian (2012) on Iranian learners of English. The Conceptual Metaphor Theory by Lakoff and Johnson in 1980 was behind the idea in both courses where understating one idea in terms of another, similar to simile. Students were taught that metaphor is an important means of expression in human languages, the written and spoken form. The courses delivered ideas like figure of speech to students to assist them to comprehend idioms. According to Adkins (1968), predicting the meaning from context exercises and dealing with figurative expressions allows learners to widen their horizons to understand and learn new unknown idioms. Participants who were enrolled in the suggested classes to obtain some knowledge of literature in the study of Cakir (2011) and Samani and Hashemian (2012) outperformed those who did not take the classes.

Samani and Hashemian (2012) argued against the traditional method of teaching idioms favoring the conceptual metaphors instruction because it allow L2 learners to express inner thoughts, views, ideas, and emotions the way native speaker do, Cakir (2011) emphasized teaching idioms and utilize all possible means to develop students "pragmatic competence." Cakir stated that teaching idioms only is not enough; they should be practiced and produced by learners (p. 378). However, the traditional method should not be abandoned because some idioms have literal meaning (Li, 2010). Conceptual metaphor teaching method is an "effective complement" in idiom teaching and learning (p. 207).

In order to apply conceptual metaphors in idioms teaching, Li (2010) suggested three aspects to consider. The metaphorical competence of the ESL teachers should be developed because they are the implementers of the conceptual metaphor theory, first. Second, students' metaphorical awareness should be raised by informing them that metaphors are not only regarded as "poetical or rhetorical embellishments." Third, cultural background should be underestimated word missing because having different religion beliefs and world views as well as living in different environment and geographical affect our "metaphorical mode of thinking" (p. 209). The study of Samani and Hashemian (2012) showed that it would be beneficial for L2 learners to interpret English idioms by implementing the conceptual metaphor instruction. Teaching learners that metaphor is "a way of explaining, describing, and evaluating ideas to understand and communicate abstract ideas in our everyday activities" (p. 250).

Along the same vein, Feng (2007) carried out an experiment on Taiwanese learners of English and considered the usefulness of conceptual metaphors and metonymies in improving idiom comprehension. Comparing the results of the posttest and the pretest of the same group, Feng noticed that the test scores showed improvement because few types of metaphors were taught to the learners during the period of the study. The "underlying knowledge" of idioms seemed to facilitate and increase learners' comprehension of unfamiliar idioms. Feng claimed that the proficiency level of the learners is a salient factor to understand idioms beside the cultural background of the target language (as cited in Chuang, 2013, p. 64). Chuang, also, added the comprehension of idioms is impacted by several factors; conceptual metaphor theory knowledge, the size of vocabulary, and the proficiency level of the learners. He stated

that few researchers such as (Gibbs, 1992; Hamblin & Gibbs, 1999) have claimed that conceptual metaphor facilitate the comprehension of idioms which was based on the theory of the Conceptual Metaphor suggested by Lakoff and Johnson in the early 1980s.

Chapter III: Methodology

Participants

I surveyed ten native and nonnative, novice native, English speaking teachers (3 males and 7 females) whose ages ranged from 21 to 45 and older. All the participants were from the Intensive English Center (IEC) at St. Cloud State University (SCSU). Most of the participants hold a master degree in TESL or are pursuing one. The demographic information was collected from the participants in order to understand the viewpoints of native and nonnative teachers about idioms. There is a shared feature among all the participants which are speaking a second language beside their mother tongue language. The majority of the participants taught English for three semesters in the IEC beside their previous experiences in EFL setting. In this study, all names are pseudonyms to protect the identity of the participants.

Procedures

After the approval of the IRB permission to conduct the survey, I emailed invitations to IEC teachers to participate in the study and assigned a meeting time. I explained the purpose of the study and had them sign the consent forms. Some of the participants preferred to spend more time with the survey. Therefore, they were given the survey and returned them in a week.

Instrument

The survey had eight open ended questions. The questions asked participants to write about their perspectives of teaching English idioms and the role idioms play in teaching ESL. Appendix C contains the eight questions for the survey. Participants were asked and

encouraged to elaborate on their answers with the help of examples and situations from their experiences in the survey.

The goal was to recruit participants from both genders with a variety of teaching experiences. The survey asked the participants about their perspectives regarding idioms and their methods of teaching idioms; the traditional or conceptual metaphor method.

Analysis

This is a qualitative research study. To analyze the data of such a study, I looked for patterns and key words (Nunan & Bailey, 2009, p. 416) that answer my research questions. I looked for points where opinions of the participants intersected and conflicted. I connected these opinions with participants' reasonable justifications.

I scanned the data for significant similar and dissimilar concepts that were related to the cultural background of the participants and their experiences. Therefore, I organized the related ideas into groups. My analysis was similar to the Card sort technique of Lincoln and Guba method mentioned in (Nunan & Bailey, 2009, p. 424). However, I wrote the replies, the main ideas, of the survey questions in tables under the participants' name as a heading. Then, I grouped similar and identical answers together. After organizing the tables, I found four major topics, categories, across the responses of the participants: importance of idioms, difficulties of idioms, relationship between culture and idioms, and teaching methods of idioms.

Eight survey questions created to address the three research questions of the study. Two of the eight questions, five and six, were used as a tool to validate the viewpoints of the participants. Research question one asked about the way ESL teachers regard idioms in

English language teaching (ELT). Participants' perceptions discussed on three topics: the importance of idioms, the difficulty of idioms to ESL learners, and considering idioms as part of the curricula in ELT. Each topic was addressed separately in the survey, specifically the first three questions.

The relationship between culture and idioms is the topic of research question two. The survey, question four, investigated the participants' understanding of this relationship and it's reflections on ELT. This relationship explained part of the difficulty issue that learners experience interpreting idioms. Through the last two survey questions, research question three looked into some of the suggested pedagogical methods of teaching idioms in ELT and which of the methods the participants prefer to use or already using in their classes.

Chapter IV: Results

The results in this section are presented in tables according to the survey questions order. The first three questions of the survey address research question one that asked how teachers perceive the teaching of idioms. Table 1 below illustrates the responses of the participants about the importance of idioms, the difficulty of idioms, and the inclusion of separate classes to teach idioms to ESL. Since there were only 10 participants in the study, each 10% presents an individual. In general, the replies to the yes\no questions were positive. All teachers without exceptions approved that idioms play an important role in ELT which is a significant finding. Both native and nonnative teachers justified their opinions that the frequency of idioms magnifies their importance.

Table 1

Results of Research Question One through Three

Q	Survey Questions	Yes	No
1	Do you believe that idioms play an important role in teaching and learning English? What do you think makes idioms important?	100%	0%
2	Do you think idioms are difficult to learn? What do you think the reasons are for the difficulties in learning idioms?	70%	30%
3	From your teaching experience, do you support the concept of having classes that teach English idioms to second language learners and why?	50%	50%

With regard to the difficulty of idioms, 70% of the participants agreed that idioms are difficult for ESL learners. However, three native teachers had contrasting opinions that the difficulty lies in using idioms correctly. NNES rarely use English idioms as if they avoid using idioms intentionally because of the difficulty of usage. Idioms are simple phrases that

can be easily memorized, but it is an application issue. Question three divided the participants into two equal groups. Half of the teachers advised to implement courses to teach idioms in ESL programs. Whereas, the other half of the participants found the idea of separate classes were unnecessary.

Table 2

Results of Research Question Four through Six

QN	Survey Questions	Yes	No
4	Do you think there is a relationship between idioms and culture? What kind of the relationship do they have?	100%	0%
5	Have you ever had a situation that your students were confused because you mentioned an idiom?	90%	10%
6	How often do you use idioms in your classes?	Always – Rare	

Participants agreed unanimously that there is a strong connection between idioms and culture. Participants understand the influence of culture on the profession. However, only a few participants were able to define this relationship. Some described this relationship by two words; for example, idioms are "cultural products" and idioms are "reflections of culture". Others elaborated their answers with examples. Question five and six were used as tools to confirm the viewpoints of the participants. The two questions evoked memories of stories that happened with the participants. For example, a student took umbrage at an idiom (sick as a dog) one of the participants used in her class to describe the attendance policy. The student did not like the simile in the idiom and felt offended by being compared with a dog. In question five, almost all the participants had situations when their students misunderstood the

meaning of idioms.   On the other hand, one nonnative teacher, Hala who followed her teachers' footsteps, excluded idioms from her teaching instructions because she did not want to confuse her students. She knew that idioms could be difficult for them because the literal meaning of idioms do not tell the intended meaning. The responses of question six ranged from always to rarely, but none of them wrote never because idioms are inevitable.

Table 3

Results of Research Question Seven

QN	Survey Questions	Percentage of Each Method		
7	Which method do you prefer to use if you teach English idioms to L2 learners?	Explicit 20%	Implicit 20%	Both 60%

Table 3 shows the preference of idiom teaching methods that the participants use in their classes. For this question, 20% of the participants stated that idioms are already vague and the implicit approach complicated the meaning of idioms and the teaching process. Offering the direct meaning is fast and easy for learners and teachers. However, 20% of the participants found the implicit method is more useful and helpful. Rich context, in stories, helps idioms interpretation and retention. Believing in the efficiency of the both methods, 60% of the teachers chose a mixed approach of the two. Of course, choosing a method depends on the context and the idiom encountered.

Table 4

Results of Research Question Eight

QN	Survey Questions	Yes	No
8	From your teaching experience, is it useful to teach literary terms to assist L2 learners interprets idioms?	60%	40%

According to Table 4 above, 60% of the teachers in the study found that teaching literary terms to ESL learners is beneficial because understanding one aspect of language, figurative language, helped them understand other aspects. Some of these participants specified that the conceptual metaphor method works better for advanced level. However, 40% of the participants found this method to contradict some of the student's goal. For example, an engineer is less likely to encounter this kind of language.

Discussion

Despite the diversity of the cultural backgrounds, different teaching experiences, and varied age ranges of the participants, there is a general consensus of opinions among the participants about how they perceived idioms in ELT and the relationship between culture and idioms. However, they had different positions regarding idioms pedagogy. In many occasions, the participants' responses and elaborations intertwined with other ideas within the study. However, the discussion follows the chronological order of the survey questions to answer the research questions which organized the topics mentioned in the analysis;

1. The importance of idioms.

2. The difficulty of idioms.

3. The relationship between idioms and culture.

4. The teaching methods of idioms.

Table 5 presents the participants' reasons about their opinions in the four major topics in the study. A comparison between the opinions of the native and nonnative ESL teachers is beyond the scope of this study. The purpose of the study was to obtain a general vision of the

teachers in the field about idioms in ELT. The participants' opinions were considered to complete the general vision.

Table 5

Summary of the Four Main Topics

Topics	Reasons stated by participants	
Importance of idioms	• Inevitable • Frequent • Common • Unavoidable	
Difficulties of idioms	• Illusive. • Not guessed easily. • Difficult to use. • Carry cultural and historic information. • Different from L1 idioms.	
Relationship between culture and idioms	• Idioms reflect and represent culture. • Better understand culture. • Carry casual conversation. • Explain cultural values and beliefs. • Products of cultures.	
Teaching methods of idioms	Explicit	• Raise awareness. • Works with simple idioms. • Idioms are already vague. • Implicit method complicates meaning. • Works for all levels of proficiency.
	Implicit	• More meaningful. • Easier to remember. • Rich context help interpret the meaning.
	Conceptual Metaphor	• Works for advanced levels. • Require more explanations. • Students' major must be considered.

Topic One—Importance of Idioms

With regard to, the role of idioms in ELT all the participants asserted that idioms play an important role in language learning and teaching. Idioms are an important aspect of language that should not be skipped from language curricula. Different reasons were given to justify their stances that are consistent with previous studies. Some of the participants stated that idioms obtained their significance from their frequent usage, especially in oral communication. This viewpoint agrees with Cooper's (2012) that ESL learners find idioms in all kind of discourses including: TV, movies, books, and lectures.

Other participants, mostly the native speakers, described idioms with adjectives such as inevitable, necessary, and unavoidable. Learners should be aware of idioms for two reasons. First, idioms sometimes communicate context that cannot be expressed literally. Second, idioms allow learners to follow casual conversation. Cakir (2011) explained that people sometimes prefer to express their opinions with these cultural specific expressions. Cakir advised to focus on the sociocultural aspects of the Target Language. Lara, a native speaker, felt idioms saved time and explanations because some idioms express thoughts and feelings clearer than just words. Lara's example was (under the weather) which allows people to avoid unnecessary details about their illness while still conveying the idea that they are sick. However, the case with nonnative speakers is different because idioms sometimes complicate the message for them instead of clarifying it. This issue is addressed in the study of Bloomfield et al (2011) that the passage is hard for nonnative speakers if it contains "any culturally specific vocabulary or idioms" (p. 38). Participants were agreed in their answers

that idioms play an important role in teaching and learning English and their frequent usage

magnifies their importance.

Rosa, a nonnative ESL teacher, highlighted a few points that require attention beside

the importance of idioms in her response. Rosa mentioned that misinterpretation of idioms

might lead to communication failure. Her reply echoed what Khan and Daşkin (2014)

mentioned that the L2 learners' lack of understanding and unfamiliarity with idioms cause

communication failure. Excerpt 1 shows the response of Rosa and her thoughts in survey

question one:

> Well, I do think that idioms play an important role in any language and so in teaching or learning that language. Language is all about culture and idioms are an important part for representing the culture of the language. You are what you speak. In addition, understanding idioms is really important for second language learners to communicate successfully using their second language because if they treat idioms as individual words they may fail to communicate correctly. For example, In English when we say "blood is thicker than water" students may understand it literally as a fact that blood is thicker than water, while the correct meaning is far away from what they think.

Topic Two—Difficulty of Idioms

Participants offered several rational reasons that make idioms difficult for English

language learners. Starting from the English idiom example from Rosa's excerpt above, Rosa

presented the definitions of idioms showing that the meaning of an idiom is not the result of

the meaning of its constituent words (Bateni, 2010; Cain, Oakhill, & Lemmon, 2005; Irujo,

1986b). If ESL learners tend to think that way, which they usually do, they misinterpret the

message or miss a moment of using an idiom correctly.

From another nonnative ESL teacher's point of view, there are more explanations

about idioms difficulties. Sara completed the picture that Rosa drew about the difficulty of

idioms. Sara mentioned that the vocabulary and grammar of everyday English are different from what one learns at school. She emphasized that teachers should take the time to explain idioms whenever they occur to avoid confusions and misuses. Her respond to the question was consistent with Noorolhoda and Zahra (2011) who stated that "just a good command of grammar and vocabulary is not enough" to become fluent in L2 (p. 1233).

From another perspective, Fatima proposed that outdated and infrequent idioms are hard to learn and remember (e.g., fit as a fiddle and a ballpark figure). It is similar to Rosa's opinion that some idioms are rarely heard in the real life situations. A "piece of cake" is easy to understand and remember because people hear it often in everyday life. Marry and Khaled evoked the same idea of the definition of idioms that their meanings can't be guessed easily and their forms are not concretely linked to meaning. They pointed out that the difficulty of idioms stems from the distance between the surface meaning of the words and their meaning as a group in context. Another participant, Hala, mentioned the issue of finding the equivalent idiom in the native language. It seems that the equivalent idiom in L1 is crucial for understanding and using English idioms. Excerpt 2 illustrates Hala's thought of the equivalent idiom in L1eloquently,

> What makes it harder to learn idioms is the difficulty to find an equivalent idiom that presents the same meaning in students' native language to understand and use it correctly in L2. This is why there are idioms that are easier to learn than others; sometimes their meanings can be guessed and understood by the meanings of the individual words, such as "actions speak louder than words."

In the same vein, Sara attributed the understanding difficulty of English idioms to the lack of the religious, cultural, and historical information of L2 (e.g., on clouds nine and catches 22). There are stories and beliefs underlie some idioms that language learners are not

aware of or never had a chance to learn them. The explanations offered by Sara and Hala approached the third category of idioms in Irujo study (1986a) that different L2 idioms, from L1, are difficult to understand.

Two other participants looked at idioms through the students' lens. Ali raised a remarkable claim that the correct usage of idioms is more difficult than learning idioms. Ali also agreed with Rosa that abstract ideas in some idioms and figurative language are among the obstacles that language learners find in learning English. Ali's claim coincided with Irujo's study. Irujo (1986b) stated that it is not only the meaning of idioms that L2 learners struggle with, but also the proper usage of idioms. Excerpt 3 below shows Ali's response the usage issue of idioms.

> I don't think that the idiom itself is hard to understand (being merely a phrase that can be memorized), but they are hard to use correctly, in the proper context. The difficulties with learning and/or using idioms come from the figurative meaning that often is quite illusive, especially for the L2 learner. An easy idiom example is 'it's raining cats and dogs' but a more difficult one would be 'by the skin of your teeth' which requires much explanation.

Topic one focused the discussion on the viewpoints of the participants about the importance of idioms in ELT. Topic two focused on the reasons behind the difficulty of learning idioms that ESL learners encounter. Since idioms play a significant role in ELT, and they are difficult for ESL learners, I wanted to know the participants' perspective about teaching English idioms within language courses or courses just for idioms. It is fascinating to see the controversial distinction between teachers' perspectives about the necessity of teaching idioms to ESL learners. Half of the participants supported the idea of teaching English idioms to ESL learners in classes just for idioms. The other half of the participants wanted to integrate idioms into classes such as conversation, speaking and listening or culture.

Lara who is a NES indicated that teaching idioms would be fun, interesting, and engaging for students. Such classes promote students' self-confidence which allows them to hold conversations with native speakers. Lara criticized the lack of idioms in teaching materials that gives students a negative impression about learning idioms while they are commonly used by native speakers.

Fatima pointed out that idioms should be explained explicitly in context because the meaning cannot be inferred easily from the definitions of the words themselves. Dedicated classes for this purpose would be useful. If such a class was not an option, Fatima felt that listening and speaking courses are the best classes to teach idioms not writing because writing is a more academic and formal discourse.

Similarly, Ali believes in teaching; English; holistically. Focusing on some aspects such as grammar, reading, and writing at the expense of other skills, speaking, would affect the outcomes of language teaching courses. According to Ali, it is rare to find fluent L2 learners who encompass idioms in their speech. He added, although those learners might know the meaning of many English idioms, they rarely employ them. It is advisable that teachers encourage students to learn frequent idioms in order to sound natural as native speakers. Ali suggested that idioms be integrated with cultural classes to be taught to ESL learners. Learners should taste the beauty of the language and its culture to share with native speakers as a part of assimilation. It is an unfortunate that learning idioms is not a priority for ESL learners; they are missing an important cultural element.

The other half of the participants did not support teaching idioms in separate classes. Surprisingly, the three NNES participants felt that idioms should not be taught on their own.

Sara expressed her opinion by stating that idioms have low priority and there should not be classes assigned for them. Instead, idioms should be addressed during authentic use in written or spoken text in order to be acquired naturally. According to Sara, a lot of ESL students skip the idiom part in a passage, for example, believing that idioms are extra details that should not be a concern. In the same way, Hala believes that it is the responsibility of students to learn idioms because if students find idioms useful, they learn idioms by themselves. The need to learn motivates students to learn and use idioms.

Rosa had a slightly deviated view from Sara and Hala. Although Rosa agreed that idioms play an important role; in ELT, she supported the concept of including idioms in the curricula, but not strictly as an added feature, as a class by itself as some language courses do. Rosa suggested including idioms in class discussion but not focusing on them because sometimes their importance to L2 learners is very slight. For example, it would be beneficial if ESL teachers use idioms that fit situations appropriately (e.g., hit the nail on the head and it's raining cats and dogs) and explain their meaning quickly without interrupting the flow of the class.

Topic Three—The Relationship between Idioms and Culture

All the 10 participants approved that there is a strong relationship between idioms and culture. They realize the impact of culture on the profession and understand it. However, only few of them defined this bond. Some described this relationship by two words and some elaborated with examples.

According to the participants, idioms assist ESL learners to better understand the culture of the TL. Moreover, idioms illustrate aspects of the culture in the TL which provide a

deeper understanding of the language and its culture. Although Sara and Ali have different nationalities and cultural backgrounds, they agreed that idioms are products of culture that they come from. Ali considered the fact that idioms need to be explained to those learners from outside the culture demonstrates the close connection between idiom and culture. Simply, ESL learners do not understand idioms because they do not understand its culture. The idiom that Ali gave was closer to an acronym rather than to be an idiom. Ali believed that (FUBAR) is tied to culture, but perhaps "all thumbs" is less tied to culture than to all human experience. In the same way, Ahmad approached Jiang (2000) explanation of the relationship that language is the mirror of culture. Ahmad stated that idioms that people use reflect their cultures, of course, considering idioms as language. Ahmad's examples included idioms from sports that are used in business usually and other situations (e.g., make a pitch, come out of left field, and a ball park figure).

"You are what you speak" was a description given by Rosa, in Excerpt 1, about the relationship between culture and idioms. This phrase seems ambiguous because it bears many different interpretations and ideas. Perhaps Rosa referred to how audience judge speakers because speech tells who you are; for example, position and educational status. Rosa explained that language was all about culture and idioms which still has a loose interpretation.

A well-presented explanation of idiom-culture relationship was illustrated by Lara. She believes that there are some idioms that are unique to certain cultures and can be explained by cultural values of beliefs. However, there are also some idioms that are similar across cultures or universal, which can also be indicative of similarities between cultures. Lara's examples were: bite the bullet and from A to Z. According to Lara (bite the bullet) is

an English idiom that is dependent on American culture. She said the idiom likely came from the prevalence of guns in American history. "From A to Z" is a cross-cultural idiom that can be found in Greek and Arabic.

Topic Four—The Teaching Methods of Idioms

Two methods of teaching idioms were discussed in topic four: the traditional method and the conceptual metaphor. The traditional method includes the explicit and implicit approaches of teaching idioms and they were addressed in question seven. It asked which approach the participants prefer when teaching idioms. It also asked about the reasons behind their preference. Question eight asked about the participants' opinions about the conceptual metaphor method to teach idioms and its feasibility in ELT. The discussion started with the traditional method and followed by the conceptual metaphor.

Responding to survey question seven, participants were divided into three groups. Table 6 illustrates the preferred teaching method(s) to each participant in the study. Lara and Rosa preferred the explicit method of teaching idioms. Lara believes that the explicit method is short and straightforward to understand not only vocabulary, but also idioms. Rosa has a different reason; she preferred the explicit method because idioms are already vague. Rosa thinks that the implicit method might make it worse for students; guessing the meaning does not always lead to the right interpretation and word-by-word or literal translation does not work with idioms.

Table 6

Participants' Preference of Idioms Teaching Method

Explicit Method	Rosa	Lara				
Both	Marry	Ahmad	Nada	Khaled	Hala	Fatima
Implicit Method	Ali	Sara				

In the same way, two participants, Sara and Ali, preferred the implicit method over the explicit method. For Sara, vocabulary laundry list is not efficient because it is hard to remember large amount of idioms just providing their meanings. Context, a story or movie, helps remembering the meaning and usage of vocabulary, in general, which easily applies on idioms. Sara's viewpoint coincided with Asl's (2013). However, based on personal preference, Ali expected and hoped his students to learn idioms the same fashion he learned them. Ali expressed his thought in Excerpt 4 as follow,

> I prefer the implicit method because I find idioms and figures of speech easier to learn and remember when they are used in normal communication. If it is easier for me, I hope that it is easier for other students as well.

The rest of the participants in the third group prefer one approach but consider the other approach indispensable. Similar to Liontas (2003), Ahmad preferred a story to learn idioms because it was more meaningful and more likely to be remembered. However, explicit instruction of idioms meaning is often required as well. Marry, on the other hand, has a neutral stance because the method she employs depends on the idiom in-hand itself. That is to say, some idioms are easy and can be understood from the context, but others are figurative and need more explanations and examples to be understood. Moreover, Nada recognizes the advantages of both methods in teaching idioms. To Nada, it is not an either or situation

because the two approaches complete each other. Nada expressed her stance eloquently in Excerpts 5.

> I don't see teaching these two methods as mutually exclusive; rather, they are symbiotic. I think that learners should be introduced to the idiom through the implicit method, in a context. However, addressing the idiom explicitly can raise awareness, and giving learners a chance to deduce the meaning of the idiom from context and compare it to similar idioms in their culture can personalize the experience.

In the same way Kainulainen (2006), Khaled and Fatima had similar responses when there are more contexts surrounding an idiom making it easier to guess its meaning. Hala agreed with them. To defend her position, Hala argued that people remember the themes and morals from fables because the context is dense; sittings, characters, and events. However, the two participants claimed that the explicit method is faster to give the meaning and is always useful.

After previewing the participants' preferences of the traditional method, the discussion turns into the participants' opinions about using conceptual metaphor method for teaching idioms. It is important to look into the impression and beliefs of the teachers about the method to determine its applicability and success. The last survey question asked about efficiency of teaching literary terms to learners. According to previous empirical studies (Gibbs, 1992; Hamblin & Gibbs, 1999) conceptual metaphor method assisted ESL learners to interpret idioms correctly through teaching figurative language, metaphor, and few literary terms. Understanding the meaning of idioms is a sign of learning.

Table 7

Opinions of Using Literary Terms to Teach Idioms

Apply Literary Terms in Teach Idioms						
Agree	Lara	Ali	Hala	Khaled	Rosa	Fatima
Disagree	Marry	Sara	Ahmad	Nada		

It is noteworthy that more than half the participants find teaching literary terms is beneficial for L2 learners. Six participants in the study found that teaching literary terms to ESL learners is beneficial because understanding one aspect of the language helps understand other aspects. Some of these participants specified that the conceptual metaphor method works better for advanced level learners but puzzling for the lower ones. However, four participants thought that this method contradicted with some of the student's end goal. There are too many other crucial components that need to be taught and idioms play merely a peripheral role in the classroom.

Specifically, Hala believed that teaching literacy terms to the advanced levels is beneficial. Also, Rosa thought that different aspects of the language are correlated, so understanding one element such as figurative language and metaphor help understanding the other. For example, the meaning of (a feather in one's cap) is metaphorical which needs learners to think idiomatically not literally in order to understand it. This method should facilitate learning the language. Likewise, Fatima agrees with Hala and Rosa. She expressed her opinion in Excerpt 6 below.

> Yes, I think that teaching and identifying literary terms is beneficial for advanced L2 learners. Being able to identify parts of language and their usage can "shine light on" language, so to speak.

Generally, exceptions exist everywhere. Ahmad and Nada have contrasting opinions to support the conceptual metaphor method. Ahmad looked at teaching idioms from the students' perspective. He highlighted the students' end goal and the purpose of learning English at the first place. Ahmad argued that engineering students are less likely to encounter this kind of language. Therefore, learners with such majors in mind do not need these much of specific explanations about glossary of literature terms. Nada shared this point with Ahmad and added introducing literary terms to students might complicate things for students rather than facilitating language learning because these terms would make the learning burden heavier. Nada justified her stance by stating that only few students who value idioms when they encounter them.

Participants acknowledged the inefficacy of the method as Marry; and some participants already adopted this approach and discussed literary terms in class. Ali supported the idea of teaching idioms and integrating them in teaching instructions. Excerpt 7 presents Ali's opinion about using conceptual metaphor to teach idioms.

> Yes, I think that it is useful to teach literary terms to help in the interpretation of idioms. I talk about these terms in the process of class time and in illustration of idioms because often an idiom cannot be understood without a concept of one of more of these terms and how they are used in language.

To sum up the discussion there are four main topics about the participants' perception found in the participants' responses to the survey questions. In topic one, participants asserted that idioms play an important role in ELT. The frequency of idioms magnifies their importance. Topic two discussed the reasons behind the difficulty of learning idioms. The participants attributed this difficulty to two reasons: the differences between the surface and the actual meaning of idioms and the difficulty of using idioms correctly. Topic three was

about idiom-culture relationship. Participants realized the influence of culture on language and understand it. However, few only define the nature of this connection. The preference of the participants and their opinions about idioms teaching methods was discussed in topic four.

The participants supported their opinions with idiom examples in the survey questions. Question five and six were used as tools to confirm the viewpoints of the participants. In question five, almost all the participants had situations when their students misunderstood the meaning of idioms. On the other hand, one nonnative teacher, Hala who follows her teachers' footsteps, excluded idioms from her teaching instructions. The responses of question six ranged from always to rare. It asked participants about the frequency of using idioms in class. Remarkably, none of participants wrote never because idioms are inevitable. Below is a review of situations when ESL learners did not understand idioms and the reactions of the participants.

The responses to the fifth survey question indicated that idioms are inevitable and their frequency highlights their importance. Most of the participants used idioms in their classes and had situations where students had confused look on their faces. When this occurs, for example, Ali proceeded to explain the meaning of the idiom and probably some clue to its origin. Although it might be a digression from the lesson plan, Ali felt that idioms are important because they give language life and color. When Lara used the idioms "I feel a bit under the weather" her students looked at each other confused. To find the meaning, Lara reported that her students tried to translate the sentence word-by-word to understand the idiom, but it didn't work. So, they asked her what it meant.

While survey question five was about the students' reaction when they heard idioms, the nonnative teachers showed distinct attitudes toward English idioms. Hala, who believes that learning idioms is the learners' responsibility, defended her attitude of avoiding using idioms in her classes in Except 8.

> I don't use many idioms in my own teaching. As a matter of fact, I don't hear much use of idioms from my teachers and professors either. I guess I just naturally tend to avoid using them because I think my students might get confused. The core thing is that, idioms can always be replaced by normal explanations. A piece of cake is my favorite idiom, could be the only one that I use in my classes and no one ever asked about its meaning.

Rosa, who believed that idioms should be taught to advance ELS levels, she had plans to teach her students an idiom every week. She took advantage of authentic class situations to be a role model and teach idioms (e.g., give it a shot, read between the lines, miss the boat etc.) However, Rosa mentioned that any idiom she said usually is followed by explanation otherwise it is pointless to say it. Taking a few minutes of class time to explain the meaning of an idiom does not waste the time according to Rosa. Sara, on the other hand, had a different strategy with idioms in her class. She explained the meaning of idioms when there was a sudden silence. If students do not ask or show the symptoms of astonishment, Sara precedes the lesson normally. She explained her point of view in Excerpt 9.

> Students either are not ready to learn it or they did not notice that I used an idiom. From my experience, whenever I use idioms that involve animals, I see wide open eyes. In fact, I had to explain the meaning of "when pigs fly, sick as a dog & hold your horses" every time I say them in my classes.

From the participants' replies, it seems that idioms are inevitable and used by native and nonnative teachers in their classrooms and explanations are followed. However, some

native and nonnative ESL teachers still are not convinced with the idea of including idioms in ELT.

Responses to the six survey question varied. Some teachers demonstrated a plan to integrate idioms in their instructions. Rosa had a goal of teaching her students at least 10 idioms in a semester because she mentioned that she introduced an idiom every week. Regardless of the type of classes she taught, Rosa reminded her students about the idiom of the week at the beginning of classes and continued with her lesson plans. According to Rosa, this is an attempt to cover what is missed, the weaknesses, in grammar texts. Reminding students with idioms is a type of drill Rosa herself used to learn English idioms.

Another participant who seemed to have a similar plan to Rosa is Ali. He supported idea of teaching idioms to L2 learners. He also was the participant who believed that idioms give language a life and color that learners should taste and experience. From his respond, Ali integrates a lot of idioms in his class. Excerpt 10 shows Ali's plans to teach idioms.

> I use idioms often in class, at least five in every class. The ones that I use and have explained I then use again in later classes to reinforce their meaning and usage. Some examples include: chew the fat, bite off more than you can chew, get in over your head, find yourself in the deep end, kick the dog, tie one on, and burn the candle at both ends.

Other participants, like Khaled, mentioned this was a hard question to answer. He wrote that he was not aware of all the idioms he used in class. He hardly realized that they were idioms because some of them might be so common. He mentioned that idioms would be a fun class to teach because there would be a plethora of activities that develop speaking skills. Learners would have opportunities to communicate comparing and contrasting their L1 idioms with the English ones. Presentation and debate activities build learners' confidence.

On the contrary, Nada had a totally different perspective. She did not regard idioms as other participants because idioms are at the bottom of her priority list. Nada explained that students disregard idioms when they encounter them. Excerpt 11illustrates Nada's position

> I have only explicitly taught idioms during an informal community English circle in Japan. Because they convey aspects of international culture as well as language, the community members with quite advanced proficiency were interested in learning more about idioms. In the classes that I teach I have never specifically addressed idioms because students do not find them important.

While the study was about the teachers' perception, it seems that the learners' behavior toward idioms influences the way teachers address idioms in their classes as the case of Nada. Her students degrade idioms believing that they are extra details that do not add to the message; whereas, sometimes idioms carry the message (e.g., go fly a kite). Similarly, Hala was influenced by her teachers who did not use idioms in their classes. A piece of cake is what Hala uses in here class.

Limitations

One major challenge in this study was the limited sample size, especially of the nonnative participants. I did not have a chance to survey nonnative male participants. The participants did not go into very much detail regarding students' understanding of idioms.

Chapter V: Conclusion

The goal in this study was to obtain a general vision of ESL teachers' views about idioms in ELT. The perceptions of the participants are helpful to those who consider ELT their future profession. Ten participants shared their opinions about the importance of idioms, difficulty of idioms, the relationship between culture and idioms, and the methods of teaching idioms. In spite of the diversity of the cultural backgrounds, different teaching experiences, and varied age ranges of the participants, there was a general consensus of opinions among the participants about how they perceived idioms in ELT. A comparison between the opinions of the native and nonnative ESL teachers was beyond the scope of this study.

The result of the study showed that the participants agreed that idioms are an important aspect of language learning. Idioms are significant because they are frequently used especially in verbal communication. Also, the difficulty of idioms originates for the following reasons: the gap between the surface meaning of the idioms and the actual meaning, the correct usage of idioms, the lack of the cultural and historical knowledge of TL, and finding the equivalent idiom in the NL. Moreover, the relationship between culture and idioms is sometime undeniable. Participants realize this relationship and the influence of culture on language and understand it. The way ESL learners and teachers regard idioms affect the method of teaching them. With regard to their teaching methods, more than half of the participants combine the explicit and the implicit approaches in class depending on the nature of the idioms, context, and teachers' intuitions. Also, more than half of the participants found the conceptual metaphor useful to advanced ESL learners. The idea of teaching idioms in

separate classes was controversial between the participants. The NS participants supported the idea whereas the NNS did not.

Pedagogical Implication

After acknowledging the importance of idioms through the participants' perceptions, ESL teachers should encourage their students to learn idioms. Through the participants' opinions and previous studies, it seems that there are reasons to encourage learning idioms. Idioms are important, common, and confusing. Idioms are an important aspect of any language, and L2 learners should be aware of them. Native speakers use them frequently especially in oral communication. If learners are not familiar with them, communication failure may occur. Idioms do not say what they mean. The difference between the surface meaning and the intended meaning of an idiom can be confusing for language learners. Teachers should explain what idioms are and how to use them. Idioms should be addressed in class in one way or another because they are inevitable and students will encounter them in and out of the class.

Through the discussion, also, the participants claimed that idioms are neglected in ELT. The participants themselves provided some solutions in teaching idioms. For example, being a role model for students is a very simple way to introduce and discuss idioms in class. Another way is to follow a plan that teaches an idiom every week in any class they teach.

The way ESL learners, teachers, and texts regard idioms affect the method of teaching them. The participants suggested that speaking and listening and culture classes are the best classes to teach idioms. This study looked into opinions about methods of teaching idioms:

the traditional and the conceptual methods. Interested teachers can benefit from these opinions

and follow the one that suits their style.

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Appendix A

Consent Form

Teaching English Idioms to L2 Learners: ESL Teachers' Perspective

Background information and the purpose of the study

This study concerns itself with ESL teachers' perspective on idioms in language teaching and learning. It looks over three major points that make idioms such a complicated obstacle to English learners: a) difficulty of idioms including comprehension and usage, b) language connection with culture, and c) methodology of teaching idioms.

Procedure

You are invited to participate in a research study. This study is about English idioms and English second language teachers' perspective. If you accept to participate in the study, you will answer a survey which consists of eight open ended questions regarding teaching English idioms.

Risks

The risks in this study are minimum. The questioner requires participants to write long answers and it may take an hour to complete. Your name will remain anonymous and no one will identify you. Also, your name will not be presented in the analysis because I will give you a different name. Moreover, your name will not be published anywhere.

Benefits

The study highlights the importance of teaching idioms to ESL and EFL learners. It raises teachers' awareness about teaching English idiom. The study illustrates the difficulties that ESL learners encounter while interpreting English idioms. It, also, includes suggested useful methods of teaching idioms that teachers may apply in their classes to teach idioms.

Confidentiality

The confidentiality of the information gathered during your participation in this study will be maintained. Your personal identity will remain confidential. You will not be identified by your name in any published material. All data will be kept confidential.

Voluntary Participation

Participation is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your relationship with St. Cloud State University or with Weam Rizq. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without penalty.

Research Results

At your request, I am happy to provide a summary of the research results when the study is completed.

Contact information

If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact with me at riwe1201@stcloudstate.edu or contact with my advisor, Professor Jim Robinson, at JHRobinson@stcloudstate.edu.

Acceptance to Participate

Your signature indicates that you are least 18 years of age, you have read the information provided above, and you have consent to participate. You may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty after signing this form.

Name: _____.

Signature: _____.

Date: _____.

St. Cloud State University
Institutional Review Board
Approval date: ___1-17-15___
Expiration date: ___1-16-16___

Appendix B

Background Information

Please circle your choice response below to best describe you:

Name: _____

1/ Gender

   a. Male   b. Female

2/ Age

   a. 21- 30   b. 31- 35
   b. 36- 40   d. 41- 45

3/ How long have you been teaching English?

   a. 1 – 3   b. 4 – 6.
   c. 7 – 9   d. other _____

4/ How often do you use English idioms in the class room?

   a. Always   b. Sometime.
   c. rare   d. never

5/ How many languages do you speak?

   a. One   b. Two
   c. Three   d. specify _____

6/ What is your mother tongue language?

_____

7/ What is your second language?

_____

Appendix C

Questions

Please answer the following questions and elaborate with examples from your teaching experience.

1. Do you believe that idioms play an important role in teaching and learning English? What do you think makes idioms important? Give example of good or less than good idiom usages.
2. Do you think idioms are difficult to learn? What do you think the reasons are for the difficulties in learning idioms? Give example for both easy to learn and difficult to learn.
3. From your teaching experience, do you support the concept of having classes that teach English idioms to second language learners and why?
4. Do you think there is a relationship between idioms and culture? What kind of the relationship do they have? Give examples of idioms dependent on culture and those that are not.
5. Have you ever had a situation that your students were confused because you mentioned an idiom? How did you react?
6. How often do you use idioms in your classes? Give examples.
7. Which method do you prefer to use if you teach English idioms to L2 learners? The explicit method giving the definition and usage or the implicit method that uses context such as a story. Why do you prefer your method?
8. From your teaching experience, is it useful to teach literary terms to assist L2 learners interprets idioms? Literary terms refer to Glossary of Literary terms such as figurative language, metaphor, personification, and simile.